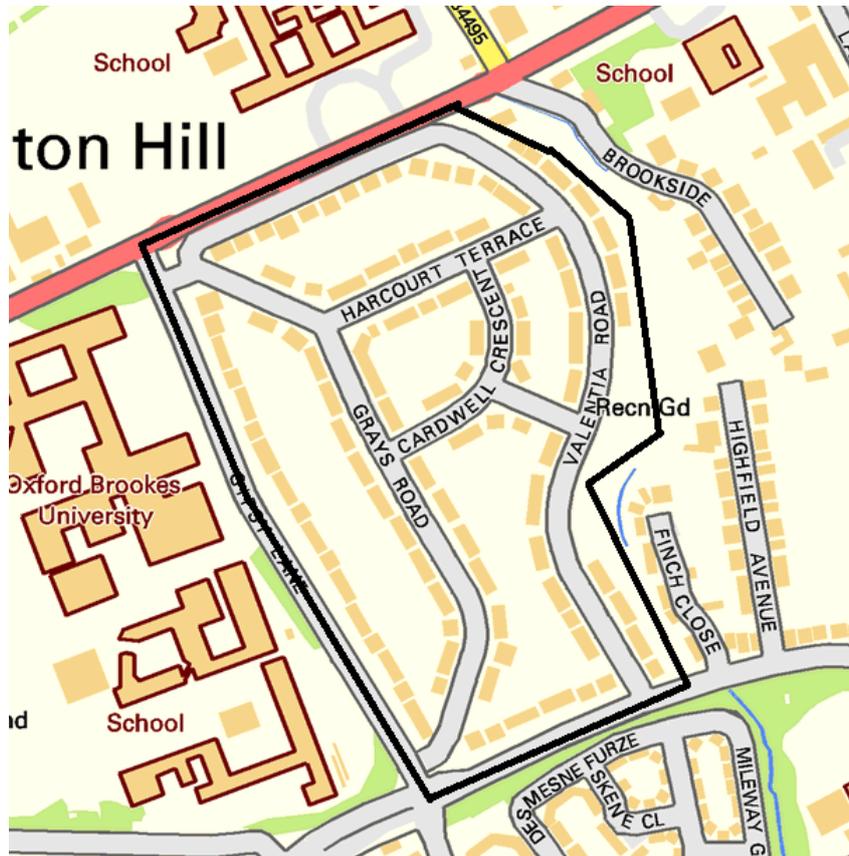




CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

AREA 8: Gipsy Lane Estate



GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The small plateau at the top of Headington Hill occupied by the Gipsy Lane Estate is enclosed by Headington Road to the north-west, Gipsy Lane to the west, Old Road to the south east and Boundary Brook (formerly Moors Brook) to the east. The estate consists of a mix of semi-detached and terraced houses, all with rear gardens and a driveway. There is a small parade of two shops and a recreation ground. The houses along the outer edges of the estate are separated from adjacent busy roads with wide grass verges, trees and either a wide footpath or an access road. Architectural detail is focused on these houses with a variety of stone lintels, fanned brick lintels, herringbone brick doorways and other features. Houses on the inner streets of the estate display less architectural ornamentation.

All houses have space in front of the property to park a car with inner roads of the estate allowing space for further car parking resulting in wide open streets. Apart from trees along the outer estate roads, planting is limited to front gardens and on the edge of the recreation ground. Boundary treatments vary, with stone walls along Headington Road to reflect the stone wall opposite enclosing

Headington Girls School and a mix of brick walls, timber fences and occasional hedges throughout the estate.

Many houses have extensions and many are converted into flats and Houses in Multiple Occupancy.

The structure of the original 1930s estate is however still intact, with continued evidence of consistent use of materials and building styles, within a defined area providing a clear sense of place.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

This carefully planned estate occupies what was Plot No. 19 in the Headington Enclosure Award of 1805, which was taken into the city of Oxford in 1889 (when Boundary Brook got its name) but managed as farmland until the late 1920s. It is bordered by the old and new routes to London and by Gipsy Lane - so named from at least 1832 after the travelling families who camped there. The brook was culverted underground in the late 1970s.

By 1930 314 dwellings had been built along wide streets named after Oxford MPs. Semi-detached houses had a garage and terraces a drive-way, and ample parking on internal estate roads reflected the increase in private car ownership. Houses along the major boundary roads were protected by wide verges, mature trees and either a footpath or access road. The estate included a small parade of two shops and a recreation ground.

Many residents have exercised the right to buy granted by the 1980 Housing Act and some have enlarged their properties with loft conversions, side and rear extensions. Several houses have been split into up to four flats. Although the City Council's 'Article 4 Direction' has curbed the conversion of family houses, the area has a higher than average amount number of Houses in Multiple Occupation: one-third compared to one-fifth in Oxford as a whole. The few houses which remain Council-owned have been renovated with new windows and roofs.

KEY POSITIVE CHARACTER FEATURES

- Planned late 1920s Council estate consisting of semi-detached and terrace houses aligned with streets. All houses have front garden areas with driveway resulting in wide open streets.
- Consistent use of materials throughout the estate provides sense of place – brick, clay tiles, wooden windows and doors (many replaced with plastic), render.



- Specific architectural detail particular to outer roads of estate provides identity and presents estate to passing traffic.
- Wide grass verges, mature trees and either access road or footway separates houses from major roads on outer edge of estate providing enclosure and clear boundary.



- Mix of boundary treatments provide variety and allows individuality, breaking up uniform appearance and are sometimes specific to location – stone walls on Headington Road, brick walls to mark internal road junctions.
- Planting within front gardens reduces the dominance of cars and provides a suburban feel.



- Road layout of estate designed to maintain visual connection between roads and allow views out to local landmarks including Headington Girls School.
- Inner roads of the estate have opportunities for visitor parking within marked bays.



- Recreation ground forms part of the estate layout providing opportunities for formal and informal play and recreation.
- Small parade of two shops also included within the layout of the estate. These are important local community facilities.





ISSUES

- Numerous extensions to properties following a variety of styles not in keeping with the vernacular of the estate often leading to conversion of family properties into flats or Houses of Multiple Occupancy.
- Inconsistent use of materials and loss of architectural detail specific to estate not in keeping with the vernacular.
- Loss of front gardens and boundaries between properties to increase parking capacity has led to loss of planting and increase in urban feel to estate.
- With houses converted into flats, increase in number of bins which are often poorly located and managed resulting in untidy appearance of properties.
- Damage to wide grass verges on Old Road and Gypsy Lane to allow for access for parking in front gardens and occasional inappropriate parking along footway for visitors.
- Inappropriate location of marked parking bays partially on pavements increase dominance of cars and reduces pedestrian friendly environment
- Poor drainage of Valentia Road recreation ground could limit potential use.



GUIDANCE FOR DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

- Provide guidance of appropriate materials and architectural styles for house renovation and extension.
- Encourage retention of boundary treatments between properties, particularly hedges.
- Enhance front gardens through encouraging planting of trees and shrubs.
- Limit number of HMOs and conversion of properties into flats.

PROPOSED ASSETS

Heritage Assets

- The estate is an early example of 1920s family social housing with parking for a car and outdoor space for food production and relaxation.



- Boundary Brook – formerly Moors Brook and marked boundary of Oxford City. The brook is culverted under Valentia Road recreation ground.

- Valentia Road Recreation Ground



Community assets

- Valentia Road Recreation Ground for communal sport and recreation – already mentioned above as a heritage asset.
- Parade of shops on Gray's Road provides community facility.



Ecological Assets

- Mature Trees along Old Road, Gipsy Lane, Headington Road and Valentia Road.



- Trees, shrubs and areas of potentially long grass around and within Valentia Road Recreation Ground.



- Boundary hedges between properties. Potentially several may have been planted during the original construction of the estate in the 1920s.



- Boundary Brook (Culverted under Valentia Road recreation ground).