

# CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

*The Blunston village settlement, excluding the designated Conservation Areas, has been further analysed and collated into a number of character areas. These character assessments provide a useful insight into the attributes and distinctiveness of the village to enable a clearer understanding of what features and characteristics are important, what should be retained and how future changes can positively enhance and strengthen the character.*



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# APPROACHES

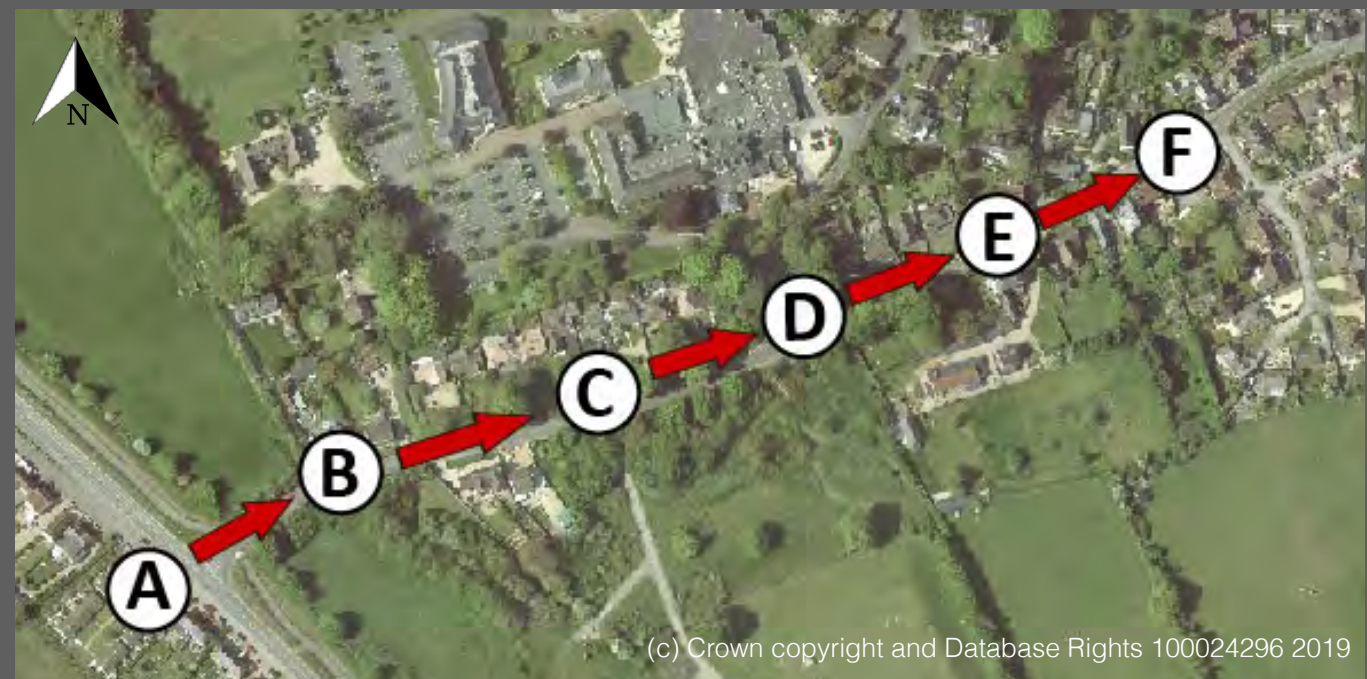
## FROM THE WEST

When approaching Blunsdon Village from Ermin Street via the High Street, **[A]** the rural character is immediately apparent **[B]** with mature vegetation lining both sides and grassed verges. This is distinctively different from the more urban ribbon development of Ermin Street and the transition from urban to rural is clear.

Hedges and mature trees **[C]** enclose the High Street for the first 70m, reinforcing the separation from Ermin Street and Swindon's urban edge. The first houses along the High Street start after this initial serenity and are dispersed, individual and set within mature grounds behind highway verges, established hedges and large established front gardens. Access to each property is individual and taken from the High Street providing a gentle, detached residential character within a heavily vegetated environment **[D]**.

Further east, the High Street character begins to transform into a tighter development grain typical of an old village centre. The buildings are closer together and stone-walls **[E]** provide a more continuous sense of enclosure to the street with hedging. The linear High Street continues through the village and some local facilities including a pub, Church, village hall and a shop are located along its length intermixed with housing **[F]**.

The experience of travel along the High Street **[A]** to **[F]** is typical of many villages. It illustrates a gradual progression from a rural edge with more 'scattered' dwellings and dominant vegetation, towards a tighter more compact form at the heart of the village.





## FROM THE NORTH

The approach to the village from the north starts within the deep rural landscape along an unmarked, unlit lane **[A]**. Each side the roadway is flanked with hedgerows, mature trees and open fields **[B]**. Along its length the route into and through the village is lined by a deep ditch and stream, which ripples and flows year round adding a unique quality. Typical of a rural setting the area is generally peaceful, with a tranquil, remote, stillness.

The roadside is edged by grassed verges and the strong vegetation provides a sense of enclosure within the wider landscape. There are glimpses and views across the countryside and toward the linear, contained settlement of Lower Blunston.

The landscape gently rises to the south and Front Lane meanders and opens up as it approaches the start of the village edge at Lower Blunston **[C]**.

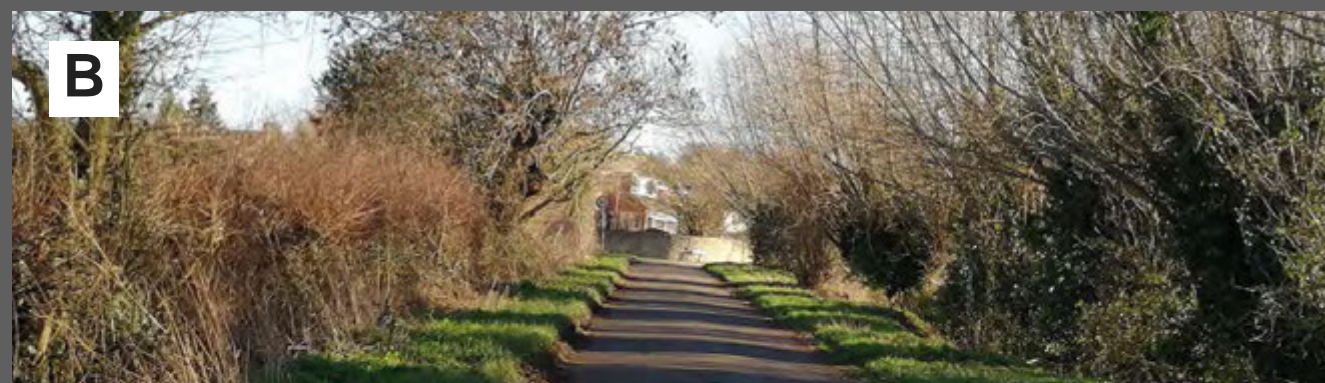
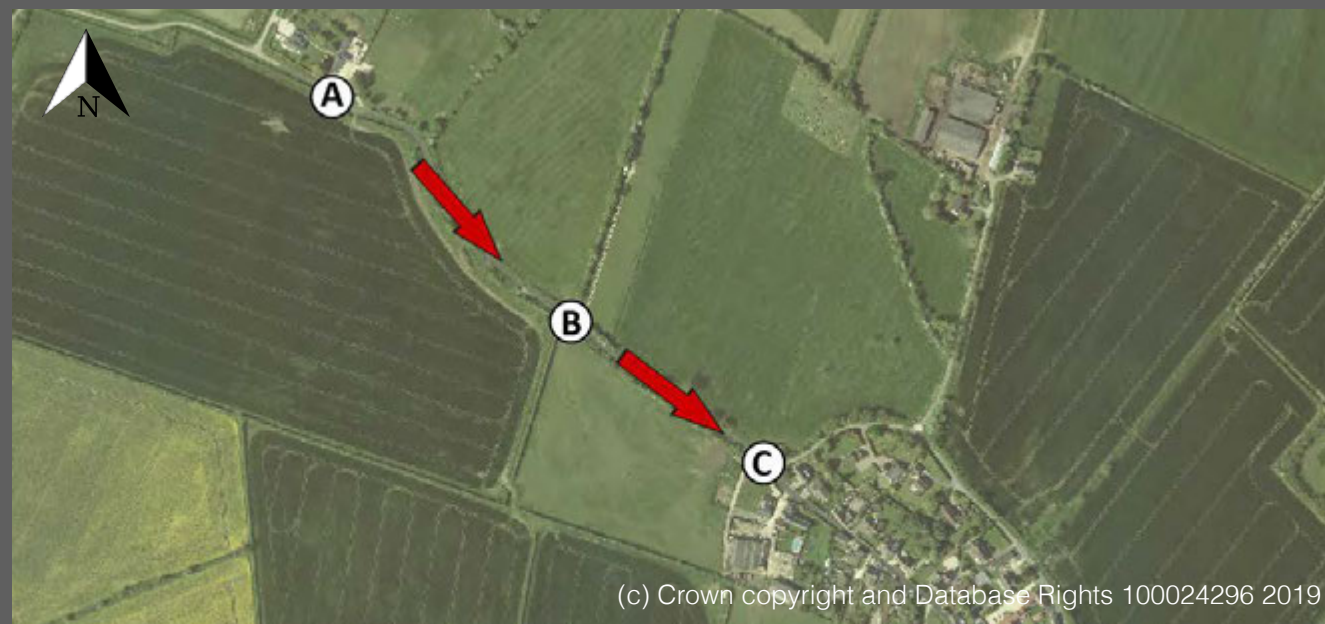


FIG 1 VIEW SOUTH ALONG FRONT LANE WITH STREAM AND DITCH



## FROM THE EAST

From the east the village is approached along the B4019, a busier route than the previous two approaches. The road is marked and includes a footway and kerbed edge in parts, but further east toward Highworth it is edged with grass verges and tall vegetation [A]. The route bends only gently, providing long forward views westward and the character of the route changes little [B] until it reaches the village.

The entrance to Blunsdon is marked with a narrowing of the road and a visual pinch point using white wooden gates across the grass verge [C]. From this point onwards, Buildings and stone walls are interspersed with vegetation, grassed verges and some pavements [D] [E]. Around the junction with Sams Lane, on the south side there are driveway openings which enable views of the oblique geometry of the built forms. The gable ends and variety of materials (stone, render, brick) provides visual interest [F].

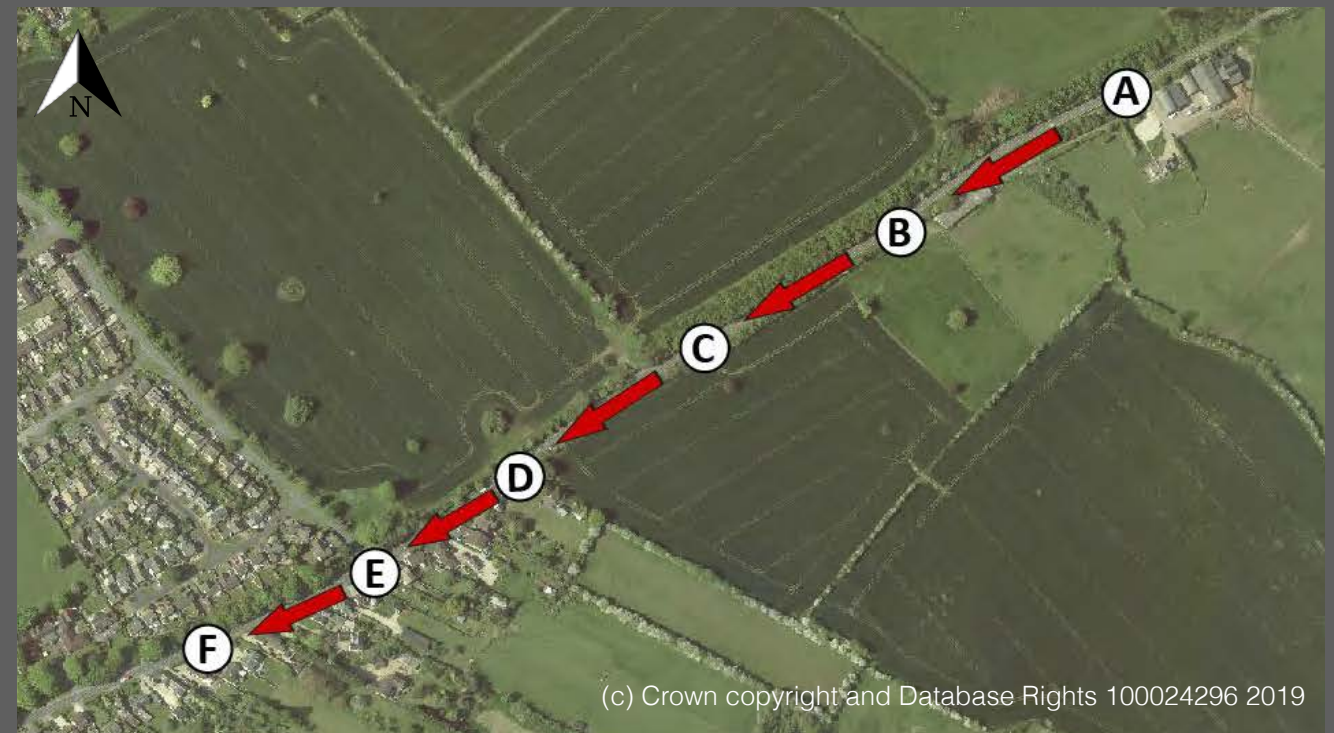


FIG 2 VIEW WEST ALONG B4019 OBLIQUE BUILT FORM IN RENDER & STONE

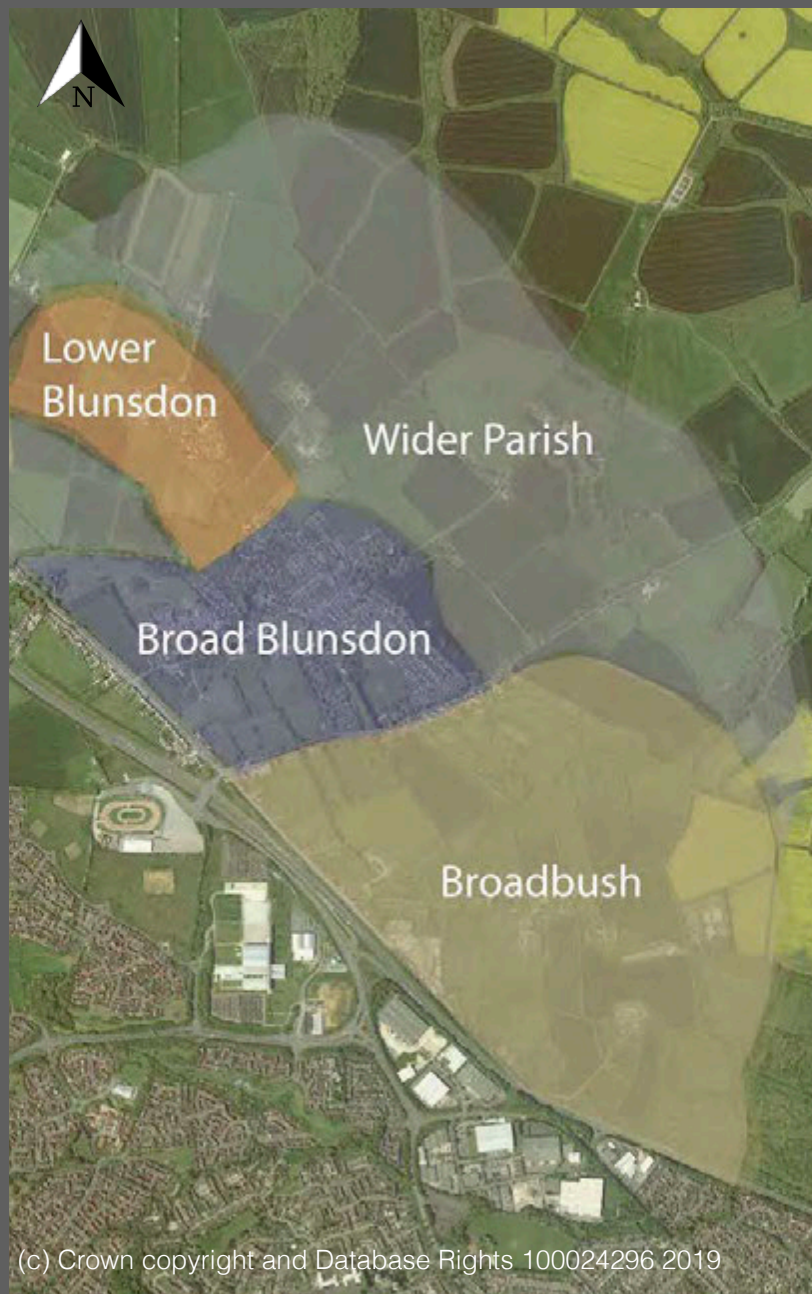


The BENP area can be conveniently described in three sections:

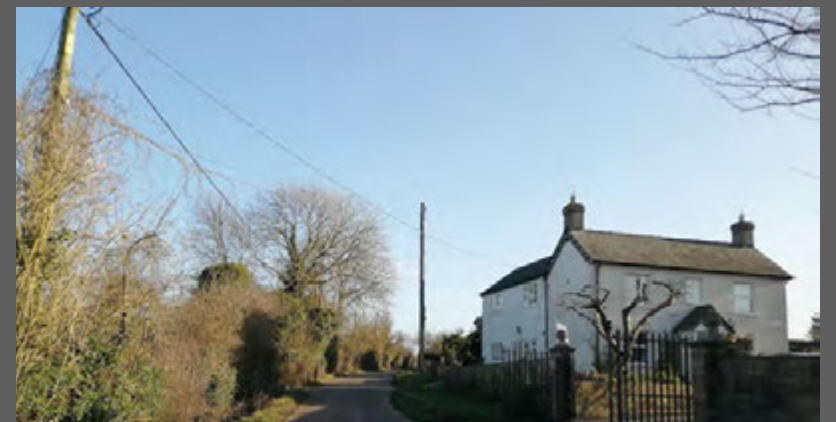
- **BROADBUSH**
- **LOWER BUNSDON**
- **BROAD BLUNSDON**

## BROADBUSH

- The southern section gently slopes down and away from the B4019/Broadbush towards the M4.
- To the south the land slopes gently away from the main village. Here the rural character has been gradually eroded as Swindon expands north and eastwards. It contains a raised valley in which flows a tributary of the Bydemill Brook. A large part of this area forms what will become Kingsdown Urban Extension.
- A backdrop of open countryside, flat farmland and some wooded areas is an intrinsic part of its character.
- The settlement can be visible from elevated points on the adjacent plateau or scarp.
- The distinctive long garden layouts along Broadbush resulting from former use as market garden.
- The built form is partially hidden by trees and other landscapes features.



**FIG 3 THE THREE BENP SECTIONS**





# LOWER BLUNSDON

- The northern section sloping down and away from the High Street towards Cricklade and Cirencester is the Lower Village.
- Northwards, at the foot of this scarp, is the settlement of Lower Blunston. This section is described in detail in the Lower Blunston Conservation Area Appraisal. Lower Blunston retains the most tranquil and rural parts of the BENP area. Many of the most significant buildings were once farm houses a century ago, but have now become large residential properties without the direct link to farming activity
- Lower Blunston is separated from Broad Blunston by green open spaces, which play a vital role, forming a gap between both settlements and maintaining the individual identity of each area.
- Houses and cottages face Front Lane, which is the spine of the area and aligns with a watercourse. Running through the centre of the settlement, north-west to south-east it gives the main access to the original buildings, whilst their curtilages run back to the east side to Back Lane and on the west to the edge of fields.

- Back Lane binds the area north-eastward and connects the area with the Church of St. Leonard's in Broad Blunston east, providing access to the back of the original properties of Front Lane.
- The character of these streets is absolutely rural, the lanes are narrow, grass verged, un-kerbed and of varying width, absence of road markings, street lights and other suburban features.
- Ivy Lane links Front Lane to Back Lane; its south side marks the northern limit of Broad Blunston, yet its north side is still lined with native trees retaining a rural character.
- In the west, the westward extent of the buildings' gardens is in direct connection with the open countryside.
- The tranquillity of the area is enhanced by the sound of the flowing streams.



FIG 6 THE RURAL CHARACTER AT BACK LANE



FIG 7 THE RURAL CHARACTER AT FRONT LANE



FIG 8 THE RURAL CHARACTER AT FRONT LANE



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# BROAD BLUNSDON

- The central flat section between the High Street and Broadbush is Broad Blunsdon.
- Broad Blunsdon evolved as a mixture of an original ridge top village and extended into a plateau village. It is a small agricultural settlement situated on a rise of land overlooking the Upper Thames. Over the past 30 years, Broad Blunsdon has become a residential dormitory for Swindon, and although its agricultural function has reduced, it still retains a strong rural character and ambience.
- Broad Blunsdon was originally a ridge top settlement, with most buildings located on the High Street at the edge of the scarp.
- A relatively compact layout.
- A linear settlement Pattern.
- Mixture of historic buildings and old roadside natural stones walls, limited 20th Century infills, areas of green open space, some fine groups of mature trees and hedges.
- The older buildings are prominent and establish the distinctive character.

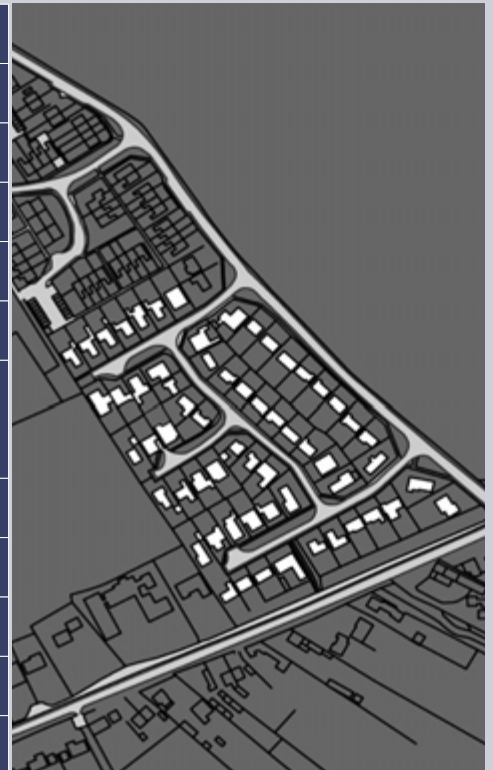






A pocket of detached and semi-detached 2-storey houses and single storey bungalows. Generous frontages and grass verges with street trees.

<b>Character Matrix Type</b>	Village Envelope
<b>Density</b>	18 d/Ha
<b>Typology</b>	Semi-detached and Detached
<b>Plot Depth</b>	21m back to back
<b>Heights</b>	1-storey 1.5-storey and 2-storey
<b>Street Types</b>	Loose liner, culs-de-sac
<b>Form and Structure</b>	Regular, gentle and ordered Continuous form and regular breaks
<b>Frontage Set Back</b>	Generally 5-6m
<b>Boundary Treatment</b>	Low hedges, low walls, lawns
<b>Parking</b>	On-plot and garage
<b>Public Realm</b>	Grass verges, street trees
<b>Materials</b>	Light buff artificial and natural stone



**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

Emphasis on individual buildings and the inclusion of grass verges and small street trees. Building set back is important with low landscaped boundary treatments and frontage space. Low pitched roof forms and large openings within a soft muted palette of materials.







Ribbon development along one side of a former Roman Road comprising regular semi-detached housing progressing northward to looser detached individual plots.

<b>Character Matrix Type</b>	Ribbon/ linear
<b>Density</b>	14 d/Ha
<b>Typology</b>	Semi-detached and detached
<b>Plot Depth</b>	50m+ plot depth
<b>Heights</b>	2-storey and 1-storey
<b>Street Types</b>	Strong linear
<b>Form and Structure</b>	Very regular rhythm becoming fragmented and looser
<b>Frontage Set Back</b>	Generally 6m
<b>Boundary Treatment</b>	Low walls some fences & hedges
<b>Parking</b>	On-plot and on-street
<b>Public Realm</b>	Grass verges and planting on east
<b>Materials</b>	Brick, pebbledash & mixed



**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

Important northern and eastern views toward Cricklade and the rural setting which should continue to be respected. The street is lacking enclosure and some boundary treatments are weak resulting in a risk of car parking dominating. Street tree planting to enhance the public realm, clear boundary treatments and on plot parking, away from the frontage will help to address this. The strong regular roof forms, building breaks and regular fenestration patterns should be respected and upheld to ensure the character is strengthened.







Meandering cul de sac development of large detached, individual dwellings set back within a landscaped estate setting.

<b>Character Matrix Type</b>	Village envelope
<b>Density</b>	9 d/HA
<b>Typology</b>	Detached
<b>Plot Depth</b>	35m+ plot depth
<b>Heights</b>	2-storey
<b>Street Types</b>	Cul-de-sac
<b>Form and Structure</b>	Irregular, loose street pattern with large frequent breaks
<b>Frontage Set Back</b>	Large set back generally 10m+
<b>Boundary Treatment</b>	None, open landscaped setting
<b>Parking</b>	On-plot and garage
<b>Public Realm</b>	Grass verges, generous open private frontages containing trees
<b>Materials</b>	Pale brick



**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

Emphasis on spacious landscape setting and wide building frontages. The planting and sense of space is important to the character. There are no formal front boundaries. Dwellings are detached, wide built forms with numerous window openings and include simple pitched roofs. These characteristics should be upheld.



BEECH LEA