



West Oxfordshire District Council
Local Plan
Heritage Impact Assessments

August 2026



West Oxfordshire District Council

Local Plan

Heritage Impact Assessments

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HAN 001: Land at Hanborough Station

Site Description

The allocation is located to the east of Long Hanborough. It comprises a series of agricultural fields that abut the urban edge of Long Hanborough to the south of Hanborough Station, surrounded by additional agricultural land to the south, east and west. The topography slopes down to the east from approximately 100 metres to 70 metres above Ordnance Datum.

The allocation is approximately 35 hectares and is proposed for residential development.

Heritage Considerations

Designated Assets

Designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the allocation site are shown on **Figure 1**.

The allocation site lies c. 400m south of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) boundary at its closest point.

The allocation site is also c. 400m south of the Blenheim Palace Grade I Registered Park and Garden, the boundary of which is mostly contiguous with the WHS boundary, but also includes Lince Bridge and the wooded area to the southwest of Bladon.

Two Conservation Areas are located in the surrounding area; Long Hanborough (900 metres west) and Church Hanborough (500 metres south). These Conservation Areas are both currently relatively distinct rural settlements with a sense of separation. The allocation currently forms part of the wider agricultural setting, and appears in long range views from the edges of Church Hanborough Conservation Area.

The Church Hanborough Conservation Area encompasses the ancient manorial heart of the parish. It forms part of the wider rural setting of the Blenheim Palace WHS, and has historical and visual links to it. Situated on an elevated gravel terrace above the Evenlode valley, the settlement commands sweeping rural vistas across the valley floor toward Blenheim's southern parkland boundary, while the spire of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter & St Paul serves as a regional landmark with glimpsed views, overtopping Pinsley wood, from high points inside the Blenheim estate (**Figure 2**). Formally annexed to the Royal Manor of Woodstock in 1375 and later consolidated into the Duke of Marlborough's landholdings, Church Hanborough's compact linear plan and rich vernacular collection of Cotswold stone farmsteads represent the agricultural hinterland that economically sustained the estate.

The Millwood End Long Hanborough Conservation Area historically functioned as part of the wider Blenheim estate landholdings, with Millwood End forming part of the

estate's forestry and industrial operations. Its name and layout reflect a centuries-old operational network, connecting local woodcutters and agricultural labourers to Combe Mill (Blenheim's estate sawmill) via historic tracks like the Burleigh Green route and the former Comborough Bridge crossing (**Figure 3**). Characterised by informal green spaces, winding lanes, and traditional limestone cottages, Millwood End's historic buildings reflect the working-class vernacular heritage of the rural areas around Blenheim that physically maintained the estate.

There are a number of Grade II listed buildings in the vicinity of the site, with the Grade II listed Old Farmhouse (NHL 1283600) lying adjacent to the north and a cluster of 7 Grade II buildings, comprising: The George and Dragon Public House (NHL 1052999), The Bell Inn (NHL 1367931), 125 and 127 Main Road (NHL 1198977), The Manor House, Granary and Gatepier (NHL 1052961), Wall and attached Gate Pier c. 15m NW of the Manor House (NHL 1367952), Outbuilding approx. 10m NNW of the Manor House (NHL 1052962) and 91 Main Road (NHL 1053000), located c. 120 – 200m northwest of the site boundary. The Grade II listed Mill Farmhouse and attached Mill Building (NHL 1283600) lie approximately 220m east of the allocation site.

Non-designated Assets

The Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway abuts the allocation to the northeast and Witney Branch Ridgeway runs through the northern part of the site.

Abraded pottery remains of possible Roman date were found in the northeastern area of the site in 1974 when the Oxfordshire Water Board were laying mains pipes.

Pinsley Wood Deer Park and Pale abut the southern boundary of the site. Pinsley Wood is not a Registered Park and Garden but had historic connections, via Hanborough Manor, to Woodstock Palace before it became the Blenheim estate.

East of Pinsley wood is a prehistoric or Roman pit cluster and a number of other undated linear features

Potential Impacts

Development of the allocation may affect the OUV of the World Heritage Site through change to its setting. This potential impact is considered in greater detail in the WHS Considerations section.

Development of the allocation may affect the setting of the listed buildings and Conservation Areas in the surrounding area. This is discussed in more detail below.

Church Hanborough Conservation Area and associated listed buildings

The listed buildings located within the Conservation Area are located to the historic core of the settlement along Church Road, with the majority of the conservation area formed of the historic farmland field parcels which reflect the assarting of Pinsley wood to its southern boundary, the piecemeal enclosure of lands adjacent to the

settlement and later 18th century planned enclosure of the former fields and common land.

The presence of Pinsley wood abutting the northern boundary of the Conservation Area limits views of the historic core, with the exception of the church spire of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul which can be seen from high ground beyond the wood. From the easternmost field parcels within the Conservation Area adjacent to Lower Road, development at height within the south east of the allocation would be visible, and from the northeastern boundary of the allocation site, the church spire is glimpsed.

Long Hanborough Conservation Area and associated listed buildings

Millwood End Long Hanborough Conservation Area is c. 860m west of the allocation area at its nearest point, with ribbon development from the 19th and 20th centuries extending along Main Road between the Conservation Area and the cluster of listed buildings in the vicinity of the allocation site. Views out from the Conservation Area are northward towards the Blenheim estate, and there are no views of the allocation site from within the Conservation Area. Listed buildings within the Conservation Area are experienced either within their own grounds or within the context of the more recent development of Long Hanborough.

Listed buildings in the vicinity of the allocation site

There is a cluster of four Grade II listed buildings c. 150m to the northwest of the site along the southern flank of Main Road, with a further four Grade II listed buildings located in a more dispersed pattern to the road's northern flank, with the nearest of these being c. 100m from the allocation site. The buildings to the northern flank are severed from views to the south-east by the presence of existing development. Three of the four buildings to the south of Main Road, these being: The Manor House, Outbuilding and Gatepiers, form a group, with the Manor House being most proximate to the allocation site with likely visibility.

The Grade II listed Old Farmhouse is located c. 15m north of the allocation site's northern boundary, with visibility of the site and potentially historical ties to the land within the site. Development to the south of the asset would begin to sever it from its agricultural setting, noting the presence of open field parcels to the north.

The Grade II listed Mill Farmhouse is located c. 200m to the east of the allocation's eastern boundary with Lower Road

Dense development would increase the urban footprint of Hanborough which would encroach on the agricultural setting and sense of rurality of the nearby listed buildings, particularly the farmhouses. This would result in some coalescence which could affect their historic character. Development could also appear in views from the fringes of the Church Hanborough Conservation Areas which would further erode its rural setting. Development would result in a **high** risk of impact.

The HER records a number of entries in the surrounding area, including Neolithic, Roman, medieval, and post medieval features, with limited finds within the site (Figure 4). This relative scarcity of recorded assets may reflect limited archaeological investigation rather than a genuine absence of remains. As such, there is **moderate** potential for archaeological remains to be identified within the allocation.

WHS Considerations

The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Blenheim World Heritage Site (WHS) is defined in its OUV. The OUV is supported by a number of Attributes, which are detailed in the 2017 WHS Management Plan.

- **Attribute 1.** It remains the home of the same aristocratic family, the successive Dukes of Marlborough, for whom it was built.
- **Attribute 2.** It still contains the unique early 18th century architecture of the Palace and its associated assemblage of buildings together with an archive of original survey and building documentation
- **Attribute 3.** It is still set within the early 18th century grand Vanbrugh landscape overlaid by Lancelot Brown's masterpiece of English Landscape style design, internationally considered to be the 'English Versailles'.
- **Attribute 4.** The surviving special relationship between the important architectural elements and their landscape setting are an exceptional piece of design and, together are greater than the sum of their parts.
- **Attribute 5.** The UK has by far the greatest concentration of veteran trees in northern Europe and within High Park, which sits in the south-west section of Blenheim Park, is one of the finest areas of ancient oak dominated woodland in the country. It is partially descended from the ancient Wychwood Forest, a 12th century deer park and an Anglo Saxon chase.
- **Attribute 6.** The gardens and pleasure grounds which surround the Palace were partly designed by Lancelot Brown in the mid-18th century, and partly by the French landscape architect Achille Duchene at the start of the 20th century.
- **Attribute 7.** The park retains a complete, 18th century enclosing stone wall which protects its integrity, but views into and out of the site still provide key linkages between Blenheim Palace and the traditional English countryside and villages surrounding it.

The 2017 Management Plan was accompanied by a Setting Study, which considered both the contribution made to OUV by the grounds and park within the WHS boundary and the contribution of the wider landscape setting of the WHS. Its findings were that the wider setting of the WHS directly relates to OUV through:

- The connection with the River Glyme - the management of this river as it runs through the setting of the WHS directly affects the character, ecological value and water quality of Lancelot Brown's lakes within the WHS;
- The links with the much larger and ancient Wychwood Forest area;

- The value of the boundary wall and plantations which mainly hide the park from outside views, but also form important woodland elements in the wider landscape;
- The key visual linkages between Blenheim and its setting - to Bladon church in the south and from Old Woodstock to the Column of Victory in the east;
- The character of the setting as traditional English countryside, dotted with picturesque villages mainly built using a uniform palate of materials.

At present, the Attributes in the 2017 Management Plan relate almost entirely to features within the WHS boundary, with limited reference to the wider context.

Technical Advice from ICOMOS in 2024 identified that the findings of the Setting Study, in respect of the wider setting's geo-cultural values and contribution to OUV, had not been sufficiently integrated into the 2017 Management Plan and advised an update to the Attributes and expressed concerns in relation to protection measures presently in place.

The technical advice from ICOMOS (2024) identified what they considered to be important in terms of the general themes in terms of the wider landscape, as follows:

- The spatial relationships of the existing village clusters and their surrounding landscape context in establishing sense of place and local distinctiveness
- The appropriate land management and enhancement of the historic landscape features
- The effects of conversion of significant areas of agricultural land/clearance of woodland areas for other purposes

ICOMOS's principal concern relates to the impact to OUV generated by individual and cumulative development schemes within the wider countryside setting that serve to erode the spatial relationships between historic settlements and dilute the historic character of the rural and agricultural context.

Key Views

The Blenheim WHS is recognised 2017 Management Plan as having limited views of the wider landscape setting from within its boundary, with the only identified key view outward from within the WHS being the southeasterly view from the main Palace frontage out through the park gates towards Bladon (Setting Study Figure 5 – reproduced at **Figure 5**). As identified above, glimpsed views of Church Hanborough church spire are also available from within the WHS. In these views the spire is seen overtopping Pinsley wood and at a distance with the visual relationship being weaker than that of the Bladon church.

Seven exterior key viewpoints of the WHS are also identified within Figure 5 of the Setting Study, these being:

- The view northeast from Long Hanborough (View 40)

- The view east-northeast from the junction of Akeman Street/Akeman Street footpath (View 41)
- The view east-southeast from the junction of Akeman Street/B4437 (View 42)
- The view east-southeast from B4437/Woodleys Farm access (View 43)
- The view south-southwest from B4437 c. 350m east of A44 junction (View 45)
- The view southwest from Banbury Road at the junction with Samsons Lane footpath (View 44)
- The view west-northwest from Oxford Road in Woodstock (View 46)

The views map contained in the Setting Study was prepared for the 2014 Park Management Plan, and it is possible that the character of some of these viewpoints has changed in the intervening years.

The Setting Study also considers further viewpoints from the vicinity of Bladon, including Bladon Heath and Burleigh Lodge (not illustrated in Figure 5).

A further important view identified within the Setting Study not illustrated on the figure is the view southwest from Combe Lodge across the Evenlode valley with the settlements of Combe and Long Hanborough experienced beyond the intervening field parcels. This is essentially the return viewpoint to Viewpoint 40.

Views from the above listed viewpoints and others included within the Setting Study are mainly characterised by the rolling pastoral landscape, glimpsed views of development and the backdrop of the WHS boundary planting.

The exception to this is the view from within Woodstock which would seem to frame the view towards the WHS in the context of the historic urban form of the settlement.

The allocation site does not feature in any of the Key Views identified within the Management Plan, but does feature in views related to Combe Lodge and Church Hanborough

Historic Landscape Context and ownership of land within the allocation

Prior to the Norman conquest, Hanborough was held by the Saxon Lord Tonni, being held post conquest by Gibert of Ghent until taken by Henry I. The manor remained in crown ownership, firstly as a dower estate and then annexed to Woodstock Palace in 1375.

Pinsley wood (originally Pin's Wood) to the south of the allocation was also under crown control and provided for the palace at Woodstock until 1256 when it was transferred to Hanborough Manor and from 1270 became an impaled deer park owned by Queen Eleanor of Provence who held Hanborough Manor as part of her royal dower. In the 14th century Pinsley Wood ceased being used as a deer park and was instead used for coppicing and was also annexed back to Woodstock in 1375.

Pinsley Wood became was gradually integrated into the lands granted to John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough in the early 18th century. Records indicate that

the previous coppicing activities continued under the new ownership, and later became used as a game covert for pheasant and partridge shooting in the later 18th and 19th centuries.

Mentioned in 18th-century estate and parish records, Comborough Bridge was constructed as a dedicated stone crossing across the River Evenlode. It allowed estate workers, gamekeepers, tenant farmers, and foresters to move livestock, game, and timber directly between the Hanborough manorial lands and Blenheim Park without making the longer detour via Hanborough Bridge or Bladon.

Historic mapping from the 18th century of the core of the estate, including the Great Park (**Figure 6**) shows little detail of the character of the surrounding area, save for the historic core of Woodstock, roads to the periphery of the park and a limited number of field parcels.

The 1761 map of Hanborough (**Figure 7**) shows the piecemeal enclosure of the land around the settlement, noting the stretch of enclosed fields between the village and Pinsley Wood and the presence of several footpaths and tracks between the two.

Tithe mapping demonstrates that the Duke of Marlborough's land ownership extended well beyond the park boundaries, and included the hamlet of Fawler, lands to the outskirts of Charlbury, Woodstock, Hensington, Bladon and Begbroke but the records are not complete enough for a full historic analysis of all of the early 19th century landscape associated with the estate.

The allocation site area is not covered by the Tithe mapping, but review of the 1884 Ordnance Survey mapping indicates that the field parcels extant within the allocation broadly match those of the later 19th century, with some minor loss to internal boundaries. Small fragments of the piecemeal inclosure survive, but it has mostly been eroded by later planned enclosure and subsequent boundary removal.

Lidar imagery shows extant areas of ridge and furrow to the south of the Manor House, to the southeast of Long Hanborough Bridge and to the northeast of Pinsley Wood.

Potential Impacts on Attributes of OUV

Development of HAN 001 will change the open agricultural nature of the field parcels within the allocation, replacing them with built form. In the view from Combe Lodge, the elevation of the lodge means that views southward over the Evenlode valley may capture land to the south of the site in the vicinity of Pinsley wood as it is on rising ground.

The degree of change would depend on factors such as building heights – leading to the potential screening of the woodland backdrop – and density in the vicinity of the northwestern area in respect of the cluster of 17th and 18th century buildings, and to the eastern boundary in respect of the 18th century Mill. The extent of coalescence in respect of these features could have a potential impact on OUV through the further erosion of the traditional village form of Long Hanborough and erosion of the

agricultural landscape, experienced in views from Combe Lodge, which presently contribute to Attribute 7.

Loss of historic hedgerows and the consequent alteration of field parcels is also a harmful potential impact, and retention of hedgerows to inform development parcels is recommended. The reintroduction of historic footpaths across the allocation to inform pedestrian access across the site would be beneficial in terms of reinstating traditional access routes.

The development of the allocation will also be experienced on the approach to, and from within the easternmost field parcels of the Church Hanborough Conservation Area, along Lower Road and Church Road. Whilst coalescence is not considered to arise, owing to the presence of Pinsley Wood, the intensification of development in respect of the settlement will be apparent, with a consequent potential impact on OUV through the erosion of the historic village character and the loss of legibility of the historic field parcels, affecting Attribute 7.

Development on areas of extant ridge and furrow would remove the surviving medieval context relating to the settlement and its historic connection with Woodstock Palace with a potential impact on OUV, through Attribute 7, being mindful of ICOMOS' advice in respect of the erosion of the traditional countryside setting of the WHS.

Without mitigation, and in respect of the impacts outlined above, it is considered that the risk of significant impact to the OUV of the WHS, arising from the individual allocation, is **high**.

Policy Recommendations

Design-led mitigation is advised to ensure that development safeguards the setting and significance of nearby heritage assets and avoids impacts on attribute 7 of OUV. To minimise potential impacts, the following measures should be considered as part of a detailed design and assessment stage:

- Views testing should be undertaken from the eastern fringes of the Church Hanborough Conservation Area and from identified viewpoints in relation to the WHS, such as Combe Lodge and the areas identified as having views of the spire of St Peter and St Paul's church, to inform development design in terms of location of development plots, density and height.
- Building height, massing, and layout should be carefully managed across the whole site to avoid prominence in views from listed buildings, the Conservation Areas and to avoid screening the boundary to the WHS. This is particularly important in relation to development on higher ground to the south in the vicinity of Pinsley wood.
- Landscape buffers, tree screening, and soft development edges should be utilised to minimise urbanising effects on the Conservation Areas and to address WHS considerations.

- Retention of historic hedgerow boundaries and the retention of the layout of historic field parcels as much as possible, is recommended. As is the reinstatement of historic footpaths within the allocation site.
- Retention of areas of ridge and furrow is recommended and the reintroduction of historic footpath routes.
- Archaeological investigation will be required to identify the presence and significance of yet unknown archaeological remains across the allocation, starting with desk-based assessment, and likely followed by geophysical survey. Further mitigation could include avoidance and preservation in situ, further investigation, or recording depending on the significance of any remains found.

The above suggested mitigation recommendations are broadly illustrated in terms of retention of field boundaries, areas of development and landscape buffers at **Figure 8**.

Residual Risk of Harm

Following the application of suitable mitigation strategies, the risk of significant residual harm in respect of the HAN 001 allocation in isolation on the setting of listed buildings in proximity is **moderate**. In terms of the setting of the Church Hanborough Conservation Area, the risk of significant residual harm through the visibility of development on the allocation site from the eastern field parcels is considered to be **low**.

The risk of residual harm to Attribute 7 and the OUV of the WHS through coalescence and loss of agricultural field parcels is considered to be **low**.

Additional Cumulative Risk

There are no additional cumulative risks for heritage assets other than regarding development surrounding the Blenheim Palace WHS.

Regarding Blenheim Palace WHS, ICOMOS have raised concerns over harm arising to the OUV of the WHS as a consequence of the cumulative impact of some recent applications, including approved applications and sites allocated in the West Oxfordshire 2031 Local Plan. The applications which have been considered are the following, illustrated at **Figure 9**:

- 16/01364/OUT and 22/00319/NMA Land east of Woodstock, Oxford Road – allocated in 2031 Local Plan, Outline and Reserved Matters applications approved and under construction
- 21/00217/OUT Land North of Banbury Road (Outline application) – allocated in 2031 Local Plan, Outline application awaiting decision (pending 106 agreement)
- 21/00189/FUL Land East of Hill Rise (Hybrid application) – allocated in 2031 Local Plan, first phase approved permission, second phase approved outline permission

In addition, the neighbouring authority of Cherwell District Council have allocated a site to the South East of Woodstock (KID H1). The allocation site sits to the east of the southeastern expansion of Woodstock, comprising the northeastern portion of the field parcel to the south of Perdiswell Farm.

Commentary on Cumulative Schemes and Historic Landscape Character

The schemes at Land East of Woodstock and Land East of Hill Rise in West Oxfordshire district increase the settlement envelope of Woodstock along the A44 to the north and southeast. Both schemes retain what exists of the historic field patterns, boundary hedgerows and historic footpaths. To the southwest the presence of Blenheim Palace Lodge Retreat and its associated tree planting and the open field parcel bounded by the A44, Oxford Road and Shipton Road maintain the historic separation of Woodstock from Bladon. These schemes therefore demonstrate a sensitivity towards the themes identified in relation to preserving settlement distinctiveness and the avoidance of coalescence, while retaining the historic field pattern outlines.

The proposed scheme to Land North of Banbury Road in West Oxfordshire district, increases the settlement envelope of Woodstock to the east, broadly retaining the route of the historic footpath and retaining historic tree planting and some remaining fragmentary field boundaries to the centre of the site. The historic hedgerow boundary to north of the site is also retained and extended, although the line of the extension bears no resemblance to any historic feature. Again, this scheme is respectful of the themes outlined in relation to the avoidance of coalescence and the retention of historic field patterns and access.

In terms of Cherwell's proposed allocated site Land South East of Woodstock (KID H1) the draft policy supporting text indicates there would be no impact on the WHS on account of severance and separation arising from the A44. Coalescence of the proposed allocation with Woodstock is mitigated to the southwest of the site by the scheduled Roman Villa, with a landscape buffer intended to preserve the asset, and the southern boundary of the site is drawn c. 350m northeast of the A4. The field has been an open prairie type since the mid-19th century, with no mapping available of the earlier condition. In wintertime views the openness of the field parcel is evident and the presence of development would be discernible in relation to the Woodstock eastern expansion.

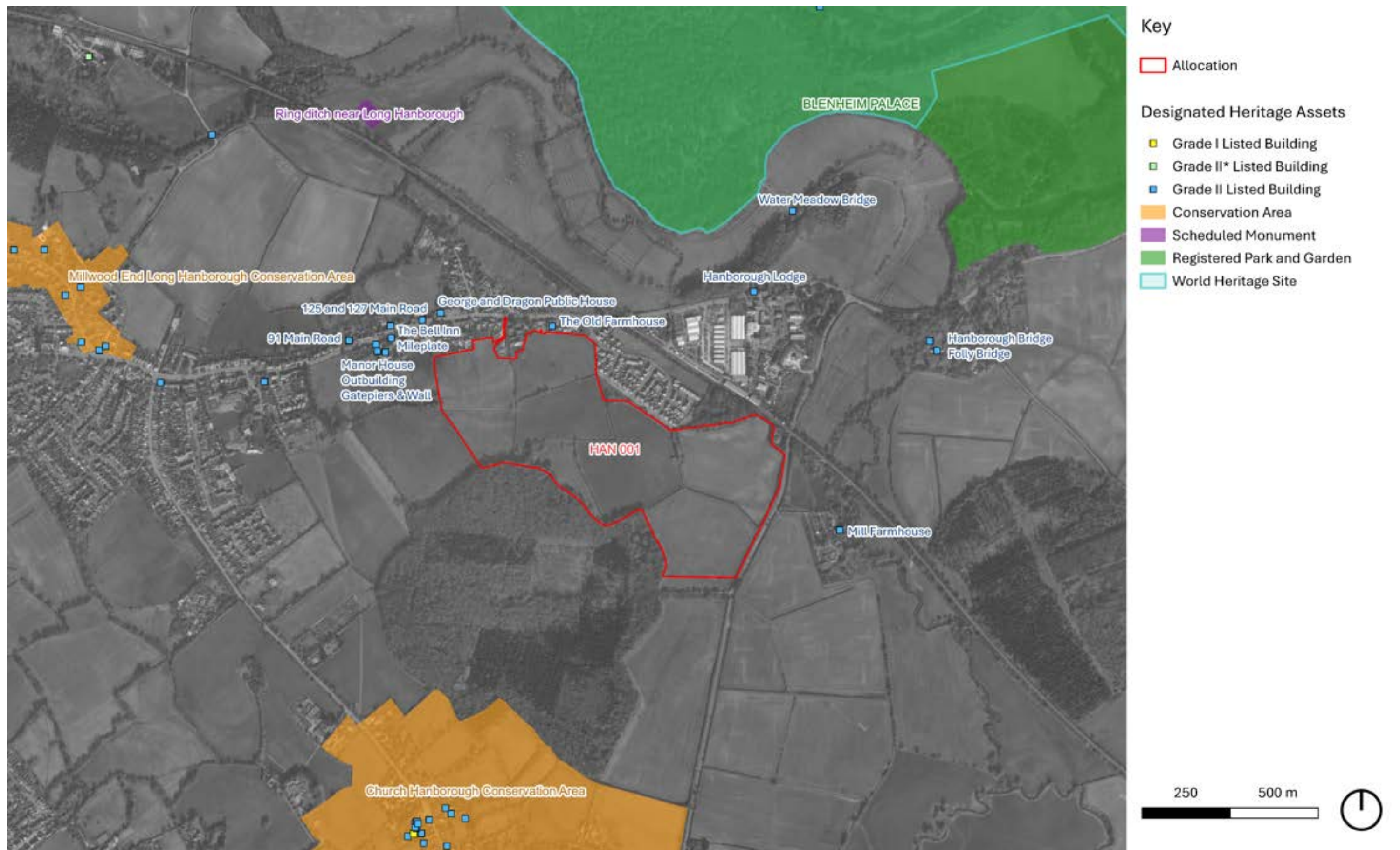
In the above context the allocation at HAN001 likewise retains a distinctive level of separation in respect of the Cherwell application.

Given the separation of HAN 001 from the allocated sites at Woodstock and to the north of Blenheim Palace WHS, its location to the south of the existing settlement at Long Hanborough and Hanborough on land that slopes downhill and the extent of the allocation not exceeding the development edge at Hanborough, it is considered that the risk of cumulative impact, with mitigation proposed for the allocation as outlined, is minimal as the proposed allocation site sits discretely behind existing development, enabling the retention of the present sense of place. The proposed

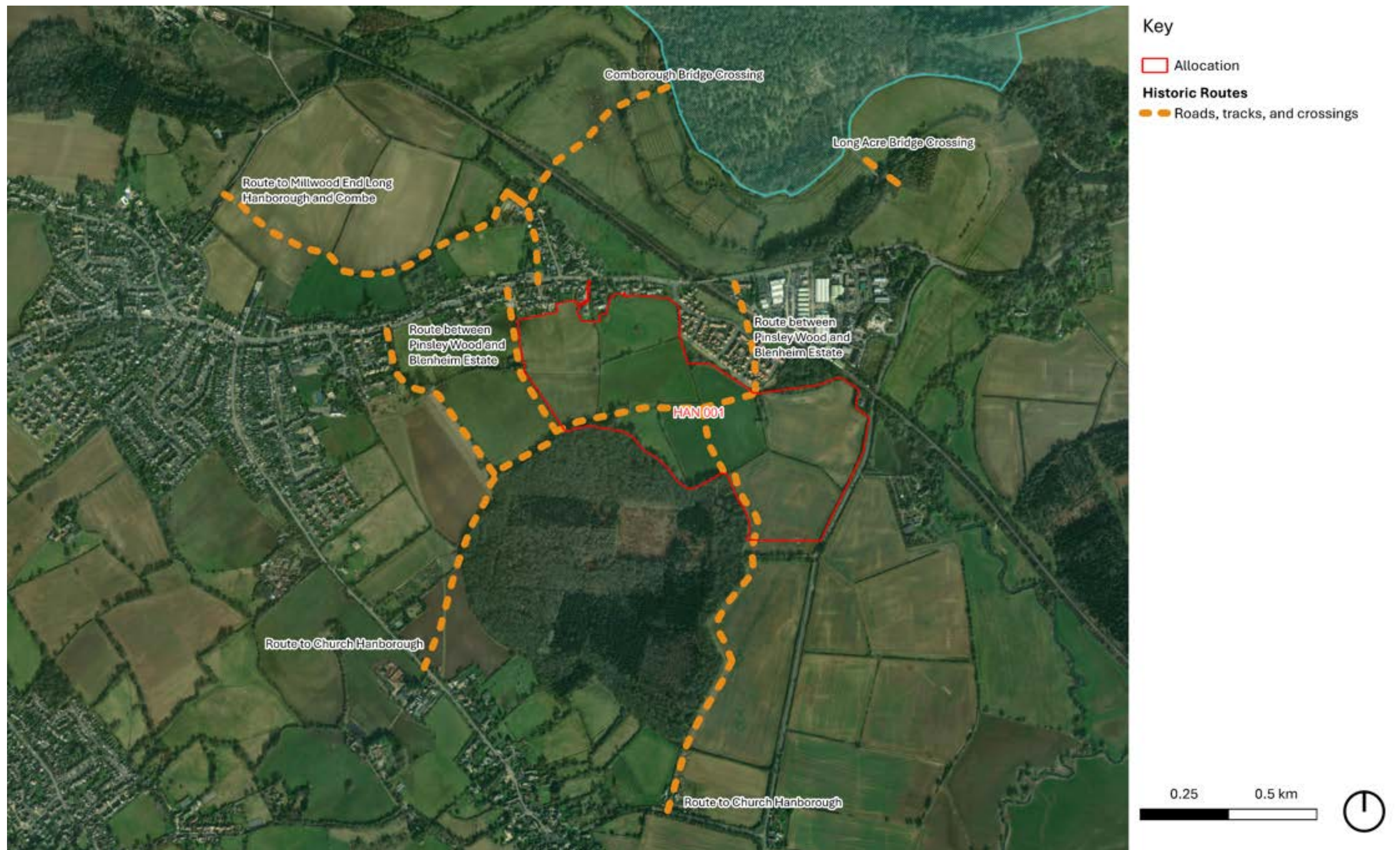
boundary does not extend beyond the existing development envelope in directions that would cause coalescence with neighbouring settlements, and the existing field boundaries and treeplanting to the south provide a robust green infrastructure framework for enhancement measures.

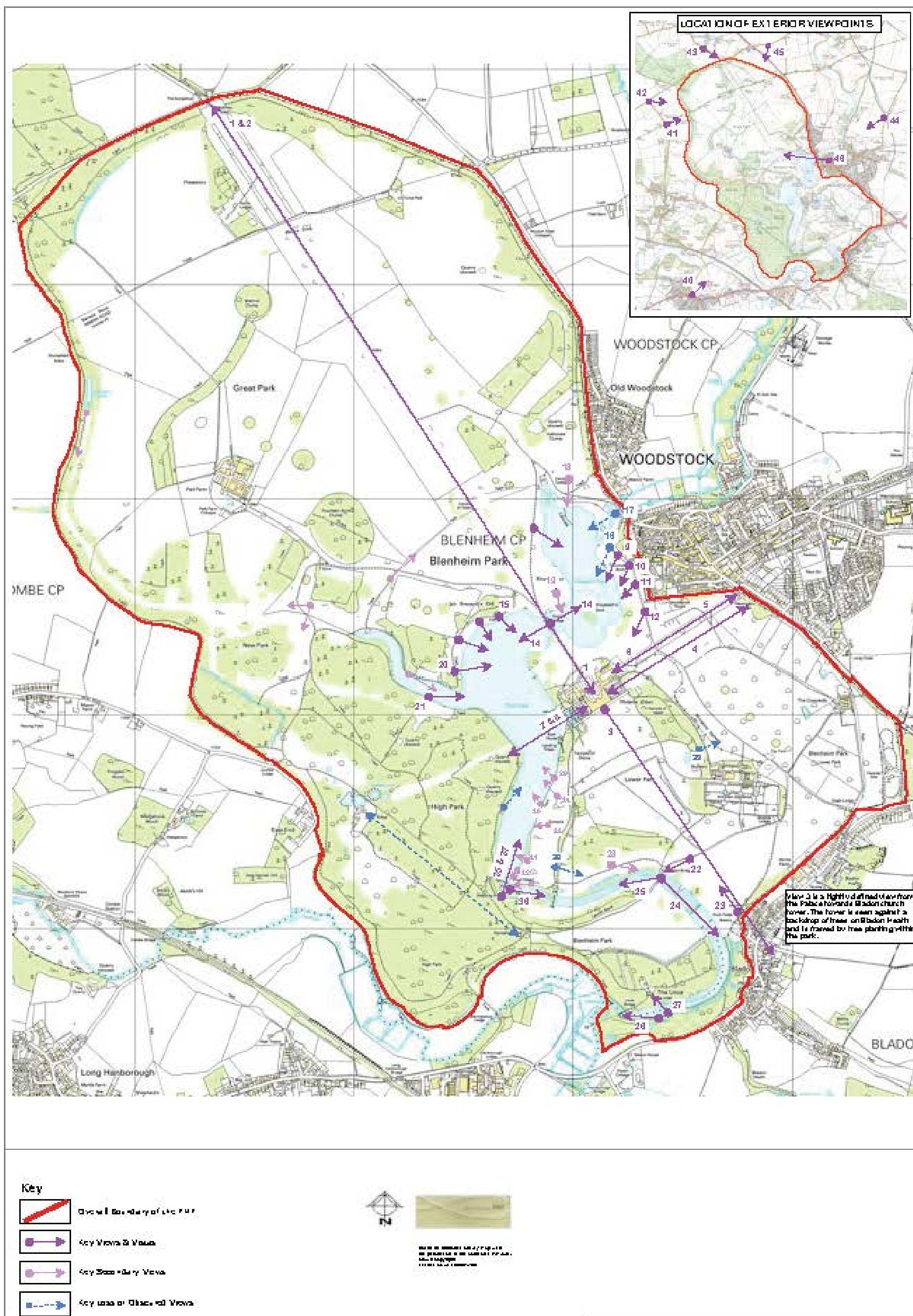
The impact on the OUV of the WHS would not be worsened when considering the other allocated sites in the vicinity.

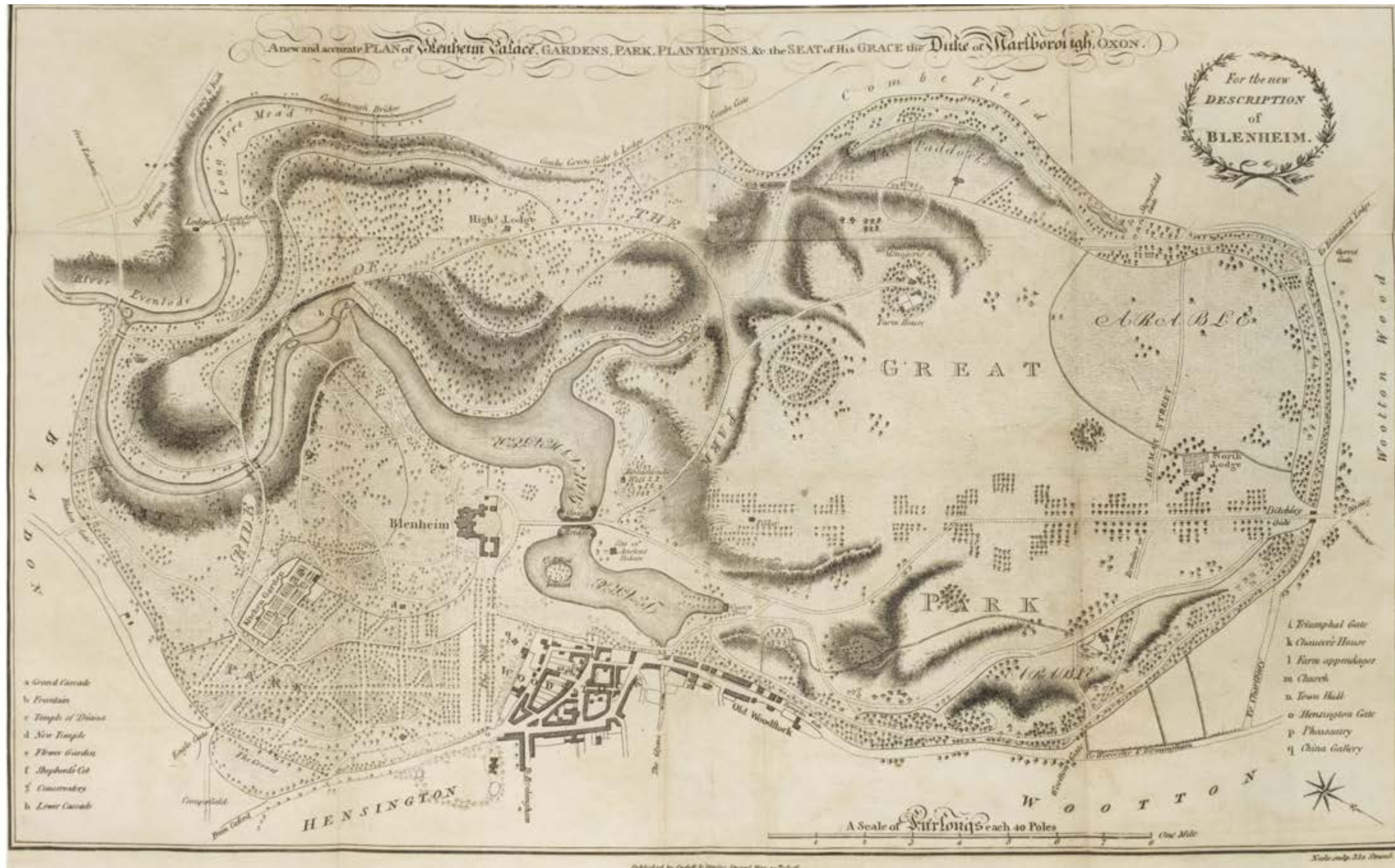
It is considered that there is **no risk of cumulative impact**.











WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 6
BLENHEIM ESTATE MAP
FROM BLENHEIM PALACE AND PARK WHS MANAGEMENT PLAN

HANBOROUGH 1761

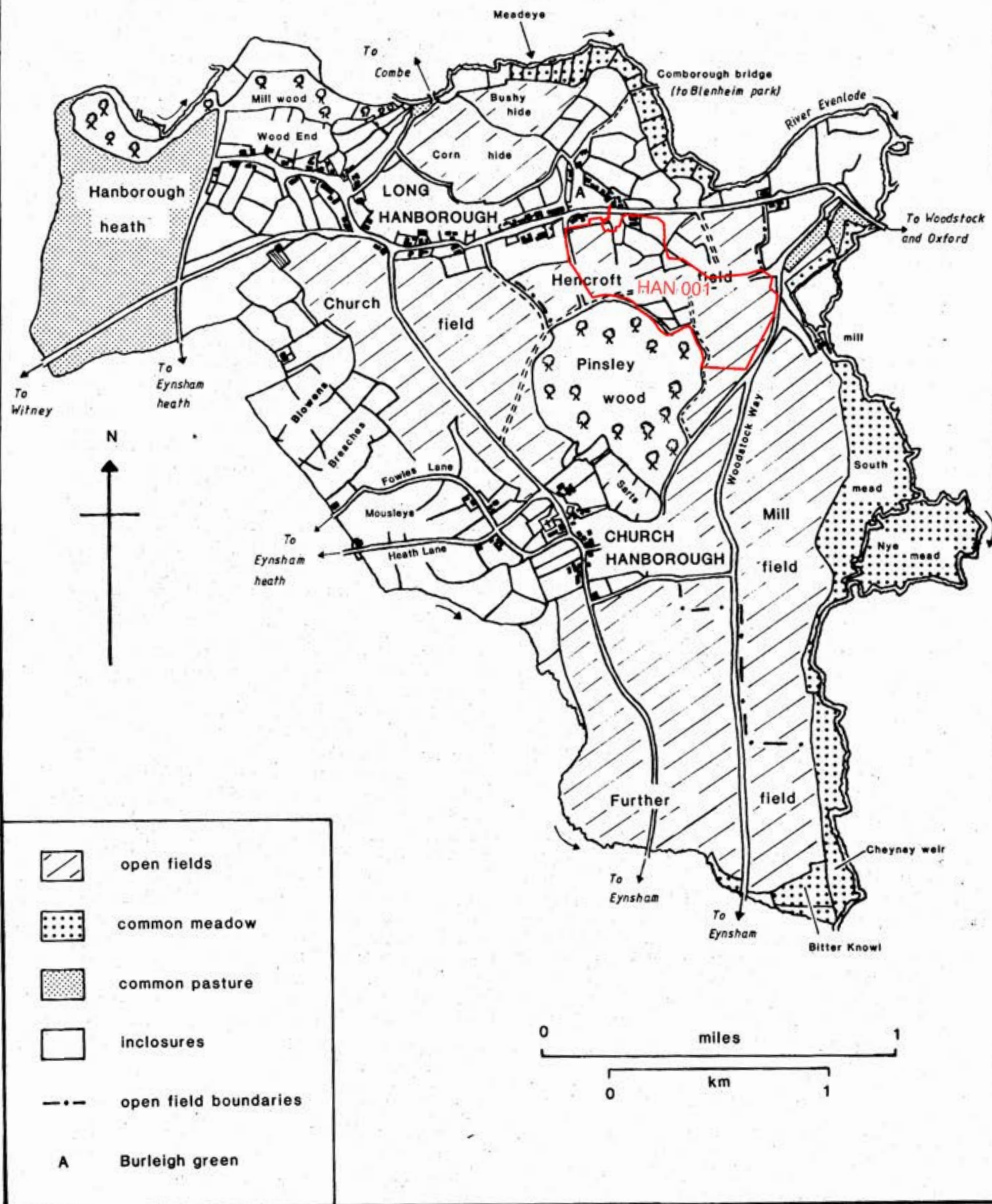


FIGURE 7
1761 MAP OF HANBOROUGH







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