

# Farmoor Character Assessment

Jennifer Cole, Nicholas Cole, Bernard Farr, Molly Farr & Fiona Newton

## ABSTRACT

This document has been created by residents of Farmoor, and supports the overarching Character Assessment for Cumnor Parish. Farmoor is one of the four wards that make up Cumnor Parish. To create the content of this document contributors used a combination of desk top research, field observations and interviews with local residents. In order to assess the area fully, we split the area into three: - Tumbledown to Farmoor Reservoir (including Filchampstead), Tumbledown to BablockHythe and thirdly, the settlement of Farmoor.

This assessment was conducted between February and September 2017 as part of the set of documents that make up the evidence base of the Cumnor Parish Neighbourhood Plan. For further information, please visit [www.cumnorneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.cumnorneighbourhoodplan.co.uk) or contact [clerk@cumnorparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@cumnorparishcouncil.org.uk)

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Appendix 1 Swinford Bridge Chronological History		Author Fred Wright; included by kind permission of Eynsham Parish Council

## Farmoor Character Assessment

### 1 : Introduction

The Farmoor Ward of Cumnor Parish lies in the Thames valley and is essentially green belt rural and agricultural land with one village, two hamlets several farms and a few scattered properties. It



It comprises the territory bounded to the east by Dean Court, to the north by the watershed at the ridge of Wytham Hill, to the west by the River Thames and its flood plain from just north of Swinford to beyond Lower Whitley, and to the south at Filchampstead (which is at the lowest level of the Farmoor Valley).

The most significant historical features are the B4044 which follows the line of the road constructed by the Earl of

Abingdon in 1811-12 to enable access to the west of Oxford by-passing Wytham Hill, the wagon track itself descending from Wytham Hill to the old Ferry (now the toll bridge), some scattered pre-C20th buildings including an old travellers' inn at Filchampstead and various farm dwellings. Even in the C19th the population of the Ward was only around 100.

Two significant grand country houses (Stroud Court and Oaken Holt) with elevated views across Farmoor Valley towards Cumnor Hill were built on the southerly slopes of Wytham Hill c.1900 and c.1890 respectively. Sir William Hunter of Oaken Holt helped establish Cumnor Parish Council and is memorialised in the Parish Church.

Apart from a small number of older style properties built at Filchampstead on 'filched land', a hamlet of cottages at Swinford, a few dwellings at Lower Whitley, and a few properties by Oaken Holt Lodge, the first significant residential development occurred at Farmoor when a local farmer speculatively placed some ex-army WW1 nissan huts along the B4044 at what was to become Farmoor Village, and which soon had a small shop/post office and petrol station/garage (now used car and tyre sales).



[Farmoor Village Stores](#)



Early Mayfield Road



Old Mayfield Road

These huts were replaced, again by speculative building, with small 1930s style bungalows and in addition to those on the B4044 a loop was made via Mayfield Road (part of which is still a private road). A small additional close of low level properties in a private cul-de-sac (Church Close) also developed along with a Village Hall, a service station/garage, a much larger and relocated shop (which now also serves an international South African community both physically and on the web), a daughter 'mission' church, St Mary's, (in an updated ex-army hut), and a very small business park.

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[St Mary's Church, Farmoor](#)

Church Close

Also, on the north side of the B4044 a small development (along the main road and running up the hill in a private road next to Stroud Court) known as Oaklands appeared with a mix of bungalow and chalet style architecture.



There was also some ribbon development at a later time comprising a small number of two storey houses for a short distance along Cumnor Road.



After the construction of the first reservoir (in 1967) the land locked between the B4044 and the reservoir was released under a revision of green belt legislation whereby trapped pockets of land became available for development. Wimpey was permitted to hugely expand Farmoor with a mid/low-density development quintessentially 1970's-style detached and semi-detached houses in Mayfield Road and Meadow Close both of which are spaciouly laid out with several small closes providing design interest and community enhancement. It included two small recreational areas for children both of which have play/activity facilities and one of which provides gated direct access to the Reservoir Countryside walk. There is a second access at the far end of Meadow Close (much favoured by dog-walkers) which is proximate to the mound created from the first

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reservoir excavation, with pleasant grass paths to the River Thames embankment, views across the reservoirs, access to Pinkhill Lock and from thence footpaths to Bablock Hythe, and to the reservoir high level walks atop the retaining walls of the reservoirs. The most recent substantial development was the creation of a small number of single storey and double storey barn-style higher value properties at Valley Farm and the conversion of an old barn to a prime property conserving its features, together with the construction of a second small business offices park in handsome barn-style two storey buildings.

In the 1920s at the east end of the Ward, and on the lower slopes of Wytham Hill, an outdoor education centre was built (Hill End Camp, which extends to 65 acres). But dominating the Ward was the arrival in Farmoor Valley in 1967 and 1976 of two extensive walled reservoirs built on Cumnor Mead to supplement the earlier elevated reservoir built on Beacon Hill with a second added there in 2007-9. Security around the reservoirs gradually relaxed and these are now a major recreational and environmental asset in respect of activities such as sailing, sail-boarding, fishing, walking (either on the top of the reservoir walls or around the four mile Countryside Trail just outside the reservoir perimeters). and bird-watching (there are now several hides between the reservoirs and the Thames). Together these facilities are of local, regional, national and international significance.

Of international significance is Wytham Wood, which is owned by the University of Oxford. It is preserved as a research wood (said to be the most studied wood in the UK with several longitudinal research projects on for example blue-tits, bats and badgers). It is in part ancient woodland and rises to a height of 164 metres, extending to 430 hectares. It is one of a series of low hills surrounding Oxford: each is characteristically capped with limestone, which sits on a layer of sandstone (Frilford Series), and is underlain by a bed of clay (Oxford Clay – Denchworth Series). The Oxford Clay to Upper Corallian sand and silt to Upper Corallian limestone and Coral Rag geological sequence gives rise to a spring line, and soils with characteristic textures (clay, sand, limestone), which in turn, influence the ecology of the site. The habitats at Wytham Woods consist predominantly of a) temperate deciduous and mixed coniferous woodland, including areas of ancient and secondary woodland with associated plantations; with b) some calcareous grassland on the top of the hill. The main tree species are oak (*Quercus robur*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), hazel (*Coryllus avellana*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), which grow in Wytham's semi-natural woodland habitat (ancient and recent), as well as plantation. The entire site is surrounded by a deer fence, which keeps the deer in the Woods and prevents them causing damage to surrounding agricultural land. As well as three species of deer, the Woods support badgers, foxes, small mammals, bats and numerous bird species. Where there are springs, small water features have arisen including a species-rich valley fen, adding to the diversity of this beautiful site. It offers magnificent views over the valley towards Cumnor Heath, Cumnor Hill, and Farmoor with outstanding views over the Farmoor Reservoirs. On the far side it affords a wonderful view of Oxford City. Access passes are available from the University. (Some data derived from <https://goo.gl/zzRqXD>). A large proportion of the upper part of the woods is an SSSI, whilst the section fronting Oxford Road west of Azad University, an area called STROUD Copse is also an SSSI which contains many veteran trees.

Farmoor Ward also provides excellent leisure facilities apart from those associated with the reservoirs (angling, sailing, specialist sailing for the disabled, sail-boarding, walking, bird-watching). Longboats can be hired from Thames cruising, glamping enjoyed alongside the historic toll-bridge, caravanning and bed'n'breakfast facilities



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rented, and camping found at Pinkhill Lock, where boats are also moored with provisions purchased from the Farmoor Shop. The Village Hall is available for hire for special occasions. There is access from the Boat Station to a footpath that arrives close to Swinford toll bridge, the Talbot Inn, and Eynsham.



## 2 : Positive Attributes/Strengths

Being predominantly green belt there is little property development envisaged or intended, and under the latest version of the VWHDC local plan the recent proposal to take the main part of Farmoor village out of the green belt has been rejected and consequently all new property development has been embargoed.

In time the Wimpey development could become a significant example of 1970's architecture perhaps worthy of listing adding further distinction to Farmoor.

Although close to Oxford the danger of Farmoor / Filchampsptead becoming merely a transient dormitory village has not occurred and they have developed a stable and increasingly confident community with their own church, shop, business parks, leisure facilities, clubs, two websites, green belt status, many small businesses run from private houses, a high quality care home, a pre-school nursery, residential facilities for a foreign university, and excellent bus services to Oxford, Eynsham, Freeland and Witney.


The potential of Farmoor Ward becoming a thriving location for rural businesses is supported by the excellent bus services and has been greatly enhanced by all properties having access to a fully installed full-fibre optic broadband network which passes every property and offers speeds up to and exceeding 5G per second – thus making Farmoor Ward one of the best connected locations in the UK (and even internationally).



Bikesafe, a local charity is carrying out a major initiative to create a path for cyclists and pedestrians on the north side of the B4044 from Botley to Eynsham and the A40. The scheme is well advanced and a planning application will be submitted early in 2018. The scheme is supported by Oxfordshire County Council which has included it in its Local Transport Plan LTP4, and has included it in a major infrastructure bid to Central Government.

To honour the Earl of Abingdon's initiative in building what later became the B4044, and to enhance the tourism profile of the ward, the possibility of renaming the B4044 as "Earl of Abingdon Road" would enhance this historical link.

### 3: Tumbledown to Farmoor Reservoir

INITIAL REACTION/GENERAL INTRODUCTION	
<p>The area from Filchampstead, across to the west at Lower Whitley Farm, ending at Farmoor Village is dominated by Farmoor Reservoir. This was built in 1967, with a second stage completed in 1976 and is the largest area of open water in Oxfordshire. The countryside walk around the reservoir is 4 miles and takes in wetland, woodland and views across open countryside. The River Thames follows the western border of the area with its floodplain spilling in to the western portions of the area.</p> <p>The overwhelming first impression is this area is of the large expanse of water, and this can be seen from all high points around the valley e.g. Tumbledown Hill, Wytham Woods, Beacon Hill. The views to and from this stretch of water are dominated by wide open, sweeping arable fields.</p>	
SPACES: GAPS BETWEEN BUILT ELEMENTS – STREETS, GARDENS, ETC.	
<p>Hints: Formal, building plots (size, building position, etc), means of enclosure, gaps, open, narrow, winding, straight, type of use, paving/surface materials, street furniture, usability, impact of traffic.</p>	
<p>The views out from the reservoir are made up of open, relatively flat agricultural fields with open views of surrounding countryside.</p> <p>Accessing the circular walk around the Reservoir from the Main Car park, there is a countryside walk to the south. This is coppiced woodland, with hawthorn, elderberry and blackthorn and leads to the small hamlet of Filchampstead, via the crossing of a small stream. The view SE towards Cumnor Village is of wide open spaces dominated by arable fields. Taking the southerly route, the path goes through Bushy Leaze Copse, which is 1.6km in length, consisting of natural woodland. Continuing around the Reservoir, the views once again open out. The only building in view is Upper Whitley Farm. The view from here is a wide open sweeping landscape of agricultural land given over to rapeseed oil, sheep, wheat and barley in the main.</p> <p>Photo 1 View from Farmoor Reservoir up towards Cumnor Village</p>  <p>Photo 2 The only building in view is Upper Whitley Farm</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b> <b>5</b></p>

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The western side of the reservoir is home to a wetland and woodland nature reserve, named Pinkhill Meadow Nature Reserve, being popular with birdwatchers and families alike. The wetland area is home to coots, reed warblers, sedge warblers, water voles and reed buntings. This is adjacent and meanders alongside the River Thames which is habitat for Grey herons, common terns, swans and banded demoiselles. Barn owls and Great Grey Shrikes are also commonly found here.

Photo 3 Managed & Wheelchair Accessible Reed Bed at Pinkhill Meadow Nature Reserve



### **BUILDINGS:**

Hints: Contribution of buildings to the space, size, scale, form (terraced, etc), frontage onto street, materials, windows, doors, condition, use, visible alterations.



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The eastern bank of the reservoir contains a large sewage treatment works and recreation facilities linked to the reservoir. These features represent the only urbanising features on the countryside within this area.

A small settlement/group of buildings is located at the south western corner of the Reservoir. It consists of Lower Whitley Farm, a small row of modern terraced cottages and a number of modern agricultural outbuildings.

Lower Whitley Farm is a substantial farmhouse now split into two dwellings. It is made of stone (Coral Rag?) with an additional storey of wooden frame and wattle & daub? The staircase within the larger dwelling was removed from Cumnor Place when it was demolished in 1810(?) and installed in this building. There are a number of stone barns and outbuildings associated with this farm. There are a number of large modern agricultural buildings situated here, mainly made of corrugated iron and modern brick. The fields surrounding these buildings are given over to scrap metal in the main. The fields further from the farm are used for sheep grazing.

Photo 4 & 5 Lower Whitley Farm



The Reservoir is principally a water treatment works, and this is the only urbanising influence in this area. The weir and treatment works do detract from the overall area, but a large level of mature tree screening works well to alleviate any negative impacts, on the Eastern boundary. On the Western boundary the Treatment Works has no green screening and negatively impacts on the overall landscape

Photo 6 Pinkhill Treatment Works – no green screening



The only other settlement in this area is Filchampstead. In the 17th century it was ordered that *'If any hogg or pigg belong- ing to the place called Filchampstead be att any time taken upon the said coomon, the owner thereof to pay one shilling for every default.'* The 17<sup>th</sup> century cottagers at Filchampstead had recently "filched" their plots from the common and roadside waste and were denied common rights. Source John Hanson The Development of Modern Farmoor

SCORE:

3

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Filchampstead is a small lane with dwellings either side, predominantly single story, detached, rendered, of modern construction with small gardens front and back. The entrance to the lane is framed by Tumbledown Cottage (perhaps began as 4 cottages, at least one door has been blocked in), made from rubble stone, brick with clay tiles. This cottage has a small plaque, placed there by Sun Alliance Insurance to show that the building had house insurance and that in times gone by the Fire Service could attend in times gone by. The number on the plaque is 1710. It is believed this relates to the policy number as opposed to a date. Policy holder details can be obtained through the London Metropolitan Archives. The small building to the left is named The Doghouse.

Photo 7 Tumbledown Cottage

Photo 8 Fire Insurance Plaque Policy Number 1710 (to be checked)



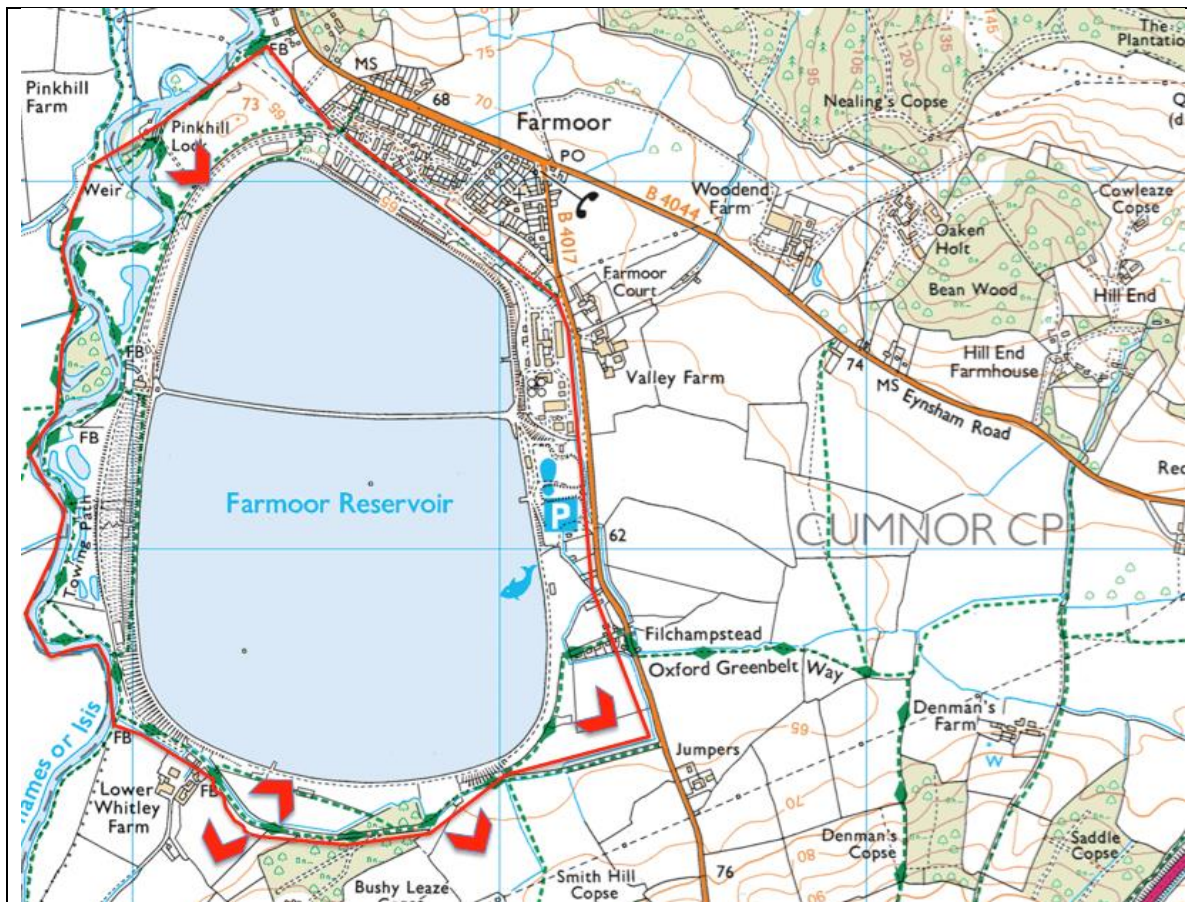
### VIEWS:

Hints: Within the space (long, short, intimate, glimpsed, channelled, wide), focal points, streetscape (how buildings and streets work together), roofscape, views out of the space (long/short distance, high level).

Figure 1 Filchampstead & Farmoor Reservoir (bounded by red line)

**SCORE:**  
**5**

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The views in this area are classic English countryside, with gently rolling arable fields, criss-crossed by hedgerows and small copses. The photo below shows the view from the SE corner of the Reservoir looking East towards Denman's Copse. The view is an open space, only slightly negatively impacted by the pylons. The depth of the valley is highlighted by the fact that the field of rapeseed cannot be seen when looking from Reservoir up towards the hill.


Photo 9 SE Corner Farmoor Reservoir looking East to Denman's Copse




Photo 10 Denman's Copse Looking NE to Farmoor Reservoir



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<b>GREENERY &amp; LANDSCAPE FEATURES:</b>		
Hints: Contribution of trees and plants (colours, shade), hard/urban, private or public, water, changing levels		
See above		<b>SCORE:</b> 3
<b>LIGHT/DARK: SHADING, TIME OF DAY/NIGHT</b>		
There are few streetlights in this area. The B4017 does not have streetlights, nor does the Reservoir, hence night-time light pollution is extremely low, with stars easy to spot throughout the year.		<b>SCORE:</b> 5
<b>NOISE &amp; SMELL: MAN MADE OR NATURAL</b>		
There are few urban noises here, with birdsong being dominant. Military planes use Farmoor Reservoir as a landmark, and turn over this water. As a consequence there is intermittent noise (average 88 decibels) which disturbs the rural and peaceful nature of the area. There is no significant odour from the Sewage works.		<b>SCORE:</b> 4
<b>SPIRIT OF PLACE:</b> Overall the sense of this area is rural, peaceful and an important habitat for a diverse range of wildlife and flora. When you take in the view from Tumbledown to Farmoor Reservoir, you get the sense that you are at “Oxford by the Sea”, particularly on a Sunday morning when the sailing boats are out. There is a sense that this is an area not well known by people other than a handful of fishermen, windsurfers & sailors and some keen birdwatchers. Footfall is low, and the car park at Farmoor is rarely more than one third full. The recent fencing and creation of reed beds at the Nature Reserve suggests a plan to encourage more people to use this facility. The Oxford GreenBelt Way criss-crosses the area, and follows the meandering banks of the Thames. It is well sign-posted but not heavily used. This may be because the pubs are not obviously accessible, nor the café at the Sailing Club well publicised.		<b>TOTAL:</b> 27

### 4: Tumbledown to Bablock Hythe

INITIAL REACTION/GENERAL AREA INTRODUCTION	
<p>The area from Tumbledown to Bablock Hythe is mainly agricultural with open vistas and gently undulating hills. Many of the Parish's 56 public footpaths are to be found here, and many make up the Oxford GreenBelt Way. The area is rich in a wide range of habitats from small copses to open grass meadows, with boundaries being predominantly marked by mature hedgerows, and as such is an important area of biodiversity.</p> <p>Tumbledown is said to have got its name from Richard Cromwell, son of Oliver Cromwell, who as Chancellor of Oxford University often came to this area to hunt. One day, he fell off his horse and the hill became known as Tumbledown Dick, the unfortunate gentleman's new nickname. The single-track road from Long Leys is in good repair but as it is a no through road, there is generally only domestic traffic to the farmhouses that lie down this stretch. Leys Road takes a direct westerly route down Long Leys Farm, where it changes to a Bridleway that goes all the way down to The Thames.</p> <p>At Bablock Hythe the river creates a natural parish boundary. A passenger and vehicle ferry used to operate at this point of the river, but is no longer in operation, hence the name of the pub, The Ferryman. The first reference to the ferry was in 1279 when John Cocus held the ferry of "Babbelak" rented from Deerhurst Priory.</p> <p>Matthew Arnold referenced the ferry in his poem, The Scholar Gypsy</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,  Returning home on summer nights, have met  Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hythe  Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet  As the slow punt swings round.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: right;">Bablock Hythe Ferry 1964</p>	
SPACES: GAPS BETWEEN BUILT ELEMENTS – STREETS, GARDENS, ETC.	
<p>Hints: Formal, building plots (size, building position, etc), means of enclosure, gaps, open, narrow, winding, straight, type of use, paving/surface materials, street furniture, usability, impact of traffic.</p>	
<p>The area from Tumbledown to Bablock Hythe is characterised by large sweeping vistas, with undulating gentle slopes of arable farmland, interspersed by small woodland copses. Open fields with hedgerows and small copses dividing the irregular fields dominate the area. The top of the brow at Denman's Lane sits at 110m above sea level and gently falls to 85m.</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b> <b>5</b></p>



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<b>BUILDINGS:</b>	
Hints: Contribution of buildings to the space, size, scale, form (terraced, etc), frontage onto street, materials, windows, doors, condition, use, visible alterations.	
<p>Buildings are incidental to this landscape and are not visually obtrusive. There are 2 large farmhouses – Long Leys Farm and Upper Whitley Farm. Neither can be seen from the top of the hill and sit in harmony with their surroundings. Long Leys (Barn) was built in 1634, with the farmhouse dating from 1808-1820. It is a stone building with brick dressings and clay tiles. It has been significantly extended from the original footprint.</p>  <p>To the North of Leys Road lies Upper Whitley Farm and is a 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. During the war, 50 German prisoners-of-war were stationed at Upper Whitley Farm.</p> 	<p><b>SCORE:</b> 5</p>
<b>VIEWS:</b>	
Hints: Within the space (long, short, intimate, glimpsed, channelled, wide), focal points, streetscape (how buildings and streets work together), roofscape, views out of the space (long/short distance, high level).	
<p>The views are extensive and positively contribute to the open, rural nature of the area. The boundaries are predominantly hedgerows or small copses. The long line of pylons cross the vista, and is the only negative attribute in the scene. Key views are annotated in the attached map with accompanying photographs.</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b> 4</p>

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Photo 1 Leys Road NE to Wytham



Photo 2 Pylons along Leys Road



Photo 3 Bablock Hythe & The Ferryman

## Farmoor Character Assessment



Photo 4 Cumnor Parish Boundary Bablock Hythe



### GREENERY & LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

Hints: Contribution of trees and plants (colours, shade), hard/urban, private or public, water, changing levels

The area is predominantly farmland and contains 5 large wooded copses, (Whitley Copse, Smith Hill Copse, Bushey Leaze Copse, Whitley Copse and Fox Covert) sloping westward towards the Thames, and to Farmoor reservoir. Despite being close to Botley and the A420 the screening effect of trees means that the area retains a very rural character. There is no intervisibility with Oxford.

The area is an important area of bio diversity.

Overhead electricity pylons are dominant features and intrude into the landscape significantly.

As you walk along the field boundary, along the public footpath, you enter a wooded copse (an extension of Whitley Copse). The Physic Well is located here. It is reputed to have healing powers for eyes. In 1956, Frank Cheeseman, the then Parish Council Chairman told this story of the Physic Well


"In the Long Leys, on the way down to Bablock Hythe is what is called "Physic" Well which in 1674 was also much frequented by scholars of Oxford in search of a pick-me-up (it was reputed to have healing powers). It was here that the great cowslip grew that had three hundred heads"

It is also recorded (check source)

"About the 8 of May, was found and gathered a cowslip in 'Philipson's leas' in the parish of Comnore, Berks, having a stalk a foot long, 2 inches and a half about in bigness; floures in number on it 258 and the circumference about them 14 inches and a half. This relation I sent to the Royall Society and is entred in their publick register. Colonel John Peacock had it and he gave it me on Holy Thursday Even (W., 27 May) when I was with him."

**SCORE:**  
**3/4**

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<b>LIGHT/DARK:</b> SHADING, TIME OF DAY/NIGHT			
Light in open ground, shady in copses. Night-time light pollution is very low and starlight is highly visible			<b>SCORE:</b> 5
<b>NOISE &amp; SMELL:</b> MAN MADE OR NATURAL			
Generally, the sound of birdsong is prevalent. Traffic noise from the road is negligible. Occasional noise from planes flying in and out of Brize Norton at approx. 60 decibels. The Physic Well is reputed to have a sulphurous odour.			<b>SCORE:</b> 4
<b>SPIRIT OF PLACE:</b> Sense of peace and serenity, with a feeling of being remote to urbanisation with wildlife and birds being present. The dominance of the overhead pylons is intrusive in this setting.			<b>TOTAL:</b> 27



### 5: The Settlement of Farmoor

INITIAL REACTION/GENERAL AREA INTRODUCTION	
<p>The first Regional Survey of Oxfordshire (1931) described the south side of Wytham Hill in which Farmoor lies as ‘the most beautiful piece of rural scenery within many miles of Oxford.’</p> <p>A quirk of topography means that the village of Farmoor does not disturb the rural scenery since the gentle undulations of the valley mean that no road approaches the village directly and the reservoir largely obscures it from Tumbledown Dick. The Oxford Green Belt Survey (2015) assessed the broad area containing the village to make a high contribution to the Green Belt statutory purpose of assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and the parcel of land to the south of the B4044 between Farmoor and Dean Court to be ‘important as a very visible, open rural landscape close to the urban edge of Botley, with strong views from surrounding higher ground.’</p>	
SPACES: GAPS BETWEEN BUILT ELEMENTS – STREETS, GARDENS, ETC.	
<p>Hints: Formal, building plots (size, building position, etc), means of enclosure, gaps, open, narrow, winding, straight, type of use, paving/surface materials, street furniture, usability, impact of traffic.</p>	
<p>A strong sense of connection to the countryside and privacy for individual properties in Farmoor village stems from the predominance of bungalows and chalets among the older property, the spaces between houses and the low density of housing, which means that every plot has sight of the countryside beyond the village. This sense of space is maintained in the 1970s’ development through a high proportion of detached properties. Outside the village, properties are set back from the roads with hedges and fences obscuring buildings that are often only truly seen straight on. The long-established small light industrial area in Farmoor and the Thames Water sites at the reservoir and Swinford Bridge are obscured from the surrounding countryside by trees and topography. Within Farmoor village, most dwellings are spaced on individual plots of land with a variety of boundary markings. The only two storey buildings on the south side of the Oxford Road are three semi-detached houses completed in 1929 before concern about ribbon development and the village shop (1931), the other houses being bungalows or chalets. Some visitors to Farmoor might find the garage opposite the shop out of character, but a garage has existed on that site since 1929 when other local villages also had their own garages (including Cumnor, Appleton and two in Botley).</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b></p> <p>4</p>
BUILDINGS:	
<p>Hints: Contribution of buildings to the space, size, scale, form (terraced, etc), frontage onto street, materials, windows, doors, condition, use, visible alterations.</p>	
<p>Most of the older buildings in Farmoor village are one or one-and-a-half storey, contributing to the rural character. Along Oxford Road, housing is largely on one side of the road only, and set well back from the road. The 1970s’ estate comprises two storey houses, but is rarely glimpsed outside the estate itself. Reflecting the organic nature of development in the village, there are a variety of styles and materials used, and many dwellings have been visibly altered since they were initially constructed. The dominant materials are brick (of various types) and wood, with pitched, tiled roofs.</p> <p>Swinford Bridge Toll House is a Grade II listed building, built for the Bridge</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b></p> <p>4</p>



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<p>Company Turnpike Trust in 1767 with tollhouse features that are largely unaltered. The other notable building along the B4044 is Oaken Holt, built in 1891 for a retiring member of the Indian Civil Service and used by the Westminster Bank (later NatWest) as its headquarters during the Second World War. Meanwhile at Pinkhill, the manual beam pound lock (1791) looks as it did in the eighteenth century when merchant barges used the river.</p> <p>St Mary's Church in Farmoor was rededicated in 1998. The original building had been dedicated in 1936, following open-air services in 1935 during a summer camp organised at Farmoor for unemployed Welsh miners. The miners also contributed to concerts on the meadows by Pinkhill Lock, close to the land set aside for residents' recreation when the reservoir was created, now much used for walking.</p> <p>Valley Farm and Swinford Valley Farm have created campsites set back from the B4044 for visitors wanting to enjoy the peace and tranquility of the rural landscape. There is also a campsite on the island at Pinkhill Lock.</p>	
<b>VIEWS:</b>	
<p>Hints: Within the space (long, short, intimate, glimpsed, channelled, wide), focal points, streetscape (how buildings and streets work together), roofscape, views out of the space (long/short distance, high level).</p>	
<p>The views and landscape are the defining quality of the ward. Whether approaching the valley from Oxford along the B4044 or from Cumnor along Cumnor Road, the valley is dominated by open farmland, bounded by hedgerows. During the day, the reservoir provides a striking focal point, but from most directions, the recreational and industrial buildings associated with it are hidden from view. At night, the lights of the village are hidden from view until close to the village.</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b></p> <p>5</p>
<b>GREENERY &amp; LANDSCAPE FEATURES:</b>	
<p>Hints: Contribution of trees and plants (colours, shade), hard/urban, private or public, water, changing levels</p>	
<p>Leaving the urban landscape of Oxford, Botley and Dean Court on the B4044, residents and visitors see an immediate and dramatic change in landscape. The road winds across the valley through Farmoor ward before coming Farmoor village, which only becomes visible at the final street sign. This is due to the winding course of the road and the building line on the Oxford Road having been pulled back in the 1930s due to concern about ribbon development. Similarly coming from Swinford Bridge, the village is not yet visible at the final street sign alerting drivers to pedestrians.</p> <p>Farmoor takes its name from the landscape, being one of several 'moor' names found along the Corallian ridge. It could originally have been 'fern moor' from Beacon Hill which still has bracken, though manorial records identified Farmer to be the 'far moore' beyond a stream from Cumnor Mead (now the site of the reservoir). The village and its approach from any direction is now dominated by private farmland bounded by hedgerows, Wytham Woods and (from certain directions) the water of the reservoir. Trees and plants in private gardens and on public land</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b></p> <p>5</p>

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<p>maintains a strong rural feel even within the village.</p> <p>The B4044 is a historic part of the landscape, having been built by the Earl of Abingdon to avoid the difficult journey over Beacon and Wytham Hills to reach Oxford from Swinford Bridge. Some of the lanes that predated the road in the valley survive as footpaths.</p>	
<b>LIGHT/DARK: SHADING, TIME OF DAY/NIGHT</b>	
<p>During the day, the village has a light and open character, created by the spacing of the buildings and the farmland beyond. At nighttime, approaching from Cumnor, the lights of Farmoor village can hardly be seen due to the reservoir. Approaching from Oxford, they can only be seen when almost upon the village itself. The natural landscape, the reservoir, limited street lighting and the nature of the buildings all contribute to the limited light pollution.</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b></p> <p>4</p>
<b>NOISE &amp; SMELL: MAN MADE OR NATURAL</b>	
<p>Birdsong can be heard clearly throughout the village at all times of day, and especially early in the morning and at weekends. The reservoir encourages a wide variety of birds, with red kite flying over from the Chilterns. The other major source of noise is the traffic along the B4044. However, in many parts of the village, hedges, trees and other buildings absorb the noise, giving most of the roads aside from the B4044 itself an extremely quiet and rural feel.</p>	<p><b>SCORE:</b></p> <p>4</p>
<p><b>SPIRIT OF PLACE:</b></p> <p>Much of the valley is farmland with few buildings and boundaries marked by hedgerows, giving the landscape a peaceful and rural character and views of open farmland in almost all directions that the village of Farmoor does not interrupt.</p>	<p>26</p>

### References

Arkell, W.J. Place-Names and Topography in the Upper Thames Country: a regional essay (1942) Lambrick, G. and Robinson, M. Iron Age and Roman riverside settlements at Farmoor, Oxfordshire (1979) Hanson, J. The development of modern Farmoor 1900-1974 (1992)

## 6: Negative Attributes/Weaknesses

The following list is drawn from an initial meeting held in September 2016, where 26 local representatives (businesses, local groups & clubs, churches) provided their feedback on what they perceived to be the issues facing the Parish. Those relating to Farmoor are listed here. There has been no assessment of these ideas (as at October 2017). Validation of this list will be done through the Cumnor Parish Big Survey.

1. Very poor mobile reception.
2. Lack of a café/restaurant/pub as a social focal point.
3. Lack of easy access between Farmoor and Cumnor, there being no public transport, the route being dangerous for both cyclists and pedestrians.
4. The B4044 from Botley to Eynsham is narrow, with sharp bends, no street lighting and heavy traffic plus a 50mph limit which makes it extremely dangerous for cyclists. It is equally dangerous for pedestrians attempting to walk to Hill End, Oaken Holt and the Valley Farm camp site on the Eynsham Road, the verge is mostly overgrown, uneven and rutted with deep drainage ditches to catch the unwary.
5. Lack of a 30mph speed limit through Farmoor on the B4044

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6. The dangerous configuration of the mini-roundabout in Farmoor
7. Poor state of Tumbledown Dick.
8. Failure to maintain free access to the reservoir for Cumnor Parish residents (which is thought to have been part of the agreement to building the reservoirs).
9. No continuous footpath between Farmoor and the main reservoir gate.
10. Financial viability of Farmoor Village Hall.
11. Parking issues at roundabout at Farmoor Village Hall. Double parking by business employees & customers causing obstruction of the highway. Cumnor Parish Council facilitated a public meeting Summer 2017 between local businesses, residents, village hall cttee and PCSO Harry Cornforth to discuss/mediate. Double yellow lines, parking at Village Hall, more parking on business premises considered – no resolution. Further meeting planned for November 2017.

### Appendix 1 : Swine-ford, ferry and bridge 1299-2008

*Notes kindly sourced by Fred W Wright, MA, DM, FRCP Resident of Eynsham since 1963 and attendee at toll bridge inquiries in 1983 & 1994*

#### Chronological History

- 1299 the ferry was recognised as belonging to the Abbott of Abingdon; from then on Eynsham Abbey paid bread (perslofs) and beer to the ferryman while the Abbott of Abingdon paid 1s/ year for use of the Eynsham river bank – Eynsham Record 4 (1987) pages 11-14).
- Following dissolution of the abbeys in 1538, the Vicar of Cumnor asserted his rights over the river and held an annual beating of the bounds to collect his dues – Eynsham Record 10 (1993) pages 34-5.
- In 1636 £800 of treasury 'ship' money was lost in crossing the river and 3 or 4 Welsh sheriffs were drowned when the ferry boat capsized.
- 1752 references to a wooden 'toll bridge' at Swinford belonging to the Goodenough family, built by Thomas Keen of Hanborough, which "did not last" – papers in the Wastie Family collection. This may however, have bridged the Limb and Chil brooks by Eynsham Wharf and the Talbot Inn.
- In 1764 John Wesley nearly drowned in crossing the ford, when his horse stumbled on the causeway then wholly submerged to a considerable depth.
- 1765 Willoughby Bertie, Earl of Abingdon acquired the ferry and land on either side of the river for approximately £10,000. In the same year "... the good Earl thought he would make the passage of (George III)'s carriage easier across the ferry. He got some logs and made it more secure ... In fact the ferry got stuck, and the Royal Coach went into the River and the King got very wet." (Neill Marten MP for Banbury, 18 March 1962)
- 1767 Swynford Bridge Act. The bridge was constructed by John Townsend and opened on 4 August 1769, with an adjacent Inn designed by Sir Robert Taylor.
- In 1774 the bridge was damaged by floods – the worst in living memory! Tolls failed to raise the predicted sums, the earl of Abingdon went bankrupt and the inn became derelict. Its base is now incorporated in the two cottages on the site.
- In 1835 tolls for pedestrians were abolished.
- On decimalisation in 1971 the charge for cars and lorries under 6 tonnes became 2p. Pedal cyclists were excused a fee (previously 1/2d) and motorcyclists 1p – usually not collected.
- In 1979 ownership of the bridge passed to Ronald Hole, a retired BBC TV producer, and his wife Joyce. The structure had been falling into disrepair, particularly from acid rain damaging the stone, and the estimate from Joslins of Long Hanborough was £273,809.
- In 1981 Mr and Mrs Michael Cox bought the bridge for £100,000. To finance the loan and to provide for repairs they increased the toll for cars to 10p but were forced to reduce it again after a High Court writ by Oxfordshire CC. Further attempts ended with an Inquiry at Witney in March 1983, when the Inspector commented *"I find it unsatisfactory that the owners are permitted to repair the bridge but are not required to do so."*
- In 1985 the bridge was placed on the market at about £275,000 and advertised by Humberts as "AN HISTORIC TOLL BRIDGE REPRESENTING A UNIQUE TAX SHELTER, FREE OF ALL CAPITAL TAXATION AND PRODUCING A SUBSTANTIAL INCOME NOT ASSESSABLE FOR ANY INCOME TAX." It was purchased by Mrs Mary G Smith of Tiddington, who also owned the toll bridge at

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Whitney on Wye with a car toll of 50p.

- A further Inquiry, requested by the new owner, was held in April 1994. At Fred Wright's suggestion, it was agreed that a toll increase of 3p should be allocated to cover repairs and OCC should monitor the funds. Repairs to the stonework etc. followed; the toll is probably still the lowest in the country.

PRE-1994 TOLL		POST-1994 TOLL	
Motor cycle, with or without sidecar	1p	Motor cycle, with or without sidecar	2p
Car, goods vehicle not exceeding 6 tonnes gross weight, minibus, trailer	2p	Car, goods vehicle not exceeding 6 tonnes gross weight, minibus, trailer	5p
Single deck bus	5p	Single deck bus	12p
Double deck bus	12p	Double deck bus	20p
Goods vehicle exceeding 6 tonnes gross weight	2p	Goods vehicle exceeding 6 tonnes gross weight	
- <i>plus for each 2 tonnes gross weight in excess of 6 tonnes</i>	2p	- <i>plus for each 2 tonnes gross weight in excess of 6 tonnes</i>	10p

- The booth for toll collectors was also erected in the 1990s, after some were run down and injured by motorists – it is now reinforced at both ends with thick steel bars! And remains a popular spot for charity collections on bank holidays.
- On 3 December 2009 the bridge was auctioned by Allsop of London and sold for £1,08m to an as yet unknown buyer. Problems may yet remain regarding the accounts for expenses, 'operating surpluses' and returns on capital made since 2003 and especially the 2p (general) and 3p (repair) accounts which should have been separate but are only shown as such in 2008–2009.