



Blackbird Leys

Morphological Analysis and Design Proposal

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Morphological Analysis



Connectivity and Permeability

The permeability of a site is the different ways of getting into it, through access points and routes.

Spatial Structure/Streets

The connectivity of the site is very **car orientated**, and after school hours traffic can build up. This is because these are the main roads that give you access to Blackbird Leys and the rest of Oxford.

It can be noted that whilst these roads are car friendly, they are **not suitable for those cycling**, with no cycle paths in the site. Furthermore, there are few safe pedestrian crossings for such a central area. As visible in Figure 4, there is a disconnected traffic island, which also acts as a central green space. Figures 1 to 3 also show how the central open space is disconnected to the shops and community centre because of the main road surrounding it.

Blackbird Leys is quite disconnected from the rest of the City. This feeling is created due to the **Oxford ring road that separates Blackbird Leys from the rest of the city.** There are 2 bus services that operate in Blackbird Leys, one of which loops around Blackbird Leys, avoiding the centre, and the other looping around Greater Leys (an area developed later than Blackbird Leys), and passing through, the central area. There is a bus stop located near the pub, but for some people, such as the elderly, this may be too far away from the shops

Many of the **main roads lead to many culs-de-sac.** These dead-end roads can not only encourage antisocial behaviour, but **reduce permeability and connectivity throughout Blackbird Leys.** All culs-de-sac surrounding and within the site can be seen in Figure 5.

Pathways in the central green space lead to the road, with no crossing. No natural flow or permeability.



Figure 1 (Above). Poor access to the green space.

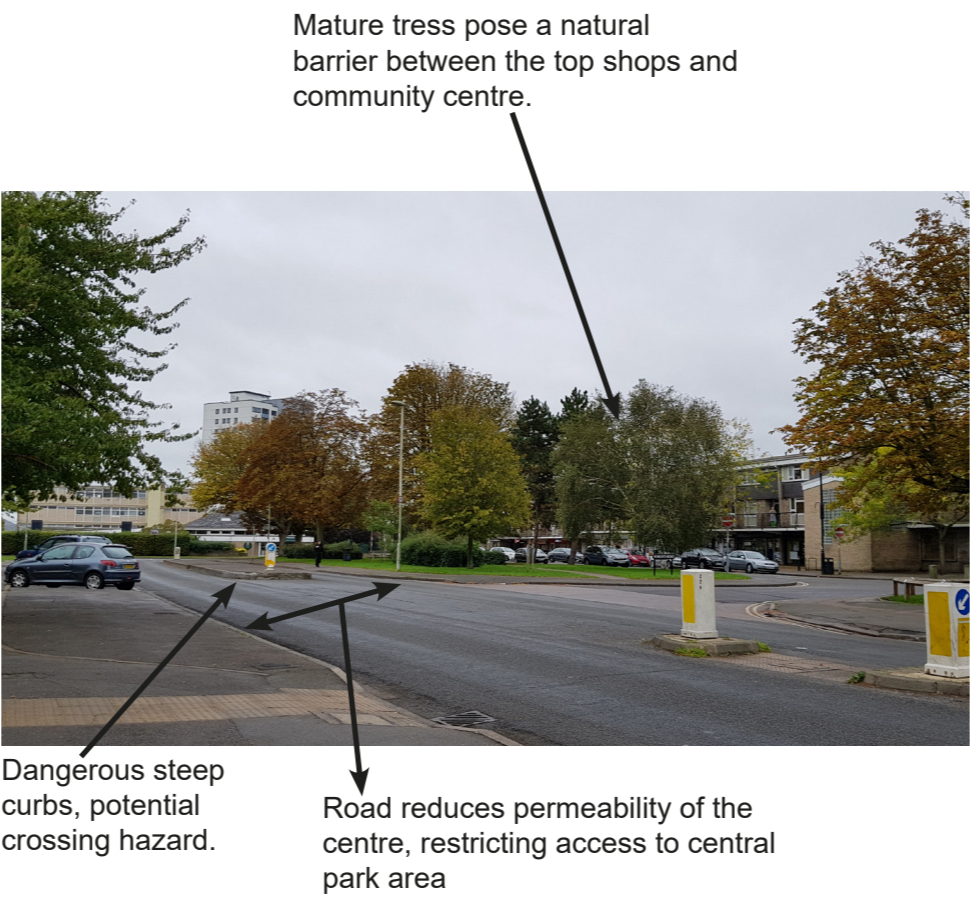


Figure 2 (Above). Permeability Issues

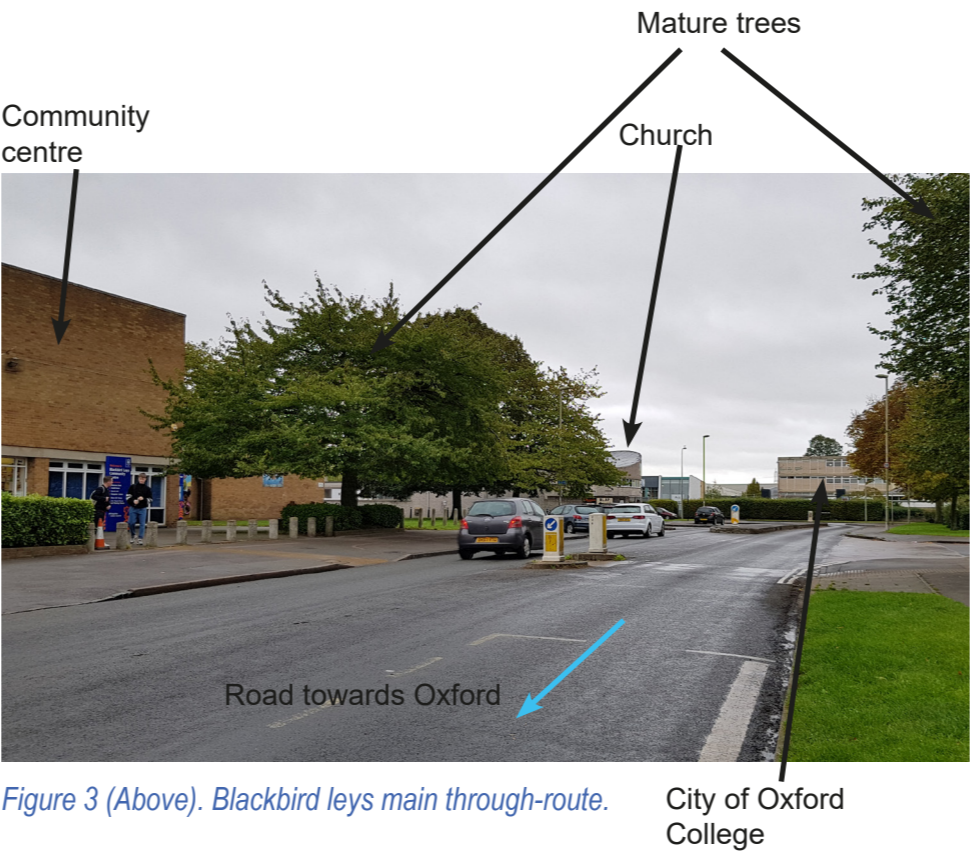


Figure 3 (Above). Blackbird leys main through-route.

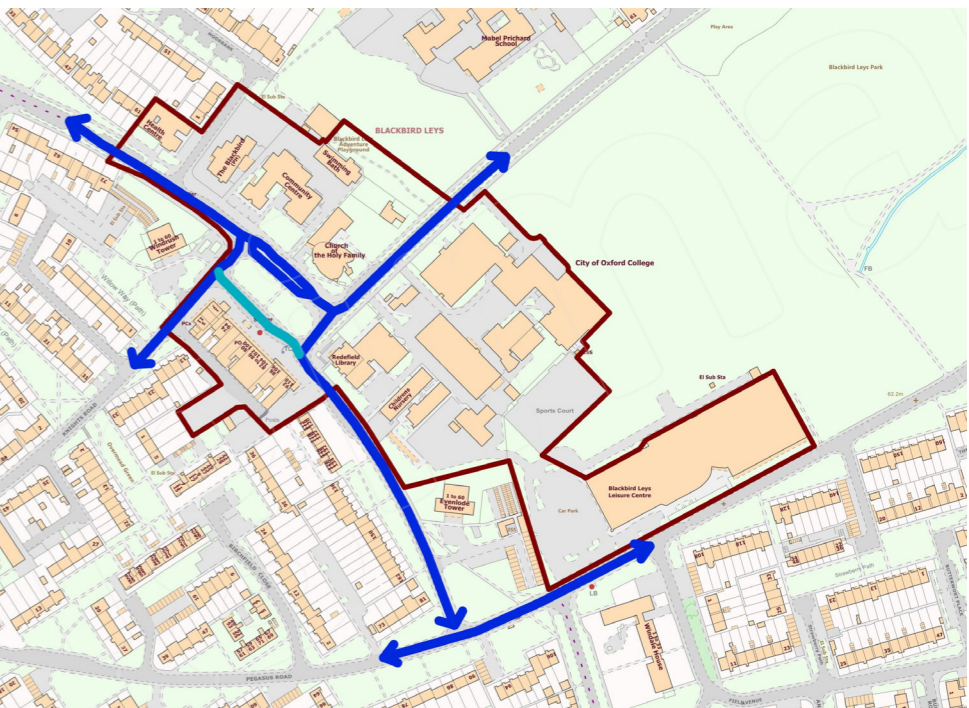


Figure 4 (Above). Map displaying the main road ways and culs-de-sac in relation to the site boundary.

- Site Boundary
 - Main Routes
 - Main Routes not being utilised
- This road is key for attracting business to the shops, but is underused because of the main roads highlighted in blue.

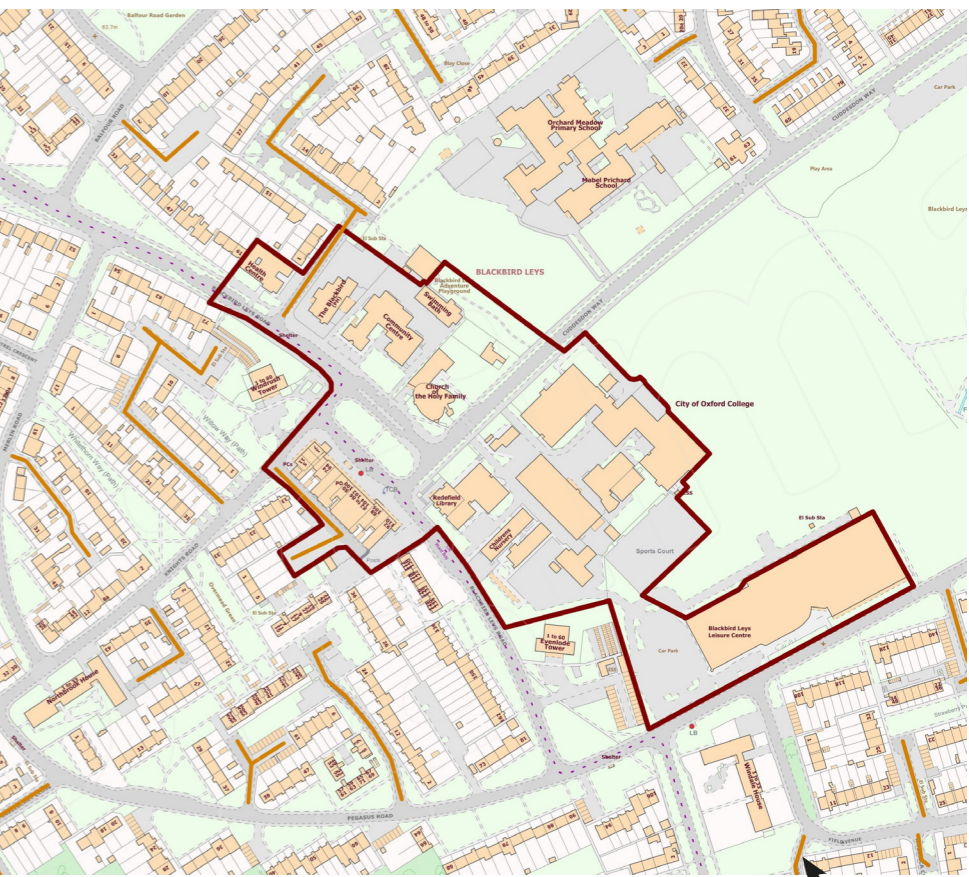


Figure 5 (Above). Map of the culs-de-sac surrounding site SP5.

- Culs-de-sac
- Culs-de-sac are a problem because they disconnect the homes and facilities from the rest of the neighbourhood. It restricts permeability, and increases traffic to main routes.

Blocks and Plots

Most **blocks** are largely formed by **culs-de-sac**, with **poorly designed and maintained inner green areas**. Whilst having greenery improves the appearance of the blocks, they are poorly overlooked, which can deter people from using it, as it can create the impression that it is an unsafe area.

The blocks have pedestrian footpaths, but with **few safe crossings**. The blocks are mainly car orientated with many plots having garage or car parking areas behind the home. Whilst this may have seemed like a good idea, these parking areas can be a magnet from crime and antisocial behaviour, as they are poorly overlooked.

Many of the blocks also have **inactive edges**. These areas can make people feel unsafe, as they are poorly overlooked. Figure 6 shows an example of this



Figure 6 (Above) Public access service yard behind the top shops, poorly overlooked.

Inactive edges, with bins, and broken garage doors, makes the area feel very unsafe.

Buildings and Open Spaces

The buildings in Blackbird Leys, are largely based in culs-de-sac, areas with no/little permeability to the neighbouring streets. Creating disconnectedness between the neighbouring houses.

Most of the buildings come with a parking space. Many of the homes were built facing green space areas, so are unsuitable for driveways. When built, the solution for this was to have separate parking areas and garages accessed through small dead-end roads. These **roads are poorly overlooked**, making the areas unwelcoming and feeling unsafe. The **street is lined with endless fencing, garages and graffiti, which is very unwelcoming and unpleasant**, whilst the frontages of the homes are completely different. An example of this is a back road near Windrush Tower, as shown in Figure 7. Figure 8 is contrasting to this, showing a nicer environment at the front on those houses, facing Windrush Tower.



Figure 7 (Above) Poorly overlooked street lined with fencing and garages.



Figure 8 (Above) The frontages of homes overlooking green spaces.

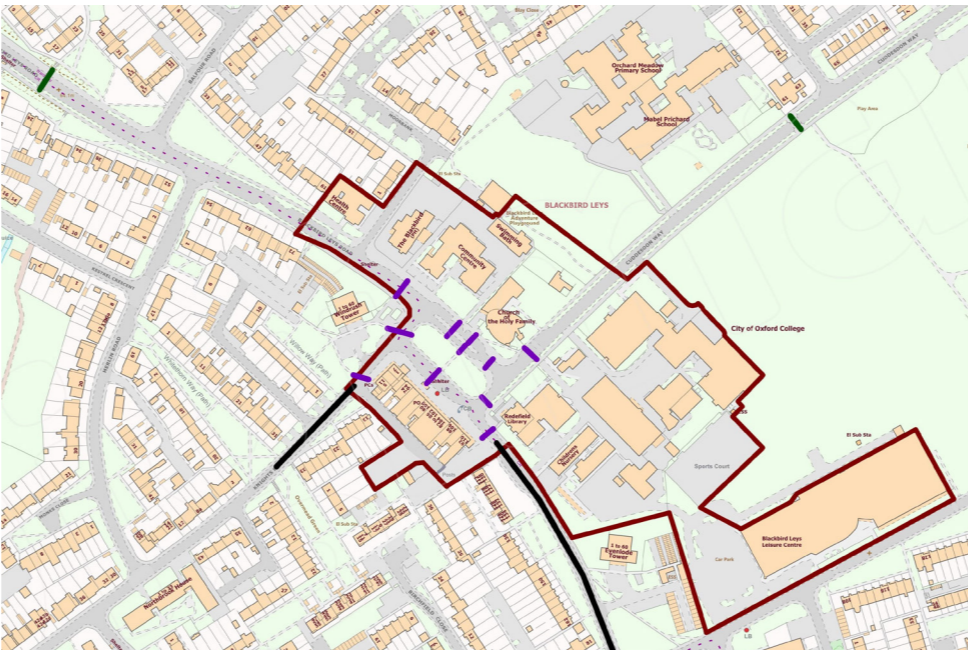


Figure 9 (Above) Map showing unsafe crossings.

- Unsafe crossings
- Safe crossing/traffic lights
- Road with no safe crossings

This map identifies that safe crossing areas are far out of the site.

Details

In Blackbird Leys, the top shops and areas around schools become very busy after school hours, with both pedestrians and vehicles. This is good, as the place comes alive with activity, but there are **few safe pedestrian crossing** for families and children in areas that they are needed. This is a significant reason why the central open space and community centre are under used. Figure 9 shows whether crossings are safe or unsafe in and around the site boundary. Figure 9a, shows the car parking outside the shops that can make it unsafe to cross the street.



Figure 9a (Above) Image displaying parking outside the shops.

Crossing can be blocked by cars parking, reducing permeability between the shops and the green space.

The curb has not been dropped, so the green space is difficult to access for those with prams, in a wheelchair or using a mobility scooter.

Variety

This is the mix of building types/uses and land uses.

Spatial Structure/Streets

There is **not a wide variety of street types**. Except from Blackbird Leys Road, which is the main entrance road into the estate, most other roads just give access to residential areas and culs-de-sac. Figure 10 has identified the main types of roads surrounding the site.

It is clear that most of the roads surrounding the site are **secondary residential roads, with many cul-de-sac streets branching off**, to give access to more homes or for access to back gardens and garages.

The map below shows this. Figures 11, 12 and 13 also display what the typical type of streets look like.

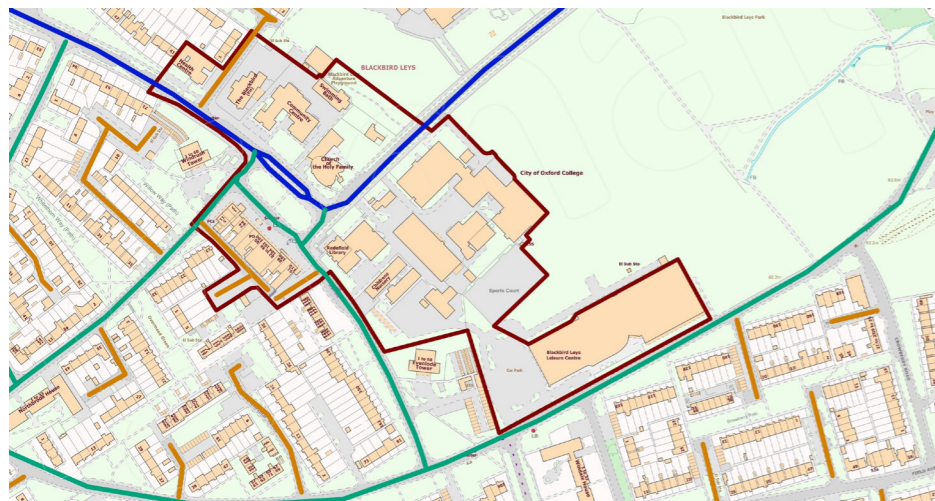


Figure 10 (Above). Map displaying the main street types.

- Blue line: Primary/Major Road
- Green line: Secondary/Residential Street
- Orange line: Cul-de-sac
- Red line: Site boundary



Figure 11 (Above). A typical secondary residential road



Figure 12 (Above). The major road outside the community centre.



Figure 13 (Above). A typical cul-de-sac outside the site boundary.

High Density flats, above the shops.



Green space (no density), between the shops and community centre.

Figure 14 (Above). Image displaying differences in densities.

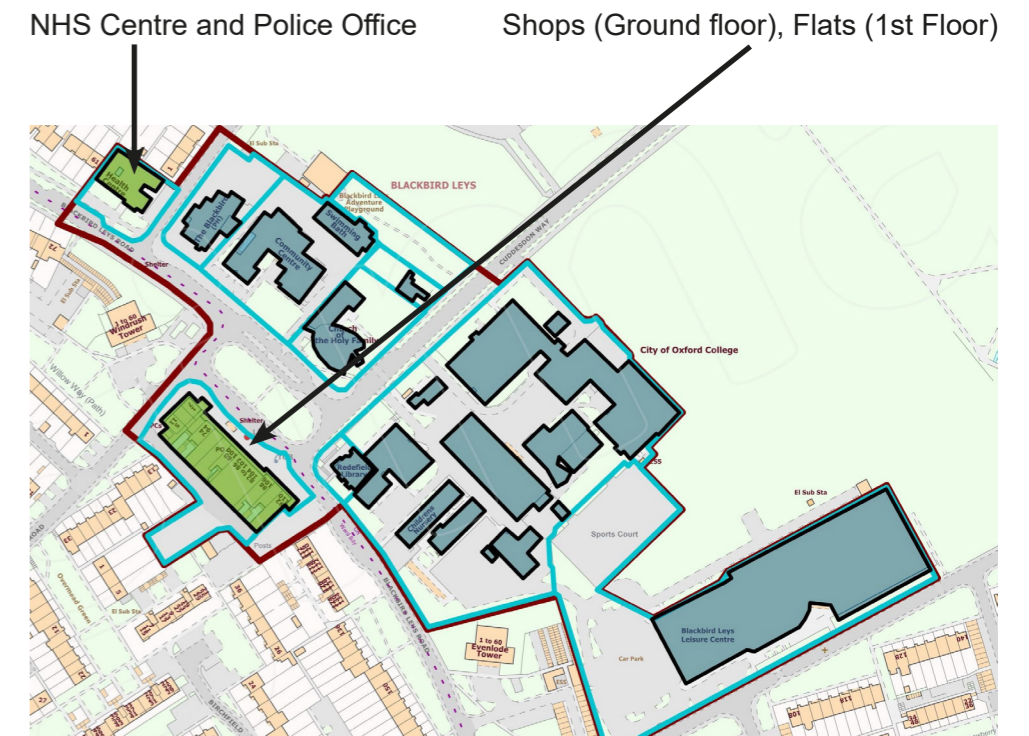


Figure 15 (Above). Map showing the blocks and plots within the site, and their uses.

- Red line: Site boundary
- Green box: Mixed-use Building
- Blue box: Single-use building
- Orange line: Block Boundary

Blocks and plots

The site has a **variety of uses, with a community centre, shops, residential accommodation and green space**. This means that the blocks have varying uses, as shown in Figure 15. The site is quite well served in terms of amenities, offering a wide variety of activities and facilities for the local residents to use, however, the main issue is that these facilities are of poor quality and/or poorly maintained.

Out of the blocks, most of the **plot density is high**, as all of the accommodation are flats. The site as a whole, the **blocks are sparsely** placed. This allows for the provision of lots of green space. However, this means that the spaces feel difficult to access due to the grass and trees limiting access and creating a natural barrier. The top shops, being the only mixed-used building in the site.

With the different plot sizes and different uses, come different densities, which is important for accommodation. Figure 14 shows the contrasting densities between an area of the site. Figure 16, on page 5 shows the accommodation densities in the flats above the parade of shops, as well as identifying the mixed-use nature of the building.

Buildings and Open Space

All of the accommodation within the site boundary are in the form of flats. The flats above the shops are a part-of the only mixed-used building in the site, and Figure 16 below identifies the mixed-uses in this building.

All of the housing has access to green space. However, it is largely very **poor quality**. With a few trees, and grass areas. There is not a large piece of usable open space, for residents to take advantage of. The open spaces have very **limited seating**, and accessible ways into them. Figure 17 shows the green spaces available within the site, and the access points to them. Supporting images (figures 18 and 19) also give a representative example of what these green spaces look like.



Residential Accommodation Shops

Figure 16 (Above). Image displaying accommodation densities and the different uses.



Green space Access routes to green space
There is a lot of green space within SP5, however, most of it is not of good quality of maintained.

Figure 17 (Above). Map displaying green open space, with access routes.



No benches or outdoor amenities, such as a playground.

Figure 18 (Above). A residential open space.



Natural Barrier to shops

Figure 19 (Above). Open space between the shops and community centre.

Details

The only shops in the site are the parade of shops shown in Figures 16. This means that most of the other buildings have a single-use, as evident in Figure 15.

The paving across the site does not benefit the area, having been largely tarmacked over. The paving, as well as the building materials used, makes the site feel very grey and bleak, as shown in Figures 20, 21 and 22.



Figure 20 (Above). Paving patchwork overtime is makes the place feel dismal.



Figure 21 (Above). Stone, concrete, brick and tarmac, creates a confusing impression. But also attracts moss.



Figure 22 (Above). Overtime, layering of tarmac outside the shops.

Tarmac for paving is not appropriate for a retail area. It is not attractive and does not benefit the dreary feeling of the site.

This presence of people in public space to create a sense of community and security.



Figure 23 (Above). Image showing the natural barrier

Open space is difficult to access because of the road. Blind corners make it unsafe to cross.

Spatial Structure/Streets

The design of Blackbird Leys creates many barriers to creating a vibrant space. The spatial structure needs to allow for a flow of people throughout the site, but **unsafe road crossings, natural barriers, and poor surveillance** does not achieve this. Evidence of this can be seen in Figures 9 and 23. Furthermore, the **central green space is difficult to access** due to roads surrounding it on all sides (Figure 23). This means that the community can be put off using it, and also prevents the flow of people between the community centre and the shops.

The **streets are poorly lit**, with few bright street lights. This as well as the streets being poorly overlooked, can make spaces feel unsafe. Figure 24, shows that the street lights will not be bright enough to make the service yard feel secure.



Figure 24 (Above). A combination of poor street lighting, bins, inactive edges and little natural surveillance, makes the service yard feel like an unsafe place.

Blocks and plots

The only spaces in the site that encourage people to visit, are the shops, and too an extent, the community centre. During daytime, there is **little activity in this area**, but after school hours, the parade of shops helps to create a space with vitality and families and students conglomerate around the area. However, the **flats above, fail to overlook the street**, as the windows are too small to have a substantial impact on the feeling of security in the space. Furthermore, come night-time, there is **little surveillance or camera's** from the shops, and poor street lighting makes the area feel unsafe, as seen in Figures 24 and 25. The situation is worsened in the service yard, where there is no activity, just bins and car parking. With this space poorly overlooked, and with little surveillance and street lighting, this area could encourage illicit activity (Figure 24).

The natural barrier also affects the feeling of security around the community centre at night-time, as this space is poorly overlooked, with many inactive edges on most walls. Figures 26 and 27 display this.



Figure 25 (Above). Identified overlooking windows are small, providing little natural surveillance.

Overhanging walkway blocks the natural surveillance. The people in the flats above cannot be seen.

Buildings and open Space

There is **little visible activity within the buildings**, due to the small windows, and the need for privacy. But for the open space, this means that there is a **lack of oversight, or security, as the building is stepped back**. This means that many of the open spaces outside residential areas lack vitality.

The community centre building has vitality when events are held, as it will encourage people to visit. It acts as a central community hub. But currently, the **outside spaces of the community centre lack vitality**, because of the poor presence of people during daytime and the limited surveillance. Figures 26 and 27 shows the poor sense of security that the inactive edges create.




◀.....▶ Inactive edge

Figure 26 and 27 (Above). The community centre's inactive edges fail to create a sense of safety.

Curtains mostly closed, makes this wall and inactive edge, as there is no presence of activity.



Figure 28 (Above). Map identifying services within the site boundary

 Buildings that provide services

Legibility

This is how a place creates a sense of orientation, so that it is easy to navigate around an area.

Spatial Structure/Streets

When visiting Blackbird Leys for the first time, it was evident that once you travel beyond the central area of the community centre and shops, the legibility of the district becomes lacklustre, as a **confusing mix of culs-de-sac creates disconnectedness**, that is easy to get lost in, thinking it could be a through-route. The **street structure creates a poor sense of legibility** in the area.

The drawing below was a quick sketch made to identify the key features of Blackbird Leys, upon first visit. This supports the above statement that when navigating into residential areas, sense of direction can be lost.

The central area of Blackbird Leys is easily navigated to, by just following Blackbird Leys road, but beyond this area, legibility is lost.

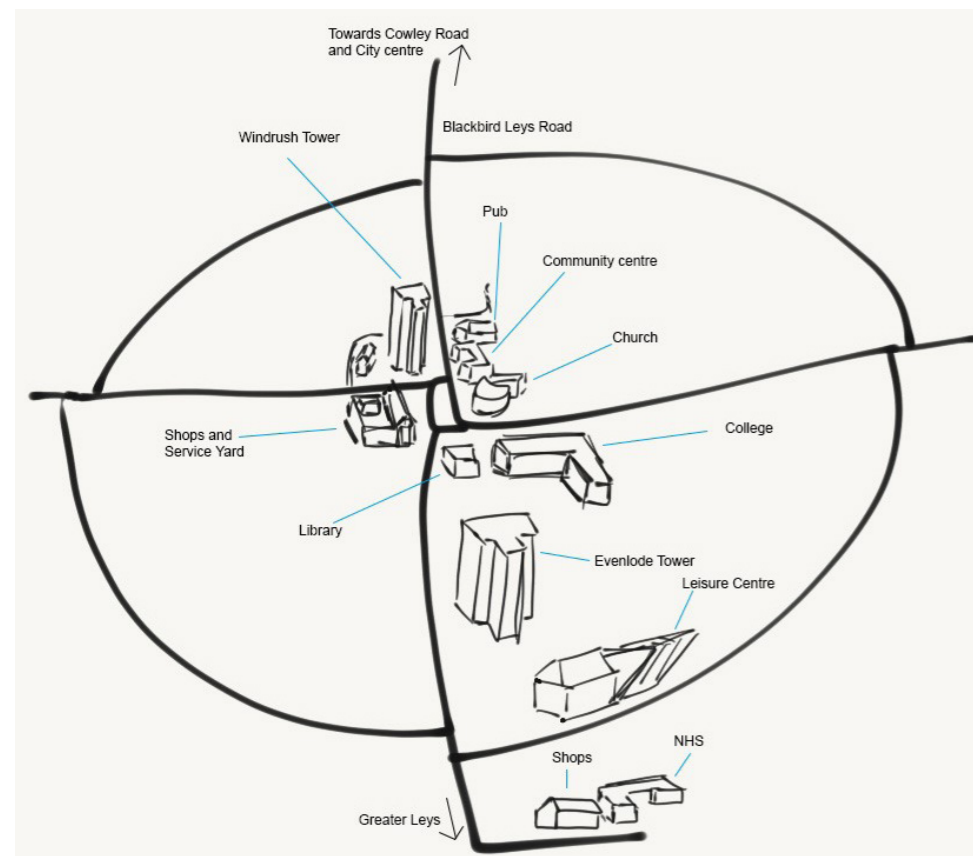


Figure 29 (Above). The below drawing shows the initial interpretation of the structure of Blackbird Leys.

Random cul-de-sac structure of Blackbird Leys, meant it was difficult to remember those streets. I could only identify the main roads, and key landmarks, most of which focus in the central area, not going beyond into residential areas. This is evident in Figure 30.

The ring-road around Blackbird Leys can make it easy to navigate around, as it connects all residential areas to Blackbird Leys Road and the central area. However, legibility is lost when coming off of these roads into the smaller residential streets and culs-de-sac.

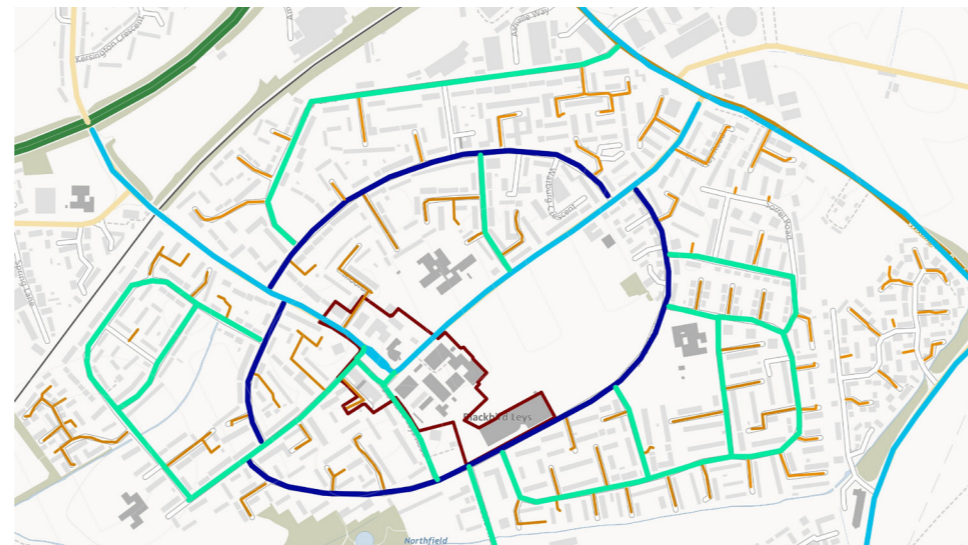


Figure 30 (Above). The map identifies the key street layouts in Blackbird Leys.

Blackbird Leys ring road
Main roads
Residential streets
Culs-de-sac

It is clear that the street structure of Blackbird Leys is largely culs-de-sac, with some larger connecting residential streets.

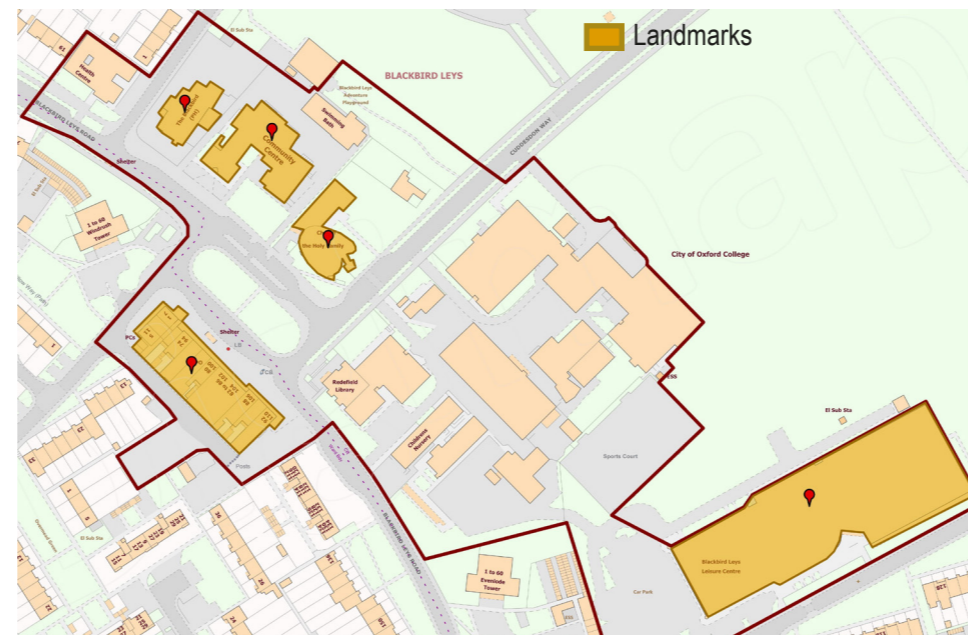


Figure 31 (Above). Map displaying the main landmarks and key buildings in SP5.



Figure 32 (Above). The grey bricks on the church create a dull feeling. The building is in a prime location, with a bold roof structure, but unidentifiable as a church, because of its design, structure and material use.



Figure 33 (Above). Lack of maintenance makes the site feel insecure.

Buildings and Open Space

This is one of the key factors in creating a sense of legibility in an area. The site SP5, has many key landmarks as identified in Figure 29. **The community centre, pub and shops are the most identifiable buildings** in this area of Blackbird Leys. **These buildings can help orientation**, but besides this central area, it is difficult to tie these buildings in with the wider area, as legibility is lost beyond SP5. Figure 31 identifies the key landmarks in SP5.

Furthermore, **some of the landmarks are unidentifiable**, for example the church. The design of it looks worlds apart from a typical church, lacking any spires, or large glass windows, refer to figures 31, 32, 33. This means that when visiting the area for the first time, it can be hard to identify uses of buildings, and without this knowledge, a sense of security will, be difficult to create.

The construction of Blackbird Leys was largely in the same time frame. A consequence of this is that **grey building materials were used, creating a very monotonous and drab feeling**. The church, shops, and housing were all constructed with similar brick. This lacking of building material variety can help identify Blackbird Leys, but not in a positive way. However, recent developments on Windrush and Evenlode Tower have added vibrancy into the building structures, adding colours to the skyline.



Figure 34 (Above). The shops look grey and monotonous, like the church.

Robustness

The adaptability of buildings for multiple uses.

Spatial Structure/Streets

As a council estate from the 1960's, Blackbird Leys has wide roads that are **very car orientated**. In its current form, they are not robust, as they provide unsafe pedestrian crossings, no cycle lanes and are strictly pro-car. However, this opens up opportunities for cycle lanes within Blackbird Leys, encouraging cycling to work and into the city, reducing cars on the road and congestion. Currently, **Blackbird Leys road becomes very busy with cars before and after school** and people are travelling to and from work and schools. By encouraging less cars on the road, the air quality will improve, and there will be less congestion. Blackbird Leys is not a large area, so children and families can be encouraged to walk to school, or cycle. Bus companies can also be encouraged to create a bus route past the schools and colleges covering the central area and residential area. This would encourage increased use of public transport within Blackbird Leys.

At the moment, there is a road, circling the central open space outside the shops and community centre. This can be adapted to a part-time road, to encourage walkability in the area during the day, creating a nice open, public space, with few barriers, increasing accessibility.



Figure 35 (Above). Blackbird Leys road was constructed as a wide main road. Wide road with wide pavements, can allow for cycle routes into Blackbird Leys.

Blocks and plots

The blocks and plots within SP5 are not robust, as most are **single-use buildings**. The parade of shops is the only mixed-use building on site, providing both residential accommodation and retail facilities. Whilst the church is also a single-use building, it has some adaptability as a hall, hosting after-school clubs for children. This provides community activities, adding vitality to the area. However, most of the buildings are single-use, lacking any means of adapting their usage for another purpose.

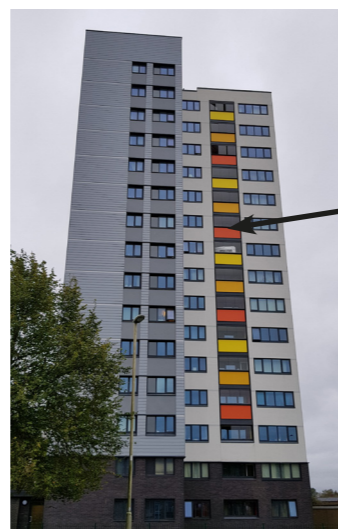


Figure 36 (Left). Renovated Windrush Tower

Bright coloured panelling adds brightness to the grey building materials used in Blackbird Leys.

Figure 37 (Right). Renovated Evenlode Tower



Buildings and Open Space

As identified, most of the buildings in site SP5 lack robustness. This is because they were initially designed for single-use. However, they have a lot of potential.

The council has previously retrofitted and **re-clad the 15-storey Windrush and Evenlode Towers** (refer to Figures 36 and 37), evidence that renovation of existing buildings can improve the feeling of an area. The **community centre is a space of great opportunity** for the area, housing a sports hall, meeting rooms and an IT suite. These spaces could be renovated that the hall can be more flexible, for example, able to host events, and also upgrading the facilities available overall. The outside would also need to be re-clad to increase the vibrancy of the street and attract people into the building. Figure 38 shows the outside of the community centre in its current state, and figure 39 shows the facilities available for hire in the community centre.

The parade of shops is another area that can be redeveloped to increase robustness. As shopping is moving further online, the shops in their current state will suffer decline. Economic vitality is important for the area, so the building will need to be re-clad and the shop-front pushed forward increasing retail capacity, but also increasing vitality through natural surveillance. Redevelopment can increase the chance of creating unique shops and cafés for Blackbird Leys that will encourage people to the area, selling goods and services not available online.

The central green space also has opportunities, for creating a more open, welcoming space, by taking out a road, to increase walkability, and creating a space that acts more as a square than a park, the space will be able to host pop-ups and support community events, increasing the robustness.

Oxford City College, pictured in Figure 40, has also recently undergone redevelopment for a new main building. This has increased the appeal on the main road, but the design is still grey and dull like the existing surrounding buildings. However, whilst a college is not very adaptable, the college does hire out its facilities, competing with the out-of-date community centre 2 blocks away.



Figure 38 (Above). Blackbird Leys Community Centre has potential to be renovated and re-clad.



Figure 39 (Left, Top Left and Above). IT, Facilities, Sports Hall and Meeting Room inside the Blackbird Leys community centre.

The facilities in the community centre look outdated and bare. There is room to increase the adaptability of these facilities.



Figure 40 (Above). Oxford City College's new building on - Way.

Richness

How an area enriches the soundscape by engaging senses and interpretations.

Blocks and Plots

Most of the blocks create a repetitive **monotonous feeling** across the site, due to the grey and architecturally unattractive building materials and designs. The **excessive use of grey and brown brick and concrete has created a space that is not inviting**. The materials used also create a sense that the place is in decline, especially when looking at the church, with the overgrown vegetation (refer to Figure 43).

The **open spaces in Blackbird Leys also do not give opportunity for events or public art**. There have been efforts to increase public art, with murals and the commissioned Glow Tree art piece. All of these artworks are located around the community centre, so many of the other blocks lack any form of artwork (refer to figure 45). The **lacking public art and events space can lead to a lack of identity** for the area.

The **paving on site also does not support the richness of the area**. The tarmacked paving visible in figures 20, 21 and 22, and below in 42, do not create a distinction between pedestrian and car areas, and supports the grey tone of the area.



Figure 41 (Above). Grey Brick and concrete Building Materials, create a bland feeling.



Building materials used creates a run-down appearance in figures 41 and 42.

Figure 42 (Left). Brick and concrete does not create a vibrant shopping street.



Figure 43 (Below). Lack of maintenance means that plants and overgrown, making the church appear derelict.



Figure 44 (Above). Tarmac on both pavements and roads does not separate these two uses. This could be a safety issue.



Figure 45 (Above). Artwork around the community centre.



Figure 46 (Left). Container left outside Windrush Tower blocks and the poorly-designed green space

Buildings and Open Space

None of the original buildings from the construction of Blackbird Leys create a rich experience. The dull building materials and lack of public art and events have been identified as issues with the richness in the area. By there is also a **lack of sensory richness**. The loudest noise heard is from passing cars and buses, and some of the shops produce some unpleasant smells that can deter people from the area. The central open space can create a positive sensory experience from the trees and planting, but the poor quality maintenance and the road noise remove the benefits of this.

The only lighting that has been used in site SP5 are street lights and small undercover lighting. **There is no lighting that has been used to create a positive experience** when dark, such as projections or up-lighting.

On the other hand, recent developments in Blackbird Leys, such as the refurbished **Windrush and Evenlode Towers have added vibrancy and colour** into the area. Figures 46, 47 and 48 display that whilst the towers have been refurbished, the gardens and entrances are still poorly looked after.

The leisure centre has also been redeveloped. The new entrance has well-maintained planting, as well as distinctive paving, with seating and cycle parking. This has created an attractive entrance, but it is not located in an area that will attract people in. Figures 49 show the benefits created by the redevelopment.



Figure 47 (Left). Green space around the tower has not been improved, but instead left as patchy-grass, that is not inviting

Figure 48 (Above). Despite the redevelopment, fly-tipping occurs on-site, lowering the positive appearance of the building.



Figure 49 (Left). Redeveloped leisure centre.

Overall Landscape

Connectivity and Permeability

The overall landscape of Blackbird Leys is **car orientated**, with lots of spaces to park, few safe crossings and no cycle lanes within Blackbird Leys. This is damaging not only for the environment, but also for creating a permeable central space. SP5 has many barriers limiting the movement of people. Figure 50 shows how the green space acts as a natural barrier between the community centre and the shops. This **natural barrier**, originally designed to deter thefts in the area, now **limits the movement of people through the area**. Figure 51 also shows how the central green space is also difficult to access in terms of accessibility, making the site even more impermeable.

The site is also **fairly disconnected by public transport**. Figure 52 shows a map identifying the bus route around Blackbird Leys. This shows that there is **no transport hub in the centre of Blackbird Leys**, which affects the accessibility of this area. Bus route 12 does travel through the site, but it does not stop in convenient places. Furthermore, when getting off the bus, it can be difficult to cross the street due to the lack of safe crossings.



Figure 50 (Above). Natural barrier between the shops and community centre.



Figure 51 (Above). The identified path shows how the design of the central green space is not safely accessible.

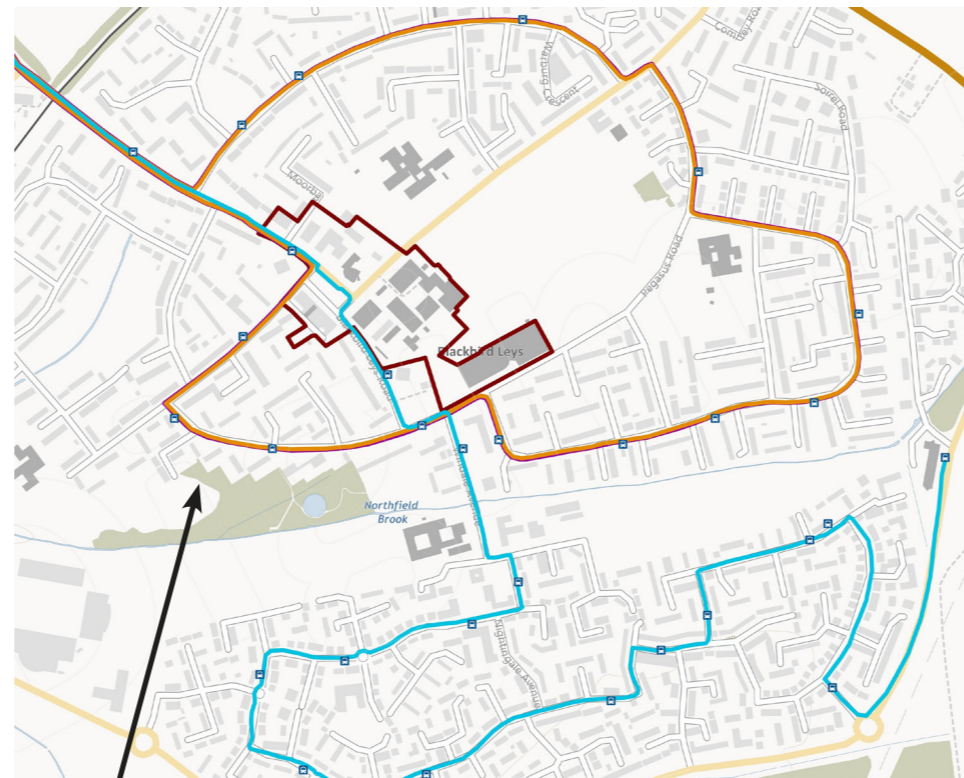


Figure 52 (Below). Map identifying bus routes around Blackbird Leys and the site.

It is clear that buses cover residential areas, but fail to connect them to the shops and community centre.

- Site boundary
- Bus Route 1
- Bus Route 5
- Bus Route 12

Variety

The site has **few shops, a run-down church, an inactive community centre, pub, library, leisure centre and poor open spaces**. This means that whilst at the moment, the facilities are in poor condition, the site has large potential to become a strong community space, by **upgrading the existing provisions**.

The only mixed-use buildings are the NHS and Police building and the parade of shops. This means that there is still scope to improve the uses of the other buildings, such as increasing the adaptability of the community centre. The central green space also has large potential as a mixed-use space, as it is currently a poorly accessible park, disrupting the permeability of the site.

Vitality

It has been addressed on page 5 that the **site lacks natural surveillance**. The **parade of shops is poorly overlooked**, due to the apartment access walkway and the small windows (refer to Figure 25 on page 6). Poor street lighting also makes the spaces feel unsafe.

During the daytime, there is little activity around the shops and community centre. However, after school hours these spaces, particularly the shops, can become a hub of activity, with families visiting the stores. As this area has an increase in activity after school hours, there is potential to increase facilities at the library and community centre to spread the activity across the site.

Legibility

As identified on Page 7, the **central area is legible**, as it is a wide, open space and because of the services the area provides. However, when moving out of the site, the **legibility is lost as the confusing mix of cul-de-sac and monotonous architecture makes the streets illegible**.

The street structure also encourages cars to travel out of the area, rather than remaining in the centre. Whilst the main-road passes through here, there is not much to slow cars down, so many cars quickly pass through the shops and community centre without stopping and slowing to see what is happening in the area. Figure 53 displays this, as well as identifying the node that the street structure creates. This is the central space that could be redeveloped to create an inviting, multi-functional space to act as the centre of the community.

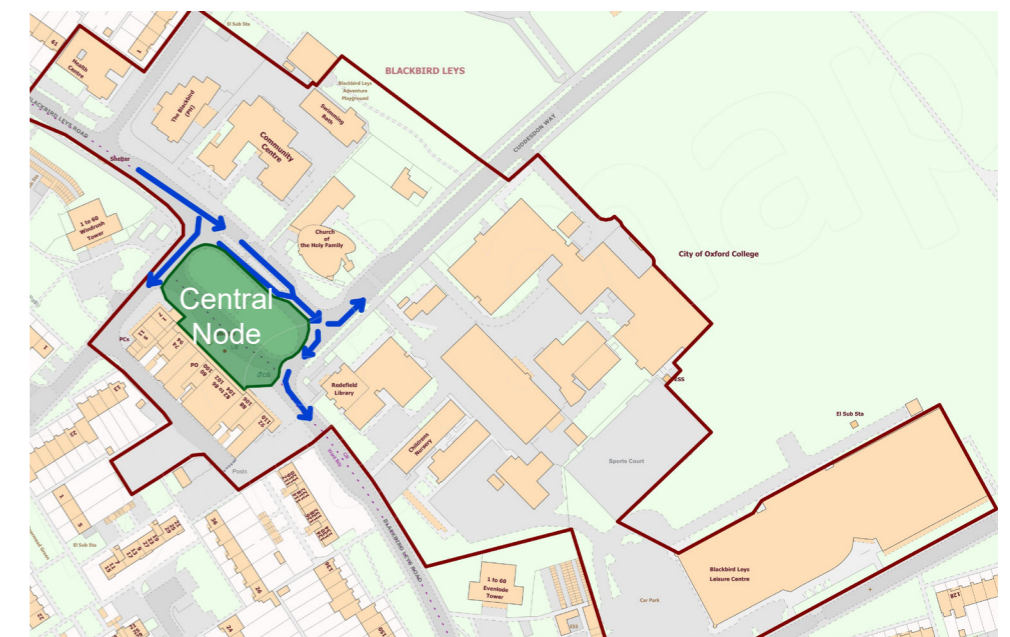


Figure 53 (Above). Map showing how the roads encourage cars to quickly pass through the area.

Robustness

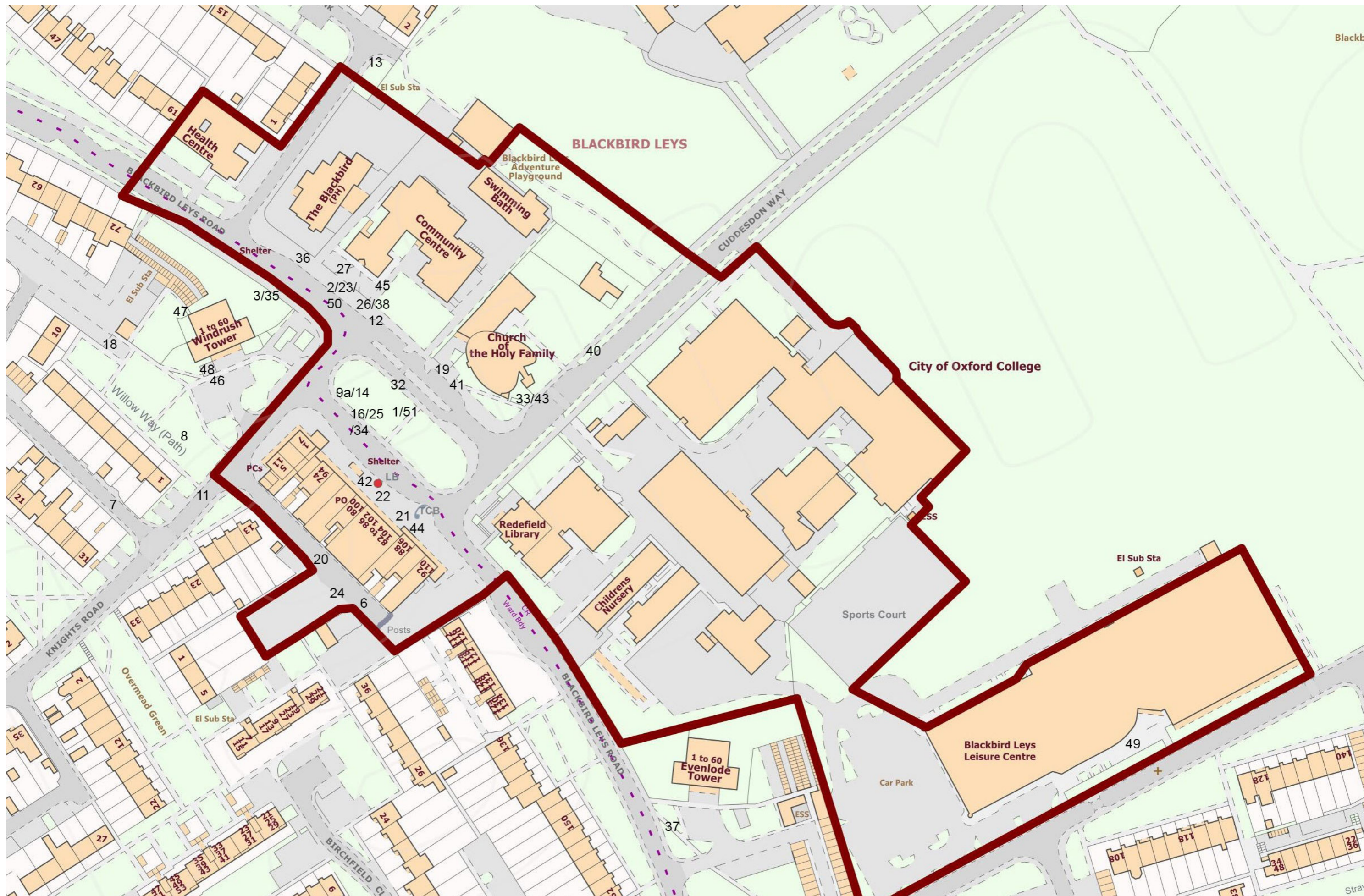
Few of the buildings in Blackbird Leys are adaptable in their current form. All of the buildings serve their purpose and do not offer any flexibility in their uses. However, as identified on page 8, all of the buildings and spaces do have potential to be adapted and renovated in future, to offer flexibility in their uses.

Richness

There is little richness on site. All of the buildings were constructed in the same time period, so similar building materials were used. This means that the grey and concrete materials have made the area colourless and bland. It has also been identified that some of the shops are producing bad smells, that can deter people from the area.

Blackbird Leys have made efforts to improve public art in the area, by **commissioning murals on the community centre and the Glow Tree statue**, shown in Figure 45. However, the natural barrier created by the central green space means that these artworks cannot be seen throughout most of the site.

Photograph Locations



S.W.O.T



Strengths

Connectivity and Permeability

Blackbird Leys has **good connectivity** to both Oxford, Greater Leys and beyond. This is due to buses being frequent, and having two bus companies offer greater frequency but also the proximity to the ring road. This increases connectivity into Oxford by car. All of the streets in the area are well connected to the district centre. This increases the permeability by foot in Blackbird Leys. The **four main roads** also connect to the district centre so it is very accessible by many means of transport. Cycle lanes are also a major benefit in the area, this results in many means of transportation.

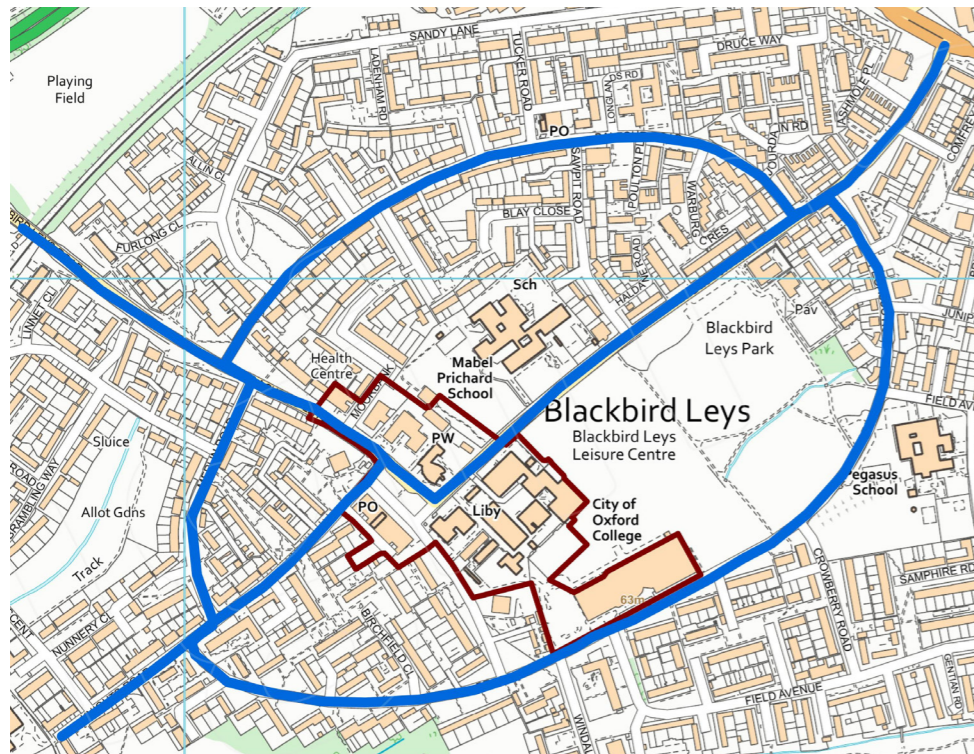


Figure 54 (Above). Map showing connectivity by car in Blackbird Leys.



Figure 55 (Above). Mixed use building with shops on the ground floor and residential on the above floor.

Variety

Blackbird Leys offers some mixed use buildings, including the top shops. There are several amenities there such as a local shop, bakery and fish and chip shop for residents and locals. Above the shops are apartments. There are also garages at the back of the shops.

Vitality

Windrush Tower and the College offer great vitality due to the amount of eyes on the street. The college has floor to ceiling windows whilst Windrush Tower has windows looking onto different streets, and at different view points due to the scale of the building.



Figure 56 (Above). Windrush Tower provides natural surveillance across site SP5.

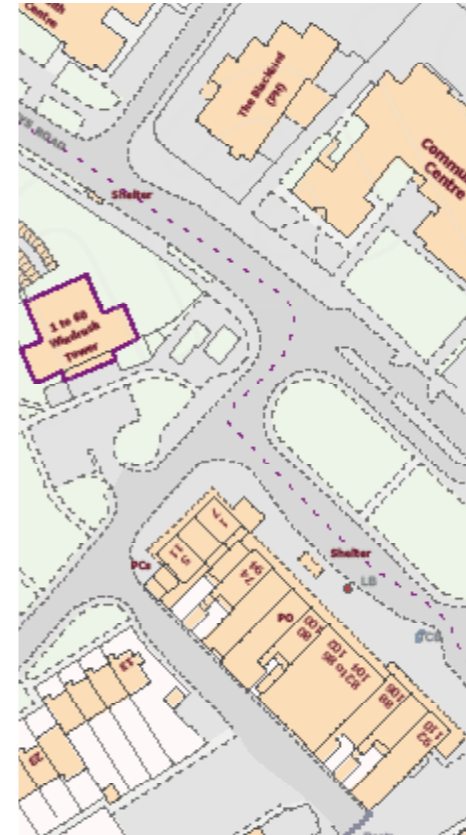


Figure 57 (Above). Windrush Tower overlooks the shops, residential areas and the Community Centre.

Legibility

Blackbird Leys has several legible features, including Windrush Tower due to its size compared to the overall landscape and the new light cladding, with the majority of buildings still showing its original 1960s design. The leisure centre in Blackbird is also legible, as well as the college, this is down to the new cladding of the exteriors.



Figure 58 (Above). New cladding on the leisure centre makes it stand out from the original buildings

Robustness

Blackbird Leys has **several buildings which could be adapted** into another use. The shops can be re-configured into different sized lettings, the library can be reconfigured to host events such as book clubs, and the **community centre could also host events** in the summer for the children and younger population of Blackbird Leys.



Figure 59 (Above). The community center has large potential to be redeveloped inside to host events.

Richness

Blackbird Leys has **limited richness**, but does have some accessible green space around the area. This includes the 'roundabout', a green space opposite the college, as well as green areas surrounding the tower blocks. If these are maintained they would become great areas to socialise.



Figure 60 (Above). The community centre, shops and library highlighted have good robustness.

Weaknesses

Connectivity and Permeability

Blackbird Leys has some issues with connectivity. There are **several high curbs and no safe crossings** such as traffic lights. This decreases pedestrians permeability to and from the district centre. Another reason why permeability is poor for pedestrians is the vast amount of cars using the four main roads. Places should be designed for people and cyclists over cars, this is not the case in Blackbird Leys. Culs-de-sac also decrease connectivity by car.



Figure 61 (Above). High curbs reduce permeability for pedestrians.

Variety

Blackbird Leys has **several amenities** which are very useful to the local residents. However, to improve the variety, there could be an **introduction of a 24 hour store, and some more retail or dining options**. The choice at the moment is very limited. **Cafés would also increase the variety** as well as becoming a social hubs.

Vitality

The **service yard behind the district centre has little to no surveillance**. There are no activities available in Blackbird Leys open 24 hours so it creates an unsafe atmosphere in the night. This **increases the amount of anti social behaviour** at night due to there being no surveillance.



Figure 62 (Above). Service yard behind the topshops offers no natural surveillance which leads to an unsafe feeling in the area.

Legibility

The **residential blocks in Blackbird Leys are not very legible** due to its monotone grey feeling. The houses were all developed in the 1950s and 1960s, and the majority are terraced so there is no individualistic design.



Figure 63 (Above). A row of terraced houses lacking individual design

Robustness

Lots of the **building plots in Blackbird Leys are designed for a specific purpose** such as the Church, College (figure 11) and Community Centre. To adapt these into something else would be rather challenging. It would be easier to design new buildings which could be adapted. For example, homes could also be designed to seen as lifetime homes for residents.



Figure 64 (Above). The college in Blackbird Leys would be difficult to adapt.



Figure 65 (Above). Highlighted single use buildings within Blackbird Leys.

Richness

Richness in Blackbird Leys is lacking. There is an area of green space opposite the college is unused due to it being located next to a house. This discourages people to use it as it could be confused between public and private space. It is also rather overlooked which is also off putting. This is also the case outside of the Church, there is a large amount of overgrown vegetation. The public space 'roundabout' found in Figure 63 is also very overlooked as well as being exposed to the loud sounds of car traffic as it is located between two of the major roads in Blackbird Leys.



Figure 66 (Above). Overgrown plants outside of the church in Blackbird Leys decreases the richness of the overall area.

Opportunities

Connectivity and Permeability

There are several options in Blackbird Leys to improve the area, including connecting different areas of the district centre to another. The **church and community centre could become one area of attraction, with linking paths** leading to and from them.



Figure 67 (Above). Connection of areas, creating a new and larger public space incorporating the community Centre, public space and the Church.



Figure 68 (Above). Aylesbury Public Square - windows offer eyes on the street. Source: (AYLESBURY NOW, 2019)

Variety

There could be an **increase in the variety of shops and other outlets** offered by the development, including a 24 hour store, gym and eateries.

Shops have an opportunity to increase their size, as well as increasing natural surveillance. Increasing retail provision.



Figure 69 (Above). Shop fronts could be extended to give a more uniform look to the buildings.

Vitality

Blackbird Leys has **little vitality at the moment**. However, with a new design, this can be changed. A **central public square** (Figure 68) would **create great visibility of the overall area**, whilst moving the library into the community centre allows the development of more homes to increase vitality of Blackbird Leys.

Legibility

Blackbird Leys could become extremely legible through different means of design. **Residential blocks could be retrofitted to have individualistic designs**, such as brick or timber cladding. The central green space also provides the opportunity to create a large public square, with new retail facilities. By closing the section of Blackbird Leys road outside the shops, there is a lot more space freed up for redevelopment. By creating this square, then the permeability between the district centre and community centre will increase.



Figure 70 (Above). Aura, Cambridge. A development where lighter brick is used to give off a more pleasant feeling and give an area an uplift. Source: (Tobermore, 2019)

Legibility can further be enhanced by the **three distinctive areas**. The new community centre development seen in Figure 70, the secondary retail area as discussed, and the new public square

Robustness

Blackbird Leys can be adapted. Increasing the amount of mixed use buildings can be done by moving the library into the community centre by extending the building. In the space left behind, a secondary set of retail storeys can be placed with either residential or office lettings above.

Rose Hill community centre allows people to hire rooms, as well as hosting events such as dance and drama. This could be implemented into the new development of the Blackbird Leys community centre.



Figure 70 (Above). The plan for the Rose Hill Community Centre. The Centre offers a variety of events. Source: (BBC, 2019).



Figure 71 (Above). The revitalised Walton Court Centre in Aylesbury. Changing the negative perceptions of the area. Source: (LABM, 2018).

Threats

There are several threats to Blackbird Leys which could have a major impact on the redevelopment.

Lack of Funding

There is a general **lack of funding from the council** which could lead to a further decline in the community centre and the surrounding district centre.

The **impact of Brexit** could make this even worse but these are unclear as of now.

Stigma

Blackbird Leys has a **poor reputation** due to the riots in 1991. Whatever the new development brings, being aesthetics or amenities, the **stigma will be hard to overcome**. To overcome the stigma, advertisement from the council would be beneficial as they could portray Blackbird Leys in a different light. By looking at the case study for Walton Court in Aylesbury, **negative perceptions of an area** can be changed. The mixed-use community hub, with 58 properties with previously associated with antisocial behaviour and illegal activity. The stairwell and walkways also encouraged this behaviour. The design extended the shop fronts to create a more vibrant and active edge, and make the central court yard, private, for residents only. Refurbishment of properties has increased their energy efficiency, the the improved community centre offers flexible space for locals.



Figure 72 (Above). Blackbird Leys riots, 1991. Source: (Alamy Stock Photo, 2019)



Figure 73 (Above). Before and After of Walton Court development. Source: (ECD Architects, 2019).



Figure 74 (Above). Bird's eye view of the redeveloped court. Source: (ECD Architects, 2019).



Figure 75 (Above). Private courtyard for the residents. Source: (LABM, 2018).

Increased traffic

Car traffic in the area would be increased due to the closure of the road section near the shops, as well as an inevitable increase of visitors to the area for new amenities such as the 24 hour shops and pleasant green area. However, priorities should lie with pedestrians and cyclists. **Bus services should also be encouraged**, with a **new bus stop** introduced to increase connectivity.

Problems with construction

Another issue is with construction. With all of the new developments occurring in the area, disturbances within community could put a strain on community spirit. The project could also be delayed with school and college hours causing problems with parents picking up their children at the end of the day.

Socio-economic Analysis



The 2011 Area classification for Output Areas (2011, OAC) allowed for output areas across England, Wales, Scotland and small areas in Northern Ireland to be organised into a hierarchical structure of three tiers; super-groups, groups, and subgroups. A total of 76 subgroups were derived, however due to the lack of rural areas within the inner-Oxford area, and other factors that may rule out certain sub-groups, only 36 are applicable to this project. These 36 characteristics of the area have been narrowed down to a small number that may help give an insight to possible socio-economic weaknesses that could be improved through the development of the area.

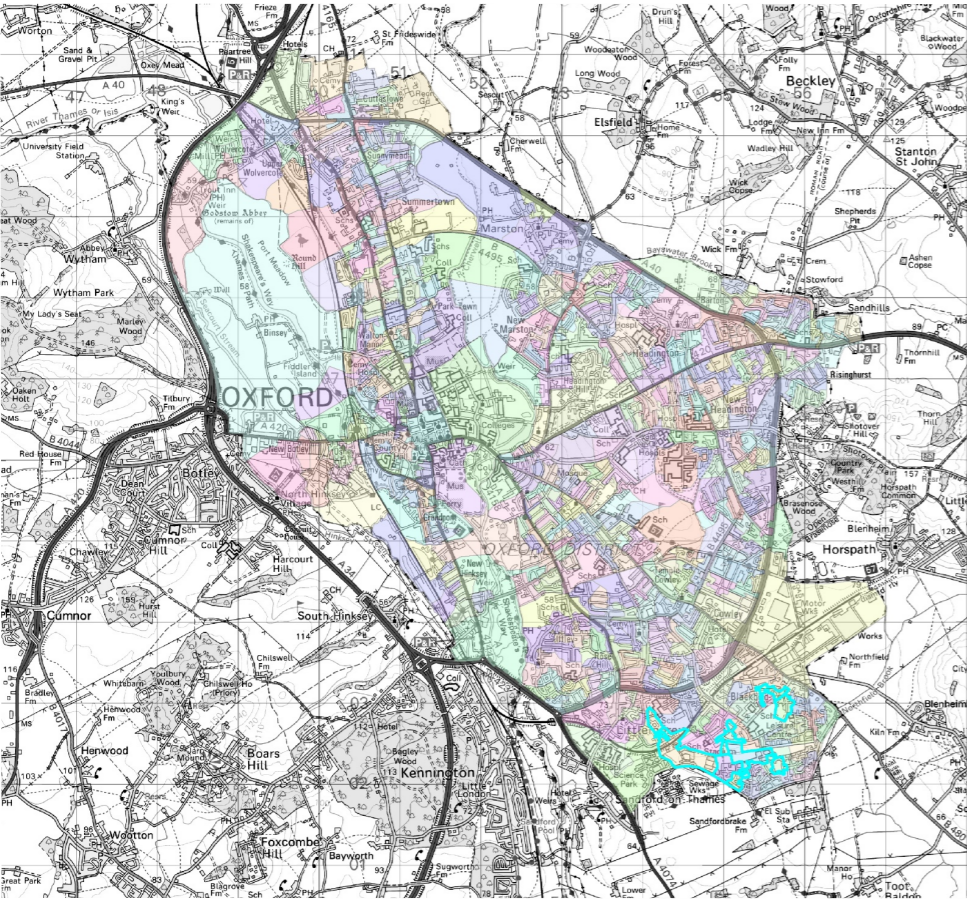


Figure 76

Commuters with Young Families (4a3)

The population within this subgroup are likely to **live in flats** with overcrowded conditions, while commuting fair distances to travel to work mid week. Small areas in Greater leys and along Blackbird Leys Road have this characteristic as seen in Figure 76.

This calls into question the need for daily child care. There is already a level of care provided by the current nursery at Blackbird Leys, however additional services could be provided from the community centre if developed.

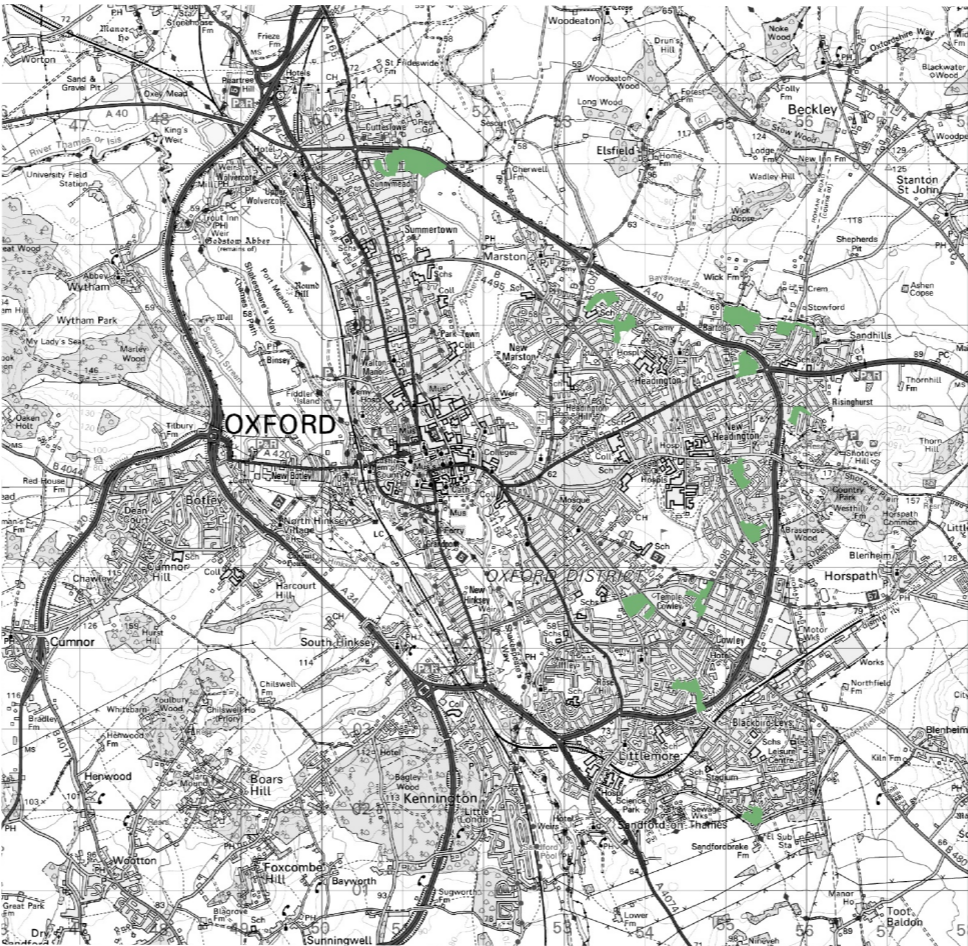


Figure 76 (Above): Map identifying areas with young families.

Constrained Neighbourhoods (3c1)

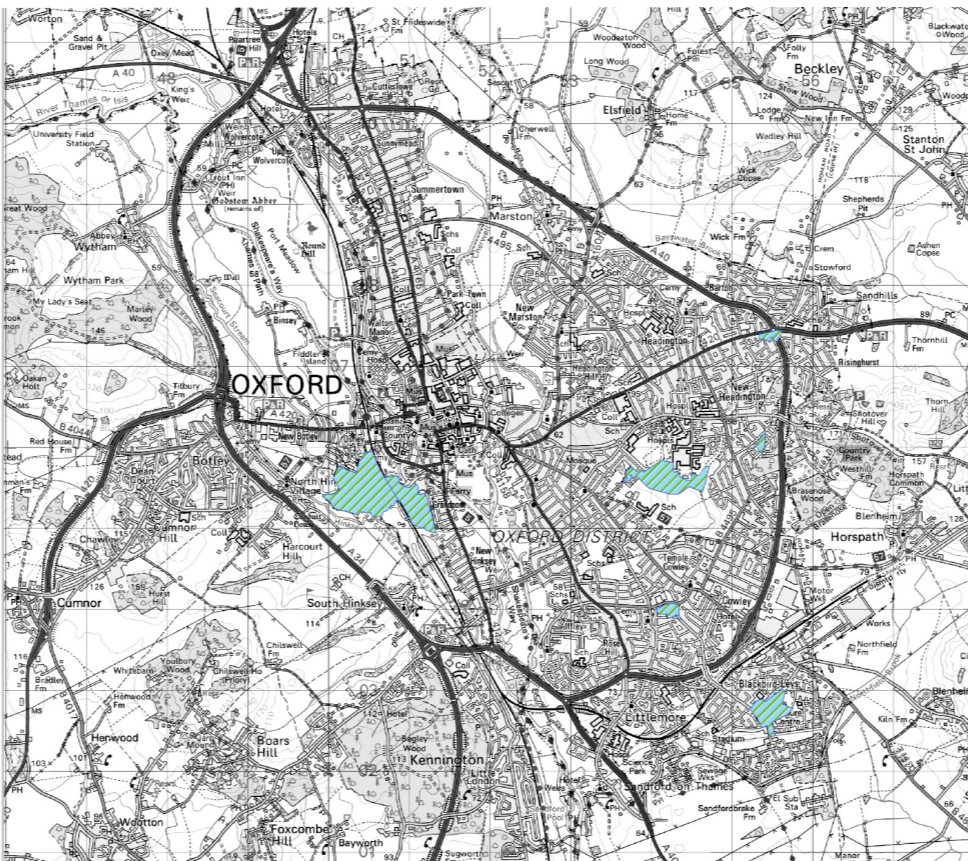


Figure 77 (Above). Map identifying constrained neighbourhoods.

Figure 77 highlights areas defined as a constrained neighbourhood, which relates to areas particularly restricted or controlled areas. There is an area sandwiched between Cuddesdon Way and Blackbird Leys Road which has been marked as a constrained neighbourhood, making it of interest when referring to the development of the SP5 site. Households within the marked subgroup have a higher proportion of people with mixed ethnicity and households are more likely to live in terraced properties. This infers that the Blackbird Leys area has a **relatively high social mix**, which could be useful in determining some key features of a proposed development.

Private Renting (4a2)

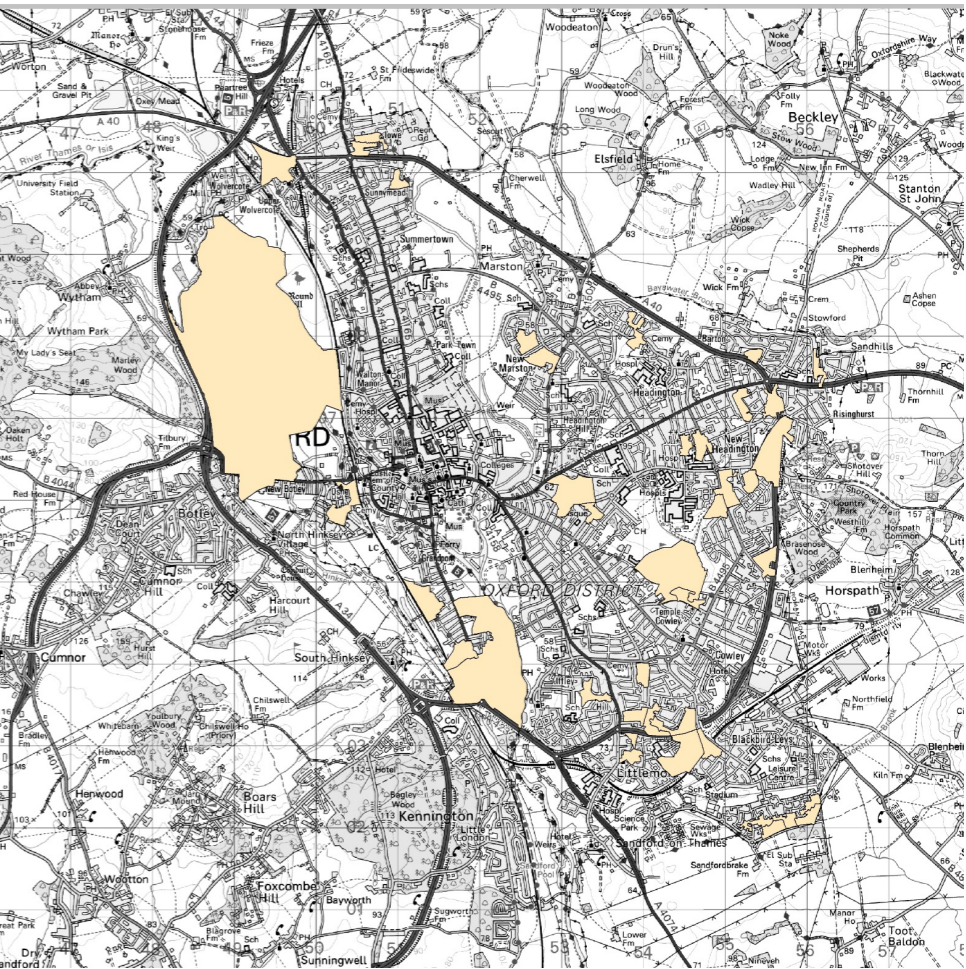


Figure 78 (Above). Map identifying areas with high levels of private renting.

OAC's with high levels of private renting new arrivals have been highlighted in Figure 78. It is clear that there is a **band of private renters** on the edge of Greater Leys and also a large area to the west of Blackbird Leys that may also be impacted by any development to the SP5 site. Although this subgroup has a slightly lower levels of Black or of mixed ethnicity, it adds to the social mix of Blackbird Leys which can indicate some characteristics of the area that can be utilised to make a proposed development as successful as possible. For example areas for locals to congregate outside shops or interact in public can be used to enhance social mix and as a result improve the areas community strength and sense of place.

Social Renting Young Families (4a1)

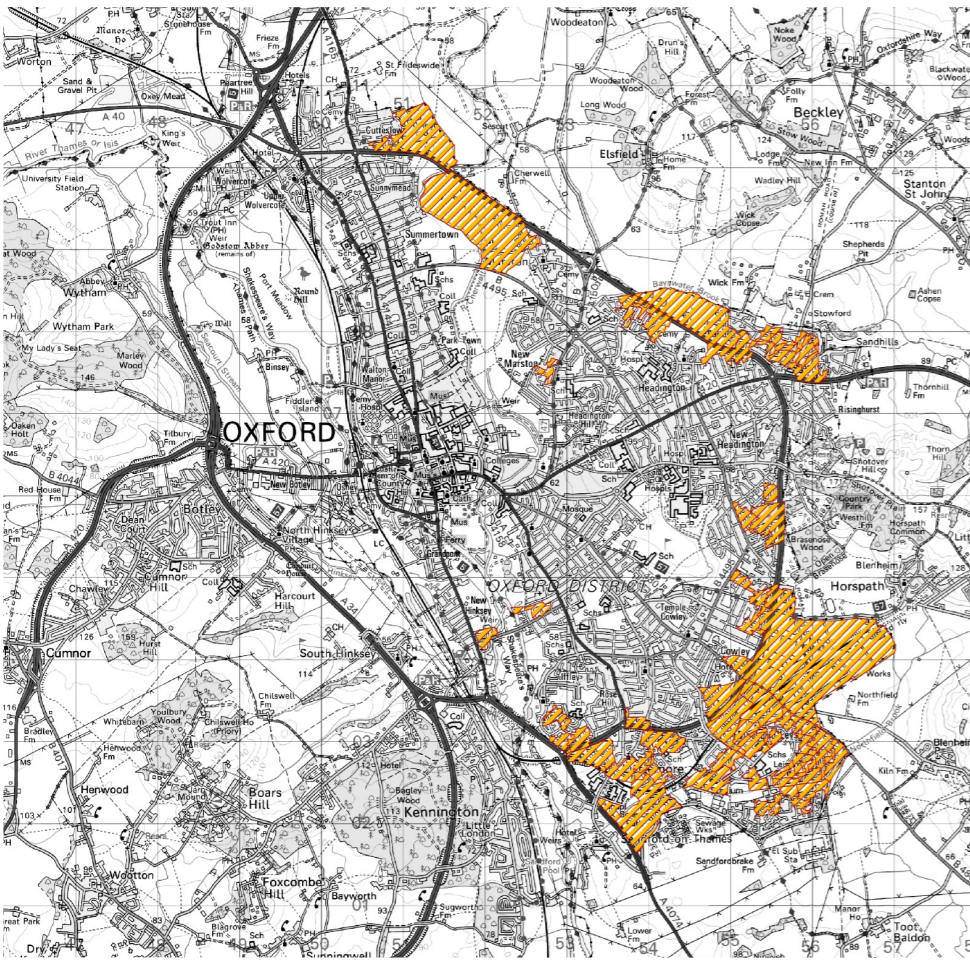


Figure 79 (Above). Areas with a high proportion of social renting young families.

Social renting young families relates to both a higher proportion of children aged 5 to 14 years old and a higher proportion of people living in social rented accommodation. **Unemployment is also more prevalent here** when compared to the parent group. From Figure 79, it is clear that there are **high levels of this characteristic** within the Blackbird Leys area, implying that there is a great need for social housing within the new development, as well as facilities to accommodate the needs of young children. There is already a future proposal for 4,000 new homes to be built south of Grenoble Road in Greater Leys as a way to help Oxford housing needs. With more dwellings also being added during this development, there will be large step towards overcoming this issue.

Students and Professionals (2a3)



Figure 80 (Above). Map showing areas with high levels of students and professionals.

Figure 80 highlights areas defined by high levels of students and professionals. These areas are focused towards the city centre, with **none being located around the Blackbird Leys site**. **Low levels of students and professionals might indicate that future job prospects within the area might be limited**. Through the regeneration of the area it could be an aim to improve this and hopefully improve the strength of the local community as a result. Bringing more shops and businesses to the area would create more jobs for locals, in particular non-family run stores, who would be open to employing a range of individuals. There is the possibility as well to include a job centre in the development, offering help and advice to resi-

Design Proposals



Connectivity and Permeability

Aim: To increase the permeability of the site, and its connectivity to the wider area, as well as increasing walkability to deter vehicle use.

As identified in the morphological analysis and S.W.O.T, there is a large issue of permeability through the site. Issues of fast moving traffic, high curbs and no safe crossings within the site, make it difficult to connect the topshops and greenspace to the Community Centre and Church. This design proposal will **pedestrianise a large area of the site** by closing the section of Blackbird Leys road outside the topshops. As visible in Figure 81, the central node has been pedestrianised to create a **mixed-use public park and square space** for the community to use. This idea was inspired by that of Home Zones, where areas of residential streets have been traffic removed from them to create safe, neighbourhoods free from cars. A similar concept can also be seen in Aylesbury, where a new public square is being planned, and will be surrounded by housing, retail, and a Community Centre. This idea is very much similar to ours.



Figure 81 (Above). View of the topshops and park, with the road removed.



Figure 82 (Above). Planned square and community facilities in Aylesbury. Source: (Aylesbury Now, 2019).

By stopping cars from accessing this street, crossing into the park space from the topshops will be much safer and **more accessible** across the level surface. Connecting the square to the Community Centre and Church was also important. Highlighted in Figure 83 is the new **raised traffic light crossing**, connecting these areas. This is a traffic calming method, which is needed in Blackbird Leys, due to its street structure encouraging vehicle usage. Somerset Council have begun using raised crossings, and have seen success in creating safer places to cross. By also changing the paving, it can make the driver more aware to slow down, and show pedestrians that they have priority in this design. The raised crossings are also used to connect the new mixed-use building to the existing topshops. These crossings not only provide safe travel through the area, but attract visitors to the new facilities, encourage full-usage of all amenities on site.

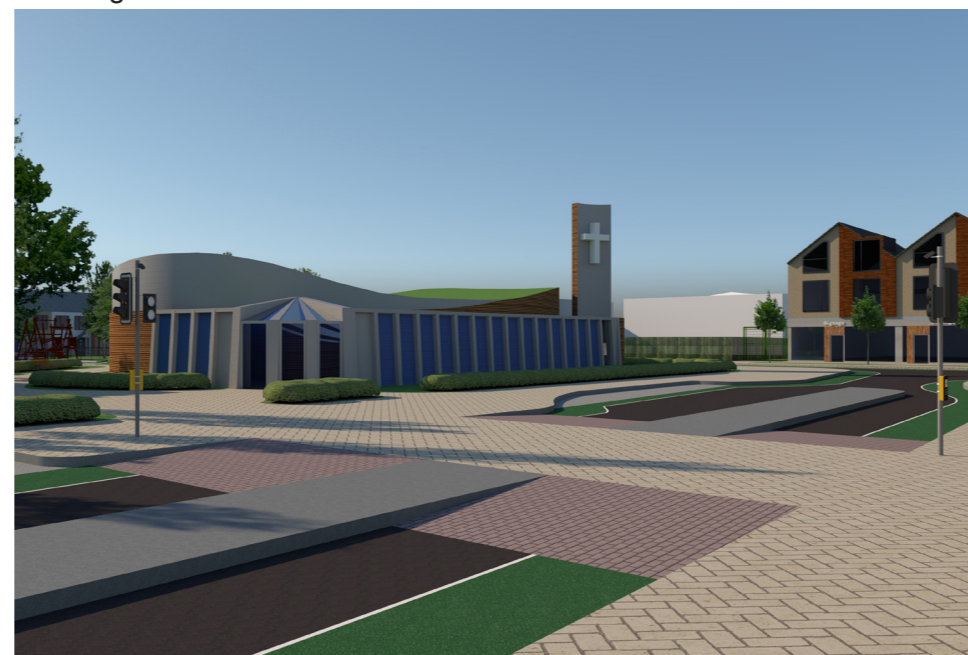


Figure 83 (Above). Raised traffic light crossing outside the church.



Figure 84 (Above). Raised crossings and junctions being implemented by Somerset Council. Source: (Somerset.gov.uk, 2019)

Connecting the park behind the church was also important in this design. The overgrown greenspace has been revitalised in this design, and accessibility to it has been improved. This space can now be accessed between the church and the new library. By connecting these **'Pocket Parks'**, the design hopes to increase flows of people and increase the vitality of the area. The Government promotes Pocket Parks as a way of providing places where "people can come together, enhance their well-being ... meet

other people and find companionship" (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019, p. 4). The connections between parks, should, therefore, successfully **increase social interaction** in the currently underused spaces.



Figure 86 (Above). Improved, and now overlooked, park space beside the Church and Community Centre.

Whilst the creation of pedestrian-friendly spaces was a priority, the needs of local car use must also be considered as there is a main road running through the site. The design aims to slow cars down, with **traffic lights, speed bumps and a zebra crossing**, however, it should not increase traffic. The design also hopes to **deter vehicle usage**. A **new bus stop** outside the Community Centre for the Stagecoach 12 service, will increase accessibility via public transport in the area, bringing visitors directly into the hub areas. **Cycle Lanes have also been extended** into the site and throughout Blackbird Leys to encourage cycling in the area, and increase the safety of cycling here. Cycle parking facilities have also been created outside the topshops and Community Centre. Despite these measures to reduce vehicle use, inevitably parking will still be needed. On-street parking outside the topshops have been taken out in this design, but the extended car parks are visible in Figures 87 and 88.



Figure 87 (Top). Improved parking provision beside the topshops.
Figure 88 (Above). More parking spaces available behind the pub.

Variety

Aim: To widen the range of land use, and introduce a varied material use.



Figure 89 (Above). Front view of the topshops glass covered walkway.



Figure 90 (Above). Rear view of the topshops glass covered walkway.

As described in the morphological analysis, the site has lots of amenities and services on offer, however they are spread throughout many different single-use buildings. The S.W.O.T, and research workshop also identified that there is a lack of variety in the retail provisions, with many family-run, independent businesses offering limited opening hours. This design proposal adds to and improves the existing strengths in the variety offered in the area. The existing **topshops have been refurbished to improve the housing provision**, and existing retail tenants will be encouraged to stay in their units. These shops will be in a prime position, facing on the new public square and park. A new **walkway** in the topshops connects the square to the service yard, with new housing and providing greater access to other housing areas. This walkway was needed to help **improve the walkability of the site**, improving connectivity. Also, by improving access, the impact of the inactive edge in the service yard can be reduced. The covered walkway also provides protection from the elements for shoppers. However, this has meant the removal of one flat, and a section of the Nisa Local Store. The Nisa Local store can be relocated into a different retail unit, and the resident in the flat taken out of the design can be relocated into the new mixed-use building that is positioned on the former library site. This site features more retail units, and **larger family-sized maisonette accommodation**. The retail units will encourage a mixture of smaller, independent businesses, to larger businesses, such as a super-

market brand to provide late opening hours. This was identified in the research workshop as a need in Blackbird Leys, as many of the family-run businesses close early and are not consistent in their opening hours. So, having a variety of independent and larger stores, could increase activity and use of these shopping facilities.

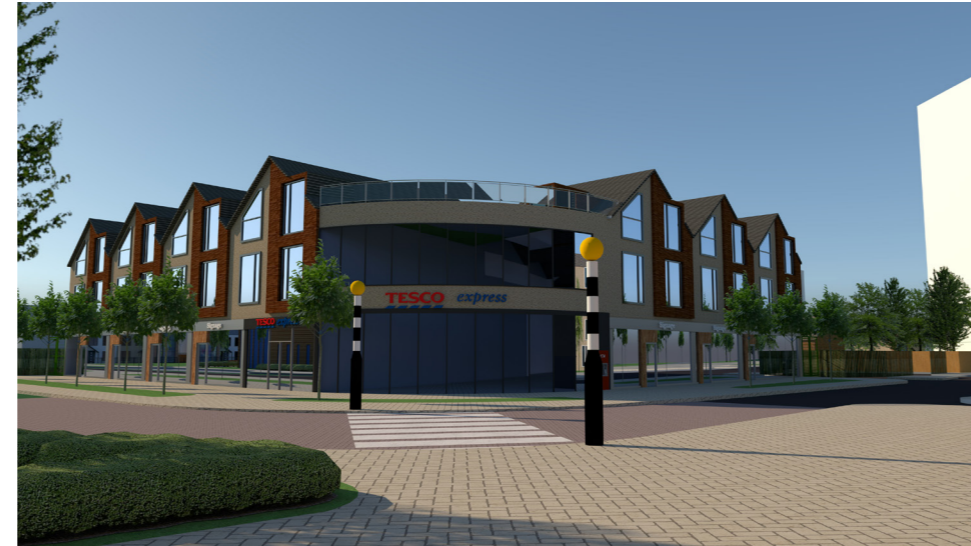


Figure 91 (Above). New mixed-use building on former library site.

A new square and park has provided a wider use of land, with **park space, a new facility for the Communi-tea Cafe, public realm and seating areas**. By having this vibrant space, focused around a cafe, hopefully businesses will be attracted to the area, encouraging footfall. In addition to this, the wide space outside the shops could also be used to improve the Blackbird Leys market, encouraging more stalls. The Cafe in the nodal point was inspired by many of Hyde Parks pavilions, attracting many visitors to the area. Pavilions and public art are evidently important in improving the vitality and richness of an area.

The cafe has been clad in the same siding wood as the topshops and the church, with splashes of yellow and a bold, black metal structure running along its rear walls, adding structure to an otherwise inactive edge.



Figure 92 (Above). New public square centered around public realm and the cafe.

The church, which is a listed building has been refurbished, with a new design, but **retaining the iconic roof structure**. White brick and wood, brightens the building, compared to its previous grey brick exterior. The use of these materials also hopes to **emphasise the curved roof structure**, and ties the building into the new refurbished buildings across the site. The after-school clubs currently on offer in the church will be relo-

cated into the extended Community Centre, which will be able to provide larger and more modern facilities. Furthermore, the **library will also be moved into the extension of the Community Centre**. It was identified from the research workshop that merging the library into the Community Centre is a risk, potentially decreasing its usage. However this design ensures that the library has its own, on-street entrance, but can also be accessed from the Community Centre. Research from 6 case studies found that many Community Centres across the UK have begun to merge library's into their structures, as libraries are key buildings in a community. By moving the library into the Community Centre, the benefits identified may allow the new facilities to thrive, which is needed, as the Blackbird Leys library is currently underused. In addition to this, by linking a business-advice centre into this building, it can become a hub for Blackbird Leys, and increase its footfall.



Figure 93 (Above). Community Centre entrance, and Library entrance.



Figure 94 (Above). Examples of Community Centres with libraries. The right image is the Curve in Slough, which acts as a community hub. Source: (England, 2017).

Spaces outside the towers have also been improved, with greater public access, by removing unnecessary fencing. Trees and play equipment will hopefully encourage users to these spaces, and connect them to the wider area.

The **building materials chosen, aim to improve the vibrancy** of the area. The Community Centre will be clad with a mix of metal cladding, plaster, concrete and wood. The use of red as a key colour theme for this building also creates a unique façade with active edges. The topshops ties into the Church's building materials, with use of a wood and white brick facade, as well as blue metal cladding improves the vibrancy the previously grey building.

Vitality

Aim: To increase activity for greater natural surveillance, as well as creating safe and vibrant spaces that people want to stay in and enjoy.

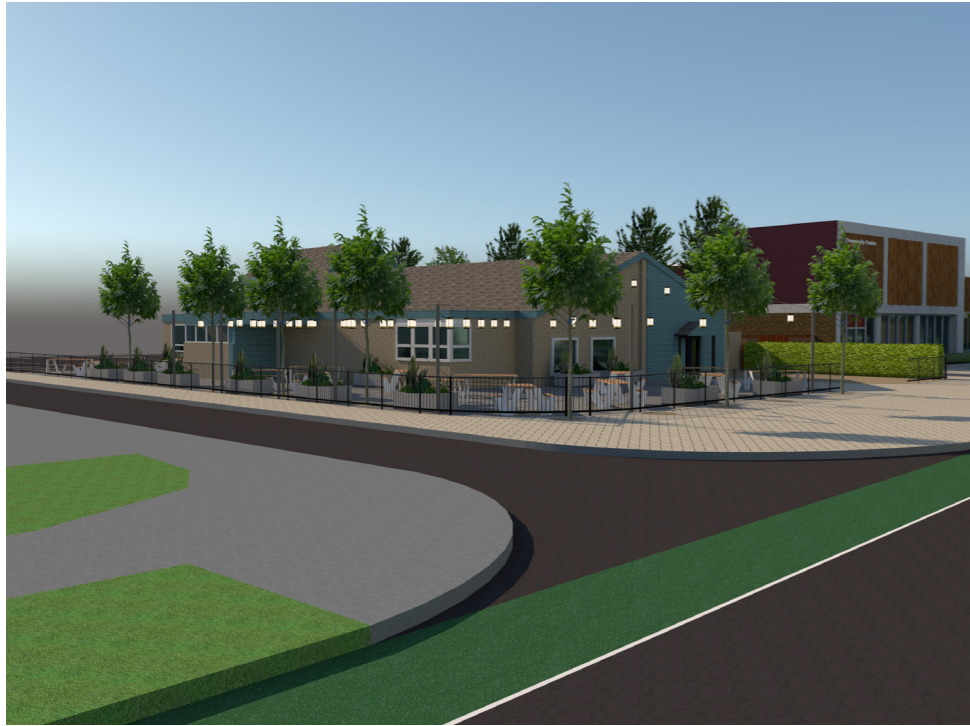


Figure 95 (Above). The new pub garden, increase the vitality towards this end of the street.

Both the morphological analysis and S.W.O.T identified the lack of natural surveillance across the site. This design aims to increase this through the new and existing buildings. The Community Centre and Church now have **large windows on the street**, so activity can be seen from both the inside and outside. On this side of the street, a new pub garden (as seen in Figure 95), with lighting, trees and planters hops to increase its appeal and increase activity. Greater usage of this area will increase visible activity towards the north-western end of the site.

The central greenspace and area outside the topshops also lacks vitality. To improve this, the new **square and park have much greater visibility, with sightlines in and out of these spaces**, as well as being overlooked from multiple angles. However, the overlooking nature of the design is not intrusive or overwhelming, as many of the buildings are set back from the public space. The refurbished topshops have larger windows for a greater sense of the security, whilst use of white brick, blue metal and siding wood helps give the building a smarter appearance. The Auckland Design Manual provides evidence that this is a good design decision, as windows and balconies facing onto the street have been viewed as successful ways to minimise possible inactive edges and provide eyes on the street. The new mixed-use building also overlooked the square and park. The new square with artwork, seating, cafés and fountains is surrounded by a well-maintained park, with clean streets that will be attractive for users. The brighter cream paving, lightens the space, compared to the tarmac currently on site.



Figure 96 (Above). The refurbished topshops providing natural surveillance over the public square.

The service yard behind the topshops was also identified in the S.W.O.T as a trouble area. During the design development process, the possible removal of garages for houses was considered but issues of blocking light and airflow to the existing homes ruled out this concept. Instead a decision was taken to **extend the rear gardens** to create more private space for residents above the shops, and creating a clean edge against the brick wall. However, this is still an inactive edge, so attempts have been made to improve it. The garages have been painted in individual colours, with the possibility to add artwork to the spaces in future. To increase surveillance in this area, a small L-shaped **block of townhouses** have been added to the street, not only **improving the streets appearance, but also increase eyes on the street**. Also, by increasing activity in this area, with the new homes, extending the car park and creating a walkway, the design hopes to improve this space and **deter antisocial behaviour** from here. Similar successful case studies can be seen in Harrow, at Stannmore Place. Properties sit directly on the street, with large windows facing onto communal space. This has helped to create a sense of security, as well as vitality in the street.



Figure 97 (Above). The refurbished topshops providing natural surveillance over the public square.



Figure 98 (Above). New townhouses in the service yard.

The **new mixed-use building also supports the vitality of the area**, increasing shopping choice for visitors and using different building materials, to some of the other buildings. A wide footpath outside this buildings increases walkability, and trees create a permeable barrier between the road and the pavement. To reduce the burden of parking in the site, residents of this building have their own private parking.



Figure 99 (Above). New mixed-use building, with 8 new retail units.

The cafe, which will act as the new central node, helps to support vitality in these new spaces. The existing Communi-tea Cafe service run by the church, will operate across the street in this new cafe. This decision was taken as cafés are seen as successful methods in attracting people to nodal points. The concept of a central meeting point, with artwork, can be seen along the Southbank in Central London. Different park bench styles act as an attraction for visitors, providing not only a use but also interest. This design uses a similar idea, with the Cafe looking onto a new art piece, with different styles of park benches around the fountains.



Figure 100 (Above). New mixed-use building, with 8 new retail units.

Lighting is not only important as a part of the vitality of an area, but the Research Workshop identified it as a measure that could be used to deter crime and improve the safety in the site. Whilst floodlighting could be used to deter crime, it could put off visitors, so more **discrete methods of lighting** have been used in this design, such as overhead LED lanterns, embedded paving lights and uplighting on plants. This helps to add richness into the design, and provide a much more **pleasant atmosphere**.



Figure 101 (Above). LED lanterns installed by the Cafe.

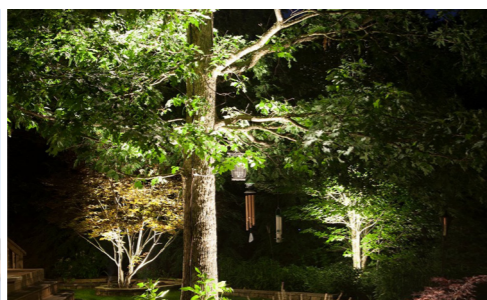


Figure 102 (Above). Example of uplighting that can be used on plants and trees. Source: (CAST LANDSCAPE, 2019).

For the space designed to have vitality, people need to stay in the area, so **car slowing measures have been introduced** in the design to encourage people to stay in a safe environment. Firstly, by adding a **cycle lane**, vehicles tend to slow down for the safety of the cyclist. **Speed-bumps** at raised crossings also help to slow car movements, but **traffic lights and zebra crossings** are measures that will physically stop vehicles for pedestrian priority. The design also has a feeling of a shared zone, but with clearer distinctions between road and pavements, with bright coloured cycle lanes and red brick crossings, **helping the visually impaired** and disabled to cross the street safely and access to the spaces.



Figure 103 (Above). Raised zebra crossing outside the mixed-use building.

Other semi-detached homes have been added to the design. These **homes have been added to areas where there was increase need for vitality**. The park behind the church is now overlooked by 5 family-sized properties, creating a nice space to live, located close to the main road and bus links. Homes were also added in replacement of the sheds and garages outside Windrush and Evenlode Towers. These towers were identified to provide surveillance in the area, but the sheds were spaces of anti-social behaviour, so the new **homes will add vitality** to the spaces outside the towers. In addition to this, these homes should help to increase use of the greenspace outside these buildings, which currently feel deserted and under-used.



Figure 104 (Above). Homes overlooking the revitalised park on Cuddesdon Way.



Figure 105 (Above). New houses in replacement of the sheds on Blackbird Leys road, by Windrush Tower.



Figure 106 (Above). New homes replace the sheds outside Evenlode Tower.

The design identifies that certain groups of the population have certain needs. An elderly population may need access to the toilet if they would like to spend time in the spaces. **Toilets are available in the pub, and 24/7 public toilets will be available to access in the Community Centre**. The centres central location, and easy access make it suitable for public toilets. In addition to this, toilets within a building is likely to be more attractive than an individual toilet outbuilding.



Figure 107 (Above). Current public toilets outside the district centre look visually unpleasant. Source: (Apen-Sandler, 2019)

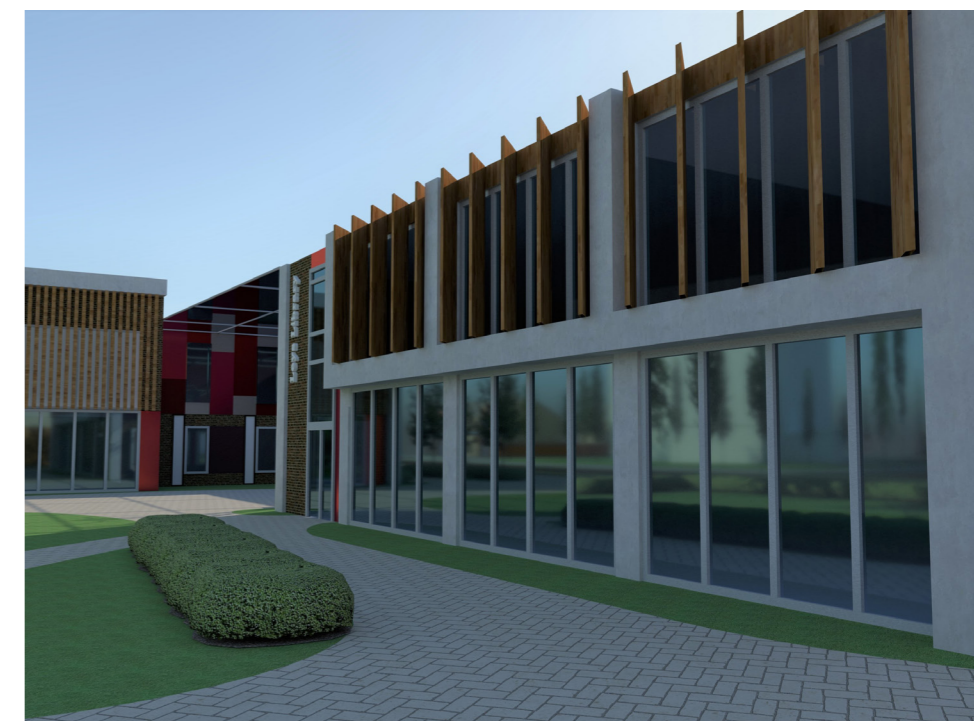


Figure 108 (Above). Toilets within the Community Centre, would not only increase its footfall, but also be safer and more appealing to locals.

Legibility

Aim: To improve the existing landmarks, and create new ones, as well as increasing flows and navigation in the area to create a sense of direction.

Windrush and Evenlode Towers have been identified as key points to help way-finding in Blackbird Leys, not only because they have been re-clad, to create a distinctive design, compared to the other buildings, but the towers stand at 15-storeys high. The average building height in Blackbird Leys is 2-storeys. Windrush and Evenlode sit at either end of the SP5 site boundary. The areas outside the towers will be re-designed with new landscaping for an improved appearance and usability.

The S.W.O.T and morphological analysis showed that SP5 has many key landmarks helping legibility, and this design improves on that. The Community Centre has been extended and refurbished with a bold design and colour scheme to make it stand out. The Church, located next door, has its original structure retained, but a new entrance foyer creates a bold statement on the street and can act as a place for the community to congregate. To enhance the legibility of the church, which now looks hidden in the shadows of the new mixed-use building, a **church tower** has been created. This tower has been perfectly positioned to be visible from the public square, Cuddesdon Way and Blackbird Leys Road, helping legibility towards the church.

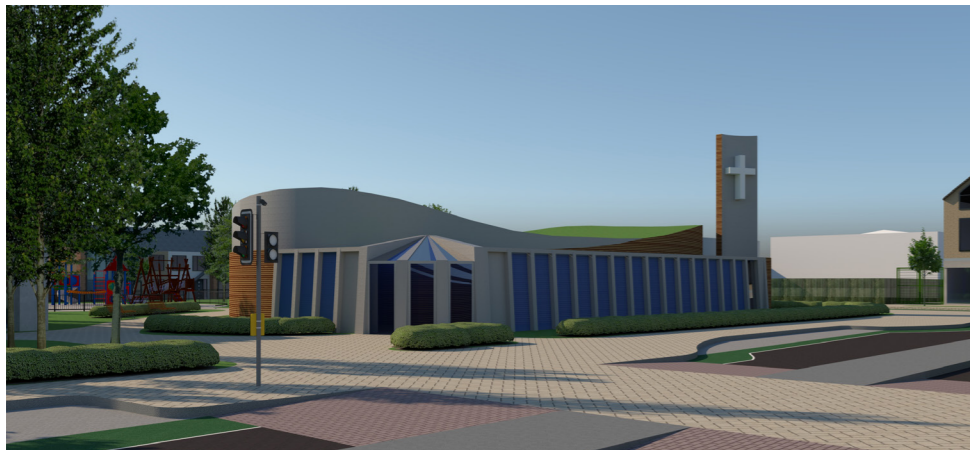


Figure 109 (Above). Refurbished and re-clad church, with new extension, foyer and tower, improving the Blackbird Leys landmark building.

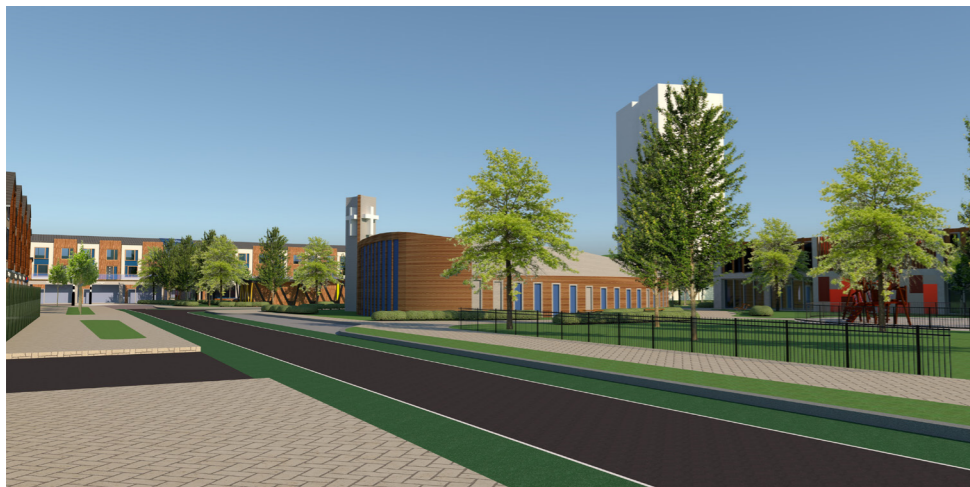


Figure 110 (Above). Curved church roof structure and its tower visible from Cuddesdon Way.

The new **public square and park enhances the existing central node**, acting as a key **focal point** for the community, surrounded by activities and shops. New pathways give direction towards key buildings and increase legibility.

The design of buildings helps to create legibility, but it is important that these buildings are individualistic in design. The **new housing on site comes in 3 design styles**, as shown in Figure 111, 112 and 113. There is a mix between semi-detached, terraced and maisonette properties, all different in design. The location of these properties have been placed to increase vitality and natural surveillance in the streets and parks, so all have large windows, but in different styles. The **varying design styles and materials help to create distinctions between areas**, to help visitors gain a sense of direction.



Figure 111 (Above). Terraced townhouses in the Service Yard, increase vitality in a road with an inactive edge.



Figure 112 (Above). Semi-detached properties located on Cuddesdon Way, and outside the Windrush and Evenlode Towers.



Figure 113 (Above). The new mixed-use building, with modern maisonettes for families.

The S.W.O.T identified that many of the residential blocks have the same design so it is easy to get lost in Blackbird Leys. To improve this, street signs will be implemented into the site, to help provide direction to the wider area. Sign posts have been used in cities across the world, the most famous being London's **monoliths**. The success of these posts have meant that they have also been implemented in the Oxford City Centre. Blackbird Leys could have smaller versions of these, to help show maps and directions around Blackbird Leys, as well as showing the key buildings.



Figure 114 (Above). An exemplar monolith in Croydon, London. Source: (Transport for London, 2019).

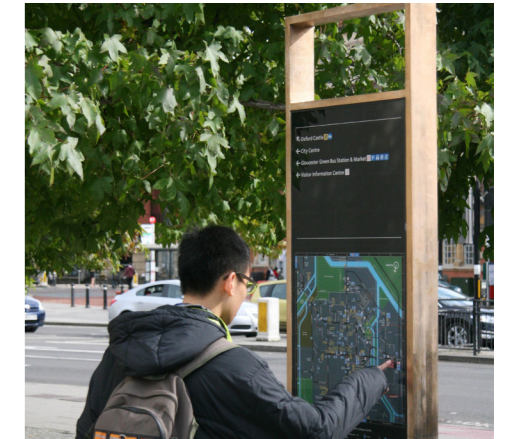


Figure 115 (Above). One of the many monoliths in Oxford City Centre. Source: (Wayfinding, 2019).

Artwork can be seen as important for legibility. The Glow Tree statue has been relocated outside the entrance of the Community Centre, to act as a focal point, rather than being hidden behind trees. **New artwork** will also be added to the public square, to help enhance the new landmark and increase richness. There are also many spaces in this design where **murals** can be created. This is an opportunity for the community to run **competitions to find artwork** that could fill these walls, possibly involving local schools. This would help to further add identity to the area, and increase legibility.



Figure 116 (Above). The glass-covered entrance of the Community Centre, housing The Glow Tree statue.

Robustness

Aim: To improve the flexibility and adaptability of buildings, as well as ensuring the services suit local needs.



Figure 117 (Above). New cycle lanes running through SP5 and wider Blackbird Leys.

There is a lack of robustness across site. The streets have increased robustness in this design proposal, due to the **cycle lane that has been extended into the site** and further on into Blackbird Leys. A bus stop outside the Community Centre, means that the space is also more accessible, and creates a street allowing safe travel by car, bus and bicycle.

The Community Centre has the largest changes to its robustness. This building has been **extended to its boundary** on the right, to make room for a **new, larger, two-storey, library**. Identified in the research workshop was that if the library was to be moved into the Community Centre it would be under-used if there was just a sign, so the design has ensured that the library acts as its own facility, with its own entrance, as well as having an entrance within the Community Centre. As seen from research by the Arts Council in 2017, large community centres with libraries have been found to be central to the community. Towards the rear, the Community Centre has also been extended, to make way for more room within the centre itself. This will allow for more services and facilities, such as a business centre, improved IT room, and council services. The design of the Community Centre, uses the existing structure of the building, helping to reduce environmental impact of the development. Some of the brick façade will be kept, some will be plastered and some will be clad. This mix of design materials aims to make the Community Centre a statement building in the development. The space outside the Community Centre will also be adaptable, acting as a semi-outdoor space, with a new location for the glow-tree statue, with seating, plants and trees, as well as paved areas. This space is covered by a large glass roof, providing protection from the weather and providing another space to congregate and interact.



Figure 118 (Above). Entrance to the Community Centre and Library.



Figure 119 (Above). View from the street of the refurbished Community Centre, acting as a landmark building into the site.



Figure 120 (Above). Aerial View of the Community Centre displays the original footprint of the building, in comparison to the new footprint.

The topshops have been adapted in this design, improving the appearance of the building. The new frontages have larger windows, for a **greater sense of natural surveillance, modern materials**, such as metal and wood, and minimal use of concrete in the design. The **glass-covered walkway** also improves the look of the building, and provides another entrance route in the central space from behind the topshops. The service yard has also been improved by extending the gardens out to the edge of the building, to have a smarter line of fencing. To add vibrancy to the street, the garage doors have been painted in different colours to increase its attractiveness. To increase vitality and eyes on the street in the service yard, some homes have been added, to increase sense of security and activity.

The **central space is now more flexible** as well, with a large square, **space for markets** and a park, meaning that the space can be used for multiple uses.



Figure 121 (Above). View of the glass walkway from the public square.



Figure 122 (Above). New housing frontages in the topshops.



Figure 123 (Above). Space to extend the Blackbird Leys market.

Richness

Aim: To create an engaging and enriching environment, where people will not only want to stay and enjoy, but also live. To also introduce sensory experience, to engage the users.

This design proposal has enriched the public spaces available within the site. Not only are the parks a lot more greener and open, but nice places to sit and enjoy the surroundings. **Play equipment in the new ‘pocket parks’ also help to encourage the increased usage of the park space.**

The public square has undergone the largest transformation in terms of the richness added. Public art in the space, not only adds colour, but acts as a central point, a space to interact and cross paths. **Water fountains are a sensory experience**, not just for young children, but also for people visiting, adding noise to the area to help drown out the car noise. A variety of seating styles are also included in the square, some are free to move for the user to sit in a place they feel comfortable, and others are fixed. The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces identified that movable and flexible seating has been seen to encourage users to an area. By enclosing the square with trees, the area has a comfortable feeling, with a sense of privacy, but the area is also relatively open, with access by the large space in front of the topshops, as well as access from the Cafe overlooking the square. Whilst having a sense of enclosure, the **space is also overlooked** by the topshops, to ensure that there is sufficient natural surveillance in the area to deter crime. Different forms of lighting have also been used in the design to increase safety at night, without having to use clear measures of security, such as floodlights. A **mixture between normal street lights, uplighting on plants, overhead LED lanterns and floor lighting** have been included in the design. This mixture of lighting will help to create a safe place at night.



Figure 124 (Above). View of the new public square.



Figure 125 (Above). View of the Communi-tea Cafe, square, park and topshops. A new vibrant hub.

The greenspace, which was previously tarmacked, with grass and trees has had richness added by using **brighter paving slabs**, across the site, linking all areas together. Grass, hedges and shrubs must be maintained, to create a sense of ownership and to create a nice place to be. The space has been designed with walkability in mind, so new natural through-routes provide directions to buildings and areas, and also help to create zones in the space, such as the public square, market space and park space.



Figure 126 (Above). The park, with seating and path towards the Church and Community Centre.

The morphological analysis identified a lack of artwork in the site. The Glow Tree statue has been relocated to a different position outside the Community Centre, and the existing artwork has been removed from the Community Centre as it was looking dated, and supported the run-down appearance of the building. However, areas of the topshops have blank walls that are free to have public art added. Design competitions will be run for these spaces to ensure that the site has the best artwork, possibly also involving local schools, to help the community have a sense of involvement with the redevelopment of their area.



Figure 127 (Above). Area that can have artwork added.

Colour has been added across the site. The Community Centre transformation adds a red theme to the building, whilst the topshops has new blue cladding on its façade. Both these colours tie into the re-cladding of the Windrush and Evenlode Towers. The flats on Blackbird Leys Road, outside Evenlode Tower have had **another storey of flats added on-top of them, with new windows added, and new cladding, replacing the existing brown wood, with a fresh forest green colour**, whilst retaining some of the existing brickwork. This subtle addition of green, blends the building in with the trees, but the larger windows also make the building clearly visible on the street, which is needed as the opposite side of the street is lined with fencing for the college, creating an inactive edge.



Figure 128 (Above). The flats have been refurbished and re-clad, with an additional floor providing more accommodation.

Large use of glass has been included in the design, with the Community Centre having large windows on the ground floor. This helps to create a connection between the outside and the inside as activities going on will be seen. Housing in the site also has larger windows, helping to increase natural surveillance and sense of security.

The leisure centre is currently quite disconnected to the site, so this design has create a new walkway, lined with trees and brighter paving to connect the site to the leisure centre. This walkway can also be see in Figure 128, outside the refurbished flats. Safe crossing at both ends of the street help to make access much easier and safer.



Figure 128 (Above). Large, ground floor, windows in the Community Centre.

Overall Masterplan



Conclusion

To summarise, the design proposal mainly targets the vitality and permeability of site SP5. The design proposal makes use of existing buildings, by not only refurbishing, but also extending their structures, such as the Church and Community Centre. The topshops, a key landmark building in the site, have also been improved with a modern design, that helps to increase eyes on the street and vitality, over the public square and park. The design of this space, with public realm, street art and seating improves the richness of the area to encourage locals and visitors into this space.

As permeability was also important in the site, new footpaths, raised crossings and walkways have been created and improved to increase flows throughout the site and connect key buildings and areas, such as the Church, to the Cafe and topshops. New cycle lanes have been extended into the site and wider Blackbird Leys, to encourage sustainable transport, as well as a new bus stop outside the Community Centre, to bring the visitors directly into the site. To support the sustainable transport, cycle parking has been added into the design.

The research workshop was a very useful session and has helped to inform this design. It was noted that if the library was to be moved to the Community Centre, then it must have its own entrance and be clearly identifiable to increase, rather than decrease, its footfall. This has been achieved in this design, with a striking facade with lots of glass, to create a bright and open library for Blackbird Leys.

Housing demands in Oxford is a growing issue, so this design has implemented lots of properties where needed. Homes have been added on Cuddesdon Way to create a nice overlooked 'pocket park'. Similar, semi-detached homes, have been added in replacement of the sheds and garages outside the Windrush and Evenlode Towers, to increase vitality in these areas that currently encourage anti-social behaviour. The service yard, which also encourages anti-social behaviour has also had its vitality increased with new terraced townhouses adding eyes on the street, and a glass-covered walkway providing a new through-route into the park and square. Maisonettes have also been included in the new mixed-use building, overlooking the redeveloped greenspace. In addition to this, new retail units have been added to increase the shopping provision and variety in Blackbird Leys.

Traffic calming measures have also been introduced, to support the aim of permeability and walkability. Raised crossings, tighter junctions and cycle lanes help to slow down vehicles, whilst traffic lights and zebra crossings will stop vehicles when pedestrians want to cross the street.

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