

# Thames Valley

Environmental Records Centre



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# AN ANALYSIS OF ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE PROVISION IN OXFORDSHIRE

MAY 2017



## AN ANALYSIS OF ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE IN OXFORDSHIRE

### SUMMARY

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) carried out an analysis of accessible natural green space provision for the county against the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) for Oxfordshire County Council. The ANGSt standards outline the minimum provision of natural green space that is accessible to residents. Access to nature is important for supporting good mental and physical health as well as an appreciation of nature and the benefits of healthy ecosystems to society.

Understanding the current provision and deficit of accessible natural green space in the county will help Oxfordshire County Council (and the District authorities) to strategically plan for the future provision of accessible green space. Access to green space and nature will help improve the health and well-being of Oxfordshire's residents and will support the Council's vision for Oxfordshire.

There are large numbers of residences that do not meet at least one of the ANGSt requirements. Even if sites with restricted access are included in the analyses (which aren't strictly accessible) there are still large areas of the county that do not meet these standards. In particular the area of Statutory Local Nature Reserves is insufficient to meet the standard. All residences in Oxfordshire do not have all of their ANGSt requirements met because of the lack of a 500 ha accessible site within 10km. If restricted access sites are included, then 42,197 (14%) residences have none of their ANGSt requirements met.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Oxfordshire County Council would like an analysis of accessible natural green space provision for the county against the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt). The ANGSt standards outline the minimum provision of natural green space that is accessible to residents. Access to nature is important for supporting good mental and physical health as well as an appreciation of nature and the benefits of healthy ecosystems to society.

Understanding the current provision and deficit of accessible natural green space in the county will help Oxfordshire County Council (and the District authorities) to strategically plan for the future provision of accessible green space. Access to green space and nature will help improve the health and well-being of Oxfordshire's residents and will support the Council's vision for Oxfordshire:

- Every community thrives, and everyone can play an active part
- Everyone leads safe, healthy lives while people with the greatest need are cared for so:
  - older and disabled people can live independently
  - every child has the best start in life
  - everyone is protected from abuse or neglect
- A strong and thriving economy creates jobs and homes for the future, and quality of life for Oxfordshire communities is protected.

The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards are:

- That no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 ha in size;
- That there should be at least one accessible 20 ha sites within 2 km of home;
- That there should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km of home;
- That there should be one accessible 500 ha sites within 10 km of home;
- And that there should be Statutory Local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of 1 hectare per 1000 population.

The aim of this study is to assess the provision of accessible natural green space in Oxfordshire. Assessment has been made against the four ANGSt site size classes. Data is presented as both positive and negative provision i.e. areas where the ANGSt requirement is met and areas where the ANGSt requirement is not met. Data are presented so that the different size classes can be viewed separately from each other as appropriate. As well as areas with access to natural green space data are included on the numbers of households who have access / lack of access at the various size classes.

Maps for each of the standards are shown in section 5.

## 2. METHODS

### 1.1. ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE DATA

The project benefitted from accessible green space data that had already been collated by Adam McQueen (OCC) as part of earlier projects. These included data from District councils in Oxfordshire, as well as data on sites in public, private and trust ownership across the county and within 10 km of the county boundary.

TVERC updated these data with new sites in the following ways:

- Selecting priority habitats with access via public rights of way.
- Amenity grassland with both public rights of way access and other paths from OS MasterMap data
- A rapid knowledge capture from key contacts for any new accessible sites created since the original data were compiled.

Once the data had been updated with new sites, any sites below 2 ha in area were removed from the data.

Accessibility was considered in two ways: sites with unrestricted access and sites with restricted access.

Sites with unrestricted access are those where:

- visitors are welcome, even if access is restricted in certain areas or at certain times
- there is no charge for access (except for car parking)
- the whole site is accessible, not just accessed by public rights of way

Any sites which did not meet the above criteria were removed from the dataset to create an unrestricted access dataset. Sites which did charge for access were included in a separate restricted access data set. Two separate analyses of the ANGSt standards were carried out on these two datasets.

### 1.2 ANGST STANDARD ANALYSIS

An analysis of the ANGSt standards was carried for both the unrestricted access and restricted access datasets. For each standard, a buffer was created as follows:

- For sites greater than or equal to 2 ha in area a 300 m buffer was created.
- For sites greater than or equal to 20 ha in area a 2 km buffer was created.
- For sites greater than or equal to 100 ha in area a 5 km buffer was created.
- For sites greater than or equal to 500 ha in area a 10 km buffer was created.



These buffers show the area of Oxfordshire that meets each standard. Layers showing the area not meeting the standards were also created by subtracting the above buffers from the area of Oxfordshire to show the deficit in green space provision for each ANGSt standard.

Finally, layers showing where all of the ANGSt requirements were met and areas where none of the ANGSt requirements were met were created for both restricted access and unrestricted access datasets. These were created by selecting only areas where all four of the above buffers overlapped.

### 1.3 RESIDENCES IN OXFORDSHIRE

To calculate the number of residences that meet each ANGSt standard, a layer of residences in Oxfordshire was created. Buildings were selected from the OS MasterMap. Small buildings and slivers were eliminated based on the area of the polygon. Residences were selected based on the classification of postcode points as residences.

The resulting layer was then used to calculate the number of residences meeting each standard (including and excluding restricted access sites) and the number not meeting each standard.

### 1.4 LOCAL NATURE RESERVE STANDARD

The latest Local Nature Reserve (LNR) data were used to calculate the LNR standard. The assessment of the standard was carried out at the level of the District. The total area of LNR in each district was calculated. Census 2011 population<sup>1</sup> data was used to calculate whether or not each district met the standard for LNR provision.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 ANALYSIS OF ANGST REQUIREMENTS

The areas of Oxfordshire that meet and do not meet each ANGSt standard (including and excluding restricted access sites) are shown in Figures 1-6 and Figures 9-16 in section 5. The area of the county that does or does not meet these standards is given in Table 2. If restricted access sites are excluded, none of the county of Oxfordshire meets the requirements of one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km as no sites within 10 km of the county meet the requirements for accessibility. If restricted access sites are included, then there are areas of the county that do meet the requirements for this standard.

TABLE 2: AREA OF OXFORDSHIRE MEETING OR NOT MEETING ANGST REQUIREMENTS

ANGSt Standard	Access	Area meeting standard (ha)	Area not meeting standard (ha)
Access to green spaces of at least 2 ha in size no more than 300 metres from home	Including restricted access	32,541 (12%)	227,303 (88%)
	Excluding restricted access	27,999 (11%)	231,847 (89%)
At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home	Including restricted access	98,490 (38%)	161,354 (62%)
	Excluding restricted access	77,924 (30%)	181,922 (70%)
One accessible 100 ha site within 5 km of home	Including restricted access	136,692 (52%)	123,808 (48%)
	Excluding restricted access	79,632 (31%)	180,214 (69%)
One accessible 500 ha site within 10 km of home	Including restricted access	51,570 (20%)	208,276 (80%)
	Excluding restricted access	n/a	n/a





### 3.2 NUMBER OF RESIDENCES MEETING ANGST REQUIREMENTS

The number of residences meeting each ANGSt requirement (including and excluding restricted access sites) is given in Table 3. The total number of residences in this study is 294,488.

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF RESIDENCES THAT DO AND DO NOT MEET THE ANGST STANDARDS IN OXFORDSHIRE.

ANGSt Standard	Access	No. of residences meeting standard	No. of residences not meeting the standard
Access to green spaces of at least 2 ha in size no more than 300 metres from home	Including restricted access	111,943 (38%)	182,545 (62%)
	Excluding restricted access	110,516 (37%)	183,972 (63%)
At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home	Including restricted access	167,621 (57%)	126,867 (43%)
	Excluding restricted access	151,567 (52%)	142,921 (48%)
One accessible 100 ha site within 5 km of home	Including restricted access	194,853 (66%)	99,635 (34%)
	Excluding restricted access	145,776 (50%)	148,712 (50%)
One accessible 500 ha site within 10 km of home	Including restricted access	58,396 (20%)	236,092 (80%)
	Excluding restricted access	None	None



### 3.3 NUMBER OF RESIDENCES MEETING ALL OR NONE OF THE ANGSt STANDARDS

Excluding restricted access, no residences meet the requirement for all four of the ANGSt standards as there are no 500 hectare accessible sites. However, for the three ANGSt standards that remain, 79,471 residences meet none of these three requirements (Figure 7) and 51,411 residences meet these three requirements (Figure 8).

If sites with restricted access are included, 42,197 residences meet none of the ANGSt standard requirements (Figure 17) and 10,117 residences meet all four ANGSt standard requirements (Figure 18).

### 3.4 LOCAL NATURE RESERVE STANDARD

There are a total of 55.3 ha of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in Oxfordshire. None of the Districts have sufficient area of LNR to meet the ANGSt standard (Table 4).

TABLE 4: ASSESSMENT OF OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICTS AGAINST LNR ANGSt STANDARD

District	LNR area (ha)	Population	ANGSt standard LNR area requirement (ha)	Does the District meet the standard?
Cherwell	15.6	141,868	142	No
Vale of White Horse	5.8	120,988	121	No
South Oxfordshire	24.5	134,257	134	No
West Oxfordshire	2.8	104,779	105	No
Oxford City	6.6	151,906	150	No

## 4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 SUMMARY

In summary there are large numbers of residences that do not meet at least one of the ANGSt requirements. Even if sites with restricted access are included in the analyses (which aren't strictly accessible) there are still large areas of the county that do not meet these standards. In particular the area of Statutory Local Nature Reserves is insufficient to meet the standard. No residences in Oxfordshire meet all of their ANGSt requirements because of the lack of a 500 ha accessible site within 10km. If restricted access sites are included, then 42,197 residences have none of their ANGSt requirements met.

Key issues:

- This analysis has included sites with restricted access. These are generally sites where an entrance fee is charged or where permit access is in operation. Some sites with these restrictions are actually large and provide rich semi-natural experiences. Therefore these sites do provide an important resource for experiencing nature.
- The ANGSt standards were designed to look at green infrastructure provision in urban and sub-urban areas. This analysis shows that urban areas in Oxfordshire are in general well provided with accessible natural green space. However, the more rural areas of the county generally do not meet the ANGSt requirements and it could be argued that these standards are inappropriate in a rural context.
- Urban areas where there are significant deficits in accessible natural green spaces are Didcot, Thame, Banbury and Bicester. Future development in these urban areas should aim to increase the provision of accessible natural green space, particularly of sites greater than 2 ha and 20 ha.
- There are many sites within urban areas that are smaller than 2 ha which still provide access to nature for urban residents. These sites are not captured in this analysis. Many of these smaller sites are highly valued by local communities even if their natural value is lower than other green spaces. In green infrastructure terms, protecting and enhancing these smaller spaces is vital for creating healthy communities and their value should therefore not be overlooked.
- In rural areas the deficit in accessible natural green space is unlikely to be apparent to the residents. This is because they have access to the Public Rights of Way network giving them access to the wider countryside. Residents are also more likely to have a view of nature, either from their houses or from within the rural settlements, of the wider landscape. As such rural populations are less likely to feel they have a deficit in access to nature because they are surrounded by it and/or can easily access it.



## 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

This study highlights the provision and deficit of accessible natural green space in Oxfordshire. It serves as a baseline to aid in the planning of green infrastructure provision across the county. The following are recommendations for further work resulting from this study:

- An access to nature in the countryside study. This study would investigate how accessible the countryside is for rural communities as well as the extent to which the countryside is 'experienced' by users. This study would build on work carried out for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) to look at rights of way connectivity, accessibility and the potential for circular walks. It would also quantify 'viewsheds' from rights of way to show how much of the countryside can be experienced from any given point. The outputs of this work could be used to target investment in countryside access and to evaluate access to nature for rural communities in a way that is comparable with the ANGSt standards.
- A Green Infrastructure Audit. This study would identify, categorise and quantify the existing green infrastructure (GI) assets in Oxfordshire, identify gaps in the GI provision and identify opportunities to address any deficits. TVERC has recently carried out a similar study for Bracknell Forest Council.
- A green space connectivity study. This study would analyse the real-world connectivity of green spaces for people by identifying actual walking routes, distances and times to local green spaces. This would help identify where there are accessibility issues and highlight residences that are within the ANGSt buffers but are practically disconnected from urban green space. The study could also include more formal green spaces as well as natural green spaces. The study could also include sites smaller than 2 ha to understand the importance of these local spaces in urban and sub-urban contexts. The results could be used to prioritise access improvements and could lead to the setting of a 'local access to nature' standard for Oxfordshire.

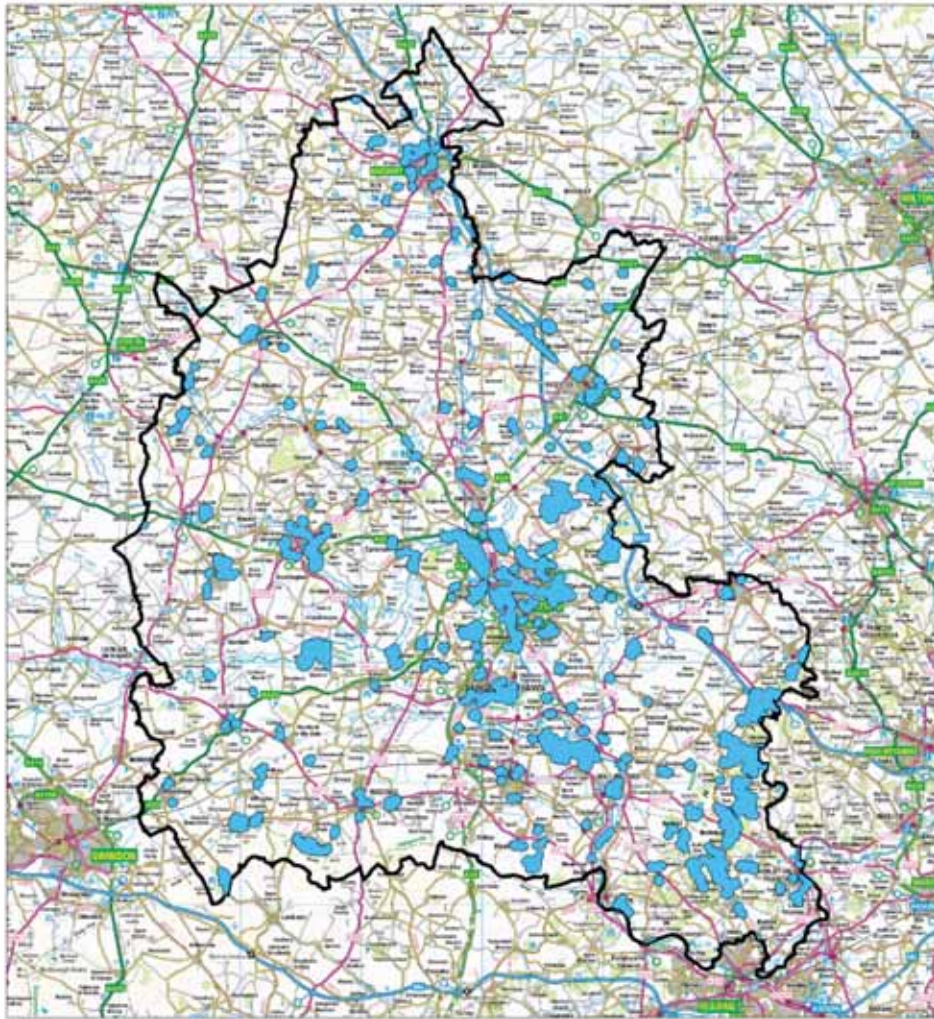
## 4.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was carried out by Dan Carpenter, TVERC Projects Manager. TVERC would like to acknowledge the contribution of Adam McQueen, Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside GIS & Data Management Officer, who compiled the original green spaces dataset. TVERC are also grateful to Oxfordshire's District councils for supplying green space data for this study.



5. FIGURES

Area of Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one 2ha site within 300 metres



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Area meeting requirement for 2ha sites within 300m  
Oxfordshire County Boundary

Scale approximately 1:2,800

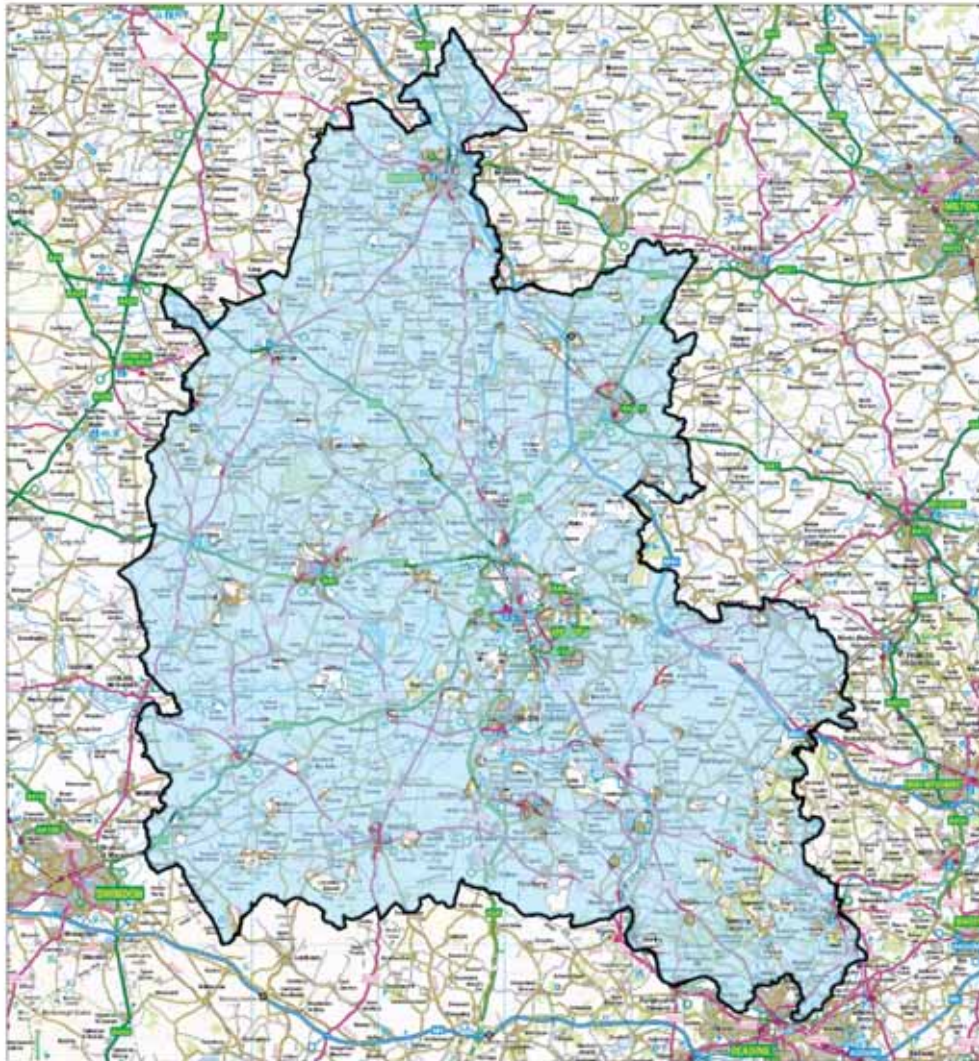
FIGURE 1: AREA MEETING THE REQUIREMENT FOR AT LEAST ONE 2 HA SITE WITHIN 300M, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Dan Carpenter, TVERC Projects Manager  
May 2017



Area of Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one 2ha site within 300 metres



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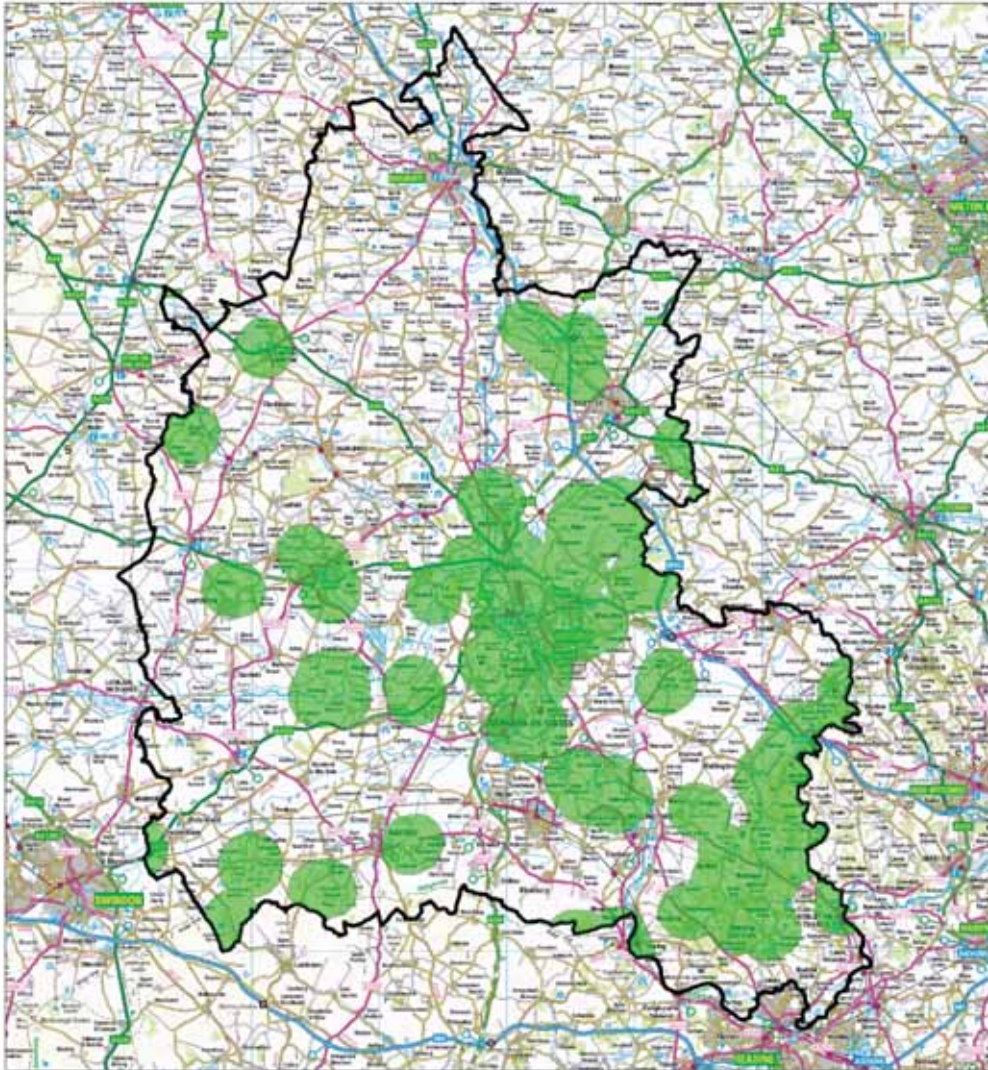
Area not meeting the requirement for 2ha sites within 300m  
Oxfordshire County Boundary

Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 2: AREA NOT MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR AT LEAST ONE SITE OF 2 HA WITHIN 300 M, EXCLUDING RESTRICTED ACCESS SITES



Area of Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one 20ha site within 2km metres



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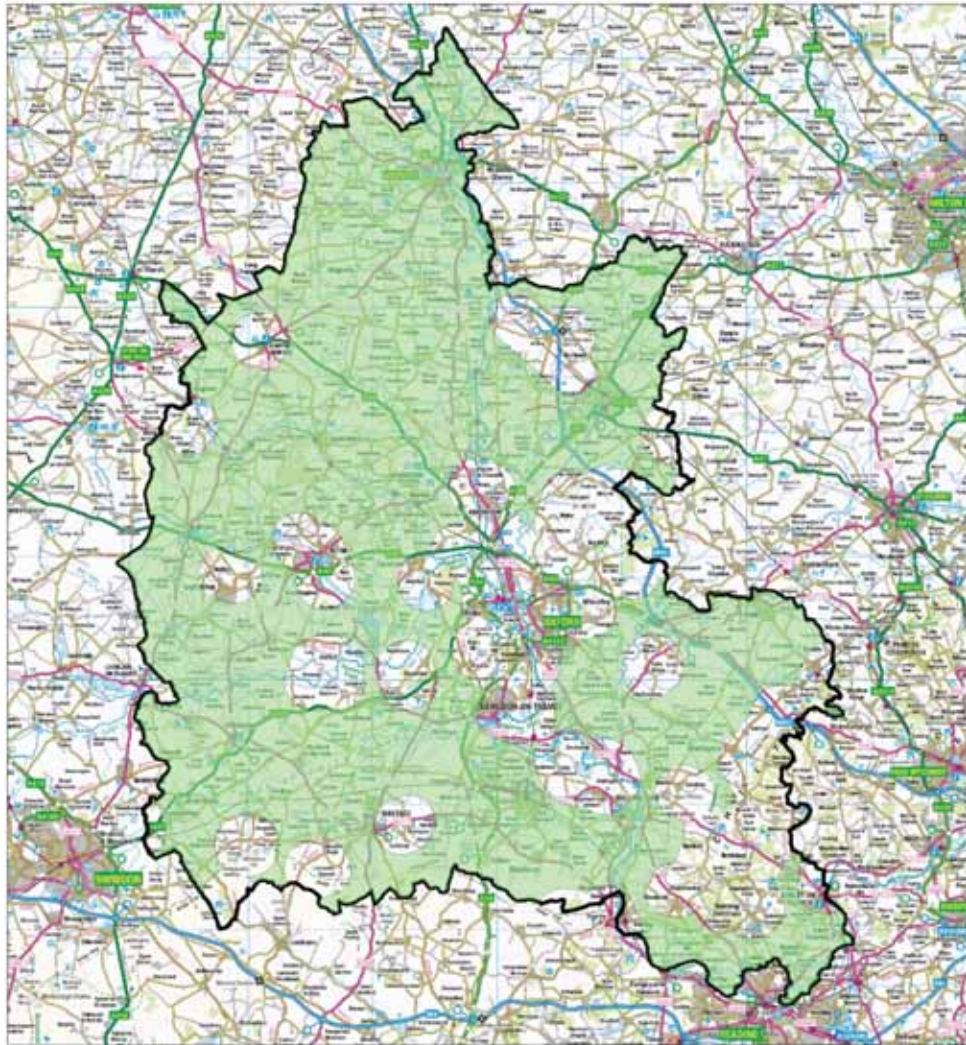
Area meeting requirement for 20ha sites within 2km  
Oxfordshire County Boundary

Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 3: AREA MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ON 20 HA SITE WITHIN 2 KM, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area of Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one 20ha site within 2km metres



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Area not meeting requirement for 20ha sites within 2km  
Oxfordshire County Boundary

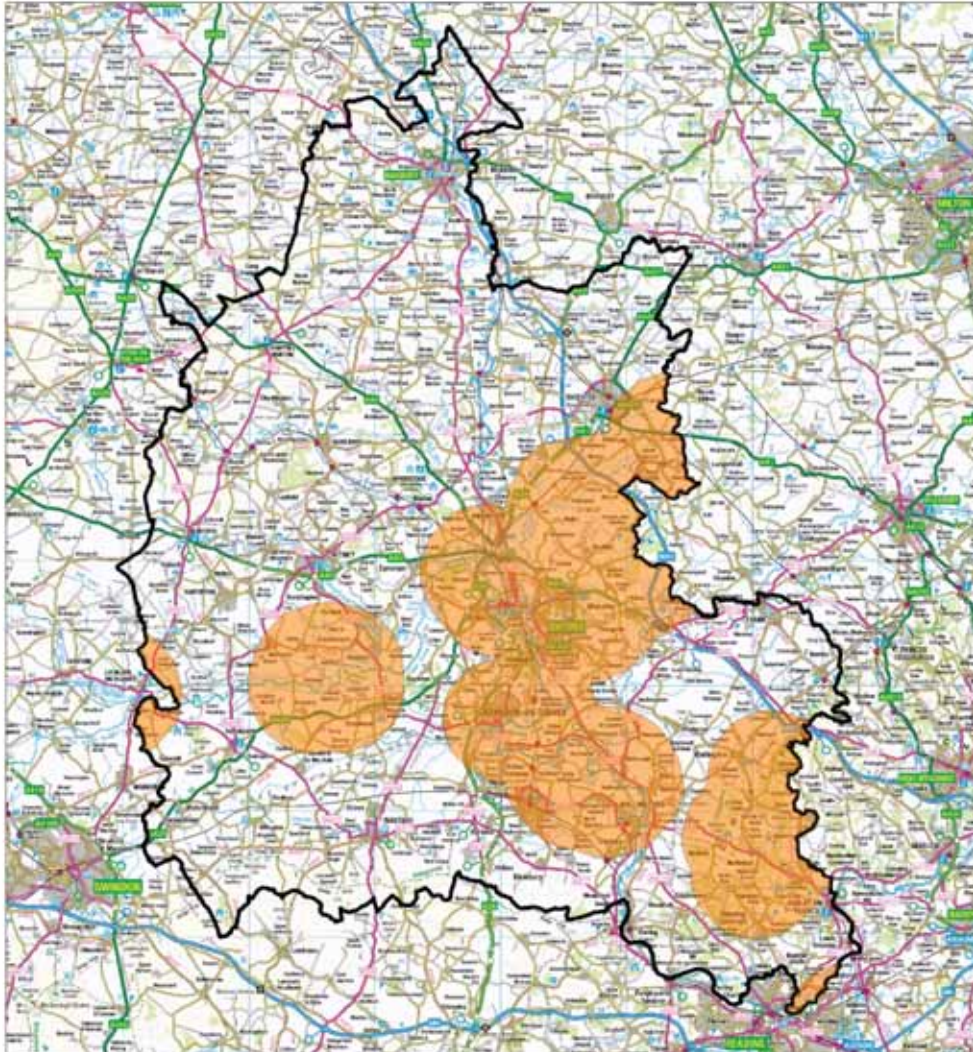
Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 4: AREA NOT MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ONE SITE OF 20 HA WITHIN 2 KM, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS





Area of Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one 100ha site within 5km metres



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Area meeting the requirement for 100ha sites within 5km



Oxfordshire County Boundary



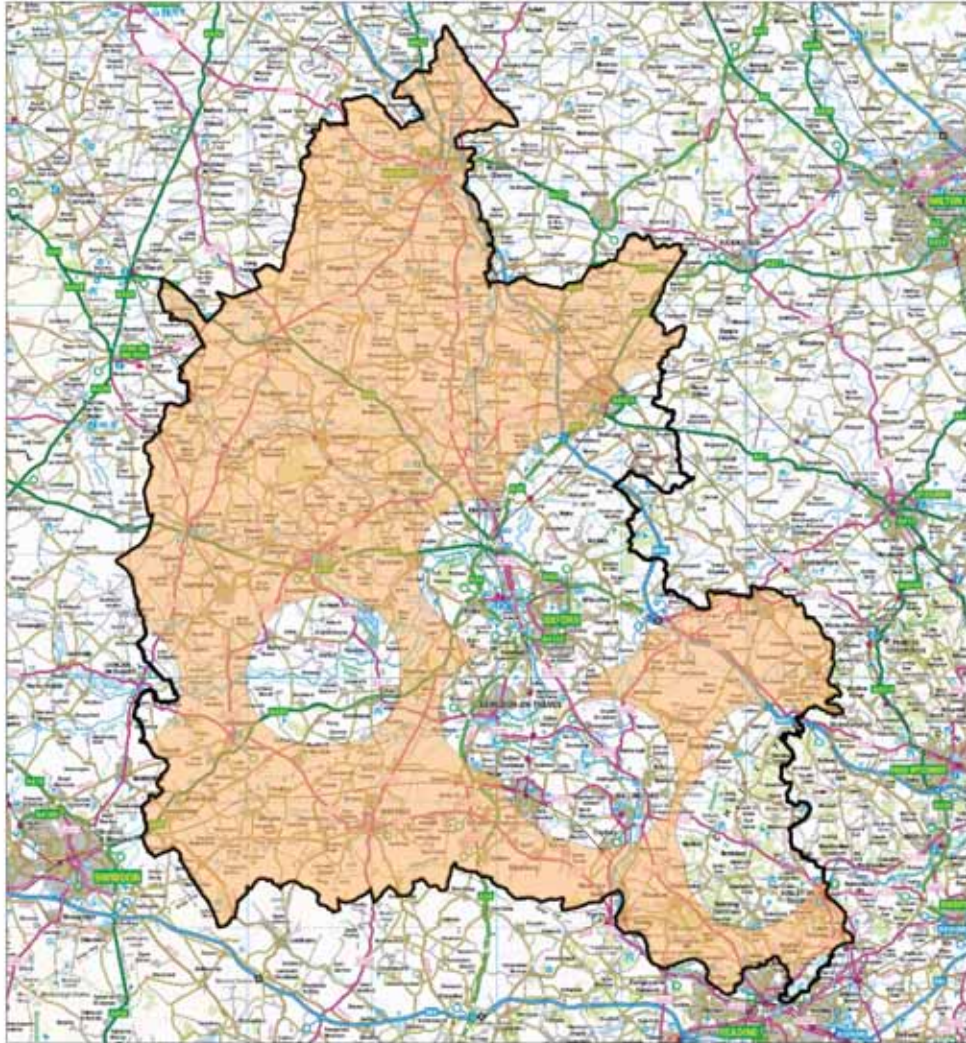
Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 5: AREA MEETING THE REQUIREMENT FOR ONE 100 HA SITE WITHIN 5 KM, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS

ANGSt analysis for Oxfordshire



Area of Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one 100ha site within 5km metres



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Area not meeting requirement for 100ha sites within 5km  
Oxfordshire County Boundary

Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 6: AREA NOT MEETING THE REQUIREMENT FOR ON 100 HA SITE WITHIN 5 KM, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS

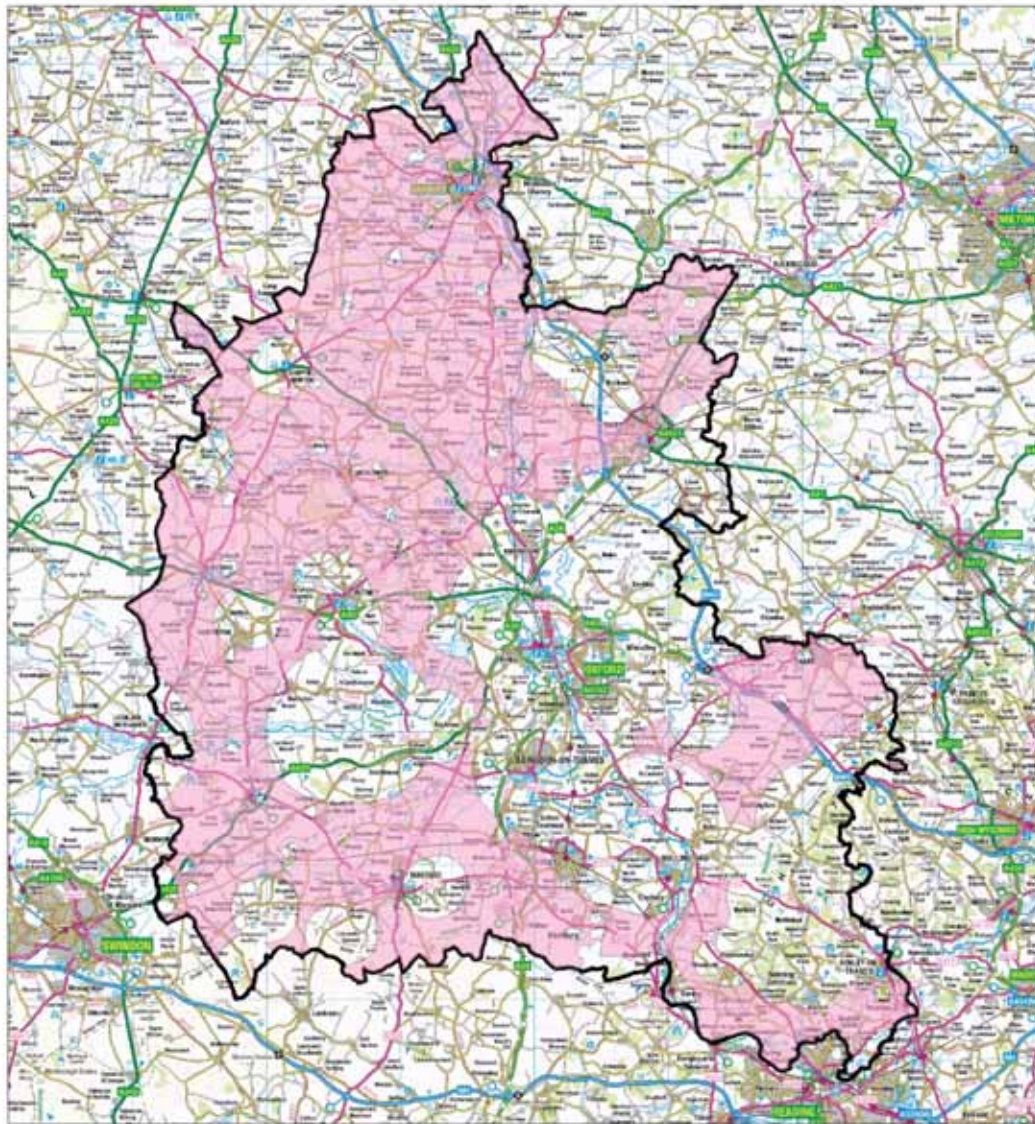


Dan Carpenter, TVERC Projects Manager  
May 2017

# ANGSt analysis for Oxfordshire



Area of Oxfordshire with no ANGSt requirement met, restricted access sites excluded



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Areas where no ANGSt requirements met  
Oxfordshire County Boundary

Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 7: AREA WHERE NO ANGST REQUIREMENT IS MET, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



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May 2017



# ANGSt analysis for Oxfordshire



Area of Oxfordshire with three levels of ANGSt requirement met, restricted access sites excluded



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Areas with 3 ANGSt requirements met  
  
Oxfordshire County Boundary  


Scale approximately 1:2,800

FIGURE 8: AREA WHERE THREE LEVELS OF ANGST REQUIREMENTS ARE MET, EXCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Dan Carpenter, TVERC Projects Manager  
May 2017

# ANGSt analysis for Oxfordshire



Areas in Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one site of 2 ha within 300 m, including sites with restricted access

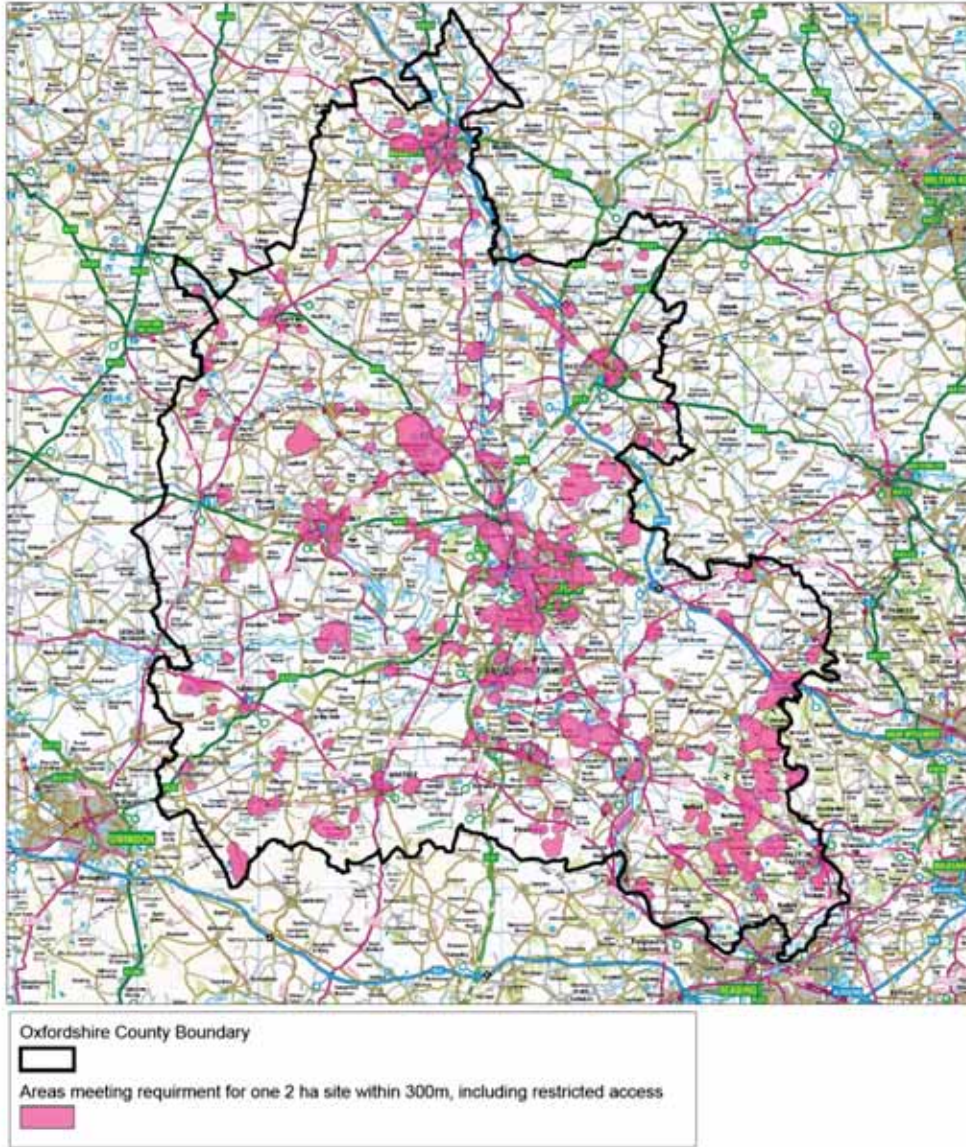


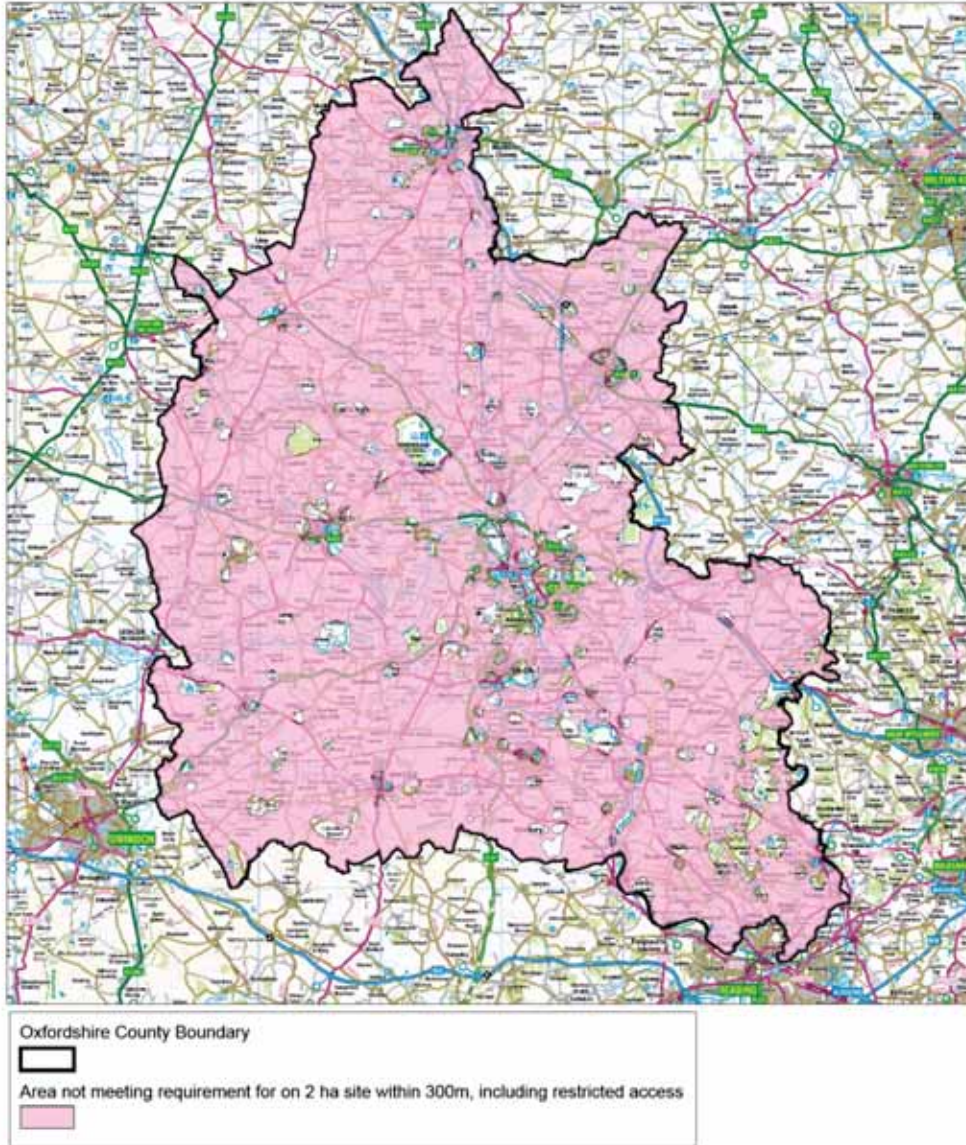
FIGURE 9: AREA MEETING THE REQUIREMENT FOR ONE SITE OF 2 HA WITHIN 300 M, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Dan Carpenter, TVERC Projects Manager  
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Area in Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one site of 2 ha within 300 m, including sites with restricted access



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FIGURE 10: AREA NOT MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ONE 2 HA SITE WITHIN 300 M, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area in Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one site of 20 ha within 2 km, including sites with restricted access

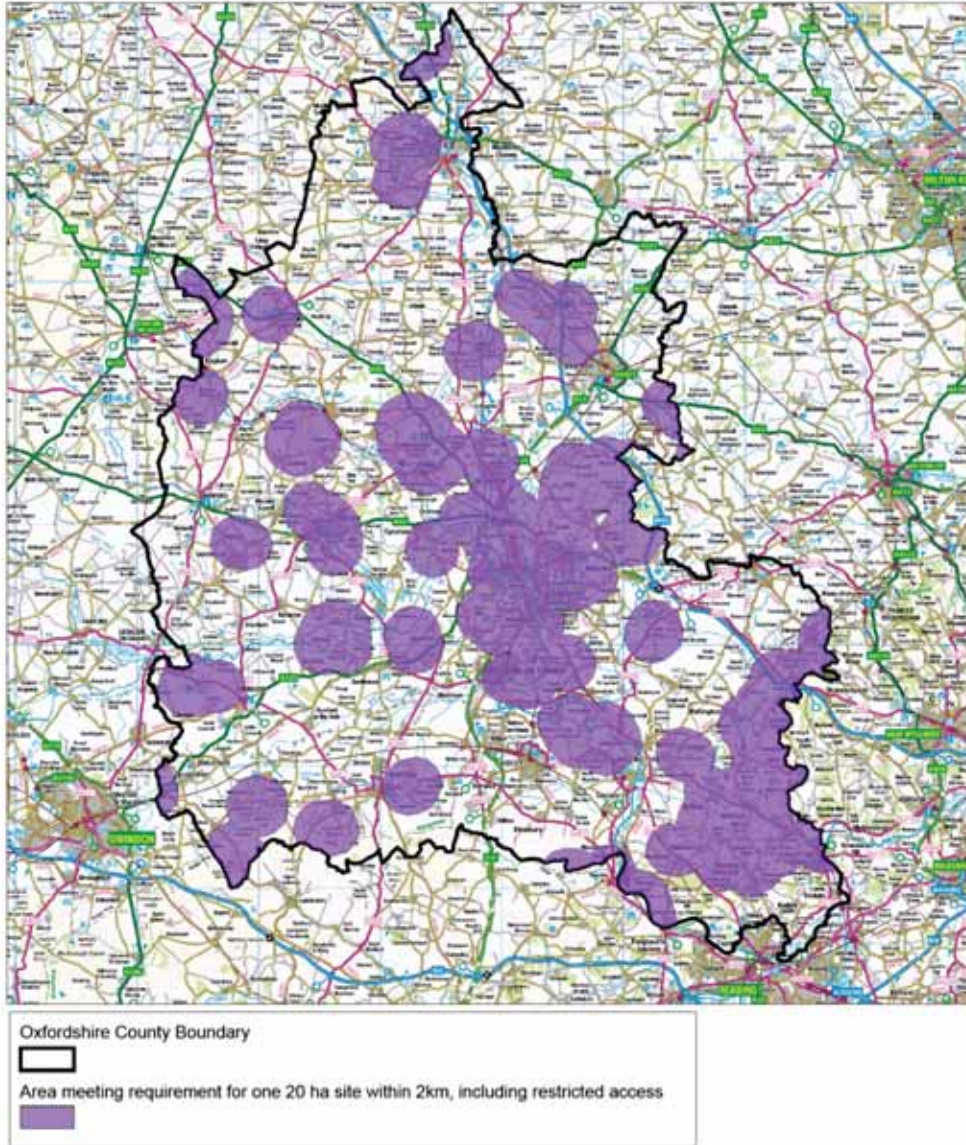
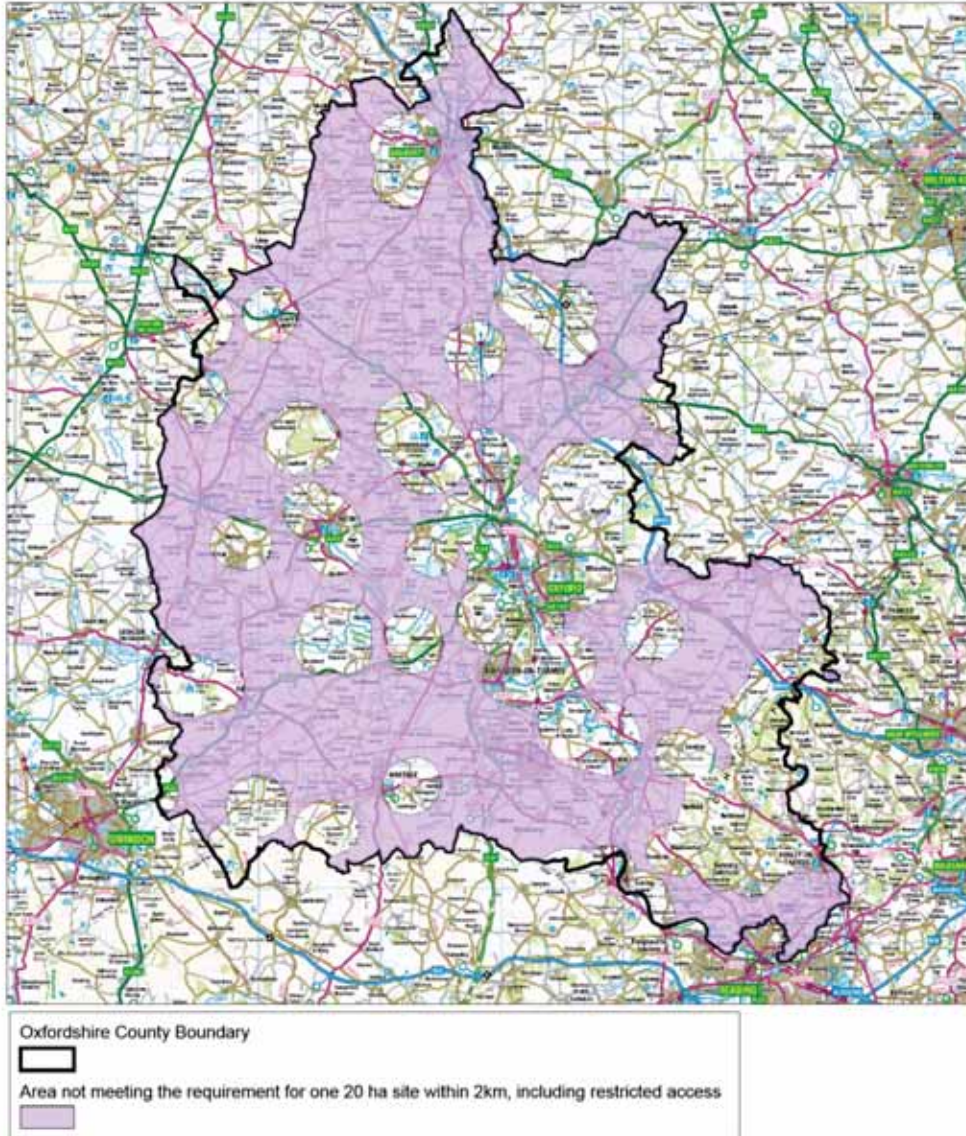


FIGURE 11: AREA MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ONE 20 HA SITE WITHIN 2 KM, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area in Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one site of 20 ha within 2 km, including sites with restricted access



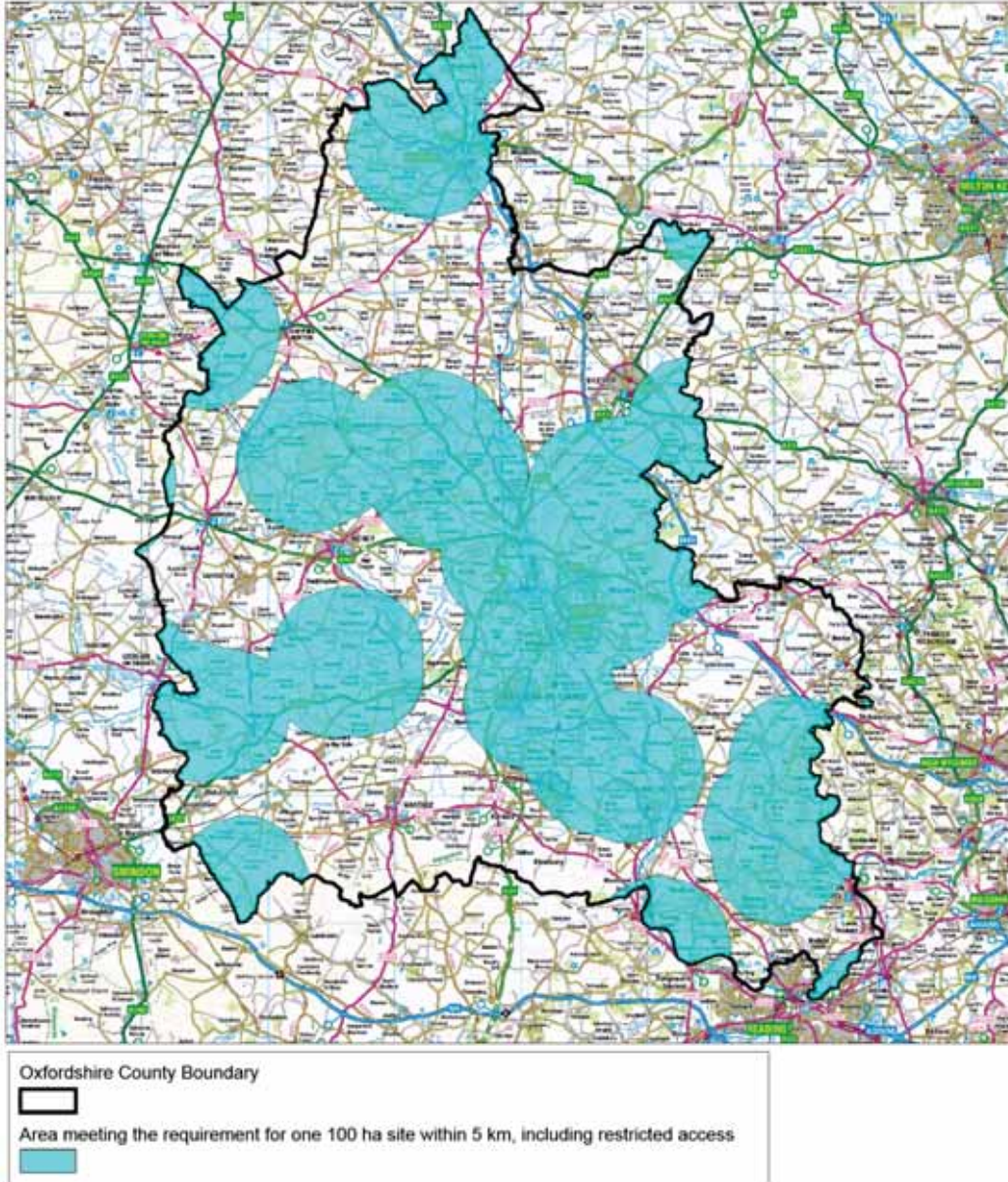
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FIGURE 12: AREA NOT MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ONE 20 HA SITE WITHIN 2 KM, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS





Area in Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one site of 100 ha within 5 km, including sites with restricted access

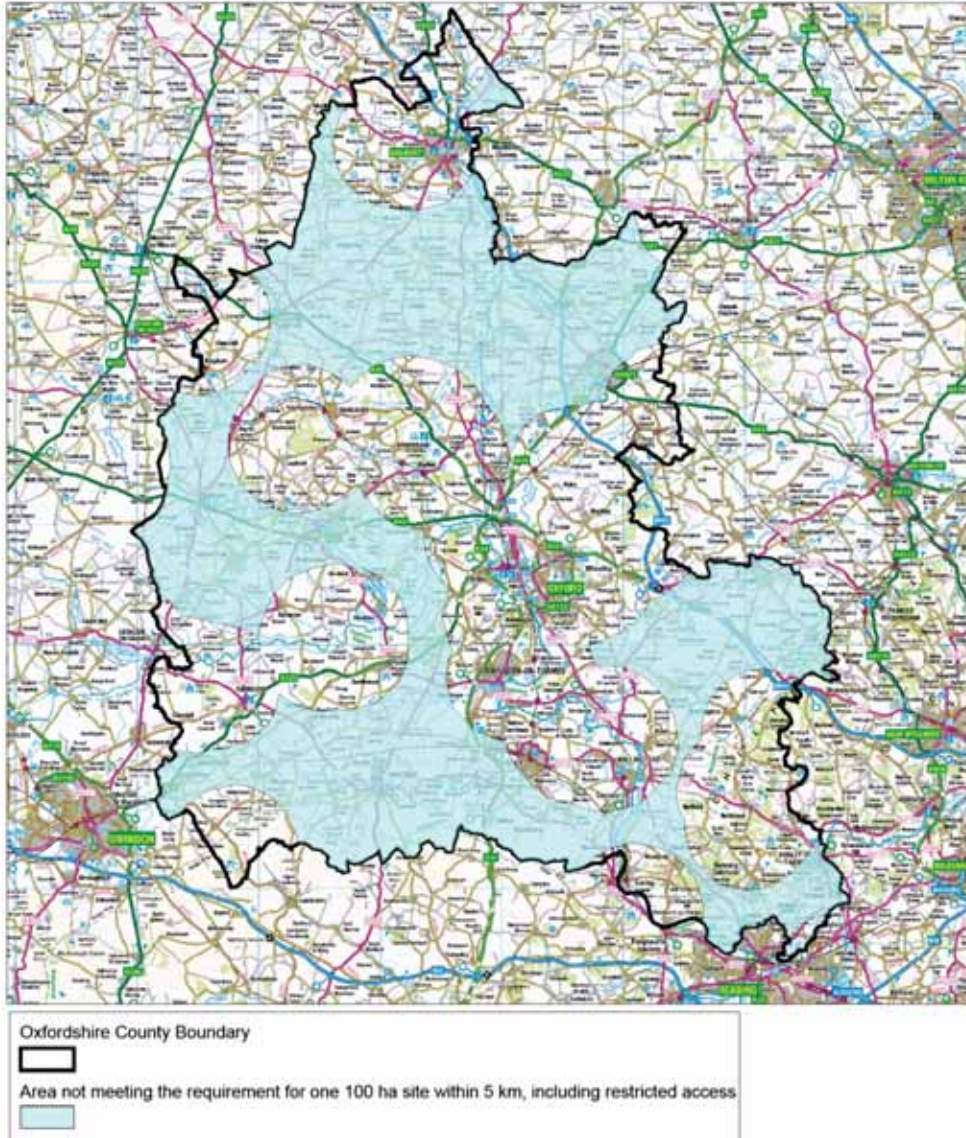


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FIGURE 13: AREA MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ON 100 HA SITE WITHIN 5 KM, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area in Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one site of 100 ha within 5 km, including sites with restricted access



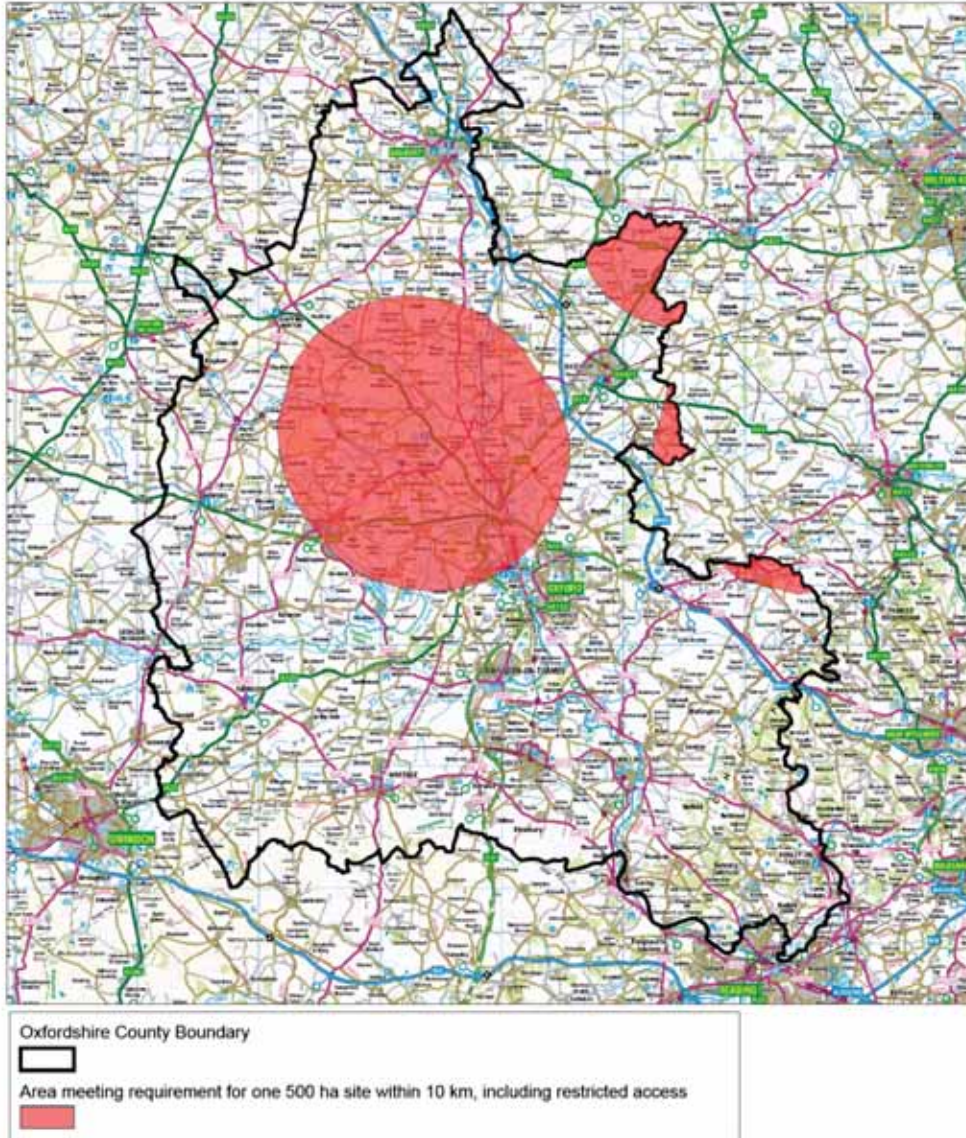
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FIGURE 14: AREA NOT MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ON 100 HA SITE WITHIN 5 KM, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS

ANGSt analysis for Oxfordshire



Area in Oxfordshire meeting the requirement for at least one site of 500 ha within 10 km, including sites with restricted access

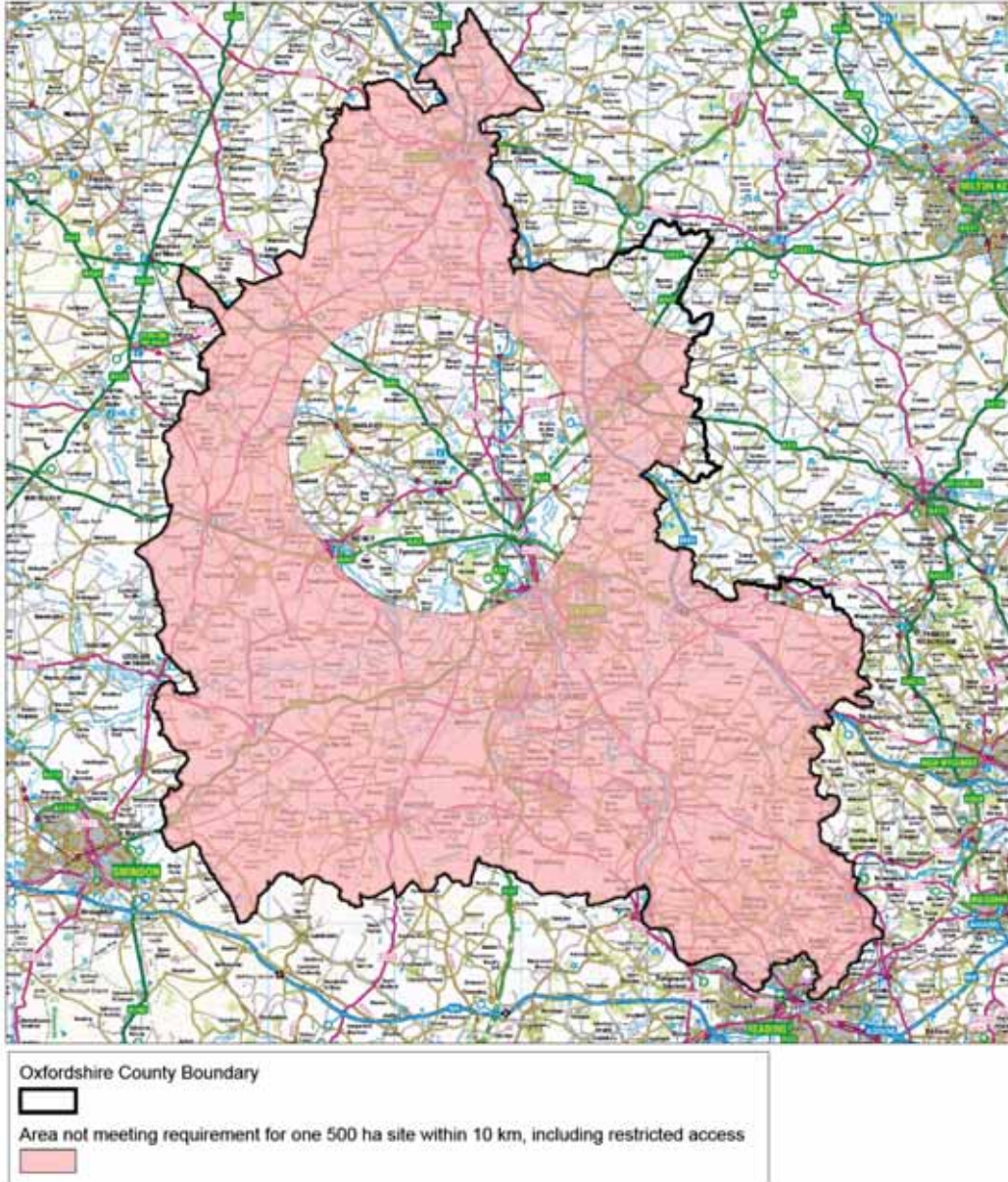


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FIGURE 15: AREA MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ONE 500 HA SITE WITHIN 10 KM, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area in Oxfordshire not meeting the requirement for at least one site of 500 ha within 10 km, including sites with restricted access

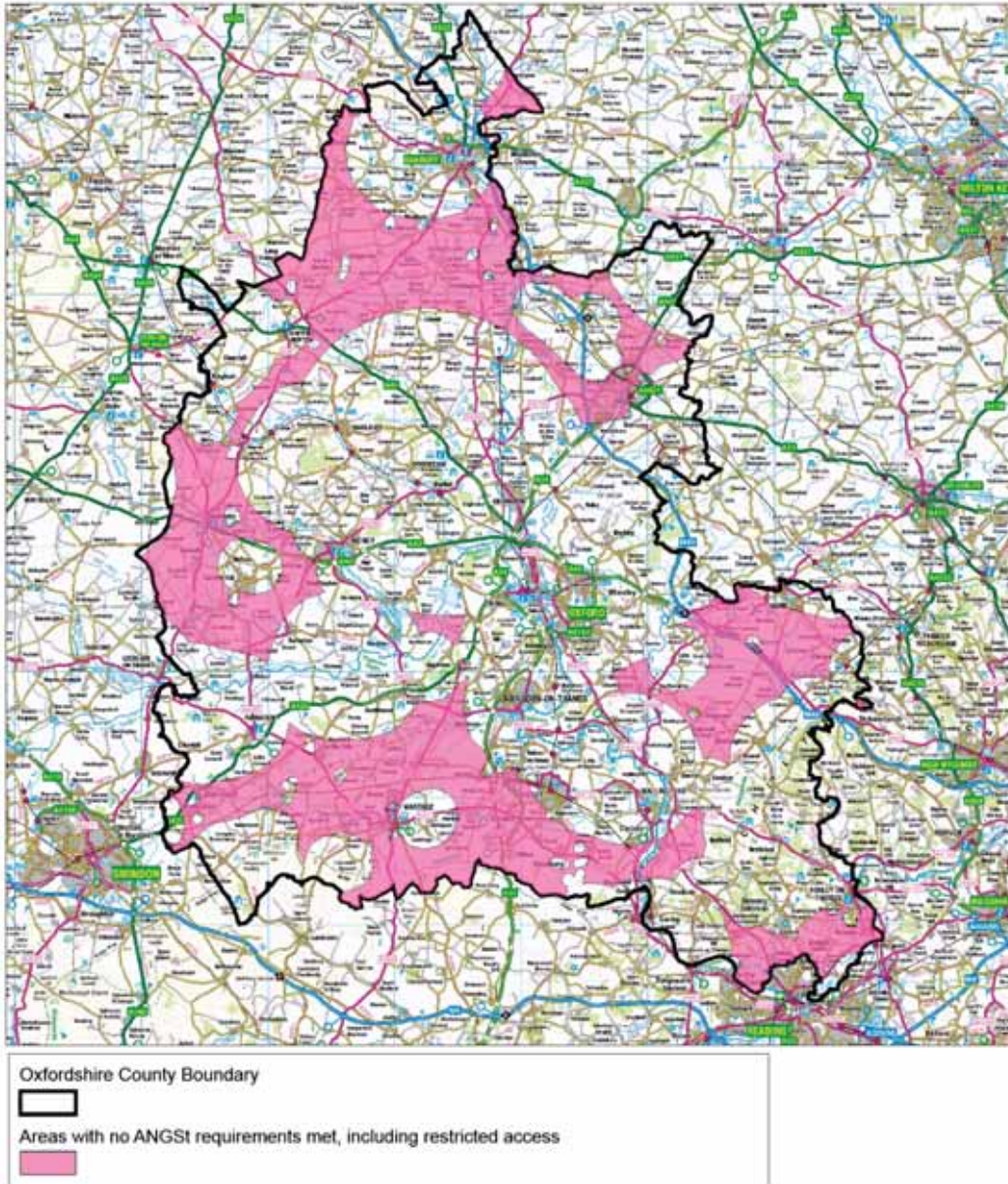


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FIGURE 16: AREA NOT MEETING REQUIREMENT FOR ONE 500 HA SITE WITHIN 10 KM, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area in Oxfordshire with none of the ANGSt requirements met, including sites with restricted access

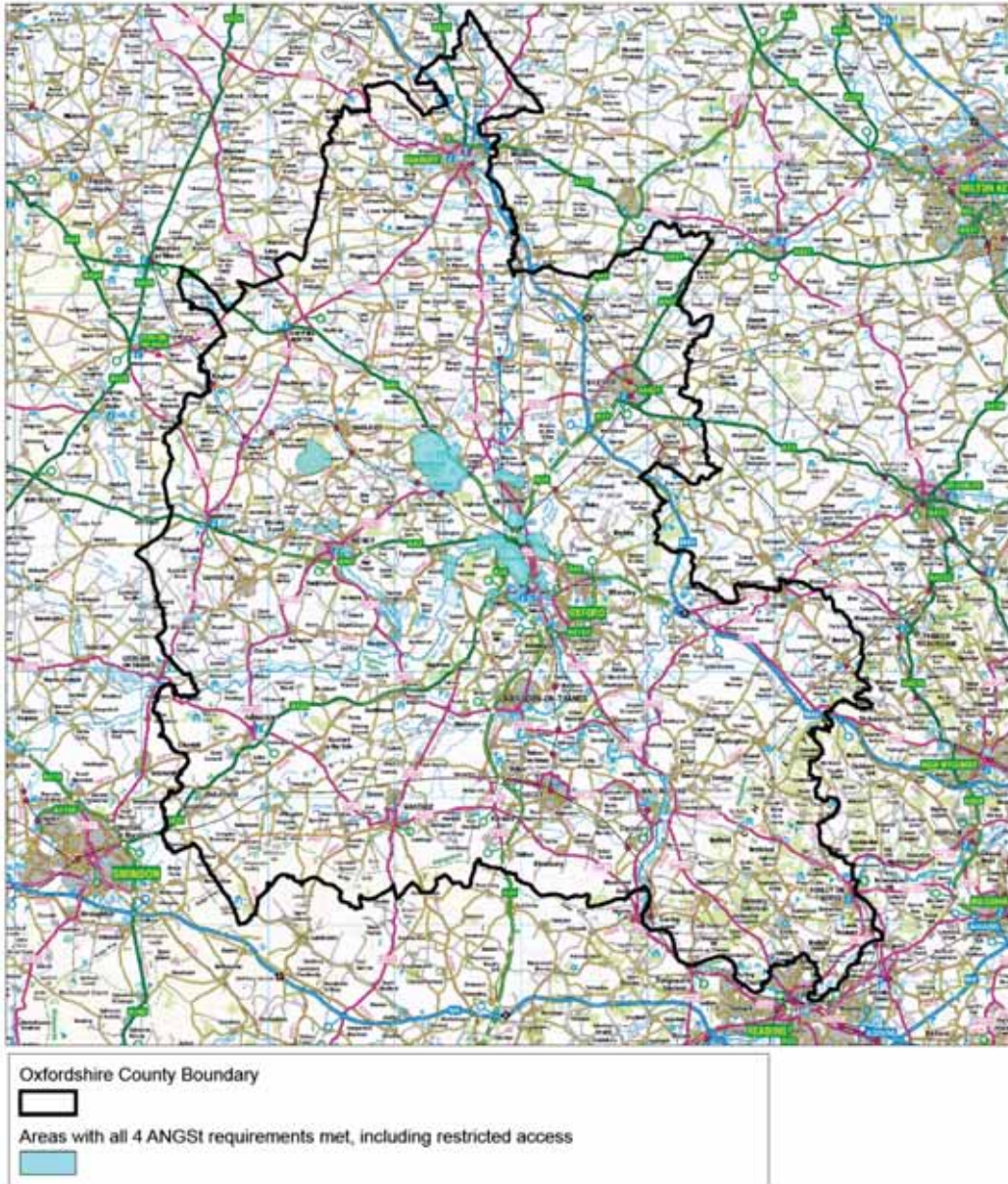


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FIGURE 17: AREA MEETING NONE OF THE ANGST REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



Area in Oxfordshire with all four ANGSt requirements met, including sites with restricted access



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FIGURE 18: AREA MEETING ALL OF THE ANGST REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING SITES WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS



## 6. ABOUT TVERC

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is a 'not for profit' organisation covering Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We are run by a partnership and are one of a national network of local records centres. We are a member of the Association of Local Records Centres (ALERC) and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). Our funding partners include all the local authorities in Oxfordshire & Berkshire plus the Environment Agency. We also work closely with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

### WHAT WE DO

We provide our funding partners with annually updated species and sites information as GIS tables, and undertake surveys of local wildlife sites. We also carry out data analysis for the monitoring of local authority Local Plans. We provide information to parish councils, local people, conservation bodies, land-owners, students and commercial organisations such as ecological consultants and utilities companies via data searches, data licensing and data exchanges. We provide other services such as ecological surveys, data analysis & presentation and training.

### OUR RECORDS

We hold around 1.8 million records of flora and fauna in Berkshire and Oxfordshire plus information about Local Wildlife and Geological Sites, NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principal Importance (previously called UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats) and Ecological Networks (Conservation Target Areas and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas). We collect this data from the general public, skilled volunteer /amateur recorders, professionals working for wildlife charities (BBOWT and RSPB), professionals working for government agencies (the Environment Agency & local authorities) and ecological consultants. This information is used:

- by planning authorities and developers to make informed decisions on the design and location of sustainable development
- to help farmers, land-owners and conservation organisations manage land in the best way to enhance biodiversity
- by nature partnerships to direct wildlife conservation work
- by teachers, students and scientists for education and scientific research.

For more information please visit our website: [www.tverc.org](http://www.tverc.org)