**Post Domesday Leafield**

Early Leafield was probably very much smaller than the present day village. At the time of Domesday, the village probably covered 475 acres, or, in the standard measurement of the time, 4 hides. Although Leafield, along with Ramsden, formed part of one of the Shipton manors, the status of the villages was somewhat distinctive. The 1279 Hundred Rolls record that in Leafield and Ramsden, almost uniquely in the area, were large numbers of freeholders but no demesne or villein tenants.

Over next the few hundred years further areas of the forest were cleared to make additional fields for the village. All these cleared areas were known as "assarts", a term used after the Conquest to describe land cleared from the forest; as Wychwood Forest was owned by the King, he was paid a "fine" for these clearings. Woods to the south of the village, previously owned by Fulbrook, were cleared around 1306. Purveyance Wood was cleared to make Purrants Field and the fields to the east of it. The adjoining hamlet of Field Assarts may have originated around this time. Whiteley Wood was cleared to make Long Assart, between Buttermilk Lane and the lower part of Witney Lane, and Broad Assart, to the east of Buttermilk Lane. The last two later became known as Long Sart and Broad Sart. These three fields amounted to some 185 acres and were became the common fields of the village, in which many people owned strips. Other post Domesday clearances were Watcham and Clay Assarts, to the west of Lowborough Ridings, and Studley Assart, in the north-east corner of the village.

**The early open fields**

The fact that the common fields of Purrants Field, Long Sart and Board Sart  were added after the Conquest does not mean that Leafield had no open field system before then. The 1547 and 1552 surveys of Shipton Manor refer to land holdings in Leafield in "West Field" and "Estbratte" (which means East Field). These two fields appear to have been to the south of the Green, and separated one from the other by Witney Lane. Medieval open fields were usually called East Field, South Field etc., so it is probable that they were the original open fields for the village. The 1552 survey also describes many other holdings as being "in the town field", some of which were north of the Greens; this may have been a third common field, perhaps called North Field. A three field arable system was certainly common in the middle ages.

**The Tudor enclosures**

By the mid sixteenth century, if not earlier, however, all the original open fields had been divided into closes (enclosed fields) and many of them turned over to pasture. This was probably because Leafield had all the common arable land it needed in the three new fields of Purrants Field, Long Sart and Broad Sart on the outskirts of the village. Typically of a village with no dominant landholder, the Leafield Tudor enclosures created a multitude of small farms, representing allotments to individual freeholders. These enclosures meant that an individual's land holding was less fragmented than hitherto, but it is evident from the mid-sixteenth century surveys of Leafield that the new allotments were not all in single compact blocks. However, greater consolidation appears to have taken place throughout the later sixteenth century.

**The later open fields**

Purrants Field, Long Sart and Broad Sart were all divided into strips and individual villagers had rights of common for individual strips. A medieval strip was the area that could be ploughed in a day, most typically 22 yards wide by 200 yards long, and was usually described as "a land" or "an acre".

The first known record of open field holdings, as well as all other land holdings, in Leafield is a 1764 survey in the Blenheim archives. By this time Leafield had grown to 730 acres. The open field holdings were then shared amongst 24 landowners, but the extent of their holdings ranged from 2 acres to more than 35.

These fields continued to be cultivated into this way until the nineteenth century, but common rights ceased with the Leafield Enclosure Award of 1837.