

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

**LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES WITHIN AND
ADJACENT TO THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY IN
WEST BERKSHIRE**

**FINAL PHASE 2 REPORT: EASTERN URBAN AREA PART 2
EUA027 TO EUA036**

E. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: EUA027: Land north of Pincents Lane, Calcot

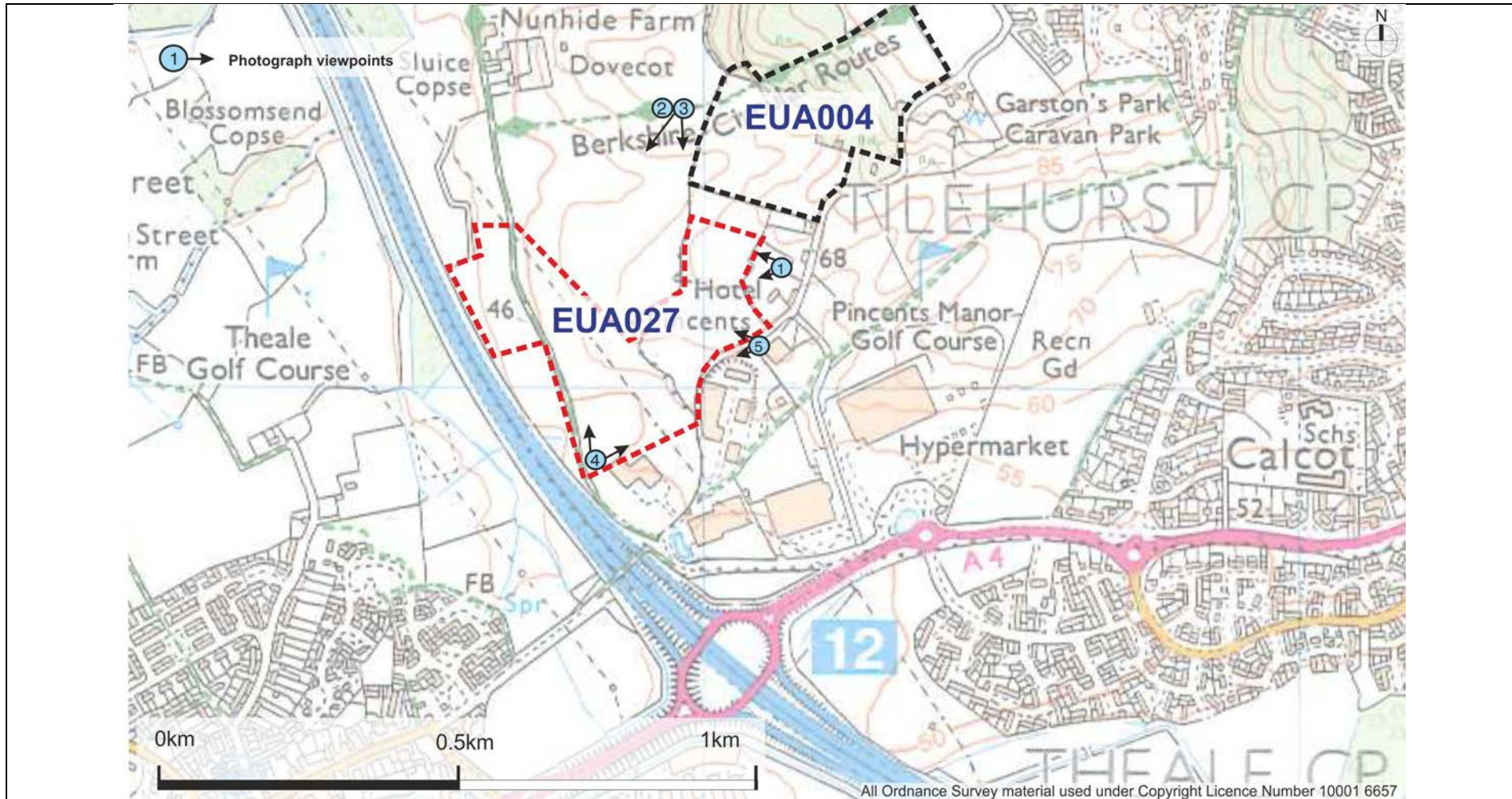


Figure EUA027.1: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA2J: Lower Sulham Slopes, with a small part (Harefield Copse) within LLCA14J: Tilehurst Plateau Edge

LLCA2J: Lower Sulham Slopes have an overall sensitivity of *medium to high*.

LLCA2J is characterised by its strong sense of seclusion and tranquillity, despite the proximity of Reading in the south, and by the extensive views to the wider AONB landscape across rolling fields and the Pang Valley. Its built form is sparse but is of an intimate scale and of historic interest. The LLCA lacks boundary features and contrasts with the intricate landscape pattern of the Pang Valley. The key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

- Good quality agricultural land
- Open landscape but good sense of seclusion
- Predominantly tranquil with some intrusion in the south from the M4 and Calcot
- Sparse settlement with narrow winding roads
- A number of small but distinctive local landmark features
- Extensive areas of medium to high historically sensitive landscapes
- Designed landscape at Sulham and medieval farm buildings
- Good public rights of way provision

Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- Topographical transition from the escarpment edge to the Pang valley floor
- Lack of field boundaries
- Woodland copses
- Part of Sulham gap WWII defences
- Small amount of BAP and SSSI wet woodland
- Some localised cultural interest

Wider landscape: LLCA2J Lower Sulham Dipslopes has a close affinity with the other LLCAs which make up the landscape of the escarpment – 18F, 2I, 13E, 14I and 14J. It also forms the setting to the Pang valley landscape to the west and the village of Sulham. It is visually contained, with views to the edge of the adjoining landscapes except for in the south where long views extend north and west as far as the Chilterns and the Englefield escarpment.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA2J: Lower Sulham Dipslopes is separated from the edge of Reading by the escarpment itself and its wooded landscapes. A small section abuts Pincents Lane in the south but some separation is created through the local topography and a belt of hedgerow and trees. The landscape quality of this short section is vulnerable to erosion through inappropriate development in the Pincents Lane area.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from north-west of Pincents Manor looking over higher part of site to the west. Dovecot visible to the right.



Viewpoint 2: View from Berkshire Circular Route to land on site west of Nunhide Lane



Viewpoint 3: View from Berkshire Circular Route to ground west of Pincents Manor



Viewpoint 4: View over site from south-west corner of site next to Nunhide Lane. Chimneys to Pincents Manor visible through trees.



Viewpoint 5: View west from Pincents Lane up embankment to eastern edge of the site

Site description

Site EUA027 sub-divides into three parts. The northern part lies on the plateau and comprises a number of small paddocks and rough grazing land. It is bounded by a broken line of trees and scrub to the north beyond which lie open arable fields. Pincents Lane lies to the south-east beyond which lies the commercial development within Calcot and to the east the grounds of Pincents Manor, a listed building. The central triangular portion is in arable use and is enclosed by mature trees along the southern boundary and a mature high hedgerow along Nunhide Lane. A young plantation of trees runs along the north-east boundary of this part of the site. The western part lies west of Nunhide Lane. It is a mix of open grassland and scrub on land rising up to the M4 which is screened by trees. The whole site forms the eastern edge of the AONB and the northern part contributes to the wider landscape setting of Pincents Manor.

<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The south-eastern boundary of the site abuts the Ikea site, a long established retail area, and commercial development east of Pincents Lane • Only Ikea lies to the west of the Pincents Lane • Site sits below the Tilehurst plateau and on slopes falling away to the south-west from the settlement • Limited intervisibility with the urban edge except with commercial development east of Pincents Lane • Pylons are a local detractor
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site lies on land rising up into the open landscape of the AONB • Development would be highly visible from the AONB to the west • Part of the AONB pattern of medium sized fields along the Sulham valley side • Part of the tranquil landscape west of Pincents Lane • Good public right of way link with wider landscape
<p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of open landscape setting to Pincents Manor • Loss of open fields on eastern edge of the AONB • Loss of visual tranquillity
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on views from Berkshire Circular Route and Nunhide Lane • Adverse impact on views of the Dovecote • Adverse impact on views from and to Pincents Manor
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development on the site would extend the settlement out onto the south-western slopes of the AONB away from the plateau and the southern slopes dipping down to Calcot • Poor landscape and visual connections with the existing built form • Erosion of the settlement pattern on the edge of the AONB in this location
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development on this site would result in significant harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The site should not be pursued further as a potential housing site on landscape grounds.</p>

F. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: EUA029: Land at Kiln Cottage, Kiln Lane, off Little Heath Road, Tilehurst

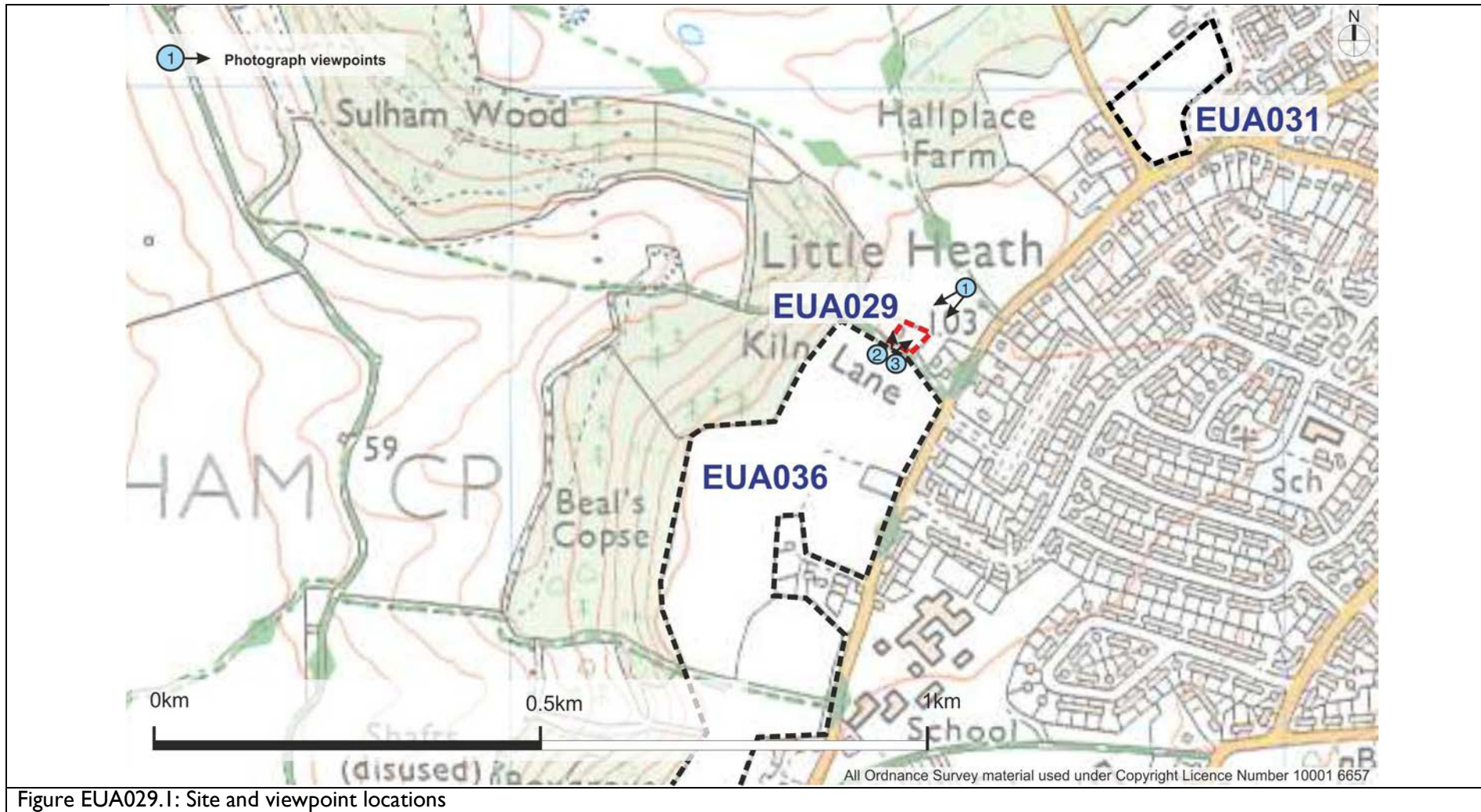


Figure EUA029.1: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau have an overall sensitivity of *medium to low*.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau is characterised by its pattern of small pasture fields, copses and mixed types of development in the plateau top. The key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

- Pattern of small fields of pasture with copses
- Hedgerows and lines of trees
- Listed Late 16th century farmhouse at Hall Place, and 17th century Kiln Cottage
- Good public access
- Value of woodland habitat links with adjacent woodlands on the escarpment

Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- Plateau top to escarpment
- Scattered mixed development broken up by small open areas
- Good level of visual enclosure
- Mostly low to medium historic landscape sensitivity
- Recreational provision
- Medium to low biodiversity

Wider landscape: LLCA21 Upper Sulham Dipslopes has a distinct landscape pattern which differs from the wider plateau and escarpment landscape of large fields and woodland blocks. Views are generally contained by the adjacent woodland.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA21: Upper Sulham Dipslopes influenced by its close proximity to Little Heath, resulting in fragmentation and domestic land uses. A thin belt of trees and hedgerows separates the settlement from the LLCA.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from Berkshire Circular Route north of the site to Kiln Cottage



Viewpoint 2: View from Kiln Lane to Kiln Cottage



Viewpoint 3: View from Kiln Lane to site on Kiln Cottage's garden

Site description

Site EUA029 is a very small area partly laid out as a garden and partly under rough grassland and surrounded by trees. Kiln Cottage, a listed building, lies to the west of the site and stands alone as an isolated building in the countryside. To the north lie open fields. To the south runs Kiln Lane with a belt of trees along its southern boundary beyond which lie the open fields of EUA036. The woodland and tree cover extend in a wide belt to the west and east of the site and link into the wooded escarpment.

<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site retains its rural character as a small historic settlement in open countryside • Contrast with the typical settlement pattern in Little Heath • Part of the wooded landscape setting to the listed Kiln Cottage
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains its rural character • Set within wooded belt that links with the wooded escarpment • Located open the open landscape of the Tilehurst plateau • Located on a rural lane
<p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development would detract from the rural setting of Kiln Cottage • Potential adverse impact on woodland and tree cover around the site • Potential loss of tree cover and hedgerow along Kiln Lane to provide access
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided tree cover is retained there would be minimal visual impact • Loss of tree or understorey cover would give rise to visual impacts on rural views from Kiln Lane and the Berkshire circular route through the AONB
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development could avoid urbanising this small settlement extension west of Little Heath Road through careful design • Minor intensification of development west of Little Heath Road but in location which is already partly developed
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development as a potential housing site would result in significant harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Development as a potential housing site is not recommended. The impact on the setting of Kiln Cottage and the loss of any surrounding tree and other understorey vegetation would have a significant detrimental effect on the AONB.</p>

G. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: EUA031: Land to the east of Sulham Hill, Tilehurst

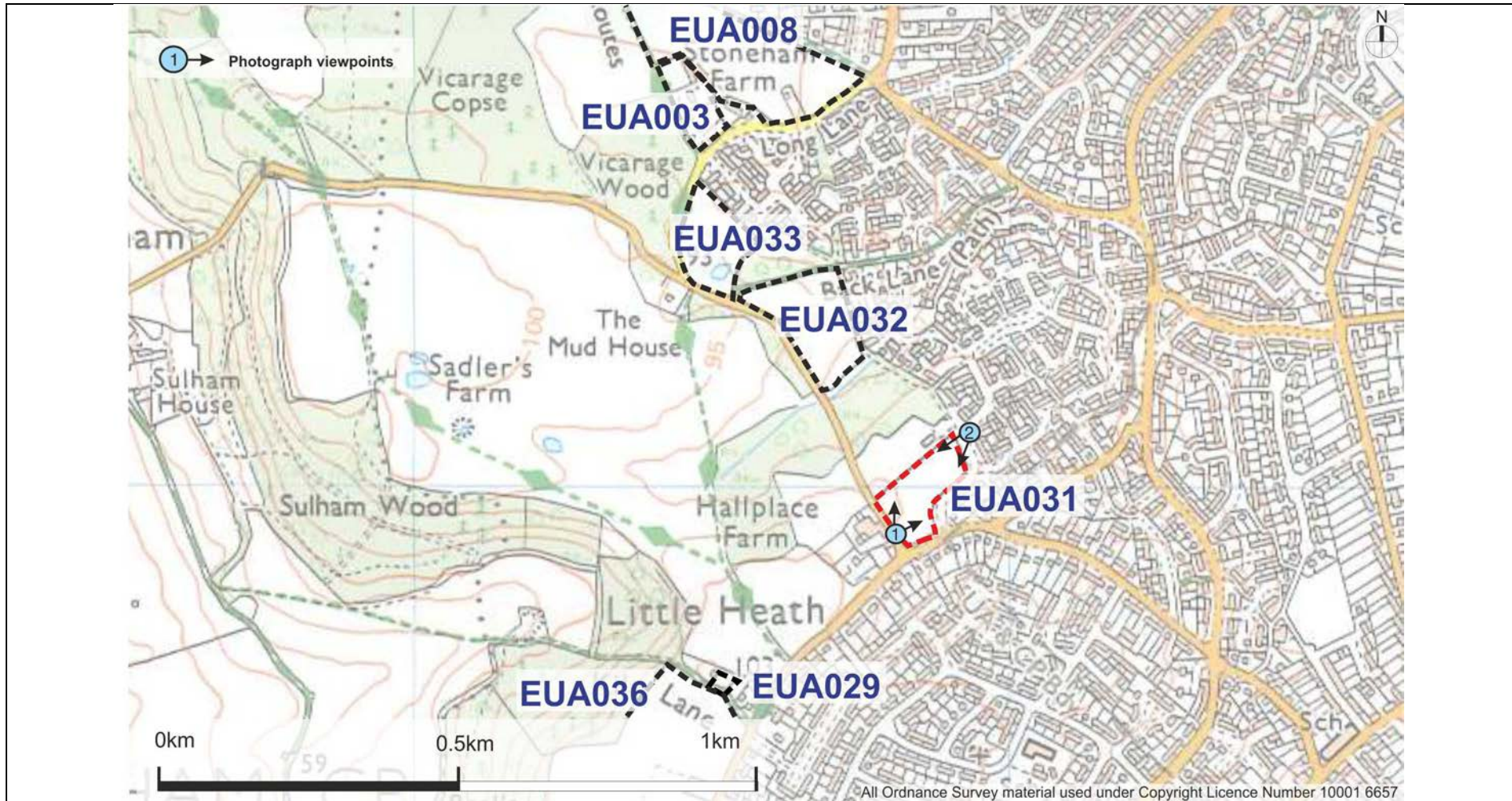


Figure EUA031.1: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau have an overall sensitivity of *medium to low*.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau is characterised by its pattern of small pasture fields, copses and mixed types of development in the plateau top. The key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

- Pattern of small fields of pasture with copses
- Hedgerows and lines of trees
- Listed Late 16th century farmhouse at Hall Place, and 17th century Kiln Cottage
- Good public access
- Value of woodland habitat links with adjacent woodlands on the escarpment

Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- Plateau top to escarpment
- Scattered mixed development broken up by small open areas
- Good level of visual enclosure
- Mostly low to medium historic landscape sensitivity
- Recreational provision
- Medium to low biodiversity

Wider landscape: LLCA2I Upper Sulham Dipslopes has a distinct landscape pattern which differs from the wider plateau and escarpment landscape of large fields and woodland blocks. Views are generally contained by the adjacent woodland.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA2I: Upper Sulham Dipslopes influenced by its close proximity to Little Heath, resulting in fragmentation and domestic land uses. A thin belt of trees and hedgerows separates the settlement from the LLCA.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View south-west from Clements Mead over the site



Viewpoint 2: View north-east over site from Sulham Hill to Clements Mead

Site description

Site EUA031 lies off Sulham Hill, on the edge of and within the setting of the AONB. It sits on the Tilehurst plateau with gentle slopes north-east towards development on Clements Mead. It is in use as paddocks which extend to the west of Sulham Hill, north of Hall Place Farm. Historic and modern buildings at Hall Place Farm overlook the site. To the north lies extensive mature woodland (ASNW) on a steep escarpment separated from the site by the recreation ground. Housing on Clements Mead and Little Heath Road surrounds the site on two sides.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- The site is framed by housing to the north-east and south-east
- Sits on the Tilehurst plateau with the land gently falling towards Clements Mead
- Existing housing visibly exposed to the site

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The site is typical of paddocks on former pre-18th century irregular fields which are common along the Little Heath plateau
- No intervisibility with other paddocks or pre-18th century fields which extend along Little Heath Road
- Adjacent wooded escarpment forms setting to the site
- Separated from wider AONB landscape by woodland

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of typical paddock on former pre-18th century irregular fields

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Potential loss of views of wooded escarpment at this point

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Would be in keeping with the pattern of development on the plateau
- On land falling down towards the urban area
- Opportunity to improve urban edge at this point

Summary of compliance with NPPF

Development on this site could be accommodated subject to important measures to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.

Recommendations

This site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site subject to the following to conserve and enhance the AONB:

- Set back from Sulham Hill to enable creation of woodland belt along this edge to soften urban edge of Tilehurst, to enhance rural character of Sulham Hill and Hall Place Farm, and to conserve and enhance the AONB
- Tree planting along the boundary with the recreation site
- Preferred access off Clements Mead in order to retain semi-rural character of Sulham Hill
- A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

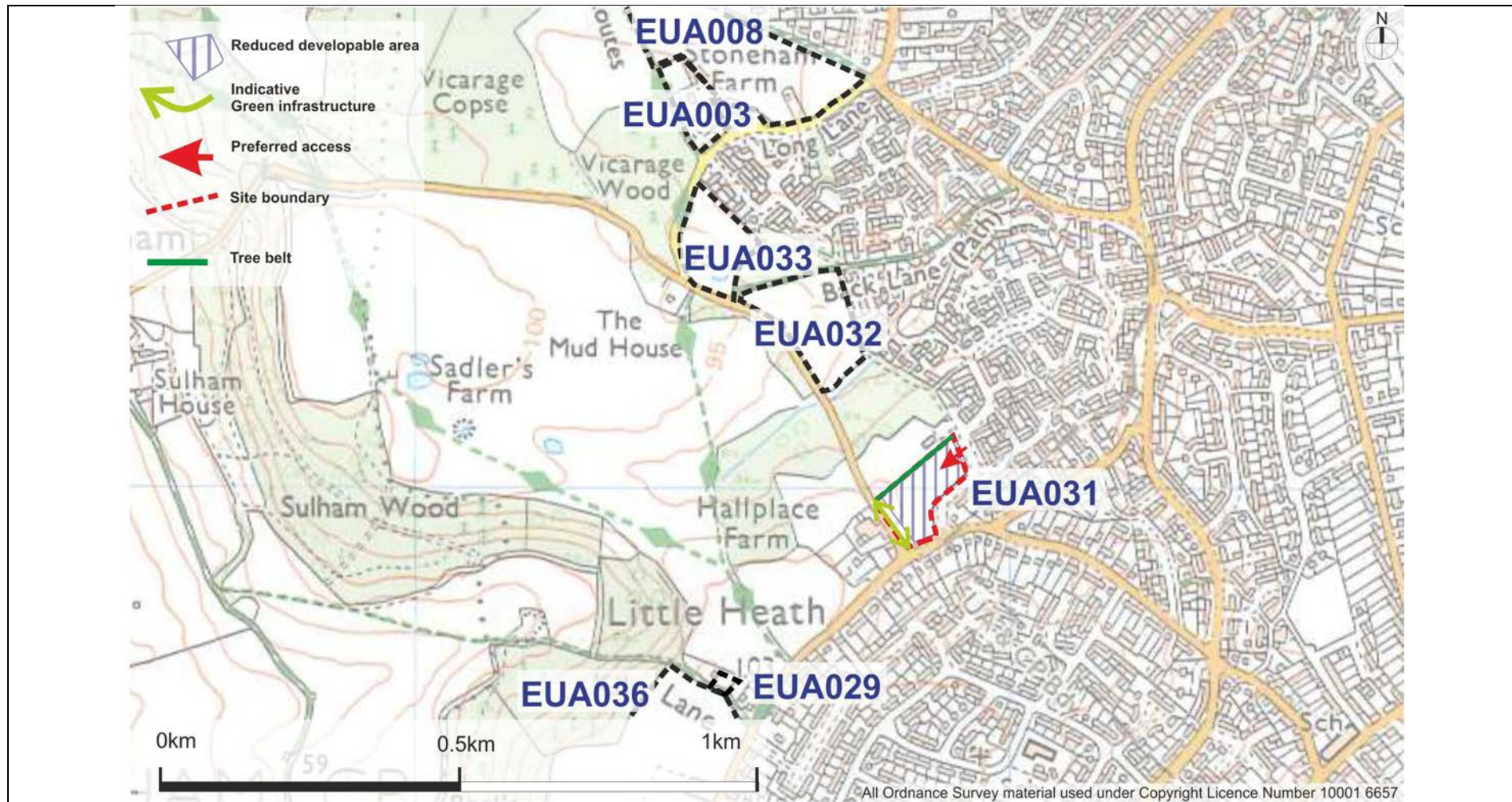


Figure EUA03 I.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

H. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: EUA032: Land to the east of Sulham Hill between Barefoot Copse and Cornwell Copse, Tilehurst

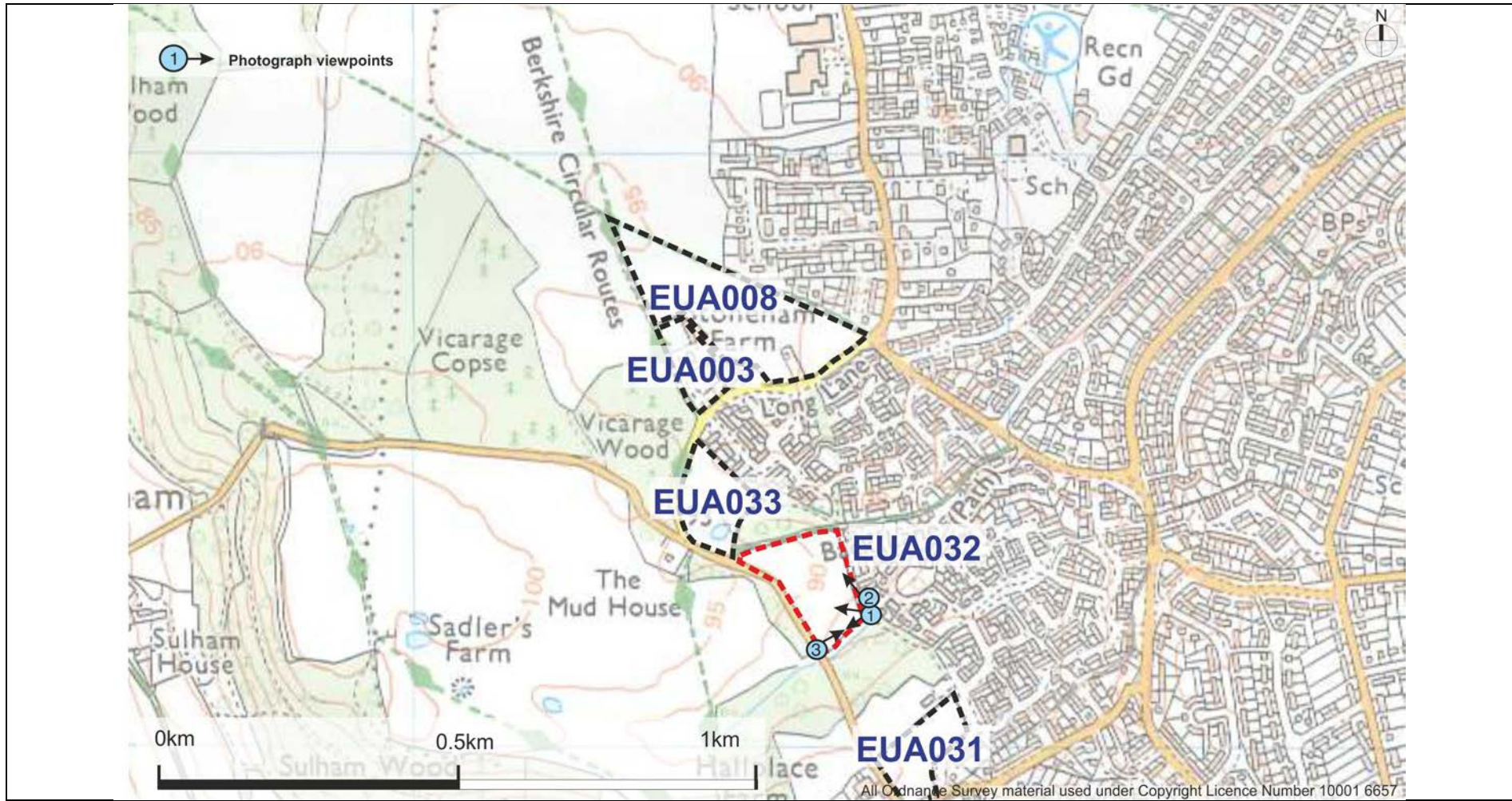


Figure EUA032.1: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau have an overall sensitivity of *medium to low*.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau is characterised by its pattern of small pasture fields, copses and mixed types of development in the plateau top. The key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

- Pattern of small fields of pasture with copses
- Hedgerows and lines of trees
- Listed Late 16th century farmhouse at Hall Place, and 17th century Kiln Cottage
- Good public access
- Value of woodland habitat links with adjacent woodlands on the escarpment

Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- Plateau top to escarpment
- Scattered mixed development broken up by small open areas
- Good level of visual enclosure
- Mostly low to medium historic landscape sensitivity
- Recreational provision
- Medium to low biodiversity

Wider landscape: LLCA21 Upper Sulham Dipslopes has a distinct landscape pattern which differs from the wider plateau and escarpment landscape of large fields and woodland blocks. Views are generally contained by the adjacent woodland.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA21: Upper Sulham Dipslopes influenced by its close proximity to Little Heath, resulting in fragmentation and domestic land uses. A thin belt of trees and hedgerows separates the settlement from the LLCA.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from permissive path on the edge of houses on Meadowside over the southern part of the site



Viewpoint 2: View from permissive path on the edge of houses on Meadowside over the northern part of the site

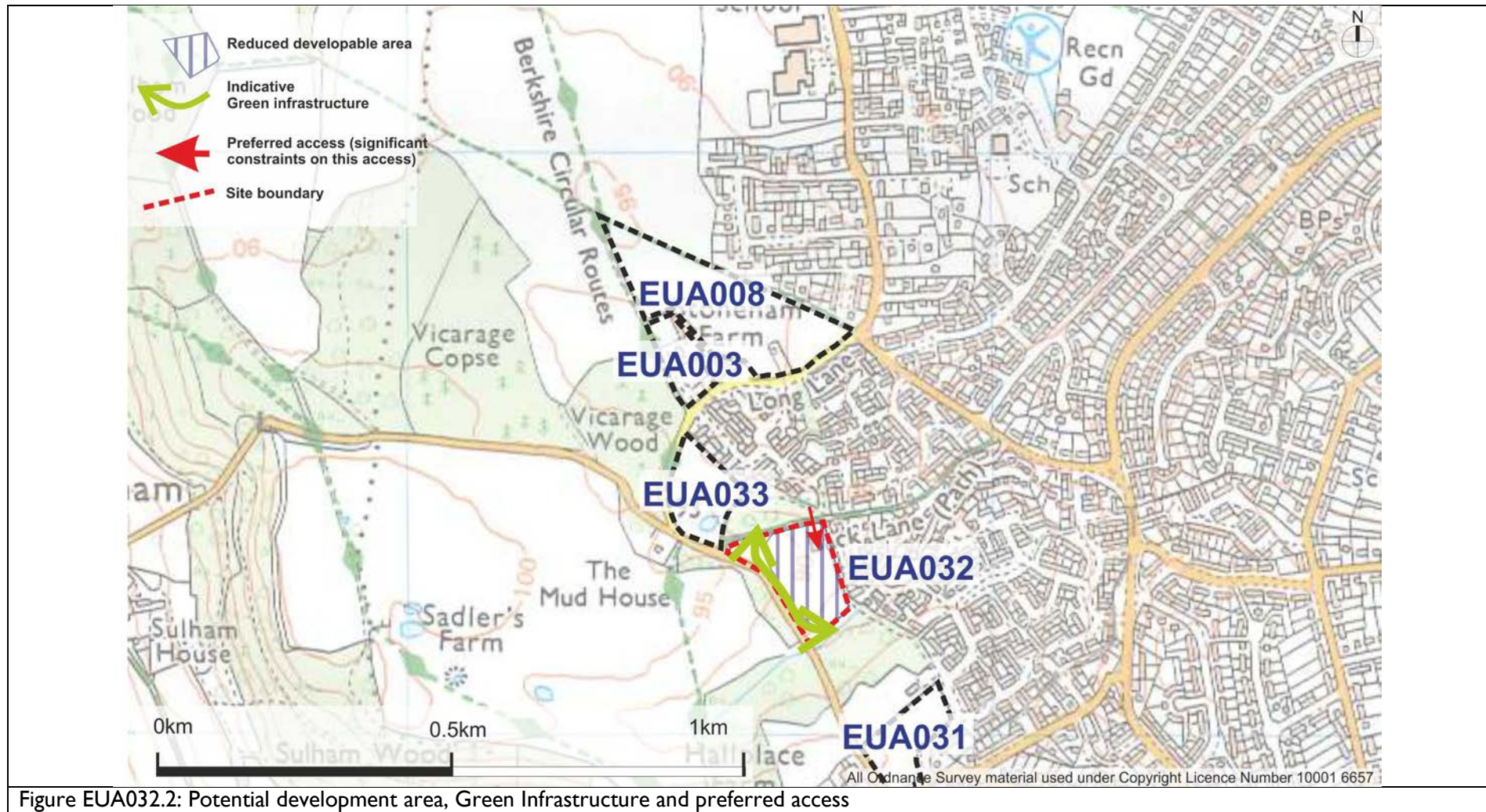


Viewpoint 3: View from Sulham Hill field entrance over the southern part of the site

Site description

Site EUA032 lies to the east of Sulham Hill, on the edge of and within the setting of the AONB, and on land below the wooded escarpment sloping down from 95m AOD in the north-west to a stream to the south at around 85m AOD. The land is under pasture and enclosed by vegetation on all four sides: by a wooded local wildlife site to the north between the site and EUA033 and development at Vicarage Wood Way; a hedgerow and trees along the rear gardens to Meadowside to the east; by an extensive woodland on the escarpment (ASNW) beyond which lies the recreation ground, site EUA031 and housing in Tilehurst; and by a dense tree line along Sulham Hill to the west, beyond which lies woodland and the open fields of the AONB.

<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The settlement wraps around the site to the north and east but is separated by woodland to the north and a dense hedgerow to the east • Away from the Tilehurst plateau but on lower undulating slopes already developed north and east of the site • No intervisibility with the settlement
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclosed by the typical woodland and dense tree belts of this area • Field is typical of the matrix of woodland and irregular fields of pasture in the area • On undulating ground which extends west into the wider AONB • Abuts a typical rural lane – Sulham Hill
<p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of field which is characteristic of the landscape pattern of this area • Potential impact on tree cover • Potential adverse impact on the rural character of Sulham Hill
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited due to wooded enclosure • Potential adverse impact on Sulham Hill if views of settlement are introduced (settlement is currently well screened in this location)
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the settlement up out from lower slopes onto undulating landscape of the AONB
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development on part of the site, subject to the recommendations below, could be accommodated subject to important measures to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. In order to avoid a wider impact on the AONB, and Sulham Hill in particular, it is not recommended that there should be any access off Sulham Hill. The only access point recommended is therefore off Vicarage Wood Way which would impact on individual mature trees and the Local Wildlife Site which may be unacceptable.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>This site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site subject to the following important constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial reinforcement of the wooded eastern boundary of Sulham Hill as shown in Figure EUA032.2 to ensure that there is no adverse intrusion from the development and to integrate the development into a wooded surrounding • No access off Sulham Hill • Detailed assessment of any alternative access point in order to avoid any unacceptable impacts on local landscape and ecological assets • A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.



I. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: EUA033: Land to the east of Long Lane, and south of Blackthorn Close, Tilehurst

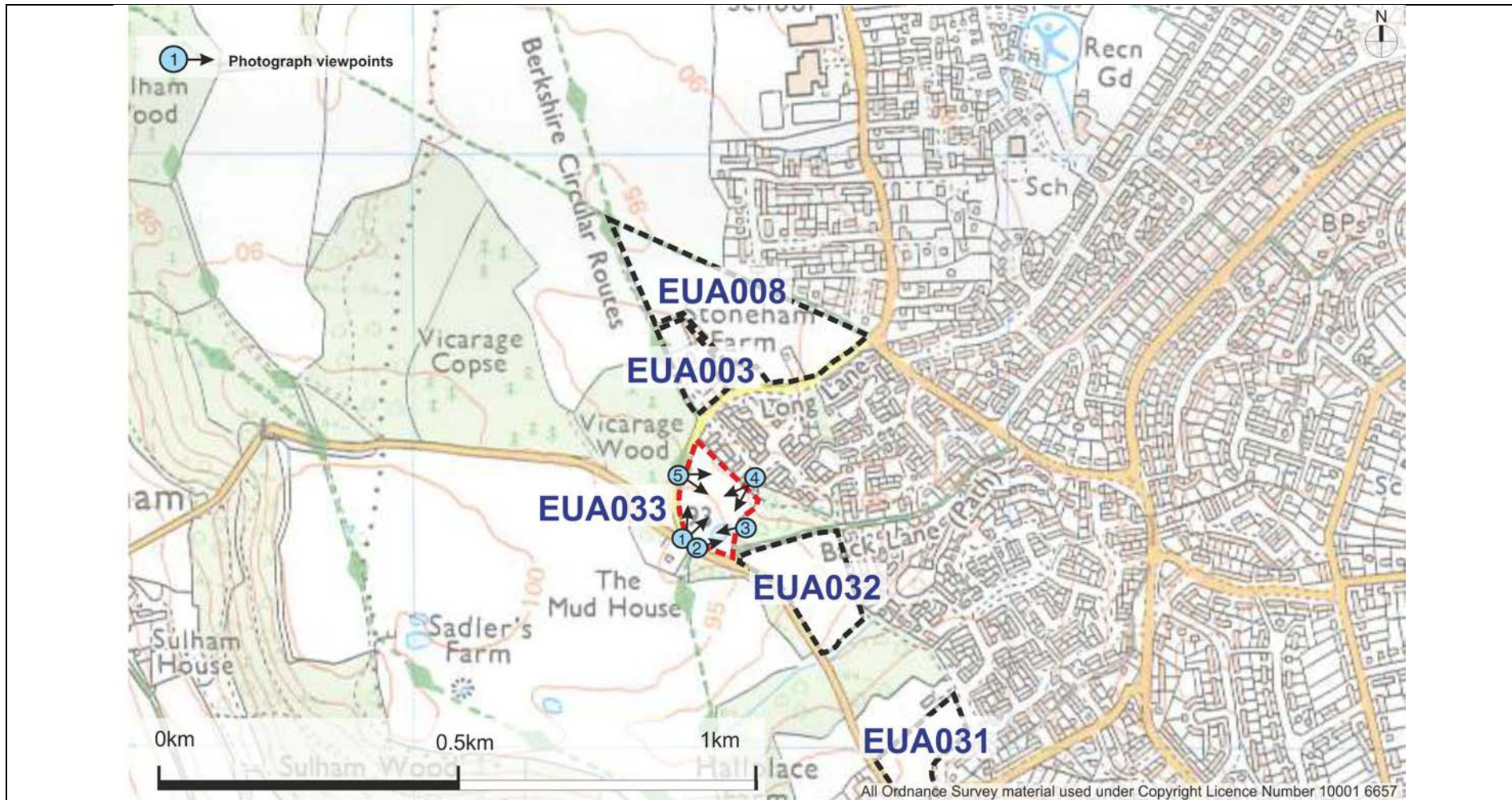


Figure EUA033.I: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau have an overall sensitivity of *medium to low*.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau is characterised by its pattern of small pasture fields, copses and mixed types of development in the plateau top. The key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

- Pattern of small fields of pasture with copses
- Hedgerows and lines of trees
- Listed Late 16th century farmhouse at Hall Place, and 17th century Kiln Cottage
- Good public access
- Value of woodland habitat links with adjacent woodlands on the escarpment

Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- Plateau top to escarpment
- Scattered mixed development broken up by small open areas
- Good level of visual enclosure
- Mostly low to medium historic landscape sensitivity
- Recreational provision
- Medium to low biodiversity

Wider landscape: LLCA21 Upper Sulham Dipslopes has a distinct landscape pattern which differs from the wider plateau and escarpment landscape of large fields and woodland blocks. Views are generally contained by the adjacent woodland.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA21: Upper Sulham Dipslopes influenced by its close proximity to Little Heath, resulting in fragmentation and domestic land uses. A thin belt of trees and hedgerows separates the settlement from the LLCA.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from junction of Sulham Hill and Long Lane over site to houses on Blackthorn Close



Viewpoint 2: View of wooded area in the south-east quadrant of the site



Viewpoint 3: View pond in wooded area in south-east quadrant of the site



Viewpoint 4: View from permissive path to the rear of houses on Blackthorn Close over site looking west to Sulham Hill



Viewpoint 5: View through trees along Long Lane across the northern part of the site

Site description

Site EUA033 is a medium to small sized field under pasture to the south-west of Blackthorn Close and east of Long Lane and Sulham Hill. It is enclosed by a tree belt along the boundary with Long Lane and hedgerow and woodland along Sulham Hill. The south-east quadrant of the site is wooded, with a small pond, and merges with the woodland (Local Wildlife Site) along the southern boundary of the site.

<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site immediately abuts the semi-exposed edge of housing on Blackthorn Close • The north-eastern part of the site lies on the lower slopes at around 90m AOD which continue into the settlement
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is one of the last remaining pre 18th century irregular fields remaining on the plateau edge • Enclosed by woodland of the wider landscape • Higher ground near Sulham Hill is part of the undulating topography of the wider landscape • Small copse with pond in the south-east quadrant contributes to the local landscape character and diversity
<p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of good local asset: small pasture field with pond and emerging woodland • Potential impact on the adjacent woodland and tree cover • Impact on open undulating topography
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual impact on local rural roads: Long Lane and Sulham Hill • Potential exposure of urban edge
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential over expansion up onto higher ground away from lower slopes
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development on part of the site, subject to the recommendations below, could be accommodated but in order to avoid a wider impact on the AONB, and Sulham Hill in particular, it is not recommended that there should be any access off Sulham Hill and that the access point off Long Lane is as close to the houses on Blackthorn Close as possible.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Development on this site would result in the loss of one of the few remaining pre 18th century irregular fields along the plateau and an area of wooded pasture which is a key characteristic of the AONB in this area. However provided the loss of this area of pasture is mitigated by substantive landscape gain through the enhancement of woodland links and screening of the settlement edge, this site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site as shown in Figure EUA033.2, subject to the following important constraints to conserve and enhance the AONB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit development area to that shown in Figure EUA033.2 below the 90m AOD contour and the wooded quadrant to avoid more extensive harm to the AONB • Retention of the woodland in the south-east quadrant and extension of the woodland over the higher ground to merge with tree line along Long Lane and complement Vicarage Wood • No access off Sulham Hill • Access as close to the urban edge as possible • Reinforce tree belt along Long Lane with understorey planting to screen development • A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

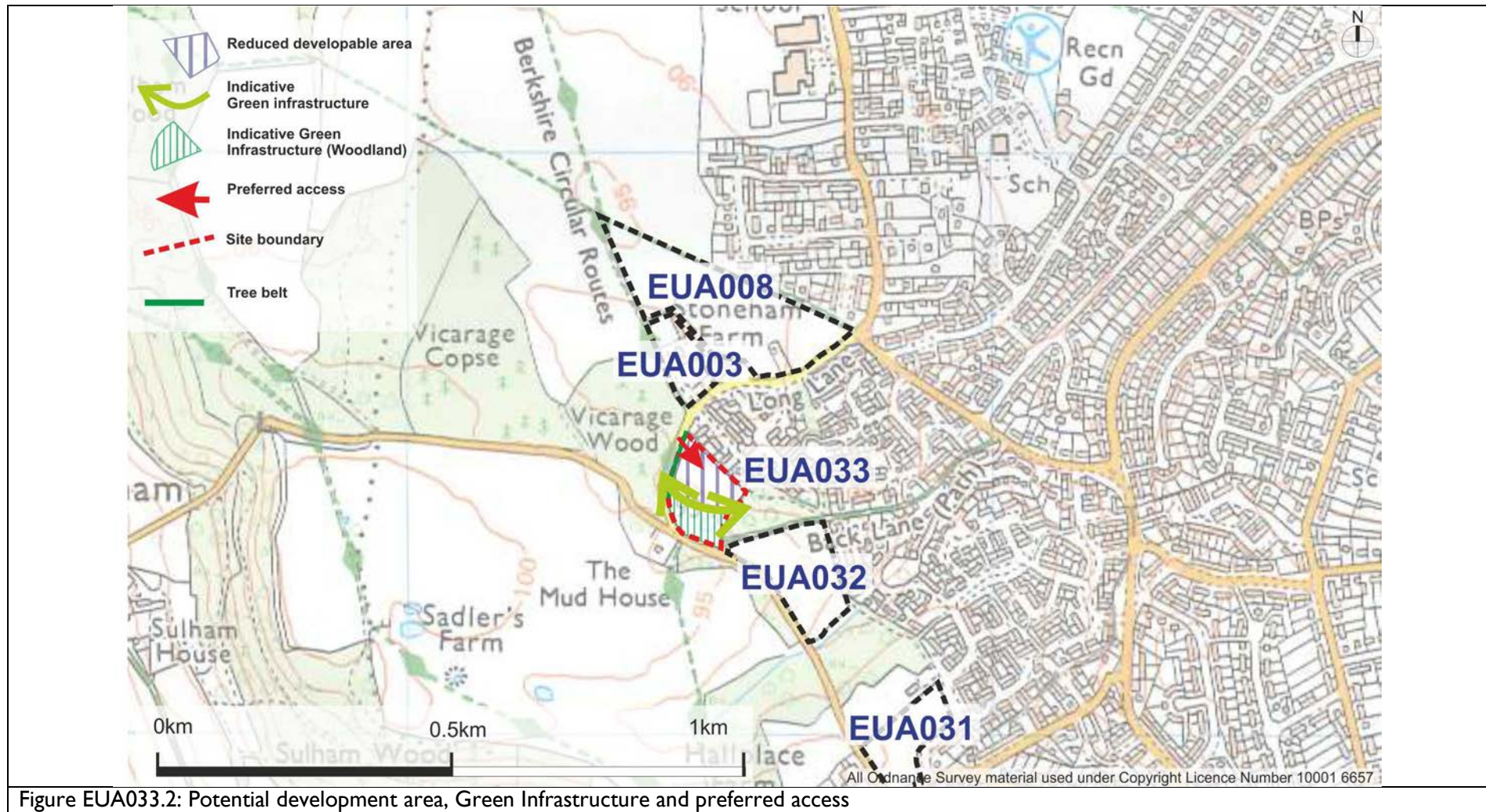


Figure EUA033.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

J. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: EUA036: Land at Little Heath Road, Tilehurst

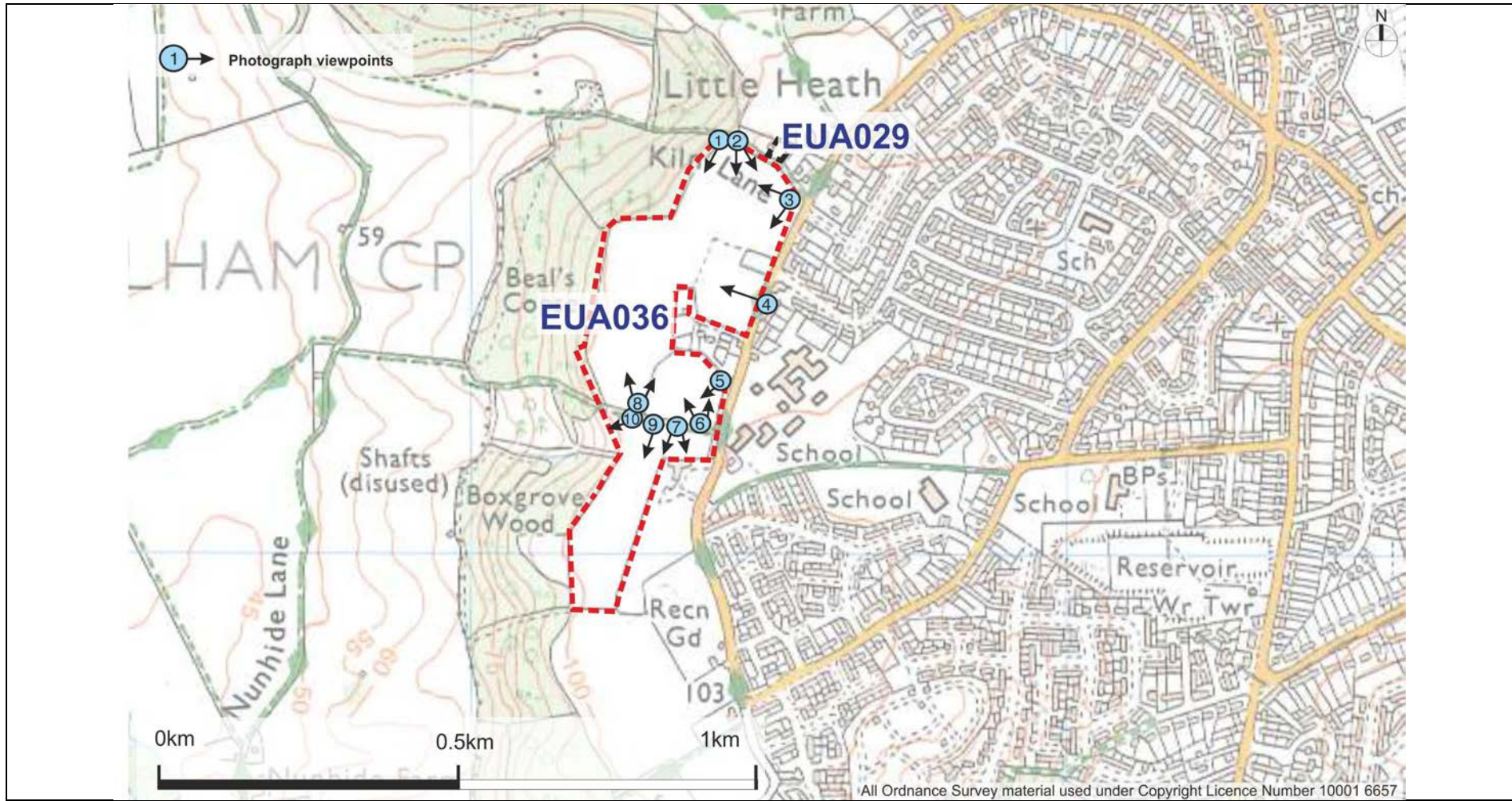


Figure EUA036.1: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau have an overall sensitivity of *medium to low*.

LLCA13E: Little Heath Gravel Plateau is characterised by its pattern of small pasture fields, copses and mixed types of development in the plateau top. The key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

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- Hedgerows and lines of trees
- Listed Late 16th century farmhouse at Hall Place, and 17th century Kiln Cottage
- Good public access
- Value of woodland habitat links with adjacent woodlands on the escarpment

Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- Plateau top to escarpment
- Scattered mixed development broken up by small open areas
- Good level of visual enclosure
- Mostly low to medium historic landscape sensitivity
- Recreational provision
- Medium to low biodiversity

Wider landscape: LLCA2I Upper Sulham Dipslopes has a distinct landscape pattern which differs from the wider plateau and escarpment landscape of large fields and woodland blocks. Views are generally contained by the adjacent woodland.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA2I: Upper Sulham Dipslopes influenced by its close proximity to Little Heath, resulting in fragmentation and domestic land uses. A thin belt of trees and hedgerows separates the settlement from the LLCA.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from Kiln Lane south-west over the northern part of the site with Beal's Copse to the right



Viewpoint 2: View from Kiln lane looking to south-east towards the edge of Tilehurst over north-eastern part of the site



Viewpoint 3: View from Little Heath Road west over the northern part of the site



Viewpoint 4: View from Little Heath Road of buildings north-west of Beal's Lane across north centre of site



Viewpoint 5: View from Little Heath Road into southern central part of the site



Viewpoint 6: View from footpath north over southern central portion of the site to development on Beal's Lane



Viewpoint 7: View from footpath looking south over southern part of the site looking towards the school



Viewpoint 8: View from footpath looking north over western part of the site with Beal's Copse to the left



View from footpath looking south into southern part of the site



Viewpoint 10: View from footpath looking west through gap in tree cover to wider AONB

Site description

Site EUA036 is a very large site extending along the plateau between Kiln Lane in the north and the rear of the School in the south. It lies on the plateau between 100m and 103m AOD with a gentle slope to the west. A band of ASNW woodland forms the western boundary along the Sulham escarpment. The eastern boundary is dominated by the western edge of Tilehurst, east of Little Heath Road, which is a mix of medium to large sized 20th century estates and Little Heath School. Small extensions of the built form are found west of Little Heath Road on fingers of historic settlement (HLC). These include the land around Kiln Cottage, around Beal's Lane and the school land west of the road. These are well contained by extensive tree cover, contrasting with the newer development to the east of the road. The site is divided up into a number of irregular fields, two of which are surviving pre 18th century irregular fields (HLC), which are largely bounded by mature tree lines and mature hedgerows giving a sense of enclosure. Tree and hedgerow cover along the Little Heath Road restricts views of the fields but in the western part of the site there are fewer field boundaries and greater intervisibility. The southern edge of the site has a number of gaps allowing views from the recreational ground.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- The site lies on the Tilehurst plateau
- The site is also already influenced by development in Tilehurst and by modern development in the historic extensions west of the Little Heath Road
- Contrast between very open scattered settlement pattern west of the road with continuous development east of the road
- Historic extensions have a semi-rural character

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The whole of the western side of the site is a continuous whole linking with the same field pattern to the south down to Pincent's Lane and north to Hallplace Farm
- This western area has a close relationship with the continuous wooded escarpment to the west
- The eastern part is more fragmented but contains better field boundaries with distinctive lines of trees and small tree groups which characterise the edge of the plateau next to Tilehurst

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Development over most of the site would result in the loss of distinctive field patterns, important tree lines, the plateau landscape of the AONB
- The flat landscape enables easier accommodation of development

Impact on key visual characteristics

- The site is large but due to the tree cover views are limited to the adjacent field except for at the western ends of the footpaths
- Development in the more open parts would have unacceptable adverse visual impacts on short but sensitive parts of the footpath network
- The tree lined views from Little Heath Road would be adversely affected
- Development in the southern sector would be highly visible from the open ground to the south

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- A small extension west of Little Heath Road might be acceptable as long as it related to the more modernised parts of the historic extensions and is small in scale
- Major expansion westwards would not be out of keeping with the scale within Tilehurst but would fail to respect the more fragmented and semi-rural settlement edge character

Summary of compliance with NPPF

Development on the majority of this site would have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB and its setting. However a small part may have the potential for some limited development.

Recommendations

This site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site in one small area only as shown in Figure EUA036.2. This area includes one of the two surviving pre 18th century fields (HLC) but the form of the field and its boundaries can be conserved. This area is very well contained by tree cover except on its boundary with modern housing on Beal's Lane. The southern part of this area lies close to the School. The extent of this area would not affect the more sensitive landscape to the west and retain the balance of settlement extensions and open land west of Little Heath Road. Any development on this area would however be subject to the following constraints to conserve and enhance the AONB:

- Retention of the tree lines and creation of a landscape buffer to those tree lines to the west and east and across the proposed reduced area as shown in Figure EUA036.2
- Retention of the copse north of the School and creation of suitable buffer
- A preferred access in landscape terms onto Little Heath Road should be close to Beal's Lane to avoid the loss of any trees along Little Heath Road. Any secondary access to the southern portion should avoid the loss of any trees and to be low key
- Assessment of the significance of the pre 18th century fields in this location. Development would not be acceptable if this became an overriding major constraint
- Development to be in keeping with the semi-rural pattern and avoid any wider visual intrusion or increase in the exposure of the urban edge
- Hedgerow and understorey planting to screen views from the footpath through the site
- A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

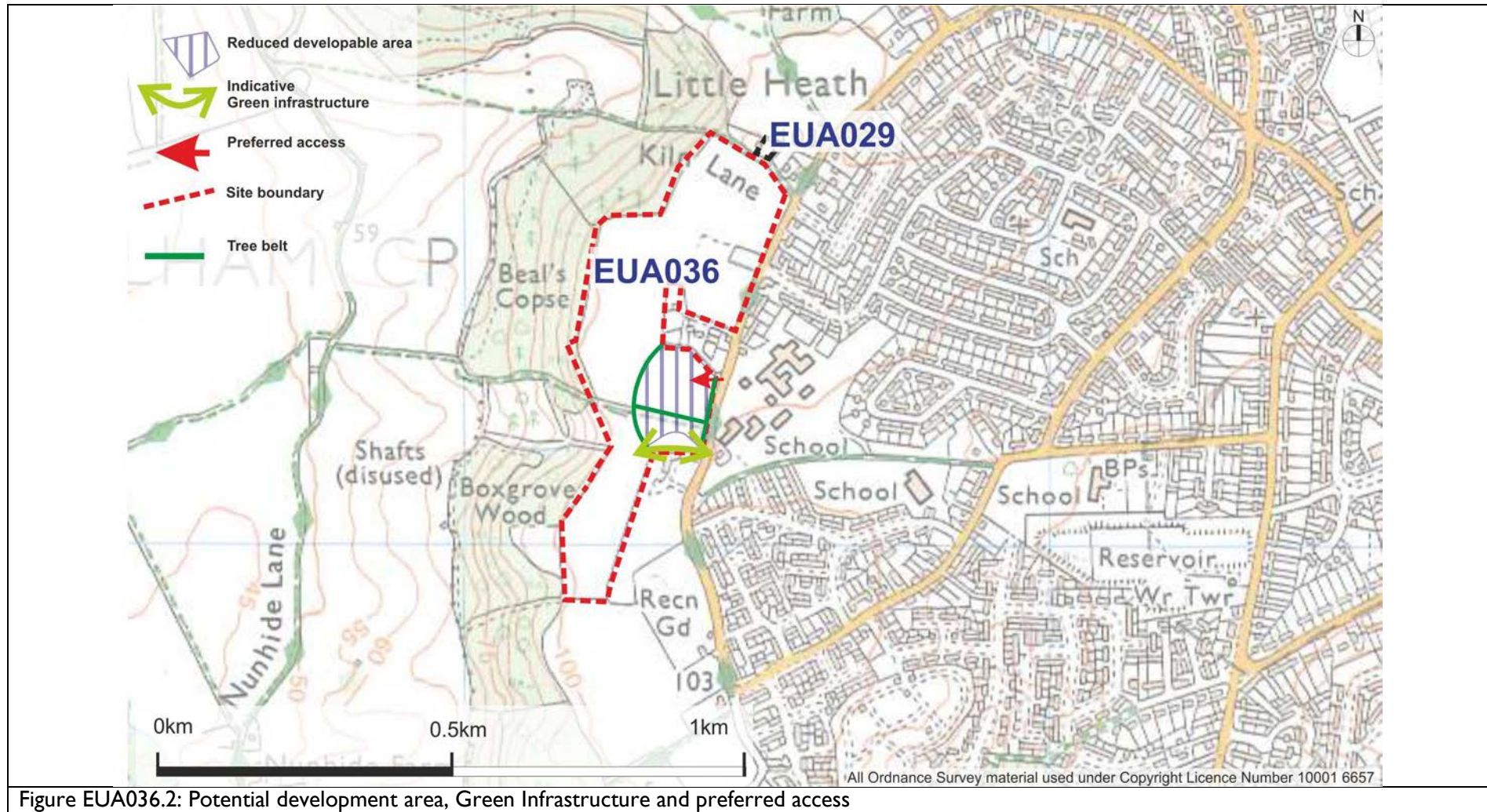


Figure EUA036.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

Conclusion and cumulative effect of all EUA sites (EUA003, EUA004, EUA008, EUA013, EUA027, EUA031, EUA032, EUA033 and EUA036)

The above analysis recommends seven potential areas for housing on landscape and visual grounds. All are heavily constrained by the following:

- The need to retain local landscape features,
- The need to avoid land that lies above or below the local settlement pattern in terms of the topographical spread
- The need to avoid any landscape intrusion on or into the wider landscape
- The need to avoid the creation of an exposed urban edge
- The need to conserve and enhance landscape links and patterns that are characteristic of the AONB
- To take advantage of enclosed and screened sites that relate well to the modern built form
- To need to seek the opportunity to mitigate existing visual intrusion from the settlement where this is not in conflict with the above.

The seven potential sites, from north to south, are reduced parts of EUA008, EUA003, EUA033, EUA032, EUA031 and EUA036 and the whole of EUA013. The area considered suitable for development has been reduced to avoid significant adverse impacts on the AONB and the wider landscape. None of these avoid all landscape and visual impacts due to their location beyond a generally well contained settlement edge where the exposure of the urban form is localised and rarely affects a wider area.

The recommended reduced areas are in themselves well contained in the main. The development of the reduced areas of EUA003 and EUA008 would require careful design and the retention and creation of major Green Infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the development and thus avoid exacerbating the impact on the wider landscape. The proximity of EUA033 to EUA003 and EUA008 is a concern. There is a risk of cumulative impact on Vicarage Wood and the rural character of Long Lane and the Berkshire Circular Route. Of these, development at EUA003 and EUA008 is preferred and should it not be possible to avoid or mitigate the cumulative impact, EUA033 should not be developed.

There is particular concern about the introduction of multiple new accesses off Sulham Hill which would have a significant adverse impact on a key landscape asset in the AONB and urbanise this edge of the AONB. For this reason it is recommended that existing access points are used where possible, or access is gained from the urban built form as at EUAU031. This is a particular problem for EUA032 which has no obvious access point without incurring damage to the landscape character of Sulham Hill and the local wildlife site, and to a lesser degree at EUA033 where it is important to retain the tree lined character of Long Lane.

EUA031, the small reduced area of EUA036 and EUA013 are all self contained and separated by open tracts of plateau fields where the balance of open fields and woodland can be maintained on the plateau.