

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 1 REPORT

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1	Introduction	2
2	Brief summary of Core Strategy Development Plan Document and West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007) policy in relation to the landscape aspects of settlement expansion in West Berkshire	4
3	Principles of development within the North Wessex Downs AONB	7
4	Overview of existing landscape character	11
5	Phase 1 Assessment	16

1. Introduction

1.1 The West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document (DPD), adopted in July 2012, identifies a dwelling requirement of 'at least' 10,500 dwellings in the District between 2006 and 2026. The Core Strategy DPD also sets the overall spatial strategy to accommodate the level of housing across the District and the allocation of two large strategic housing sites (Newbury Racecourse and Sandlesford Park).

1.2 The Council is now progressing a Housing **Site Allocations DPD** to allocate the remainder of the 'at least' 10,500 dwellings by allocating specific smaller scale housing sites for development within built up areas and, if necessary, in areas outside existing settlement boundaries. Sites for gypsies and travellers will also be included in the DPD, as will several housing related development management policies.

1.3 This Phase 1 Report examines the potential landscape impact of a number of potential housing sites that fall within and adjacent to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the light of national landscape policy. These potential sites were identified through the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The Council have commissioned this landscape assessment for twenty sites that fall on the edges of the following settlement boundaries:

Bradfield Southend

Chieveley

Cold Ash

Compton

Eastern Urban Area (this area includes the settlements of Calcot, Purley on Thames, Tilehurst and Theale)

Hermitage

Hungerford

Kintbury

Pangbourne

1.4 This Phase 1 Report is prepared by Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd, with support from Terra Firma Consultancy, to provide an initial, high level, assessment of the potential merits and landscape and visual constraints of each site. It is based on an initial review of all the sites and of primary baseline documents: the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies September 2007), the

Core Strategy DPD and supporting documents; North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 to 2019 (endorsed by the AONB Council of Partners and now going through the process of being adopted by the individual authorities); OS mapping; and GIS environmental constraints mapping from West Berkshire Council. The methodology used is the same as that for the *West Berkshire Council Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Scale and Distribution of Development in the North Wessex Downs AONB* that was prepared for West Berkshire Council by Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd and Terra Firma Consultancy Ltd in January 2011.

- 1.5 This Phase 1 Report therefore sets out the initial assessment of these sites and comes to a high level, assessment of the potential merits and landscape and visual constraints of each site.
- 1.6 The Study does not include a new local landscape character assessment of West Berkshire. The landscape character areas and types in the North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 were therefore taken as the starting point, particularly for Phase 1. However it was evident that in order to undertake an assessment of the comparative sensitivity and landscape capacity of the twenty sites, it is important to undertake a more detailed assessment of the sites, individually and in comparison with each other to ensure a consistent approach. This will be undertaken in detail in Phase 2 of the Study. Phase 2 will also have regard to the landscape character assessments at the district and county level; and West Berkshire's historic landscape character assessment.

2. Brief summary of Core Strategy DPD policy in relation to landscape aspects of settlement expansion in West Berkshire

2.1 The **Core Strategy DPD** includes a number of policies which are relevant to considering the potential allocation and capacity of sites for housing in this Landscape Study:

Area Delivery Plan Policy 4 Eastern Area:

The vision for the Eastern Area seeks the following:

- *The individual identities of Purley on Thames, Tilehurst and Calcot will be maintained and enhanced, as will the quality of the built environments. This area will have a close functional relationship with the Reading area and will benefit from the facilities and services that Reading offers.*
- *The high quality landscape and environmental assets in this part of West Berkshire, which includes the Thames National Path and the adjoining North Wessex Downs AONB will be protected and enhanced as a resource for the local population and for green tourism.*

Area Delivery Plan Policy 5 North Wessex Downs AONB:

- *The North Wessex Downs AONB will have appropriate and sensitive growth that conserves and enhances its special landscape qualities.*
- *Recognising the area as a national landscape designation, development will conserve and enhance the local distinctiveness, sense of place and setting of the AONB whilst preserving the strong sense of remoteness, tranquillity and dark night skies, particularly on the open downland. Development will respect identified landscape features and components of natural beauty.*

Policy CS4 Housing Type and Mix:

- *Residential development will be expected to contribute to the delivery of an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the housing needs of all sectors of the community, including those with specialist requirements. The mix on an individual site should have regard to:*
 - *The character of the surrounding area.*
 - *The accessibility of the location and availability of existing and proposed local services, facilities and infrastructure.*

- *In the areas outside town centres, new residential development will predominantly consist of family sized housing which should achieve densities of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, and should enhance the distinctive suburban character and identity of the area.*
- *Lower density developments below 30 dwellings per hectare will be appropriate in certain areas of the District. Some parts of the urban areas and some villages are particularly sensitive to the impact of intensification and redevelopment because of the prevailing character of the area, the sensitive nature of the surrounding countryside or built form, and/or the relative remoteness from public transport.*

Policy CS14 Design Principles:

- *New development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. Good design relates not only to the appearance of a development, but the way in which it functions. Considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate area, but to the wider locality. Development shall contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place.*

Policy CS17 Biodiversity and Geodiversity:

- *Biodiversity and geodiversity assets across West Berkshire will be conserved and enhanced.*
- *Habitats designated or proposed for designation as important for biodiversity or geodiversity at an international or national level or which support protected, rare or endangered species, will be protected and enhanced. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site or species in terms of its international or national importance.*
- *Development which may harm, either directly or indirectly, locally designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites), or habitats or species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, or the integrity or continuity of landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna will only be permitted if there are no reasonable alternatives and there are clear demonstrable social or economic benefits of regional or national importance that outweigh the need to safeguard the site or species and that adequate compensation and mitigation measures are provided when damage to biodiversity/geodiversity interests are unavoidable.*
- *In order to conserve and enhance the environmental capacity of the District, all new development should maximise opportunities to achieve net gains in biodiversity and geodiversity in accordance with the Berkshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Berkshire Local Geodiversity Action Plan.*

- *Opportunities will be taken to create links between natural habitats and, in particular, strategic opportunities for biodiversity improvement will be actively pursued within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas identified on the Proposals Map in accordance with the Berkshire Biodiversity Action Plan.*

Policy CS18 Green Infrastructure:

- *The District's green infrastructure will be protected and enhanced. The Council will work with partners, including Parish Councils and the community to address the District's green infrastructure needs and deficiencies as set out in the forthcoming Green Infrastructure SPD.*
- *New developments will make provision for high quality and multifunctional open spaces of an appropriate size and will also provide links to the existing green infrastructure network.*
- *Developments resulting in the loss of green infrastructure or harm to its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. Where exceptionally it is agreed that an area of green infrastructure can be lost a new one of equal or greater size and standard will be required to be provided in an accessible location close by.*

Policy CS19 Historic Environment and Landscape Character:

- *In order to ensure that the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character of the District is conserved and enhanced, the natural, cultural, and functional components of its character will be considered as a whole. In adopting this holistic approach, particular regard will be given to: a) The sensitivity of the area to change. b) Ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character. c) The conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of heritage assets and their settings. d) Accessibility to and participation in the historic environment by the local community.*
- *Proposals for development should be informed by and respond to: a) The distinctive character areas and key characteristics identified in relevant landscape character assessments including Historic Landscape Characterisation for West Berkshire and Historic Environment Character Zoning for West Berkshire. b) Features identified in various settlement character studies including Quality Design – West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document, the Newbury Historic Character Study, Conservation Area Appraisals and community planning documents which have been adopted by the Council such as Parish Plans and Town and Village Design Statements. c) The nature of and the potential for heritage assets identified through the Historic Environment Record for West Berkshire and the extent of their significance.*

3. Principles of development within the North Wessex Downs AONB

3.1 An over-riding principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is that any development within the North Wessex Downs should conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and in so doing not result in harm to the special qualities of the AONB (paragraphs 14, 113, 115). Major development should not take place in the AONB, except in exceptional circumstances (paragraph 116).

Special Qualities of the North Wessex Downs

3.2 The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 sets out the defining special features of the AONB:

- *Remoteness and tranquillity*
- *Great variety: majestic to intimate, bare and open to small-scale and enclosed, prairie to pastoral, urban edge to remote*
- *Ancient monuments in a recognisably ancient landscape setting*
- *Big skies*
- *Sweeping downland*
- *Sparkling chalk streams*
- *Prominent copses/hangars*
- *Huge arable fields*
- *Large estates*
- *Intimate, enclosed mosaic of lanes, fields, woods, commons, heath, houses and farmsteads*
- *Dry valleys*
- *Open plains*
- *Verdant vales*
- *Oases of tranquillity and dark skies*
- *Criss-crossed by a vast network of footpaths, bridleways and byways*
- *Charming villages*
- *Brick, flint and chalk*
- *Thatched buildings and walls*

- *Bustling market towns*
- *Nationally renowned centre for horseracing*
- *Chalk stream plants (e.g. water buttercup), fish (e.g. brown trout, grayling)*
- *Chalk grassland – trees (e.g. juniper), flowers (e.g. scabious) and insects (e.g. Shrilla Carder Bee, Adonis Blue)*
- *Veteran trees*

3.3 The North Wessex Downs AONB is a visibly ancient landscape of great diversity. The area is divided into 8 landscape types which reflect this diversity which are described in the North Wessex Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002. The landscape type is subdivided into landscape character areas to reflect local distinctiveness and each has its own special landscape qualities. These are examined in greater detail in Phase 2 of this Report.

Management Plan 2014 - 2019: Development Section

3.4 **Special qualities**

Remoteness and tranquillity: *The sense of remoteness and tranquillity associated with the North Wessex Downs is fundamental to the character of the AONB and vital to the enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape. These special perceptual qualities are a fragile resource and under threat from a combination of factors, including major development, such as wind turbines, intruding into the open downland. Darkness at night is one of the things that defines the countryside and makes it so different from surrounding urban areas. Darkness allows the majesty of the skies and stars to be seen away from the orange glow that now spreads for miles outside towns and cities blotting out the sight of thousands of stars. Ambient noise associated with transport networks and machinery can further erode this special quality.*

Green infrastructure: *'Green infrastructure' (GI) is the physical environment within and between the towns and villages. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. There is an opportunity for new development to secure and enhance the AONB's GI. This will support the sustainable management of land and water resources, including production (e.g. energy and food crops), pollution control, climatic amelioration and increased porosity of land cover. Biodiversity is supported by ensuring the connectivity of habitats. Public health and well-being is enhanced with the recreational development of greenways and the use of non-car routes.*

Urban fringe: A number of sizable and expanding towns lie just outside the AONB. In the west, the most notable is Swindon and a strategy has been prepared, the Swindon Urban Fringe Action Plan, which includes a part of the AONB. It notes that the agricultural economy close to Swindon is under pressure as a result of uncertainty over the future, marginal viability, and urban pressures, including vandalism and litter dumping. It concludes that with carefully guided support it could become an area of immense opportunity and multiple use, but without specific focus much of that which is most valued could be squandered and the great potential of the area, both as the gateway to the North Wessex Downs AONB and to Swindon and as the bridge between town and country, could be lost.

Built environment: The appropriate and sympathetic design and siting of all new developments, reflecting local landscape character, architecture and the use of local materials, is vital to ensuring that development maintains the essential character of the AONB and the settlements within it. The development of individual settlements should be guided by an assessment of local landscape character that takes account of the historical evolution, architecture and current community needs of individual settlements, including those for affordable housing. Within the AONB there is previously developed land where developers may seek a new use.

In the AONB, the authorities will take a strategic approach to requests for major developments with the support of planning briefs and sub regional strategies.

3.5 Key Issues

- Expansion of the main urban areas just outside the AONB, including the main centres of Swindon, Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke and Andover, creating urban fringe pressures on the boundaries of the AONB.
- Unsympathetic incremental expansion of the settlements of and adjacent to the AONB, detracting from the surrounding countryside.
- Potential for major development to intrude onto open downland, including masts, pylons, major wind turbine developments, and mineral extraction and waste management, threatening the senses of remoteness and tranquillity.
- The future use of redundant 'brown field' sites within the AONB, especially redundant airfields and military sites (as at Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape.
- The pressure for new developments at junctions of the M4 and A34.
- Lack of knowledge about the boundaries of the current pools of tranquillity and dark night skies within the AONB and the implications of light spillage from development in and around the AONB.

- *Lack of understanding of the value and role of green infrastructure networks.*

3.6 Objectives and Policies: Development

Objective number	Objectives	Policies
12	To encourage appropriate development that meets the economic and housing needs of the AONB and surrounding communities	Encourage the adoption of guidance that is sustainable and enhances the special qualities of the AONB.
13	To ensure that the formulation and implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs takes full account of the purposes of designation and the character and quality of the AONB and its setting.	13.1 Ensure the purposes and objectives of AONB designation are fully recognised in the development and local, regional and national planning policies
		13.3 Encourage the preservation and provision of adequate 'Green Infrastructure'. Work with communities to increase capacity and involvement in development processes

3.7 The AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019 was endorsed by the AONB Council of Partners at its meeting in March 2014 and is now going through the process of being adopted by each of the individual authorities.

Setting of AONBs

3.8 The North Wessex Downs AONB has published its position statement with regards to the setting of the AONB. Guidance on assessing the impact of development is provided in the North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement Setting (Development affecting the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB) 2012.

Phase 2 Report

- 3.9 Using currently available information and site visits to the sites, the Phase 2 Report will analyse the extent to which each site conserves the special qualities and addresses the Key Issues in the AONB.

4. Overview of existing landscape character

4.1 The North Wessex Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 landscape character areas and types has been used in the Phase 1 assessment. Additional district and county character areas and types will also be considered in the detailed site assessments to be carried out in Phase 2 of the Project and any additional guidance reported under each site.

Table 1: Landscape character of sites

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
1D Blewbury Downs	COM009	1. Open Downland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> underlain by the Middle and Upper Chalk with overlying drift deposits of Clay-with-Flint and a mantling of Boulder Clay to the south; characteristic strong structural landform of elevated rolling downland with round or flat-topped hills, intersected by dry valleys; a steep, deeply convoluted scarp forms the northern edge allowing long views out including to the development at Didcot on the AONB edge; a large scale, open landscape dominated by arable farmland with sparse woodland cover on the tops. Little enclosure apart from the occasional post and wire fences; scarp retains important areas of unimproved herb-rich chalk grassland including four SSSIs, plus extensive linear hanging woodlands; more settled than other areas of Open Downland with three substantial villages at Compton, East Ilsey and West Ilsey. Absence of settlement on the scarp with large villages set at the base of the slope; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss and fragmentation of chalk grassland to arable conversion with grassland only remaining on the steep eastern scarp. Reduction in livestock, so that there is no longer the means to maintain existing areas of pasture; increasing intensification within this already very large scale, open landscape including further loss of peripheral features; future requirements for new visually intrusive large scale farm buildings, plus other redundant farm buildings with potential for conversion and associated range of issues, e.g. traffic; development pressures within the small villages in the dry valleys; damage to archaeological sites; management of the characteristic chalk hanger woodlands of the scarp slope;

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> isolated Bronze Age round barrows in highly visible locations on the scarp edge, plus an Iron Age hillfort on Blewburton Hill and a prominent folly on Churn Hill; the race horse industry is prominent with numerous equestrian centres plus a large number of gallops clustered along the northern slopes; dominant roads including the A34 and a number of B roads and lanes which connect the villages to the higher downs. A dismantled railway line crosses the downs from Didcot; numerous rights of way including the Ridgeway National Trail, following the line of a prehistoric routeway along the scarp top; sinuous land boundaries and tracks may date to medieval times but much of the area was probably open grazing and commons until the 18th or 19th centuries when large, regular and straight-sided fields were created as a result of formal Parliamentary enclosure; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the prominent A34 and a large number of B roads are visibly and audibly intrusive features; high traffic levels on the rural lane network is a concern - impacting on the rural character of the lanes and raising safety issues; cumulative impact of small-scale incremental change, e.g. signage, fencing, kerbing of rural lanes on the remote qualities of the chalk upland landscape;
2A Brightwalton Downs	CHI015	2. Downland with Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chalk dipslope overlain with a capping of Clay-with-Flint creating a more subdued landform pattern. Excellent views can be obtained to the north, east and west; large scale, undulating, mixed farmed landscape of pasture and arable fields enclosed by hedgerows with frequent mature oak and ash hedgerow trees and woodlands; diverse pattern of woodland cover including recent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> intensive arable farming leading to loss of biodiversity (e.g. chalk grassland/farmland birds) archaeological features and creation of a very large scale landscape structure; loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows and failure to retain young hedgerow tree saplings;

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
			<p>mixed plantations, summit tree clumps, and shelterbelts as well as semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin on the steeper slopes of the dry valley sides;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> varied field patterns including some sinuous boundaries reflecting medieval or post medieval 'ladder' fields, particularly in Chaddlesworth and Beedon parishes. Generally large regular fields created by Parliamentary enclosure. Extensive boundary loss with very large scale open fields; chalk pits and dew ponds are a distinctive feature; a settled landscape comprising a large number of individual farmsteads, houses and manors, a regular distribution of small villages in dry valleys and linear settlements on ridges. extensive network of interconnected rural lanes, often deeply incised and overhung by grass banks, hedges and mature hedgerow trees contributing to the richness and intimate scale of the landscape; recreational opportunities are characterised by a high density of footpaths, bridleways and byways which provide a high degree of permeability; a quiet rural landscape; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of appropriate woodland management particularly ancient and semi natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of wood pasture; incongruous plantings of shelterbelts in regular linear formations which are visually discordant; localised visual intrusions plus potential future demand for tall structures, e.g. masts on the open summits which will impact on the secluded rural character; increased traffic on the narrow rural lane network making them dangerous for walking and riding, plus road improvements including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which are particularly intrusive within the distinctive sunken lanes; development pressures, particularly for new housing - potential effect of expansion on the character of the small nucleated hamlets and villages; loss of tranquillity, including impact of air traffic noise;
2B Ashampstead Downs	PAN009	2. Downland with Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chalk rocks overlain by a thick deposit of Clay-with-Flint producing heavy brown clay loamy soils. Better drained calcareous soils supporting arable production occur to the east of the area; elevated plateau incised by dry valleys running east- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> intensive arable farming leading to loss of biodiversity (e.g. chalk grassland/farmland birds) archaeological features and creation of a very large scale landscape structure; loss of hedgerows boundaries and

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
			<p>west including the distinctive Ashampstead valley system. At Goring Gap the ridges between the valleys form a series of bold headlands above the Thames Valley;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive interconnected semi natural woodland, much of ancient origin, on the valley sides and steep slopes creating a strong sense of enclosure, plus regular blocks of commercial plantation along the southern part of the dipslope; • large scale open arable summits; • pasture, including remnant herb-rich chalk grassland, concentrated along the steeper slopes, particularly along the escarpment or valleys; • settlement consisting of hamlets and small villages of clustered form, often focussed around a crossroad or small green; • an intricate winding network of minor roads, rural lanes and tracks, lined by dense hedgerows and woodland edges, often following lines of the dry valleys and contributing to the enclosed visual character; • prominent archaeological feature of Grim's Ditch, runs across the northern section of the area - visible due to the accompanying line of trees; • varied field pattern, including both sinuous medieval and post medieval enclosure and regular, straight edged fields resulting from Parliamentary enclosure; • intimate scale, enclosed views - a quiet, rural landscape; 	<p>particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of appropriate woodland management particularly ancient and semi natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of wood pasture; • localised visual intrusions plus potential future demand, e.g. tall structures/masts on the open summits and skylines, which would impact on the secluded rural character; • increased traffic on the narrow rural lane network, plus road improvements including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, are particularly intrusive within the distinctive sunken lanes; • localised visual and noise impact of the M4 which form part of the southern boundary of the character area; • loss of tranquillity;

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
8A Hermitage Wooded Commons	BRS001 BRS003 BRS004 BRS005 COL009 COL010 EUA003 EUA004 EUA008 EUA013 EUA027 EUA029 EUA031 EUA032 EUA033 EUA036 HER009	8. Lowland Mosaic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lowland area at the base of the chalk dip slope, underlain by clays, silts, sands and gravels of the Reading and Bagshot Beds and London Clay, giving rise to nutrient poor, often acidic, soils; • a broad undulating plateau falling towards the Kennet Valley to the south east and dissected by River Pang; • variable land cover forming an intricate mosaic of woodland, pasture and small areas of remnant heathland. Some more open areas of arable land can be found on the slopes that drop to the Pang Valley and to the south east near Beenham; • large, interconnected woodland blocks and strong hedgerow pattern with mature trees restrict views and create an enclosed and intimate character. Low wooded horizons are a feature; • numerous semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin, with some large commercial plantations. Wooded commons and small areas of remnant heath are a distinctive element; • many features of biodiversity interest including heathland, dry and wet woodland, bog and areas of wet meadow; • dominated by small irregular fields of informal and piecemeal enclosures, of medieval and post-medieval date with some larger, more regular and straight edged, formal Parliamentary enclosure on flatter terrain in the south-east and west; • dispersed pattern of settlement characteristic of encroachment into areas of common and woodland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decline in the extent of heathland vegetation through conversion to forestry or lack of management leading to scrub invasion and development of woodland; • lack of appropriate management of woodlands particularly ancient and semi • natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of wood pasture; • loss of hedgerows boundaries and mature hedgerow trees, plus poor • management of remaining hedgerows; • localised intrusion of road infrastructure with the M4 cutting through the area • with visual and noise impacts; increased traffic on the lane network (rat runs from main routes) and • improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays • which, in places create a more 'urban' character and are particularly damaging to the • character of the sunken lanes; comparative accessibility resulting in development pressures, particularly for new • residential development including suburbanising influence of built development (e.g. • fencing, lighting and paddocks);

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
			<p>Includes large nucleated villages, lines of estate cottages, loose roadside settlements as well as many dispersed farmsteads and residential country houses;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> intricate network of rural lanes, many sunken and overhung by woodland plus more intrusive road infrastructure; historic parkland based on medieval deer parks and manor houses with associated ornamental parklands with gardens, rides and plantings are a particular feature; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss of tranquillity;
8D Hungerford Farmland	HUN026 KIN016	8. Lowland Mosaic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an open and gently rolling landscape rising steadily from the Kennet Valley, underlain by clay and valley gravel deposits on chalk beds -forming a transitional lowland area between the valley and higher chalk downs; presence of water with many wells and numerous small streams influencing the landform; predominantly arable land use, with free-range pig units and occasional pastoral fields. Field boundaries are often post and wire fences or non-existent with the only definition, in many areas, between lanes and fields being low grassy banks; varied field pattern, but dominated by large regular fields of Parliamentary enclosure, with more recent removal of boundaries to create a very large scale open landscape in places; woodland blocks are a feature across the area and include small woods and copses on the clay capped ridgetops plus numerous narrow, coniferous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets particularly conversion of permanent pasture to arable; removal of woodlands to create arable farmland and lack of management of remaining woodlands; loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;

Landscape character area	Sites	Landscape character type	Key characteristics	Key issues
			shelterbelts south of Hungerford; • sparsely settled, particularly to the north of the river, with occasional isolated farms, manor houses and hamlets connected by a fairly dispersed pattern of lanes throughout the area. To the south of the river are Hungerford and Kintbury, both associated with the river valley but extending out into this character area; • a quiet, open rural character.	

5. Phase 1 Assessment

- 5.1 The sites are all subject to landscape and visual constraints to a greater or lesser degree. The purpose of this Phase 1 assessment is to identify over-riding constraints based on the presence of environmental designations and on the contribution to site makes to local landscape character and the wider landscape; on visual prominence; and on the relationship of the site to the settlement pattern (as defined by the local landscape). All sites will be carried over for detailed assessment under Phase 2 of the study.

Relationship with the wider landscape

- 5.2 Each site has been assessed for its importance, and contribution, to the adjacent wider rural landscape and the degree to which it shares common characteristics with the wider landscape.

Visual prominence

- 5.3 Each site has been assessed for its level of visual prominence in the landscape. At this stage this is based on views out from the site and nearby views into the site (with some exceptions where more distant views into the site were particularly noted). Some sites were noted as widely prominent, others locally prominent.

Relationship to settlement

- 5.4 Each site has finally been assessed for the level of urbanising influence from the adjacent built form, the degree of enclosure by the existing settlement, and the pattern of uses and development within the settlement.

Recommendations

- 5.5 The recommendations in the following Table 2 are based on an initial assessment of each site following site visits, a review of the relevant landscape character assessment and a preliminary assessment of potential visual impacts. All of the sites are subject to more detailed studies under Phase 2. Phase 1 identifies those sites which have over-riding and significant landscape or visual constraints which make it unlikely that they would be suitable for housing.

5.6 Table 2 below sets out the Phase 1 assessment and recommendations.

Table 2: Phase 1 Assessment of Sites

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
BRADFIELD SOUTHEND						
BRS001: Land to the south of South End Road	Bradfield Southend	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Somewhat typical of LCA, but less enclosed and with long views to the wider landscape. Strong relationship with wider valley landscape to south west.	Visually exposed site. Possible views from across and within the valley (within the AONB)	North western, and part of the north eastern boundary, contained by settlement –well vegetated in part. North western edge on plateau with settlement and rest of site drops off into the valley. Linear settlement pattern south of Southend Road	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. There may be limited potential for housing on the north western part adjacent to the settlement. Away from settlement edge the potential is limited by important landscape and visual constraints. Development of the whole site would be out of keeping with linear settlement pattern
BRS003: Land to the north of South End Road (Public views of site not possible)	Bradfield Southend	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA and part of landscape setting of Bradfield Southend. Northern field is more related to the wider countryside to the north	Visually contained with no publicly available views	South east edge of site adjacent to settlement. The north western section of site extends well beyond the settlement limit. Linear settlement	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study. Development of the whole site would be out of keeping with linear settlement pattern

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
					pattern north of Southend Road less defined adjacent to the site	
BRS004: Land off Stretton Close	Bradfield Southend	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA and part of small scale landscape setting of Bradfield Southend north	Visually contained	Contained by built form to the east and south. Linear settlement pattern north of Southend Road less defined adjacent to the site	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study. Development of the whole site would be out of keeping with linear settlement pattern
BRS005: Land at Crackwillow, Cock Lane <i>(Public views of site not possible)</i>	Bradfield Southend	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA and part of small scale landscape setting of Bradfield Southend north	Visually contained with no publicly available views	Contained by built form to the east, with the small protruding eastern section surrounded by settlement on 3 sides. Linear settlement pattern north of Southend Road less defined adjacent to the site	Possible potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study. Development of the whole site would be out of keeping with linear settlement pattern
CHIEVELEY						
CHI015: Land at School Lane	Chieveley	North Wessex Downs AONB	Typical of LCA and part of small scale	Site locally prominent with	Part of northern boundary contiguous	Potential for significant harm to the AONB.

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
		Conserve and enhance	landscape setting of Chieveley, with some relationship with larger scale wider landscape	possible longer views from within the North Wessex Downs AONB	with settlement edge but separated by adjacent woodland from settlement to east	There may be some limited scope adjacent to road at the eastern end
COLD ASH						
COL009: Beggar's Folly, The Ridge <i>(Public views of eastern part of site not possible)</i>	Cold Ash	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Not typical of LCA. Largely separated from wider landscape	Visually enclosed with no publicly available views	Southern section of site is part of the linear south eastern section of Cold Ash, with the northern section extending north of the settlement limits	Possible potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
COL010: Land at Westrop, The Ridge	Cold Ash	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA. Landscape pattern extends northeast. Partly contained by woodland.	Partly enclosed but with long views across North Wessex Downs AONB to north east	South west and part of north west boundaries adjacent to settlement, with much of site extending beyond settlement limit	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. There may be some limited scope adjacent to road
COMPTON						

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
COM009: Land between Ilsley Road and Churn Road	Compton	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA with some continuity with the land to the north and south west	Southern part of site is locally visually prominent. Higher ground in northern section has long views to north	Southern section contained by low density housing on the edge of the settlement on eastern and southern boundaries	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. There may be some limited potential for housing although this is likely to be constrained by some important landscape and visual constraints including the impact on the wider AONB
EASTERN URBAN AREA						
EUA003: Stonehams Farm, Long Lane, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Not typical of LCA. Largely separated from wider landscape	Not visually prominent	Relates to small group of dwellings at Stoneham's Farm which are outside of the main settlement. Built form on south eastern side only	Possible potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
EUA004: Land at Pincents Lane, Calcot	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of small scale mosaic landscape with strong links to wider landscape, particularly the western end	Eastern field not visually prominent – enclosed by tree belts and the woodland in the centre of the site. Western end open to expansive views	Divorced from main settlement built form	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. Very unlikely to be suitable for housing due to some important landscape and visual constraints including the impact on the wider AONB and the adjacent

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
				across North Wessex Downs AONB		woodland
EUA008: Stonehams Farm, Long Lane, Tilehurst**	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Large site typical of LCA. North section has strong links with wider countryside to the north	Not widely visible from settlement but open to long views across North Wessex Downs AONB towards the Chilterns	Eastern part contained by built form to north and south. North western part extends well beyond settlement limits	Potential for significant harm to the AONB as a result of settlement expansion into wider landscape in the western part of the site. There may be some scope in eastern section
EUA013: Turnhams House, Pincents Lane, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Not typical of LCA. Largely separated from wider landscape	Visually enclosed with no publicly available views	Contains Turnham Farm House, one of the few buildings west of Pincents Lane. The main settlement is east of Pincents Lane	Possible potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
EUA027: Land north of Pincents Lane, Calcot	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of small scale mosaic landscape. Eastern field has strong links to wider landscape. Western half of site cut off from wider countryside by woodland strip and more influenced by urban edge and M4 corridor	Eastern field visually prominent with long views. Western half of site less visible, being on lower ground and partly enclosed by woodland strip and M4 corridor	Southern and eastern edges of site adjacent to industrial development and hotel grounds. Separated from main residential areas by these land uses and by open ground.	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. Very unlikely to be suitable for housing due to some important landscape and visual constraints including the impact on the wider AONB and the adjacent woodland

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
EUA029: Land at Kiln Cottage, Kiln Lane, off Little Heath Road, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Garden of house; not typical of LCA. Largely separated from wider landscape	Visually enclosed with limited publicly available views	Relates to small group of dwellings along Kiln Lane which are outside of the main settlement. Built form on eastern side of Little Heath Road	There may be some potential for limited development within existing planting framework
EUA031: Land to the east of Sulham Hill, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Not greatly typical of LCA. Part of urban edge landscape rather than wider countryside.	Locally prominent site. Not visible in wider landscape.	Surrounded on 3 sides by built development. Exposed urban edge.	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
EUA032: Land to the east of Sulham Hill between Barefoot Copse and Cornwell Copse, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of small scale mosaic landscape with continuity with the land along the western edge of Reading	Enclosed by woodland to north and south and tree belt to west. Glimpsed views only.	Adjacent to settlement on eastern edge. Fairly well vegetated edge.	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
EUA033: Land to the east of Long Lane and south of Blackthorn Close, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of small scale mosaic landscape with continuity with the land along the western edge of Reading	Enclosed by woodland to east, west and south. Glimpsed views only	North eastern edge adjacent to settlement. Exposed urban edge	Potential for harm to the setting of the AONB There may be some scope adjacent to the existing settlement
EUA036: Land at Little Heath Road, Tilehurst	EUA	North Wessex Downs AONB	Typical of LCA with links to landscape forming setting of	Northern fields locally prominent; rest of site not	Some eastern parts relate to small group of dwellings along	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. There may be some

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
		Conserve and enhance	west Reading, though cut off from wider landscape to west by woodland	widely visible, though some long views to AONB are possible	Beal's Lane which is outside of the main settlement which is east of Little Heath Road	potential for limited housing although this will be constrained by some important landscape and visual constraints including the impact on the wider AONB
HERMITAGE						
HER009: Land to the north of Hermitage Primary School, Hampstead Norreys Road	Hermitage	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA and linked to immediately adjacent countryside but cut off from wider landscape to north by M4 and by woodland to the south	Locally prominent site	Eastern edge adjacent to settlement with loose development to north, south and west	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
HUNGERFORD						
HUN026: Land at North Standen Road	Hungerford	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Typical of LCA, strongly linked to landscape to south, south east and south west.	Widely prominent site with long and panoramic views across AONB from higher ground in north.	North field adjacent to new housing on eastern side. Rest of site separated from settlement by open ground though intervisibility with urban edge	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. There may be limited potential for housing but this is likely to be constrained by important landscape and visual constraints including the

Site ref and address	Settlement	Designations and landscape strategy	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Initial recommendations – subject to more detailed review in Phase 2
						impact on the wider AONB
KINTBURY						
KIN016: Land at Deane, Inkpen Road	Kintbury	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Not typical of LCA. Largely separated from wider landscape	Some views from road but not a prominent site	North end contained by settlement. Relates more closely to loose built form to south and along Inkpen Road	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study
PANGBOURNE						
PAN009: Burfield, Pangbourne Hill (Public views of site not possible)	Pangbourne	North Wessex Downs AONB Conserve and enhance	Appears more related to the housing on western side of Pangbourne than the wider LCA	Visually contained with no publicly available views	Relates to the loose built form on the western side of Pangbourne	Potential for significant harm to the AONB. There may be limited potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study