

3.0 Site and Surroundings

3.1 Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations, this chapter provides a general overview of the site and its surroundings.

Detailed information on the site and its surroundings where it constitutes the environmental baseline, is included in the technical ES chapters (*Chapters 5 – 15*).

3.2 Site Location and Context

The site is located immediately to the south of the built-up area of Newbury as shown in *Figures 1.1* and *1.2*. Details of the site context is shown in *Figure 3.1*.

The site is bounded:

- To the north by Monks Lane.
- To the north east by Newbury College, a public house and day nursery.
- To the east by Newtown Road (A339) and a household waste recycling centre.
- To the north west by Newbury Rugby Football Club, a gym and Falkland Surgery;
- To the west by Park House School and Sports College and agricultural land at New Warren Farm and Sanfoin (i.e. the Sandleford Park West site).
- To the south by the River Enborne.

3.2.1 Highwood Copse Primary School Site

Planning permission (ref: 17/03434/COMIND) has been granted for a new one form of entry primary school to the south of Newbury College known as Highwood Copse Primary School.

The Site Plan for the school is included in *Appendix C1* and it includes a new link road from Newtown Road (A339) providing access to the school and the Sandleford Park development.

At the time of writing the school was under construction and is due to open in 2020.

3.2.2 Residential Areas

Beyond the immediate site boundaries to the north and west, the surrounding area is predominantly suburban in nature. There are existing residential streets in Wash Common to the west, which are accessed off Andover Road (A343). Wash Common also includes a local centre, Falkland Primary School, Park House School, a petrol station and Falkland Cricket Club.

North of Monk's Lane is a large residential area accessed off Andover Road at the west, Monk's Lane at the south and Newtown Road (A339) at the east.

3.2.3 Retail Facilities

To the north east of the site beyond Newbury College and Newtown Road (A339) is a retail park that includes a large supermarket, retail units, car showrooms, food outlets, a place of worship and associated vehicle parking.

Further to the north is Newbury Town Centre.

3.2.4 St Gabriel's School and Sandleford Priory

To the east of the site is the Grade I listed Sandleford Priory which now comprises St Gabriel's School. The surrounding land is also a Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden.

There are also other Grade II listed buildings to the east of the site which include:

- A stable block approximately 10m north of Sandleford Priory;
- Sandleford Farmhouse, adjacent to Newtown Road (A339);
- A dairy adjoining Sandleford Farmhouse; and
- Sandleford Place.

Further details of the nearby cultural heritage assets are provided in *Chapter 9*.

3.2.5 Greenham & Crookham Commons SSSI

Greenham & Crookham Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 400m to the east of the site.

The SSSI comprises an extensive complex of heathland, grassland, gorse scrub, broadleaved woodland and alder-lined gullies. The SSSI also includes one large ancient coppiced woodland, Peckmoor Copse. The heathland and acid grassland make up the single largest tract of these habitats in Berkshire.

Further details on this SSSI are included in *Chapter 6*.

3.2.6 River Enborne and Land to the South

To the south of the site is the River Enborne which is classified as a 'Main River' by the Environment Agency.

Beyond this is predominantly agricultural land with several areas of woodland. Further details of the landscape within this area are provided in *Chapter 7*.

3.3 The Application Site

The site is approximately 114 hectares in area with approximately three quarters of this in agricultural use as part of Sandleford Farm. An overview of the site is shown on *Figure 3.2*, with detailed descriptions provided in Section 4 of each of the technical chapters (*Chapter 5 – 15*).

The site comprises predominantly arable fields and areas of grassland separated by hedgerows.

There are also several areas of woodland covering approximately a quarter of the site area, with the following designated as ancient woodland:

- Crook's Copse;
- Barn Copse;
- Slockett's Copse;
- High Wood;
- Dirty Ground Copse;
- Waterleaze Copse.

The site has a complex topography, but in general slopes south-eastwards towards the River Enborne from a level of approximately 120m above ordnance datum (AOD) at the north to approximately 80m at the south.

There is a valley landform located relatively centrally within the site which runs from the north and north-west corner to the River Enborne in the south-east corner. The valley includes an unnamed 'ordinary' watercourse which forms a tributary to the River Enborne.

At the fringes of the site are areas of flat or gently sloping land particularly at the northern and western boundaries.

Other than farm accesses, there are no existing formal vehicular access routes into or within the site, although a public footpath runs through the site from Warren Road at the west, to where it meets Newtown Road at the east opposite the entrance to St Gabriel's School.