

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### AN INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY APPROACH TO SETTLEMENT EXPANSION WITHIN WEST BERKSHIRE

#### SUMMARY REPORT: THATCHAM

##### Introduction

This report summarises the integrated landscape sensitivity of the local landscape character areas which form the LDF study area. Appendix 1 to the report explains the methodology and we would recommend that this be read first.

The key landscape sensitivity factors are set out under the 'key elements' and 'other interests' all of which should be taken into account in considering any settlement expansion. Full details can be found in the database and spreadsheets held at West Berkshire Council.

The report does not identify any landscape mitigation or the new landscape features which would be a prerequisite of any settlement expansion within part of an LLCA (such as, re-establishment of hedgerows, new woodland planting, chalk downland).

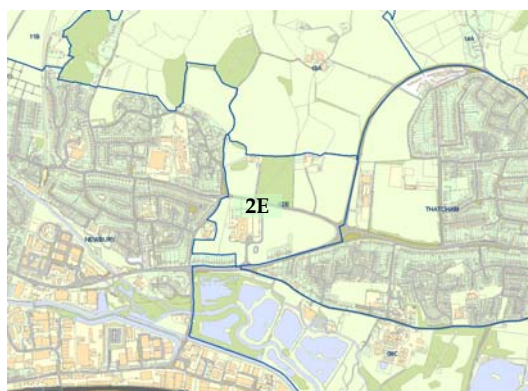
Figure 1B: Plan of Thatcham LLCAs  
Figure 2B: Sensitivity mapping for Thatcham

##### THATCHAM

The hinterland of Thatcham has been divided into eleven local landscape character areas (LLCAs), some of which are also part of Newbury's hinterland:

LLCA2E:	Lower Henwick Slopes
LLCA8C:	Thatcham Lakes
LLCA8D:	South Thatcham Valley Farmland
LLCA13C:	Upper Cold Ash Plateau Woodlands
LLCA13D:	Hart's Hill Plateau Woodlands
LLCA14A:	Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge
LLCA14F:	Colthrop Manor Plateau Edge
LLCA14G:	Sayers and Aspen Copses
LLCA14H:	Highfield Copse
LLCA20D:	Colthrop Park

The sensitivity of the local landscape character areas around Thatcham to urban expansion is summarised below. It should be noted that the AONB which covers some of these LLCAs has not been factored in at this stage.

**LLCA2E: Lower Henwick Slopes****Lower Henwick Farm****West Berkshire Community Hospital****View north towards Sett Copse**

*Lower Henwick Slopes* is characterised by its open, fragmented landscape and a landscape pattern eroded by urban roads and poor landscape siting and treatment to the built form. It has a strong connection the landscape to the north, characterised by the sloping topography, and the field and settlement pattern.

***Overall sensitivity: Medium to low***

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Visually and physically separates Newbury from Thatcham
- Grade 2a agricultural land
- Open area with low level of sub-division
- Landscape pattern of fields, mature trees and farmsteads north of Turnpike Road
- West Berkshire Community hospital forms a landmark feature
- Archaeological finds and historic farmhouses

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Poor landscape structure
- Built form of mixed and non-cohesive character
- Dominated by 3 inter-urban roads
- Little access and recreational value
- Low level of tranquillity
- Mainly low to medium level of historic landscape sensitivity

*Wider landscape*

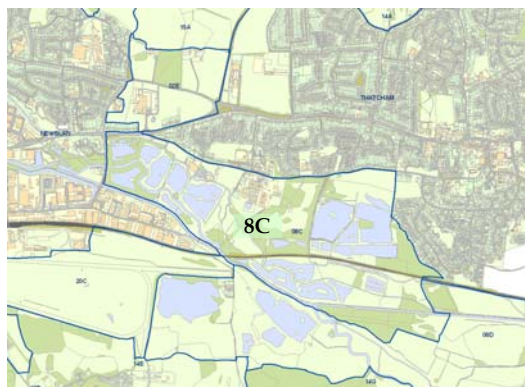
LLCA2E: *Lower Henwick Slopes* has good landscape and visual links with LLCA15A to the north. In particular the area north of Turnpike Road has a close affinity with the settlement and landscape pattern to the north.

**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA2E: *Lower Henwick Slopes* is exposed to the hard built form edge of both Newbury and Thatcham. This area therefore forms an important edge to both settlements.

**LLCA8C: Thatcham Lakes**

Thatcham Lakes



Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre



Thatcham Reedbeds and the railway

*Thatcham Lakes* is characterised by its extensive mosaic of lakes and watercourses, separated by different vegetation types in the flat river Kennet floodplain. It is an important landscape buffer between Newbury and Thatcham, but is visually marred by some development on its edges, and by features left over from gravel extraction.

***Overall sensitivity: Medium******Key elements of landscape sensitivity***

- Mosaic of lakes, woodland, wetland habitats and rough grassland
- Significant water bodies including the rivers Kennet and Lambourn, small watercourses and numerous lakes shaped by gravel extraction
- Good level of vegetation enclosure
- Generally secluded landscape with a good level of tranquillity
- Important recreation area and facilities at Discovery Centre
- One sixth is open access land

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Low grade agricultural land
- Visually enclosed area
- Medium to low level of historic landscape sensitivity

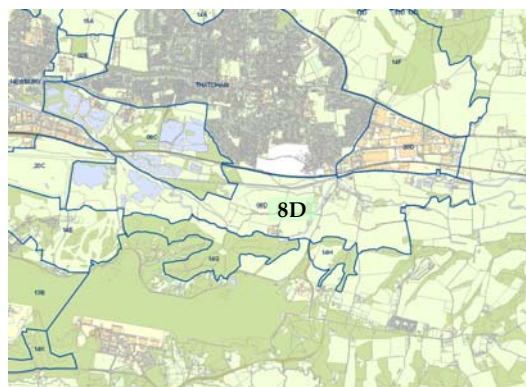
**Wider landscape**

LLCA8C: *Thatcham Lakes* tends to be a discrete area but has some continuity with 8D, immediately to the south. There is a strong contrast with 2E and no landscape link between the two.

**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA8C: *Thatcham Lakes* is an important setting to the south of Thatcham and east of Newbury. The sharp contrast with the built form is of significant value. In most places the boundary is well vegetated, thus containing the settlements, although the built spills into 8C off Lower Way. 8C provides an important open area which physically and visually separates Newbury from Thatcham.



**LLCA8D: South Thatcham Valley Farmland****River Kennet south of Colthrop****View east from Chamberhouse Farm****View to lake at Lower Farm from Pigeons Farm**

*South Thatcham Valley Farmland* is characterised by its generally open agricultural valley landscape, although development/gravel extraction intrudes occasionally. It has a good range of vegetation types. The industrial area at Colthrop Park (LLCA20D) to the north is intrusive in the east of the area.

***Overall sensitivity: Medium to high***

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Good Grade 2 agricultural soils on lower ground
- Variety of water features: river Kennet, Kennet and Avon Canal, minor watercourses, lakes formed from gravel pits
- Largely open landscape with little sub-division
- In the river Kennet floodplain
- Riparian meadows
- Very good sense of seclusion and tranquillity in parts
- Exposed to views from rising ground to north and south and from the east
- Lack of built form except scattered historic farmsteads
- Considerable archaeological interest

- Varied level of historic landscape sensitivity but mainly medium
- Good level of access through public rights of way and recreational facilities, little road access
- Important wetland habitats including BAP priority

#### *Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Gravel working to the west and Chamberhouse Farm is a preferred area for mineral extraction.
- Extensive medium sized arable areas and grassland, broken by small copses mainly associated with watercourses
- Pocket of degraded land in east, south of Colthrop, to be used for minerals processing
- Cultural connections and Parish Plan

### **Wider landscape**

LLCA8D: *South Thatcham Valley Farmland* forms an important setting to the wooded escarpment to the south (LLCA14E, G and 14H), linking this whole escarpment and flood plain together into a cohesive whole. It also has good landscape links to LLCA8C with the river Kennet and lakes common to both areas.

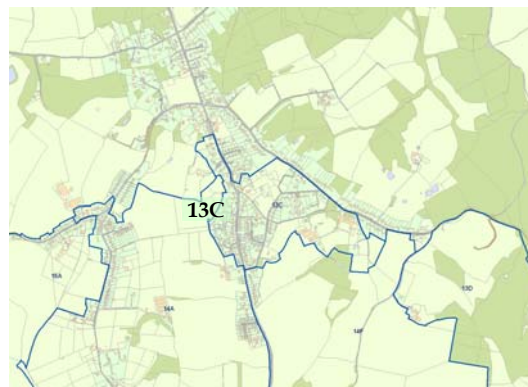
### **Setting to the urban form**

LLCA8D: *South Thatcham Valley Farmland* is separated from the settlement edge in the west by LLCA8C and 20C. At the eastern end, the edge of Thatcham is exposed with little landscape mitigation, especially in the Colthrop Park area (LLCA20D). The contrast with urban Thatcham is an important feature of the area.

## LLCA13C: Upper Cold Ash Plateau Woodlands



View of St Finians School from Cold Ash Hill



Tree lined road off The Ridge



Small fields south of St Finians School

*Upper Cold Ash Plateau Woodlands* is characterised by its ridge top setting with a complex internal topography, dominated by the village of Cold Ash, with areas of buildings separated by small scale fields and treed gardens.

**Overall sensitivity: Medium**

### *Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Ridge top setting with complex internal topography
- Large well treed gardens and road side trees
- Small scale irregular shaped fields
- Visually exposed area with long distance views from the Greenham escarpment and LLCAs 2E, 14A and 14F
- Views out from the southern edge across the Kennet Valley
- St Finians convent is a local Landmark
- Medium to high level of historic landscape sensitivity
- Good level of public access



*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Views restricted within the area
- Moderate level of tranquillity
- Linear settlement along ridgeline, now extended southwards to form cluster of houses
- Mixed development styles and patterns – mainly housing
- Medium to low bio-diversity including scattered deciduous woodland
- Local cultural associations and both VDS and Parish Plan.

**Wider landscape**

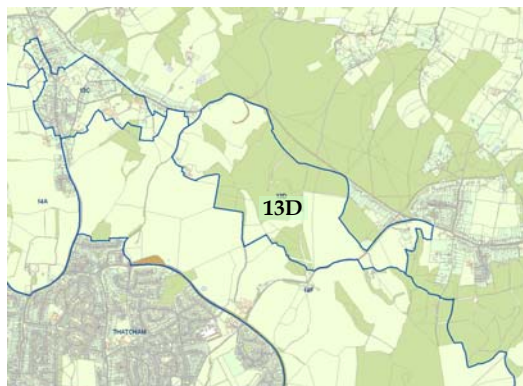
LLCA13C: *Upper Cold Ash Plateau Woodlands* has strong continuity with the wider settled landscape to the north. Its topography and landscape and settlement pattern contrast with 14A and 14F to the south, although there are good visual links between these areas, and it reads as part of the strong east-west ridge in long views from the south.

**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA13C: *Upper Cold Ash Plateau Woodlands* is separated from Thatcham by both 14A and 14F. It has a high level of built form itself which has a mixed character, strongly related to the topography, and with a loose grain with large gardens, in marked contrast to Thatcham.

**LLCA13D: Hart's Hill Plateau Woodlands**

View south from Broad Lane, Upper Bucklebury



Burdens Heath



Young woodland along Broad Lane/Burdens Heath

*Hart's Hill Plateau Woodlands* is characterised by its ridgeline topography, lack of settlement and heavily wooded core. It forms part of the southerly edge of the wooded AONB in this area, beyond the study area. Small and medium sized fields about the settlements of Cold Ash to the west and Upper Bucklebury to the east. Together with the wooded core, these help define the separate identity of these two villages.

**Overall sensitivity: Medium**

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Strong ridgeline topography with well defined break of slope to the southern edge
- Well covered by deciduous woodland
- Small irregular fields close to Upper Bucklebury
- Sense of seclusion within woodland
- Good level of tranquillity except on Harts Hill Road
- Long views across the Kennet Valley

- Little settlement
- Parkland style garden on edge of Upper Bucklebury marks entrance to village
- Part of Dunston Park (not listed)
- Wooded central area has high level of historic landscape sensitivity
- Considerable archaeological interest
- Woodland BAP habitat

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Grade 3 agricultural soils and arable and grassland
- Minor watercourses and water bodies
- Field boundaries neglected
- Internal views limited by woodland cover
- Medium to low bio-diversity sensitivity
- Parish Plan

### **Wider landscape**

LLCA13D: *Hart's Hill Plateau Woodlands* has strong landscape links with the wider AONB landscape to the north. It contrasts with the characteristics of 14F to the south, marked by the break of slope on the ridgeline.

### **Setting to the urban form**

LLCA13D: *Hart's Hill Plateau Woodlands* is separated from Thatcham by 14F and the topography.

**LLCA14A: Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge**

South of Cleardene Farm



Ashmore Green Road



Bowling Green Road

*Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge* is characterised by a mix of small and complex field pattern and modern linear settlement. There are good landscape links with the adjacent parts of the escarpment and there is a well defined edge to Thatcham.

**Overall sensitivity: Medium**

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Complex rolling topography part of the long escarpment along the southern edge of the AONB
- Mosaic patchwork of small fields with woodlands
- Locally important hedgerows and tree lines in southern part
- Roadside trees
- Long views from east part across the Kennet Valley
- Woodland BAP habitat

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Strong linear settlement pattern
- Poor internal boundary definition in some parts
- Generally a moderate level of tranquillity
- Mixed age and style built form with older farmsteads scattered, closest to Thatcham
- Medium to low bio-diversity sensitivity
- Both Village Design Statement and Parish Plan

**Wider landscape**

LLCA14A: *Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge* has good landscape links with 15A to the west and 14F to the east. Intervisibility between these areas is good if broken up by the landform and vegetation. 14A contrasts with the character of 13C with the boundary marked by the change of slope.

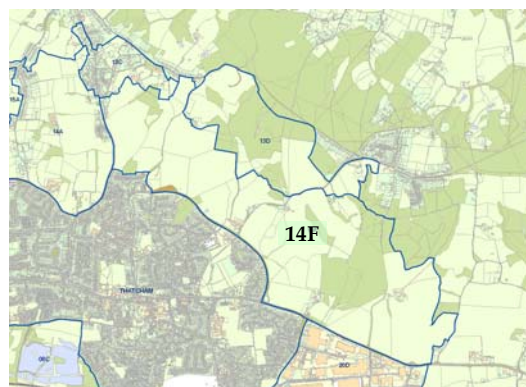
**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA14A: *Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge* abuts Thatcham and is separated from it by the perimeter road and tree planting along the road edge. The settlement edge follows the contours, with older farmsteads hugging the road.



**LLCA14F: Colthrop Manor Plateau Edge**

View south across Kennet Valley from Park Farm



Colthrop Manor



View from Floral Way up to Harts Hill

*Colthrop Manor Plateau Edge* is characterised by its open farmed landscape with major blocks of woodland, and undulating escarpment slopes forming part of the northern enclosure to the Kennet Valley. Settlement is sparse but the area is an important setting to north Thatcham.

**Overall sensitivity: Medium**

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Lower slopes of important ridgeline
- Big Gully a local landmark
- Good views across the area and long views across the Kennet Valley
- Colthrop Manor is a local landmark
- Well vegetated boundary to the A4
- Little development with scattered farmsteads and minor roads
- High and medium/high historic landscape sensitivity in west and east
- Part of Dunston Park (not registered) and good archaeological evidence
- Historic settlement at Siege Cross Farm
- Blocks of Ancient Woodland and Woodland BAP habitat

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

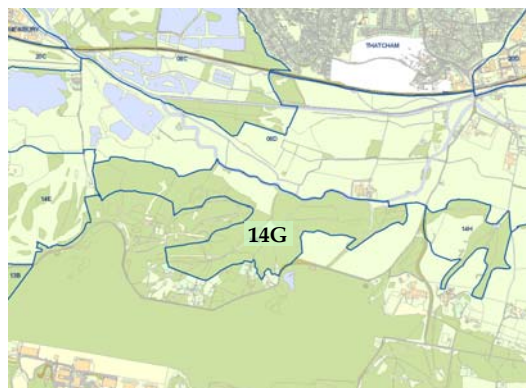
- Variable field boundaries and neat hedges
- Extensive area of grade 3 agricultural land
- Colthrop Park is visually intrusive but otherwise the area has a good level of tranquillity
- Exposed edge to the perimeter road
- Central core is medium to low historic landscape sensitivity
- Medium to low bio-diversity sensitivity
- Both Village Design Statement and Parish Plan

**Wider landscape**

LLCA14F: *Colthrop Manor Plateau Edge* has strong landscape links with 14A and continues eastwards beyond the study boundary. There are also common characteristics with 13D to the north. The area is part of the hillsides that enclose the Kennet Valley, rather than the plateau to the north. The area is highly visible from the Kennet Valley and the Greenham escarpment, with localized views from neighbouring areas.

**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA14F: *Colthrop Manor Plateau Edge* provides a strong contrast to the urban form of Thatcham town and Colthrop Park 20D. It forms an important setting to Thatcham and rural transition zone between the urban area and the AONB. The boundary to Thatcham is long and the urban edge exposed in the west and much better screened or broken up in the east.

**LLCA14G: Sayers and Aspen Copses****View of Ashen and Sayer's copses****Great Wood from Bury's Bank Road****Ashen Wood from Chamberhouse Farm**

*Sayers and Aspen Copses* is characterised by extensive woodland cover of high value on a distinctive topography. The area is highly visible from the surrounding landscape and is itself enclosed and secluded in nature.

**Overall sensitivity: Medium to high**

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Rolling steep topography forming part of the southern escarpment to the Kennet Valley
- Extensive prominent woodland cover
- Some fields along northern edge, complementing the winding route of the river Kennet
- Enclosed and secluded landscape
- Northern boundary formed by the river Kennet
- Very tranquil enclosed area
- Exposed to views from the northern AONB escarpment and the Kennet Valley

- High level of historic landscape sensitivity
- High level of bio-diversity sensitivity and woodland SSSI and BAP

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- No built form of any significance
- Parish plan in production and some cultural interest

**Wider landscape**

LLCA14G: *Sayers and Aspen Copses* forms part of the wooded steep escarpment which extends along the Greenham plateau and continues eastwards. This escarpment mirrors that to the north on the edge of the AONB and frames the Kennet Valley. It is therefore important as a setting to the valley floor.

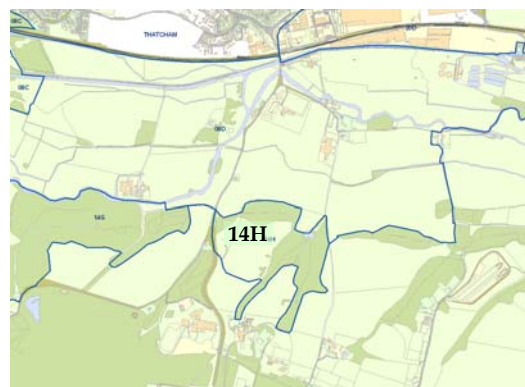
**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA14G: *Sayers and Aspen Copses* is separated from Thatcham by LLCA8D and also 8C in the west. It is also separated from Newbury by 14E and 20C and isolated from any significant settlements. It forms an important setting to scattered houses adjacent to Greenham and Crookham Common.

## LLCA14H: Highfield Copse



Highfield Copse from Crookham Hill



*Highfield Copse* is characterised by extensive ancient woodland cover on a distinctive topography, with strong similarities to LLCA14G. The area is highly visible from the surrounding landscape and is itself enclosed and secluded in nature.

**Overall sensitivity:** *Medium to high*

### *Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Rolling steep topography forming part of the southern escarpment to the Kennet Valley
- Prominent woodland cover
- Irregular shaped woodland, and a few remnant woodland trees in the fields
- Enclosed and secluded landscape
- Minor streams
- Tranquil enclosed area
- Medium to high historic landscape sensitivity
- Medium to high bio-diversity sensitivity and ancient woodland and woodland BAP habitats

### *Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- No built form of any significance
- Parish Plan

### **Wider landscape**

LLCA14H: Like LLCA14G, *Highfield Copse* also forms part of the wooded steep escarpment which extends along the Greenham plateau and continues eastwards. This escarpment mirrors that to the north on the edge of the AONB and frames the Kennet Valley. It is therefore important as a setting to the valley floor.

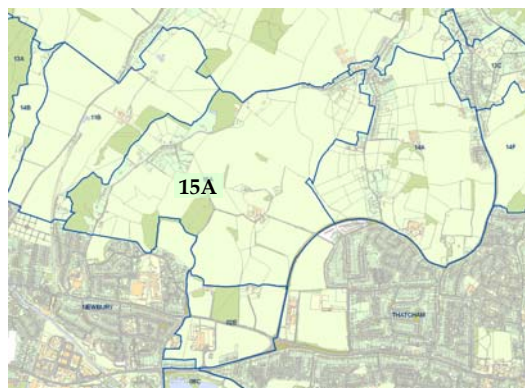


**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA14H: *Highfield Copse* is separated from Thatcham by LLCA8D. It is isolated from any significant settlements, but forms the setting to scattered houses at Crookham Common.

**LLCA15A: West Thatcham Farmland**

View from Stoney Lane across to Yates Copse



Stoney Lane



View south towards Henwick Manor

*West Thatcham Farmland* is characterised by undulating topography with large field sizes and locally significant woodland. Settlement is scattered or linear with large curtilages. It has particularly strong landscape and visual links with 2E and 14A, and with the ridge to east and west and across the Kennet valley to the south.

**Overall sensitivity: Medium**

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Undulating slope rising to rounded ridge forms part of the northern escarpment to the Kennet Valley
- Substantial hedgerows and locally important woodland blocks in the west
- Very secluded/enclosed/tranquil in parts
- Older settlement of scattered farmhouses
- Good level of publicised public access
- Some woodland BAP habitat

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Edges affected by development/traffic
- Large fields with open boundaries in the east
- Linear settlement of houses in large gardens
- Generally low to medium historic landscape sensitivity with patches of high
- Little historic interest
- Medium to low bio-diversity sensitivity
- Grade 3 agricultural land
- Grade 3 agricultural land
- Some cultural interest and Village Design Statement and Parish Plan

**Wider landscape**

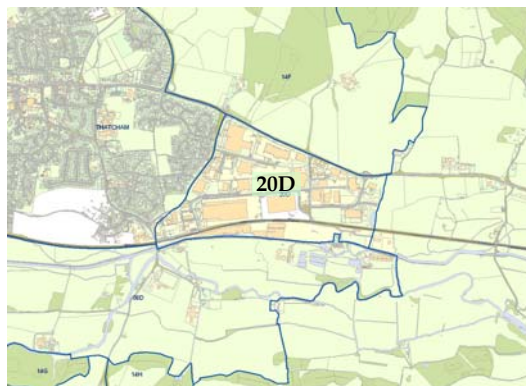
LLCA15A: *West Thatcham Farmland*. The southern part of this area has strong links with 2E and forms part of the open landscape separating Thatcham from Newbury. Henwick Manor sits on a gentle ridge which forms a northern boundary to the south facing slopes which extend down to the A4. The area as a whole has strong visual and landscape links with the remainder of the east-west ridge.

**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA15A: *West Thatcham Farmland* abuts Thatcham to the east with an open boundary allowing intervisibility with the town edge. To the west the area abuts Newbury with woodland screening the urban edge in places but elsewhere housing is conspicuous on the edge.

**LLCA20D: Colthrop Park**

View across the canal to Colthrop Park



Kennet and Avon Canal east of Colthrop Lane



Gables Way

*Colthrop Park* is characterised by large scale commercial development, increasingly being modernised, often with very large buildings, on the flat river valley floor. It does however contribute to, and in many ways detract from, the river Kennet and Kennet and Avon Canal landscape corridor

***Overall sensitivity: Low***

*Key elements of landscape sensitivity*

- Borders Kennet and Avon Canal
- Highly visible from adjacent rural landscapes
- Surviving mature trees break up the scale of the development
- Fair landscape treatment to the A4
- Good views out from the southern edge
- Historic transport routes
- Setting to the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath

*Other landscape sensitivity interests*

- Highly commercial landscape
- Few landscape features of merit
- Poor level of tranquillity

**Wider landscape**

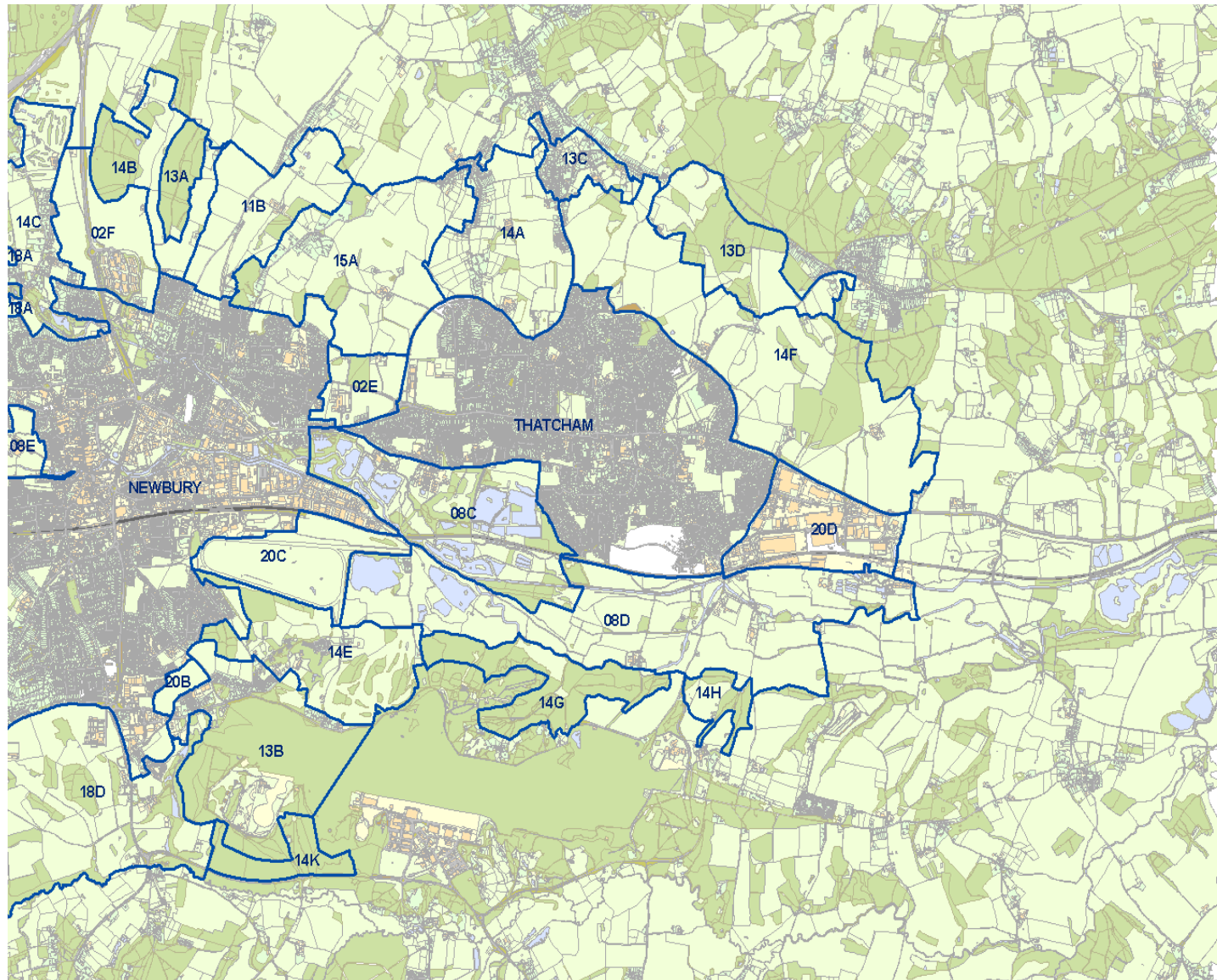
LLCA22D: *Colthrop Park* is part of the river Kennet/Kennet and Avon Canal landscape corridor which extends into LLCAs 8D and 8C, and eastwards beyond the urban/rural hinterland

**Setting to the urban form**

LLCA22D: *Colthrop Park* is bolted onto the eastern edge of the settlement at Thatcham, forming its eastern gateway. Its built form contrasts strongly with that of the settlement, and is extremely prominent from rural areas to the north and south. Urban planting along Pipers Lane forms some sort of transition between the two areas.



**FIGURE 1B: THATCHAM LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**

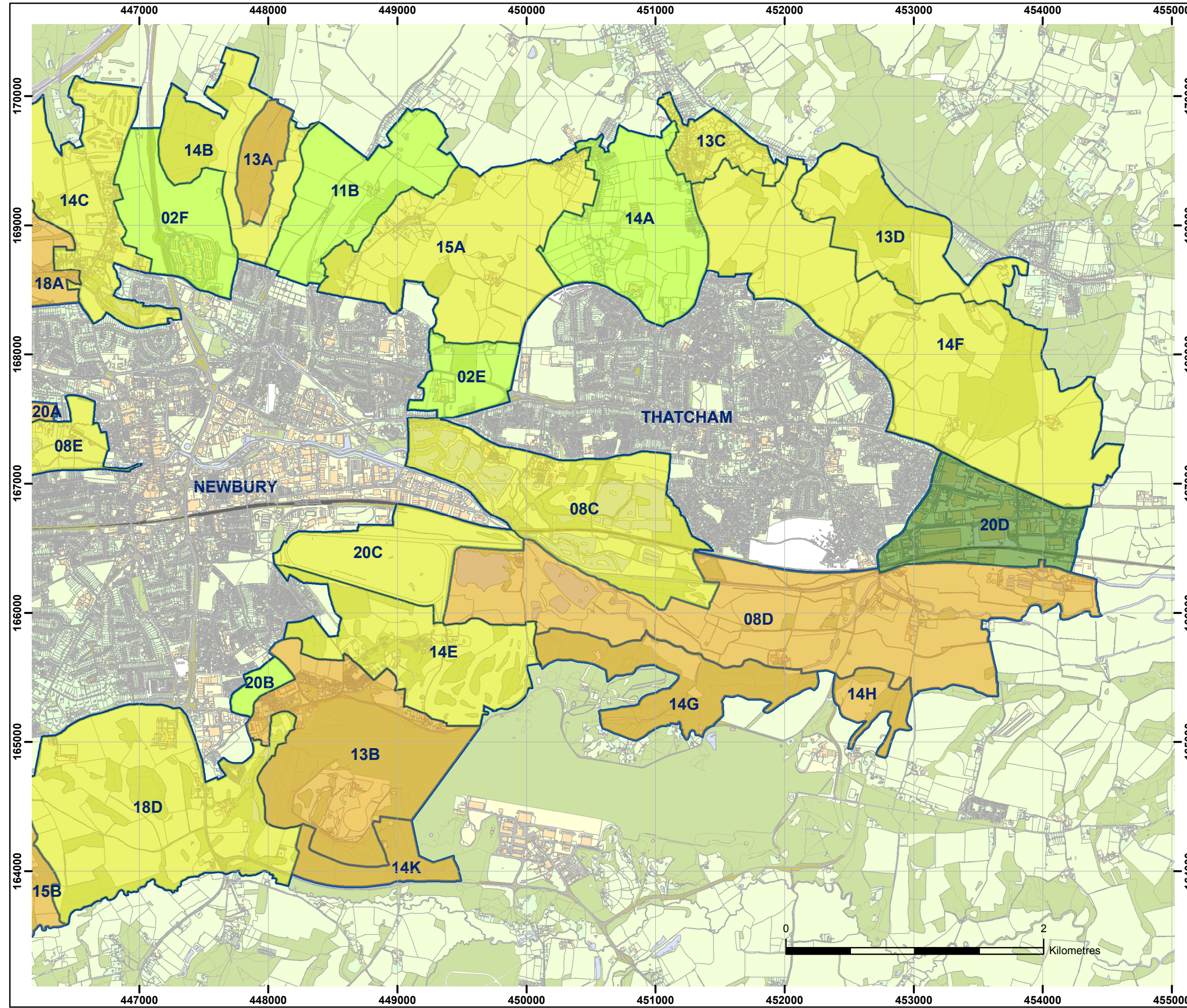


- 2E: Lower Henwick Slopes**
- 8C: Thatcham Lakes**
- 8D: South Thatcham Valley Farmland**
- 13C: Upper Cold Ash Plateau Woodlands**
- 13D: Hart's Hill Plateau Woodlands**
- 14A: Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge**
- 14F: Colthrop Manor Plateau Edge**
- 14G: Sayers and Aspen Copses**
- 14H: Highfield Copse**
- 15A: West Thatcham Farmland**
- 20D: Colthrop Park**



### West Berkshire Landscape Sensitivity Study

- low sensitivity
- low to medium sensitivity
- medium sensitivity
- medium to high sensitivity
- high sensitivity



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