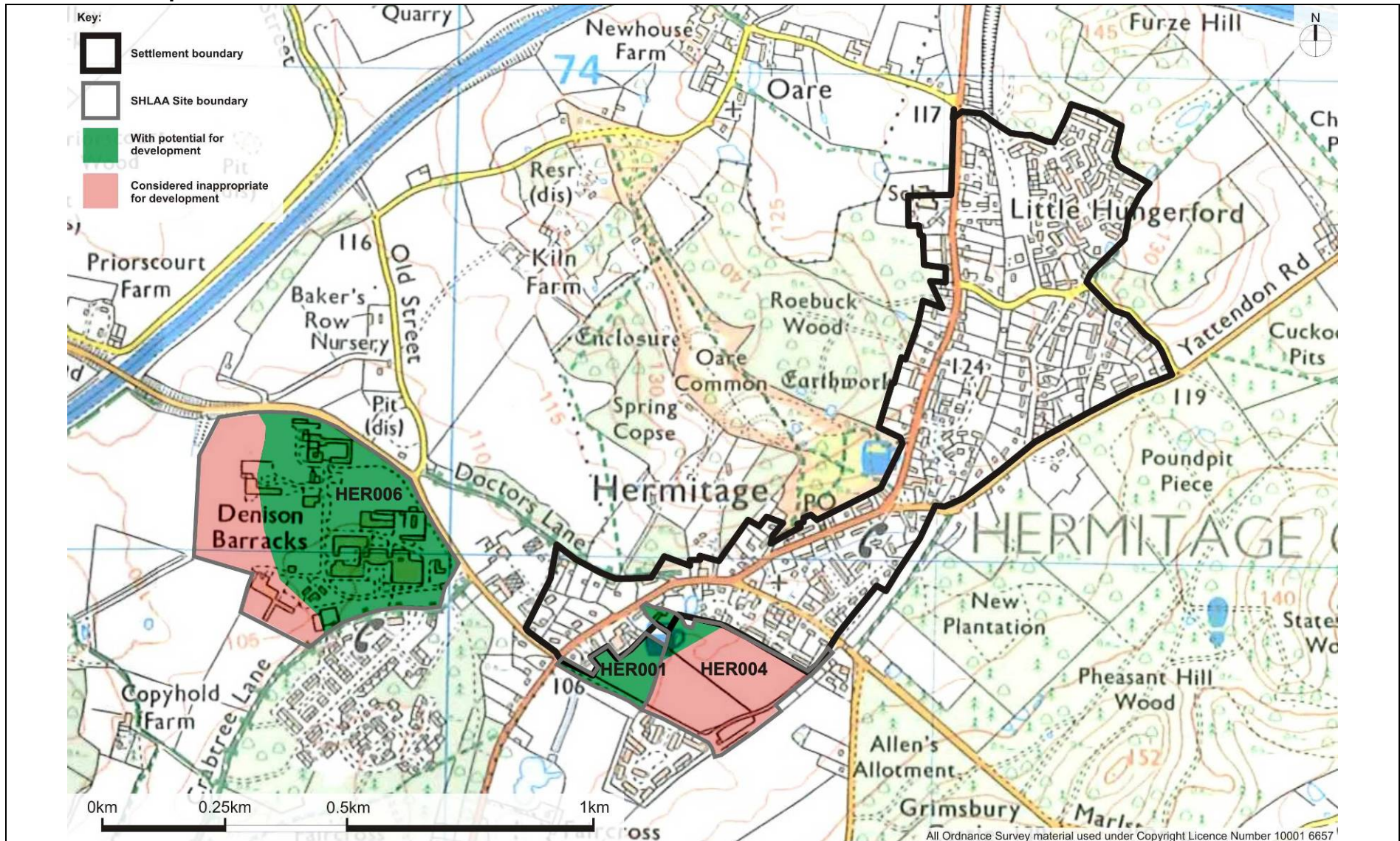

2.4. Service Village: Hermitage – HER 001, HER 004, HER 006

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Settlement map:



Assessment of Settlement

Settlement Hermitage
North Wessex Downs AONB Character areas LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons Lowland Mosaic
Date of site surveys 8 December 2010
Surveyors BK/AG
Key landscape characteristics
<p>AONB LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons (unless source noted otherwise)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad undulating plateau • Intricate mosaic of woodland, pasture and small areas of remnant heathland • Large interconnected woodland blocks • Strong hedgerow pattern with mature trees • Enclosed and intimate character • Small irregular fields of informal and piecemeal enclosures • Intricate network of rural lanes, many sunken and overhung with woodland • Historic parkland • Ancient and semi-natural woodland • Mixed well managed woodland to east in Fence Wood, Grimsbury Wood and Pheasants Hill Wood (VDS) • Substantial tree groups at gateways to the village (VDS) • Reorganised fields, formerly pre 18th C irregular fields (HLC): HER 004 and 007
Key visual characteristics
<p>AONB LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons (unless source noted otherwise)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low wooded horizons • Fine views over the AONB • Views out of the village to the wooded skylines (VDS)

Key settlement characteristics**AONB LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons** (unless source noted otherwise)

- Dispersed settlement pattern characteristic of encroachment into woodland and commons
- Large nucleated settlement (Hermitage) and loose roadside settlements
- Hermitage is a good sized settlement (NDLCA LCT11)
- Settlements have a sense of long establishment (NDLCA LCT11)
- Development has extended beyond the settlement boundary
- Original settlement centred on two drove roads
- Linear settlement with residential growth post WWII and a number of non residential developments (e.g. Cementation site; depots and barracks) (VDS)
- Recent settlement growth, formerly pre18thC irregular fields (HLC): HER 001
- Military establishment, formerly pre18thC irregular fields (HLC): HER 006
- Development has been so intense that it has spread along the roads between historic nuclei: Cold Ash, Longlane, Curridge, Hermitage and Little Hungerford from an almost uninterrupted belt of settlement. The small surviving agricultural areas consist of modern fields created by rationalisation of historic enclosures through boundary removal and reorganisation. (HECZ Curridge, Hermitage, Cold Ash Settlements)
- Most housing has been constructed around historic settlement nuclei on areas of former common heathland. Small areas of ancient woodland have also been lost to housing development on the edge on Hermitage (HECZ Curridge, Hermitage, Cold Ash Settlements)

Summary of the key characteristics of the settlement and landscape constraints on the extent and location of development

The whole of Hermitage and its hinterland lies within the AONB landscape character area LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons. This is a well populated landscape which has been subject to development pressures as a consequence of the area's relative accessibility. This has resulted in the linear spread of development out from the nucleated settlements. However although Curridge and Longlane lie close to Hermitage, these settlements are separated by open countryside and woodland which are particularly important in retaining the rural character and identity of Hermitage itself. Hermitage is noted for its wooded setting, with many woodlands adding height to the surrounding low hills that contain the village. Most of the settlement lies on lower flat ground at 105 – 115m AOD, either side of the B4009. Any proposed development which would result in the loss of woodland cover, would extend up onto higher ground, or would lead to the loss of open countryside between Hermitage and the adjacent settlements is likely to have a detrimental affect on the special qualities of the AONB and the settlement of Hermitage.

The area is also noted for its small scale landscape mosaic, its fine views of this particularly wooded landscape of the AONB, its rural winding lanes and the pattern of hedgerows and tree lines. Any proposed development needs to respect these characteristics and avoid suburbanising the rural character through unsympathetic hard landscape features such as kerbs, grand site entrances, or ornamental planting on the perimeter of the countryside.

Although Hermitage has had, and still has, large sites on the edge of the settlement which have long been under some form of development, the development of large and homogeneous estates would detract from the special qualities of this area. Great care will also be needed to minimise the impact on the landscape character of the surrounding AONB, through limitations on development and generous provision of Green Infrastructure, and to mitigate the existing harm to the AONB landscape from intrusive built form as at Dennison barracks.

Sources:

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002;
Additional information from:

- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
- Historic Environment Character Zoning (HECZ)
- Hermitage VDS

SITE HER 001**Photographs:**

View north into site from access road to Hermitage Green



View north over site to wooded slopes from access road to Hermitage Green

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Broken settlement edge on western boundary
- Site relates well to the settlement pattern

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Part of the open field pattern of reorganised fields east of Hermitage
- Hedgeline separates this area from field to east and the wider landscape
- Flat lower slopes immediately east of the village
- Land use as grass and scrub is not typical of the adjacent wider landscape

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Small site that is well contained by tree and scrub vegetation. Development could be accommodated and retain small scale pattern and not intrude into the wider AONB
- No woodlands are affected
- Site lies on the lower flat area below 100m AOD
- Site would not intrude into valued open countryside lying between settlements

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Development would have a localised impact on views out from property along the B4009 to the wooded hills to the east
- By retaining and enhancing existing tree cover and hedgerows, the visual impact of any development could be contained

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development would not be out of keeping with existing settlement pattern

Summary of compliance with PPS7 paragraph 21

- Development on this site, subject to the recommendations below, would result in little harm to the natural beauty of the AONB

Recommendations

- Development on this site should be subject to the protection and enhancement of the following features:
- Tree line along the access to Hermitage Green
- On site trees
- Hedgerow boundary along the eastern boundary
- Views through or over the built form to the woodland beyond

SITE HER 004

Photographs:



View into site with wooded slopes behind from Charlotte Close, off Newbury Road

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Abuts settlement on the northern boundary and isolated housing estate, Hermitage Green, on the southern
- Separated from settlement on west by HER001
- Open boundary to rear gardens on the north
- Prominent and significant line of trees along the southern boundary which separates the site from Hermitage Green
- Site is part of the open gateway to Hermitage from the south

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Links with open fields to south (west of Hermitage Green)
- Linked to wider wooded landscape by visually prominent tree belt on eastern boundary
- Site is typical of the local field pattern which extends southwards
- Views to woodland in east
- Views across the site to wooded hillside from the village centre, Hermitage Green and Slanting Hill

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Notwithstanding the presence of Hermitage Green, development on the site would result in the loss of the open field linked to the wooded hillsides and open landscape at Hermitage, forming the setting of the village
- The site lies in the flat lower area at 110-115m AOD

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Development would result in the loss of predominantly rural views from the village and surrounding area

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development of the site would constitute considerable back land and infill development which is not characteristic of Hermitage
- Development would not extend Hermitage further south or result in merging with Curridge or Longlane
- The landscape and visual impact of Hermitage Green is limited by its current isolation and containment and by its rural setting within open fields with views of woodland

Summary of compliance with PPS7 paragraph 21

- Development on this site would result in harm to the natural beauty of the AONB

Recommendations

- The site as a whole should not be pursued as a SHLAA site. It may be that a small area in the north-east of the site (between the public house and the access off Upscomb Close) could be developed together with HER001

SITE HER 006**Photographs:**

View of east part of site from Crabtree Lane



View north from PROW to south west

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Military establishment on the outer edge of the village
- Separated from main settlement by substantial belt of woodland
- Brownfield site used as barracks linked to settlement by built form of garden centre, the children's nursery and housing estate on north side of Priors Court Road
- Synergy with housing to the east in the northern part of Faircross Plantation
- Built form is not typical of the settlement. Large buildings, mainly 1 to 3 storeys high are set within open grounds with scattered trees, lines of trees, woodland blocks, grassland and extensive hardstandings
- Site and buildings mark the gateway to Hermitage from the west

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Site projects into open countryside west of Hermitage
- Distinct character in contrast with surrounding area of open fields, dense or scattered woodland and mixed uses: parkland, pockets of older houses, gravel sites and the garden centre
- Northern boundary to Priors Court Road lined with trees and formal beech hedgerow. Arboretum west of garden centre, with backcloth of trees on Doctor's Lane, lies immediately opposite site
- Open fragmented boundary to the wider landscape to the west
- Buildings on the site are intrusive and visible from open countryside to the south and west
- Open fields in the south-west of the site are part of the character of the open landscape to the west which is temporarily disturbed by gravel workings
- The M4 overbridge and sound of traffic draw attention to the presence of the motorway west of the site but it is not visually intrusive

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- No loss of woodland
- Site is on flat lower ground at 105m AOD
- Part of the site contributes to the wider landscape west of the barracks
- Site could be better integrated into the local landscape/settlement vegetation pattern
- Semi-open aspect of the site could be lost

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Additional built form on the site could increase the visual impact of modern development on this part of the AONB
- Views from the south are particularly vulnerable to visual intrusion
- Views over the site to the wooded backcloth must be retained

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- The extent of the site is out of keeping with the settlement pattern
- The site relates well to one of the principal roads through the village
- Inappropriate development would adversely affect the character of this gateway to the village

Summary of compliance with PPS7 paragraph 21

- Some development on this site, subject to the recommendations below, could be accommodated without harm to the natural beauty of the AONB.

Recommendations

- Development on this site should be subject to the protection and enhancement of the following features:
- Open landscape in the west and south-west of the site
- Predominantly open character in the western and southern developed part of the site to protect the wider AONB
- Woodland cover within the whole site
- Tree line along Priors Court Road and trees on site
- Views through or over the built form to the woodland beyond

Conclusion

It is concluded that some development can be accommodated adjoining the settlement of Hermitage within the three potential SHLAA sites examined without incurring material harm to the special qualities and natural beauty of the AONB. It is recommended that HER001 and HER006 be retained subject to the landscape requirements in the Recommendations. However it is recommended that HER 002 be deleted, except for a small part next to HER001. The development of such a large area at her 006 should be undertaken in phases over time to create smaller discrete and distinct areas, avoiding the introduction of a large homogeneous estate design. It is not recommended that all areas are developed concurrently as the scale of development would not be in keeping with a continuing slow sequential development of the village.