



Sandleford Park, Newbury

Landscape and visual assessment

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 WYG Planning and Design have been instructed by Cooke and Arkwright on behalf of the Sandleford Partnership to promote Sandleford Park for a development of up to 2,000 residential units through the ongoing West Berkshire Local Development Framework (LDF) process. The proposed development site includes a small element of business use which, together with the residential component, extends to approximately 58 hectares. It is proposed that 72 hectares of adjacent land within the control of the Sandleford Partnership, including retained areas of ancient woodland within the site, would become a landscape enhancement area relating to the proposed development site.

1.1.2 The proposed development site and adjacent land extending to approximately 130 hectares was promoted during the Newbury District Local Plan process in the late 1990s. At the Local Plan Inquiry in 1998 the proposed allocation of the site for housing was criticised by the inspector due to potential landscape and visual impact¹. In order to provide an evidence base for future allocations, West Berkshire Council recently commissioned Kirkham Landscape Consultants to prepare a landscape sensitivity assessment of the rural landscape around Newbury². The report considered the sensitivity to change of the landscape character around the Newbury in order to inform future settlement expansion proposals in the LDF.

1.1.3 WYG Planning and Design submitted representations to the Council to promote Sandleford Park for residential development, aiming for it to be identified as the preferred option for a strategic housing allocation within the Core Strategy, which is due to be confirmed towards the end of 2009 / early 2010. As part of this process, the Council are seeking to allocate a major strategic housing site for the delivery of around 2,000 houses. Options for the Future, the latest Core Strategy consultation document prepared by the Council identified Sandleford Park as one of three options.

1.2 Scope of report

1.2.1 The scope of this report is to:

- provide an outline landscape and visual assessment of the proposed development;
- consider the issues raised in the Kirkham Landscape Consultants' landscape sensitivity report and the comments of the Local Plan Inspector;

1 **Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006:** Local Plan Inquiry 30 September 1997 - 7 April 1998

2 **Landscape Sensitivity Study: Newbury - Local Development Framework - An integrated landscape sensitivity approach to settlement expansion within west Berkshire,** Kirkham Landscape Consultants, 2009

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- inform discussions with Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd to discuss the merits of the site as proposed to be developed.

1.2.2 This report is supported by drawings and other information included in the Appendices. All photographs were taken during the site and context appraisal undertaken on July 2009. The following drawings are included within **Appendix 2**:

Figure 1:	Designations
Figure 2:	Landscape appraisal
Figure 3:	Visual appraisal
Figure 4:	Site appraisal
Figure 5:	Site photographs
Figure 6:	Views of the site

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The methodology used for assessing the potential landscape and visual effects is based on the recommendations and guidance published by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment³, and is described in more detail in **Appendix 1**. These include a review of planning policies for the landscape and designations, and previous landscape character assessments and the Countryside Character Assessment for the area. Reference has also been made to the Landscape Sensitivity Study for Newbury, referred to above. The subsequent analysis involved evaluation of the features, landscape character, and views, and the potential effects on them likely to arise from the development of the site.
- 1.3.2 The likely landscape and visual effects are graded as: Significant, Substantial, Moderate, Slight, Negligible or None, by relating the sensitivity, or ability of the landscape or view to accommodate the changes arising from the development proposals, and the magnitude of the changes to which they will be subjected. The potential or scope to mitigate the adverse effects is also taken into account. Criteria for these grades are set out in **Appendix 1**.

3 **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** (2nd Edition), The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, E&FN Spon 2002

2.0 Desk study

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The desk study includes reference to relevant studies and landscape assessments, including those undertaken at a national, regional and local level. In summary, the desk study involved:

- a review of landscape assessment carried out at a national, regional and local level;
- consideration of the inspectors' comments relating to the potential development of the site at the Local Plan Inquiry in 1998;
- a review of landscape sensitivity study of Newbury prepared by Kirkham Landscape Consultants; and
- a review of landscape designations, planning policies and strategies for the landscape published by West Berkshire Council.

2.2 National landscape characterisation

2.2.1 The desk study has made reference to The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features, the Countryside Character Initiative programme⁴. The Countryside Character Initiative recognised the need for a new approach to landscape assessment which would look at the whole of England's countryside - rather than just specific designated areas. It is intended to provide a consistent national framework within which more detailed local landscape assessments would sit. This new approach led to the identification of 8 'regions' and 159 separate distinctive character areas across the country. The salient features that define the landscape of each area are recorded in individual descriptions that explain what makes one area different from another and how it is changing.

2.2.2 The site is located within Character Area 129: Thames Basin Heaths. It is a particularly diverse landscape. The western part of the area, within which the site is located, is fairly well wooded with grazed pasture. Cultivated farmland is typically enclosed within small irregular shaped fields divided by hedgerows with small areas of wood and heath. There are significant areas of ancient woodland in the west.

2.2.3 Within the 'Changing Landscape' section a number of the points are of relevance to the Sandleford Park site:

- "Poor management of existing woodland and tree belts is diminishing the character of the landscape and making development more intrusive;

4 The Character of England Map - Character Area 129: Thames Basin Heaths, The Countryside Agency and English Nature, 1996

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- Loss of characteristic features such as hedgerows in small pockets of farmland;
- Agricultural diversification pressures on the landscape giving rise to inappropriate land uses, such as Christmas tree nurseries and golf courses; and
- Development pressures from the continuing rapid growth of towns in the area and from pressures relating to transport infrastructure and road improvements”.

2.3 Newbury District-wide landscape assessment

2.3.1 A landscape assessment for Newbury was published in 1993 by Newbury District Council⁵. The report reviewed the evolution of Newbury District landscape, influenced by physical and human factors which include geology, topography, ecology, land use and management, the historical development of a landscape, the influence of human settlement and archaeology. The assessment defined 21 distinct landscape character areas, grouped under four headings: chalk landscapes, Tertiary and recent deposited, river valleys and modified landscapes. Key landscape characteristics for each character area are identified, confirming the diversity and distinctiveness of the many and varied landscape character types which can be found within the District. The study developed strategies for the conservation, enhancement or creation of landscape character within each of the areas and landscape guidelines are provided.

2.3.2 The site is identified within landscape character area 18a: Degraded Parkland (**Appendix 3**). Key features referred to are specimen trees and tree clumps, degraded pasture and the destruction of parkland by mineral extraction and commercial after-use. The erosion of the contextual setting by the degraded urban fringe is noted. The assessment classifies the landscape as “*one which has suffered change but still demonstrates a reasonably strong landscape character, worthy of conservation but where the overall structure and features are in decline requires a landscape strategy based on enhancement*”.

2.4 Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006

2.4.1 The site was promoted during the Newbury District Local Plan process in the late 1990s. At the Local Plan Inquiry in 1998 the proposed allocation of the site for housing was criticised by the inspector due to potential landscape and visual impact⁶. Those comments of most relevance to the site and its potential development are included below to provide background information for this report.

2.4.2 At paragraph 3.10.10 of the report, the inspector refers to the site and parkland at Sandleford Priory- “*Together, the site and Priory form an attractive "gateway" into and out of the confines of the town which have been re-established in recent years by the*

5 Newbury District-wide landscape assessment: Technical Report, Newbury District Council, 1993

6 Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006: Local Plan Inquiry 30 September 1997 - 7 April 1998

development of the commercial centre around the retail park, building onto the more established residential areas around Monk's Lane".

- 2.4.3 The importance of landform is referred to under paragraph 3.10.11 – *"The character and appearance of the ridge, aligned roughly along Monk's Lane and Pinchington Lane, and the associated narrow plateau at some 120m which currently form the general extent of Newbury have been consolidated by these recent developmentsNewbury RFC's grounds impinge slightly over the slope".*
- 2.4.4 At paragraph 3.10.13, the inspector refers to the overall impression of the site, which is *"unspoilt, attractive countryside contributing predominantly to the remaining impression of an open entrance and exit to and from the Town".* At paragraph 3.10.15 the inspectors refers to the relationship of the site to the land over the County and District boundary; there is *"a continuous visual separation of town and villages and the intervening countryside".*
- 2.4.5 The visual prominence of the site is referred to in paragraph 3.10.17 where the inspector refers to the *"broad agreement reached between the Council and the various Objectors that the individual public vantage-points to see the site are limited".* It was demonstrated that *"with existing and proposed planting little of the site would be seen from each vantage-point, and often views would be of more open uses".* However, views from the public footpath passing through the site were considered the exception. The footpath was considered to be a well-used public footpath, offering *"extensive and widely varying views and appreciation of this open land".*
- 2.4.6 At paragraph 3.10.18 the inspector refers to the *"perception and appreciation of the visual characteristics and value of this land as a whole... from the adjoining main roads".* Although the views experienced by drivers are *"limited to glimpses because of the busy nature of the road"*, consideration needs to be given to *"other occupants of the many vehicles passing this large site".*
- 2.4.7 Other potential visual receptors are referred to in paragraph 3.10.19. Specific reference is made to *"pupils and parents and other visitors to St Gabriel's School at the Priory, the Rugby Club, Park House School, and the hotel, as well as from the future students and staff of the relocated Newbury College".*
- 2.4.8 With regards to development at the site, at paragraph 3.10.21 the inspector refers to the *"replacement of fields and woods by housing and the indispersed, retained woods".* Despite the *"plans to soften this loss within the basic design concept"...the inspector was "not convinced that this would avoid the serious harm which would be caused by building so much housing development over this large area of land".*
- 2.4.9 In conclusion at paragraph 3.10.22, the inspector commented that "there is no doubt that this land represents a very important contribution to the pleasantness and attraction of

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the distinctive southern side and setting of the town". He referred to the *"desire to retain it, with even suggestions for a public town or country park"*.

2.5 Landscape Sensitivity Study: Newbury-Local Development Framework

- 2.5.1 The landscape sensitivity study considered the sensitivity to change of the landscape character around the main towns of West Berkshire. It differed from the Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment published in 1993 in a number of fundamental ways. It defined the term landscape as *"physical, visual, ecological, historical, access and recreational, cultural, economic and social issues which together make up our understanding and appreciation of our external landscape surroundings"*.
- 2.5.2 The study subdivided the landscape character types of the 1993 study into smaller local landscape character areas which reflect local differences. However, landscape character area 18D: Sandleford Park (**Appendix 4**), as identified in the sensitivity study, is broadly similar to the landscape character area 18a in the 1993 study.
- 2.5.3 The methodology for the landscape sensitivity study was based on sensitivity scoring of different landscape themes, consistent with Topic Paper 6 published by the Countryside Agency⁷. The analysis used a five level sensitivity score for each of these seven themes, which were then amalgamated and re-analysed to create a five level sensitivity score combining the seven themes.
- 2.5.4 The overall sensitivity of the site was assessed as *Medium* within the study. It described Sandleford Park as *"characterised by a flat topped ridge in the north, falling south to the Enborne valley, partly overlain by parkland. The area appears quite wooded, but there are large open areas with long views out and in"*. The area is *"dominated by large scale development on the high ground to the north"*.
- 2.5.5 The following elements are identified as key elements of landscape sensitivity:
- "Complex topography, with a flat topped ridge along the northern sector falling southwards to the valley of the River Enborne, with two north-south minor valleys and internal undulations
 - Mosaic of arable, pasture and amenity grassland, with blocks of woodland, specimen trees and tree clumps
 - Group of parkland ponds, former fishponds, in east, associated with Sandleford Priory
 - Secluded within valleys, but open in places on higher ground
 - Open views south from higher ground, and views of hard settlement edge and development encroaching into area

7 Topic paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity, The Countryside Agency, 2004

- Former Sandleford Priory a landmark feature
- Grade II Sandleford Park contains remnants of Capability Brown designed landscape, several listed buildings, numerous archaeological records. Varied historic sensitivity, with predominantly low to medium in north, high in centre, and medium and high in south. Overall medium to high”.

2.5.6 Other landscape sensitivity interests are:

- “No settlement, but a number of large scattered developments, including the former priory, now a school, a new Newbury College development in the north, and a caravan park/holiday lodge development in the north east.
- Considerable visual intrusion from adjacent development, including the large scale retail park to the north east, residential, industrial, and waste development, lit roads and floodlighting masts. Overall tranquillity levels very low to low, but medium in enclosed valleys
- Medium PROW including one promoted. Medium access and recreational value
- Significant areas of ASNW and BAP habitats: medium biodiversity interest
- A number of local cultural associations and Parish Plan; high cultural sensitivity“

2.5.7 In terms of the relationship of the site with its wider landscape setting, the report identifies that *“Sandleford Park has strong visual links with the higher ground to the south, although its character is distinct from the surrounding landscape”*. It states that *“Sandleford Park abuts part of the southern edge of Newbury, the northern part being surrounded on three sides by often intrusive development”*. Despite a number of other detractors and negative impacts on its character the area *“remains an important open area contributing to the rural setting of Newbury”*.

2.6 Designations and planning policies

Designations: national

- 2.6.1 Designations are shown on Figure 1. The site is not located within an area with a national landscape designation, such as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The North Wessex Downs AONB, designated in 1972, is 1.8km south-west of the site at its nearest point. The landscape within the adjacent part of the AONB is classed as lowland mosaic, *being “a small-scale intimate landscape with an intricate network of narrow rural lanes, winding through a mosaic of ancient woods, plantations and more open farmland”*.
- 2.6.2 Immediately adjacent to the eastern edge of the site is Sandleford Priory which is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest. The park was designed by Lancelot ‘Capability Brown’ in 1781 with planting dating from the 19th century. The park surrounds the Grade I listed Priory, which was remodelled from a 14th century stone chapel to a Gothic style house in the 1780s. To the north and west of Newbury are a

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number of Registered Parks and Gardens, namely Hamstead Marshall Park, Benham Park and Shaw House (all Grade II).

- 2.6.3 There are a number of Scheduled Monuments in the vicinity of the site. On Wash Common 500m west of the site there is a Barrow Cemetery consisting of a Round Barrow and two Bowl Barrows. The site of the deserted medieval town of Newtown is found south of Sandleford Priory at a distance of 250m from the site boundary. The Cruise Missile Shelter Complex at Greenham Common Airbase, 650m east of the site, has been scheduled as a 'Cold War' monument.
- 2.6.4 The Registered Battlefield of the first Battle of Newbury which took place in 1643 is located on land between the A34(T) and the western edge of Newbury, 700m to the west of the site.
- 2.6.5 A large part of the town centre of Newbury is designated as a conservation area including 200 listed buildings, the River Kennet and the Kennet and Avon Canal. The site is 600m south of the southern extent of the conservation area. Other conservation areas in the vicinity include Stroud Green, Shaw House and Church, Shaw Road and Crescent, Donnington Square, Benham Park and Speen.
- 2.6.6 There are a total of 25 listed buildings located within 1km of the site. These include Sandleford Priory (Grade I), 18, Falkland Garth (Grade II*) and 23 other Grade II buildings. Squirrel Cottage on Kendrick's Road is situated adjacent to the western boundary of the site, and dates from c.1720. To the north lies Warren Lodge Presbytery on Andover Road, 70m from the site boundary. The Grade II listed Sandleford Farmhouse and adjoining dairy is located on the opposite side of the A339 Newtown Road from the site. Sandleford Place, dating from c.1800 is situated 100m from the south-east corner of the site. The nearby settlement of Newtown contains a number of listed buildings.

Designations: local

- 2.6.7 Long distance footpaths include the Berkshire Circular Routes to the west of Newbury which are 700m from the site at the nearest point. Public Footpath GREE/9/1 crosses the site connecting the residential area of Wash Common with the A339, which it joins opposite the access to Sandleford Priory.
- 2.6.8 National Cycle Network Route 4, which connects London to Fishguard, follows the Kennet and Avon Canal through Newbury.
- 2.6.9 Areas designated as access land under the CROW Act include the wooded slopes of Greenham Common, Crookham Common, Newtown Common, Great Pen Wood and The Chase.

- 2.6.10 There are seven blocks of woodland within the site designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland including High Wood, Slockett's Copse and a neighbouring small block, Crook's Copse, Barn Copse, Dirty Ground Copse and the woodland in the south of the site along the River Enborne.
- 2.6.11 Tree Preservation Order (TPO) number 786 covers trees along Newtown Road (A339) adjacent to the site boundary. Land at Brickkiln Copse neighbouring the south-western edge of the site is covered by TPO number 487.
- 2.6.12 Approximately 500m to the east of the site, Greenham Common and Crookham Common are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, representing the single largest tract of heathland and acid grassland in Berkshire. There are a number of other SSSIs in the area including the River Kennet. The Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain and Kennet Valley Alderwoods are also designated as Special Areas of Conservation. Herbert Plantation Local Nature Reserve is mixed woodland of oak, birch, alder and pine, and is located 1.3km to the south of the site. Bowdown Woods and Avery's Pightle (both SSSIs) are managed by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust as reserves.
- 2.6.13 The majority of the woodland areas within the site are designated as Wildlife Heritage Sites namely the High Wood Complex, Waterleaze Copse and Brick Kiln Copse. These sites are non-statutory, and are defined by the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum.

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3.0 Landscape appraisal

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The landscape appraisal was undertaken on 17 September 2009, and provides a broad overview of the landscape character of the wider area. It considers the elements of the physical landscape or landscape fabric, for example landform, vegetation, field boundaries, land use and other landscape features. The elements combine to form features and patterns, which give rise to particular characteristics or landscape character. Individual landscape elements, features, patterns and character are collectively referred to as landscape receptors. These are the receptors to the changes resulting from development occurring in the landscape.
- 3.1.2 The features described below are located on **figure 2**: landscape appraisal, **figure 3**: visual appraisal and **figure 4**: site appraisal. Photographs illustrating many of the features described below are included on **figure 5**. The photograph viewpoints are located on **figure 3**. The drawings referred to above are included in **Appendix 2**.

3.2 Landscape appraisal

Topography

- 3.2.1 The landscape character of the area is strongly influenced by the pattern of topography, which is dominated by the valley of the River Enborne. The valley floor is typically between 80 and 90 metres AOD within the vicinity of the site. Land rises to the south, towards the North Wessex Downs AONB, and to the north across the site. The topography away from the valley floor is undulating with tributaries to the River Enborne incised into the rising land away from the river.
- 3.2.2 Land to the south rises for some distance away from the site in contrast to the land to the north, which forms a ridge running broadly parallel with the River Enborne. Monk's Lane at the northern boundary of the site broadly follows this ridge, which rises typically to 120 metres AOD.

Settlement

- 3.2.3 The main settlement in the area is Newbury, the majority of which is separated from the valley of the River Enborne by a ridgeline. The suburb of Wash Common is located on the southern side of the ridge. Other uses typical of the urban edge are also located on the southern side of the ridge, for example, the rugby ground, medical centre, Newbury College, hotel, retail area and recycling centre.

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3.2.4 Beyond the edge of the urban area there are several small villages and hamlets. To the south of the site these include Enborne Row, Burghclere and Newtown. There are a significant number of other properties and groups of properties located within the well wooded rural landscape to the south of the River Enborne, particularly along the B4640.

3.2.5 A significant proportion of the settlement to the south of the site is not immediately apparent because it is absorbed into the landscape by the woodland. Despite the rural character of the landscape, agricultural use is not prominent. Much of the grassland between the blocks of woodland is in non-agricultural use; including a camp site on Petwood Road; the school at Horris Hill; a sewage works adjacent to the A34(T); a number of small stables; and extensive grounds and gardens associated with residential properties.

Vegetation

3.2.6 The location of ancient woodland is shown on **figure 1**, which includes all woodland in the northern part of the site. All woodland at the site is designated at a local level as Wildlife Heritage sites. Areas of plantation woodland on ancient woodland sites are also shown.

3.2.7 Vegetation is an important landscape feature across the landscape to the south of Newbury. There are extensive areas of coniferous plantation in the wider context, at Great Pen Wood, but smaller areas of deciduous and mixed woodland are more common. Land to the south of the River Enborne within the vicinity of the site is well wooded, contributing to an intimate character with few external influences. This landscape pattern of irregular blocks of deciduous woodland continues on the northern side slopes of the River Enborne, including the site. There is a change in the pattern of vegetation within the site, reflecting its designed origins, relating to Sandleford Priory. The angular shape of woodland blocks outside the site relates to the field pattern with no obvious relationship to landform. Within the site, woodland is less angular in shape and its location relates to landform, generally along valley side slopes. This arrangement creates a more harmonious landscape with vegetation reinforcing landform leading to a distinctive character.

3.2.8 Woodland within the site relates to the degraded parkland of Sandleford Priory. To the north of the priory the removal of former parkland has been extensive due to gravel workings and subsequent miscellaneous commercial uses including a residential caravan site, hotel, Newbury College, recycling centre, auto-repair workshops and a riding school. Within the eastern part of the site there are a number of standard trees, scattered across the pasture near the A339. Similar trees; which are remnants of the Sandleford Priory parkland are located on the eastern side of the A339.

3.2.9 Field pattern contributes to the vegetation pattern, although hedgerow field boundaries tend to be overgrown with many hedgerow trees. A variety of fence types are used instead of hedging in a number of locations; post and rail fences are associated with

equestrian land use; post and wire fences for livestock grazing; and there are also sections of wrought iron railings, typically associated with estates. There is evidence of hedgerow removal and field enlargement in areas of arable cultivation, including the northern part of the site. The recent Newbury College and hotel development adjacent to this area has ornamental shrub planting defining its boundary with the site.

Landscape amenity and recreation

- 3.2.10 The principal attractions for informal outdoor recreation in the area include cycling and walking the network of cycle ways, public footpaths and long distance routes. Public rights of way extend from Newbury, providing links to countryside and open access land. The extent of the open access land is shown on **figure 1**; it includes common land and land managed by the Forestry Commission. These areas have access rights under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.
- 3.2.11 There is a public right of way within the site boundary. Public Footpath GREE/9/1 crosses the site connecting the residential area of Wash Common with the A339, which it joins opposite the access to Sandleford Priory. There are no footpaths extending southwards towards the River Enborne, and onwards to the access land and network of footpaths near Oakleaze Farm.

3.3 The site

- 3.3.1 The site appraisal is shown on **figure 4** in Appendix 2. The site is located on the southern side of a broad ridgeline separating the valleys of the River Kennet and the River Enborne. Land within the site slopes southwards towards the River Enborne from a level of approximately 120 metres AOD to 80 metres AOD at the river. Within this general pattern there is undulating topography relating to smaller watercourses, tributaries of the River Enborne.
- 3.3.2 The break in slope in the northern part of the site provides separation between the majority of the site and adjacent settlement. This separation is emphasised by existing blocks of woodland and copses which divide the site in a number of landscape 'compartments', particularly the north-western half of the site. Each of these areas is a self contained area with an intimate character and few external influences. Landform associated with three small valleys combines with the woodland to form the boundary features of these 'compartments'; refer to **figure 4**. The character of the site is broadly similar to the rural landscape to the south and the AONB beyond, which is described as "*a small-scale intimate landscape.....a mosaic of ancient woods, plantations and more open farmland*".
- 3.3.3 The northern and western boundaries of the site are formed by existing settlement and land-uses relating to the urban area. There are significant areas of vegetation and mature trees which provide separation from the adjacent uses.

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- 3.3.4 Adjacent farmland forms the boundary to the south of the site. Pasture and cultivated land extends to the east into the parkland associated with Sandleford Priory on the eastern side of the A339. The eastern boundary of the area identified for landscape enhancement relating to the proposed development is formed by the A339. The eastern boundary of the development is defined to the north of this area by Newbury College and the adjacent hotel. This boundary is poorly defined and has inappropriate boundary treatments. An overgrown hedge along Monk's Lane strongly defines the northern boundary of the site.
- 3.3.5 The land identified for landscape enhancement is more open than the landscape within the proposed development site to the northwest. In contrast to the more enclosed, intimate landscape within the site, there are distant views available from the landscape enhancement area. These views are generally towards the well wooded landscape on the southern side of the River Enborne. There are also views toward Sandleford Priory, with its impressive frontage facing towards the site. The parkland relating to the Priory is generally in a poor condition. There appears to be a lack of appropriate and consistent management of the parkland, resulting from the area being divided into several ownerships.

4.0 Visual appraisal

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The appraisal was undertaken on 17 September 2009, and provides a broad overview of the visual receptors in the wider area. Visual receptors⁸, as defined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), are identified from OS mapping and the visual appraisal. Visual receptors are defined in the methodology in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.1.2 The visual appraisal drawing, **figure 3**, illustrates the location of the appraisal photographs shown on figure 6. The photographs are representative of the views available of the site from publicly accessible locations.

4.2 Visual appraisal

Views from Sandleford Priory

- 4.2.1 The view from Sandleford Priory is illustrated by appraisal photograph 2 on **figure 5** taken from the A339 near the entrance to the School. The view is across pasture and cultivated land within the landscape enhancement area to the southeast of the site towards High Wood, which forms the horizon in the right hand side of the view. A small part of the land proposed for business use within the site is visible in the right of the view. There is boundary vegetation and hedgerow trees in the foreground, just beyond the A339, but these do not obstruct distant views. The low lying land along the River Enborne is obscured by landform, largely precluding an impression of the undulations in landform. There are distant features visible on the horizon where the view extends beyond the woodland along the River Enborne to the west of Sandleford Place.

Views from the south

- 4.2.2 A number of opportunities for views towards the site from the south are identified. Despite the rising land south of the River Enborne, which offers greater potential for views, the well wooded nature of the landscape limits the views available. Appraisal photograph 1 on **figure 5** shows the view available from Hill Farm at approximately 110 metres AOD, adjacent to the B4640 and elevated above the River Enborne. In contrast to many other potential views from the area, there are few intervening features between the viewpoint and the site. The foreground of the view is occupied by pasture with scattered trees and overgrown hedgerows. The landscape along the River Enborne in the middle distance is wooded and tree cover extends away from the view into the landscape enhancement areas adjacent to the site. A small part of the land the land proposed for

8 **GLVIA definition of visual receptors:** 'Visual receptors include the public or community at large, residents, visitors, and other groups of viewers as well as the visual amenity of the people affected'.

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business use can be seen; those limited areas visible are pasture to the east of High Wood. The whole of the area proposed for residential development is obscured from view by woodland within the site and along the River Enborne.

- 4.2.3 Appraisal photograph 3 on **figure 5** is taken from Ox Drove near the village of Burghclere. This is over 3km away from the site but no other potential views could be located along the B4640, or from adjacent properties and footpaths. The viewpoint is just over 140 metres AOD but is not sufficiently elevated to allow a view over intervening vegetation towards the site.
- 4.2.4 Appraisal photograph 4 on **figure 6** is taken from Penwood Road near to the campsite at Falkland Farm. A view across the valley of the River Enborne is available from this location but the well wooded nature of the landscape to the north prevents a view of the ground surface within the site. In this view the various blocks of woodland and copses merge to form a continuous area of woodland in the view.

Views from the west

- 4.2.5 Wash Common is a suburb of Newbury to the west of the site. Between the site boundary and the A343 there are large detached properties in a well wooded setting. Appraisal photograph 5 on **figure 6** shows the view available from the minor road to Wildwoods. Pasture within the site extends up to the minor road and occupies the foreground of the view. Properties in this part of Wash Common have primary and secondary views into the westernmost part of the site. Undeveloped land within the site is an important feature in the setting of many of these properties.

Views from the north

- 4.2.6 There are a number of potential views of the site from the north. The main limitations on the views are the downward sloping topography within the site and the site boundary vegetation. The overgrown hedge along the southern side of Monk's Road limits the views available from the road and adjacent footway to glimpses through field gateways. Residential properties along Monk's Road, Newbury College and the hotel have views over the northern part of the site from first and second floor windows. Undeveloped land within the site is an important feature in the visual setting of these receptors.
- 4.2.7 Appraisal photograph 6 on **figure 6** shows the view available from Newbury RFC carpark. These are elevated views over the site but very little of the ground surface can be seen due to sloping topography. The upper parts of the blocks of deciduous woodland within the site are important elements of the setting of the RFC.

Views within the site

- 4.2.8 **Site Photograph 1** on **figure 5.1** is taken from the north-west corner of the site near Monk's Road. The view is across cultivated land without noticeable field boundaries. There is an overgrown hedgerow along the northern boundary of the site with Monk's Road which provides separation from the main road. Along the western boundary there is a mixed native maintained hedgerow separating the site from the adjacent rugby club. The site is sub-divided by large blocks of mature native ancient woodland.
- 4.2.9 It is self contained landscape with few external influences and limited views of external features. The Rugby club to the west, which is floodlit, includes a number of full pitches and training areas along with a clubhouse. It would appear that the site boundary extends into the south-eastern corner of the rugby club training pitches.
- 4.2.10 **Site Photograph 2** on **figure 5.1** is taken from the south-east corner of the rugby club near Slockett's Tops. The view is down towards the valley with land sloping gently down to the watercourse, a tributary of the River Enborne. The area is enclosed on three sides by ancient woodland. The boundaries to the woodland are open in many locations. The woodland is sub-divided by a number of tracks. At the bottom end of field near Slockett's Copse there is a more significant change in level where land drops some 10-15m down to the water course. In this location the water course is a very small stream with damp grassland on either side.
- 4.2.11 **Site Photograph 3** on **figure 5.1** is taken from the top end of the valley. This area is again self-contained and surrounded on three sides by woodland and landform. The only external features visible are floodlighting within the rugby club to the north and a distant view to wooded high ground to the south-east near Newtown. From the south-west side of the valley where the land starts to rise again there are views northwards of the clubhouse, the rugby club and the adjacent medical centre along with the floodlighting. The land in the top part of the valley is damp grassland pasture. The changes in slope between the valley and the cultivated land have scattered trees and blocks of vegetation. Boundaries are post and wire fencing.
- 4.2.12 **Site Photograph 4** on **figure 5.2** shows the view along the public footpath towards Wash Common and the School. The land continues to rise away from the viewpoint. This part of the site is in cultivated use and is surrounded by mature trees, forming the horizon for much of the panorama. From higher ground within the site more external features start to become visible, for example, the rugby club to the north and school buildings to the northwest. The southern boundary of this area is defined by overgrown hedgerows and mature trees at Warren Lodge, along the line of the public footpaths from the school down past Gorse Covert.
- 4.2.13 **Site Photograph 5** on **figure 5.2** is taken from the same location as photograph 4 but in a south-easterly direction. It shows the importance of the screening provided by Gorse Covert which provides enclosure to this elevated part of the site. Distant woodland is

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visible to the southeast along the line of the public footpath, which is mixed woodland at Newtown Common.

- 4.2.14 **Site Photograph 6** on **figure 5.2** shows the view from the public footpath Warren Lodge. It shows the extent of mature woodland and tree in this area heading south towards Wildwoods.
- 4.2.15 **Site Photograph 7** on **figure 5.3** shows the enclosed valley in the central part of the site. The view is taken towards Newbury RFC, which is obscured by Slockett's Copse.
- 4.2.16 **Site Photograph 8** on **figure 5.3** shows the view from the northern part of the site towards the adjacent Newbury College and hotel. The view also shows residential properties along Monk's Road, a number of which have views from upper storey windows over the northern part of the site.
- 4.2.17 **Site Photograph 9** on **figure 5.3** shows the view across the landscape enhancement area to the southeast of the site. The land falls gently towards the River Enborne and is open to views from properties to the southeast along the B4640. These are properties at Newtown Common, Hill Farm, Newtown House and Sandleford Priory which have views over this land but not into the area proposed for residential development. The landscape enhancement area is also visible from the A339 where it passes Sandleford Priory heading north towards Newbury and Greenham. The public footpath linking Sandleford Priory to the school at Wash Common crosses this land from the north-west to south-east following a gappy hedgerow field boundary.

5.0 Potential landscape and visual effects

5.1 Landscape mitigation and enhancement

5.1.1 A number of potential mitigation measures are identified below, which would help to mitigate potential adverse impacts on landscape and views. However, an over emphasis on mitigation alone can have a negative impact on 'place making' or the creation of a development with a distinct sense of place. Measures to enhance landscape features combined with a masterplan approach that builds upon existing landscape character are essential. A combination of mitigation and enhancement are required to create sustainable development that responds positively to landscape character.

5.1.2 The proposed development would keep development away from many of the visual receptors and retain all woodland within the site. It would result in a large part of the land within the ownership of the Sandleford Partnership remaining undeveloped, with potential for landscape enhancement. During the appraisal it became clear that there are a number of potential enhancements which, along with mitigating potential adverse impacts associated with the proposed development at the site, could also offer amenity benefits. In summary these are:

- The importance of the 'Countryside Around Towns' has been emphasized by Natural England – "The countryside in and around our towns and cities, the urban fringe, is the area of countryside closest to where most people live. It is a place where rural and urban influences meet and mingle to create a distinctive and dynamic landscape. This could be managed and used to improve the everyday lives"⁹ The site offers the potential to deliver a multifunctional landscape. An approach based on local 'Green Infrastructure' planning could establish a strategic network of green space to support sustainability and quality of life within the site and for the adjacent urban area.
- There is potential for landscape enhancement to restore the parkland character to the southeast of the site, which would create a more appropriate setting for Sandleford Priory. A restoration strategy for this parkland area would also improve the southern approach to Newbury, which was referred to by the inspector at the LDP inquiry.
- The retention of the ancient woodlands would be a major asset for the site. These areas are currently in private ownership with no public access. They are used for a pheasant shoot but do not appear to be managed in a way that ensures longevity. The development of the site would allow these woodlands to become an amenity resource for the public. Appropriate management would also allow these woodlands to be maintained and managed to maximise biodiversity value.
- Although there is a public right of way crossing the site, there is an absence of footpath links to Monk's Lane. The development of the site would facilitate increase

9 Natural England website at <http://p1.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CIAT/Index.asp>

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public access to existing public footpaths and ancient woodland within the site boundary.

- Recent development which has occurred along Monk's Road has not resulted in the creation of an appropriate edge to Newbury. At Newbury RFC there has been a piecemeal approach to the urban edge with a partial retention of field boundary hedgerows. At Newbury College, inappropriate ornamental species have been used between the College and the site. The strategy for the site would allow consideration to be given to create an appropriate edge to the settlement.

5.2 The potential sources of impact

5.2.1 The development proposals at the site are illustrated on the WYG drawing, *HP07098 Proposed Land Use Plan*. A masterplan has not been developed at this stage, merely the potential disposition of land uses across the site. Up to 2,000 homes are proposed, located across the north-western part of the site. A small area of Business Use is also proposed in the eastern part of the site to the south of Newbury College. The impact assessment has therefore considered the potential impacts associated with the proposed land uses, based on experience of impacts associated with similar development.

5.2.2 This section describes potential sources of impact on the landscape or visual amenity. These potential impacts are not specific to the proposed development but are generic. These aspects typically associated with urban extensions may affect landscape and/or visual amenity:

- removal of sections of several hedgerows, particularly at the site access / accesses and soil stripping associated with infrastructure works;
- construction activities and specifically earthworks associated with infrastructure works, including the access and main highway network within the site;
- site establishment, surface stripping and building activities during the construction of each section of the development. It is anticipated that the proposed development will be developed progressively over several years;
- landscape management activities within retained woodland adjacent to the residential development;
- landscape management activities of grassland / parkland areas relating to landscape enhancement outside the area to be developed;
- introduction of buildings into publicly accessible views;
- introduction of built development into a rural landscape with a distinct pattern of vegetation and landform;
- operational features within the development such as vehicle movements and street lighting; and
- the impact of the proposed landscape strategy on landscape character and views.

5.3 Potential landscape effects

Ability of landscape to accommodate change – sensitivity

- 5.3.1 A number of landscape receptors have been identified during the landscape appraisal, including elements of the physical landscape or *landscape fabric*, for example landform, vegetation and field pattern. These features combine to create a distinct *landscape character*, which is itself a receptor.
- 5.3.2 The ability of a landscape to accommodate change may be defined as its ability to accept the proposed development "without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character";¹⁰ this is referred to as the *sensitivity* of the landscape. There are a number of factors that contribute to this ability:
- landscape designations reflecting the national/local value of the landscape
 - existing landuse;
 - the pattern and scale of the landscape;
 - the presence of features of historical or cultural importance; and
 - rarity of the elements or character.
- 5.3.3 These factors are considered during the landscape appraisal and are used to determine the level of landscape sensitivity. **Table 8-1** provides examples of High, Medium and Low sensitivity, demonstrating how the contributing factors are interpreted. The landscape receptors considered sensitive to the proposed development are listed below:
- **vegetation pattern:** a mosaic of arable, pasture and grassland with blocks of woodland, specimen trees and groups of trees;
 - **landform:** the ridgeline aligned roughly along Monk's Lane and Pinchington Lane, and undulating topography to the south descending to the valley of the River Enborne;
 - **landscape amenity:** experienced by people who use the public footpath through the site; travellers along roads and particularly the A339 and Monk's Lane, within the immediate vicinity of the site; and nearby residents.
 - **landscape setting:** the rural setting of Newbury at the southern approaches to the town; and the setting of the Grade II Sandleford Park with its remnants of the Capability Brown designed landscape.

Vegetation pattern

- 5.3.4 The character of the landscape is derived in part from the vegetation pattern including visually prominent blocks of deciduous woodland linked by other small areas of mature

10 Landscape Assessment Guidance, Countryside Commission, 1993.

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vegetation. This pattern is regarded as a receptor of *high sensitivity*. The potential loss of the mature woodland could result in a significant change in character.

- 5.3.5 The effect of the vegetation pattern within the site on landscape character is variable. Along Monk's Lane, the mature woodland of Crook's Copse and Slockett's Copse are enclosing elements to the south. The separate copses define the extent of the arable field along Monk's Lane. Enclosure provided by these copses makes a much greater contribution to character than either the arable land or the pattern of the separate copses. Similarly, at Newbury RFC the mature woodland copses are defining elements of the landscape character. The surface of the land descends away from this area and therefore contributes little to the perception of space between the copses, and the pattern that these areas create. In the context of Newbury RFC the separation between the copses occurs primarily at canopy level.
- 5.3.6 The context of Wash Common and properties towards Wildwoods is wooded. Undeveloped land at the western edge of the site consists of paddocks set within woodland. The mature woodland and overgrown hedgerows make the most significant contribution to landscape character. Similarly, to the southwest of the site the landscape context of Cedarwood and Oakleaze Farm is densely wooded. In views from this landscape, the vegetation within the site and along the River Enborne is continuous. There are limited examples of grassland, either within or outside the site, contributing to the pattern of vegetation.
- 5.3.7 Moving eastwards towards Hill Farm and the B4640, vegetation along the River Enborne contributes to the perception of a well wooded landscape. A limited number of glimpses of the area proposed for business use give an impression of space within this pattern, but the mature woodland areas are by far the dominant elements.
- 5.3.8 Grassland within the area proposed for landscape enhancement and the deciduous woodland copses make an important contribution to the setting of the A339 and Sandleford Priory. The copses, located in the central and north-western part of the site, are in contrast with the grassland across the landscape enhancement area to the southeast of the site. This grassland is fairly open, and is defined to the south by mature woodland along the valley of the River Enbourne. A combination of the copses and landform within the site define the northern and western extent of this grassland.

Potential mitigation

- 5.3.9 The *Proposed Land Use Plan* (WYG drawing HP07098) shows the retention of the ancient woodland within the proposed development. Existing hedgerows and linear tree groups would also be largely retained within the development, and should be supplemented by additional planting in a number of locations.
- 5.3.10 The retention of the ancient woodlands would be a major asset for the site. These areas are currently in private ownership with no public access. They are used for a pheasant

shoot but there is no evidence of woodland management. The development of the site could allow these woodlands to become an amenity resource for the public subject to consultation with Natural England. A management strategy would consider the maintenance and management of the woodland to maximise amenity and biodiversity value.

- 5.3.11 Landscape enhancement on land to the southeast of the site would restore its parkland and associated vegetation pattern. This would reinforce its landscape character and create a more appropriate setting for Sandleford Priory. A restoration strategy for this parkland area would also improve the landscape setting for the southern approach to Newbury.

Potential effects

- 5.3.12 The retention of all areas of ancient woodland within the site would reduce potential adverse impacts on the vegetation pattern within the site. Planting within the proposed developed offers potential to reinforce connectivity between the areas of woodland, in some locations through restoration of degraded hedgerow field boundaries. Appropriate management of the copses and restoration of parkland in the eastern part of the site would offer long term enhancement or *beneficial impact* on landscape character.

The pattern of landform

- 5.3.13 The character of the landscape is derived in part from the distinctive landform within the site, which is regarded as a receptor of *medium sensitivity*. Earthworks associated with the proposed development are likely to be small-scale and therefore have limited potential to affect the existing pattern of landform. Development within the site has the potential to adversely affect the appreciation of landform in the wider context, although this is unlikely providing the layout of the development responds to landform sympathetically.
- 5.3.14 The effect of landform within the site on landscape character is reinforced by vegetation pattern. Ancient woodland is located on higher ground, reinforcing the valley landforms within the site. Character across the site changes from the exposure and vantage points of the higher ground, to enclosure and intimacy within the valleys. An overall impression of the landform within the site is available from publicly accessible locations outside the site, and from the public footpath which crosses the site. However, those locations which allow the greatest appreciation of the landform within the site are not currently accessible to the public.
- 5.3.15 Along Monk's Road, there is an overall impression of the rural landscape descending towards the south before rising to the south of the River Enborne. The complexity of landform within the site is not apparent. Similarly, at Newbury RFC the top part of trees within the mature woodland is visible. This provides an impression of the descending land but not necessarily of the valley landform to the south of Slockett's Copse.

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- 5.3.16 Landform makes a less significant contribution to landscape character than vegetation within the landscape setting to the south and west of the site, at Wash Common, Wildwoods, Cedarwood and Oakleaze Farm. There is an overall impression of land rising along the northern edge of the River Enbourne valley, but the overall nature and complexity of landform is not apparent.
- 5.3.17 Landform within the site contributes to the landscape character of areas to the southeast of the site. The valley forms and undulations within the site are consistent with the landforms adjacent to the site and help to contribute to the character of the wider area. However, there is a distinct contrast between the self contained character within the site and the more open land to the southeast. The more open land outside the site contributes to the setting of Sandleford Park and the A339 north of its junctions with the B4640.

Potential mitigation

- 5.3.18 The *Proposed Land Use Plan* (WYG drawing HP07098) has not identified possible access points or the alignment of highway infrastructure within the site. However, given the scale of the site it is assumed that these can be accommodated without large-scale earthworks. Highway routes within the site and the overall layout of the development would be sympathetic to landform, and not require large-scale earthworks. This approach will complement the landscape character of the site, and allow future residents and the wider public to more readily appreciate the diversity of landform.

Potential effects

- 5.3.19 Potential effects on the pattern of the landform of the site are likely to be limited to *slight adverse* to *negligible*. The main potential for adverse impact will be where the proposed development covers the landform, changing how the landform within the site is perceived by users of the public footpath crossing the site.

Amenity of local residents, users of public rights of way and roads

- 5.3.20 Recreation and enjoyment of publicly accessible places is inextricably linked to the landscape character of the wider area which is regarded as a receptor of *medium sensitivity*. The receptors of changes in landscape amenity are people walking the public footpath through the centre of the site and other routes in the footpath network; walkers of footways along roads within the vicinity; visitors to Newbury College, rugby club, hotel and Sandleford Priory School near the site; and vehicle travellers along Monk's Road, the A339 and B4640. The potential adverse impacts on landscape amenity would occur temporarily during construction activities, but also permanently as a result of the introduction of development into the landscape and the occupation of the proposed development.

- 5.3.21 Residents of a group of properties along Monk's Road would also be able to perceive change within the setting of their properties. Adverse impact would only occur where the development would be a perceptible element in the setting of the property. In addition to temporary disturbance during the construction period, residents of those properties would experience a permanent change from a setting which is predominantly rural, to one which is urban. Newbury College and the rugby club would have a similar change in landscape amenity.
- 5.3.22 Change as a result of the proposed development would be most perceptible to people who use the public footpath which passes through the site. This route passes through a self contained rural landscape which would experience considerable change during its transition to an urban environment.

Potential effects and mitigation

- 5.3.23 Adverse impact on landscape amenity can be mitigated during construction through measures to minimise the impact of construction activities (noise, dust etc). The phasing of the works can help to minimise the extent of disturbance at any one time.
- 5.3.24 In the long term the introduction of built development into the landscape and the occupation of the site would have adverse effects on landscape amenity. These effects would be mitigated by the layout of the development and its response to adjacent land uses. The potential loss of long distance views of a rural landscape can in part be offset by improved public access to the site and adjacent landscape enhancement area. The retained ancient woodland and the parkland relating to Sandleford Priory would represent a significant addition to the landscape amenity of Newbury, due to increased accessibility. Overall, the impact of the proposed development has the potential for *beneficial* impact on landscape amenity.

Landscape setting

- 5.3.25 At the Local Plan Inquiry in 1998 the proposed allocation of the site and adjacent land extending to approximately 130 hectares for housing was criticised by the inspector due to potential landscape and visual impact¹¹. Those comments of most relevance to the site and its potential development are summarised in section 2.4 of this report. A response to these specific comments is provided in section 6 of this report. The inspector's comments related to the landscape setting of Newbury at the southern approaches to the town. The site and adjacent land contribute to the rural character of the landscape at the southern 'gateway' to the town of Newbury when travelling along the A339. Mature woodland within the site and pasture to the southeast of the site contribute to this rural character.

11 Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006: Local Plan Inquiry 30 September 1997 - 7 April 1998

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- 5.3.26 The inspector also referred to the potential adverse impact on the setting of the Grade II Sandleford Park and remnants of the Capability Brown designed landscape. Parkland located along the eastern side of the A339, and similar parkland on the western side of the A339, are directly associated with the priory.

Potential enhancement

- 5.3.27 There is potential for landscape enhancement on land to the southeast of the site to restore its parkland and associated pattern of vegetation. This would reinforce its landscape character and create an improved setting for Sandleford Priory. A restoration strategy for this parkland area would also improve the southern approach to Newbury, which was referred to by the inspector at the LDP inquiry.

Potential effects

- 5.3.28 Adverse impact on landscape setting would only occur if the proposed development became a perceptible element within the landscape setting of the A339 and Sandleford Priory. The *Proposed Land Use Plan* (WYG drawing HP07098) shows the retention of the ancient woodland within the developed part of the site. Proposed residential development is located on land that does not contribute to the landscape setting of the A339 and Sandleford Priory. Overall, the landscape strategy associated with the development would have a *slight beneficial* impact on the landscape setting of Sandleford Priory and the A339.

5.4 Potential visual effects

- 5.4.1 The visual appraisal of the site and its context is based on a desk study and field surveys. It identified a number of locations from which the site and the proposed development are potentially visible. These are views from:

- The B4640 and adjacent properties;
- Sandleford Priory and the A339;
- Monk's Lane and adjacent properties;
- Newbury Rugby Club;
- Wash Common and Wildwoods; and
- Newbury College.

- 5.4.2 These areas were visited and a representative selection of views photographed. The views are described below and the potential effects of the development on them assessed; refer to **figures 5** and **figure 6** for photographs.

The B4640 and adjacent properties

- 5.4.3 The vegetation pattern and well wooded nature of the landscape along the B4640 and within the River Enborne Valley define the extent of views available towards the site. **Appraisal Photograph 1** on **figure 6.1** shows the view available from the B4640 near Newtown Common. Mature woodland within the site is visible along with land to the southeast of the site. A small proportion of the land which is visible on the eastern side of High Wood is proposed for business use.
- 5.4.4 Mature trees, tall hedgerows and mature woodland form an almost continuous band of vegetation in the middle distance and along the horizon in the view. Where there are views towards the site from the B4640, and a number of residential properties adjacent to the road, it is the mature woodland within the site which is visible, including Gorse Covert and High Wood. This woodland obscures potential views of the pasture within the site.
- 5.4.5 The potential for more distant views from the south was considered during the desk study and field survey. Existing woodland in the area obscures views, which based on landform, are theoretically visible. **Appraisal Photograph 3** on **figure 6.1** shows the view available from Ox Drove, just off the B4640 at Burghclere. Despite a viewpoint elevation of over 140m AOD, the site is obscured by intervening vegetation.
- 5.4.6 There are potential views towards the site from the B4640 near its junction with the A339 and several adjacent residential properties. The views are considered of *medium sensitivity* due to the number of potential visual receptors.

Potential mitigation

- 5.4.7 The key element of the mitigation strategy would be the layout of the site, and more importantly, the containment of the developed area by retained woodland. The area identified for landscape enhancement to the southeast of the site is visually prominent in views from the A339.
- 5.4.8 Existing vegetation and potentially additional planting could offer complete screening of the proposed development in views from the B4640. This approach to mitigation would be consistent with the well vegetated character of the landscape. It would fully mitigate potential visual impacts on views from the B4640 and adjacent properties.

Potential effects

- 5.4.9 The scale of change and *medium sensitivity* of the receptors could result in a *slight adverse* visual impact. However, with mitigation measures in place visual impacts would reduce from *slight adverse* to *negligible*. Screen planting linking the separate copses along the south-eastern edge of the development would screen potential views whilst being consistent with the vegetation pattern of the area.

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Sandleford Priory and the A339

- 5.4.10 The vegetation pattern and landform of the site and adjacent land to the southeast define the extent of the area visible from Sandleford Priory and the A339. **Appraisal**
Photograph 2 on **figure 6.1** shows the view available from the A339 near the entrance to the Sandleford Priory School. Gorse Covert, High Wood and woodland along the River Enborne form the horizon in the view and obscure views of the site beyond. Landform in the middle distance also obscures a proportion of the land surface within the area identified for landscape enhancement. It also defines the extent of the site visible to the east of High Wood.
- 5.4.11 A small area of the site, proposed for business use, is visible from the A339, Sandleford Priory and the adjacent public footpath GREE/9/1. These views are considered of *high sensitivity* due to the number of potential visual receptors.

Potential mitigation

- 5.4.12 The key element of the mitigation strategy would be the layout of the proposed development and the retention of existing woodland. Land to the southeast of the site is visually prominent in views from the A339. This land is proposed for landscape enhancement.
- 5.4.13 Existing vegetation and additional planting could offer complete screening of the proposed development in views from the A339 and Sandleford Priory. This approach to mitigation would be consistent with the well vegetated character of the landscape. This mitigation approach would fully mitigate potential visual impacts from the A339 and Sandleford Priory and the adjacent section of public footpath GREE/9/1.
- 5.4.14 Planting along the southern edge of the site proposed for business use would provide screening of the proposed development in views from the A339 and Sandleford Priory.

Potential effects

- 5.4.15 The scale of change and *high sensitivity* of the receptors could result in a *slight adverse* visual impact. However, there is scope for mitigation measures to reduce adverse visual impacts from *slight adverse* to *negligible*. Screen planting linking the separate copses along the south-eastern edge of the development would screen potential views whilst being consistent with the vegetation pattern of the area.

Monk's Lane

- 5.4.16 Views available from publicly accessible locations along Monk's Lane are related to the existing screening provided by the tall hedgerow along its southern side. The view is considered of *medium sensitivity* due to the number of potential visual receptors. These include pedestrians and vehicle travellers in close proximity to the site.

- 5.4.17 Views from the majority of vehicles and pedestrians walking the footway along the southern side of Monk's Lane are restricted to gaps in the hedgerow at the two field gateways. These are passing glimpses into the site and the land beyond.
- 5.4.18 There are private views from a group of properties along Monk's Lane. The visual receptors for these views are residents and views are limited to first and second floor windows due to the screening provided by highway boundary vegetation along Monk's Lane. The site would be an important element in the views from these properties.

Potential mitigation

- 5.4.19 The existing hedgerow along the southern side of Monk's Lane provides an attractive setting for the road and appropriate screening of the proposed development within the site. In addition to appropriate long-term management of the hedgerow, any changes which occur during the creation of the site access should maintain or improve its screening value. Hedgerow planting across the existing breaks in the hedgerow at field gateways would further limit views into the site. Alternatively, gaps within the hedge should be aligned with vistas across the development where elements of green infrastructure are the dominant feature of the view. An increase in the number of views across the site at key locations would improve the variety of experience for pedestrians and vehicle travellers along Monk's Lane, with associated amenity benefits.
- 5.4.20 The layout of the proposed development would influence the significance of the potential impacts on visual receptors along Monk's Lane. Decisions relating to building heights and arrangement of the roofscape would determine how the development is viewed from Monk's Lane. It is important to avoid the situation of a continuous line of development along Monk's Lane, even if it were largely screened by the roadside boundary hedgerow. Views into and through the development layout would help to integrate the development into the urban area.

Potential effects

- 5.4.21 Pedestrians and vehicle travellers would experience a *slight adverse* visual impact, given the nature of the changes and the medium sensitivity of the view. Residents of several properties along Monk's Lane would experience a medium to high magnitude of change within the view available. However, the screening provided by the existing hedge limits views to those available from first and second floor windows. Overall, the visual impact on views from properties along Monk's Lane would be *slight adverse*, although several properties would experience more significant impacts than others.

Newbury Rugby Club

- 5.4.22 The northwest boundary of the site with Newbury Rugby club is defined by a boundary hedgerow near Monk's Lane. Boundary vegetation and a change in level define the southern boundary of the rugby club; refer to **Site Photographs 2 and 3** on **figure**

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5.1. The boundary of the site is undefined on the ground, where it crosses the corner of the rugby training area near Slockett's Copse.

- 5.4.23 Views to the east from the rugby club are obscured or filtered by a site boundary hedgerow. The rugby pitch and spectator area is graded into the landform with higher ground further obscuring views of the site towards the east. Existing mature woodland within the site, and particularly Slockett's Copse, are important features in views from the rugby club. The view eastwards along the Monk's Lane boundary of the site is shown in **Site Photograph 1** on **figure 5.1**.
- 5.4.24 Views to the south from the rugby club-house and car park are more distant towards the village of Newtown and Newtown common; refer to **Appraisal Photograph 6** on **figure 6.2**. As a result of the land descending away from the viewpoint, only the upper part of each area of mature woodland is visible. These appear in the lower part of the view, merging with more distant woodland along the River Enborne Floodplain and at Newtown Common.
- 5.4.25 There are views available from the rugby club-house and car park. The view is considered of *high sensitivity* due to the number of potential visual receptors in close proximity to the site.

Potential mitigation

- 5.4.26 Existing and potentially additional landform would offer screening of views from the rugby club. Land within the site falls away from the site boundary within the rugby club, increasing the screening effectiveness of landform and existing vegetation along the rugby club boundary.
- 5.4.27 The layout of the proposed development would influence the significance of the potential impacts on visual receptors at Newbury Rugby Club. It is important to avoid the situation of development in close proximity to the site boundary, which could be intrusive in distant views over the site. Key vistas should be accommodated within the layout to achieve depth and visual interest in views to the east towards Newbury College.

Potential effects

- 5.4.28 The scale of change and *high sensitivity* of the receptors could result in a *moderate adverse* visual impact. However, mitigation measures offer the potential to reduce adverse visual impacts in views from the rugby club from *moderate adverse* to slight adverse. The sympathetic layout of the development along Monk's Lane and the creation of distant views through the development would help to mitigate change in views to the east. The resulting increase in visual interest compared to the intensively cultivated field, and the retention of Crook's Copse and Slockett's Copse, would help to minimise potential adverse impacts.

Wash Common and Wildwoods

- 5.4.29 The vegetation pattern of mature woodland and parkland near Wash Common define the views available from the minor road and properties to the west of the site. Mature trees, tall hedgerows, mature woodland and landform combine to contain the extent of views. Where the site is visible from residential properties and the school at Warren Common, only a small part or field within the site can be seen. The view to the northeast from Wildwoods is shown in **Appraisal Photograph 5** on **figure 6.2**. The site occupies a relatively small part of many of the views available, but it does contribute to the sense of open space, which is limited in such a heavily wooded landscape.
- 5.4.30 A more open view is available from the public footpath adjacent to the site near Warren Lodge, as shown in **Site Photograph 6** on **figure 5.2**. The whole of the field in this view, framed by mature trees, is proposed for development. The footpath rises onto higher ground towards Gorse Covert to offer panoramic views across the central part of the site; refer to **Site Photographs 4 and 5** on **figure 5.2**.
- 5.4.31 **Appraisal Photograph 4** on **figure 6.2** shows a potential view of the site from Penwood Road, to the southwest of the site. Existing vegetation along the River Enbourne and at Wildwoods obscure the site from view.
- 5.4.32 There are views of the site available from several residential properties at Wildwoods and Warren Common; the adjacent school; and from public footpath GREE/9/1 adjacent to and within the site. The views are considered of *medium sensitivity* due to the number of potential visual receptors and the importance of the site in views available.

Potential mitigation

- 5.4.33 Existing vegetation and potentially additional planting could offer screening of key sensitive views where required. This approach to mitigation would not be out of character with the well vegetated character of the landscape. Care would need to be taken to maintain the open space available in certain locations, which contributes to the diversity of views available.
- 5.4.34 The layout of the proposed development would influence the significance of the potential impacts on visual receptors at Wash Common and Wildwoods. It is important to avoid the situation of development in close proximity to the site boundary, which could be intrusive in close proximity views into the site. Key vistas should be accommodated within the layout to achieve depth and visual interest in views towards the east.

Potential effects

- 5.4.35 The scale of change and *medium sensitivity* of the receptors could result in a *moderate adverse* visual impact. However, there is scope for mitigation measures to reduce adverse visual impacts from *moderate adverse* to *slight adverse*. Additional planting, and potentially landform, could be incorporated into the proposed masterplan. A sympathetic

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layout of the development along the western edge of the site and the creation of distant views through the development would help to mitigate the change in views from rural to urban.

Newbury College

- 5.4.36 The northeast boundary of the site with Newbury College is largely open with scattered shrub planting along the edge of the carpark. The view of this boundary from within the site is shown in **Site Photograph 8** on figure 5.3. There are also views from the adjacent hotel and adjacent publicly accessible amenity space extending to the south. The view is considered of *high sensitivity* due to the number of potential visual receptors.
- 5.4.37 Views from the college buildings, access road and car park are filtered by tree planting within the car park. There are views available from ground floor and first floor windows of the college buildings. Crook's Copse defines the south-western extent of the view. The view is directed across the cultivated field in the north-eastern part of the site towards Monk's Lane, which is obscured by the roadside hedgerow.

Potential mitigation

- 5.4.38 Existing tree and shrub planting within the college carpark filters views into the site. This vegetation would remain but the creation of a total screen for views is not desirable in design terms. Providing issues of privacy and over-shadowing of properties within the proposed development can be overcome, a permeable landscape zone between the College and the site is more appropriate.
- 5.4.39 The layout of the proposed development would influence the significance of the potential impacts on visual receptors at Newbury College and adjacent areas. It is important to avoid the situation of a continuous line of development, which could obscure more distant views across the site. Key vistas should be accommodated within the layout to achieve depth and visual interest within the views available.

Potential effects

- 5.4.40 The scale of the change and *high sensitivity* of the receptors could result in *substantial adverse* visual impact. However, the sympathetic layout of the development and creation of more distant views through the development would help to mitigate the change in the view from rural to predominantly urban. The resulting increase in visual interest compared to the intensively cultivated field, and the retention of Crook's Copse, would help to minimise potential adverse impacts. The impact could potentially be reduced to *moderate adverse*.

6.0 Response to issues raised

6.1 Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006

- 6.1.1 The proposed development site (58 hectares) and adjacent land extending to approximately 130 hectares in total was promoted during the Newbury District Local Plan process in the late 1990s. At the Local Plan Inquiry in 1998 the proposed allocation of the site for housing was criticised by the inspector due to potential landscape and visual impact. The comments made within the report into objections¹² have been considered during the landscape and visual impact assessment. A summary of the findings is provided below:

Comment within Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 (with paragraph number)	Summary landscape and visual impact assessment
3.10.10: <i>"Together, the site and Priory form an attractive "gateway" into and out of the confines of the town which have been re-established in recent years by the development of the commercial centre around the retail park, building onto the more established residential areas around Monk's Lane"</i>	Proposed landscape enhancement of land to the southeast of the site would help to restore parkland associated Sandford Priory and improve the 'gateway' (refer to paragraphs 5.3.27-5.3.28 and 5.4.10 to 5.4.14).
3.10.11: <i>"The character and appearance of the ridge, aligned roughly along Monk's Lane and Pinchington Lane, and the associated narrow plateau at some 120m which currently form the general extent of Newbury have been consolidated by these recent developmentsNewbury RFC's grounds impinge slightly over the slope"</i>	Newbury is separated from the valley of the River Enborne by a ridgeline. The suburb of Wash Common and land uses typical of the urban edge are located on the southern side of the ridge, for example, the rugby ground, medical centre, Newbury College, hotel, retail area and recycling centre (refer to paragraphs 3.2.3). Boundaries along the edge these urban fringe developments are poorly defined and typically there is an inappropriate or piecemeal approach to boundary treatments (refer to paragraphs 3.3.4). The proposed development offers the potential to create an appropriate southern edge to Newbury.

¹² **Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006:** Local Plan Inquiry 30 September 1997 - 7 April 1998

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Comment within Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 (with paragraph number)	Summary landscape and visual impact assessment
3.10.13: <i>“unspoilt, attractive countryside contributing predominantly to the remaining impression of an open entrance and exit to and from the Town”</i>	Land within the area proposed for landscape enhancement contributes to the rural setting of Newbury. Although blocks of woodland within the site also make a contribution, the ground surface within the site is obscured. There is not an impression of space between the woodlands (refer to paragraphs 5.3.8 and 5.3.28). Proposed landscape enhancement of land to the southeast of the site would help to restore parkland associated Sandleford Priory and improve the ‘gateway’ (refer to paragraphs 5.3.27-5.3.28 and 5.4.10 to 5.4.14).
3.10.15: <i>“a continuous visual separation of town and villages and the intervening countryside”</i>	Intervisibility between the southern edge of Newbury and villages to the south is limited (refer to paragraph 5.4.23). Level change within the site and the layout of the proposed development would prevent key vistas from being obscured (refer to paragraph 5.4.27). The valley of the River Enbourne and land to the southeast of the site identified for landscape enhancement would maintain the physical separation between Newbury and villages to the south.
3.10.17: <i>“broad agreement reached between the Council and the various Objectors that the individual public vantage-points to see the site are limited”....“with existing and proposed planting little of the site would be seen from each vantage-point, and often views would be of more open uses”. However, views from the well used public footpath were considered the exception...“extensive and widely varying views and appreciation of this open land”.</i>	Change as a result of the proposed development would be most perceptible to people who use the public footpath which passes through the site. This route passes through a self contained rural landscape which would experience considerable change during its transition to an urban environment (refer to paragraph 5.3.22). In the long term potential adverse effects on landscape amenity would be mitigated by the layout of the development and its response to adjacent land uses. The potential loss of long distance views of a rural landscape can in part be offset by improved public access to the site and adjacent landscape enhancement area. The retained ancient woodland and the parkland relating to Sandleford Priory would represent a significant addition to the landscape amenity of Newbury, due to increased accessibility (refer to paragraph 5.3.24).

Comment within Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 (with paragraph number)	Summary landscape and visual impact assessment
3.10.18: <i>“perception and appreciation of the visual characteristics and value of this land as a whole... from the adjoining main roads”. Although the views experienced by drivers are “limited to glimpses because of the busy nature of the road”, consideration needs to be given to “other occupants of the many vehicles passing this large site”.</i>	Existing vegetation and potentially additional planting could offer complete screening of the proposed development in views from the B4640 and A339 (refer to paragraphs 5.4.8 and 5.4.14). Pedestrians and vehicle travellers along Monk’s Lane would experience a <i>slight adverse</i> visual impact due to views available through gaps in the existing hedgerow and potentially as a result of the creation a site access (refer to paragraphs 5.4.18).
3.10.19: Specific reference is made to <i>“pupils and parents and other visitors to St Gabriel’s School at the Priory, the Rugby Club, Park House School, and the hotel, as well as from the future students and staff of the relocated Newbury College”.</i>	Existing vegetation and potentially additional planting could offer complete screening of the proposed development in views from Sandlesford Priory and Park House (refer to paragraph 5.4.14). The sympathetic layout of the development along Monk’s Lane and the creation of distant views through the development would help to mitigate change in views across the northern part of the site. The resulting increase in visual interest compared to the intensively cultivated field, and the retention of Crook’s Copse and Slockett’s Copse, would help to minimise potential adverse visual impacts on Newbury Rugby Club, Newbury College and the adjacent hotel (refer to paragraph 5.4.27). Land within the site falls away from the southern boundary of Newbury Rugby Club, increasing the screening effectiveness of landform and existing vegetation along the rugby club boundary. The layout of the proposed development would prevent key vistas from being obscured (refer to paragraph 5.4.27).

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Comment within Report into objections to the Newbury District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 (with paragraph number)	Summary landscape and visual impact assessment
3.10.21: With regards to development at the site, the inspector refers to the <i>“replacement of fields and woods by housing and the indispersed, retained woods”</i>. Despite the <i>“plans to soften this loss within the basic design concept”</i>...the inspector was <i>“not convinced that this would avoid the serious harm which would be caused by building so much housing development over this large area of land”</i>.	Proposed landscape enhancement of land to the southeast of the site would help to restore parkland associated Sandleford Priory (refer to paragraphs 5.3.27-5.3.28 and 5.4.10 to 5.4.14). Highway routes within the site and the overall layout of the development would be sympathetic to landform, and not require large-scale earthworks. This approach will complement the landscape character of the site, and allow future residents and the wider public to more readily appreciate the diversity of landform (refer to paragraph 5.3.18). The retention of the ancient woodlands would be a major asset for the site. These areas are currently in private ownership with no public access. The development of the site could allow these woodlands to become an amenity resource for the public subject to consultation with Natural England. A management strategy would consider the maintenance and management of the woodland to maximise amenity and biodiversity value (refer to paragraph 5.3.10).
3.10.22: <i>“there is no doubt that this land represents a very important contribution to the pleasantness and attraction of the distinctive southern side and setting of the town”</i>. He referred to the <i>“desire to retain it, with even suggestions for a public town or country park”</i>.	Intervisibility between the southern edge of Newbury and villages to the south is limited (refer to paragraph 5.4.23). Level change within the site and the layout of the proposed development would prevent key vistas from being obscured (refer to paragraph 5.4.27). Boundaries along the edge of urban fringe developments to the south of Newbury are poorly defined and typically there is an inappropriate or piecemeal approach to boundary treatments (refer to paragraphs 3.3.4). The proposed development offers the potential to create an appropriate southern edge to Newbury. Proposed landscape enhancement of land to the southeast of the site would help to restore parkland associated Sandleford Priory (refer to paragraphs 5.3.27-5.3.28 and 5.4.10 to 5.4.14).

6.2 Landscape Sensitivity Study: Newbury-Local Development Framework

- 6.2.1 In order to provide an evidence base for future allocations, West Berkshire Council recently commissioned Kirkham Landscape Consultants to prepare a landscape sensitivity assessment of the rural landscape around Newbury¹³. Landscape Character Area 18D: Sandford Park within the sensitivity study includes the proposed development site (58 hectares) and adjacent land to the south and east beyond the A339. The report considered the sensitivity to change of the landscape character around the Newbury in order to inform future settlement expansion proposals in the LDF. A response to the key findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Study is provided below.

Sensitivity to change

- 6.2.2 The Landscape Sensitivity Study (LSS) considers the sensitivity of the site and adjacent areas without considering changes in sensitivity across the site. The report suggests subdividing a number of the potential sites to allow development of the least sensitive parts; this is not suggested for the Sandford Park site, which is inconsistent.
- 6.2.3 Potential mitigation measures are described in the LSS for some of the landscape character areas. The details of such measures are not identified, however, typically earthworks and planting would be proposed. Mitigation measures (landform and planting) can adversely affect landscape character where they are inconsistent with the existing landscape features i.e. landform and vegetation pattern. The proposed development site would require little further visual mitigation due to the existing strong landscape framework. This would allow the focus of the landscape strategy and masterplan to be on landscape amenity, biodiversity, landscape management and the landscape restoration of retained, degraded parkland.

The relationship of the site with its wider landscape setting

- 6.2.4 In terms of the relationship of the site with its wider landscape setting, the LSS identifies that *“Sandford Park has strong visual links with the higher ground to the south, although its character is distinct from the surrounding landscape”*. It states that *“Sandford Park abuts part of the southern edge of Newbury, the northern part being surrounded on three sides by often intrusive development”*. Despite a number of other detractors and negative impacts on its character the area *“remains an important open area contributing to the rural setting of Newbury”*.
- 6.2.5 Intervisibility between the southern edge of Newbury and villages to the south is limited to views from the Newbury Rugby Club car park and views through field gateways along Monk's Lane. Level change within the site and the layout of the proposed development would prevent key vistas from being obscured. The valley of the River Enbourne and land

13 Landscape Sensitivity Study: Newbury - Local Development Framework - **An integrated landscape sensitivity approach to settlement expansion within west Berkshire**, Kirkham Landscape Consultants, 2009

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to the southeast of the site identified for landscape enhancement would maintain the physical separation between Newbury and villages to the south. Land proposed for landscape enhancement would make a beneficial contribution to the rural setting of Newbury. Parkland relating to Sandleford Priory would be restored to create more appropriate setting for the Priory and a more distinct 'gateway' to Newbury.

- 6.2.6 Boundaries along the edge of urban fringe developments to the south of Newbury are poorly defined and typically there is an inappropriate or piecemeal approach to boundary treatments. The proposed development offers the potential to create an appropriate southern edge to Newbury whilst creating an opportunity for increase access to retained woodland within the site. Proposed landscape enhancement of land to the southeast of the site would help to restore parkland associated with Sandleford Priory and increase public access.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 The approach to the development of the site and the incorporation of green infrastructure into the masterplan would have a fundamental effect on how the development site would be viewed and perceived. Adverse visual impacts could largely be avoided through the sensitive location of development in the less visually intrusive north-western part of the site. There would inevitably be changes in the landscape character of the site. However, development designed to fit within the existing landscape framework of the site could maintain the legibility and identity of the landscape, even though the change proposed may be considerable. The measures identified above illustrate how development offers the potential to complement the landscape framework of the site.
- 7.1.2 Reference has been made to the Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd report, entitled '*An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire – Summary Report: Newbury*' (May 2009). The methodology contained in the Appendix of the report is based on current published guidance, '*Landscape Character Assessment - Topic paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*', published by Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency. It is a 'sensitivity' study, which considers overall landscape sensitivity, and not necessarily the sensitivity of the landscape to a specific type of change or development.
- 7.1.3 Sensitivity studies which consider the type of development proposed are referred to as capacity studies. These studies consider the particular types of impacts associated with specific types of development, and more importantly, the potential effectiveness of site features to offer appropriate forms of mitigation measures. The study carried out by Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd does not consider landscape capacity specifically for residential development.
- 7.1.4 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment considers the sensitivity of the whole of the site. It does not consider changes in sensitivity across the site, which it does for 'Potential Strategic Development Sites'. The report suggests subdividing a number of the potential sites to allow development of the least sensitive parts; this is not suggested for the Sandleford Park site.
- 7.1.5 The Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd report mentions potential mitigation measures in relation to some of the landscape character areas. The details of such measures are not identified, however, typically earthworks and planting are proposed. Mitigation measures (landform and planting) can adversely affect landscape character where they are inconsistent with the existing landscape features.
- 7.1.6 The Sandleford Park site would require little further visual mitigation due to the existing strong landscape framework. This would allow the focus of the landscape strategy and masterplan to be on landscape amenity, biodiversity, landscape management and the landscape restoration of retained, degraded parkland.

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8.0 Appendix

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Appendix 1: Methodology

Landscape appraisal is undertaken in two stages; these are the desk study and the field survey. The desk study includes reference to other studies and landscape assessments, including those undertaken at a national, regional and local level. In summary, the desk study involved:

- a review of landscape designations, planning policies and strategies for the landscape published by West Berkshire Council;
- consideration of the inspectors' comments relating to the potential development of the site at the Local Plan Inquiry in 1998; and
- a review of landscape sensitivity study of Newbury prepared by Kirkham Landscape Consultants; and

The subsequent landscape and visual field survey was undertaken on 17 September 2009. In summary, the landscape appraisal involved:

- an inspection of publicly accessible viewpoints, representing the range of views available of the site, including a photographic survey; and
- an evaluation of the landscape context and setting, and their ability to accommodate the likely changes associated with the proposed development.

Landscape and visual assessment requires a combination of objective analysis and subjective professional judgment. It follows a clearly defined methodology based on published guidance comprising a combination of desk studies and field surveys, with subsequent analysis. It involves analysis and evaluation of the baseline, including landscape features, landscape character, and views available of the site and the effects on them likely to arise from the proposed development. The methodology is based on the recommendations and guidance published by the Countryside Commission¹⁴, in addition to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, published by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment¹⁵. In outline, assessment involves:

- a viewpoint analysis of the likely effect on visual amenity of the public in the surrounding area, including local residents;
- consideration of mitigation and enhancement measures to avoid, reduce or remedy significant effects on the landscape or on views; and
- the identification of potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, their magnitude and significance.

14 Countryside Commission, **Landscape Assessment Guidance**, 1993.

15 The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** (2nd Edition), E&FN Spon 2002

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Landscape appraisal

The Landscape appraisal is undertaken in two stages, the desk study and the field survey. The desk study includes reference to other studies and landscape assessments, including those undertaken at a national, regional and local level. Other studies of relevance to landscape appraisal are also reviewed.

The landscape appraisal considers the elements of the physical landscape or landscape fabric, for example vegetation, field boundaries, landform, land use and other landscape features. The elements combine to form features and patterns, which give rise to particular characteristics or landscape character. Individual landscape elements, features, patterns and character are collectively referred to as landscape receptors. These are the receptors to the changes resulting from development occurring in the landscape.

The importance or value of the landscape is also considered during the landscape appraisal. Landscape designations provide an indication of landscape value; they are areas that have been recognised for the scenic beauty and recreational potential of the landscape. National, regional and local level landscape designations are reviewed during the desk-study. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Parks are statutory national designations relating to landscape quality.

Open access land is a statutory national recreational designation. It includes land managed by the Forestry Commission and areas with public access rights under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000. The right of access does not extend to camping, cycling, horse riding or driving a vehicle, nor does it apply to developed land, gardens or cultivated land. The extent of open access land is shown on new editions of the Ordnance Survey Explorer maps.

Other landscape designations reviewed during the desk-study are non-statutory. These are designated by Local and Unitary Authorities, for example Special Landscape Areas (SLA), designated to reflect special landscape character.

Landscape sensitivity

The term landscape sensitivity describes the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be proposed. It is typically most relevant at a strategic level, for example in preparation of regional and sub-regional spatial strategies. It includes a combination of the sensitivity of the landscape resource and the visual sensitivity of the landscape.

Landscape sensitivity relates to the ability of the landscape to accommodate change or development, without detrimental effects on its character¹⁶. There are a number of factors that contribute to this ability:

- landscape designations reflecting the national/local value of the landscape;
- existing landuse;
- the pattern and scale of the landscape;
- the presence of features of historical or cultural importance; and
- rarity of the elements or character.

Table 8-1 provides examples of High, Medium and Low landscape sensitivity, demonstrating how the contributing factors identified above are interpreted.

Table 8-1: Landscape sensitivity

High:	A landscape of high importance, for example; ▫ a landscape with a statutory (national) designation reflecting landscape and scenic value; ▫ a landscape particularly vulnerable to disturbance, where the loss of key features would result in a significant change in character; or ▫ a landscape including a large number of landscape elements sensitive to disturbance.
Medium :	A landscape of importance, for example; ▫ a landscape of national or local importance which may have a non-statutory landscape designation reflecting landscape and scenic value; ▫ a landscape vulnerable to disturbance, where the loss of features may result in a significant change in character; or ▫ a landscape including a large number of landscape elements sensitive to disturbance.
Low:	A landscape of low importance, for example; ▫ a landscape of local importance which has the capacity to accommodate changes of the scale proposed; or ▫ a landscape which is not vulnerable to disturbance, where the loss of features would not result in a significant change in character.

16 The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** (2nd Edition), E&FN Spon 2002

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Landscape capacity

The term landscape capacity describes the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type. It reflects the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, but more specifically its sensitivity to a particular type of development. The capacity will reflect both the sensitivity of the landscape resource and its visual sensitivity.

An overall assessment of sensitivity to the specific form of change or development requires consideration of:

- “impacts upon particular aspects of landscape character including landform, land cover, enclosure and settlement pattern;
 - impacts on aesthetic aspects such as the scale, pattern, movement and complexity of the landscape;
 - potential visibility of the development and the number of people of different types who are likely to see it;
 - scope to modify visual impacts by various appropriate forms of mitigation measures”.
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Visual appraisal

The visual appraisal considers the Visual receptors¹⁸, as defined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA). These are identified within the visual envelope from OS mapping, the computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and the visual appraisal. Receptors can be divided into two main groups based upon their location and activities, which influence the way that they experience the landscape and views:

- Location Receptors are those in particular locations within which they are able to appreciate a relatively constant view or views towards the site, including residents, users of public open spaces and visitors to outdoor visitor attractions.
- Route Receptors are those travelling along linear routes, including motorists on public highways, railway passengers and walkers, cyclists or horse riders on public rights of way.

The main differences between the two types of receptors relate to their perception of change in views, or their sensitivity to change. Location receptors can perceive long-term changes in a view for an appreciable duration. In contrast, route receptors are already

17 Topic paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity, The Countryside Agency, 2004

18 GLVIA definition of visual receptors: ‘Visual receptors include the public or community at large, residents, visitors, and other groups of viewers as well as the visual amenity of the people affected’.

experiencing a constantly changing series of views, potentially making them less aware of any one view or group of views in the sequence.

Viewpoint analysis and sensitivity

The viewpoint analysis considers views from locations that represent the main visual receptors identified within the visual envelope for the site. A representative selection of views, often selected in consultation with the local planning authority, are taken forward to the impact assessment. For each of the views selected, the visual receptors are identified along with their 'sensitivity' to the changes that would occur as a result of the proposed development. 'Sensitivity' to change has a number of contributing factors, which are:

- the location and context of the viewpoint;
- the extent of the location over which the changes would be visible;
- the field of view occupied by the development;
- the activity of the receptor and duration of the view for moving receptors;
- the expectation of the receptor in relation to the view available;
- orientation - of receptors in relation to the development, and
- the importance of the view / location - potentially indicated by designations, historic or cultural importance of the location.

Consequently, different types of receptors in a single location may have different levels of sensitivity. Alternatively, a single receptor may have different levels of sensitivity at a number of locations. **Table 8-2** provides examples of High, Medium and Low sensitivity, demonstrating how the contributing factors identified above are interpreted.

Table 8-2: Visual sensitivity

High:	A view of high importance, for example; ▫ near or open views from large numbers of residential properties or settlements where there are primary views of the proposed development site that would be experienced on a daily basis; ▫ near or open views from a nationally important landscape, designated for its scenic value, where receptors are primarily at the location in order to enjoy the view and are engaged in either stationery or slow moving activities (walking, cycling or horse riding); ▫ near or open views experienced by large numbers of viewers; or ▫ views in which the proposed development site is the defining element in the view.
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Medium:	A view of importance, for example; ▫ near or open views from residential properties and settlements where there are primary views of the proposed development site that would be frequently experienced; ▫ near or open views from a valued landscape or an area designated for its scenic value, where receptors are engaged in outdoor recreation; ▫ near or open views experienced by many viewers who are travelling and who enjoy the view of landscapes that, although not nationally designated for their scenic value, may be a locally designated landscape, a public right of way or sustrans cycle route; or ▫ views in which the proposed development site is an important element in the view.
Low:	A view of the proposed development, for example; ▫ distant, filtered or partly obscured views from residential properties and settlements where the proposed development site would be visible; ▫ views from an area used for outdoor recreation, where receptors are likely to be aware of views available; ▫ views experienced by those working outdoors; ▫ views experienced by vehicle travellers who may enjoy the view but are moving too quickly to appreciate feature in the view in detail; or ▫ distant views from public rights of way and public parks in which the proposed development site is a small but recognisable element in the view.

Photography

Photographs have a special role in describing landscape character and illustrating key views. In order for photographs to be representative and to create an image that is as similar as possible to that which is seen with the human eye, accepted practice is to use a lens with a focal length equivalent to 50 mm for a 35 mm Single Lens Reflex (SLR) camera, and a print size of 150 mm x 100 mm¹⁹. The camera used for the appraisal photography is a Canon EOS 400D digital SLR camera. Photographs are taken with a focal length of 30-32mm which is equivalent to a focal length of approximately 50mm on a 35 mm SLR camera.

19 The Landscape Institute, Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/04, Use of Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment, June 2004

Landscape photography includes wide angle or panoramic views requiring a sequence of photographs to be taken in order to capture the full width of the view. The resulting series of overlapping photographs are digitally spliced together in Adobe Photoshop CS using a cylindrical projection; this provides a panorama approximating to the normal field of view in a landscape context. Where necessary, the contrast and brightness of individual photographs is slightly manipulated in order to create a consistent panorama without visible joins. The viewpoints are located with their Ordnance Survey grid reference and height above Ordnance Datum.

Assessment and mitigation

The effects of the development, whether beneficial or adverse, would vary in nature and degree through the operational and restoration phases. Mitigation measures are proposed in the design of the quarry or by management of the quarry operational processes. The aims of mitigation measures are: first, to avoid potential effects; and second, to reduce the degree of adverse effects which are unavoidable. The effects assessed are those that remain after mitigation measures are put in place, defined as 'residual effects'.

The degree of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed quarry was determined by relating the ability of the landscape or view to accommodate the changes arising from the development proposals, and the magnitude of the changes to which they would be subjected. The degree of effect, whether adverse or beneficial, is graded from substantial to negligible, as defined for landscape in Table 8-3, and for visual amenity in Table 8-4.

Table 8-3: Effects on the landscape

Significant:	Sensitive landscape completely degraded, with little or no scope for mitigation; or Improvement sufficient in scale to upgrade overall landscape character.
Substantial:	Considerable adverse change to the features, elements, character, or quality of a sensitive landscape, with limited scope for mitigation (or lesser change in very sensitive landscape); or Improvement to the landscape over a wide area sufficient to alter perceptions.
Moderate:	Discernible change to landscape character, features, or elements of medium-high sensitivity, but with scope for mitigation; or Perceptible improvements to landscape character.
Slight:	Localised or limited adverse change to the existing landscape character with considerable scope for mitigation; or

Sandleford Park, Newbury

Landscape and visual assessment

	Localised improvement to the existing landscape quality.
Negligible or None:	No perceived change to the existing landscape character and quality, or the change is difficult to discern.

Table 8-4: Effects on visual amenity

Significant:	Major visual intrusion experienced from settlements or numbers of properties and/or from sensitive public viewpoints, where the development would cause a large scale deterioration in the existing view, with little or no scope for mitigation, or An improvement in the view, sufficient to upgrade overall visual amenity.
Substantial:	Visual intrusion experienced from settlements or numbers of properties and/or from sensitive public viewpoints where the development would cause deterioration in the existing view with limited scope for mitigation (or a lesser intrusion in highly sensitive views); or An improvement in the view, sufficient to provide some benefits to visual amenity.
Moderate:	Visual intrusion on settlements or numbers of properties and/or from public viewpoints where the development would cause a limited deterioration in the existing view, but with scope for mitigation; or A reduction in visual intrusion, or improvement in the view.
Slight:	Minor visual intrusion attributable to the development or a perceptible deterioration in the existing view, with scope for mitigation; or Localised reduction in visual intrusion, or noticeable improvement in the view.
Negligible:	The change in the view is imperceptible or difficult to discern.

Appendix 2: Drawings

Figure 1:	Designations
Figure 2:	Landscape appraisal
Figure 3:	Visual appraisal
Figure 4:	Site appraisal
Figure 5:	Site photographs
Figure 6:	Views of the site

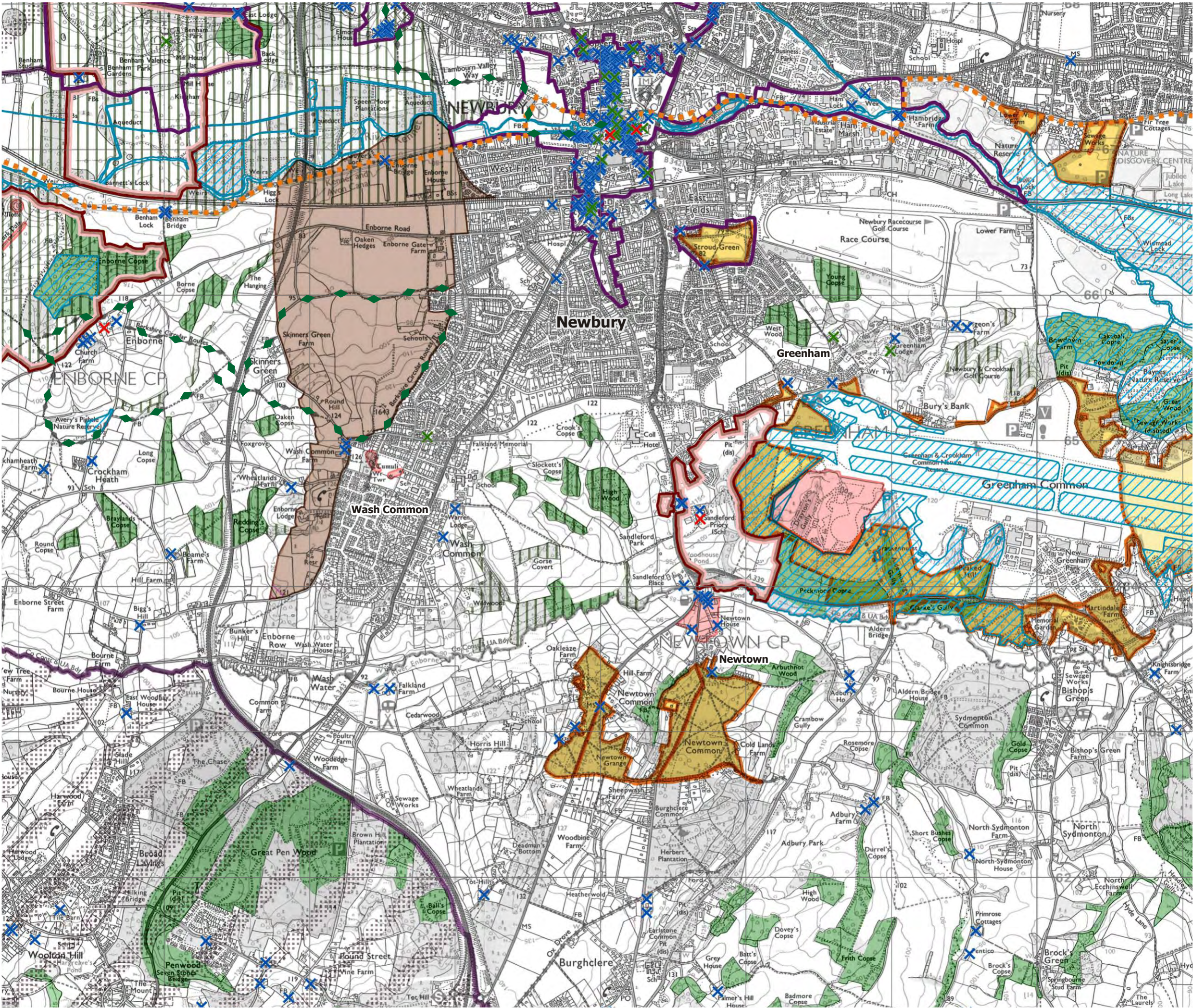
Sandleford Park, Newbury

Landscape and visual assessment

Sandleford Park, Newbury

Designations

1



- Key
- Potential development site
 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - Ancient and semi natural woodland
 - Plantation on ancient woodland site
 - Wildlife heritage site
 - Scheduled monument
 - Conservation Area
 - Registered Historic Park/Garden
 - Listed building (red denotes Grade 1)
 - Registered Battlefield
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - Access Land
 - National Cycle Network Route
 - National Cycle Route
 - Long Distance Footpath

North

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 km

Scale 1:25,000 @ A3 Do not scale from this drawing

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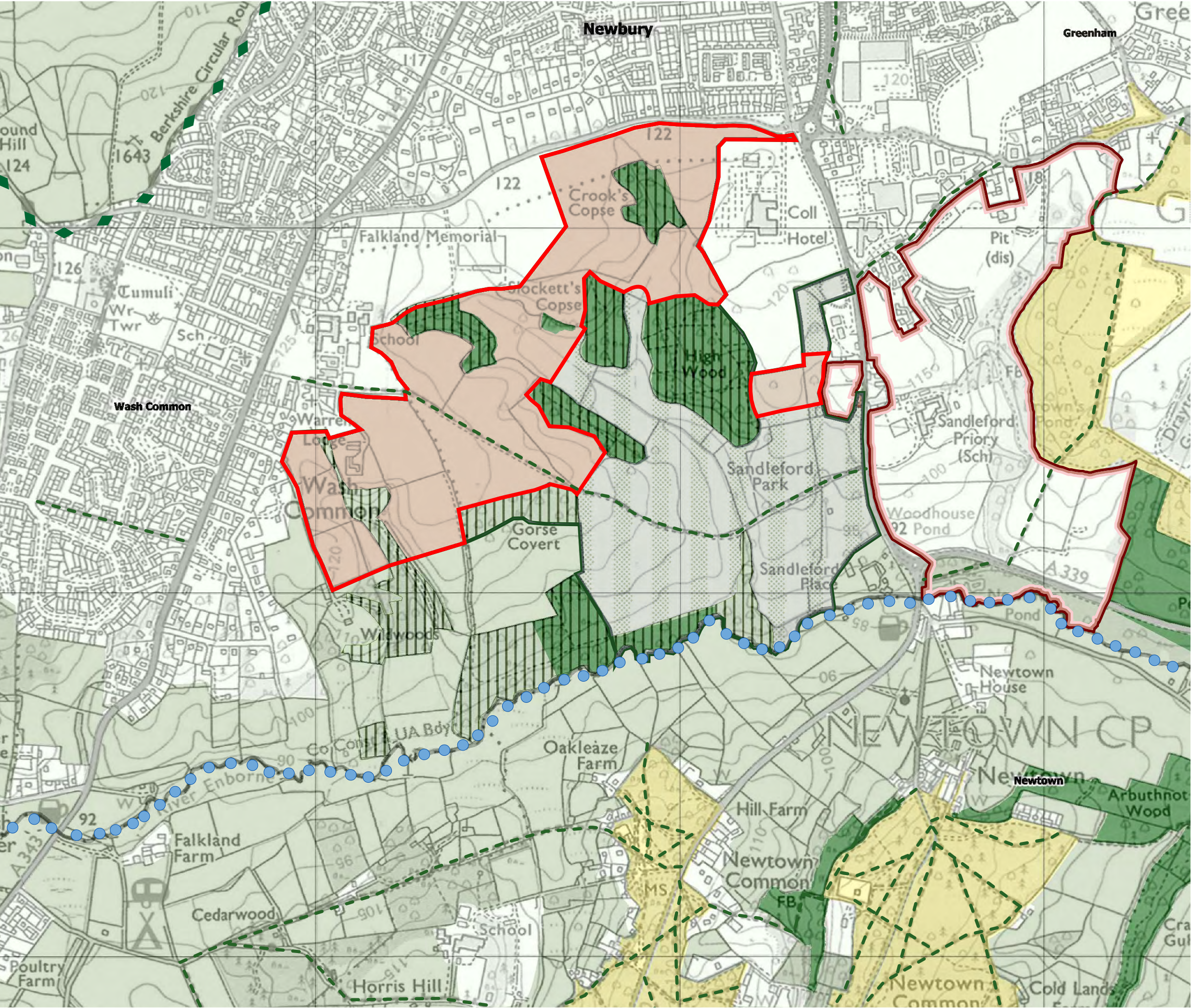
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Sandleford Park, Newbury

Landscape appraisal

2

Key

Potential extent of development

Potential land for landscape enhancement

Ancient and semi natural woodland

Wildlife heritage site

Undeveloped land

Registered Historic Park/Garden

The River Enborne

Access Land

Public footpath

Long Distance Footpath

North

0100200300400500m

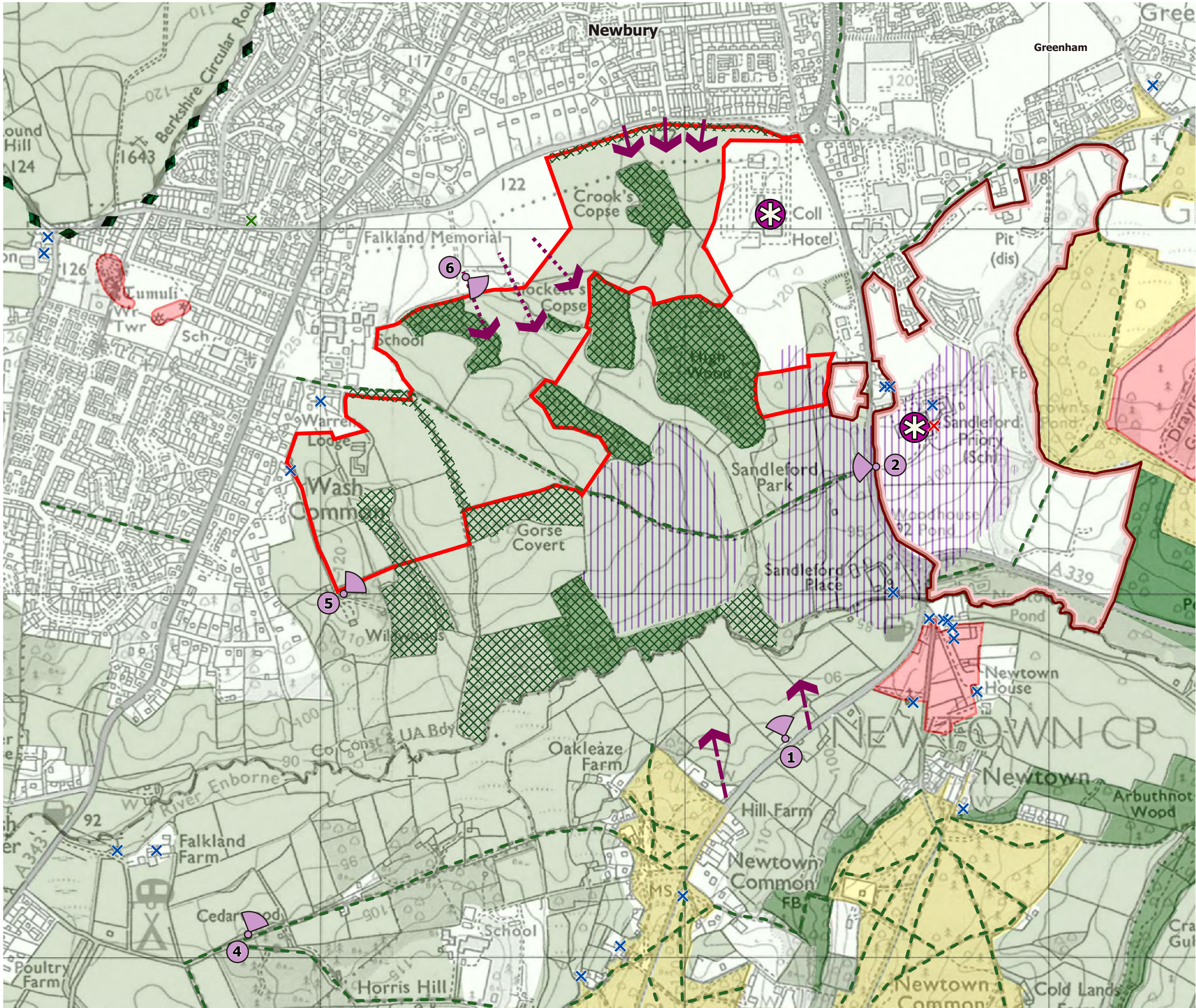
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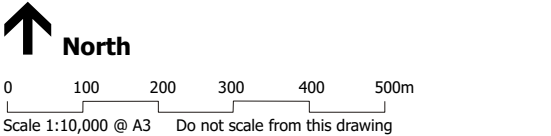


Sandleford Park, Newbury

Visual appraisal

3

- Key
- Potential extent of development
 - Landmarks
 - Appraisal photograph locations (Refer to drawings 6.1 and 6.2)
 - Areas visible from the south and at 'gateway' to Newbury
 - Screening elements
 - Elevated publicly available views over site
 - Private views over part of site from adjacent residential properties
 - Filtered publicly available views
 - Ancient and semi natural woodland
 - Undeveloped land
 - Scheduled monument
 - Registered Historic Park/Garden
 - Listed building (red denotes Grade 1)
 - Access Land
 - Public footpath
 - Long Distance Footpath

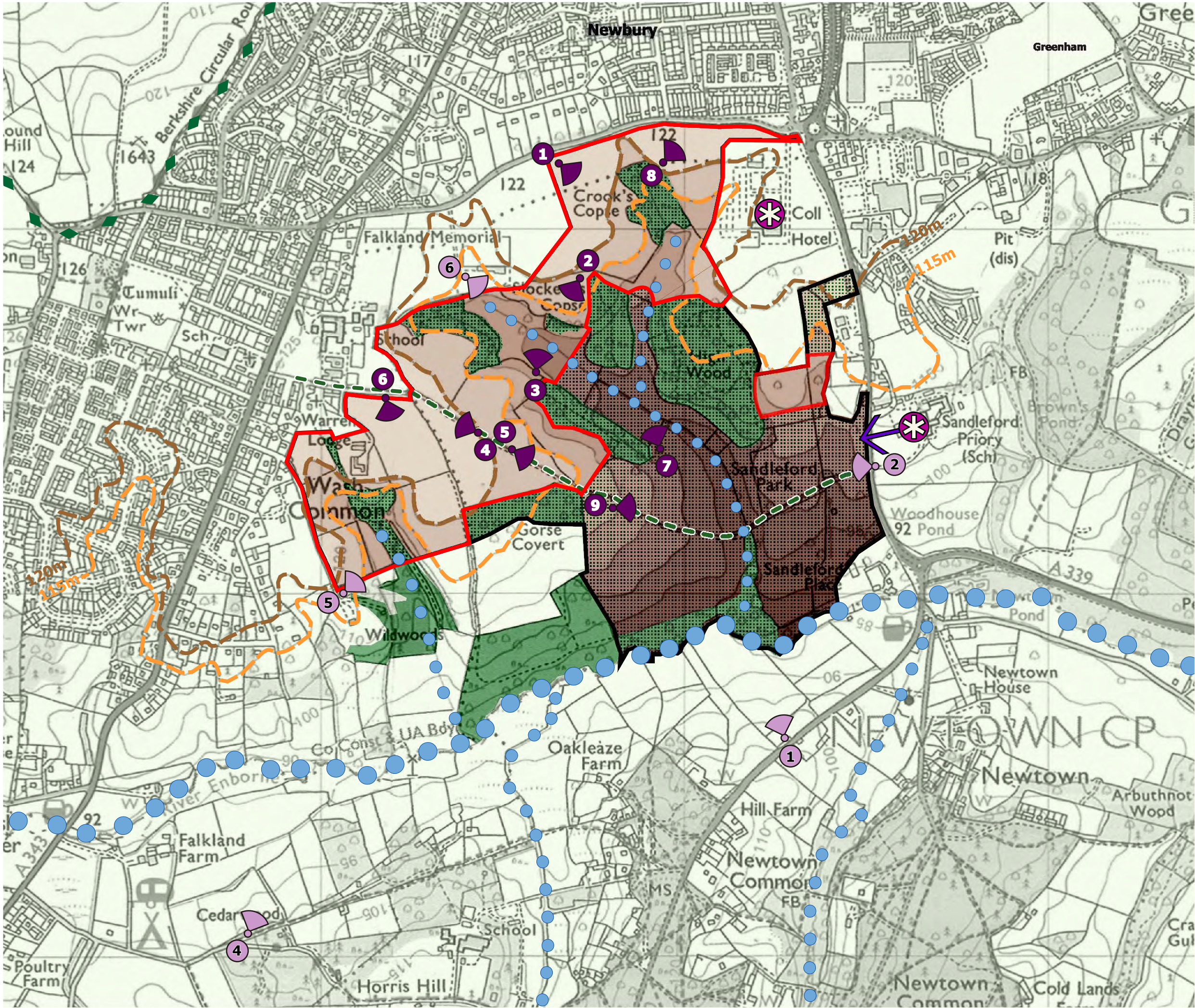


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Sandleford Park, Newbury

Site Appraisal

4

Key

Potential extent of development site

Potential landscape enhancement area

Valley floor

Landmarks

Significant view

Site photograph locations
(Refer to drawings 5.1- 5.3)

Appraisal photograph locations
(Refer to drawings 6.1 and 6.2)

115 m contour

120 m contour

Elevation m AOD

120-125m

115-120m

110-115m

105-110m

100-105m

95-100m

90-95m

85-90m

Public footpath within site boundary

Long Distance Footpath

North

0100200300400500m

Scale 1:10,000 @ A3 Do not scale from this drawing

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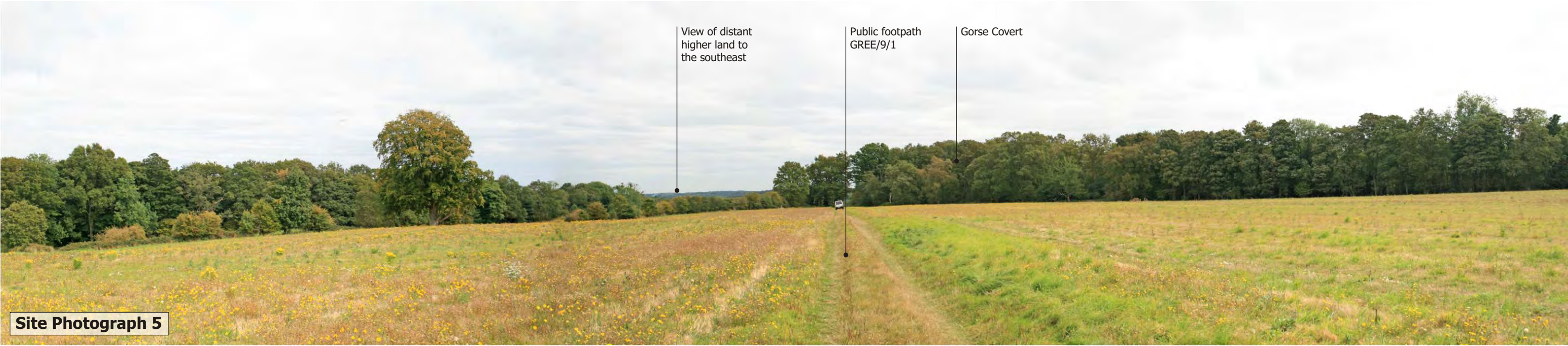
Site Photograph 1

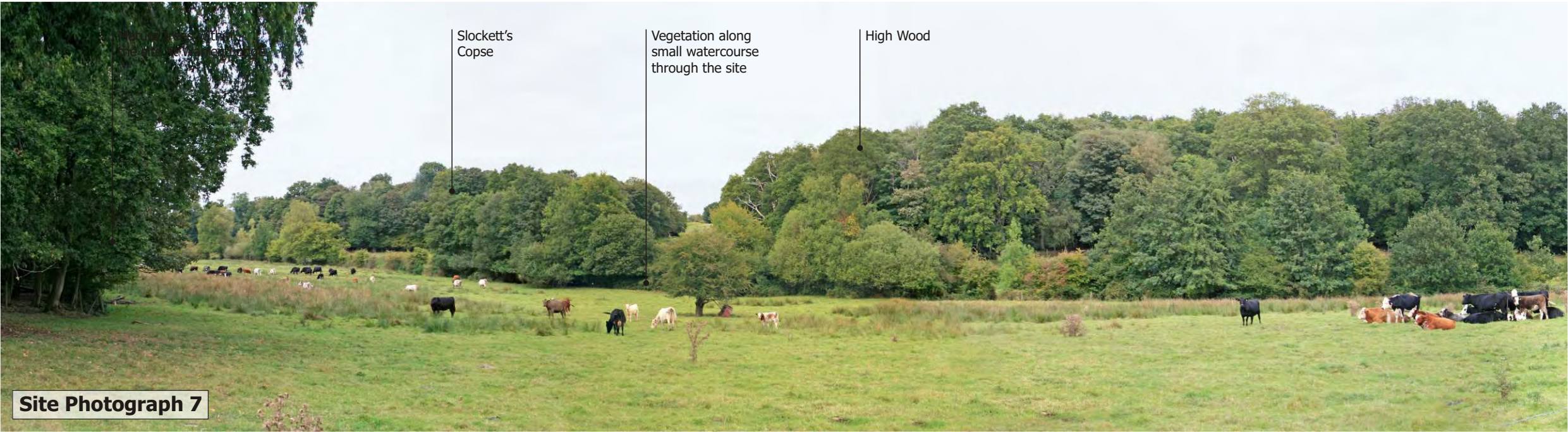


Site Photograph 2



Site Photograph 3





Site Photograph 7



Site Photograph 8



Site Photograph 9





Houses at Wash Common

Appraisal Photograph 4: View north east from Penwood Road

Sandleford Park, Newbury

Appraisal
 Photographs

6.2



Appraisal Photograph 5: View east from Wildwoods



Crook's Copse

Appraisal Photograph 6: View south east from Newbury RFC

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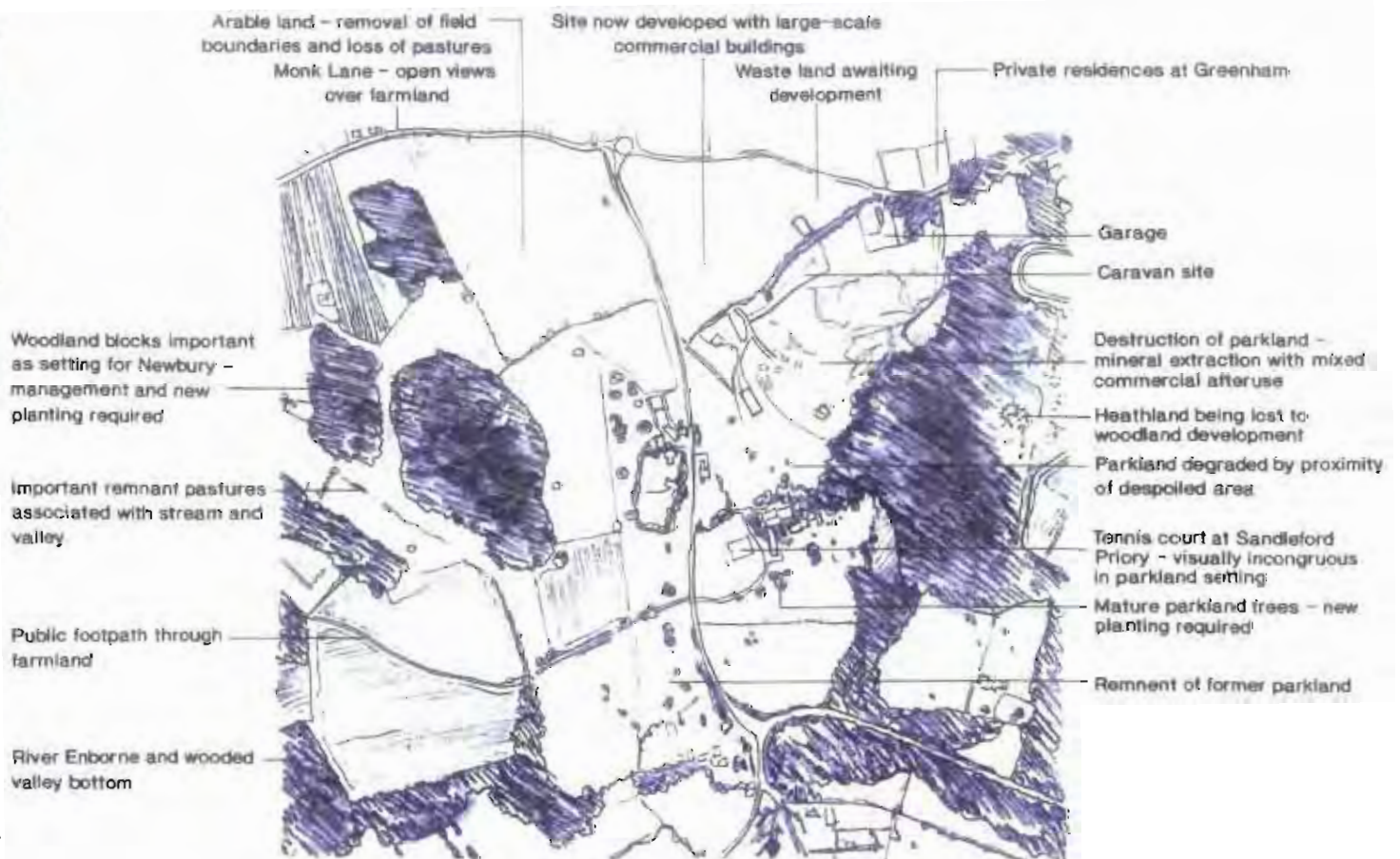


Appendix 3: Newbury District-wide landscape assessment

DEGRADED PARKLAND



SANDLEFORD NEAR NEWBURY



18a. DEGRADED PARKLAND

Key Landscape Characteristics

- Specimen trees and tree clumps, some over-mature standing in ploughed or arable farmland (pasture destroyed).
- Unkempt grounds and silted-up ponds associated with mapped parklands.
- Destruction of parkland by mineral extraction and commercial after-use.
- Erosion of contextual setting by large-scale commercial development and degraded urban fringe.

Landform and Context

This landscape character description applies in particular to a fairly extensive area of parkland immediately to the south of Newbury which is composed of Sandleford Priory, a Grade II listed park and the adjacent Sandleford Park, across the A34. Together these areas span the southern "gateway" to Newbury between the Greenham Common Airbase and residential development at Wash Common. The area is mapped in detail as Map 59.

Land use and Landscape Pattern

The prominent position as part of the setting to the southern edge of Newbury draws attention to the degraded quality of this parkland area. Sandleford Priory is now a school and related development, such as tennis courts, has had a visually detracting influence on the south side of the buildings. In general, the grounds appear somewhat unkempt. To the north, destruction of former parkland has been extensive. Gravel workings and subsequent miscellaneous commercial uses including a residential caravan site, auto-repair workshops, and a riding school, have had a serious visual impact. The general rural setting has also been eroded by development on land to the north of the caravan site.

Sandleford Park is by contrast a large area of arable farmland, broken by substantial blocks of woodland. Free-standing, mature trees remain scattered across a small area near the A34, indicating the former parkland, but the pasture has been lost from all except a small valley area hidden by the woodland blocks. The area is crossed by a public right of way joining the A34 to Wash Common, and a small stream drains the slope to join with the River Enborne.

There are no settlements within the area other than the Priory and Sandleford Farm and related buildings close to the A34. Various private houses and the caravan site skirt the northern edge of Sandleford Priory.

Human Response

The present state of Sandleford Priory is a sad vestige of its former condition. It is now divided into several ownerships with much of the former detail lost through neglect or destruction.

There is scope for fundamental environmental and visual improvement of this whole landscape, and this is outlined in the Landscape Guidelines section. The farmland character of the larger western portion provides a good quality rural setting, but there is scope here through management and replanting to further enhance the area.

18a DEGRADED PARKLAND

Strategy - Enhancement

Note: any restoration works should be in consultation with English Heritage, and with reference to historical records of earlier layouts and planting plans.

Trees and Woodlands

- Plant new tree clumps and single specimens to replace those lost or in decline.
- Encourage thinning, coppicing and replanting of woodlands to enhance quality and maintain semi-enclosed landscape character. Tree groups and woodlands at Sandleford are important to the setting of Newbury.
- Plant new tree screens and woodlands to edges of parks, particularly to soften views of visually degraded areas and recent development to the north of Sandleford Priory.
- Formal tree planting along the Monks Lane boundary would enhance the parkland quality of this urban edge, and allow views over the parkland.

Farmland and open areas

- Encourage, where possible, restoration to pastureland from current arable land and areas neglected or despoiled by mineral extraction, caravan parks and miscellaneous commercial uses.
- Re-introduce grazing to manage grassland areas.
- Screen visually intrusive elements, or remove and resite - e.g. tennis courts, unsightly buildings, inappropriate development.

Waterbodies and watercourses

- Protect streams and ponds from contamination by fertiliser run-off.
- Desilt and cut back vegetation from ponds overgrown by woodlands

Access

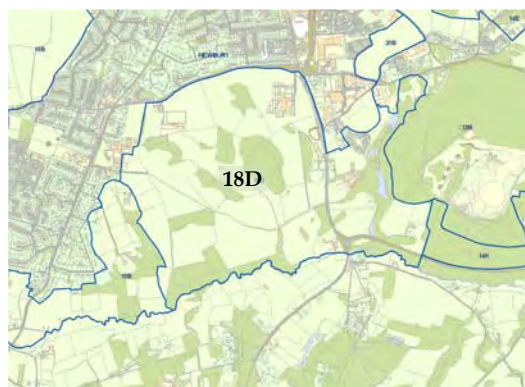
- Maintain Public Rights of Way

Development

- Prevent any further erosion of former parkland by development.
- Development on adjacent land, i.e. north of Sandleford Priory, should include substantial provision for tree planting to enhance context of parkland and prevent further visual degradation.



Appendix 4: Landscape sensitivity study

LLCA18D: Sandleford Park**View to Sandleford Park and St Gabriel's School****Parkland west of Newtown Road****View to Newtown College**

Sandleford Park is characterised by a flat topped ridge in the north, falling south to the Enborne valley, partly overlain by parkland. The area appears quite wooded, but there are large open areas with long views out and in. The LLCA is dominated by large scale development on the high ground to the north.

Overall sensitivity: Medium

Key elements of landscape sensitivity

- Complex topography, with a flat topped ridge along the northern sector falling southwards to the valley of the River Enborne, with two north-south minor valleys and internal undulations
- Mosaic of arable, pasture and amenity grassland, with blocks of woodland, specimen trees and tree clumps
- Group of parkland ponds, former fishponds, in east, associated with Sandleford Priory
- Secluded within valleys, but open in places on higher ground

- Open views south from higher ground, and views of hard settlement edge and development encroaching into area
- Former Sandleford Priory a landmark feature
- Grade II Sandleford Park contains remnants of Capability Brown designed landscape, several listed buildings, numerous archaeological records. Varied historic sensitivity, with predominantly low to medium in north, high in centre, and medium and high in south. Overall medium to high

Other landscape sensitivity interests

- No settlement, but a number of large scattered developments, including the former priory, now a school, a new college development in the north, and a caravan park/holiday lodge development in the north east.
- Considerable visual intrusion from adjacent development, including the large scale retail park to the north east, residential, industrial, and waste development, lit roads and floodlighting masts. Overall tranquillity levels very low to low, but medium in enclosed valleys
- Medium PROW including one promoted. Medium access and recreational value
- Significant areas of ASNW and BAP habitats: medium biodiversity interest
- A number of local cultural associations and Parish Plan; high cultural sensitivity

Wider landscape

LLCA18D: **Sandleford Park** has strong visual links with the higher ground to the south, although its character is distinct from the surrounding landscape.

Setting to the urban form

LLCA18D: **Sandleford Park** abuts part of the southern edge of Newbury, the northern part being surrounded on three sides by often intrusive development. Housing in the north looks out over the area, but views are filtered by trees/woods within the LLCA. Large developments and caravan park/holiday lodges within the LLCA blur boundary between rural and urban. Nevertheless, even in this condition the LLCA remains an important open area contributing to the rural setting of Newbury.

Sandleford Park, Newbury

Landscape and visual assessment