

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

**LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES WITHIN AND
ADJACENT TO THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY IN
WEST BERKSHIRE**

FINAL PHASE 2 REPORT: CHIEVELEY

CHIEVELEY

Assessment of Settlement

Settlement	Chieveley
North Wessex Downs AONB Character area	LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs
Date of site survey	17 June 2014
Surveyors	AG

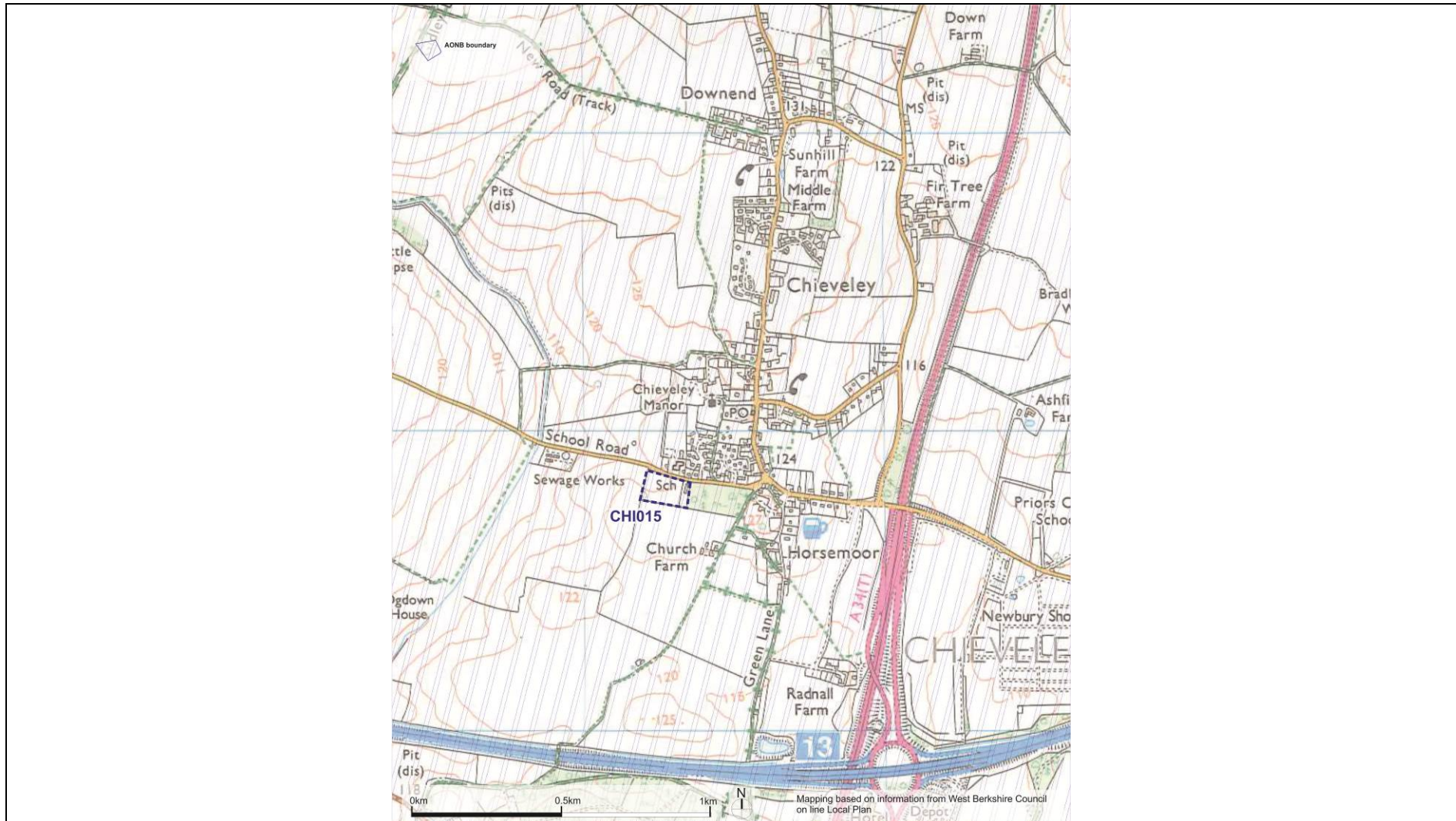


Figure CHI.1: Chieveley potential housing sites

Key landscape characteristics

AONB LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs (unless source noted otherwise)

- A discrete area of downland with woodland occurring on the dipslope, between the more open downland areas of Lambourn Downs to the west and Blewbury Downs to the east
- The area has the essential landform pattern and characteristics of the Open Downlands but on a reduced scale, with gentler contours
- A large scale, undulating mixed farmed landscape of pasture and arable fields, enclosed by hedgerows, though boundaries often denuded with gaps or intensively flailed
- Hedgerows frequently with mature oak and ash hedgerow trees
- Varied field patterns, including some sinuous boundaries reflecting medieval or post medieval 'ladder' fields, but generally large regular fields created by Parliamentary enclosure
- Large ridge top woodland blocks are a feature of the area and form dark wooded horizons providing visual containment
- In some parts of the area, where woodland is less prevalent, the landscape has a more open arable character, particularly where field boundaries have been removed
- Woodlands are very diverse and include recent mixed plantations and shelterbelts as well as semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin, including formerly coppiced woods of ash, maple and hazel with oak standards, though traditional coppicing has been discontinued resulted in more dense enclosed woodland structures
- Carefully positioned tree clumps drawing the eye to the higher ground are distinctive features
- Chieveley has a north-south orientation and sits on relatively flat land, declining slightly from north to south (VDS)
- Chieveley is well endowed with hedges and trees, which help to conceal the village from outside (VDS)
- The mix of broad-leaf and evergreen species maintains Chieveley's rural feel even in winter, softening the hard edges of walls and buildings (VDS)
- Replant hedgerows and hedgerow oaks (NDLCA)
- Retain wooded horizons and strengthen existing character of wooded summits and ridges with shelterbelts and hedges (BLCA)

Key visual characteristics

AONB LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs (unless source noted otherwise)

- Low wooded horizons
- Excellent views from the northern edge, from which the escarpment drops steeply
- Views also exist to the east and west of the area
- Tree and woodland features combine to create a softer, sheltered character
- The sunken, enclosed lanes contribute to the rich and intimate scale of the landscape
- A quiet, rural landscape
- Apart from the church tower, Chieveley is well hidden from most aspects in the wider landscape, with the only view available from off road on the higher ground to the west or north west, though even then the settlement is so cloaked with mature trees, shrubs and hedgerows that it offers only tantalising glimpses of itself (VDS)
- The village has a remarkable sense of seclusion (VDS)
- The linear nature of the settlement area provides opportunities to view the surrounding landscape, not just from the properties themselves but also through the spaces between (VDS)
- Peaceful, remote, rural character (BLCA)

Key settlement characteristics

AONB LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs (unless source noted otherwise)

- A well settled area with a large number of individual farms and with villages often surrounded by woodland and set within folds in the landform
- The linear settlement of Chieveley is located on a low ridge rather than in a valley
- An extensive network of interconnected rural lanes serve the settlement, the lanes often deeply incised and overhung by grass banks, hedges and mature hedgerow trees
- Where the village becomes more visible at its main entrances, houses are either set back from the road or, for the most part, well screened by hedges, shrubs and trees (VDS)
- Almost complete lack of tall structures in Chieveley (VDS)
- The newly completed housing developments in the centre of Chieveley emphasise the linear form of the settlement and create a new 'centre' for the village (VDS)
- Large scale development would be visually intrusive in this open farming landscape (NDLCA)
- The linear expansion infill to join smaller settlements (e.g Chieveley – Downend to Beedon) should be avoided to prevent loss of character and local identity (NDLCA)
- Limited infill within defined settlement boundaries would be preferable (NDLCA)

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

The whole of Chieveley and its hinterland lies within the AONB landscape character area LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs. This is a well populated landscape with many individual farms set in folds in the landscape. Despite Chieveley's location on a low ridge, the buildings are generally well integrated into the landscape in views from the surrounding countryside. Essentially made up of two settlements, one to the north and one to the south, recent developments have closed the gap with the intention of creating a new settlement 'centre' though the open spaces and lack of focus in this centre make it feel like a gap rather than a centre. The pattern of development has grown in a linear fashion, closely linked to the road network that makes up the village, with modern estates small in scale and closely related to the road, rather than extending back into the open countryside.

The area is noted for its quiet, rural character, its fine views, rural, often sunken, lanes and the pattern of hedgerows and woodlands. The older parts of the village have a strong visual and architectural character and the village is notably devoid of tall structures. Any proposed development needs to respect these characteristics and avoid suburbanising the rural character through unsympathetic hard landscape features such as kerbs, grand site entrances, or ornamental planting on the perimeter of the countryside.

Although Chieveley has modern housing estates, these are generally of a scale in keeping with the older pattern of development, and with close relationships with existing road networks. Large, sprawling estates would detract from the special qualities of this area. Great care will also be needed to minimise the impact on the landscape character of the surrounding AONB, through limitations on development and generous provision of Green Infrastructure which will be needed to continue the existing character of a village in a well-vegetated setting. Although the relative enclosure of the areas around Chieveley offer opportunities for locating new development and still retaining the visual enclosure, the cumulative effect of multiple developments should be taken into consideration so that the special qualities of the LCA close to Chieveley are not completely lost.

Sources:

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002

Additional information from:

- Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Scale and Distribution of Development in the North Wessex Downs AONB (2011) (LSA 2011)
- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
- Historic Environment Character Zoning (HECZ)
- Chieveley VDS

Assessment of Potential Housing Site: CHI015: Land at School Lane

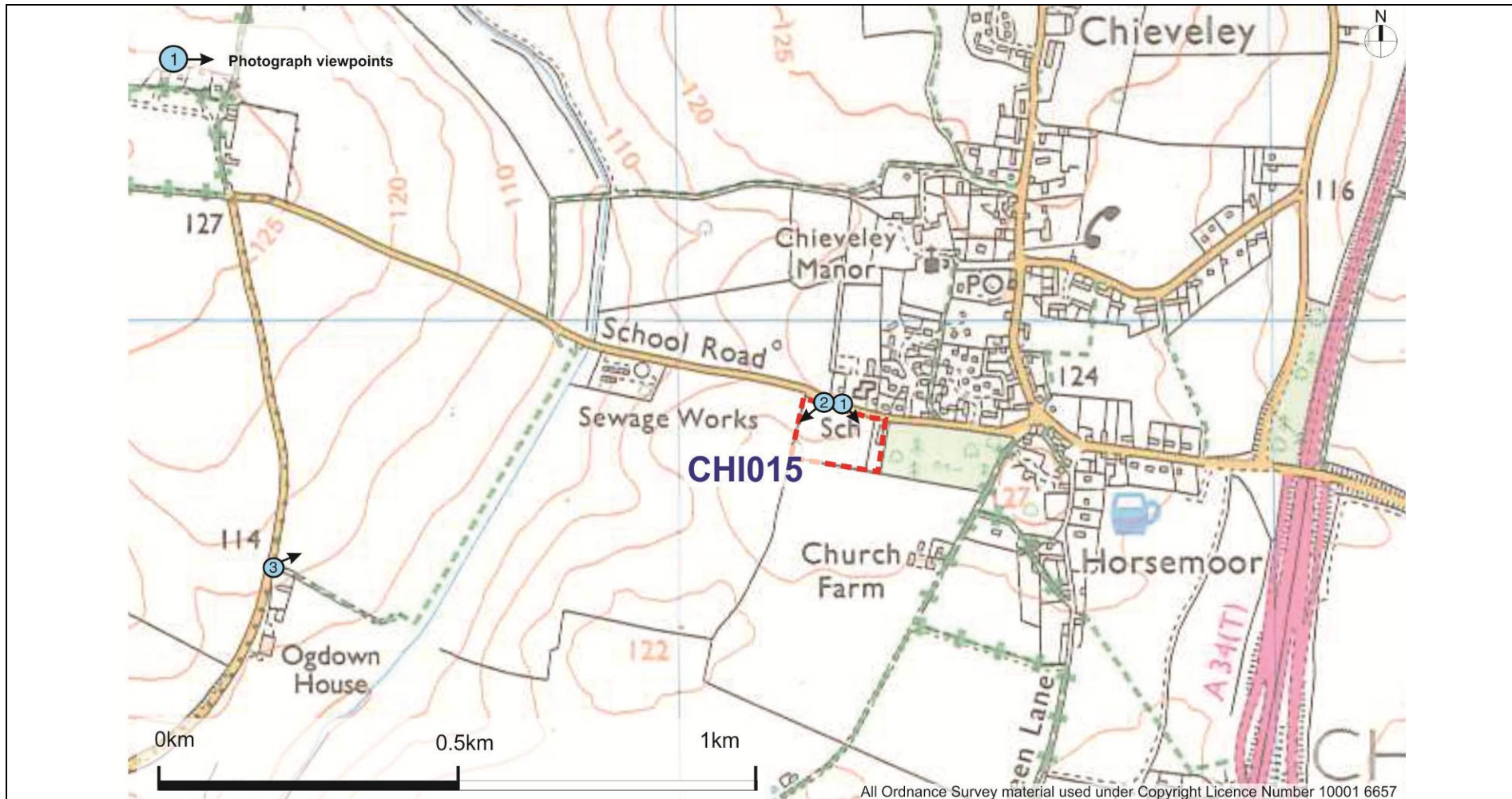





Figure CH015I.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS

	
<p>Viewpoint 1: Views into site from School Road, with mature TPO trees lining the boundary.</p>	<p>Viewpoint 2: Long views westwards are possible from within the site.</p>
	
<p>Viewpoint 3: The well-wooded village is hidden from the wider AONB, but housing on CHI015 would be visible as it is outside the wooded envelope</p>	

Site description

Site CHI015 is located at the south western extremity of Chieveley on the south side of School Road, opposite the school. The site is entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB and comprises 2 fields, the larger western field is used for meadow grass with hedgerows to the south and west boundaries and the smaller eastern field contains a single building (possibly a converted agricultural building), with mixed woodland to the east. The northern boundary is formed by School Road with a row of TPO trees to the north edge of the western field with a fence allowing views into the field. These trees form an important part of the wooded setting of the village. Expansive views across the surrounding countryside to the west are possible from the site. A low hill to the south of the site cuts off long views to the south. The site slopes gently westwards down to the Winterbourne stream valley and away from the low ridge on which the village sits.

<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site lies at and beyond the western extremity of Chieveley with the northern boundary adjacent to the settlement • The site forms part of the important open countryside at the entrance to the village • Beyond the TPO trees on the northern boundary, the site is outside of the wooded envelope characteristic of much of the village • The eastern field contains a building (use unknown) set back from the road. Beyond this field, the settlement is broken by a woodland with loose development beyond, including the southern edge of the Conservation Area • Little intervisibility with the village – separated by the tree belt to the northern boundary
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The north western part of site extends down the slope and off the low ridge on which much of the settlement lies • The site is part of the matrix of small scale fields and woodlands which forms the setting of parts of the village and which has physical and visual links with the wider countryside • The site is strongly linked with the open landscape to the south and west and is an important part of the setting of and approach to the village
<p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on TPO trees • Erosion of tranquillity • Loss of locally uncommon meadow • Loss of part of the wider landscape
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent in views from PRoWs in the AONB to the west and south • Loss of views onto open fields from within the village and on the approach to the village
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion beyond the low ridge on which Chieveley sits • Sub-urbanisation of the south western edge of Chieveley, particularly along the southern edge of School Road • Expansion beyond the western extent of the village envelope • Expansion beyond the wooded envelope of the village
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development over the site would result in significant harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The site is not recommended as a potential housing site on landscape grounds.</p>