

Settlement	Hermitage
North Wessex Downs AONB Character areas: LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons	
Date of site survey	June 2014
Surveyor	BK
Key landscape characteristics AONB LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons (unless source noted otherwise) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broad undulating plateau• Intricate mosaic of woodland, pasture and small areas of remnant heathland• Large interconnected woodland blocks• Strong hedgerow pattern with mature trees• Enclosed and intimate character• Small irregular fields of informal and piecemeal enclosures• Intricate network of rural lanes, many sunken and overhung with woodland• Historic parkland• Ancient and semi-natural woodland• Mixed well managed woodland to east in Fence Wood, Grimsbury Wood and Pheasants Hill Wood (VDS)• Substantial tree groups at gateways to the village (VDS)• Reorganised fields, formerly pre 18th C irregular fields (HLC): HER 004 and 007	
Key visual characteristics AONB LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons (unless source noted otherwise) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low wooded horizons• Fine views over the AONB• Views out of the village to the wooded skylines (VDS)	

Key settlement characteristics

AONB LCA 8A Hermitage Wooded Commons (unless source noted otherwise)

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

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

The potential gypsies and travellers site near Hermitage lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB. It is located within the parish of Hampstead Norreys and a kilometre to the north of the settlement of Hermitage. This capacity report builds upon the work in the previous assessment in *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Scale and Distribution of Development in the North Wessex Downs AONB* (2011) (LSA 2011) and examines the north-western part of Hermitage and its landscape setting in greater detail, specifically concentrating on the special qualities and key characteristics which contribute to the natural beauty of the AONB around GTTS1.

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

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

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)
- Hermitage VDS

Assessment of Potential Gypsies and Travellers Site: Furze Hill, Hermitage: GTTSI

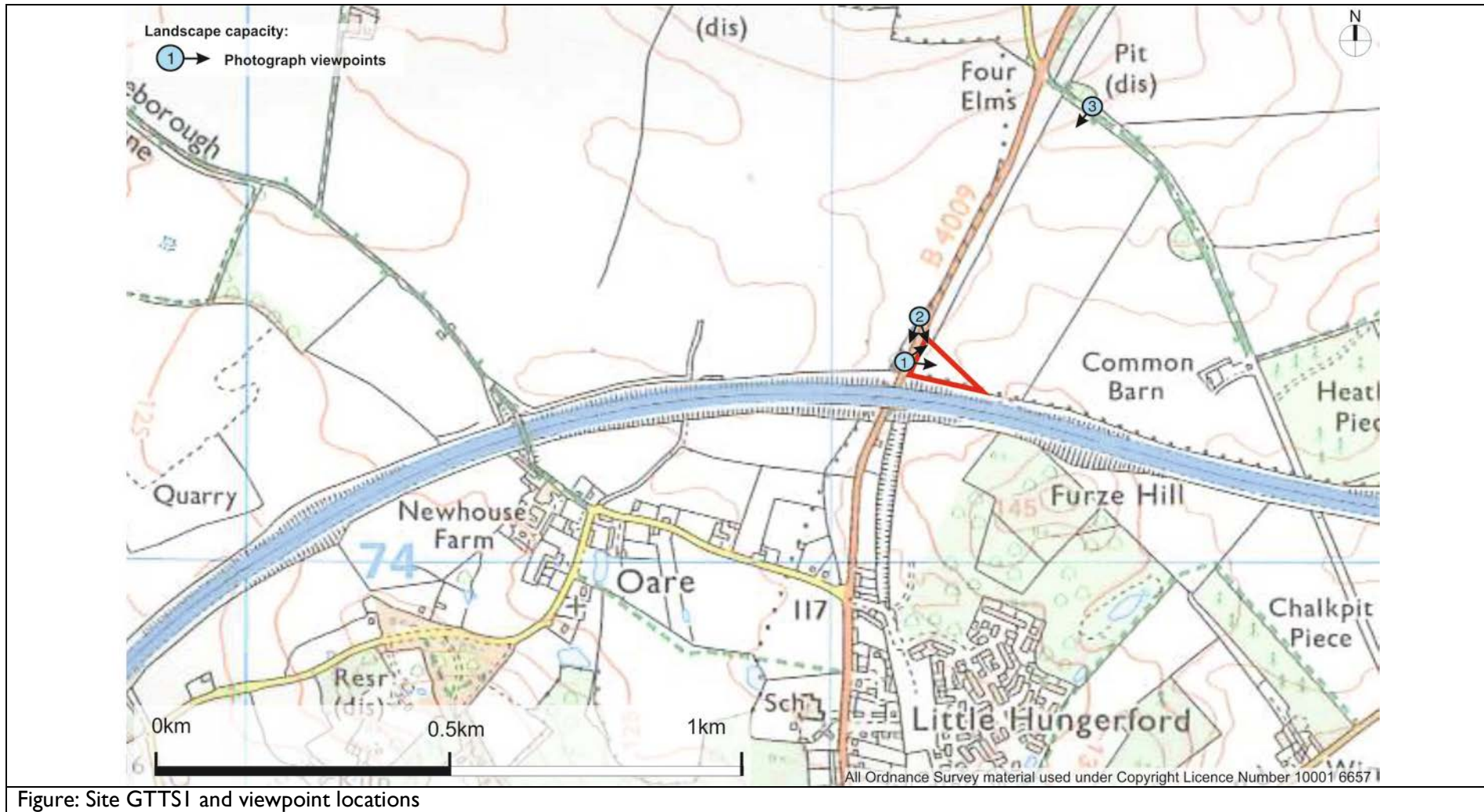


Figure: Site GTTSI and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from B4009 looking to small shed and mature tree line on the northern edge of the site.



Viewpoint 2: View from B4009 looking south over the site to the M4 (largely hidden behind the mature trees)



Viewpoint 3: View from Restricted Byway to the north of the site, over open field to mature trees and the gap in tree line on northern edge of the site

Site description

Site GTTS1 is a small triangular piece of land which lies within the parish of Hampstead Norreys, a kilometre to the north of Hermitage on gently sloping ground between 115 and 120m AOD immediately adjacent to the northern embankment of the M4 and west of the B4009. It comprises a field of rough grassland, scrub and one small shed on the northern boundary. A line of mature trees mark the northern boundary, with a gap in this cover behind the shed. The southern boundary comprises a group of trees on the M4 embankment and southern edge of the site. The western boundary to the B4009 is open with some scattered scrub. Large open fields extend to the east, north and west of the site. Beyond the M4 to the south lies the rural edge of Hermitage with individual house in small to large gardens.

<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Divorced from the settlement of Hermitage by the M4, a distance of 1km and small scale rural open countryside and gardens on the settlement edge up to the M4• No nearby built form other than Common Barn• On lower ground at 115m AOD
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small field of pasture with high level of tree cover typical of the area• Contrast with open arable fields surrounding the site• Largely contained by tree cover with an open boundary to the B4009
<p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of small area of pasture• Risk to surrounding tree and woodland cover as a result of development , fencing, storage of materials and vehicles within the root protection area• Erosion of the open character of the area north of the M4• Introduction of non-agricultural intensive development into this undeveloped landscape
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential loss of tree screening to M4• Visual impact on rural character of the approach to Hermitage from Hampstead Norreys along the B4009 north of the M4 as result of the prominence of buildings, and ancillary fencing and storage of materials and vehicles• Visual impact on views from the Restricted Byway to the north as result of the increased prominence of buildings, and ancillary fencing and storage of materials and vehicles
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extends the built form well beyond the more dense centre and the loosely developed northern edge of the village
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development on this site would not conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The site is not recommended as a gypsy and traveller site as it would result in an adverse impact on small scale local landscape features that are typical of the special qualities of this part of the AONB and the parish of Hampstead Norreys north of Hermitage. It would have an adverse landscape and visual impact on the open undeveloped wider landscape north of the M4 (despite the presence of the M4 which is largely screened, although audible). It is poorly integrated with the village. Additional native screening might further isolate the site from the local community and could not hide the presence of the development.</p>