

STRATFIELD MORTIMER PARISH COUNCIL

LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES AT STRATFIELD MORTIMER

REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) went to Examination in August 2016. The Examiner's Report was received on 25 October 2016 where he came to the conclusion that the NDP should not progress to referendum.

I.2 In that Report the Examiner concluded in his Summary of Main Findings:

Whilst the draft NDP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan, I find that potential landscape and visual impacts have not been considered properly when promoting The Site (the land to the south of St John's Infants School) for development. Having regard to national policy, which gives importance to environmental as well as to economic and social considerations, I am not satisfied that the making of the NDP is appropriate nor that it would as a whole contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. My recommendation must therefore be that the proposal to make the NDP be refused.

I.3 The Examiner goes on to set out in great detail the reasons for his conclusions in paragraphs 68 to 126, 145 to 152, 198 to 200. In response the Parish Council has taken the Examiner's reasons for refusing the draft NDP forward and seeks to meet the requirement for further landscape and visual review of a number of sites at Stratfield Mortimer.

I.4 Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd was commissioned in January 2017 by West Berkshire Council, on behalf of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, to undertake an independent landscape capacity assessment of five sites at Stratfield Mortimer:

- MOR001: Land at Kiln Lane (also known as Monkey Puzzle Field)
- MOR005: Land adjoining West End Road
- MOR006: Land to the south of St John's Church of England School, off The Street
- MOR008: Land at north east corner of Spring Lane
- MOR009: Land north of Windmill Road and west of Brewery Common

I.5 Sites MOR001 to MOR008 were considered by the Examiner in his Report. West Berkshire Council has also included MOR009 in this Study following a request through the NDP process to amend the settlement boundary in this area.

I.6 This Report has been prepared in accordance with the landscape capacity methodology employed for a series of landscape capacity studies for West Berkshire Council between 2011 and 2015 to inform the West Berkshire Local Plan. The methodology was developed in collaboration between KLPL and the Council based on best practice at the time. The Stratfield Mortimer Landscape Capacity Assessment follows the same methodology to ensure continuity in the landscape and visual assessment of potential housing allocations in the District.

I.7 The Study does not include a new or more detailed local landscape character assessment of the whole of Stratfield Mortimer and its landscape setting. The landscape character areas and types in the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA) and Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1992 (NDLCA) were therefore used to identify the key characteristics and valued attributes of the landscape around

Stratfield Mortimer as requested by the Examiner. However it was evident that in order to undertake an assessment of the comparative sensitivity and landscape capacity of the five sites, a more detailed assessment of each of the sites was undertaken to a consistent approach. It was noted that there has not been a material change to the landscape character of MOR001 to MOR009 since the BLCA and NDLCA were undertaken. New development in the village since 1992 similarly has not affected the key landscape and visual characteristics of these sites.

- I.8 The Landscape Capacity Assessment does not assess a particular development proposal and does not undertake detailed assessments as would be required for a Landscape and Visual impact Assessment in accordance with The Guidelines of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Edition 3 2013 published by the Landscape Institute (GLVIA3). Each of the sites, and the principal viewpoints to the sites, were visited. The following Reports for each site at Stratfield Mortimer identify the key features of each site and the impact on those features of any potential development on the site. In those cases where it is considered that the site, or part thereof, has some capacity for housing development, recommendations are set out to guide the provision of green infrastructure and to conserve and enhance landscape and visual attributes.
- I.9 The Landscape Capacity Assessment was carried out in mid-winter with the minimum of leaf coverage on a clear sunny day, with some mist but this did not affect the ability to appreciate long distance views. It is expected that visibility will be much reduced in summer where there is a dense wooded setting to the sites.
- I.10 The recommendations within the Study are designed to guide the landscape capacity of the site and landscape capacity for the village to accommodate new housing sites. It will identify key aspects of any Green Infrastructure which should accompany any future development proposals and the most appropriate location in landscape terms for a point of access. Any development proposals for these sites would still be required to be accompanied by comprehensive Landscape and Visual Assessments in accordance with GLVIA3 and appropriate landscape mitigation.
- I.11 The final suitability of any of the sites should be based on a review of all sustainability issues to which the landscape capacity forms part of the evidence base.

2. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 2.1 The Examiner was particularly concerned that the NDP had not had regard to the relevant landscape character assessments in the BLCA and NDLCAs. The whole of Stratfield Mortimer and its hinterland lie within BLCA landscape type H: Woodland and Heathland mosaic and landscape character area H4: Burghfield. The village and its hinterland are split within the more detailed NDLCAs into two landscape character types: LCT13: Gravel Plateau Woodlands with Pasture and Heaths which covers the village, its plateau and land to the west and north; and LCT14: Plateau Edge Transitional Matrix which covers the open land to the south and east. The following tables set out the key characteristics and guidance for each of the relevant landscape character types and areas. These identify the valued landscape features and those features and characteristics which should be conserved and enhanced.

BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2003
<p>Key landscape characteristics and guidelines for BLCA LCT H and LCA H4 (all sites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowland landscape• Large scale inter-linked woodland blocks• Undulating topography• Large scale pastoral and arable fields• Varied landcover mosaic• Presence of streams and ponds• Seek to conserve and restore areas of pastureland• Ensure woodland planting follows the existing pattern of wooded ridges and inter-connected valleys• Conserve and strengthen existing boundaries including characteristic wooded boundaries and boundary hedgerows• Conserve the rural character of the lanes
<p>Key visual characteristics and guidelines for BLCA LCT H and LCA H4 (all sites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prominent and visually sensitive wooded ridge tops
<p>Key settlement characteristics and guidelines for BLCA LCT H and LCA H4 (all sites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small traditional villages and dense settlement pattern• Winding rural and sunken lanes largely free from development• Woodland structure helps to integrate built form into the landscape• Distinctiveness of the settlements• Positive management of land on the fringes of settlement is required
<p>Landscape Strategy: Conserve and where necessary restore the wooded landscape with small scale mosaic of pasture, arable farmland and woodland</p>

NEWBURY DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 1992: LCT13

Key landscape characteristics and guidelines for NDLC A LCT13 (MOR005; north part of MOR006; MOR008; MOR009)

- Flat to undulating plateau
- Incised valleys with streams
- Complex pattern of woodland, pastures, paddocks
- Important woodland habitats
- Encourage planting of new broadleaved woodlands and protect woodlands from piecemeal housing development
- Encourage positive hedgerow management and plant new hedges and hedgerow trees
- Protect species rich pasture
- Improve environmental and visual quality of horse paddocks
- Maintain tree cover and include native planting

Key visual characteristics and guidelines for NDLC A LCT13 (MOR005; north part of MOR006; MOR008; MOR009)

- Visually important ridges with characteristic woodland cover

Key settlement characteristics and guidelines for NDLC A LCT13 (MOR005; north part of MOR006; MOR008; MOR009)

- Linear settlements within wooded areas and some sub-urban areas
- More nucleated pattern at Mortimer
- Large private houses
- Road pattern of dominant straight ridge top roads and complex winding lanes and bridleway networks
- Maintain edge buffers to settlements
- Prevent piecemeal erosion of pasture and woodland fringes by built development
- Small scale developments may be permitted if carefully integrated with the land use
- Siting and detailing should reverse incipient suburbanisation of the area

Landscape Strategy: Conservation and enhancement

NEWBURY DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 1992: LCT14

Key landscape characteristics and guidelines for NDLC A LCT14 (MOR001; south part of MOR006)

- Small to medium scale as a transition from the Plateau woodlands to lower open farmland
- Woodland, pasture and arable land
- Concave and confused hummocky upper slopes
- Small streams and springs at the base of dry slopes
- Quite dense woodland on upper slopes close to plateau woodlands
- Poor pasture often on upper slopes. More extensive pasture on rounded clay areas
- Encourage native broadleaved planting
- Protect existing hedgerows and encourage new hedgerow tree planting
- Conserve and protect permanent pasture
- Protect banks and verges

Key visual characteristics and guidelines for NDLC A LCT14 (MOR001; south part of MOR006)

- Horse paddocks increasingly visually dominate pasture area
- Visual quality of the mixture of woodlands, pasture and open farmland

Key settlement characteristics and guidelines for NDLC A LCT14 (MOR001; south part of MOR006)







- Clustered farmsteads and small villages
- Few lanes traverse the slopes except where gentler slopes allow
- Extensive footpaths and bridleways linking settlements
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes
- Large scale development would be undesirable
- Small scale development should be carefully integrated into the existing land use pattern

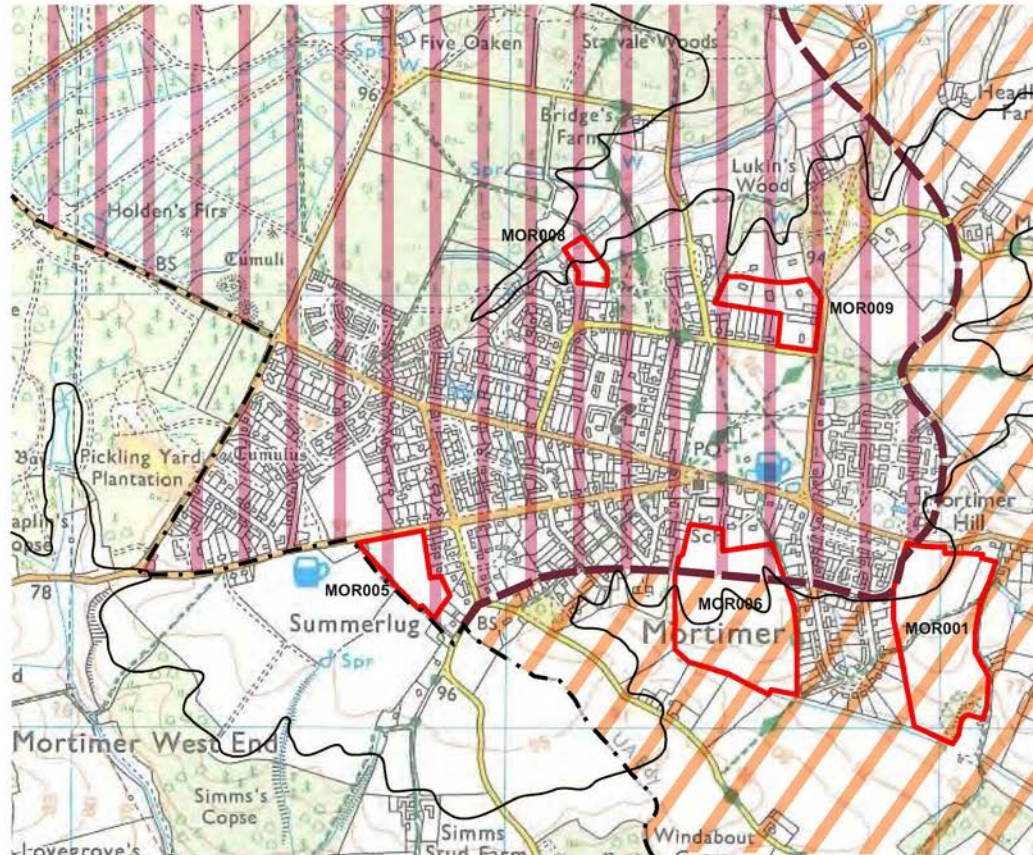
Landscape Strategy: Conservation

Settlement Stratfield Mortimer	
Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment LCT H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic – H5: Burghfield	
Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment	LCT13: Gravel Plateau Woodlands with Pasture and Heaths (MOR005; MOR006 (part); MOR008 and MOR009)
	LCT14: Plateau Edge Transitional Matrix (MOR001 and MOR006 (part))
Date of site survey	18 January 2017
Surveyor	Bettina Kirkham

Figure BK1:

Potential Housing Sites

-  Sites Assessed
-  West Berkshire Boundary
-  Boundary of NDLC 13 & 14
-  14: Plateau Edge Transition
-  13: Gravel Plateau Woodlands
-  90m AOD contour line



Revision	Date	By	Notes

Purpose of issue: Appeal Hearing
Project: Stratfield Mortimer, West Berkshire
Drawing title: Potential Housing Sites
Drawing no: BK1
Drawn by: DB
Checked by: BK

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Figure MOR.1: Stratfield Mortimer potential housing sites showing landscape character areas

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

- 2.2 The potential housing sites in Mortimer all lie on the edge of the village. No more detailed landscape assessment studies have been undertaken of the settlement hinterland to date. However as the Examiner noted, the NDLCAs were carried out in sufficient detail to recognise local variations in character and subtle changes within the landscape. This is borne out by the additional settlement appraisals carried out in NDLCAs which included Mortimer (Map 39) which identifies detailed landscape and visual features around the village.
- 2.3 The main village of Mortimer is a nucleated plateau settlement located on the eastern end of a ridge lying above 90m AOD. There is little exception to this, except in the area of housing at The Avenue which drops down south facing slopes to the 70m AOD contour and the line of a stream to the south of the village. This ridge top settlement pattern contributes to the distinctive character of the settlement and its relationship with the surrounding landscape.
- 2.4 The village and its hinterland lie within the two district landscape character areas LCT13 and LCT14 summarised in detail in Section 2. These two areas are closely related, with LCT13 covering the plateau and LCT 14 the slopes descending from LCT13. Variations in the landscape of these two areas are marked around Mortimer with LCT13 covering not only the higher flatter ground but also the much more heavily wooded landscape with straight roads and small fields under pasture. In contrast LCT14, in this location, is much more open, dominated by arable fields with woodland blocks and winding narrow lanes reflecting the more varied topography. Views within LCT13 are contained by the woodland cover and dense hedgerows whilst LCT 14 is more open with extensive views southwards to the wider open countryside from elevated locations. The Examiner drew attention to a summary description of LCT 14:
- This is one of the most interesting and varied of the District's landscape character area. The mixture of woodlands, pasture and open farmland includes some of the most delightful countryside ... it is generally easily accessible on foot. ... This is a visually and environmentally important landscape type, and further development for residential use is already spoiling parts of it.*
- 2.5 Overall the landscape character of LCT 14 is therefore considered to be higher value. However within this general pattern, there is local variation as described in the following Reports.
- 2.6 The NDP referred to the West Berkshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment and the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Sensitivity Map. This information was used to inform the NDP's site selection process and has been included into this assessment.

Sources:

- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

A. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: MOR001 Land at Kiln Lane (also known as Monkey Puzzle Field)

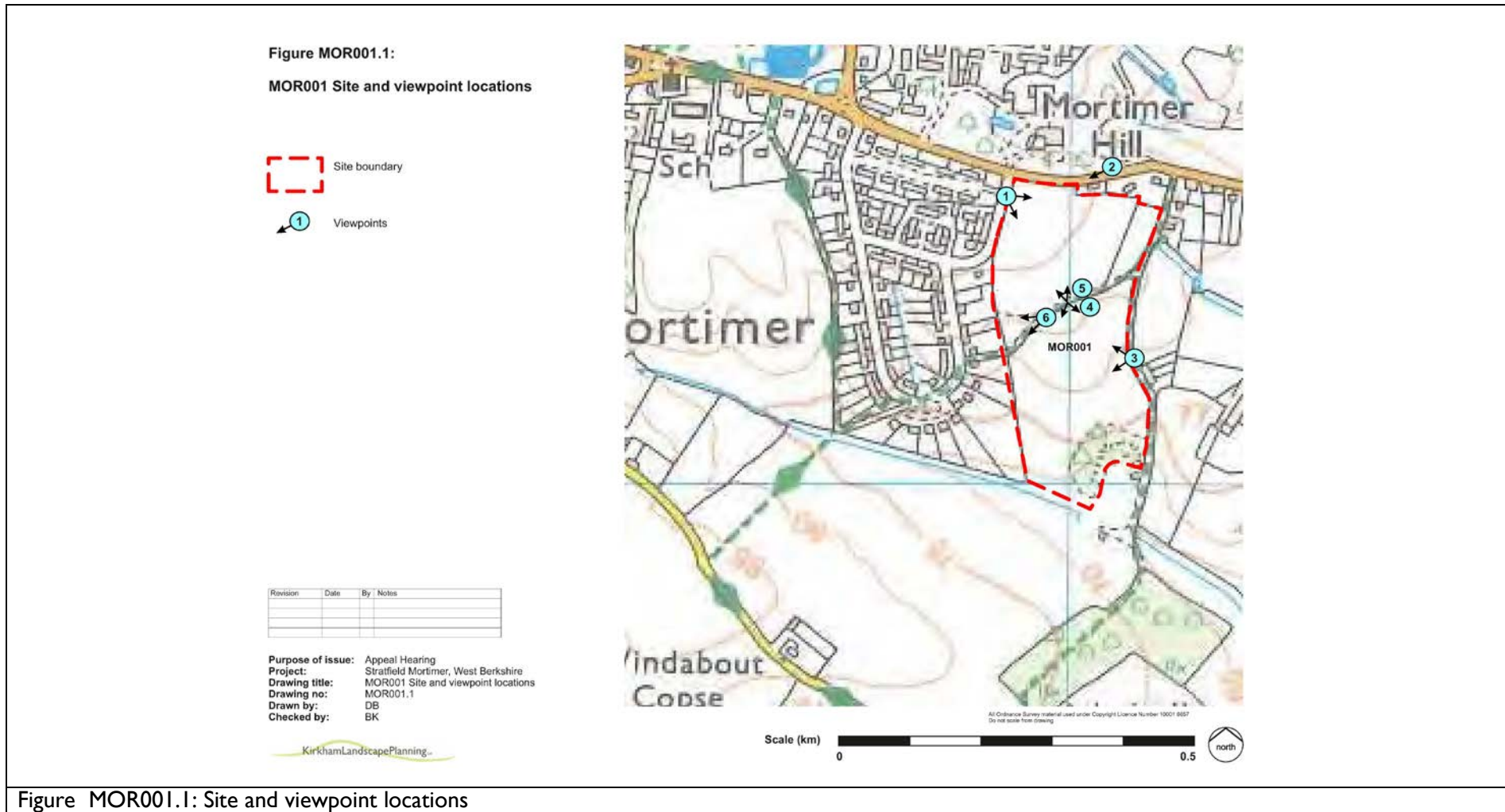


Figure MOR001.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View of the northern parcel as seen from The Avenue near the north-west corner of the site - looking east to trees along Kiln Lane



Viewpoint 2: View of the northern parcel from The Street looking along the northern boundary of the site - approaching from the east up the hill



Viewpoint 3: View of the southern parcel from Kiln Lane looking west to the trees along the boundaries of rear gardens in The Avenue and to the open countryside beyond



Viewpoint 4: View of the southern parcel from the footpath across the site looking south to woodland and open countryside beyond the site



Viewpoint 5: View of the northern parcel from the footpath across the site looking north to the boundary with the tree lined The Avenue



Viewpoint 6: View from the footpath of the small area of woodland between the two parcels

Site description

Site MOR001 is a large area of land to the east of the village. To the north lies an open area of small fields and open grounds under pasture with woodland and a deep woodland edge to The Street. The more recent development at Strawberry Fields lies to the west of this area. To the east the landscape falls away through an open countryside of medium sized fields with tree lined boundaries to the hamlet of Stratfield Mortimer which is characterised by traditional ribbon development. To the south lies an open landscape of arable fields and woodland blocks on the undulating landform. To the west lies a large housing area at The Avenue which drops down south facing slopes to the 70m AOD contour.

Site MOR001 forms two separate parcels of land, divided by a public right of way which runs between two hedgerows with hedgerow trees which separate the two parts. The footpath also runs through a further small triangular area lies in the west of the site. There is very little intervisibility between these separate parts of MOR001.

The northern parcel is under pasture and is grazed by horses. The north-west area of this part lies above the 90m AOD contour from where the land drops to the south-east to 85m AOD. The boundary to the north is defined by a dense mature hedgerow along The Street which prevents views into the site in the eastern approach to the village. The western boundary is defined by a post and rail fence and line of trees in a grass verge; and by tree cover along the rear garden boundaries. The southern boundary is well defined by the vegetation and footpath across the site which largely prevents views to the wider landscape. The eastern boundary is defined by mature tree planting along Kiln Lane.

The southern parcel is in arable use. It lies between 85m AOD and 70m AOD descending to the stream south of the village. This area is much more open with views out the wider landscape to the south. The northern boundary is the aforementioned footpath and its vegetation. The western boundary is a line of trees which form the rear boundaries to properties in The Avenue. The rear gardens here are very long, varying between 20m and 130m from the houses, so that even in winter the houses are not evident from the site or the footpath along the eastern boundary. The southern boundary is a short section of mature hedgerow along the stream and a dense woodland belt around two properties on the end of Kiln Lane. These two isolated properties are set down into the landform and with the woodland cover are largely well screened even in winter. The eastern boundary is defined by mature hedgerow with trees along Kiln Lane which is also a public footpath. A couple of isolated dwellings lie east of the Lane.

The small wooded triangle in the west straddles a small stream flowing south. The land slopes down to the watercourse. This woodland reinforces the landscape buffer to the Avenue.

Site MOR001 lies within an area of *high* HLC sensitivity comprising pre 18C irregular fields.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- The higher ground above 90m AOD in the north-west of the site lies next to houses off The Avenue
- The remainder of the site is separated from housing in Mortimer by long gardens and robust tree belts
- Built form to the east of the site is isolated from the village and has a strong rural setting
- The site mirrors the extent of housing down the hillside in The Avenue to the west

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The site lies within LCT 14
- Site is typical of the mix of pasture and arable land in this area
- Typical plateau and undulating topography
- Southern parcel is contiguous with the wider landscape to the south
- Forms the open landscape setting to Kiln Lane
- The site is largely contained by trees and hedgerows which are typical of the open countryside

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of pasture – a valued feature of the landscape character
- Loss of open arable land forming part of the wider open countryside and the distinctive landscape setting to Mortimer
- Loss of open rural character of the winding Kiln Lane (a valued feature of the landscape)
- Development of the two parcels would result in erosion of the landscape integrity of the central footpath and wooded triangle
- Access would require a gap in the tree line to either The Street or The Avenue
- Impact on area of high HLC sensitivity

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Visual impact on two public footpaths which are currently rural in character
- Loss of open views to open countryside to the south from these footpaths
- Development of the two parcels would result in the loss of containment to the northern parcel
- Potential visual impact on views from Drury Lane and the wider landscape to the south

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development below 90m AOD would be out of keeping with the dominant and distinctive settlement character
- The scale of development would not be compatible with the guidance for this area

Recommendations

None of this site would be suitable for housing. Despite the fact that the existing development in The Avenue to the west extends down the hillside to a similar extent, this is not a suitable model for future development if the distinctive character of the settlement pattern and the valued attributes of the open rural landscape character are to be conserved. The only part of the site that relates well in any way to the settlement pattern is the most north-westerly corner above 90m AOD but to develop this would adversely affect the area of pasture, a valued feature of this landscape. The northern parcel is better contained, both visually and physically, but this does not outweigh the harm to the landscape character and views from the adjoining rural footpaths.

B. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: MOR005 Land adjoining West End Road

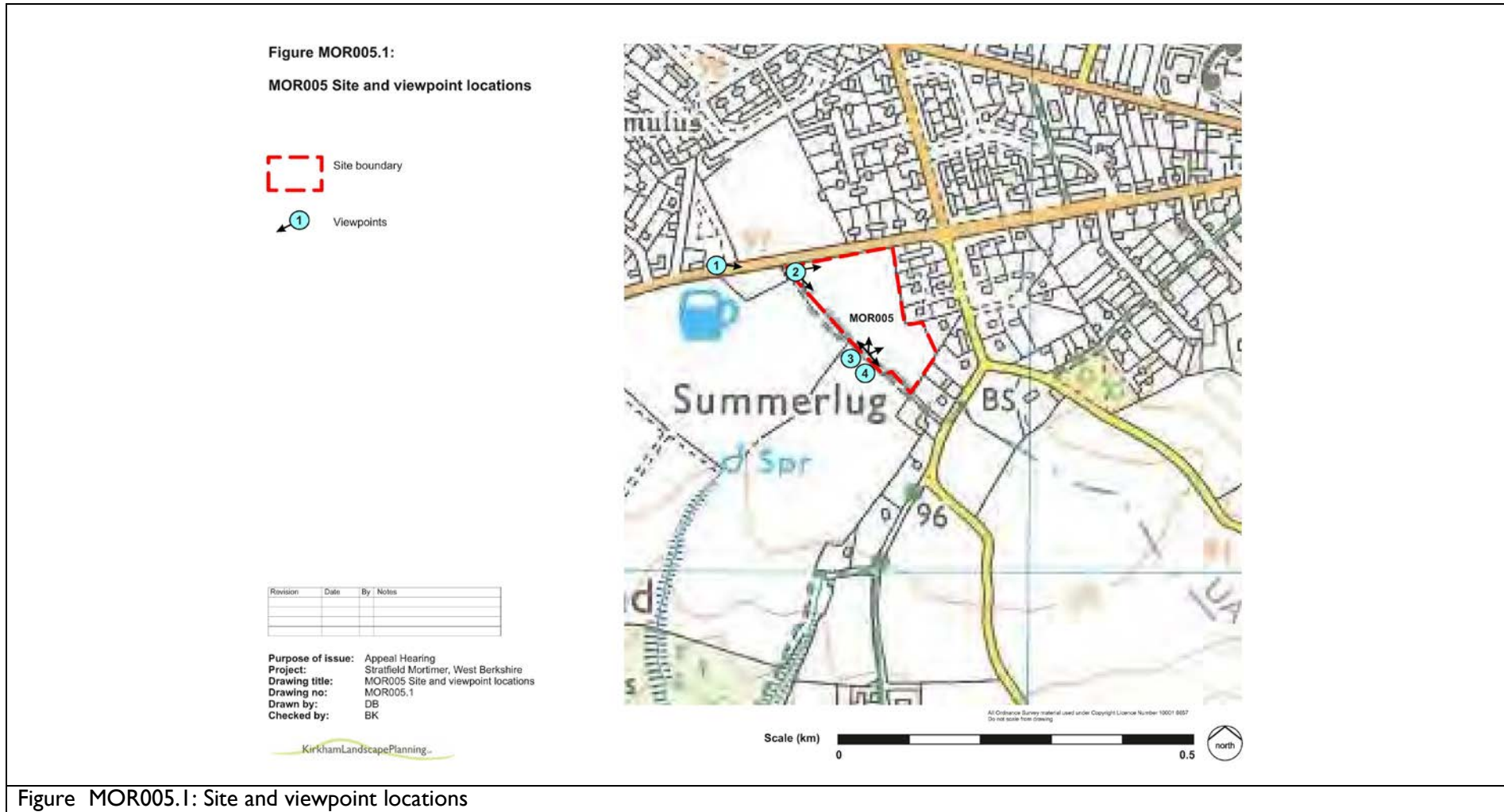


Figure MOR005.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View of the northern boundary of the site from West End Road from adjacent to the recreation ground



Viewpoint 2: From the public footpath along the western boundary near to Wood End Road looking south over the site to houses on Turks Lane and Drury Lane



Viewpoint 3: View from half way down the public footpath looking over the site northwards to West End road and houses on Drury Lane



Viewpoint 4: View from same location looking south across the southern part of the site to houses on Turks Lane

Site description

Site MOR005 is situated on the western edge of the village. To the east and north-east lies modern housing. To the west lies the open arable fields and woodland blocks within Hampshire. To the north lies the recreation ground on Wood End Road which is itself enclosed by housing to the west and east.

Site MOR005 is a medium sized field under arable use. The northern boundary is defined by a mature hedgerow with trees which runs along the southern boundary of West End Road. The western boundary is defined by a further mature hedgerow which runs west of a public footpath down the side of the site, leading off West End Road. There is a short gap in this hedgerow which allows open views to the fields to the west. To the south the boundary is defined by the tree line along the rear garden boundaries to houses on Turks Lane. To the east the rear gardens of houses on Drury Lane are defined by hedges and more intermittent trees. The housing around the site is clearly visible through boundary vegetation.

The site has a built form context due to the proximity and visibility of houses to the east and south and to the extension of the village along the north side of West End Road for some distance to the west of the site. However it has some sense of continuity with the open countryside to the west.

Site MOR005 lies within an area of *medium-high* HLC sensitivity and is parliamentary enclosure.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Lies on the settlement plateau above 90m AOD
- Adjacent to housing to the east and south
- Opposite continuation of the settlement to the north of West End Road

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The site lies within LCT13
- Part of the field pattern of arable fields to the west of the village
- Typical plateau topography
- Typical mature field hedgerow to west

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Localised urbanisation of boundary hedgerow
- Loss of part open rural approach to the village
- Access would require a gap in the tree line to West End Road

Impact on key visual characteristics

- None

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- None






Recommendations

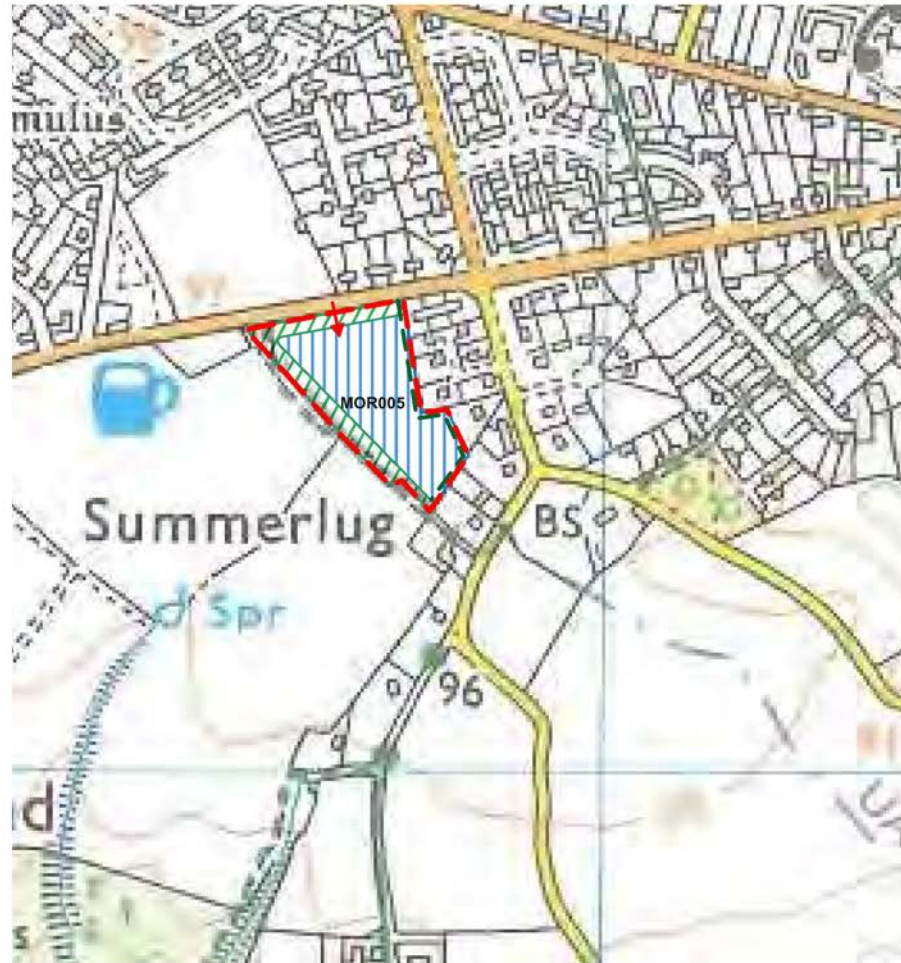
The site is considered suitable for further consideration as a potential housing site subject to the following landscape and visual requirements to protect the wider countryside. The site is in keeping with the settlement pattern and development on this site would have limited impact on the open countryside. No key features of the landscape would be affected. The visual impact would be limited and can be mitigated as set out below.

- Limit the developable area to that shown in Figure MOR005.2
- Provide a tree planted landscape buffer to the western boundary of a minimum of 10m from the boundary (to protect views from the west and contain the built form)
- Set back the development from the edge of the northern boundary (to retain tree cover and a more open approach to the village in keeping with existing housing frontage)
- Face development towards West End Road (to retain settlement character)
- The height and density should reflect the local settlement pattern (to retain settlement character and limit visual intrusion)
- Buffer planting to rear gardens (to protect amenity of the adjoining houses)
- Locate the access to avoid loss of any trees along West End Road (to conserve tree lined route)

Figure MOR005.2:

MOR005 Potential Development

-  Site boundary
-  Potential development area
-  Indicative green infrastructure
-  Preferred access
-  Tree or hedge planting



Revision	Date	By	Notes

Purpose of issue: Appeal Hearing
Project: Stratfield Mortimer, West Berkshire
Drawing title: MOR005 Potential Development
Drawing no.: MOR005.2
Drawn by: DB
Checked by: BK

KirkhamLandscapePlanning

Scale (km)



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Figure MOR005.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

C. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: MOR006 Land to the south of St. John’s Church of England School, off The Street

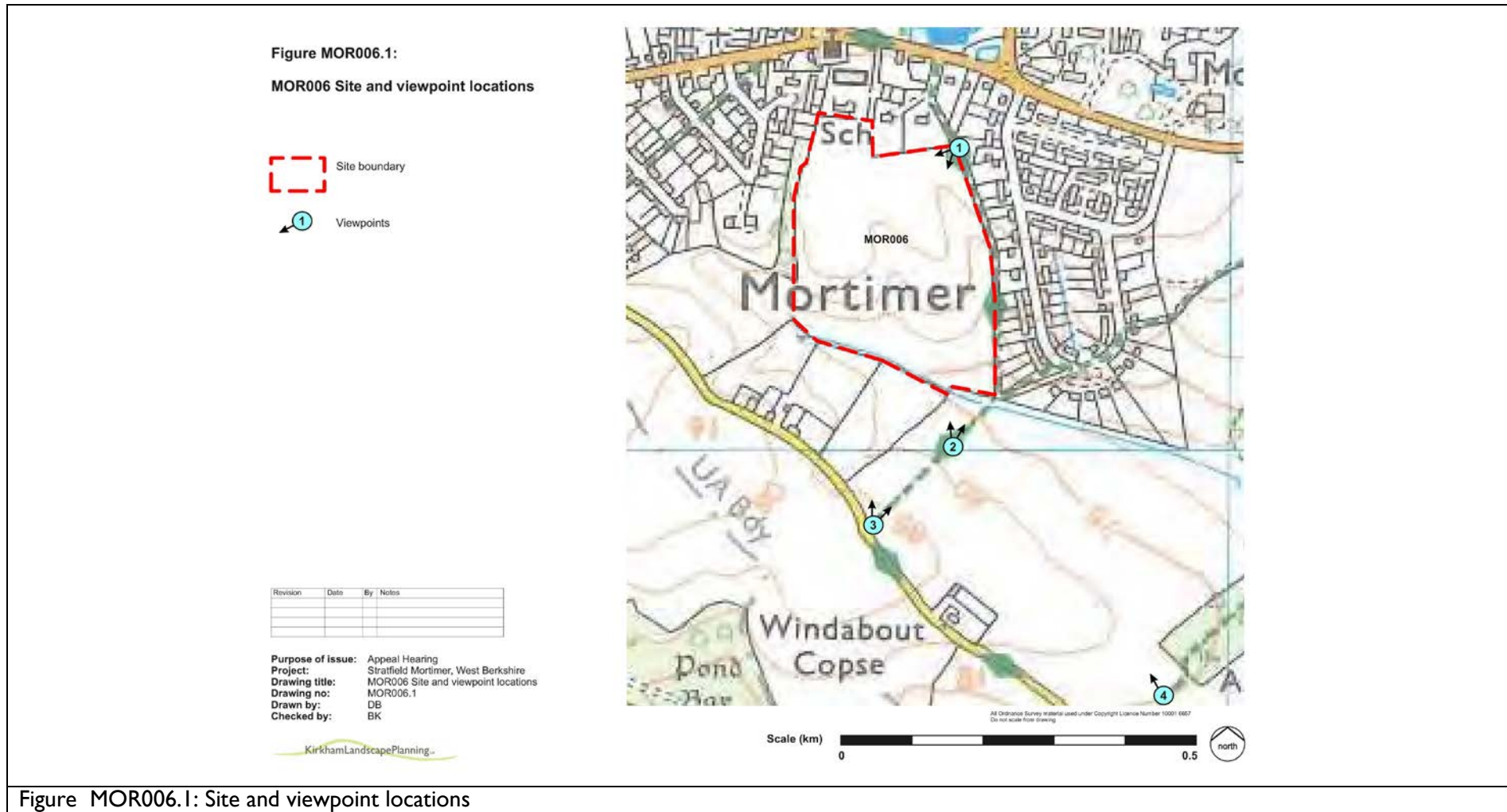


Figure MOR006.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from public footpath along the eastern boundary looking south-west over the site to the wider countryside



Viewpoint 2: View from footpath just south of the site looking north over the site with the roofs of a house south of the school visible on the horizon



Viewpoint 3: View from footpath close to Drury Lane looking north over the site with a house south of the school on the horizon south of The Street

Site description

Site MOR006 lies south of the village core. To the north is the school and housing beyond which lies the open recreational ground. To the west and east of the site are two large housing areas at The Avenue and centred on St John's Road. The housing at The Avenue drops down south facing slopes to the 70m AOD contour. The housing at St Johns Road is contained on the plateau above the 90m contour. To the south the site is open to the wider countryside either side of Drury Lane.

Site MOR006 is a large single field under arable farmland. The upper part is on the plateau above 90m from where the land falls in a wide dome to the south down to 75m AOD along a stream line on the southern boundary. The northern boundary is defined by a continuous hedgeline which separates the site from the school grounds, a new housing site under development by TA Fisher and existing housing. The western boundary is a broad prominent woodland belt which separates the houses at St John's Road from the site. The eastern boundary is a mix of hedges, mature hedgerow and open fencing to the rear gardens of houses on The Avenue. The southern boundary is defined by a mature hedgerow along the lowest part of the site.

The site is visually exposed with the higher ground forming the land just below the treed skyline and the slopes visible from the south.

Site MOR006 lies within an area of *low* HLC sensitivity comprising amalgamated fields.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- The site lies between two parts of the settlement and is bordered by the village on three sides
- Only the northern part of the site sits on the settlement plateau above 90m AOD
- The school is visually exposed
- Housing within St John's Road area is separated by woodland which integrates this housing into the open landscape

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The northern part of the site lies within LCT 13 and southern part within LCT14
- Woodland to west of site is typical of linked plateau woodlands
- Typical plateau and undulating topography
- The site shares common characteristics with the open arable land to the south
- Typical small stream along southern boundary

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of open arable land which contributes to the wider landscape
- Further urbanisation of wooded ridge planting to west
- Encroachment into landscape corridor of the stream
- Urbanisation of rural aspect of footpath along eastern edge of the site

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Loss of views to the wider countryside from the footpath
- Impact of extensive development on the skyline in views from the south
- Potential visual impact on views from Drury Lane and wider landscape
- Loss of views to wooded ridgeline

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Scale of development over the whole site would urbanise the settlement edge
- Expansion beyond plateau settlement pattern
- Scale of development over the whole site would be out of keeping with the settlement pattern and contrary to LCA guidance






Recommendations

Only a portion of the site is considered to be suitable for further consideration as a potential housing as shown in Figure MOR006.2 and would be subject to the following requirements to conserve and enhance the character and visual qualities of the settlement pattern and the landscape. The northern part of the site above the 90m AOD could be developed and retain the predominant settlement pattern. However this would result in an exposed visually intrusive settlement edge unless substantial landscape treatment is incorporated into the southern edge of the potential development area. This part would be contained with LCT13. The remaining part of the site forms an open hillside with strong physical and visual links with the wider landscape. It is recognised that there is no existing field boundary within the site, and at present the site is read as one large field. However the LCAs are less concerned with the loss of arable land and as an amalgamated field, the introduction of a new field boundary across the slope (as at MOR001) would not be out of keeping with the local landscape character.

- The extent of the potential developable area is as shown on Figure MOR006.2
- The developable area is confined to land above 90m AOD
- Extensive plateau woodland as shown in MOR006.2 is provided to the transition from the plateau at 90m AOD to open slopes (to integrate the development into the landscape and create a woodland landscape feature)
- A 15m margin of Green Infrastructure is provided along the western edge as a buffer to the woodland
- The tree planting along the eastern boundary is reinforced with additional woodland planting extending into shallow valleys between 20 – 35m wide
- A vista to be provided to the wider countryside from the footpath or alternative publically accessible land on the higher ground
- The preferred access is from The Street although the exact location will depend on adjoining land owners

Figure MOR006.2:

MOR006 Potential Development

-  Site boundary
-  Potential development area
-  Indicative green infrastructure
-  Retained open fields
-  Preferred access



Revision	Date	By	Notes

Purpose of issue: Appeal Hearing
Project: Stratfield Mortimer, West Berkshire
Drawing title: MOR006 Potential Development
Drawing no: MOR006.2
Drawn by: DB
Checked by: BK

KirkhamLandscapePlanning

Scale (km)

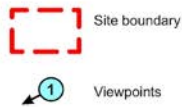


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FigureMOR006.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

D. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: MOR008 Land at the north east corner of Spring Lane

Figure MOR008.1:
MOR008 Site and viewpoint locations



Revision	Date	By	Notes

Purpose of issue: Appeal Hearing
Project: Stratfield Mortimer, West Berkshire
Drawing title: MOR008 Site and viewpoint locations
Drawing no: MOR008.1
Drawn by: DB
Checked by: BK

KirkhamLandscapePlanning



Figure MOR008.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from woodland edge public footpath along the eastern boundary with the site lying to the right of the hedgerow



Viewpoint 2: View from a gateway close to the above footpath looking over the site with the existing houses in Spring Lane to the right and woodland north of the site



Viewpoint 3: View from Spring Lane looking north to the cul-de-sac. The site lies to the right of the bungalow



Viewpoint 4: View from the cul-de-sac at the end of Spring Lane looking east over the site to the location of Viewpoint 1

Site description

Site MOR008 lies within LCT13, on the northern edge of the village to the east of Spring Lane and south of an extensive area of woodland. The site is under pasture with a small group of trees in the north-west corner and lies in an undulating landform on a north facing slope which drops to the small valley (with a stream) on the edge of the woodland. The site is enclosed by mature vegetation except for a short stretch next to the last house in Spring Lane where there are open views as shown in Viewpoint 4. The northern boundary is defined by woodland edge planting on the edge of the large area of woodland north of the village. The eastern boundary is formed by a mature hedgerow which flanks a public footpath on the edge of the woods. The southern and western boundaries are defined by the rear garden planting with trees of the houses in Spring Lane and Windmill Road.

Site MOR008 lies within an area of *medium-high* HLC sensitivity as it forms a part of the historic settlement.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- Contained by woodland structure which would help integrate any development into the landscape
- Settlement on two sides overlook the site
- Similar relationship to the topography as Spring Lane

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The site lies within LCT 13
- Part of the valued landscape matrix of pasture land in a wooded setting
- On undulating land falling to incised valley with stream
- Tree, woodland and hedgerows are valued features

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of open pasture
- Piecemeal erosion of valued matrix of pasture and woodland fringe
- Urbanisation of setting of adjoining landscape woodland and hedgerow boundary features

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Localised views form adjoining houses and footpath

Impact on key settlement characteristics



- Development would not be out of keeping with settlement pattern at Spring Lane

Recommendations

None of this site would be suitable for housing. Although the site is visually well contained with limited views into the site and Spring Lane already extends down this slope to the narrow stream valley floor, the key characteristics of the site as set out above are valued assets recommended to be conserved in BLCA and NDLCA LCT13. Of particular importance is the presence of pasture in a prominent wooded setting, the impact on the adjacent woodland and woodland edge.

E. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: MOR009 Land north of Windmill Road and west of Brewery Common

Figure MOR009.1:
MOR009 Site and viewpoint locations

-  Site boundary
-  Viewpoints

Revision	Date	By	Notes

Purpose of issue: Appeal Hearing
Project: Stratfield Mortimer, West Berkshire
Drawing title: MOR009 Site and viewpoint locations
Drawing no.: MOR009.1
Drawn by: DB
Checked by: BK

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Figure MOR009.1: Site and viewpoint locations

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View from Brewery Common near to the northern boundary marked by the access, looking south over the site



Viewpoint 2: View from Brewery Common looking west to 'Lukin Wood' within the site



Viewpoint 3: View from recreation area south of Windmill Road to the southern boundary tree line of the site



Viewpoint 4: View to the southern boundary tree line of the site from The Street looking across the recreation area

Site description

Site MOR009 lies in the very north-eastern part of the village and is currently occupied by four large houses in large gardens. These gardens and the boundaries include a number of mature visually prominent trees which make a positive contribution to the village character. This part of the village borders onto Brewery Common, a mix of open pasture and woodland. It is very low density and has more in common with the houses to the north off Brewery common than the more regular and denser settlement pattern to the south-west. To the north the site borders three more, similar, properties with well vegetated boundaries. To the east the site is bounded by mixed hedgerow and mature trees along the road, with a walled entrance to Lukin Wood with open countryside beyond. To the south a strong belt of mature trees separate the site from Windmill Road and from the rear gardens of houses on Windmill Road to the west. The western boundary is again defined by mature trees along the rear gardens of the above houses and by a wood extending south of the woodland known as 'Lukin's Wood'. The mature planting encloses this site with gaps through the tree cover at the entrance to houses off Brewery Common. The southern boundary, and tree cover within and around the site, are important visual features of the open recreational centre of the village.

Site MOR009 lies within an area of *low* HLC sensitivity as it part of an area of recent modern growth.

Relationship with adjacent settlement

- The site is distinctive as a transition from the more dense village built form to the loose very low density of Brewery Common
- It contributes to the semi-rural character of the road along Brewery Common
- Located on the plateau above 90m AOD

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The site is in LCT13
- Set within woodland blocks to north and east
- Tree, woodland and hedgerows are valued features

Impact on key landscape characteristics

- Potential erosion of dominance of mature tree cover and hedgerows
- Loss of large open gardens contributing to semi-rural character

Impact on key visual characteristics

- Potential impact on views from the centre of the village, the recreational area and approach to the village down Brewery Common
- Potential loss of prominent tree cover

Impact on key settlement characteristics

- Potential to sub-urbanise Brewery Common
- Would follow the pattern of development on the plateau





Recommendations

The site has some potential for redevelopment but in order to conserve the semi-rural character of this part of the village, to retain the many mature trees and valued hedgerow boundaries, and to avoid a visual impact on the open core of the village, it is recommend that the site is only considered if the following can be achieved. These recommendations do not take account of any historic or architectural merit to the existing houses:

- Small scale development might be possible
- Retention of all mature trees on the site and around the site boundaries;
- Retention of the hedgerows and other boundary vegetation
- A staggered set back from Brewery Common, with a minimum set back of 16m, to reflect the current building line relationship between the existing houses and the road
- Set back from Windmill Road to avoid visual intrusion in views from the south
- Lower density than found typically in the village (to protect the character of Brewery Common)
- The preferred access is from existing access points, avoiding removal of good quality tree and hedgerow cover

Figure MOR009.2:

MOR009 Potential Development

-  Site boundary
-  Potential development area
-  Indicative green infrastructure
-  Preferred access

Revision	Date	By	Notes

Purpose of issue: Appeal Hearing
Project: Stratfield Mortimer, West Berkshire
Drawing title: MOR009 Potential Development
Drawing no: MOR009.2
Drawn by: DB
Checked by: BK

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FigureMOR009.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access

Conclusion on cumulative effect

The above assessment recommends that only sites MOR005, MOR006 (part) and MOR009 are considered further as potential housing sites. As these three sites are some distance from each other, and do not result in similar landscape characteristics, it is not anticipated that development of these areas would have a cumulative adverse landscape and visual impact on the village over the lifetime of the NDP.