

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 1: Membury East

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Membury Industrial Estate - Site I: Membury East
Date of site survey	16 th January 2022
Surveyors	LA
Weather/visibility	Low cloud
LCA	North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019 Lambourn NPD Landscape Character Assessment 2020

West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019: The site is located within LCA *WD1: Shefford Wooded Downland*

Key Characteristics

- Strong rolling landform with scarp and dipslopes, underlain by a chalk plateau
- Mixed farmland, divided into large-scale fields bound by mature hedgerows and broken up by blocks of woodland
- Ridgetop woodlands and calcareous grasslands form important semi-natural habitats
- Visible archaeological remains from various eras of history
- Sparse settlement, comprising hamlets and scattered farms, cottages and stud farms
- Access via a variety of routes, including motorway and major roads contrasting with a network of rural lanes, byways, tracks and footpaths
- Sheltered, wooded character restricts views and creates an enclosed landscape which contrasts with panoramic views experienced from vantage points
- A traditional rural landscape with few modern intrusions

Valued Features and Qualities

- Nationally valued landscape which forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Well-wooded character, including areas of ancient semi-natural woodland
- Nationally and locally designated semi-natural habitats
- Strong rural character due to sparse settlement and limited modern influences
- Frequent archaeological features which create a strong sense of time-depth
- Expansive open views from higher ground
- Sense of enclosure and high levels of tranquillity

Detractors

- Over intensification of arable farming practices
- Lack of appropriate woodland management in some areas
- Noise and visual pollution created by the M4
- Ongoing pressure for development
- Increased traffic near Membury motorway service area as well as on the rural lane road network

- Localised modern intrusions on the landscape

Landscape Strategy

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve woodland, trees and hedgerows within the landscape
- Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats including lowland calcareous grassland
- Conserve historic features within the landscape
- Conserve the sparsely settled and rural character of the landscape
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes and extensive public rights of way

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment: The site is located within *LCA2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs*

Key Characteristics

- Strongly rolling chalk plateau landform incised by dry valleys with Clay-with-flint deposits capping higher sections of the plateau and softening landform
- A mosaic of woodland/mixed arable and pasture farmland. Large scale fields bounded by hedgerows, thick shelterbelts and distinctive ridge top woodlands. Unimproved chalk grassland retained on steep slopes
- Field patterns reflecting both formal and informal post medieval enclosure, plus many valley side woodlands which show signs of informal intakes by assarting
- High proportion of ancient semi-natural woodlands including ash-hazel coppice, with a rich ground flora
- A distinct landscape pattern around woodland St Mary and Lambourn Woodlands with a regular patterning of rectilinear fields, broad shelterbelts and ridge woodlands
- Isolated individual Bronze Age round barrows on ridgelines and a large prominent Iron Age Hillfort at Membury
- Settlement pattern typical of a wood pasture landscape, characterised by a high density of regularly spaced farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings along Roman Road, with few villages. Built form includes red brick, flint and render, weatherboard, tile and thatch
- A large number of equestrian centres, stud farms and increasing number of pony paddocks

Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural character of the Lambourn Wooded Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views contrasting with the strong wooded horizons, historic features including archaeological sites, the historic field pattern and road and lane network. The wooded pattern and character of the landscape is a key characteristic and there are opportunities for reintroduction of management (coppicing) to the ancient and semi-natural woodlands, sympathetic management of commercial forestry plantations and restoration of hedgerows. Remnant chalk grassland is a feature along steep slopes and should be conserved with opportunities for habitat restoration to link existing isolated sites. The distinctive pattern of settlements with dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings should be maintained.

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

Key development issues with the potential to have significant influence on the special qualities of the AONB

- The loss of rural character through suburbanising influences from new development (new fencing, lighting, signage, parking areas, paved footpaths, loss of native hedgerows and creation of new garden areas)
- Impact on dark skies and tranquillity of high-powered external lighting, especially where poorly directed or in an exposed location (not usually subject to planning control)
- Potential for certain forms of development to intrude on the wider landscape, including masts, pylons, wind turbine developments, photovoltaic schemes, and minerals and waste schemes, threatening the landscape quality, heritage assets, and the sense of remoteness and tranquillity
- Unsuitable development of redundant previously developed and part-developed sites within the North Wessex Downs, especially redundant airfields and military sites (e.g., Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape quality and heritage assets
- New developments at the junction of the M4 and A34 or along their corridors which spread the impact from development yet further into the undeveloped parts of the AONB
- Development that results in a material loss of tranquillity and/ or impact on the dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs or its setting.
- Development that does not provide for or support existing Green Infrastructure

Lambourn NPD Landscape Character Assessment 2020

This appraisal provides a more detail assessment of the landscape of Lambourn Parish. The site is located within *Membury Airfield (LCA3)* described of comprising the former RAF airfield and Aerial Business Park to the east and medium size solar panels to the west. Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA3 are as follows:

- The complex of industrial buildings at this location is partially enclosed by hedgerows and trees whilst other part are more conspicuous. Additionally, landscaping would help reduce visual impacts where they exist.
- Some of the landscaping has used non-natives to create visual enclosure. Whilst effective, it does not look as appealing as native species and is less beneficial in terms of biodiversity.
- The scale and planning of developments at this location needs much careful considerations of any further growth to help avoid further change in character.
- The tower at Trinity Grain is c.60 metre tall (*) and is incongruent with the landscape. Tall structures should be avoided and not exceed neighbouring tree height where possible
- HGVs introduce noise and dust which can lead to synergistic adverse effects on character. These matters and the resolution of impact is a planning control matter. However, any proposals to increase and expand development at this location should be mindful of such in-combination effects as well as the direct effect of encroachment.
- It might be useful to prepare a design guide for LCA3 that would help provide guidance on what is appropriate and elements which should be avoided in order to maintain a proportionate level of development which avoids detracting further from landscape character.

*NOTE: Within the planning application for Trinity Grain Silos, it states the silos are 18.4m high, not 60m high

Landscape Designations

North Wessex Downs AONB

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
Views into the site from: Adjacent businesses within PEA	Types of viewers: Users of adjacent businesses	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: An enclosed landscape, with a well-established woodland (Cuckoo Copse) to the east aligning the site boundary to the east and south east. Include a no build zone adjacent the woodland
Views out of the site to: Adjacent buildings within PEA to the north and west Woodland to the east	Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): High, although expectation lower as a work place	Impacts of mitigation: A site not requiring any mitigation, except maintaining a no build zone adjacent the woodland
Does the site form part of a skyline? No	Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): Industrial activity from users within adjacent PEA M4 users, higher expectations as within AONB	
Panoramic views: None		
Landmark features: None		
Sensitivity score: Low	Sensitivity score: Low	Sensitivity score: Low
Visual sensitivity score: Low		
Additional comments: The site is contained and not visible from any public locations. The buildings to the west within the PEA are visible from the M4, therefore to reduce the visibility of any new buildings on the site, they should be set back from the site's northern boundary		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: Flattish and at a lower level than the adjacent PEA	Boundary features other than vegetation: Unable to view	Tranquillity – Noise levels: Adjacent M4 to the north receives constant traffic noise
Geological features: None	Historic landscapes: None	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: M4: a slight earth bund separates the site from the M4 Adjacent buildings within PEA visible
Soil quality: Southern part of the site which has not had a compacted base and remains as grassland/pasture is classified as Grade 3 (Good-moderate) for Agriculture Land Classification Soil: Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. Fertility moderate to high	Parkland features: None	Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: As per CPRE England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies map, the site is located between the (8-16 Nanowatts cm2/sr) and the slightly darker (2-4). Light pollution in this area is centred on the M4 Membury Services
Water features: None		
Landcover and land use: Agricultural barn located on NW site boundary with an area of compacted ground used for storage of agricultural machines. Rest of site shown as grassland, with an access track aligning the SW and southern boundary with a number of piles of spoil (subsoil) adjacent	Conservation Area: None	
Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: None within site. However, along the SE site boundary aligning Cuckoo Copse is a row of mature trees probably oak	Landscape features of LCA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape • Woodland along SE site boundary contributes to wooded landscape character • Mixed farmland 	

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for potential employment areas within West Berkshire

<p>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: Separated from adjacent business (Martin Collins Enterprises Ltd) by an established hedgerow</p>	<p>Built form: Permitted agricultural barn (08/01763) located in NW corner of site. Additional barns located SE of this as well</p>	<p>Accessibility by public footpath: None</p>
<p>Woodland and copses: SE site boundary defined by woodland edge of Cuckoo Copse, further defined by a row of mature trees (probably oak) and probably delineating an old field hedgerow</p>	<p>Setting of listed buildings: None</p>	<p>Open access areas: None</p>
<p>Wetland and meadow: None</p>	<p>Scheduled Monuments: None</p>	<p>Recreational areas: None</p>
<p>Common land: None</p>	<p>Pattern of Protected Employment Area (PEA) A central area, with fragmented areas within surrounding landscape. The site is located adjacent the central area</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: An enclosed site, not visible from public areas. Enclosed by woodland along SE edge and industrial buildings/uses along northern and western edge</p>
<p>Heathland: None</p>	<p>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: N/A</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: The site forms an open area adjacent the main PEA at Membury. Enclosed by woodland and open to the John Day Engineering storage of farm machinery</p>
<p>Other significant vegetation cover: None</p>	<p>Cultural associations: None known</p>	

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for potential employment areas within West Berkshire

BAP/Phase I records: None	Features of cultural importance: None	
Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: None		
Sensitivity score: Medium/low	Sensitivity score: Low	Sensitivity score: Low
Landscape sensitivity score: Low		
Additional comments: An important aspect of this site is that it provides an open area of grassland which provides an open setting for the established woodland		

Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area**Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)**

The main area of the existing PEA is located adjacent west of the site at a slightly higher level. Beyond this main part of the PEA there are three other fragmented parts of the PEA south of the M4. The Ramsbury Road forms the main spine road through the main PEA, with private roads leading off. The size of the buildings adjacent the Ramsbury Road screen development beyond. The western part of the PEA is located at a slightly higher level than the eastern area. Cuckoo Copse (the woodland which aligns the site to the east) to the east of the PEA forms a natural boundary/landscape buffer to the wider AONB landscape. New mitigation planting measures link across the Ramsbury Road loosely connecting to the linear tree belts adjacent the old runways. Woodland helps to integrate the PEA into the surrounding wooded Landscape Character Area

Character of the Protected Employment Area (PEA)

This main PEA is compact, contains tall structures/buildings with the tallest structures the silo towers at a height of 18.4m. The site is set at a lower level than the silo site

The wooded landscape character of the area helps to integrate the smaller parts of the PEA into the landscape and screen their buildings/structures from wider views.

Presence in a floodplain:

No

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The site has a strong physical relationship with the adjacent PEA, with the existing storage of farm machinery and buildings partly relating with the built form and industrial character. Cuckoo Copse is also visible on the skyline above the roofs of the buildings within the PEA from locations on the Ramsbury Road. Cuckoo Copse also provides a buffer to the wider agricultural landscape further to the east

Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

The site is separate from any villages or towns, with Lambourn located circa 3.5km to the north from the site. The B4000 (located circa 600m to the north) is characterised by a number of intermittent residential properties and farmsteads, with a more concentrated collection of properties at the junction of the B4000 and Hilldrop Lane known as Lyedowns, circa 580m from the site boundary.

Historic links with the wider area if known:

Originally part of the WWII airfield

Ecological links with the wider area if known:

None known

Recreational links with the wider area:

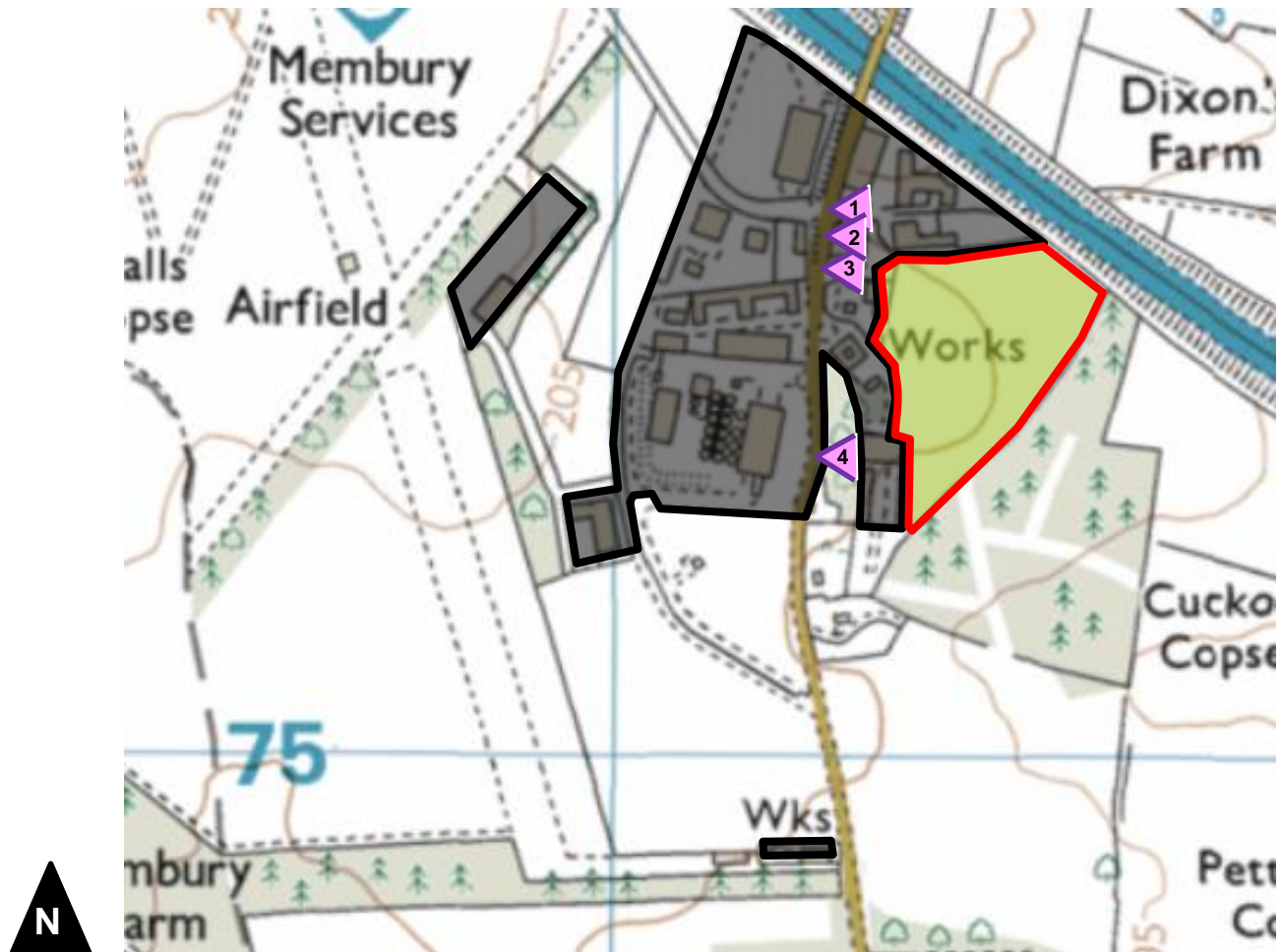
None

VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:

Lambourn Parish is currently preparing their NDP

Figure 1: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 1: Membury East

-  Site boundary
 -  Protected Employment Area
 -  North Wessex Downs AONB - complete area
 -  Viewpoint photo
- Landscape capacity**
-  High capacity
 -  Medium/high capacity
 -  Medium capacity
 -  Medium/low capacity
 -  Low capacity



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West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

The site lies within the following *LCA WDI: Shefford Wooded Downland* for which the key requirements are set out below:

Landscape Strategy:

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve woodland, trees and hedgerows within the landscape
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- Conserve historic features within the landscape
- Conserve the sparsely settled and rural character of the landscape
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes and extensive public rights of way

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Character Assessment 2002

The site lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB Character Area: *2C Lambourn Wooded Downs*

Key Management Requirements:

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural character of the Lambourn Wooded Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views contrasting with the strong wooded horizons, historic features including archaeological sites, the historic field pattern and road and lane network. The wooded pattern and character of the landscape is a key characteristic and there are opportunities for reintroduction of management (coppicing) to the ancient and semi-natural woodlands, sympathetic management of commercial forestry plantations and restoration of hedgerows. Remnant chalk grassland is a feature along steep slopes and should be conserved with opportunities for habitat restoration to link existing isolated sites. The distinctive pattern of settlements with dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings should be maintained.

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

Key development issues with the potential to have significant influence on the special qualities of the AONB

- The loss of rural character through suburbanising influences from new development (new fencing, lighting, signage, parking areas, paved footpaths, loss of native hedgerows and creation of new garden areas)
- Impact on dark skies and tranquillity of high-powered external lighting, especially where poorly directed or in an exposed location (not usually subject to planning control)
- Potential for certain forms of development to intrude on the wider landscape, including masts, pylons, wind turbine developments, photovoltaic schemes, and minerals and waste schemes, threatening the landscape quality, heritage assets, and the sense of remoteness and tranquillity

- Unsuitable development of redundant previously developed and part-developed sites within the North Wessex Downs, especially redundant airfields and military sites (e.g., Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape quality and heritage assets
- New developments at the junction of the M4 and A34 or along their corridors which spread the impact from development yet further into the undeveloped parts of the AONB
- Development that results in a material loss of tranquillity and/ or impact on the dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs or its setting.
- Development that does not provide for or support existing Green Infrastructure

Lambourn NPD Landscape Character Assessment 2020: The site is located within Membury Airfield (LCA3)

Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA3 are as follows:

- The complex of industrial buildings at this location is partially enclosed by hedgerows and trees whilst other part are more conspicuous. Additionally, landscaping would help reduce visual impacts where they exist.
 - Some of the landscaping has used non-natives to create visual enclosure. Whilst effective, it does not look as appealing as native species and is less beneficial in terms of biodiversity.
 - The scale and planning of developments at this location needs much careful considerations of any further growth to help avoid further change in character.
 - The tower at Trinity Grain is c.60 metre tall (*) and is incongruent with the landscape. Tall structures should be avoided and not exceed neighbouring tree height where possible
 - HGVs introduce noise and dust which can lead to synergistic adverse effects on character. These matters and the resolution of impact is a planning control matter. However, any proposals to increase and expand development at this location should be mindful of such in-combination effects as well as the direct effect of encroachment.
 - It might be useful to prepare a design guide for LCA3 that would help provide guidance on what is appropriate and elements which should be avoided in order to maintain a proportionate level of development which avoids detracting further from landscape character.
- *NOTE: Within the planning application for Trinity Grain Silos, it states the silos are 18.4m high, not 60m high*

Site description:

The site includes an area of grassland which extends across to Cuckoo Copse. Within the northern part of the site is John Day Engineering which consists of a large open area of compacted ground used for the storage of farm machinery; there are also a number of barn structures. A road leads around the SW periphery, with piles of spoil located adjacent. Within the southern part of the site, a tall robust hedgerow (conifer) separates the area of grassland with Martin Collins enterprises which includes a storage of materials.

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- The site is set adjacent the main area of the Protected Employment Area (PEA) at Membury

Viewpoints:



Photo 1: Looking slightly to the north of the site, which is obscured by Rutpen Ltd, located within the adjacent PEA. Highway planting is visible on the skyline



Photo 3: View down across to the east from Ramsbury Road



Photo 3: Looking east from the Ramsbury Road through the existing PEA to the site. The khaki-coloured building is located on the site (John Day Engineering). Cuckoo Copse is just visible beyond



Photo 4: View across to the east from Ramsbury Road into Martin Collins Enterprises site

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: Low

- The site is screened from public viewpoints by the woodland: Cuckoo Copse from the east and the buildings within the aligning PEA to the west
- Cuckoo Copse is just visible over the roof tops of the buildings within the adjacent PEA
- The existing buildings within the adjacent PEA are visible from the adjacent section of the M4, as filtered views through the intervening highway trees/shrubs
- The site is already enclosed by the adjacent PEA and woodland: Cuckoo Copse. New planting mitigation measures would not be required, however a building free area should be provided adjacent Cuckoo Copse to protect the woodland

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Low

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Located adjacent the main part of the PEA at Membury
- Part of the site remains as part of a field, which allows an open setting for the adjacent Woodland: Cuckoo Copse
- Woodland is a feature of the area and creates a sense of enclosure and remoteness with numerous framed views across the landscape
- Cuckoo Copse adjacent the site separates the site from the wider AONB landscape to the east and south
- The M4 aligns the northern boundary of the site, therefore constant traffic noise is apparent

3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low (combines 1 and 2)

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Low

- The site is located adjacent the main part of the PEA at Membury and is visually separated from the wider landscape by the adjacent woodland: Cuckoo Copse

5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low (combines 3 and 4)





6. Landscape Value: Medium/high

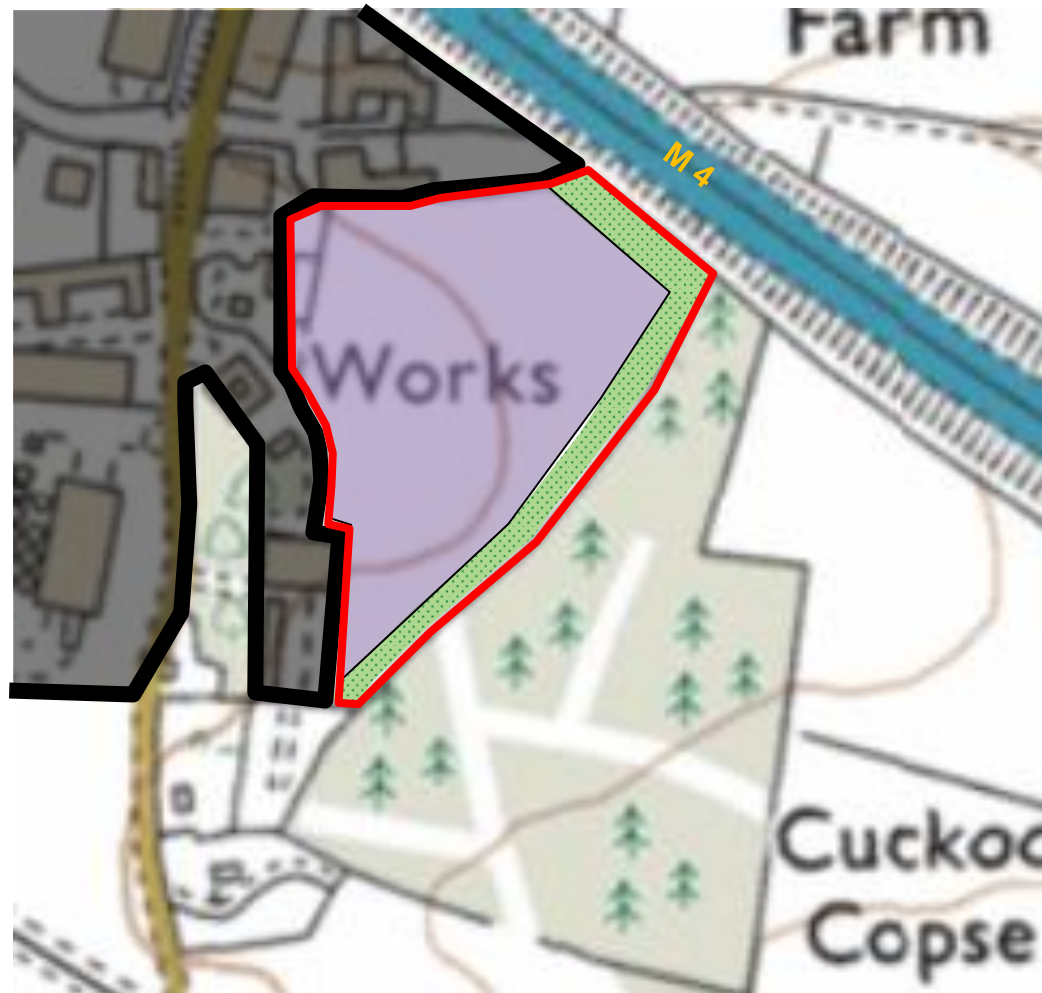
- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

1. Landscape Capacity: Medium/high (combines 5 and 6)

<p>Relationship of site to Membury Protected Employment Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membury Industrial Estate PEA is made up of a central area and a number of fragmented outlying areas. The site is located adjacent and east of the central area
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The woodland: Cuckoo Copse to the east of the site provides a natural boundary and buffer and screens the site from the surrounding wooded landscape character area, • Although the site contains a lot of grassland, which is a key feature of the AONB, the site visually relates to the adjacent PEA
<p>Potential impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of open character and area of grassland on the site • Loss of open setting of adjacent Woodland: Cuckoo Copse • Increased light spill and light pollution on site and adjacent areas • Increased industrial character on site, also on setting of Cuckoo Copse
<p>Potential impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of views of trees/woodland as seen across to the east from Ramsbury Road • Extension of views of buildings adjacent the M4
<p>Potential Impact on Existing Protected Employment Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site area will extend the PEA to the east to an existing wooded landscape buffer (Cuckoo Copse)
<p>Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of open land including grassland within the North Wessex Downs AONB • Loss of open setting of woodland • Loss of quiet rural character and rural character of Ramsbury Road, with increased traffic on access route from M4
<p>Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development on the site will not require any more planting mitigation measures, as Cuckoo Copse provides a natural buffer already • Retain a development free area adjacent Cuckoo Copse to protect the mature oaks on the woodland edge
<p>Conclusion and recommendations</p> <p>Development across the western part of the site, could be accommodated retaining a development free belt (minimum 10m or 2m beyond the outer tree canopy) set aside as grassland for the adjacent woodland: Cuckoo Copse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development should not be located adjacent the northern boundary to avoid extending views of development from the M4. • Height of buildings should be no more than 10m to the roof ridge. The North Wessex Downs AONB: Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development should be used as guidance • External lighting should be avoided, especially on the site boundary, or in locations which would cause light pollution on adjacent areas, especially Cuckoo Copse. The North Wessex Downs AONB: A guide to good external lighting should be used to inform any proposed development

Figure 2: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 1: Membury East

-  The site
-  Protected Employment Area (PEA)
-  With potential for development
-  Landscape buffer



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