

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 2: South of Trinity Grain

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Membury Industrial Estate – Site 2: South of Trinity Grain
Date of site survey	16 th January and 16 th February 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
<p>West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019: The site is located within LCAWD1: <i>Shefford Wooded Downland</i></p> <p><i>Key Characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p><i>Valued Features and Qualities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p><i>Detractors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: Ramsbury Road – adjacent eastern boundary of site 2No residential properties on Ramsbury Road Membury Industrial Estate	Types of viewers: Vehicle travellers Walkers/ cyclists and equestrian Residents on Ramsbury Road Users of Membury Industrial Estate	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: Existing wide belt of tree planting along eastern boundary of site. Small woodland at southern area of site. The site is already well contained. Mitigation measures should retain these features and manage them to secure long term establishment
Views out of the site to: Adjacent to PEA, with Trinity Grain silos to the north and Jacquet Engineering to the west	Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): High, as within AONB	Impacts of mitigation: Protection of existing eastern tree belt and southern woodland would enhance wooded landscape character of the area and relate across the Ramsbury Road to existing woodland: Cuckoo Copse
Does the site form part of a skyline? No	Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): Natural beauty, high expectations	
Panoramic views: None		
Landmark features: None		
Sensitivity score: Low	Sensitivity score: Low	Sensitivity score: Low
Visual sensitivity score: Low		
Additional comments: Views towards the site, although the site is not visible are dominated by the grain silos within the adjacent PEA		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: Flattish	Boundary features other than vegetation: None known	Tranquillity – Noise levels: M4 to the north creates background hum of traffic. Adjacent Ramsbury Road not particularly busy
Geological features: None	Historic landscapes: Part of the redundant WWII airfield opened in 1942, it was used by both the Royal Air Force (RAF) and United States Army Air Forces (USAAF). After the war, it was a private airport until the construction of the M4 motorway in the 1960s when it was closed	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: M4 well screened by intervening trees and Woodlands Silo towers within adjacent PEA, partly visible above tree line.
Soil quality: Part of existing WWII airfield area of buildings	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: The central area is rough grassland Eastern area there is a tree belt, with internal earth bund Southern area includes a young well-established woodland, which was part of the 07/02754/COMIND approved application Small compacted area used for parking of lorries	Conservation Area: None	

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<p>Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: Eastern boundary</p>	<p>Landscape features of LCA: Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape Wooded character, restricts views across landscape Quiet rural character adjacent Ramsbury Road when not adjacent PEA</p>	
<p>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: SW site boundary defined by roadside hedgerow</p>	<p>Built form: None</p>	<p>Accessibility by public footpath: None</p>
<p>Woodland and copses: Semi established woodland copse at southern end of site</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 southern edge of the central PEA</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: An enclosed site from the wider landscape</p>
<p>Heathland: None</p>	<p>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: N/A</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: The site is set within a semi established new landscape which relates and integrates with the surrounding wooded landscape of the area</p>

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

<p>Other significant vegetation cover: None</p>	<p>Cultural associations: Part of ex WWII Membury Airfield – the site does not contain any features</p>	
<p>BAP/Phase I records: None Site covered by Open Mosaic Habitat (Draft)</p>	<p>Features of cultural importance: None</p>	
<p>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: None</p>		
<p>Sensitivity score: Medium/high</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Low</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Low</p>
<p>Landscape sensitivity score: Medium/Low</p>		
<p>Additional comments: Mitigation planting from the 2007 planning application (07/02754) has enclosed the site from the wider landscape to the south</p>		

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

The main area of the existing PEA is located to the north and partly to the west of the site. Beyond the main part of the PEA there are three other fragmented parts of the PEA. The first is a small area, located across a field from the southern part of the site, which solely contains Andy Godwin Car Repairs. Walkers Logistics is another isolated part of the PEA located then further to the south. The third part of the PEA is located towards the north west of the main PEA.

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 located directly to the south of the Silo towers.

The wooded landscape character of the area helps to integrate the existing PEA into the landscape and screen the buildings/structures from wider views. On the southern part of the site there is a small maturing woodland copse which provides lower-level screening and also links across Ramsbury Road to the west to an established woodland: Cuckoo Copse. These two areas of woodland provide containment of the main southern area of the PEA and a wooded buffer to the wider open landscape beyond.

Presence in a floodplain:

No

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

Originally the site was open to the south and to the Ramsbury Road, but now the 2007 mitigation planting measures have enclosed the site along its eastern and southern site boundary. This mitigation tree planting also links across Ramsbury Road to Cuckoo Copse, creating a nearly continuous southern wooded edge to the main PEA.

Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

The site is separate from any villages or towns, with Lambourn located circa 4km to the north from the site. The B4000 (located circa 950m 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 1km from the site boundary.

Historic links with the wider area if known:

Part of RAF Membury WWII airfield, now redundant

Ecological links with the wider area if known:

None known

Recreational links with the wider area:

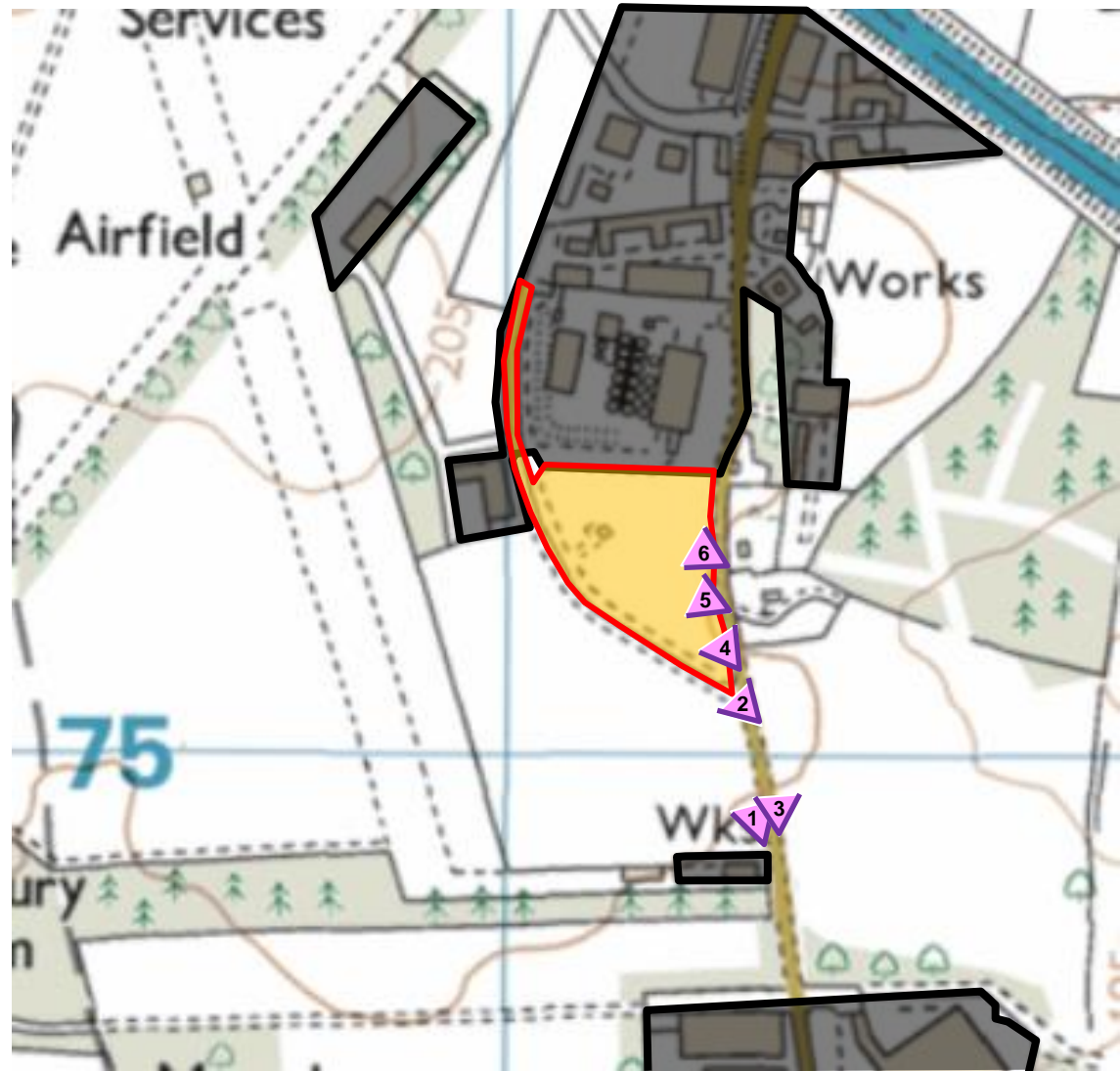
The Ramsbury Road provides access to the wider AONB to the south

VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:

Lambourn Parish is currently preparing their NDP

Figure 1: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 2: South of Trinity Grain

-  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



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
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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 Landscape 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

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- 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 consists of a central area of rough grassland/low level scrub and bare ground, enclosed along its eastern edge by a bund and circa 15m wide belt of trees/shrubs. On the southern part of the site is a young woodland copse, which was planted as part of the 2007 approved planning application for the silo towers. The site contains a small areas with a compacted base for the parking of lorries

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 north along Ramsbury Road with site located in the foreground of the silo towers (within PEA) and above intervening maturing woodland copse (July 2021)



Photo 2: The site is to the right, out of view beyond the maturing woodland copse located on the southern part of the site (July 2021)

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Photo 3: Looking north along Ramsbury Road with site (out of view) located in the foreground of the silo towers (within PEA) and above intervening maturing woodland copse (February 2020)



Photo 4: Looking north along Ramsbury Road with site located beyond the semi-wooded site boundary, out of view (February 2020)



Photo 5: View towards site, largely screened by winter site boundary vegetation. The silo towers are just visible beyond (February 2020)



Photo 6: View through site boundary vegetation which is marked by an earthbound (out of view) (February 2020)

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: Low

- The site is screened from public viewpoints by onsite trees and woodland
- A circa 15m wide tree belt/hedgerow filters and predominantly screens views of the site from the adjacent Ramsbury Road
- The maturing woodland located on the southern part of the site, screens views of the site from locations on the Ramsbury Road further to the south
- Views of the top sections of the adjacent silo towers are visible above the 2007 planted woodland from the south and from other public viewpoints within the wider landscape to the north
- The site is enclosed by onsite trees and woodland, therefore additional mitigation measures would not be required, beyond protecting and continuing the management of the existing trees/shrubs to promote a healthy woodland edge

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Located adjacent the main PEA at Membury
- Woodland is a feature of the area and creates a sense of enclosure and remoteness with numerous framed views across the landscape
- The tree belt and southern woodland copse within the site separates the site from the wider AONB landscape to the south and east

3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium/low (combines 1 and 2)

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Low

- The site is located adjacent the main PEA at Membury and is visually separated from the wider landscape by an onsite woodland and a tree belt

5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/low (combines 3 and 4)

6. Landscape Value: Medium/high

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

7. Landscape Capacity: Medium (combines 5 and 6)

Relationship of site to Membury Protected Employment Area

- Membury Industrial Estate is made up of a central area and a number of fragmented outlying areas. The site is located adjacent and south of the central area

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The woodland copse on the southern part of the site and the wide tree belt/hedgerow on the eastern site boundary integrates the site into the surrounding wooded landscape character of the area, with the central open part of the site relating to the adjacent PEA

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of open character and area of rough grassland/ scrub
- Loss of woodland which contributes to the wooded character of the area
- Loss of existing eastern tree belt/hedgerow which forms a buffer to the wider rural landscape directly to the east
- Loss of rural character of Ramsbury Road
- Introduction of more modern inclusions eroding the traditional and quiet rural landscape character

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Visual impact on rural character of Ramsbury Road
- Increased visual impact of built form on skyline alongside the existing silo towers

Potential Impact on Existing Protected Employment Area

- The fragmented character of the PEA allows the undeveloped areas in-between to retain characteristic landscape features of the AONB, therefore mitigating and reducing the overall effect of the PEA on this area of the AONB. The proposed site connects to the main PEA, retaining the characteristic landscape features within the undeveloped areas
- The site area will extend the PEA to the south to an existing wooded landscape buffer
- Existing mitigation measures will integrate the site into the surrounding landscape

Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB

- Loss of open land including rough grassland within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Loss of quiet rural character and rural character of Ramsbury Road, with increased traffic on access route from M4

Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure

- Retain existing woodland copse within southern part of site and eastern tree belt/hedgerow adjacent Ramsbury Road
- Enhance existing western site boundary by retaining existing hedgerow and widening with additional tree planting

Conclusion and recommendations

Development across the central part of the site, could be accommodated retaining the tree belt/hedgerow along the eastern site boundary and the woodland copse within the southern part of the site. Buildings should be at a height where they are not visible above the tree canopy (within the southern part of the site) from the wider landscape to the south and from the Ramsbury Road. Restricting the height of proposed buildings below the height of the adjacent silo towers and trees will not increase the visual impact of built development within the AONB.

Figure 2: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 2: South of Trinity Grain

