Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 4: Membury North West

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Membury Industrial Estate - Site 4: Membury North West
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 Berks 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 key 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 Wessey Downs AONR

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

Population	Mitigation potential
Types of viewers: Users of industrial estate Users of adjacent air strip Vehicle travellers on M4 and to MSA	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: An open elevated landscape. Local vegetation pattern includes Highway tree planting adjacent M4, MSA and tree belts adjacent runways within the adjacent airfield. Strengthening of these existing areas of planting with more tree planting could enhance this area of the AONB
Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): High, as within AONB	Impacts of mitigation: Woodland planting would enhance this area of the AONB and provide containment to the PEA from the NW and separation from MSA
Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): Within adjacent PEA there will be visual perceptions of Industrial activity From the M4 and MSA, for travellers' expectation will be high of landscape Airstrip users also high expectations of landscape	
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Sensitivity score: Medium/low	Sensitivity score: Low
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Visual sensitivity score:

Medium/low

Additional comments:

The site is slightly elevated to the adjacent PEA, and forms part of the skyline
There are long views across the airfield to the wooded hill fort known as Membury Camp a Scheduled Monument

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: Elevated part of a very gently undulating landform. The location of Membury airfield was chosen due to the flattish elevated landform, the site forms the northern part of this	Boundary features other than vegetation: Grey palisade steel security fencing	Tranquillity – Noise levels: M4 to the north creates constant traffic noise
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. No features of value remain on the site Located to the west at circa 630m is the hill fort Membury Camp: Scheduled Monument	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: M4 screened, as at lower level than site Adjacent buildings within PEA visible, provides industrial estate character Existing storage of objects (portaloos, containers) adjacent site visually detract from any rural character
Soil quality: N/A – as site mainly compacted ground	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 is in this area is centred on the M4 MSA
Water features: None		
Landcover and land use: Compacted ground/subsoil with B8 usage for storage and distribution. Presently open, with no B8 land use	Conservation Area: None	
Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: A few individual trees align the southern site boundary	Landscape features of LCA: Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape Frequent archaeological features which create a strong sense of time-depth, with important Iron Age hillfort: Membury Camp Expansive open views from higher ground	

Hedgerows and hedgerow trees:	Built form: Although no buildings were evident, the approved B8 usage	Accessibility by public footpath:
None	includes a single storage building approved within the eastern part of the site	None
Woodland and copses: None	Setting of listed buildings: None	Open access areas: None
Wetland and meadow: None	Scheduled Monuments: None on site, but Membury Camp an Iron Age Hillfort (Scheduled Monument) is located circa 630m to the SW	Recreational areas: None
Common land: None	Pattern of Protected Employment Area (PEA) A central main area, with fragmented areas within surrounding landscape. The site is located adjacent the central area	Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: Due to the site's slight elevated landform, the site has an open character, which is marginally enclosed by the highway tree planting adjacent along the northern and north eastern site boundary
Heathland: None	Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: N/A	Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: The site forms part of the open elevated landscape associated with the once open airfield now dominated by open air storage and the adjacent PEA
Other significant vegetation cover: None	Cultural associations: Part of the WWII airfield, although within exact area, no features of value remain	

BAP/Phase I records: None	Features of cultural importance: Although originally part of WWII airfield, no features of value remain on the site			
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 feature of this site is that it is slightly elevated to the adjacent main PEA and is potentially very open to the adjacent area of airfield, the AONB to the west and the M4				

Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)

The main area of the existing PEA is located adjacent to the east and south of the site at a slightly lower level. Beyond this main PEA there are three other fragmented parts of the PEA south of the M4. The first is a small area located to the south of the main PEA across an open field and which contains Ady Godwin Car Repairs. Then further beyond this across a woodland belt and newly planted woodland is the Walkers Logistics site containing four large buildings. The third part is located to the south west of the site and overlooks the adjacent remaining area of airfield.

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 17m. The site aligns adjacent to the main PEA, however at a slightly higher level

The wooded landscape character of the area helps to integrate the smaller PEAs 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, and the approved B8 uses to the south. However, its elevated character still partly relates more to the wider open landscape to the west. The M4 aligns the northern site boundary, but is within a cutting

The overall PEA is visible from the north from a Public Right of Way as it becomes elevated (circa 200m AOD) at Lambourn Woodlands, where the grain silos are visible on the skyline and other parts of buildings within the PEA are also partly visible

The Iron Age Hillfort to the west is visible across the airfield from the northern end of the site

Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

The site is separate from any villages or towns, with Lambourn located circa 3.km to the north from the site. The B4000 (located circa 460m 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 780m from the site boundary.

Historic links with the wider area if known:

Originally part of the WWII airfield

Setting of Membury Camp an Iron Age Hillfort (Scheduled Monument)

Ecological links with the wider area if known:

None known

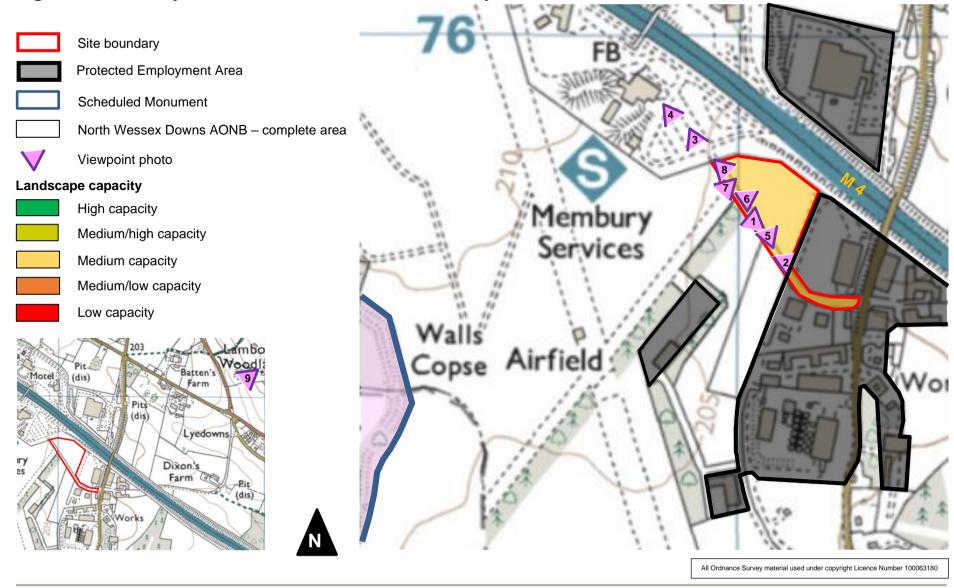
Recreational links with the wider area:

None

VDS/Parish Plan - relevant extracts:

Lambourn Parish is currently preparing their NDP

Figure 1: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 4: Membury North West



West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

The site lies within the following LCA WD1: 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
- 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 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 key 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. I 8.4m high, not 60m high

Site description:

The overall site is located to the west and is slightly elevated to the adjacent main PEA at Membury. The site also aligns the M4 to the north and abuts to Membury Motorway Service Area the west. To the south west, the site faces the open airfield, originally constructed in WWII. The site consists of an area of rough levelled ground. The site has an approved application for Class B8 usage storage or distribution. There is also an approved permission for a small single storey building within the eastern part of the site. Beyond the northern and north eastern site boundary, there is highway tree planting on the M4 embankment, which then continues adjacent the entrance slip road into the Services, which provides some enclosure of the site. Grey palisade fencing marks the internal site boundary to the adjacent main PEA.

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 I: A view along the internal road along the southern side of the site. The site is just visible beyond the grey steel palisade fence to the left, opposite the site is another area with storage and distribution usage. The grain silo towers are just visible on the skyline



Photo 2: Looking towards the site, with Membury Motorway Service Area located at a lower level beyond, out of view. The tree planting on the services slip road is visible on the skyline



Photo 3: View from Membury Motorway Service Area through the winter periphery tree planting, allowing filtered views across into the site. Large earth mound at northern end of the site obscures views of the site



Photo 4: Another view into the site from Membury Motorway Service Area . The existing buildings within the main PEA at Membury are visible



Photo 5: View at entrance into site to right. Storage use is apparent within opposite area



Photo 6: View into site, with site boundary marked by grey palisade steel fencing, occasional tree with earth bund beyond. The highway tree planting on the skyline (which aligns the northern and north-eastern site boundary) is just visible



Photo 7: View across adjacent ex WWII airfield, with wooded horizon marking site of the hillfort: Membury Camp a Scheduled Monument



Photo 8: View into site, with site boundary marked by grey palisade steel fencing, occasional tree with earth bund beyond. The highway tree planting on the skyline is just visible. The building within the adjacent PEA is also visible, located at a slightly lower height



Photo 9: Long view from PRoW: LAMB/20/3 across to Membury PEA. The grain silo towers are just visible breaking the treeline, while other buildings are visible partly through breaks within the trees. Another smaller PEA area (originally a WWII camp) is visible in the foreground, accessed off the B4000

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

- 1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/low
 - The site is elevated to the adjacent PEA and can be viewed in context with the PEA buildings
 - Visible from adjacent private roads within the adjacent PEA
 - Northern end of site is visible from Membury Motorway Service Area
 - Northern edge of site is visible against the skyline as viewed from the M4
 - Visible in context of Membury Camp a Scheduled Monument, circa 420m from the site to the west
 - There are filtered views of the site from Membury Motorway Service Area through the narrow periphery belt of trees
- 2. Landscape Sensitivity: Low
 - Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
 - Located adjacent the main PEA at Membury
 - Due to the close proximity of the, M4, there is a constant traffic noise
 - Located on a slightly more elevated level than the adjacent main PEA
- 3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low (combines 1 and 2)
- 4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/low
 - The site is heavily influenced by the adjacent PEAs, however its elevated landform partly relates to the wider landscape of the airfield further to the south
- 5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/ low (combines 3 and 4)
- 6. Landscape Value: Medium/high
 - Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- 1. Landscape Capacity: Medium (combines 5 and 6)

Relationship of site to Membury Protected Employment Area

• Membury Industrial Area (PEA) is made up of a central area and a number of fragmented outlying areas. The site is located adjacent the main PEA

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- The existing semi-industrial land use of the site, relates to the adjacent PEA in character. However, it is slightly elevated to the adjacent PEA, at a height which is more in line with the adjacent airfield. The northern part of the site is open to the adjacent airfield
- The Iron Age Hillfort to the west is visible across the airfield from the northern end of the site

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of restricted height presently controlled by B8 usage, impacting on skyline
- Potential adverse impact on wider remote setting of the Scheduled Monument: Membury Camp

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Visual impact on rural character of Membury Services
- Potential increase in modern visual intrusions as viewed from longer views

Potential Impact on Existing Protected Employment Area

- The site will extend the existing PEA across an area already with planning approvals for B8 usage, which retains very little valued characteristics features of the AONB. Although this will result in a larger PEA
- This will also extend the PEA onto slightly higher ground increasing the visibility of Membury Industrial Estate from within the wider landscape

Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB

- Loss of open land within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Increased traffic on access route from M4
- If developed, new mitigation measures along the periphery could reduce the overall visibility of the existing PEA within the landscape

Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure

- Propose a woodland copse on the north western corner of the site, which would build on the existing pattern of tree planting adjacent the site, while
 further reducing the visibility of the existing PEA on the adjacent area of the AONB to the west and Membury Services
- Extend the woodland along the northern and southern site boundary as a tree belt, with a minimum width of 10m along the northern edge
- All planting should be native

Conclusion and recommendations

Development across the site could be accommodated as follows:

- Development across the southern part of the site should be limited with a height of buildings up to 10m (roofline)
- Development across the northern part of the site should be limited in height to not intrude into the skyline as would be visible from the M4
- The colour of the building facades should also be selected, to avoid overdominance of buildings against the skyline and to integrate into the surrounding AONB. The North Wessex Downs AONB: Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development should be used as guidance
- Roof lines should also be curved
- The impact of light pollution should be carefully considered. The North Wessex Downs AONB: A guide to good external lighting should be used to inform any proposed development
- Mitigation planting measures should strengthen the existing tree and shrub planting, adjacent the site, by extending into the site. The views out from Membury Services need to be enhanced to protect its rural location and semi-rural character
- The setting of Membury Camp an Iron Age Hillfort (Scheduled Monument) should be conserved and protected

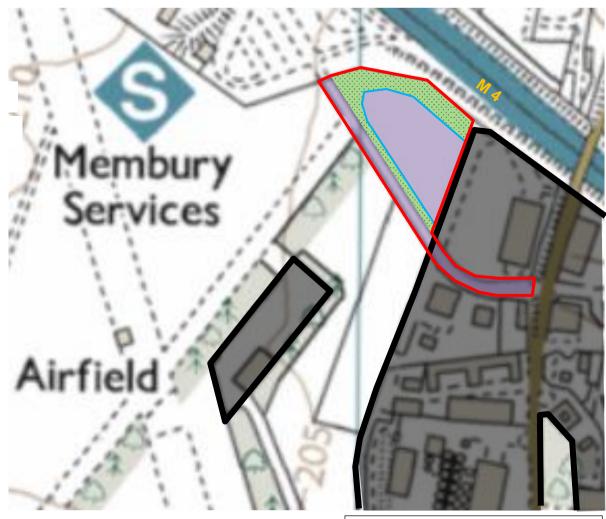
Figure 2: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 4: Membury North West

The site

Protected Employment Area (PEA)

With potential for development

Landscape buffer





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