

**Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 5: Membury North**

**WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET**

<b>Site</b>	Membury Industrial Estate - Site 5: Membury North
<b>Date of site survey</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
<b>Surveyors</b>	LA
<b>Weather/visibility</b>	Low cloud
<b>LCA</b>	North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

**West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019:** The site is located within *LCA WDI: 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 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 Ermin Street (LCA4). Described as subtly different from the landscapes that lie to the south (LCA3- Membury Airfield) and north (LCA2 - Wooded Downland). A well wooded LCA with hedgerows and permanent pastures. Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA4 are as follows:

- Improve quantity of woodland cover to help reduce noise and visual impacts from the transport corridors.
- Can potentially contain and hold more development than other parts of the NPD as landscape impacts would be likely to be less sensitive than elsewhere.
- Optimise biodiversity in the woodlands and wider habitat mosaic of grasslands and hedgerows
- Safe crossing points need to be considered for horse riders and walkers alike. A number of bridleways and footpaths terminate at Ermin Street. Improved connectivity should be an aspiration for the LCA (as elsewhere in the parish)
- Recognise and where appropriate enhance the character and setting of the various Grade II listed buildings that are evenly distributed evenly throughout the LCA

<b>Landscape Designations</b>	North Wessex Downs AONB
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**VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

<b>General visibility</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Mitigation potential</b>
<b>Views into the site from:</b> Ramsbury Road: adjacent eastern site boundary Ermin Street: adjacent northern site boundary Residential property – The Beeches Adjacent PEA	<b>Types of viewers:</b> Vehicle travellers Cyclists and walkers Residents and visitors along Ramsbury Road PEA users	<b>Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation:</b> Internal site of small paddocks delineated by timber post and wire fences. Site boundary includes wide hedgerows, tree belts and small woodland copse. Proposed planting mitigation measures could strengthen existing vegetation pattern, but would take time to mature
<b>Views out of the site to:</b> To the north - limited in length, as site is at a lower level To the south - adjacent buildings within PEA	<b>Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity):</b> High, as within AONB	<b>Impacts of mitigation:</b> Loss of open views of paddocks across semi open area from adjacent roads: Ermin Street and northern end of Ramsbury Road
<b>Does the site form part of a skyline?</b> No	<b>Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors):</b> Natural beauty, high expectations	
<b>Panoramic views:</b> None		
<b>Landmark features:</b> None		
<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium/high	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium
<b>Visual sensitivity score:</b> Medium		
<b>Additional comments:</b> The site is visible and partly visible within the foreground of the buildings within the adjacent PEA		

**LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

<b>Natural factors</b>	<b>Cultural factors</b>	<b>Perceptual features</b>
<b>Topography and landform:</b> Valley base within local undulating landform Surrounding roads are at a higher level	<b>Boundary features other than vegetation:</b> None known	<b>Tranquillity – Noise levels:</b> M4 to the south creates background traffic noise Adjacent the busy Ramsbury Road and at times Ermine Street
<b>Geological features:</b> None	<b>Historic landscapes:</b> None known	<b>Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors:</b> M4 well screened by intervening trees and woodlands Looking south to adjacent PEA visible on skyline, influences rural character of site
<b>Soil quality:</b> Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, moderate to high fertility Agricultural Land Classification: Grade 3 (Good to moderate)	<b>Parkland features:</b> None	<b>Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies:</b> 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
<b>Water features:</b> None		
<b>Landcover and land use:</b> Grazed paddocks, with two horse shelters located towards eastern site boundary	<b>Conservation Area:</b> None	
<b>Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees:</b> None	<b>Landscape features of LCA:</b> Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape Wooded character, restricts views across wider landscape mixed farmland	

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

<b>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees:</b> Northern site boundary defined by roadside hedgerow	<b>Built form:</b> Two horse shelters	<b>Accessibility by public footpath:</b> None
<b>Woodland and copses:</b> None	<b>Setting of listed buildings:</b> None	<b>Open access areas:</b> None
<b>Wetland and meadow:</b> None	<b>Scheduled Monuments:</b> None	<b>Recreational areas:</b> None
<b>Common land:</b> None	<b>Pattern of Protected Employment Area (PEA)</b> A central area, with fragmented areas within surrounding landscape. The site is located adjacent the northern edge of one of the smaller fragmented parts of the PEA, which is separated from the main PEA by the M4	<b>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure:</b> The site is open to the north, however its natural valley base landform, creates semi enclosure
<b>Heathland:</b> None	<b>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character:</b> N/A	<b>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern:</b> The site is part of a larger area of mainly horse paddocks, small single dwellings, separated from the adjacent PEA and Membury Services by hedgerow/tree belt
<b>Other significant vegetation cover:</b> None	<b>Cultural associations:</b> None known	

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

<p><b>BAP/Priority Habitats/Phase I records:</b> None Northern hedgerow would qualify as Priority Habitat</p>	<p><b>Features of cultural importance:</b> None</p>	
<p><b>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland:</b> None</p>		
<p><b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium</p>	<p><b>Sensitivity score:</b> Low</p>	<p><b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium/Low</p>
<p><b>Landscape sensitivity score:</b> Medium/Low</p>		
<p><b>Additional comments:</b></p>		



## Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

### Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)

The main area of the existing PEA at Membury is located to the south and beyond the M4. Beyond the main part of the PEA there are three other fragmented PEAs south of the M4.

The site is located north of the M4, north of another fragmented PEA site. This PEA site contains a large footprint of a relatively low-lying building set in landscaped grounds with areas of car parking to the east and a storage compound to the rear (west and south). Set at a lower level to the adjacent Ramsbury Road which is located on an embankment, the sloping embankments contain semi-mature highway planting of trees and shrubs. The adjacent intervening M4 embankment is also well wooded. These wooded embankments semi-encapsulate the adjacent 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 17m. The site is separated from the main PEA by the M4 and an additional fragmented part of the PEA.

The adjacent PEA contains a large-scale building (Arena House) set within a semi landscaped setting of amenity grassland and trees. This PEA is set back from the Ramsbury Road with an intervening area of paddocks, its presence is not fully appreciated from Ramsbury Road.

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

### Presence in a floodplain:

No

### Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The site, although semi-enclosed is part of a larger area of small fields and paddocks which aligns the southern area of countryside from Ermin Street

### Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

The site is separate from any villages or towns, with Lambourn located circa 3km to the north from the site. The B4000 (located 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 650m from the site boundary.

### Historic links with the wider area if known:

Ermin Street which aligns the northern site boundary is a Roman Road

### Ecological links with the wider area if known:

None known

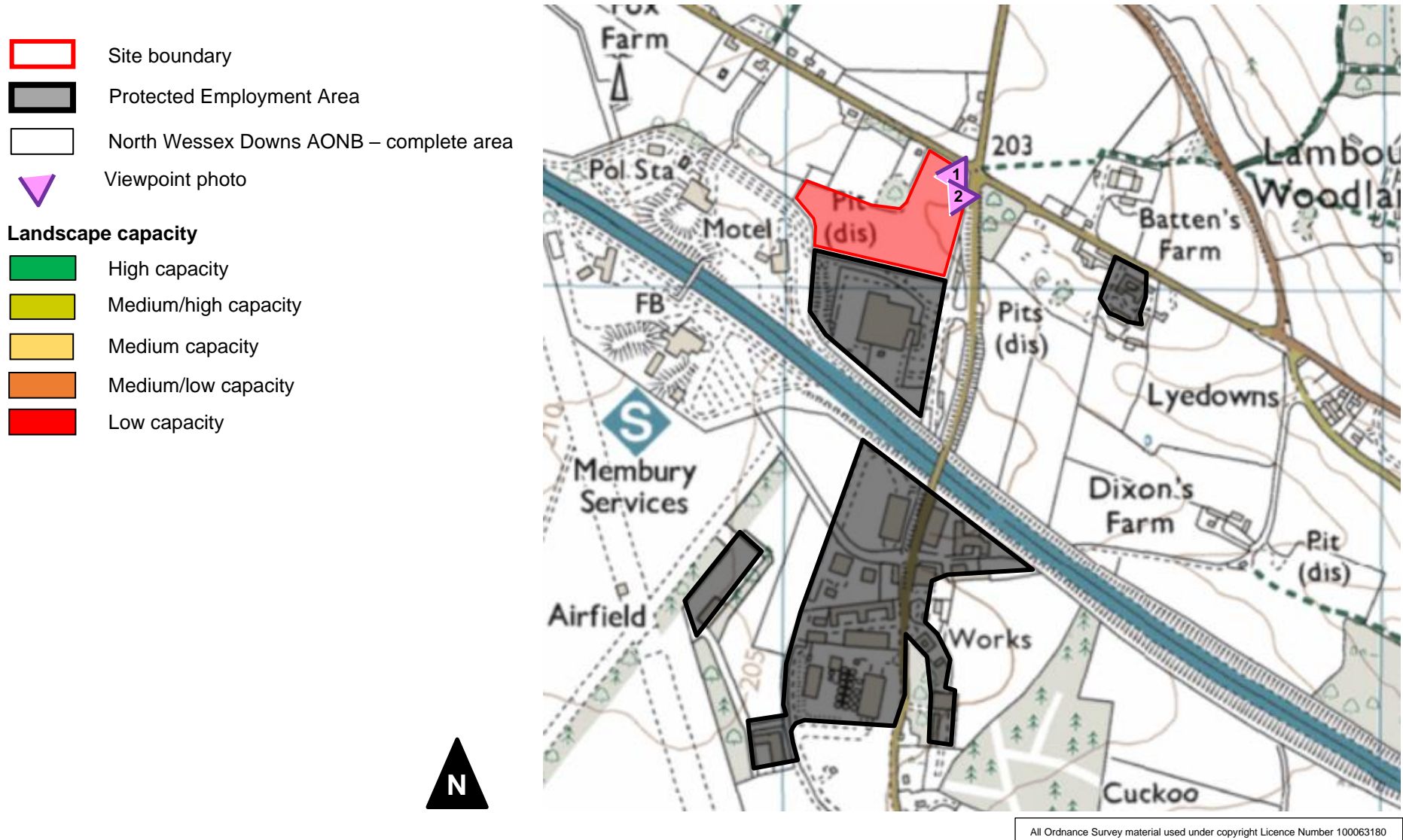
### Recreational links with the wider area:

Ramsbury Road and Ermin Street provides access to the wider AONB

### VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:

Lambourn Parish is currently preparing their NDP

Figure 1: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 5: Membury North



### **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
- 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 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
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- Development that does not provide for or support existing Green Infrastructure

**Lambourn NDP Landscape Character Assessment 2020:** The site is located within Ermin Street (LCA4)

Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA4, as follows:

- Improve quality of woodland cover to help reduce noise and visual impacts from the transport corridors
- Can potentially contain and hold more development than other parts of the NDP as landscape impacts would be likely less sensitive than elsewhere
- Optimise biodiversity in the woodlands and wider habitat mosaic of grasslands and hedgerows
- Safe crossing points need to be considered for horse riders and walkers alike. A number of bridleways and footpaths terminate at Ermin Street. Improved connectivity should be an aspiration for the LCA (as elsewhere in the parish)
- Recognise and where appropriate enhance the character and setting of the various Grade II listed buildings that are distributed evenly throughout the LCA

**Site description:**

The site consists of an area of horse paddocks, subdivided by post and wire fencing and including stables/horse shelters and a lunge ring. Separated from the adjacent PEA by a semi treed hedgerow/tree belt. The site along the northern site boundary is aligned by Ermin Street an alignment of an old Roman Road. To the east beyond a wooded belt is the Ramsbury Road.

**Key landscape planning factors:**

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- The site is set adjacent one of the smaller fragmented areas of the Protected Employment Area (PEA) at Membury Industrial Estate



**Viewpoints:**



**Photo 1:** Looking across from Ermin Street, over the roadside hedgerow into and across the site, with the large building within the adjacent PEA visible beyond the southern site boundary **(April 2021)**



**Photo 2:** Looking south across Ermin Street and along Ramsbury Road, the large building within the adjacent PEA is just visible beyond the southern site boundary

**Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process**

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- The site is visible from the old Roman Road: Ermin Street which aligns the northern site boundary. From here there are views over the site boundary hedgerow down and across the site
- A narrowing tree belt/hedgerow adjacent the Ramsbury Road and other vegetation screens views of the site from the northern end, until at the cross roads with Ermin Street there are views into the site
- Views of the large building within the adjacent PEA are visible from the site and from Ermin Street
- Visible from the adjacent residential property – The Beeches
- No intervisibility with the main PEA south of the M4
- The site has a semi enclosed character
- The site is very open internally, therefore new planting mitigation measures would be required within the site

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/low**

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Located adjacent one of the fragmented PEAs at Membury, north of the M4 and away from the main PEA
- Due to the close proximity of the, M4, there is a constant traffic noise
- Located within a local valley base with gently rising sides, as part of the gently undulating landform of the surrounding area
- Includes a number of horse paddocks internally fenced off with post and wire. Stables, horse shelters and lunge ring give the eastern part of the site a horsey landscape character

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

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- The site is partly influenced by the adjacent PEA, but shares many of the characteristics of the wider landscape, with good physical links
- The site as an area of small fields is part of a larger area of small fields as visible south of Ermine Street and within this part of the AONB

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

**6. Landscape Value: Medium/high**

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

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

**Relationship of site to Membury Protected Employment Area**

- Membury Protected Employment Area is made up of a central area and a number of fragmented outlying areas. The site is located adjacent one of the fragmented areas, which is also separated from the main PEA by the M4

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- The current land use of the site, forms a small part of a larger area of small fields which align Ermin Street contributing to its rural character

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Loss of open character and area of grassland
- Loss of rural character of Ermin Street
- Introduction of more modern inclusions eroding the traditional and quiet rural landscape character of the area

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- Visual impact on rural character of Ermin Street

**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 one of the fragmented PEA, however this PEA seems more separate from the other PEA, as it is north of the M4 in a locally different type of landscape
- The site area will extend the PEA to the north away from the main PEA south of the M4, further spreading its influence and characteristics within the AONB
- Due to the size of the site, new mitigation measures will be required to integrate and screen any new development, this will take time to mature therefore the impact on the AONB will be substantial for an unacceptable time

**Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB**

- Loss of open land including grassland within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Loss of rural character of Ermin Street
- Increased traffic on access route from M4

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure**




- Difficult to mitigate, as views are down into site, therefore no comments

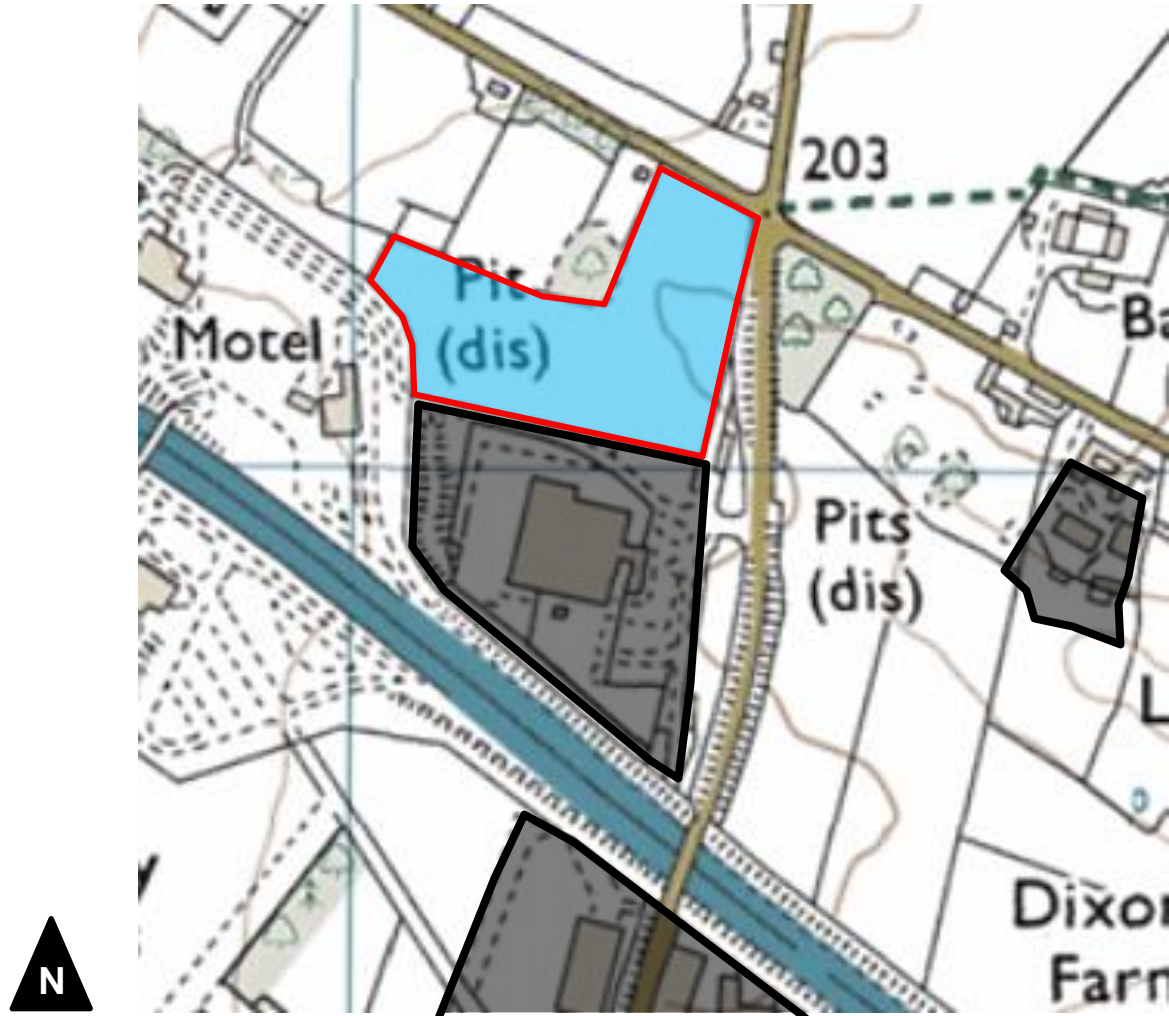
**Conclusion and recommendations**

It is recommended that the site is not considered for development



**Figure 2: Membury Industrial Estate - Site 5: Membury North**

-  The site
-  Protected Employment Area (PEA)
-  Not suitable for development



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