

**Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Beenham Industrial Area - BEEN3**

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

<b>Site</b>	Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN3
<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 LVI: Kennet Lower River Valley*

*Key Characteristics*

- Distinctive flat and open lowland landscape, created by the River Kennet and associated channels and drainage ditches
- Principally pasture farmland used for cattle grazing, with some larger arable fields. Woodland occurs along the river corridor.
- Internationally and nationally important wetland habitats along the valley floor
- Sense of time-depth with visible heritage features and historic settlements
- Sparsely settled, although influenced by Newbury and Thatcham in the west of the area, modern urban development and industry within Newbury and Thatcham
- Many public rights of way, particularly along the river
- Transportation routes, often parallel to the river corridor
- Visually semi-enclosed, with strong rural qualities away from large settlements

*Valued Features and Qualities*

- Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape
- Ecologically valuable habitats along the river corridor
- Numerous heritage assets and historic landscape features give the landscape a sense of time-depth
- Strong rural and sparsely settled character
- Valued destination for recreation
- Distinctive visual character

*Detractors*

- Impacts of improvements and intensification of the railway line

- Increasing development pressures
- Changes in farming practices including a reduction in the viability of livestock grazing
- Past and present impacts of industrial use
- Nutrient enrichment of the river from agricultural run-off and water vessels
- Increased risk of more frequent and severe flooding due to climate change
- Development of large infrastructure such as solar farms and waste management facilities

#### *Landscape Strategy*

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated AONB landscape
- Conserve and restore the traditional valley landscape
- Restore, extend and manage wetland habitats that occur along the floodplain
- Conserve the valley floor woodland
- Conserve and enhance heritage features in the landscape
- Manage recreational pressure
- Conserve the distinct identities of individual settlements

**North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002:** The site is located within *Character Area 8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons*

#### *Key Characteristics*

- Lowland area at the base of the chalk dip slope, underlain by clays, silts, sands and gravels of the Reading and Bagshot Beds and London Clay, giving rise to nutrient poor, often acidic, soils
- A broad undulating plateau falling towards the Kennet Valley to the south east and dissected by River Pang
- Variable land cover forming an intricate mosaic of woodland, pasture and small areas of remnant heathland. Some more open areas of arable land can be found on the slopes that drop to the Pang Valley and to the south east near Beenham
- Large, interconnected woodland blocks and strong hedgerow pattern with mature trees restrict views and create an enclosed and intimate character. Low wooded horizons are a feature
- Numerous semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin, with some large commercial plantations. Wooded commons and small areas of remnant heath are a distinctive element
- Many features of biodiversity interest including heathland, dry and wet woodland, bog and areas of wet meadow
- Dominated by small irregular fields of informal and piecemeal enclosures, of medieval and post-medieval date with some larger, more regular and straight edged, formal Parliamentary enclosure on flatter terrain in the south-east and west

- Dispersed pattern of settlement characteristic of encroachment into areas of common and woodland. Includes large nucleated villages, lines of estate cottages, loose roadside settlements as well as many dispersed farmsteads and residential country houses
- Intricate network of rural lanes, many sunken and overhung by woodland plus more intrusive road infrastructure
- Historic parkland based on medieval deer parks and manor houses with associated ornamental parklands with gardens, rides and plantings are a particular feature

#### *Key Management Requirements*

- The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet, secluded character of the Hermitage Wooded Commons. This includes conservation and enhancement of the key assets, namely: ancient and semi-natural woodlands, pasture, field patterns and hedgerows, remnant heathland commons, historic parkland and the rural lane network. There are opportunities to enhance the landscape through restoration of the hedgerow network and diversification of some of the plantations to include a broadleaved element. In the longer term, as part of a wider initiative, it may be appropriate to consider restoration of former areas of heathland to link existing sites.
- The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement with its small hamlets and loose linear settlements and prevent the gradual merging and coalescence that will result in a more suburban character. Consideration should be given to measures that could lessen the impact of the road infrastructure and reduce high traffic levels on the rural lanes.

#### **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

#### **Landscape Designations**

North Wessex Downs AONB

**VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

<b>General visibility</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Mitigation potential</b>
<b>Views into the site from:</b> Long views from Back Lane and PRow: BEEN/18/1 of the top parts of a building within the site just visible through and above the tree belt along the north eastern boundary	<b>Types of viewers:</b> Walkers, horse riders, cyclists, vehicle users Users of Beenham Landfill and adjacent PEA	<b>Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation:</b> Except for southern boundary, the site is virtually enclosed landscape by the wide tree belt along the NW, SE and NE site boundaries. New mitigation planting could link well with this existing established vegetation framework
<b>Views out of the site to:</b> Potentially partly to the SE, however the domed landform would restrict views	<b>Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity):</b> high	<b>Impacts of mitigation:</b> Mitigation planting would strengthen existing vegetation pattern and link with wider area
<b>Does the site form part of a skyline?</b> Yes	<b>Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors):</b> Good, as located within AONB	
<b>Panoramic views:</b> Yes		
<b>Landmark features:</b> None		
<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Low/medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Low/medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Low
<b>Visual sensitivity score:</b> Medium/Low		
<b>Additional comments:</b> A well contained site, with no significant open views from adjacent public areas		

**LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

<b>Natural factors</b>	<b>Cultural factors</b>	<b>Perceptual features</b>
<b>Topography and landform:</b> Ex quarry, with landform restoration ongoing. Site area to the SE restored to grassland	<b>Boundary features other than vegetation:</b> Unable to inspect	<b>Tranquillity – Noise levels:</b> Noise from onsite machinery
<b>Geological features:</b> None	<b>Historic landscapes:</b> Nothing of significance	<b>Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors:</b> Waste processing site, containers, and recycling materials
<b>Soil quality:</b> Artificial semi-restored landform, with areas containing made-up soil formation	<b>Parkland features:</b> None	<b>Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies:</b> Bright - 8-16 (Nanowatts/cm <sup>2</sup> /sr) and fading
<b>Water features:</b> None		
<b>Landcover and land use:</b> Northern part of site waste recovery facility. Southern part of site is presently open grassland, but has an approved planning application temporary storage and permanent composting facility	<b>Conservation Area:</b> None	
<b>Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees:</b> None on the site, however immediately beyond the site boundary to the NE and NW there is a wide tree belt (circa 35m),	<b>Landscape features of LCA:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape</li> </ul>	

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<b>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees:</b> None	<b>Built form:</b> Industrial sheds, conveyor, containers and structures for recycling	<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> Grassland within the southern area could have a meadow character	<b>Scheduled Monuments:</b> None	<b>Recreational areas:</b> None
<b>Common land:</b> None	<b>Pattern of Protected Employment Area</b> Central PEA with two fragmented PEA areas. Separated by woodland, hedgerows and grass fields The site partly aligns adjacent to the central PEA and to one of the smaller fragmented PEA	<b>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure:</b> Largely separate and enclosed site by adjacent woodland belts and some woodland planting along site boundary
<b>Heathland:</b> None	<b>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character:</b> N/A	<b>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern:</b> A well contained site, within semi-mature tree belts from previous quarrying conditions
<b>Other significant vegetation cover:</b> Along the south west site boundary with the access road is semi defined by scrub with a few small trees  Areas of regenerating scrub within northern section	<b>Cultural associations:</b> None	

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

<p><b>BAP/Priority Habitats/Phase I records:</b> None</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> Low</p>	<p><b>Sensitivity score:</b> Low</p>	<p><b>Sensitivity score:</b> Low</p>
<p><b>Landscape sensitivity score:</b> Low</p>		
<p><b>Additional comments:</b> Semi-restored extraction site, which is well enclosed by adjacent and onsite semi mature tree belts Quarrying started in this area in the late 1960's</p>		



## Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

### Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)

The main area of the existing PEA is circa 20m to the south west of the site. Separated by a wide band of tree/shrub planting and Pips Way. Beyond this main PEA there are two other fragmented PEAs further to the west. The first to the NW is located beyond a narrow lake enclosed by woodland; this PEA contains a metal recycling plant, waste management and a Porsche dealership. The third PEA is south of Grange Lane and contains a mix of businesses as well as the residential redbrick Beenham Grange and a single storey building containing flats

### Character of the Protected Employment Area (PEA)

This main PEA is characterised by an extensive open area with a compacted base used for storage of recycled materials with a cluster of industrial shed buildings concentrated adjacent Grange Lane. There is very little tree planting within this expansive PEA area. The south eastern part of the main PEA, located beyond a mature belt of trees which then leads to a woodland copse, also containing a lake just north of the junction of the A4 and Grange Lane; this area contrasts with the open landscape containing the recycled materials and contains a newly built large grey industrial shed presently a Porsche Cars Distribution Centre

The two smaller fragmented PEA areas are described as follows:

NW part of the PEA (beyond the lake) the PEA is compact and enclosed by mature boundary trees, linking with more mature trees existing within the site. These semi mature trees help screen the site from the wider AONB to the north. Originally this area was a woodland called Seven Acre Copse

The other smaller PEA area is located further to the south east and is characterised by a higher density of buildings with very little internal tree planting and also open to the wider surrounding landscape. Originally Beenham Grange farmstead, the north east side of this PEA retains a semi 'historic grounds' character with a number of mature parkland style trees (also TPO's), which probably would have been part of the historic Beenham Grange grounds. The southern edge of this PEA contains a row of residential properties which fronts and is accessed off Clay Lane

### Presence in a floodplain:

No

### Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The southern area within the site of restored grassland connects with the field pattern to the south. The planted earth mounds to the NE and NW separates the site from the wider countryside, in particular across to Beenham Hill and the Kennet valley side.

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

The site is separate from any settlement. The closest is to the south at a distance of 350m: Aldermaston Wharf. Aldermaston Wharf developed around the Kennet and Avon Canal. The settlement is characterised by a mix of residential development leading off from the lock on the Canal. A Conservation Area covers the historic part of Aldermaston Wharf. The settlement extends to the north east as, a long linear area of mainly residential ribbon development sandwiched between the A4 and the railway line further to the south. The urban fabric and building character of this settlement area is characterised by a mix of late 19<sup>th</sup> bungalows with infill residential development of a higher density semidetached and detached two storey dwellings. The properties along the northern edge can appreciate the long views across to Beenham Hill and the Kennet Valley side

**Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for potential employment areas within West Berkshire****Historic links with the wider area if known:**

None known

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

None known












**Recreational links with the wider area:**

None known

**VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:**

None known

**Figure 1: Site: Beenham Industrial Area - BEEN3**

-  Site boundary
  -  Protected Employment Area
  -  Settlement boundary
  -  Boundary of North Wessex Downs AONB
  -  BEEN/18/1 Public Right of Way (PRoW) reference
  -  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 LVI: Kennet Lower River Valley* for which the key requirements are set out below:

*Landscape Strategy:*

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated AONB landscape
- Conserve and restore the traditional valley landscape
- Restore, extend and manage wetland habitats that occur along the floodplain
- Conserve the valley floor woodland
- Conserve and enhance heritage features in the landscape
- Manage recreational pressure
- Conserve the distinct identities of individual settlements

### **North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Assessment 2002**

The site lies within the within *Character Area 8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons*

*Key management requirements:*

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet, secluded character of the Hermitage Wooded Commons. This includes conservation and enhancement of the key assets, namely: ancient and semi-natural woodlands, pasture, field patterns and hedgerows, remnant heathland commons, historic parkland and the rural lane network. There are opportunities to enhance the landscape through restoration of the hedgerow network and diversification of some of the plantations to include a broadleaved element. In the longer term, as part of a wider initiative, it may be appropriate to consider restoration of former areas of heathland to link existing sites. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement with its small hamlets and loose linear settlements and prevent the gradual merging and coalescence that will result in a more suburban character. Consideration should be given to measures that could lessen the impact of the road infrastructure and reduce high traffic levels on the rural lanes.

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

**Site description:**

The northern part of the site contains a waste processing facility characterised by a central area containing piles of material, a conveyor, an area of containers, car parking and a small building. The southern end of the site is presently restored grassland, however is covered by the approved planning application (21/00885/COMIND), which is for a temporary change of use for a laydown facility for the storage of materials, light fabrication operations and the permanent provision of fencing, lighting and areas of hardstanding to provide for the future use of the land for permitted composting activities. The site is accessed from Pips Way off the A4. The site boundary is well defined along the NW and NE with a wide belt of trees planted on an earth mound. The SE boundary is more open and defined by a track with an intermittent line of trees. The SW boundary, is defined by the edge of the access road which also provides access to the adjacent PEA, this site boundary is also more open, however further to the SW a wide tree belt separates the access road from the adjacent PEA. The site is not visible from public areas within the surrounding landscape

**Key landscape planning factors:**

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- The site is separate from the main PEA by Pips Way,



## Viewpoints



**Photo 1:** View from PRoW BEEN/18/1 towards site. The site is located beyond the tree belt on the horizon. No views



**Photo 2:** View from the adjacent section of the PRoW BEEN/18/1 towards the site. The site is located beyond the tree belt to the right. No views



**Photo 3:** View from on Back Lane, the location of the site is not within the view parameter



**Photo 4:** View from on Back Lane towards the site. The site is set beyond the tree belt on the horizon, where the main shed building is just visible beyond the winter trees





**Photo 5:** View at junction with A4 and Pips Way, the site is not visible from here



**Photo 6:** View from on Back Lane across fields towards the site. The site is located beyond the tree belt on the horizon. Small parts of buildings from the main PEA can be just seen in this view, with the main building on the site also just visible through the winter trees



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

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/low**

- The site is largely screened by its landform, adjacent planted earth bunds from the wider North Wessex Downs AONB to the west, north and east
- The upper parts of a building within the site is just visible through and above the tree belt from locations to the north from Back Lane and a short length of the PRoW: BEEN/18/1
- The site is linked visibly to the adjacent central PEA
- The site is not visible in the existing open rural view from Beenham Hill and the Kennet Valley side
- The site is not visible from the A4 to the south
- Overall, building on the site is just visible through the tree belts when the trees do not have their leaves; however, in some views the buildings from the central PEA are also visible within this view
- Mitigation planting could enhance this area

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Ex quarry site with semi restored landform
- The northern part of the site is presently used as a waste processing plant, with an approved application for the southern part of the site for temporary storage and permanent composting facility
- Wide tree belts on artificial earth bunds align the NW and NE site boundary, but are not part of the site

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

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

- The site is located within the AONB, however the NW and NE tree belts, which align the site boundary, and landform of the site, separate the site from the wider AONB

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

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

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

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

**Relationship of site to Protected Employment Area**

- Beenham Industrial Area PEA is made up of a central area and two fragmented smaller outlying areas. The site is located adjacent, but separated by the access road and a tree belt to the central PEA, the buildings within the central PEA are also seen with the main building within the site from some long views.
- The site is also set adjacent but separated by a tree belt to one of the smaller fragmented PEA sites

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- The site has a limited connection with the wider countryside

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Loss of potential open rural character and part of grass field patchwork typical of area

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- Large scale tall buildings, artificial lighting and an increase in noise within the site would be visible and would affect tranquillity within the wider landscape to the NE

**Potential Impact on existing Protected Employment Area**

- Development of the site as PEA would relate well with the existing PEA sites
- Proposed mitigation planting could also screen and improve the views of the existing PEA from long views within the AONB

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

- Loss of potential open undeveloped land
- Long term opportunity to introduce tree planting to enhance the woodland character of the area

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure**





- There is a potential to further enhance the woodland character of the area, which would also help further integrate the site and surrounding development (including the central PEA) into the landscape and further strengthen the screening of the overall PEA from views from the NE

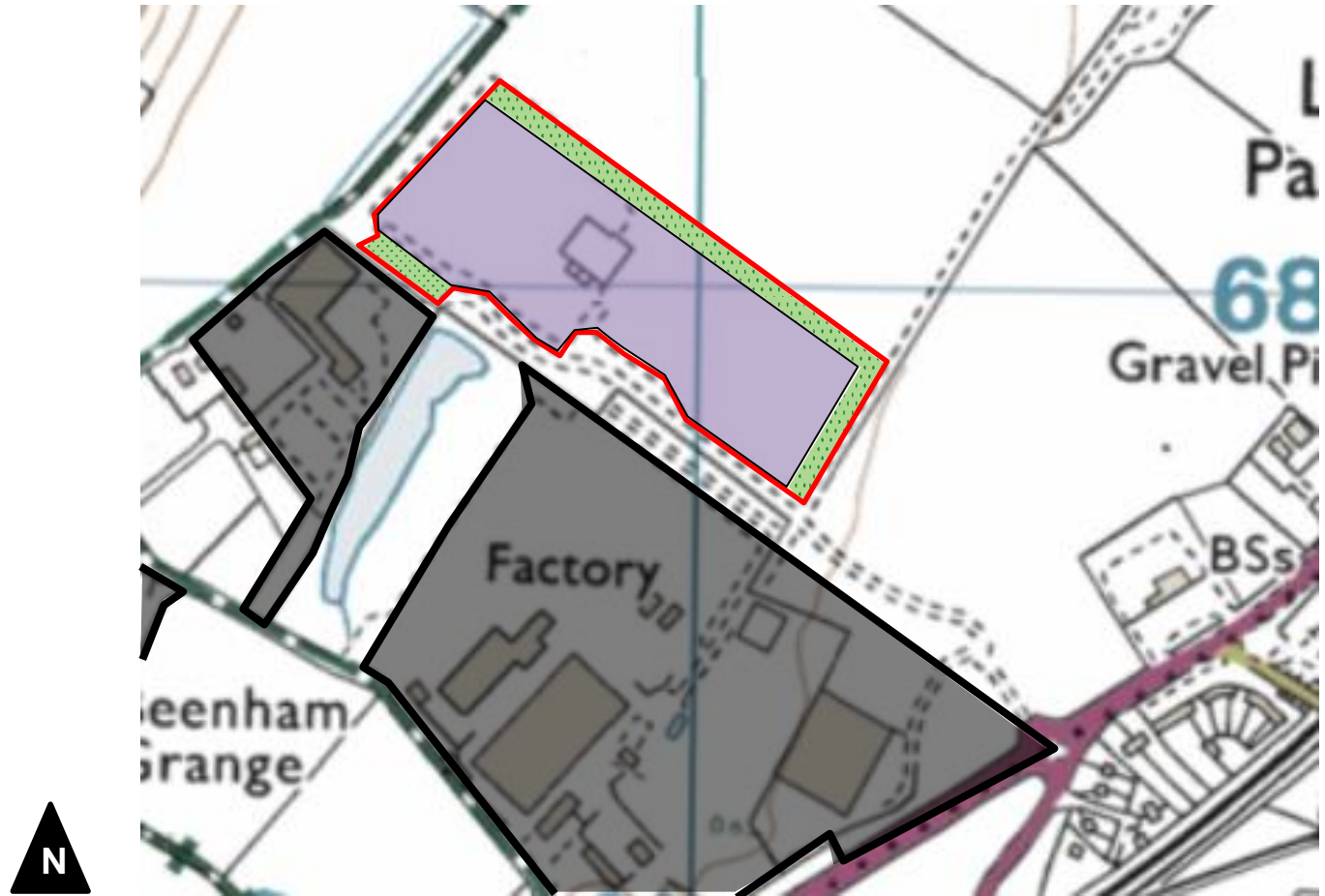
**Conclusion and recommendations**

Development across the site could be considered with the following mitigation measures:

- Propose a landscape buffer along the southern boundary of the site, which should be planted as native woodland
- Strengthen the existing woodland belts which enclose the site by additional tree planting, especially along the NE site boundary
- Retain the wooded buffer between the site and the adjacent smaller PEA and strengthen with infill tree planting as required
- Restrict and consider the scale of development to avoid any adverse visual effects on adjacent areas of the AONB. This will include the proposed height of buildings, colour, architectural style and roof profile, the impact of external lighting and noise and any other structures/features which could negatively impact on adjacent areas

**Figure 2: Beenham Industrial Area - BEEN3**

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



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