Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Beenham Industrial Area - BEEN10 land north east of Beenham Grange

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN10: Land north east of Beenham Grange	
Date of site survey	17th of January 2022	
Surveyors	LA	
Weather/visibility	Low cloud	
LCA	North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002	
	West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019	

West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019: The site straddles the boundary of two landscape character areas, therefore the guidance for both would apply. The landscape character area to the south is LCA LVI: Kennet Lower River Valley and to the north WH4: Cold Ash Heathland and Woodland Mosaic.

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

LCA WH4: Cold Ash Heathland and Woodland Mosaic

Key Characteristics

- Geologically and topographically varied with steep and gentle undulating slopes rising to a central ridge
- Presence of surface water and small streams
- Complex pattern of land cover, dominated by woodland and with remnant heaths
- Varied field pattern with strong hedgerows
- Parklands are a characteristic feature
- Relatively densely settled, particularly along the ridge, but with woodland containment
- A minor road network contained by the wooded landscape
- An accessible landscape
- Quiet, intimate and secluded character

Valued Features and Qualities

- Nationally valued landscape which forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- The visual role of the wooded ridge crest and slopes
- The varied land cover mosaic and important habitats
- A very rural character away from major roads and urban edges
- Recreational value
- Historic landscape character

Detractors

- Past hedgerow loss for arable farming
- Changing land use patterns resulting in gradual loss of landscape variation and biodiversity
- Increase in horse paddocks
- Impact of the M4 on character
- Decreasing separation/coalescence between settlements
- Increased suburbanisation
- Loss of gradation between settlement and countryside
- Increased traffic on the rural lane network

Landscape Strategy

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve and restore heathland characteristics
- Promote appropriate woodland management
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements
- Retain the distinction between and individual identity of settlements
- Conserve the existing character of rural lanes and public rights of way
- Maintain open views from routeways

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 dipslope, 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

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VISUAL SENSITIVITY

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
Views into the site from: Public Right of Way: (BEEN/18/1) Views across intervening native hedgerow into site BEEN/17/4: Views across intervening hedgerow and at site entrance into site	Types of viewers: Walkers/cyclists and equestrian on PRoW Users of adjacent PEA Adjacent residents at Beenham Grange and on Grange Lane	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: Existing relatively robust site boundary hedgerows and woodland tree belt adjacent and beyond SE site boundary. New mitigation tree and shrub planting could link with this existing vegetation pattern and the wooded landscape character towards the NW located on the Kennet Valley side
Views out of the site to: Views to north across fields to the Kennet Valley side and Beenham Hill Views across Grange Lane to Beenham Grange PEA	Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): AONB would expect to be popular with PRoW (adjacent the site) providing access further into AONB	Impacts of mitigation: Mitigation planting would strengthen existing vegetation pattern and could link with wider area and landscape character
Does the site form part of a skyline? No	Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): AONB – expectations high of rural landscape	
Panoramic views: None		
Landmark features: None		
Sensitivity score: High	Sensitivity score: Medium	Sensitivity score: Medium
Visual sensitivity score: Medium		
Additional comments: A visible site, from two PRoW aligning the NW and SW sit	e boundary	

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: Relatively flat	Boundary features other than vegetation: Short section of timber post and rail and close boarded timber fence Site set behind recent mesh fence	Tranquillity - Noise levels: Background low key rural noise and traffic noise from adjacent PEA
Geological features: None	Historic landscapes: Would have been open setting of Beenham Grange, although Beenham Grange does not contain any historic buildings of significance and now forms part of PEA	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: None of note
Soil quality: Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils – low fertility Agricultural Land Classification: Grade 3 (Good to moderate)	Parkland features: None	Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: Bright - 8-16 (Nanowatts/cm2/sr) and fading
Water features: None		
Landcover and land use: A small area on the NE part of site contains a one and half storey dwelling, three industrial/agricultural style barn buildings associated with a car dealership. The SW (main part of the site) are horse paddocks, including further subdivision by post and rail and also including a timber post and rail dressage area with an artificial surface a. A tarmac driveway aligns across the middle of the site	Conservation Area: None	
Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: Intermittent tree planting adjacent tarmac driveway Intermittent trees within eastern corner of site and around the car dealership The site is covered by a blanket TPO (Ref 201/21/0390-A1)	Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape Visually semi-enclosed, with strong rural qualities away from large settlements Many Public Rights of Way	

	 Visual role of the wooded ridge crest Views across to Kennet Valley side and views towards site from Kennet Valley side Varied field pattern with strong hedgerows 	
Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: NW, SW and eastern site boundaries defined by semi robust treed hedgerows	Built form: Large, timber façade, 1.5 storey, residential detached building Three medium sized barns associated with car dealership Dressage ring Tarmac driveway	Accessibility by public footpath: None
Woodland and copses: Small woodland copse within eastern corner of site linking to larger wooded area beyond site boundary to the east	Setting of listed buildings: None	Open access areas: None
Wetland and meadow: Paddocks are grassland	Scheduled Monuments: None	Recreational areas: None
Common land: None	Pattern of Protected Employment Area Central PEA with two fragmented PEA areas. Separated by woodland, hedgerows and grass fields The site is located between the two smaller fragmented PEA, with the site boundary located adjacent the NE PEA and the SW PEA located across Grange Lane	Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: An semi-enclosed site by site boundary treed hedgerows and the woodland (containing lake) beyond the site boundary to the SE. The well treed PEA adjacent to the NE also contains the site The internal area of the site itself is predominantly open grassland
Heathland: None	Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: Small area of amenity grassland with some trees, forms small part of site, contributing very little to character of site	Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: Small field character typical of wider rural landscape which contributes to rural landscape

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

Other significant vegetation cover: None	Cultural associations: None	
BAP/Priority Habitats/Phase I records: None The NE site boundary hedgerows would qualify as 'important' as regard to The Hedgerows Regulations 1997	Features of cultural importance: None	
Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: None		
Sensitivity score: Medium	Sensitivity score: Medium	Sensitivity score: Medium
Landscape sensitivity score: Medium		
Additional comments:		

Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)

The main area of the existing PEA is circa 70m to the south east of the site, separated by the access driveway: Knot Lane and a tree belt. Additional to the main PEA there are two other fragmented PEAs. The first to the NE is located adjacent the NE site boundary; 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 (largest) PEA is characterised by an extensive open area with a compacted gravel base, which is presently used for storage of recycled materials, towards the south of this area are a number of large industrial shed buildings located adjacent Grange Lane. There is very little tree planting within this expansive PEA area. The south eastern part of this 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:

NE of the site, this 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 SW 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 NE side of this PEA retains a semi 'historic grounds' character with a number of mature parkland style trees (also TPOs), which probabably have been part of the 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:

Nο

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The grassland and hedged field character of the site connects with the wider agricultural landscape further to the NW leading across to the Kennet Valley side, Beenham Hill and Beenham

Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

The site is separate from any villages or towns, with the closest (Aldermaston Wharf) located circa 680m to the SE

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, Aldermaston Wharf, 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 19th 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
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:
Two PRoW align the northern and western boundary of the site, which provide a recreational ink to the wider AONB to the north and up the Kennet Valley side and
Beenham Hill
VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:
None known

Figure 1: Site: Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN10: Land north east of Beenham Grange



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West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

The site straddles the boundary of two landscape character areas, therefore the landscape strategy for both would apply. The landscape character area to the south is LCA LVI: Kennet Lower River Valley and to the north WH4: Cold Ash Heathland and Woodland Mosaic.

Landscape Strategy:

LCA LVI: Kennet Lower River Valley

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated AONB landscape
- Conserve and restore the traditional valley landscape
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- Conserve the valley floor woodland
- Conserve and enhance heritage features in the landscape
- Manage recreational pressure
- Conserve the distinct identities of individual settlements

WH4: Cold Ash Heathland and Woodland Mosaic

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve and restore heathland characteristics
- Promote appropriate woodland management
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements
- Retain the distinction between and individual identity of settlements
- Conserve the existing character of rural lanes and public rights of way
- Maintain open views from routeways

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character 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 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

Site description:

The site consists of a series of grass paddocks including a dressage ring, all sub divided by timber post and rail fences, with a central tarmac driveway aligning from Grange Lane across the site to the northern boundary. Adjacent the northern eastern site boundary there are three large shed buildings and a detached residential property (located within the northern corner) surrounded by areas of grass and hardstanding. The site is semi enclosed by a hedgerow containing a number of trees, some mature set behind the post and rail fence and a new mesh fence. There is a blanket TPO across the site.

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 small fragmented areas of Beenham Industrial estate and across the road (and PRoW) to another fragmented PEA site

Viewpoints





Photo 1: View from entrance driveway across paddocks to the buildings on the NE side of the site

Photo 2: Similar to Viewpoint I, but including large tree at the entrance





Photo 3: View along Grange Lane (PRoW BEEN 17/4) with site beyond site boundary hedgerow to the left. Mature conifers visible within the adjacent PEA to the right, remains of the parkland character of the grounds of Beenham Grange

Photo 4: View from adjacent PRoW BEEN 18/1 through boundary hedgerow across site to mature conifer trees within Beenham Grange (PEA)





Photo 5: View along adjacent PRoW (BEEN 18/1) to residential property. The adjacent PRoW has a good rural character

Photo 6: View from PRoW (BEEN 18/1) to timber close boarded fence, originally contained the access to the detached residential property on the site, now unused

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

- 1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium
 - The site is visible from the NW from the adjacent PRoW BEEN 18/1
 - The site is visible from the SW from the adjacent PRoW BEEN 17/4
 - There are no views of the site from the NE and SW due to intervening trees and buildings (adjacent PEA)
- 2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium
 - Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
 - Located between two fragmented parts of the Beenham Industrial Area PEA
 - A robust tree belt separates the site further to the SE from the central parts of the PEA
 - The northern part of the site contains a single dwelling and small barns
 - The site is covered by a blanket TPO, although there are few trees within the central part of the site, as this is open grassland
 - A rural landscape with grass paddocks and some mature trees, relates to the adjacent Beenham Grange site, now PEA
 - Retains a rural character although sandwiched between two PEA
- 3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)
- 4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/high
 - The site is located within the AONB, with good physical and visual links with the wider landscape and AONB
- 5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/high (combines 3 and 4)
- 6. Landscape Value: Medium/high
 - Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- 7. <u>Landscape Capacity: Low (combines 5 and 6)</u>

Relationship of site to Beenham Protected Employment Area

 Beenham Protected Employment Area is made up of a central area and two fragmented smaller outlying areas. The site is located between the fragmented areas, with the central PEA, located circa 65m beyond a woodland belt to the NE

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

Although located between two of the PEAs, and in proximity to the central PEA, the site also lies adjacent open countryside to the NW. The two
PRoW (BEEN 17/4 and BEEN 18/1) which both align the site also provides good access to the countryside which retains a well intact rural character

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of open rural character and area of grass fields, typical of the AONB within this area
- Introduction of more modern inclusions adjacent two PRoW and resulting effect on their rural character and amenity value
- Loss of mature trees and their open setting

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

Adverse visual impact on views from adjacent PRoW (BEEN 17/4 and BEEN 18/1)

Potential Impact on existing Protected Employment Area

- The site will join up two of the fragmented PEA
- Proposed mitigation planting could also help integrate/ screen any proposed changes and retain the rural character of the adjacent PRoW

Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB

- Loss of open land including grassland and field area within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Loss of trees of value and their open setting
- 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 enhance the woodland character of the area, which would also help integrate the site into the landscape

Conclusion and recommendations

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

- Retain a landscape buffer between the site and the two adjacent PRoW, which should be planted as native woodland
- Retain and provide an open setting for existing mature and trees of value
- Avoid the use of close boarded fencing in areas visible from Public Rights of Way and in particular along the site boundary. The existing wire mesh fencing could be retained as a suitable fencing
- Buildings should be rural in scale and character, and of a height which does not intrude above the existing height of buildings on the site. Particular attention should be given to building facades which face onto the surrounding landscape, to avoid any indirect adverse landscape effect on the AONB.

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

- The North Wessex Downs AONB: Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development should be used as guidance

 External lighting if required, should be minimal and avoid edge off site locations which could result in light pollution intruding into adjacent areas of the open countryside

 Noise levels should not increase above the existing noise levels within adjacent areas

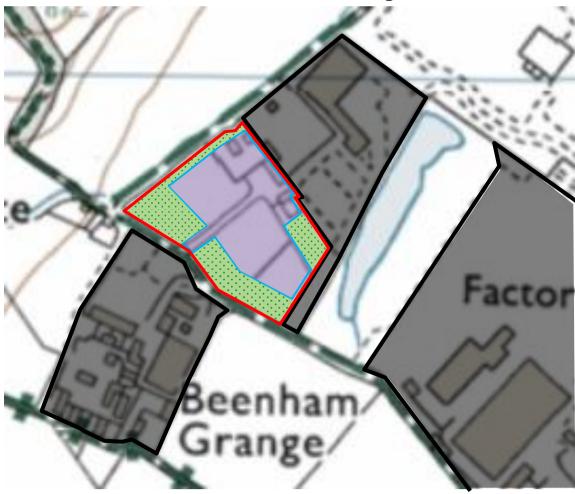
Figure 2: Site: Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN10: Land north east of Beenham Grange

The site

Protected Employment Area (PEA)

With potential for development

Landscape buffer





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