

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for:

Beenham Industrial Area - BEEN11 (parcel 2) land south east of Beenham Grange

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN11 – Parcel 2 - Land south east of Beenham Grange
Date of site survey	16 th January 2022 and August 2022
Surveyors	LA
Weather/visibility	Low cloud (16.01.2022) and high cloud (08.2022)
LCA	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*, but is located towards the northern edge therefore contains characteristics of the adjacent *LCA WH4: Cold Ash Heathland and Woodland Mosaic*, which should also be considered

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

*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 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
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VISUAL SENSITIVITY

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
Views into the site from: Public Right of Way: Grange Lane (PRoW: BEEN/1/7): Some views across and over adjacent intervening hedgerow to the site Clay Lane (PRoW: BEEN/17/4): Views across and over adjacent intervening hedgerow to the site Long view (PRoW: BEEN/13/1): Across open farmland down onto site	Types of viewers: Users of PEA to the north Walkers/cyclists and equestrian on PRoW Users and visitors to the two small PEA's and a small number of detached residential properties Vehicle users on Grange Lane and Clay Lane	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: Hedged field, mitigation planting will change the character, although could build on existing hedgerow field boundary structure Existing woodland to the south could be extended as part of the mitigation
Views out of the site to: Tree planting along eastern edge of smaller PEA to the NW of site and across to Kennet Valley side and Beenham Hill Views to the north east to main PEA, located beyond site boundary hedgerow and the intermittent row of trees which forms part of the PEA boundary	Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): Located within AONB, would expect relatively high level of use, with two PRoW (adjacent the site) providing access further into AONB	Impacts of mitigation: Presently open rural agricultural landscape linking with wider adjacent landscape as a mosaic of small fields. Development of the site would detract from wider views and views across to the Kennet valley side and Beenham Hill
Does the site form part of a skyline? No	Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): AONB – expectations good quality rural landscape	
Panoramic views: None		
Landmark features: None		
Sensitivity score: Medium/high	Sensitivity score: Medium/high	Sensitivity score: Medium
Visual sensitivity score: Medium/high		
Additional comments: A visible site, with PRoW aligning the NE and SW site boundaries		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: Relatively flat to slight domed	Boundary features other than vegetation: Post and wire adjacent site boundary hedgerow	Tranquillity – Noise levels: Good - Background low key rural noise Some traffic noise from vehicles accessing PEAs further to the west Some traffic noise from adjacent main PEA Traffic noise from A4
Geological features: None	Historic landscapes: An area which had been quarried and now restored as farmland	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: None of note. Adjacent main PEA, partly screened by intermittent row of trees and roadside hedgerow Screened from A4 to the south by mature woodland
Soil quality: Restored agricultural land as previously quarried Agricultural Classification: Grade 3 (Good-moderate)	Parkland features: None	Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: Eastern part of the site is Bright - 8-16 (Nanowatts/cm ² /sr) and then becoming darker to the west (4-8)
Water features: None		
Landcover and land use: Arable	Conservation Area: None	
Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: No trees on site	Landscape features of LCA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	

<p>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: South western hedgerow adjacent Clay Lane has a managed boxed agricultural hedgerow character South eastern hedgerow contains a mix of small trees, with larger trees to the north North western hedgerow separating the site from adjacent field to the north west is also has a managed boxed agricultural character and contains one semi mature tree North eastern hedgerow adjacent Grange Lane is a taller managed hedgerow</p>	<p>Built form: No buildings Redundant kerbed and hard surface entrance to the site off Grange Lane</p>	<p>Accessibility by public footpath: None</p>
<p>Woodland and copses: None</p>	<p>Setting of listed buildings: None</p>	<p>Open access areas: None</p>
<p>Wetland and meadow: None</p>	<p>Scheduled Monuments: None</p>	<p>Recreational areas: None</p>
<p>Common land: None</p>	<p>Pattern of Protected Employment Area Main PEA with two fragmented PEA areas. Separated by woodland, hedgerows and grass fields The site is located adjacent to the south of the main PEA</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: A semi enclosed site by agricultural hedgerows and woodland, part of wider agricultural landscape</p>
<p>Heathland: None</p>	<p>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: None</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: Small field character typical of wider rural landscape which contributes to rural landscape character of the two adjacent PRow</p>

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

Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)

The main part of the existing PEA, is separated from the site by Grange Lane along the northern eastern boundary of the site. Further to the main PEA there are two other fragmented PEAs. The first is located to the NW of the site, separated by another field; this smaller PEA occupies a similar footprint of the once historic farmstead of Beenham Grange, although now containing a number of businesses as well as a single storey building sub divided into flats. The second smaller fragmented PEA is located to the north of the site separated by Grange Lane, field and woodland belt with the access off Grange Lane; this PEA contains a metal recycling plant, waste management and a Porsche dealership.

Character of the Protected Employment Area (PEA)

This main (largest) part of the 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 is 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 the main PEA, is located beyond a belt of mature 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 a newly built large grey industrial shed presently a Porsche Cars Distribution Centre

The two smaller fragmented PEA areas are described as follows:

North 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 (separated from the site by a field) 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, which area also have TPOs which probably would 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:

No

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The arable and hedged field character of the site connects with the wider agricultural landscape further to the north leading across to Beenham Hill and the Kennet Valley side and to the south west across the open agricultural landscape of the Kennet valley floor












Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

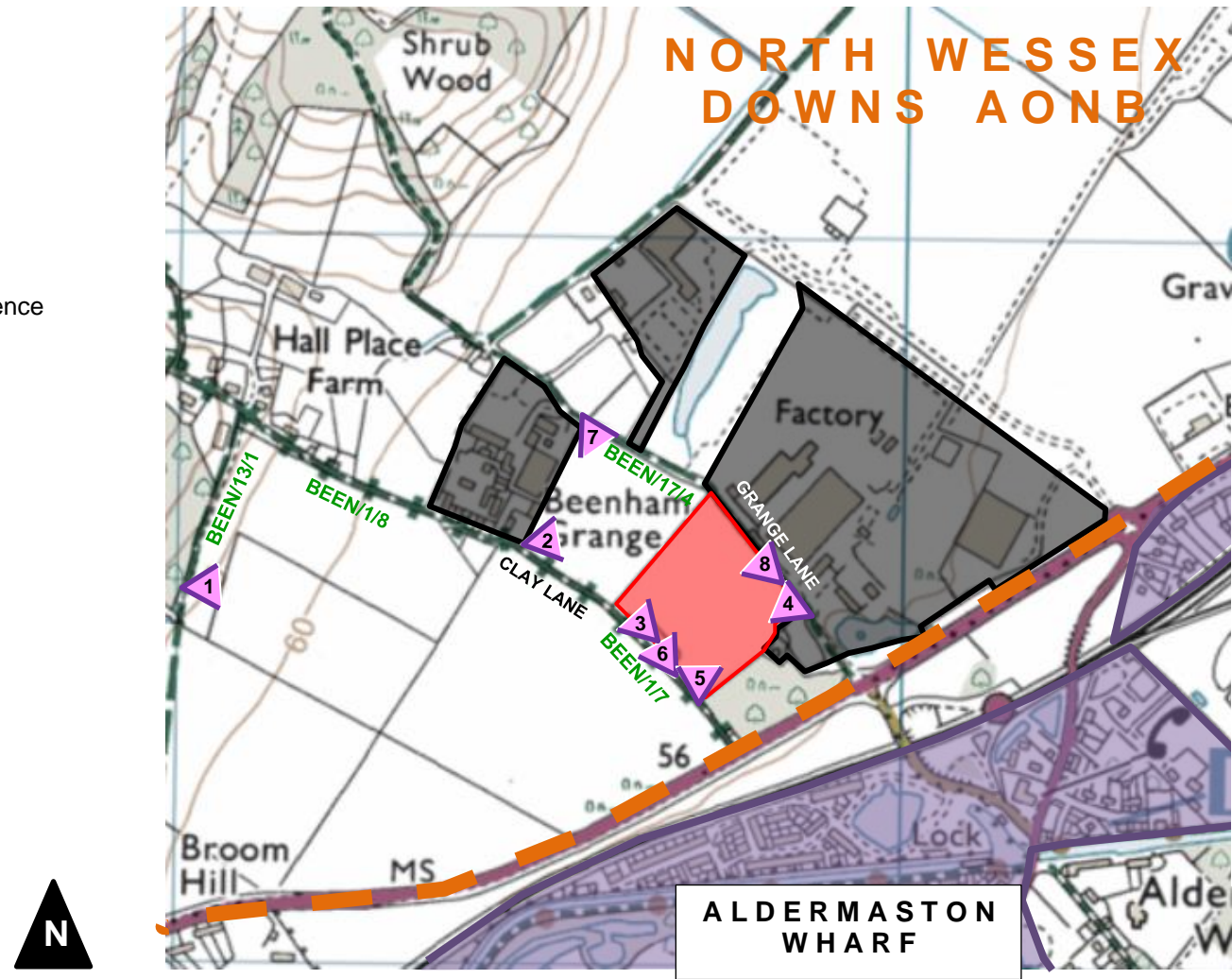
The site is separate from any villages or towns, with the closest (Aldermaston Wharf) located circa 160m to the south

The closest part of Aldermaston Wharf is set beyond the railway line. Aldermaston Wharf developed around the Kennet Canal. The settlement is characterised by a mix of residential developments 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 19th century bungalows within infill residential development of a higher density semi-detached 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

<p>Historic links with the wider area if known: None known</p>
<p>Ecological links with the wider area if known: None known</p>
<p>Recreational links with the wider area: Two PRow align the northern and western boundary of the site, which provide a recreational link to the wider AONB to the north and up the Kennet Valley side and Beenham Hill</p>
<p>VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts: None known</p>

Figure 1: Site: Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN11 - Parcel 2 - Land south east of Beenham Grange

-  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



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West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

The site is located within Landscape Character Area *LVI: Kennet Lower River Valley*, but towards the northern boundary, therefore the adjacent LCA *WH4: Cold Ash Heathland and Woodland Mosaic*, will also apply

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
- 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

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 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 large hedged bound field, presently arable. The north eastern site boundary is a managed agricultural native hedgerow and aligns Grange Lane; this hedgerow also continues along the NW boundary of the site, which includes a solitary tree. The site boundary then extends along Clay Lane which is marked by another field managed boxed hedgerow. The site lies adjacent the main Beenham Industrial PEA site, but is separated from the PEA by the hedged bound Grange Lane and an intermitted row of trees along the PEA boundary.

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- The site is set adjacent the main Beenham Industrial Estate

Viewpoints



Photo 1: View from PRoW: BEEN/13/1 located on Kennet Valley side, a long view across farmland to the site, although located adjacent the central PEA, the site forms part of the wider agricultural landscape (January 2022)



Photo 2: View from Clay Lane (PRoW: BEEN/1/7) at field entrance of field to the immediate north of site. The site is beyond the hedgerow (NW boundary of site) which cuts across the photo. Main PEA partly visible in background (August 2022)

AUGUST 2022



Photo 3: View from Clay Lane (PRoW: BEEN/1/7) over managed hedgerow to the right (site boundary), with an agricultural barn visible against the buildings within one of the fragmented PEAs, with the Kennet Valley side beyond (January 2022)



Photo 4: View from Grange Lane (PRoW: BEEN/17/4) into site from now redundant quarry entrance, with wooded Kennet valley side enclosing view (August 2022)



Photo 5: View from Clay Lane (PRoW: BEEN/1/7), with site to the right. The agricultural barn within the next field is visible, with wooded Kennet valley side enclosing the view (August 2022)



Photo 6: View along Clay Lane (PRoW: BEEN/1/7), with site to the right and PEA at Beenham Grange obscured by landform, allowing uninterrupted views across to the Kennet Valley side and Beenham Hill (January 2022)



Photo 7: View from Grange Lane (PRoW: BEEN/17/4), showing the temporary portacabins for The Woof retreat – dog day-care within adjacent field (January 2022)



Photo 8: Filtered views through site boundary hedgerow of site from Grange Lane (January 2022)

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/high

- The site is partly visible from the north from the adjacent PRow BEEN/17/4 (Grange Lane) through the intervening site boundary hedgerow
- The site is visible from the south from the adjacent PRow BEEN/1/7 (Clay Lane)
- The site is visible as a longer view from the Kennet Valley side from the PRow BEEN/13/1
- Overall, the site is visible and seen in the setting of the Kennet Valley side, contributing to its rural setting

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- A restored to agriculture hedged field bound by hedgerows adjacent small woodland copse to the south
- Separated from the main PEA Beenham Industrial Area by the site boundary hedgerow and an intermittent row of trees along the PEA boundary
- Retains a rural character although in close proximity to the two smaller parts of the PEA

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

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- The site is located within the AONB, with good physical and visual links with the wider landscape and AONB, although also partly influenced by the adjacent employment uses

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

6. Landscape Value: Medium/high

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

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

Relationship of site to Beenham Protected Employment Area

- Beenham Industrial Area (PEA) is made up of a main area and two fragmented smaller outlying areas. The site is located to the south east of the main PEA, separated by Grange Lane. And a field away from one of the smaller fragmented PEA

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Although located in proximity to PEAs, the site also lies adjacent open countryside to the SW and SE. The two PRow (BEEN/17/4 and BEEN/1/7) which both align the site also provides good access to the countryside (and further into the AONB) which retains a well intact rural character

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of open rural character and a grass field, typical of the AONB within this area
- Introduction of more modern inclusions including large scale industrial buildings, noise and external lighting adjacent the two PRow and resulting adverse effect on their rural character and amenity value
- Loss of open setting of woodland area to south of site

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Adverse visual impact on views from adjacent PRow (BEEN/17/4 and BEEN/1/17)
- Adverse visual impact on views across to the Kennet Valley side

Potential Impact on existing Protected Employment Area

- The site will join and extend the main PEA

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 rural views across to the Kennet Valley side and rural character
- Loss of rural character of adjacent PRow and lanes




Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure

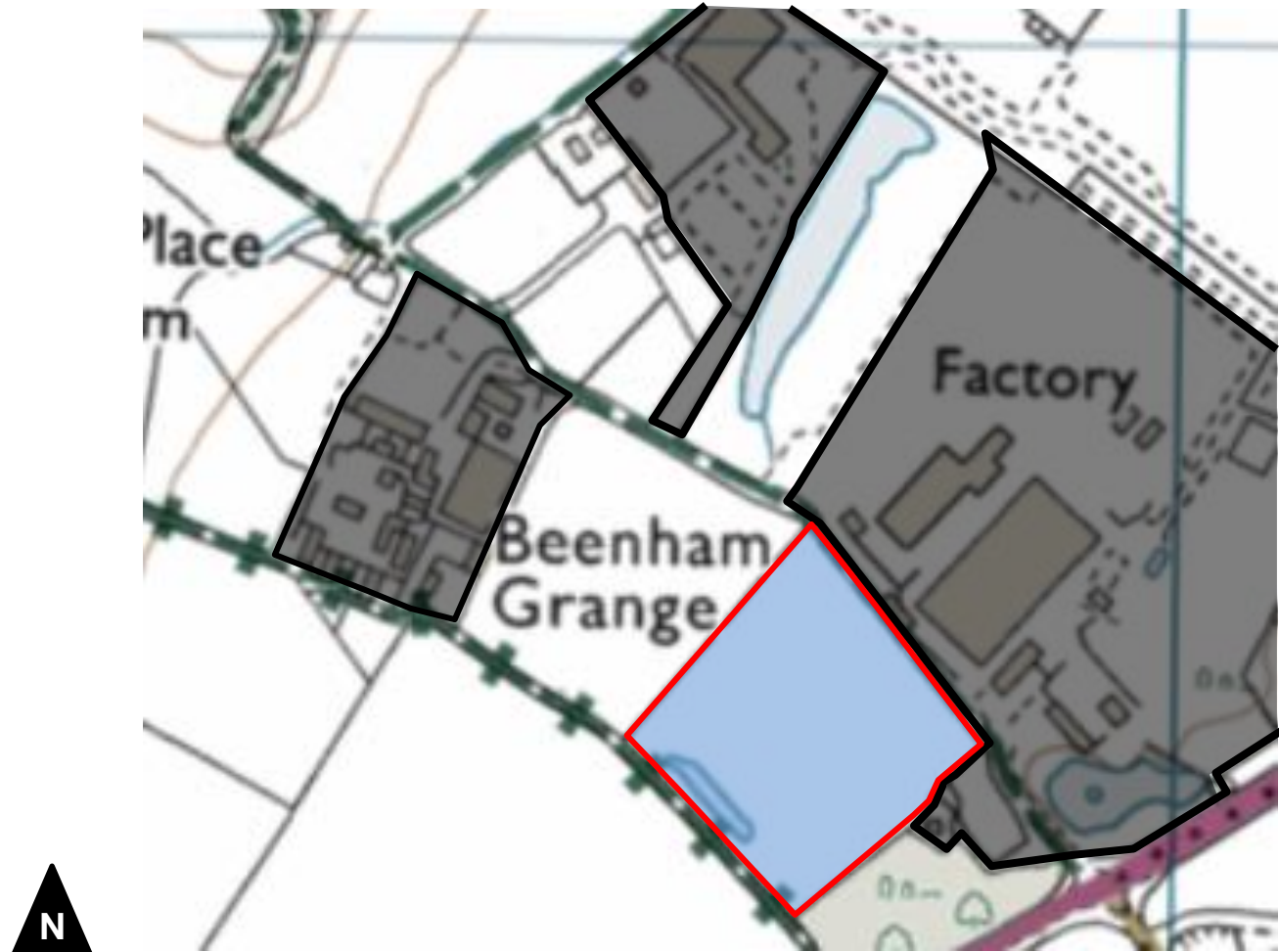
- Although there is a potential to enhance the woodland character of this area, this would also block views into the AONB and across the area to the Kennet Valley side. New mitigation measures would therefore be visually damaging to this area

Conclusion and recommendations

- It is recommended that no part of the site is developed

Figure 2: Site: Beenham Industrial Area: BEEN11 Parcel 2 - Land south east of Beenham Grange

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



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