

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Junction 13 - CH127 - Land north of Priors Court Road

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Junction 13 – CHI27 Land north of Priors Court Road
Date of site survey	February 2022
Surveyors	LA
Weather/visibility	Clear
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 WD2: Peasemore Wooded Downland*

Key Characteristics

- A vast, open landscape with strong rolling topography underlain by a chalk plateau
- Patchwork of large arable and pasture fields divided into a mixed field pattern
- Well-wooded landscape, with some ancient semi-natural woodlands
- Historical features include evidence of medieval settlements and historic churches
- Settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farms
- Dense networks of rural lanes and public rights of way
- Views are extensive, although woodland restricts visibility in places
- A strongly rural landscape, with high levels of tranquillity

Valued Features and Qualities

- Nationally valued landscape which forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Frequent woodlands including some with ancient semi-natural origin
- Variety of historic features which create a sense of time-depth
- Strong rural character with sparse settlement
- Recreational value
- Presence of long wooded views

Detractors

- Intensification of arable farming
- Historic loss of hedgerow boundaries
- Lack of appropriate woodland management in some areas
- Ongoing pressure for development
- Increased levels of traffic on minor roads
- Localised intrusions from the M4 and A34

Landscape Strategy

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve and enhance areas of woodland
- Conserve the sense of time-depth in the landscape
- Conserve the overall sparsely settled and rural character of the landscape
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes and extensive public rights of way
- Conserve the perceptual qualities of the landscape and key views

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment: The site is located within the Landscape Type *Downland with woodland* and the character area *LCA2A: Brightwalton Downs*

Key Characteristics

- Chalk dip slope overlain with a capping of Clay-with-Flint creating a more subdued landform pattern. Excellent views can be obtained to the north, east and west;
- Large scale, undulating, mixed farmed landscape of pasture and arable fields enclosed by hedgerows with frequent mature oak and ash hedgerow trees and woodlands;
- Diverse pattern of woodland cover including recent mixed plantations, summit tree clumps, and shelterbelts as well as semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin on the steeper slopes of the dry valley sides;
- Varied field patterns including some sinuous boundaries reflecting medieval or post medieval 'ladder' fields, particularly in Chaddlesworth and Beedon parishes. Generally large regular fields created by Parliamentary enclosure. Extensive boundary loss with very large-scale open fields;
- Chalk pits and dew ponds are a distinctive feature;
- A settled landscape comprising a large number of individual farmsteads, houses and manors, a regular distribution of small villages in dry valleys and linear settlements on ridges. Vernacular building materials include red brick and clay tile with thatch and weatherboard;
- Extensive network of interconnected rural lanes, often deeply incised and overhung by grass banks, hedges and mature hedgerow trees contributing to the richness and intimate scale of the landscape;
- Recreational opportunities are characterised by a high density of footpaths, bridleways and byways which provide a high degree of permeability;
- A quiet rural landscape

Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet, rural character of the Brightwalton Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views, archaeological sites and the historic field pattern. 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, hedgerow restoration, and blending the regular linear shelterbelt planting into the landscape. The pattern of settlements with scattered villages and small hamlets and interconnected network of rural lanes 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

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- 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

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
Views into the site from: A34 Priors Court Road PRoW: CHIE/19/1 Ashfield's Farm Industrial Estate and cottages (Hawthorn Cottage and Dew Pond Cottage) Newbury Showground	Types of viewers: Road users Walkers Workers at Ashfield's Farm Industrial Estate and residents of Hawthorn Cottage and Dew Pond Cottage users of Newbury Showground	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: Screen planting or site boundary planting could compromise the open character of the site and the far-reaching views to wooded horizons within the AONB Forms part of a patchwork of fields, mitigation planting would compromise long views within this elevated landscape
Views out of the site to: West and partly south of site: Tree and hedgerow planting on A34 embankment/cutting and Priors Court Road bridge embankment Newbury Showground North of site: rest of open field towards field hedgerow	Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): High. Busy Priors Court Road and A34 PRoW: for walkers within AONB	Impacts of mitigation: Screen planting and site boundary planting would screen long views across site to wooded horizons within the AONB beyond
Does the site form part of a skyline? Nearly, as seen from Priors Court Road	Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): High as located within AONB	
Panoramic views: Yes, from PRoW (CHIE/19/1) where part of the site forms part of a wider longer and panoramic view		
Landmark features: None		
Sensitivity score: Medium	Sensitivity score: Medium	Sensitivity score: Medium
Visual sensitivity score: Medium		
Additional comments:		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: A sloping site from the northern area from just over 120m AOD down to the south western corner at below 110m AOD. Forms part of the large-scale undulating landscape of this part of the AONB	Boundary features other than vegetation: Highway timber post and rail along the southern and western site boundary with highways Post and wire align driveway across site	Tranquillity – Noise levels: Adjacent A34 creates constant background traffic noise
Geological features: None	Historic landscapes: None	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: The A34 is located partly on embankment adjacent the western site boundary, where it is visible from areas within the site
Soil quality: Agriculture Land Classification: Grade 3 (Good - moderate) Soil Quality: Except for a small area towards the northern site boundary the site is free draining slightly acid but base rich soils with a high fertility. The northern area is freely draining slightly acid sandy soil with low fertility	Parkland features: None	Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: As per CPRE England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies map, the site is located at around 8-16 Nanowatts cm2/sr. The Chieveley Services is measured at 16-32 Nanowatts cm2/sr
Water features: None		
Landcover and land use: Agriculture: grass for grazing	Conservation Area: None	
Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: One individual tree within site towards north eastern boundary	Landscape features of LCA: Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vast open landscape • Settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farms • Part of a patchwork of large arable fields and pasture • Extensive views, with woodland restricting views in places • Recreational value 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of long wooded views 	
Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: Part of driveway is hedged at northern end	Built form: There are no buildings on the site The driveway to Ashfield's Farm is tarmac	Accessibility by public footpath: PRoW: CHIE/19/1 aligns the western boundary between the A34 and the site
Woodland and copses: None	Setting of listed buildings: Priors Court School Grade II listed. Located 216m to the east of the site boundary. The site is not shown to form part of the designed grounds in 1899. There is also a wide woodland belt located on the school's western perimeter	Open access areas: None
Wetland and meadow: None recorded	Scheduled Monuments: None on the site	Recreational areas: None
Common land: None	Pattern of Protected Employment Area (PEA) None within locality Ashfields Farm Industrial Estate (located to the north of the site) is a small-scale development including converted farm buildings, partly contained within the landscape by mature trees and the cottages to the south	Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: Extensive open elevated area, with long views out to wooded horizons, views over M4 (not in view)
Heathland: None	Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: N/A	Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: The site has an open landscape character which relates to the mosaic of fields within the area
Other significant vegetation cover: None	Cultural associations: None known	










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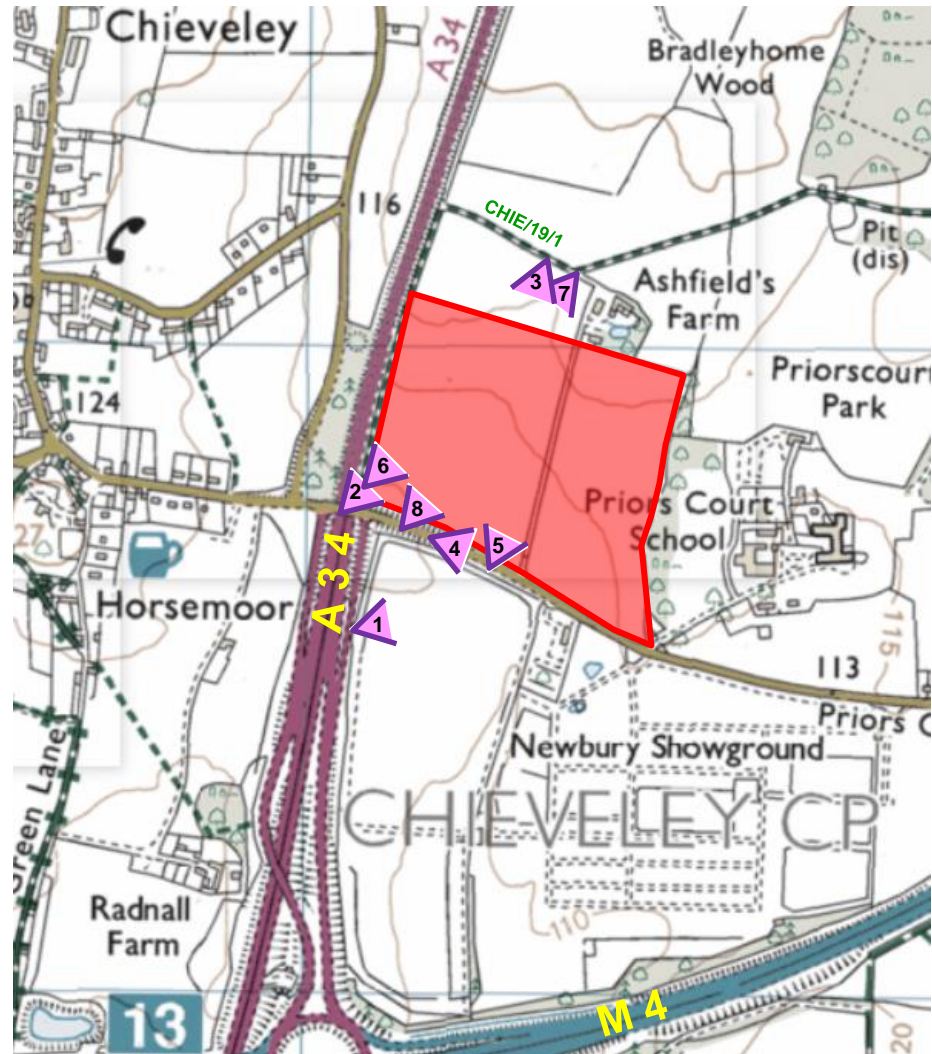
<p>BAP/Phase I records/ Priority Habitats: None</p>	<p>Features of cultural importance: None</p>	
<p>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: None</p>		
<p>Sensitivity score: Medium</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Medium</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Medium</p>
<p>Landscape sensitivity score: Medium</p>		
<p>Additional comments: Although in close proximity to the M4 and A34, the site contains key characteristics of the AONB and forms part of the wider open landscape of the AONB</p>		

Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

<p>Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA) No PEA in locality</p>
<p>Character of the Protected Employment Area (PEA) Not applicable</p>
<p>Presence in a floodplain: No</p>
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms part of an elevated landscape • No relationship with PEA, as none within vicinity. • Part of a mosaic of fields within this area • The site forms part of panoramic views as seen from the PRoW: CHIE/19/1
<p>Character of adjacent village(s)/towns: N/A. Nearest settlement is Chieveley, located circa 235m from the site boundary, with the intervening area containing the A34 with highway woodland planting</p>
<p>Historic links with the wider area if known: None</p>
<p>Ecological links with the wider area if known: None known</p>
<p>Recreational links with the wider area: No PRoW on site</p>
<p>VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts: Chieveley Parish: None known</p>

Figure 1: Site: Junction 13 - CHI27– Land north of Priors Court Road

-  Site boundary
 -  Protected Employment Area (none in vicinity)
 -  North Wessex Downs AONB – Complete area
 -  Viewpoint photo
 - CHIE/19/1 Public Right of Way (PRoW) reference
- 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 lies within the following LCA *WD2: Peasemore 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 and enhance areas of woodland
- Conserve the sense of time-depth in the landscape
- Conserve the overall sparsely settled and rural character of the landscape
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes and extensive public rights of way
- Conserve the perceptual qualities of the landscape and key views

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Character Assessment 2002

The site lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB Character Area: *2A: Brightwalton Downs*

Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet, rural character of the Brightwalton Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views, archaeological sites and the historic field pattern. 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, hedgerow restoration, and blending the regular linear shelterbelt planting into the landscape. The pattern of settlements with scattered villages and small hamlets and interconnected network of rural lanes 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
- 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 is located adjacent the A34 and to the north of Priors Court Road. Occupying two fields of grassland separated by a tarmac driveway which provides access to Ashfield's Farm. The driveway is also fenced with post and wire.

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

Viewpoints:



Photo 1: View from A34 slip road across western end of Newbury Showground across Priors Court Road to the eastern end of the site



Photo 2: View from Priors Court Road bridge over the A34 through mesh. Overlooking down onto site, with A34 aligning the western site boundary. Wooded horizons area feature of the enclosing landscape



Photo 3: View from CHIE /19/1 across site to A34 on slight embankment



Photo 4: View along Priors Court Road, with eastern end of site visible as a part of field to the left



Photo 5: View from Priors Court Road raised bridge embankment looking through embankment tree planting down onto the site



Photo 6: View from PRow across site to Hawthorn Cottage and Dew Pond Cottage, with Ashfield's Farm Industrial Estate partly visible to the right of dwellings, but mainly screened by intervening trees



Photo 7: Long view from CHIE/19/1, across the site, with Newbury Showground visible as another field beyond. The site forms part of a slightly elevated agricultural landscape, which is further enclosed by wooded horizons



Photo 8: View from Priors Court Road raised bridge embankment looking over embankment hedgerow planting down onto and across the site towards the A34 on low embankment

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium

- The site is visible from the adjacent Priors Court Road, where there are views into and across the site
- There is a PRoW (CHIE/19/1) which aligns the western site boundary, where there are open views across the site
- There are also panoramic views from the PRoW: CHIE/19/1 from locations north of the site
- Overall, the site is very visible from visual receptors occupying and aligning three of its site boundaries
- The site forms part of a panoramic view which includes the western field adjacent the Newbury Showground and beyond to low wooded horizons on the southern side of the M4
- The site is briefly visible from the A34 which passes on a low embankment
- The site is visible from Ashfield's Farm Industrial Estate and Hawthorn Cottage and Dew Pond Cottage
- The site is visible from Newbury Showground

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- A semi- elevated landscape, which forms part of long panoramic views from a number of locations to the north of the site
- The landform of the site slopes down from a high point from just over 120m AOD on the northern site boundary down to a low point within the south western corner at below 110m AOD
- The site constitutes two large grass fields, separated by a tarmac fenced driveway to Ashfield's Farm and Cottages
- The site forms part of a mosaic of fields
- Traffic noise from the A34 is apparent
- There are no PEA areas within the locality
- The adjacent road infrastructure (A34, M4) does not visually detract from the overall landscape character of this area

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

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: High

- The site is an important part of the wider landscape with which it has strong visual and landscape links. Nearby employment uses have little impact on the site

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




6. Landscape Value: Medium/high

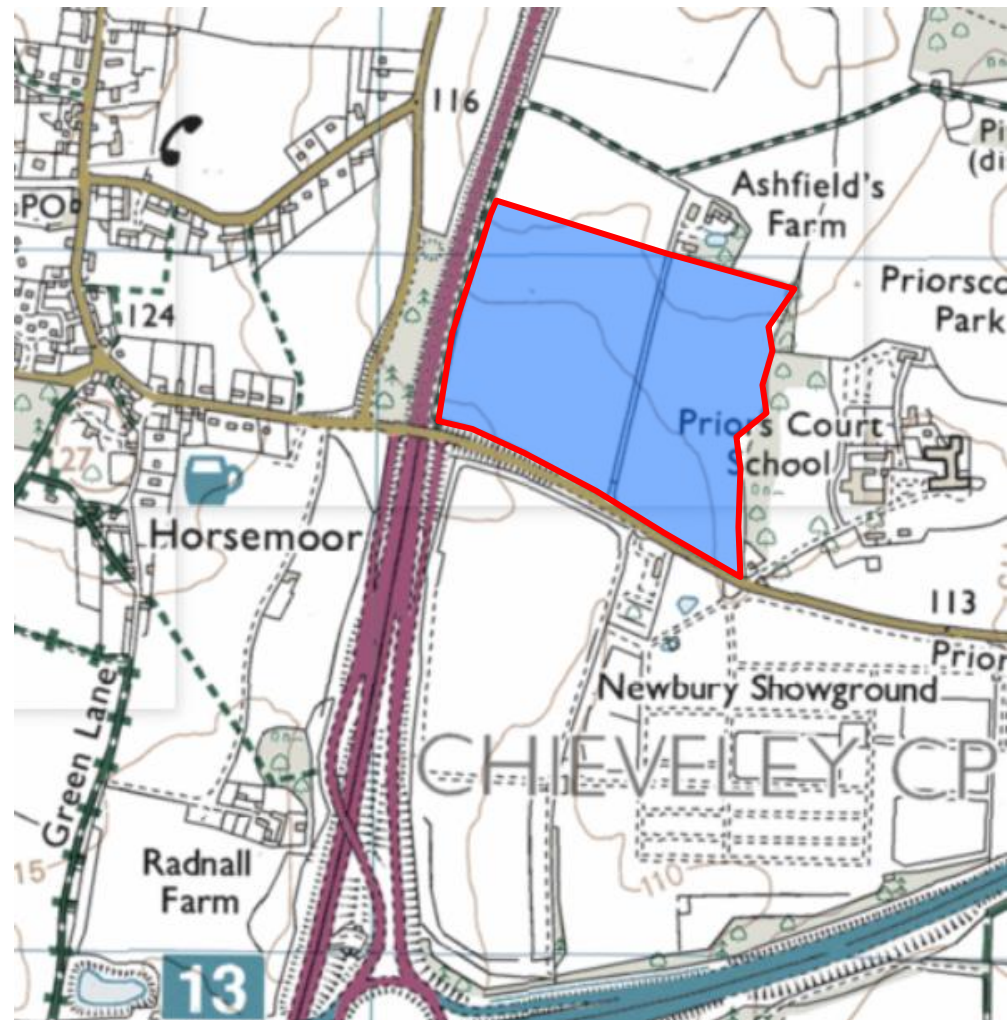
- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

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

<p>Relationship of site to Protected Employment Area (PEA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No PEA within vicinity
<p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of the mosaic of fields within the area, contributing to the rural character• No relationship with PEA, as none within vicinity.• The site is visible in wide and long panoramic views from locations north of the site
<p>Potential impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of open character and grass fields which forms part of the mosaic of fields within this area• Erosion of rural character of Priors Court Road and open agriculture/rural setting of Priors Court• Introduction of more modern inclusions including large scale buildings, noise and lighting eroding the traditional and rural landscape character of the area
<p>Potential impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adverse visual impact on Priors Court Road, PRow: CHIE/19/1 Ashfield's Farm Industrial Estate and Cottages, by introducing views of modern buildings eroding the rural character of the area
<p>Potential Impact on Existing Protected Employment Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not applicable
<p>Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of open land within the North Wessex Downs AONB• Loss of uninterrupted long views to far wooded horizons• Adverse impact on the rural character of Priors Court Road which aligns the southern boundary of the site• Increased level of development will erode the rural qualities and the open character of the area• Increased external lighting resulting in further light pollution on the site and adjacent areas• Increased noise levels and traffic levels on local area
<p>Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planting mitigation measures would not be suitable within this open semi-elevated landscape
<p>Conclusion and recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is recommended that the site is not suitable for development

Figure 2: Site: Junction 13 – CH127 – Land north of Priors Court Road

-  The site
-  Protected Employment Area (PEA) None in vicinity
-  Not suitable for development



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