

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Junction 13 – CHI3 parcel 3 – Land west of Chalky Lane

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Junction 13 – CHI3 - Parcel 3 – Land west of Chalky Lane
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 FC4 *Winterbourne Farmed Chalk Mosaic*

Key Characteristics

- Open and gently rolling landform, rising from the Lambourn Valley
- Presence of surface water and small streams
- Diverse land use of large rolling arable farmland and extensive woodland, plus areas of heathland and parkland
- Generally sparse and dispersed settlement pattern in the wider rural area
- Busy major roads contrast with rural road network
- Historic and archaeological landscape relating to strategic position at intersection of east west and north south routes.
- An accessible landscape
- Low wooded horizons contrast with open rural landscape

Valued Features and Qualities

- Nationally valued landscape which forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Snelsmore Common
- Woodlands and strongly wooded horizons
- Rural character away from major roads and urban edges
- Winding rural roads and sunken lanes
- Historic landscape character

Detractors

- Decline in extent of heathland
- Lack of appropriate management of woodland
- Changes to farming practice
- Mineral extraction
- Intrusive influence of major road network
- Increasing development pressures

Landscape Strategy

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve and restore heathland characteristics
- Conserve and extend existing mixed woodland
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements
- Opportunities for restoration of completed extraction sites
- Mitigate the adverse influences of the major roads and maintain character of rural lanes
- Maintain the rural settlement character
- Seek to promote enhanced management of horse paddocks, and particularly boundary associated elements
- Actively manage and conserve features of historic significance

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002: The site is located within *LCA8A: 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

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
Views into the site from: Short adjacent section of A34 PRoW: CHIE/36/2 (Chalky Lane) CHIE/51/1 (PRoW Overbridge) CHIE/46/1 Tarmac lane to Kite's Abbey Residential properties on lane to Kite's Abbey (west of A34)	Types of viewers: Road users Walkers, cyclists, horse riders Residents	Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: Adjacent to a wooded landscape, could offer opportunities for new tree belts/woodland which could tie in with these areas of woodland. However, the open agricultural landscape, which the site forms part of provides a contrast with these wooded areas, which is a feature of the landscape character area and would therefore be compromised
Views out of the site to: West of site: Views across the A34 to the opposite valley side including the ancient woodlands: High Wood, Bean Hill Copse and Beech Copse East of site: The area of ancient woodland including Breach Copse and Griggs Copse	Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): High. The site is adjacent a good network of Public Rights of Way and adjacent an important PRoW route over the A34	Impacts of mitigation: Loss of views from PRoW across landscape and wider longer views Loss of open agricultural landscape of the lower valley sides, typical of this landscape character area
Does the site form part of a skyline? No	Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): High as located within AONB	
Panoramic views: Yes, as seen across from the western valley side		
Landmark features: None		
Sensitivity score: High	Sensitivity score: High	Sensitivity score: Medium
Visual sensitivity score: High		
Additional comments: Chieveley Services is set at a slightly lower level, enclosed by a robust tree lined hedgerow/tree belt and earth mounding; there is no intervisibility between the two areas		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
Topography and landform: Undulating gentle valley side, from 110m AOD on eastern site boundary down to below 105m AOD on western site boundary	Boundary features other than vegetation: Highway timber post and rail on western site boundary with A34	Tranquillity – Noise levels: Adjacent M4/A34 creates constant background traffic noise, although bird song is heard from adjacent woodlands
Geological features: None	Historic landscapes: None	Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: M4: no intervisibility A34: a short section, before the A34 enters a cutting No view of services
Soil quality: Agriculture Land Classification: Grade 3 (Good-moderate) Soil Quality: Free Draining slightly acid but base rich soils with High fertility.	Parkland features: None	Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: As per CPRE England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies map, the site is located between 8-16 Nanowatts cm2/sr to the east across to 4-8 Nanowatts cm2/sr to the west. Chieveley Services is measured at 16-32 Nanowatts cm2/sr, considerably brighter
Water features: None		
Landcover and land use: Agriculture: Single arable field, enclosed by a treed hedgerow to the south, Breach Copse and another hedgerow to the east and Highway hedgerow and woodland planting which aligns the A34 to the west	Conservation Area: None	
Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: None	Landscape features of LCA: Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentle rolling landform of arable fields • Large, interconnected woodland blocks and strong hedgerow pattern with mature trees restrict views and create an enclosed and intimate character. • Low and strongly wooded horizons contrast with open rural landscape • An accessible landscape containing PRow, linking to 	

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

	<p>wider area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin 	
<p>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: Only within site boundary</p>	<p>Built form: None</p>	<p>Accessibility by public footpath: Not into site, however Chalky Lane which aligns the eastern site boundary is also a Public Right of Way</p>
<p>Woodland and copses: None on the site, but adjacent to the site to the west is Breach Copse, an ancient woodland</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 (PEA) None within locality</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: Field of arable land contained by hedgerows and woodland. The site is enclosed along its eastern edge by the hedged Chalky Lane (also PRow) which aligns the adjacent ancient woodland (Breach Copse). Part of a non-developed valley side which continues further to the south and eventually Newbury. Enclosed by the low wooded horizon to the east</p>
<p>Heathland: None</p>	<p>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: N/A</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: Part of the pattern of fields, hedgerows, lanes within a mosaic of woodland, key characteristics of this landscape character area of this part of the AONB</p>





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






<p>Other significant vegetation cover: None</p>	<p>Cultural associations: None known</p>	
<p>BAP/Priority Habitat/Phase I records: Boundary hedgerows would qualify as a Priority Habitat</p>	<p>Features of cultural importance: None</p>	
<p>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: Woodlands adjacent to the site are ancient woodland Adjacent Local Wildlife site: Breach and Griggs Copse, therefore also contributes to its open setting</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>		

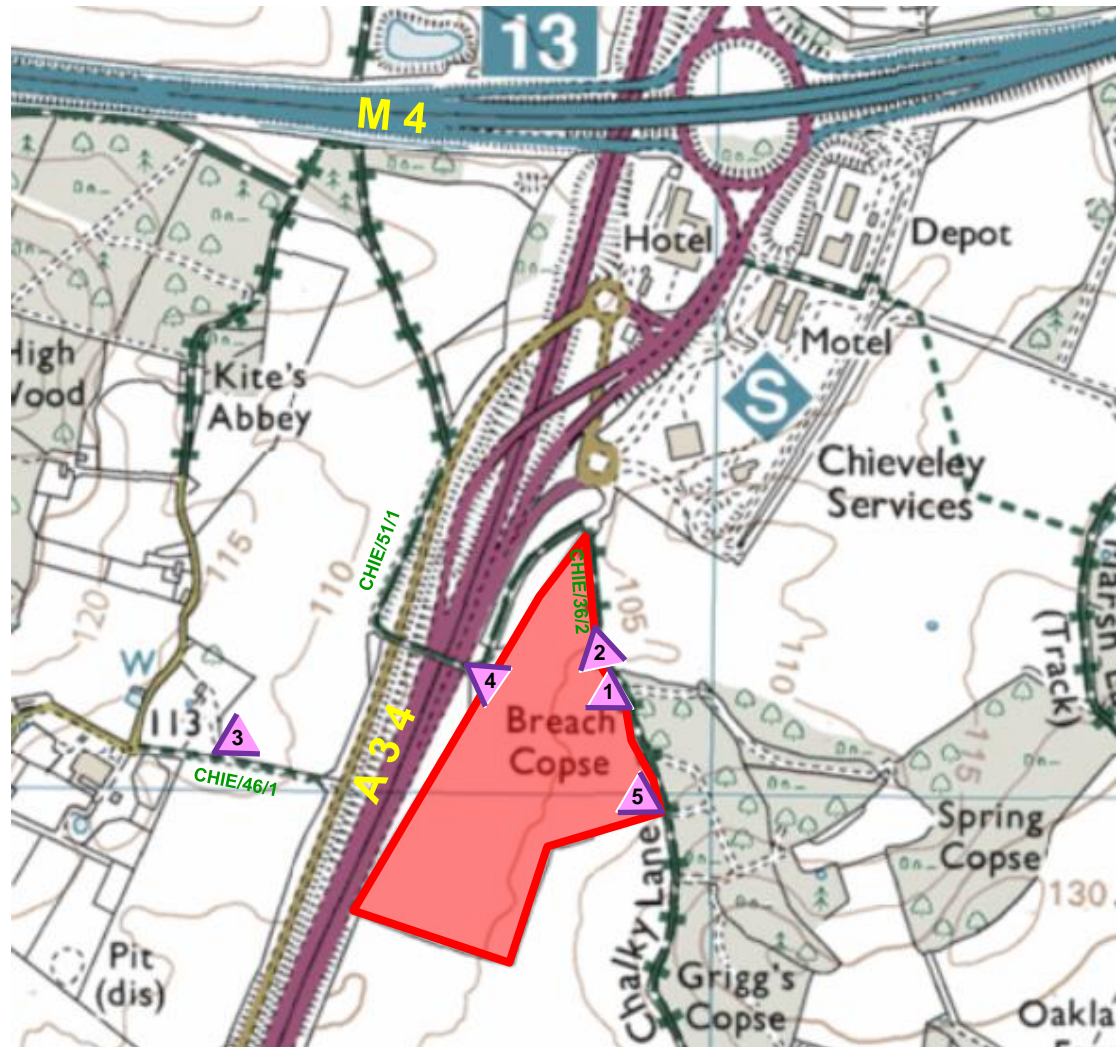
Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

<p>Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA) None within 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: The site forms part of the mosaic of fields which continues to the south and provides an open rural setting for the adjacent ancient woodland, Local Wild Life Site and the A34 within this area of the AONB</p>
<p>Character of adjacent village(s)/towns: N/A. Nearest settlement is Curridge, located circa 500m from the site boundary, with the intervening area shown as woodland</p>
<p>Historic links with the wider area if known: None</p>
<p>Ecological links with the wider area if known: Adjacent Local Wildlife Site: Breach and Griggs Copse, therefore also contributes to its open setting</p>
<p>Recreational links with the wider area: Chalky Lane which aligns the eastern part of the site contains a Public Rights of Way which is the only point of access over the A34, providing a link further into the wider countryside to the west</p>
<p>VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts: Chieveley Parish: None known</p>

Figure 1: Site: Junction 13 – CHI3 – Parcel 3 - Land west of Chalky Lane

-  Site boundary
-  Protected Employment Area (none in vicinity)
-  North Wessex Downs AONB – Complete area
-  Viewpoint photo
- CHIE/9B/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 FCA4: Winterbourne Farmed Chalk Mosaic* 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 restore heathland characteristics
- Conserve and extend existing mixed woodland
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements
- Opportunities for restoration of completed extraction sites
- Mitigate the adverse influences of the major roads and maintain character of rural lanes
- Maintain the rural settlement character
- Seek to promote enhanced management of horse paddocks, and particularly boundary associated elements
- Actively manage and conserve features of historic significance

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Character Assessment 2002

The site lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB: 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
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- Development that does not provide for or support existing Green Infrastructure.

Site description:

The site occupies a single arable field which is located on the eastern side of the A34. The site boundaries are well defined and are to the west the highway hedgerow/timber post and rail fence which also marks the boundary of the A34. To the east of the site, the boundary is the tree/hedgerow lined Chalky Lane, which is also a PRoW (CHIE/36/2). Also beyond this is the ancient woodland Breach Copse. To the south, the site boundary is defined by a robust field hedgerow with a number of trees. The site is located on the lower levels of the gentle valley landform which contains the A34, located on the valley floor. From Chalky Lane, which aligns the eastern side of the site, there are views across the site, across the A34 to the opposite valley side. Overall, the site is part of an accessible landscape and contributes to a matrix of fields which occupy the lower valley sides of this undulating landform, typical of the landscape character of this area within the North Wessex Downs AONB

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

Viewpoints:



Photo 1: View from Chalky Lane (PRoW: CHIE/36/2), through the tree lined hedgerow across the site towards highway boundary marked by timber post and rail fence and planting beyond



Photo 2: View along Chalky Lane (PRoW: CHIE/36/2), with filtered views into site to the right



Photo 3: View from western side of A34 (not in view) across the valley to the site (pale green field) enclosed by low wooded horizon. The PRoW bridge is visible linking the two sides of the valley. The site forms part of the open agricultural landscape of the lower valley



Photo 4: View from eastern side of overbridge (PRoW: CHIE/51/1), through field gateway looking across the site to the eastern site boundary marked by the tree/hedgerow lined Chalky Lane, with the ancient woodland Breach Copse beyond



Photo 5: View across site with the A34 partly in view. The site forms part of the open agricultural landscape which aligns the valley floor and lower valley sides, which is further enclosed by woodland on the upper valley sides

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: High

- The site is visible from the adjacent PRow which aligns the eastern boundary of the site. This PRow is also a characterful lane (Chalky Lane) a feature of this area of the AONB
- The site is visible from a short section of the adjacent section of the A34
- There are also views across the landscape from the west, where the site forms part of the open agricultural landscape, enclosed by a continuous low wooded horizon
- The site is visible from the eastern side of the PRow overbridge, where the site also forms an open setting for the adjacent ancient woodland
- From the west the site forms part of a panoramic view
- There is no intervisibility between the site and the Chieveley Services

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- A single arable field which forms part of a wider area of fields which occupy the lower valley landscape
- Enclosed by a low wooded horizon to the east, a key landscape characteristic of this area
- Adjacent an ancient woodland, where the site contributes to its open setting
- The site also contributes to the rural character of the adjacent Chalky Lane
- Adjacent Local Wildlife Site: Breach and Griggs Copse, therefore also contributes to its open setting
- Traffic noise from the A34 is apparent, however bird song is also apparent from the adjacent woodlands
- There are no PEA areas within the locality
- The adjacent road infrastructure does not visually detract from the overall landscape character of this area
- The site is affected by light pollution from Chieveley Services

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

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: High

- The site is an important part of the wider agricultural landscape with which it has strong visual and landscape links. There is no intervisibility with the nearby services and hotels

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




6. Landscape Value: Medium/high

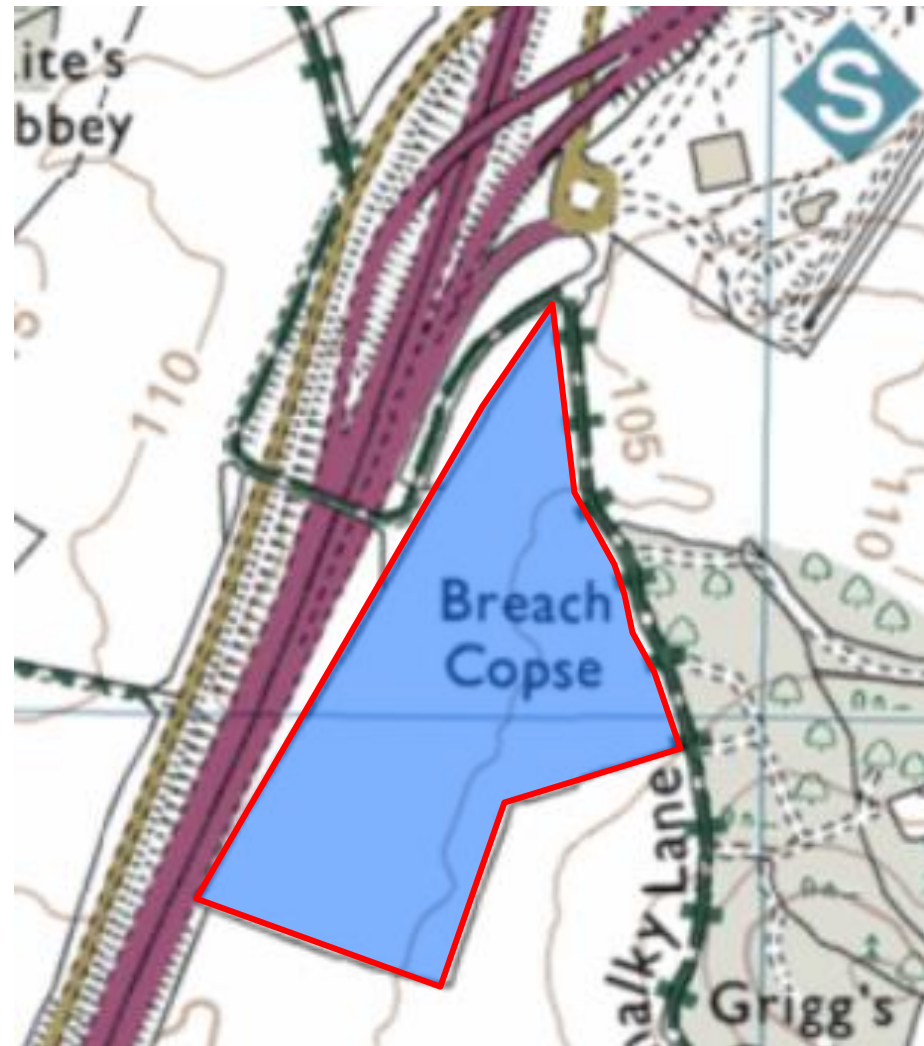
- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

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

Relationship of site to Protected Employment Area (PEA) <ul style="list-style-type: none">No PEA within vicinity
Relationship with adjacent wider countryside <ul style="list-style-type: none">Strong relationship with wider landscape to the south and east and across the valley to the corresponding valley sideThe site forms part of the open agricultural valley landscapeThe site contributes to the open setting of the adjacent ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site
Potential impact on key landscape characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of open character and an arable field which forms part of the mosaic of fields within this areaLoss of open setting of adjacent ancient woodlandErosion of rural character of Chalky LaneIntroduction of more modern inclusions including large scale buildings, noise and lighting eroding the traditional and rural landscape character of the area
Potential impact on key visual characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none">Adverse visual impact on a PRoW (Chalky Lane) which aligns the eastern site boundary, by introducing views of large modern buildings eroding the rural character of the areaVisible from across the valley side, resulting in an adverse effect on longer views within the wider AONB
Potential Impact on Existing Protected Employment Area <ul style="list-style-type: none">Not applicable
Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB <ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of open land within the North Wessex Downs AONBLoss of open setting of adjacent woodlands, including ancient woodlandsLoss of amenity value of a PRoW which aligns the periphery of the site and other PRoW across to the west of the valley sideAdverse impact on the rural character of Chalky Lane which aligns the eastern boundary of the siteIncreased level of development will erode the rural qualities and the open character of the areaIncreased external lighting resulting in further light pollution on the site and adjacent areasIncreased noise levels and traffic levels on local area
Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none">Not applicable
Conclusion and recommendations <p>It is recommended that the site is not considered for development</p>

Figure 2: Site: Junction 13 – CHI3 – Parcel 3 - Land west of Chalky Lane

-  The site
-  Protected Employment Area (PEA) – none within vicinity
-  Not suitable for development



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