

**Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Land at Junction 13 - CHI26 - Newbury Showground**

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

<b>Site</b>	Junction 13 – CHI26 Newbury Showground
<b>Date of site survey</b>	February 2022
<b>Surveyors</b>	LA
<b>Weather/visibility</b>	Clear
<b>LCA</b>	North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

**West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019:** The site is located within LCA 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 2002:** The site is located within the Landscape Type *Downland with Woodland* and the character area LCA2A: *Brightwalton Downs*

*Key Characteristics*

- Chalk dipslope 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 key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the special qualities of the AONB

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

- The loss of rural character through suburbanising influences from new development (new fencing, lighting, signage, parking areas, paved footpaths, loss of native hedgerows and creation of new garden areas)
- Impact on dark skies and tranquillity of high-powered external lighting, especially where poorly directed or in an exposed location (not usually subject to planning control)
- Potential for certain forms of development to intrude on the wider landscape, including masts, pylons, wind turbine developments, photovoltaic schemes, and minerals and waste schemes, threatening the landscape quality, heritage assets, and the sense of remoteness and tranquillity
- Unsuitable development of redundant previously developed and part-developed sites within the North Wessex Downs, especially redundant airfields and military sites (e.g. Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape quality and heritage assets
- New developments at the junction of the M4 and A34 or along their corridors which spread the impact from development yet further into the undeveloped parts of the AONB
- Development that results in a material loss of tranquillity and/ or impact on the dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs or its setting.
- Development that does not provide for or support existing Green Infrastructure.

### Landscape Designations

North Wessex Downs AONB

**VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

<b>General visibility</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Mitigation potential</b>
<b>Views into the site from:</b> Slip road onto A34 through gateway Priors Court Road Dwellings on Priors Court Road Priors Court School PRoW: CHIE/19/1 – located to the north	<b>Types of viewers:</b> Road users Residents and users of Priors Court School Residents on Priors Court Road Walkers Users of Newbury Showground	<b>Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation:</b> A large slightly elevated open landscape with far reaching views to wooded horizons within the AONB. Opportunities for substantial woodland planting could bring enhancements to this area of the AONB
<b>Views out of the site to:</b> South and west of site: Tree and hedgerow planting on highway embankment and wooded horizons within AONB North of site: Priors Court Road lined with trees and part hedgerows, with Priors Court School and fields beyond	<b>Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity):</b> High. Busy Priors Court Road PRoW: for walkers within AONB	<b>Impacts of mitigation:</b> Potential loss of long views across site to wooded horizons beyond
<b>Does the site form part of a skyline?</b> No	<b>Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors):</b> High as located within AONB	
<b>Panoramic views:</b> Yes, from Priors Court Road within the setting and foreground of woodlands and wooded horizons Yes, from PRoW (CHIE/19/1) where part of the site forms part of a wider view		
<b>Landmark features:</b> None		
<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium
<b>Visual sensitivity score:</b> Medium		
<b>Additional comments:</b> Although in close proximity to the M4 and A34, both roads are not visible from the site. A visible site from the adjacent Priory Court Road		

**LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

<b>Natural factors</b>	<b>Cultural factors</b>	<b>Perceptual features</b>
<p><b>Topography and landform:</b> Largely flat, but with local elevated areas at around 115m AOD adjacent Priors Court Road, especially adjacent crossing of A34, descending towards the SW corner of the site at a lower level of 110m AOD</p>	<p><b>Boundary features other than vegetation:</b> Highway timber post and rail along the southern and western site boundary Concrete posts and wire mesh on the site side of the site boundary hedgerow adjacent Priors Court Road Timber post and rail at showground entrances</p>	<p><b>Tranquillity – Noise levels:</b> Adjacent M4/A34 creates constant background traffic noise</p>
<p><b>Geological features:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Historic landscapes:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors:</b> Although the M4 and A34 can be heard, they are both not visible from the site</p>
<p><b>Soil quality:</b> Agriculture Land Classification: Grade 2 (Very good) Soil Quality: Free draining slightly acid but base rich soils with a high fertility</p>	<p><b>Parkland features:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies:</b> As per CPRE England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies map, the site is located at 8-16 Nanowatts cm2/sr. The Chieveley Services is measured at 16-32 Nanowatts cm2/sr</p>
<p><b>Water features:</b> None</p>		
<p><b>Landcover and land use:</b> Newbury Showground: central area contains a grid of tarmac roads, with internal areas of grass used for exhibits and displays etc, with the western open fields used for car parking. Eastern area contains triangular field, separated from the main showground area by a row of trees Agriculture: Grassland used for sheep grazing when not used for showground</p>	<p><b>Conservation Area:</b> None</p>	
<p><b>Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees:</b> Individual trees are evident towards Priors Court Road; around the Newbury and District Agriculture Society building; adjacent the southern site boundary adjacent the highway boundary of the M4 and adjacent the grid of tarmac roads within the centre of the site One internal row of trees is located on a north-south</p>	<p><b>Landscape features of LCA:</b> Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vast open landscape</li> <li>• Extensive views, with woodland restricting views in places</li> <li>• Low wooded horizons, within adjacent Landscape</li> </ul>	

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

<p>alignment across the eastern part of the site and another west of the barn building within the west of the site</p>	<p>Character Area: LCA8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons</p>	
<p><b>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees:</b> A hedgerow within the western part of the site aligns in a north-south alignment along the internal access road to the barn, the alignment of the hedgerow then continues as a row of semi mature trees</p>	<p><b>Built form:</b> There are a number of dispersed buildings within the site as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red brick two storey building presently the Newbury and District Agricultural Society</li> <li>• Red brick and flint single storey building part of the showground</li> <li>• Barn, concrete walls, boarding high roller shutter doors and pitched roof located towards south western part of the site, with a height of 12m to ridge and footprint of 3358m<sup>2</sup></li> </ul> <p>Tarmac roads concentrated within the central part of site; other vehicle tracks constructed from compacted material located around the western periphery</p> <p>A rectangular in shape compound area is used for outdoor storage of containers and vehicles, located adjacent above-described barn, enclosed by tree and shrub planted earth mound along western edge</p>	<p><b>Accessibility by public footpath:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Woodland and copses:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Setting of listed buildings:</b> Priors Court School Grade II listed. Located 216m to the north of the site boundary. The site is not shown to form part of the designed grounds in 1899</p>	<p><b>Open access areas:</b> None</p>
<p><b>Wetland and meadow:</b> Grassland across complete site</p>	<p><b>Scheduled Monuments:</b> None on the site</p>	<p><b>Recreational areas:</b> Private, but accommodates a series of open shows throughout the year</p>

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<b>Common land:</b> None	<b>Pattern of Protected Employment Area (PEA)</b> None within locality	<b>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure:</b> Extensive open elevated area, with long views out to wooded horizons, views over M4 (not in view)
<b>Heathland:</b> None	<b>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character:</b> N/A	<b>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern:</b> Although the site contains an extensive open area used as a showground, which as a land use is slightly alien to the area, the site retains a strong open character which relates to the mosaic of fields within the area
<b>Other significant vegetation cover:</b> None	<b>Cultural associations:</b> None known	
<b>BAP/Phase I records/ Priority Habitats:</b> Site and site boundary hedgerows would qualify as Priority Habitats	<b>Features of cultural importance:</b> None	
<b>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland:</b> None		
<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium	<b>Sensitivity score:</b> Medium
<b>Landscape sensitivity score:</b> Medium		
<b>Additional comments:</b> 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.		

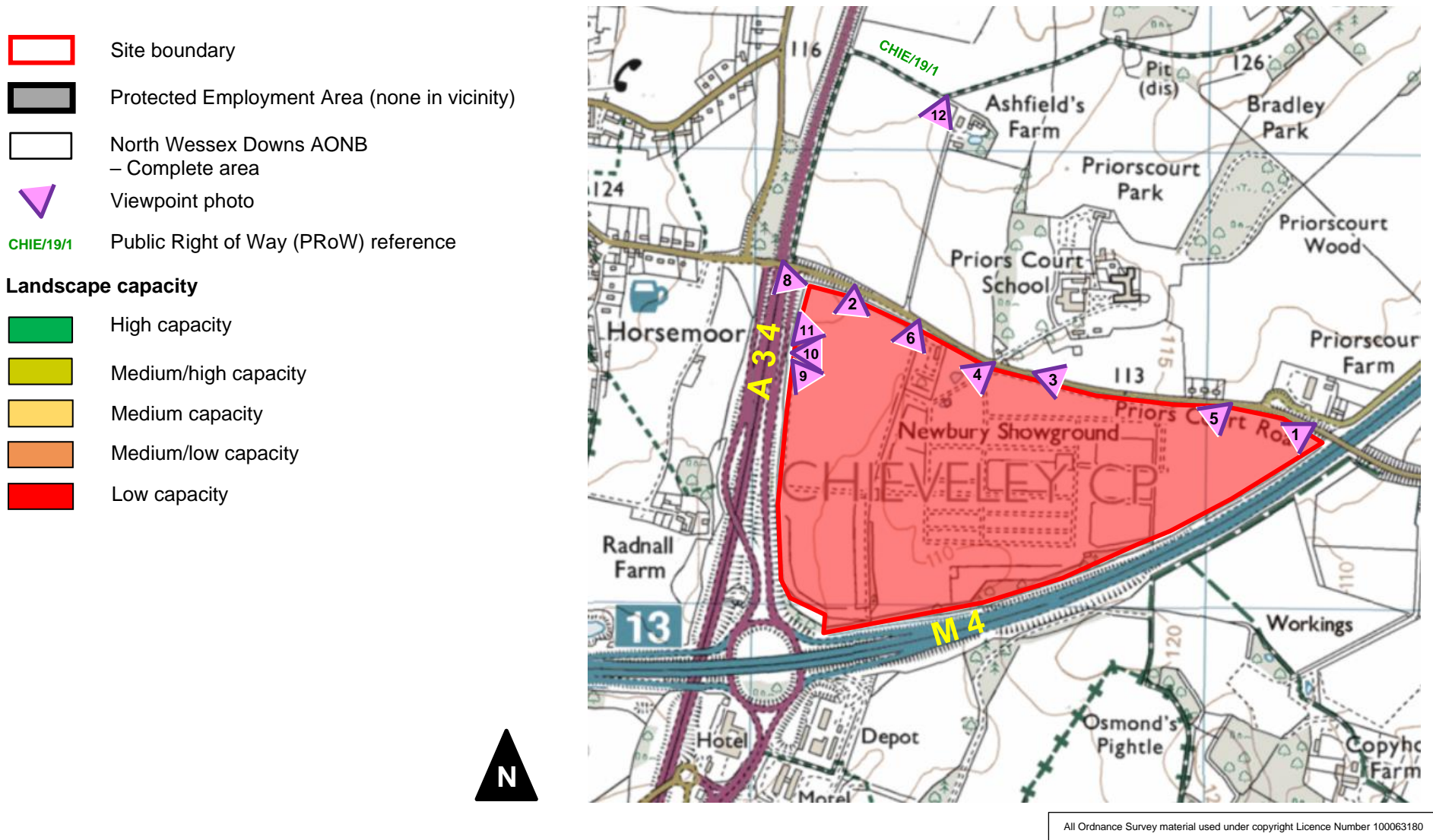


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**Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area**

<b>Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)</b> No PEA in locality
<b>Character of the Protected Employment Area (PEA)</b> Not applicable
<b>Presence in a floodplain:</b> No
<b>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms part of an elevated landscape, although an area within the site to the south, is located at a slightly lower level</li> <li>• No relationship with PEA, as none within vicinity. No intervisibility with Priors Court Farm employment site off Priors Court Road towards the north east of the site</li> <li>• Open setting to Priors Court School, a listed building and fields to the north of the site</li> <li>• Western part of the site visible from north of the site as part of panoramic views</li> </ul>
<b>Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:</b> N/A. Nearest settlement is Chieveley, located circa 235m from the site boundary, with the intervening area containing the A34 with Highway woodland planting
<b>Historic links with the wider area if known:</b> None
<b>Ecological links with the wider area if known:</b> None known
<b>Recreational links with the wider area:</b> No PRoW on site
<b>VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:</b> Chieveley Parish: None known

**Figure 1: Site: Junction 13 – CHI26 - Newbury Showground**



### **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 occupies the existing Newbury Showground, to the south of Priors Court Road and north of the M4, adjacent Junction 13. Characterised by open grassland, a grid of tarmac roads for access to the display of temporary marquis and exhibits etc. There are a small number of permanent buildings including a large barn towards the south western corner, a single redbrick building presently the Newbury and District Agricultural Society and a red brick and flint single storey building part of the showground infrastructure. The site is largely flat, although the levels slightly dip towards the south and rise up to Priors Court Road. Additionally, the site is semi-elevated to the surrounding area, permitting long views from the north across the site and beyond to wooded horizons.

**Key landscape planning factors:**

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

**Viewpoints:**



**Photo 1:** View from Priors Court Road, through roadside vegetation into western end of site



**Photo 2:** View from Priors Court Road, through timber post and rail fence into north eastern end of site. The barn is visible below the wooded horizon located on the southern side of the M4



**Photo 3:** View from Priors Court Road, the thick hedgerow partly screens views of the site



**Photo 4:** View from Priors Court Road, through site entrance. The barn is visible, with its roofline located below the wooded horizon



**Photo 5:** View from Priors Court Road, through gateway across into the western part of the site



**Photo 6:** View from Priors Court Road, through gateway across into the north eastern part of the site, with the barn just visible beyond a site hedgerow and below the wooded horizon



**Photo 8:** View from Priors Court Road bridge. The western part and barn on the site is just visible, below the wooded horizon south of the M4



**Photo 9:** View across site from A34 slip Road, looking in a south east direction, with the barn on the site visible and the view then extending across the M4 (not in view) towards the enclosing wooded horizon





**Photo 10:** View across site from A34 slip road, looking in a north east direction



**Photo 11:** View across site from A34 slip road, looking in a north east direction over Priors Court Road to the wooded horizon beyond



**Photo 12:** Long view from PRow: CHIE/19/1, towards the site, shown as the field, beyond the immediate field. The barn on the site is just visible. The site also forms part of a slightly elevated agricultural landscape, which is further enclosed by wooded horizons and is within the setting of these longer views

**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 is a sequence of views into and across the site
- There are no PRow within the site, however the site forms part of a panoramic view from PRow: CHIE/19/1 located circa 500m from the northern site boundary
- A large barn is located towards the south western corner of the site, this barn is visible from a number of locations
- There is no intervisibility with the M4 south of the site
- There is no intervisibility with the A34, but there are views through a gateway from the A34 slip road into the site

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- A semi- elevated landscape, which forms part of panoramic long views from a number of locations to the north of the site
- Known as Newbury Showground with a central area containing a grid of tarmac roads, with internal areas of grass used for exhibits and displays etc, with the area to the west and east shown as open grass fields, with the western fields used for car parking for shows and sheep grazing when not in use. A long rectangular area adjacent to the west of the barn is presently used as open storage and car parking, this area is enclosed by an earth bund
- Agriculture: Grassland used for sheep grazing when not used for showground
- Three buildings are located on the site: red brick two storey building presently the Newbury and District Agricultural Society; red brick and flint single storey building part of the showground infrastructure; large barn with concrete walls, boarding high roller shutter doors and pitched roof located towards south western part of the site, with a height of 12m to ridge and footprint of 3358m<sup>2</sup>
- Hedgerows separate the central area from the fields within the site to the east and west. The central area is also speckled with trees
- Traffic noise from the A34 and M4 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: Medium/high**

- The field areas within the east and west of the site link with the adjacent agricultural landscape. The central area the main area of the showground is slightly more separate
- The site is separate from areas with 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 Protected Employment Area (PEA)**

- No PEA within vicinity

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- Forms part of an elevated landscape, although an area within the site to the south, is located at a slightly lower level
- No relationship with PEA, as none within vicinity. No intervisibility with employment site off Priors Court Road towards the north east of the site. This site is a small site with a semi treed boundary
- Open setting to Priors Court School, a listed building and fields to the north of the site
- Western part of the site visible in panoramic views from north of the site

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Loss of open character and grass fields which forms part of the matrix of fields within this area
- Erosion of rural character of Priors Court Road and 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

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- Adverse visual impact on Priors Court Road, PRoW: CHIE/19/1 Priors Court School and Priors Court Cottages located to the north of the site, by introducing views of large modern buildings eroding the rural character of the area
- Visible from the north, especially the western part of the site, resulting in an adverse effect on longer views within the wider AONB

**Potential Impact on Existing Protected Employment Area**

- Not applicable

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

- 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 northern 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

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure**





- A large site with good opportunities for Green Infrastructure, in particular the planting of a broadleaf woodland which could form a characteristic feature of this area

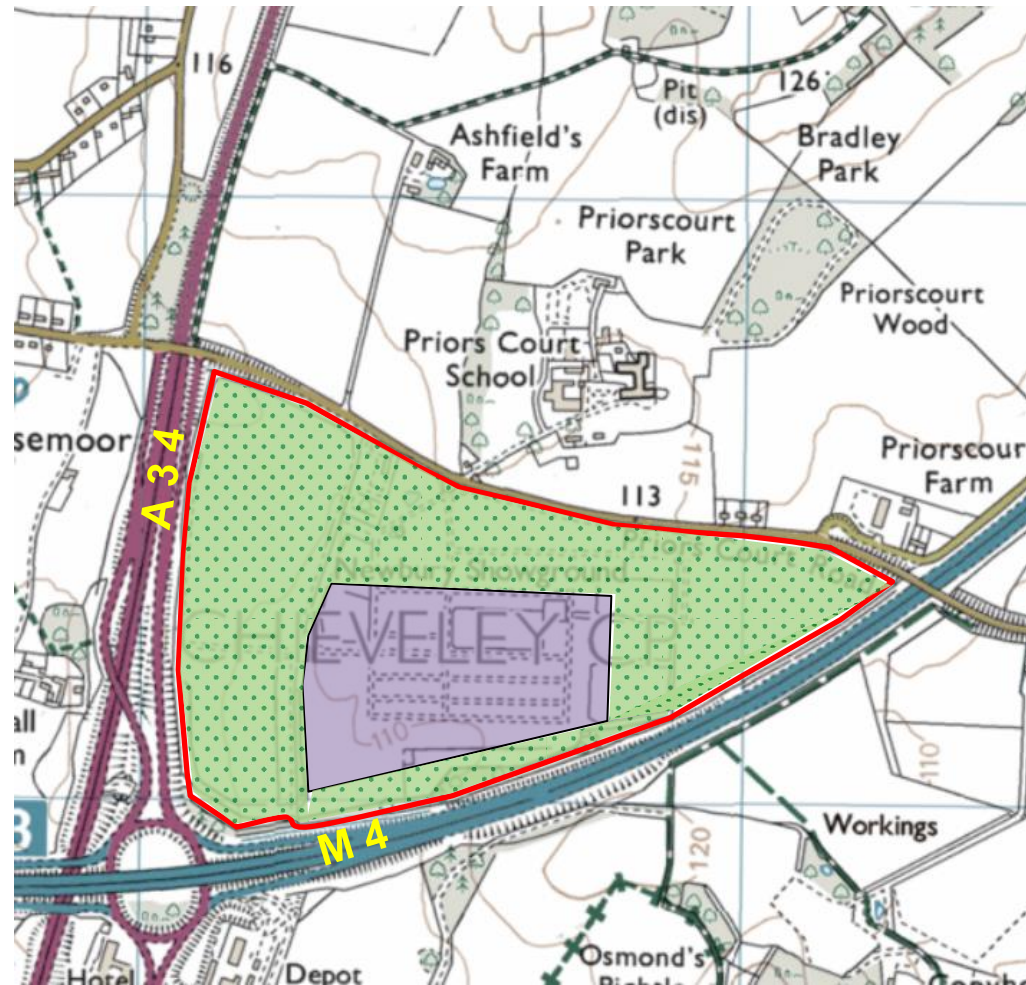
**Conclusion and recommendations**

The site as a whole is not considered appropriate for employment. However, a small part of the lower part of the site could be developed for employment uses, with the following requirements:

- The two areas of grass fields (west and east within the site) should be retained as grazing and managed accordingly; buffer planting should also be included to protect them from any visual residual effect from proposed development
- Any proposed buildings should respond to their context so their scale, mass and bulk will need to be carefully considered in order to reduce their visual prominence. Several smaller buildings may be more appropriate than one larger one in order to retain the views through the site
- Wooded skylines should not be adversely affected, with a restriction to the height of buildings, especially as seen from the PRow (CHIE/19/1). The height of any proposed buildings or structures should not intrude above the wooded horizons, as viewed from the surrounding area. There should be a maximum building ridge height of 12m
- Roof profiles need to be sympathetic to the landscape, for example curved or pitched in profile rather than flat
- The colour of the buildings will need to be carefully considered, so that in the early years before mitigation planting has matured, where development is visible the colour, external treatment of facades blend into the surrounding landscape. The North Wessex Downs AONB: Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development should be used as guidance
- The area between Priors Court Road and the proposed area suitable for development should be planted with a broadleaf woodland to protect the character of Priors Court Road and enhance the wooded character of the area
- Buildings should be set back from the southern site boundary and should not be visible from the M4
- Access into the site should remain rural in character and respect the historic layout of Priors Court School and the rural character of Priors Court Road
- The access and routes for HGV will need to be considered to avoid an adverse effect on the landscape character of adjacent rural roads and the adjacent landscape. This will include any widening, the requirement for sight lines and the increase in traffic noise
- The impact of light pollution should be carefully considered. The North Wessex Downs AONB: A guide to good external lighting should be used to inform any proposed development

Figure 2: Site: Junction 13 – CHI26 - Newbury Showground

-  The site
-  Protected Employment Area (PEA) – none in vicinity
-  With potential for development
-  Landscape buffer



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