

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: HER5 - Land at North Hermitage

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site:	HER5: Land at north Hermitage
Date of site survey:	28 th March 2022
Surveyors:	LA
Weather/visibility:	Clear
LCA:	North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2002: LCA8A Hermitage Wooded Commons West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019: LCA WH4: Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland Mosaic

North Wessex Downs AONB LCA 2002: LCA8A Hermitage Wooded Commons

- 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
- Settlement: Present-day settlement is largely dispersed across the area and was probably formed by encroachment into areas of common and woodland, although dates and patterns of encroachment are not clearly understood

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 issues of relevance

- New large free-standing dwellings as replacement dwellings in the open countryside.
- The change of use of land to domestic garden use.
- 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)
- New housing developments on greenfield sites
- The threat of incremental housing development outside settlements from conversions, redevelopments or rural workers' accommodation which are not clearly beneficial
- 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)
- 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
- Development that does not provide for appropriate mitigation (including through the Community Infrastructure Levy)
- Impact of road signage, street lighting and other highway clutter on landscape character, including within settlements. Measures which have an urbanising effect on AONB character and are thus generally inappropriate include: oversized, multiple and yellow-backed road signs; new street lighting in previously unlit locations; lighting that allows spillage or glare; road markings; concrete kerbing; illuminated bollards; fencing; and elaborate traffic-calming schemes

West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019: LCA WH4: Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland 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 elements that mark a transition between settlement and countryside
- Conserve the existing character of rural lanes and public rights of way
- Maintain open views from routeways

Landscape Capacity Assessment of Potential Housing Sites within and adjacent to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, West Berkshire: FINAL PHASE 2 REPORT: HERMITAGE (2014)

This capacity assessment was undertaken in 2014 and built on a previous study: *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Scale and Distribution of Development in the North Wessex Downs AONB (2011) (LSA 2011)* by examining the north part of Hermitage and its landscape setting in greater detail, specifically concentrating on the special qualities and key characteristics which contribute to the natural beauty of the AONB.

The 2011 assessment stated the landscape is well populated and has been subject to development pressures as a consequence of the area's relative accessibility. This has resulted in the linear spread of development out from the nucleated settlements. However, although Curridge and Longlane lie close to Hermitage, these settlements are separated by open countryside and woodland which are particularly important in retaining the rural character and identity of Hermitage itself. Hermitage is noted for its wooded setting, with many woodlands adding height to the surrounding low hills that contain the village. Most of the settlement lies on lower flat ground at 105 – 115m AOD, either side of the B4009. Any proposed development which would result in the loss of woodland cover, would extend up onto higher ground, or would lead to the loss of open countryside between Hermitage and the adjacent settlements is likely to have a detrimental effect on the special qualities of the AONB and the settlement of Hermitage.

The area is also noted for its small-scale landscape mosaic, its fine views of this particularly wooded part of the AONB, its rural winding lanes and the pattern of hedgerows and tree lines. Any proposed development needs to respect these characteristics and avoid suburbanising the rural character through unsympathetic hard landscape features such as kerbs, grand site entrances, or ornamental planting on the perimeter of the countryside.

Although Hermitage has large sites on the edge of the settlement which have long been under some form of development, the development of large and homogeneous estates would detract from the special qualities of this area. Great care will also be needed to minimise the impact on the landscape character of the surrounding AONB, through limitations on development and generous provision of Green Infrastructure, and to mitigate the existing harm to the AONB landscape from intrusive built form as at Denison barracks.

Landscape designations: North Wessex Downs AONB

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
<p>View into the site: Oare, including the cemetery of St Bartholomew's Church B4009 (Hampstead Norreys Road) and dwellings aligning Manor Lane Hermitage Primary School PRoW - CHIE/25/1, CHIE/24/1, HERM/13/1</p>	<p>Types of views: Rural views of fields, wooded hillside and occasional buildings Views across to Oare as rural hamlet, with church bell gable</p>	<p>Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: Although the landscape has a wooded character the areas/pockets of open fields also contribute positively to the mixed mosaic landscape character of this area of the AONB</p>
<p>Views out of the site to: To the south: Wooded hillside of Roebuck Wood (ancient woodland) To the west: Village of Oare, including bell gable of Grade II Listed St Bartholomew's Church To the north: Dwellings off Manor Lane, with wooded horizon To the east: Dwellings off the B4009, with wooded skyline beyond at Little Hungerford enclosing the view</p>	<p>Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity) High level of use, with the PRoW well used route from Hermitage to Oare for locals and walkers within AONB Manor Lane approach to Oare Adjacent primary school and playing field</p>	<p>Impacts of mitigation: Loss of long views across landscape, loss of extent of open farmland separating Oare from Hermitage Loss of rural views across open countryside from B4009 and Manor Lane Loss of extent of rural setting of Oare Loss of open character of Public Right of Way</p>
<p>Does the site form part of a skyline? No</p>	<p>Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): High expectations as located within AONB</p>	
<p>Panoramic views: To the west and wooded horizons including Oareborough Hill (on the northern side of the M4)</p>		
<p>Landmark features: None Outside the site, local landmarks would include the wooded hillsides of Roebuck and Windmill Plantation and the bell gable of St Bartholomew's Church</p>		
<p>Sensitivity score: High</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: High</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: High</p>
<p>Visual sensitivity score High</p>		
<p>Additional comments: A very locally visible site which forms part of the rural setting of Hermitage and separation from the small rural hamlet of Oare. Also contains a well-used Public Right of Way</p>		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
<p>Topography and landform: Gently rising landform from around 117m AOD on the north east site boundary in a south west direction to between 120-125m AOD</p>	<p>Boundary features other than vegetation: Northern site boundary adjacent Manor Lane: Timber post and rail fencing Western site boundary: Timber post and rail fencing</p>	<p>Tranquillity – Noise levels M4 traffic noise is audible from the site</p>
<p>Geological features: None</p>	<p>Historic landscapes: None known</p>	<p>Tranquillity – Visual intrusion/detractors Overall, none,</p>
<p>Soil quality: Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soil with moderate fertility Agricultural Land Classification: Grade 3 (good-moderate)</p>	<p>Parkland features: None</p>	<p>Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: Light pollution from M4 motorway corridor and from Chieveley Services/ Denison Barracks increases night light pollution above general rural levels from 0.5-1 to 1-2 NanoWatts/cm²/sr</p>
<p>Water features: Pond adjacent school boundary Smaller pond just outside western site boundary</p>		
<p>Landcover and land use: Agriculture – one medium size arable field and part of another adjacent medium size arable field Area on eastern side adjacent school is rough grassland with seasonal pond Overhead cables on timber posts</p>	<p>Conservation Area: None</p>	
<p>Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: Individual tree adjacent pond on hedge line</p>	<p>Landscape features of LCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of a broad undulating plateau • Views out to low wooded horizons, also ancient woodland • Views out of village to wooded skylines • Presence of surface water and small streams • Varied field pattern with strong hedgerows • An accessible landscape • Adjacent rural lane: Manor Lane • Dispersed settlements and distinctive pattern of small rural hamlets 	

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for Potential Housing Sites within West Berkshire

<p>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: Hedgerow aligns across the site in a east-west adjacent the PRow Treed hedgerow aligns the eastern site boundary adjacent the B4009 Treed hedgerow aligns the school boundary in the south Very intermittent hedgerow, with occasional small tree along northern boundary adjacent Manor Lane</p>	<p>Built form: None</p>	<p>Accessibility by public footpath: One PRow crosses the site, providing a footpath link from Hermitage across the fields to Oare. From Oare, another PRow then circles southwards across an area of common land back into Hermitage, this creates a local circular walk/route</p>
<p>Woodland and copses: None</p>	<p>Setting of listed buildings: St Bartholomew's Church (Grade II listed) in Oare</p>	<p>Open access areas: None</p>
<p>Wetland and meadow: Area adjacent pond, probably will include a small area of wetland characteristics</p>	<p>Scheduled Monuments: None</p>	<p>Recreational areas: None</p>
<p>Common land: None</p>	<p>Settlement pattern: Hermitage is one of a number of dispersed settlements within this wooded area, which grew as part of a pattern of encroachment into woodland and commons. To the west of Hermitage is the small hamlet of Oare, separated from Hermitage by open fields and intermittent development off Manor Lane</p>	
<p>Heathland: None</p>	<p>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: None</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – Elements of openness/enclosure: The east-west hedgerow which crosses the site, visually separates the two open fields. These two fields are further visually enclosed by characteristic low wooded horizons, with dwellings visible on the edge of Hermitage and Oare</p>
<p>Other significant vegetation cover: None</p>	<p>Cultural associations: None</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: The site forms part of an established recognised landscape pattern of this part of the AONB, with the site forming part of the mixed mosaic of fields enclosed by hedgerows and woodlands, with views out to wooded horizons</p>

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for Potential Housing Sites within West Berkshire

<p>BAP/Phase I records/ Priority habitats: The hedgerows would qualify as Priority Habitats</p>	<p>Features of cultural importance: None</p>	
<p>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: The south of the site aligns Roebuck Woodland, which is designated an ancient woodland and a Local Wildlife Site</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: A well intact rural landscape with established boundary elements, although slightly blighted by traffic noise from the M4</p>		

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WIDER LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE

Adjacent settlement:

Hermitage is one of the dispersed settlements within this area, separated from other settlements by open countryside and fields.

Character of the urban edge: Hermitage

Just over half of the eastern site boundary aligns the B4009 roadside hedgerow, with dwellings on the opposite side of the road. Dwellings are two storeys, semidetached and former Local Authority. Some have been extended, all with off street car parking, but also with a long layby permitting on road car parking. The roadside pavement and density of development creates a more urban character than rural. View of these dwellings are partly visible from the site, set against the wooded hillside. Behind these dwellings is an area of more recent development (2005) with a higher density residential character and 2-2.5 storey terraces, semidetached and detached, and three storey blocks of apartments.

The rest of the eastern site boundary abuts the school playing field, with Hermitage Primary School set back towards the B4009. The school marks the extent of the northern edge of development on the western side of the B4009. To the south of the school, the B4009 is flanked by detached ribbon development, which backs onto Roebuck Wood

Presence in floodplain:

No

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The site to the south is enclosed by the wooded hillside of Roebuck Wood, visible throughout the site and a typical landscape characteristic of this area of the AONB. There are also views from the site across to the east beyond the residential area to the wooded hillside and Windmill Hill Plantation. The new intervening area of residential development is screened from these views.

To the north the views continue, with filtered views of traffic on the M4 within the leafless winter months

Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

Oare is located to the west of the Hermitage settlement boundary by 350m, separated by arable fields which includes the site. Oare is a small rural hamlet, with two listed buildings including the small flint church of Saint Bartholomew's. A pond with surrounding open grassland forms a central feature within the village. Oare is characterised by a low density of traditional redbrick dwellings, enclosed by redbrick garden boundary walls and mature trees. A number of traditional farm buildings have been converted to dwellings, while the larger farm: Newhouse Farm is characterised by modern farm buildings, leading back to the M4, but largely out of view from within the village. M4 traffic noise is audible.

Historic links with the wider area if known:

None

Ecological links with the wider area if known:

The site abuts Roebuck Woodland, which is designated an ancient woodland and a Local Wildlife Site

Recreational links with the wider area:


The site includes a PRow, which provides a well-used pedestrian link between Hermitage and Oare. From Oare, there are further PRow which provide access to the common land located within Roebuck Wood, and then south back into Hermitage

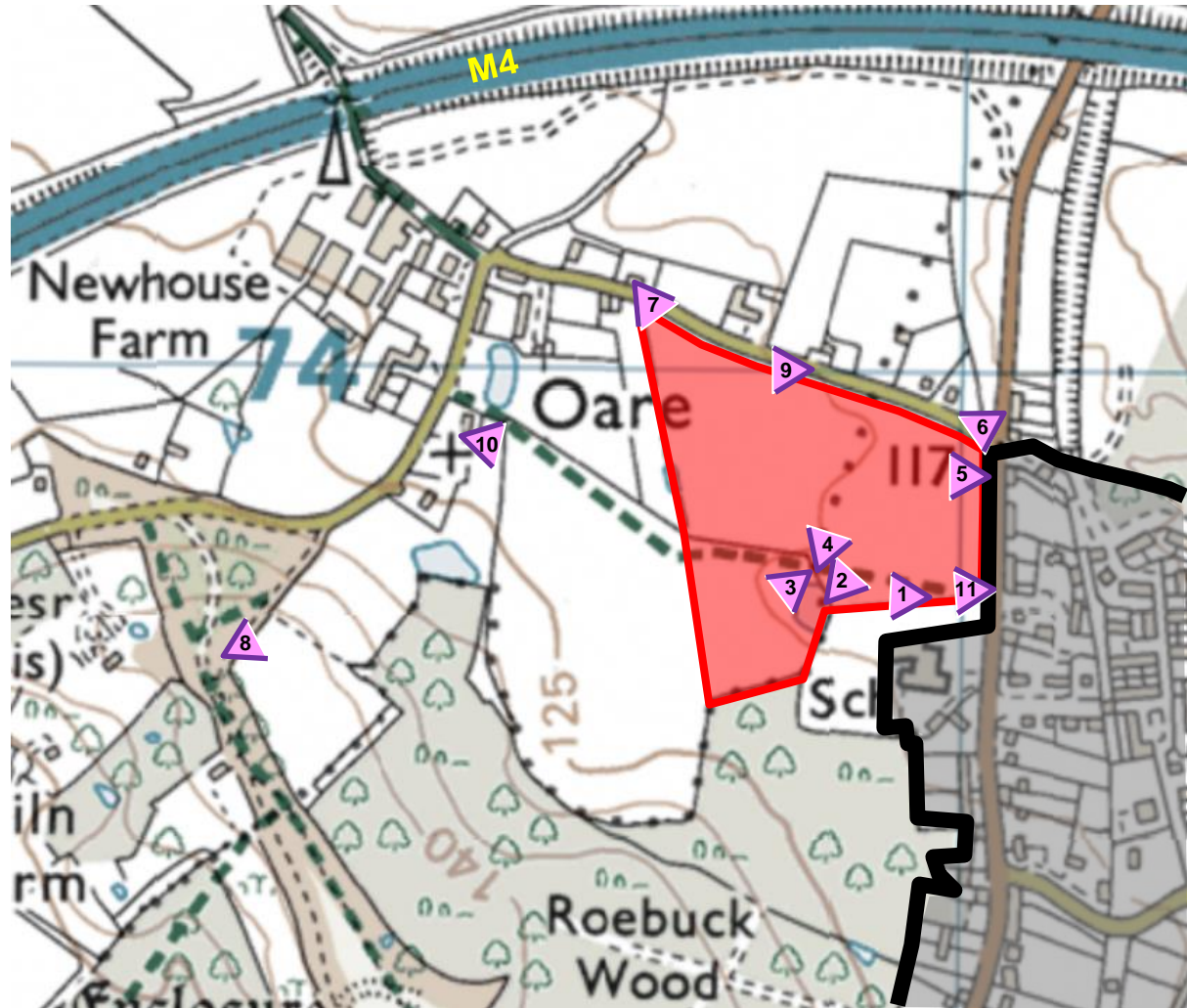
VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:

Hermitage Village Design Statement 2004:

- The majority of houses in Hermitage are two-storey detached. Bungalows are also found in individual closes such as Colyer Close and Briants Piece and there are also some semi-detached houses. Most houses are three or four-bedroom and sit on plots that allow for open gaps between them, often providing outward views
- From almost anywhere within the village there are outward views between buildings, providing a visual link with wooded skylines of the surrounding AONB
- There are substantial groupings of mature trees at the four main entrances to the village (north, south, east and southeast)

Figure 1: Site: HER5: Land at North Hermitage

-  Site boundary
 -  Hermitage settlement boundary
 -  North Wessex Downs AONB complete map area
 -  Viewpoint photo
- Landscape capacity**
-  High capacity
 -  Medium/high capacity
 -  Medium capacity
 -  Medium/low capacity
 -  Low capacity



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North Wessex Downs AONB LCA 2002: LCA8A 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.

West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019: LCA WH4: Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland Mosaic

The site lies within the following *LCA WH4: Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland Mosaic*. The landscape strategy for this LCA is set out below:

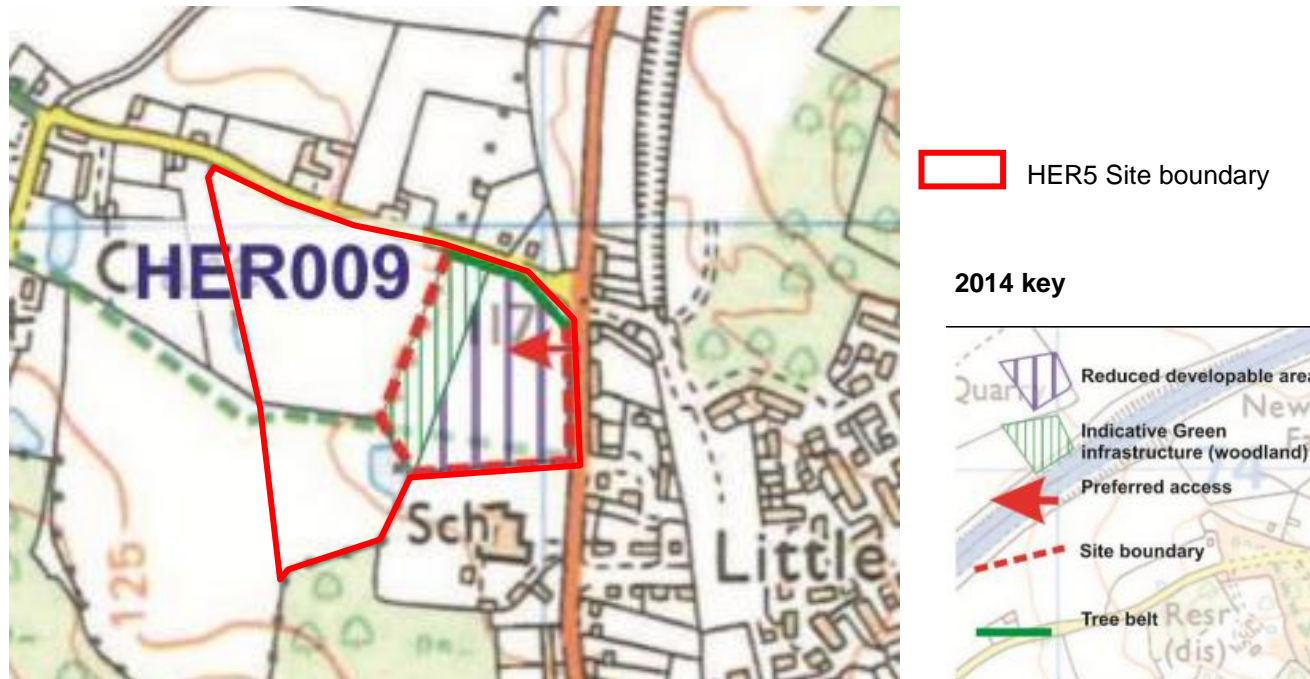
- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve and restore heathland characteristics
- Promote appropriate woodland management
- Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements
- Retain the distinction between and individual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

Landscape Capacity Assessment of Potential Housing Sites within and adjacent to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in West Berkshire 2014: Final Phase 2 Report: Hermitage

This report provided an assessment of a smaller site area (referenced: HER009) which covered the eastern part of the site for its suitability as a potential housing site. This assessment built on a previous study: *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Scale and Distribution of Development in the North Wessex Downs AONB (2011) (LSA2011)*, by examining the northern part of Hermitage and its landscape setting in greater detail, specifically concentrating on the special qualities and key characteristics which contribute to the natural beauty of the AONB.

2014 Report Recommendations: The 2014 assessment recommended that only part of the HR009 site should be considered further as a potential housing site subject to the retention of boundary vegetation and the careful consideration of the footpath route. Development should be contained in the eastern part of site as indicated in Figure HER009.2.

The plan below shows the smaller 2014 potential site (site boundary: red dashed line) and the 2022 HER5 potential site (site boundary: red solid line)



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Extract from Figure HER009.2 (taken from Landscape Capacity Assessment of Potential Housing Sites within and adjacent to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in West Berkshire 2014: Final Phase 2 Report: Hermitage)

HER5 Site description:

Site HER5 lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB at the northern end of Hermitage. Constituting one medium arable field and to the south a small part of another medium arable field. The site is located between the village of Hermitage and small grazing paddocks on the eastern side of the small rural hamlet of Oare, located further to the west. The site boundaries are to the east the roadside well treed hedgerow of the Hampstead Norreys Road/ B4009; to the north a timber post and rail fence, with occasional small tree which aligns Manor Lane, a narrow road in cutting leading to the rural hamlet of Oare; to the west the site boundary aligns a treed field hedgerow; to the south, the site boundary cuts across an arable field before terminating at the ancient woodland: Roebuck Wood. The site boundary then aligns this woodland, south of a pond and along the treed boundary of the adjacent school playing fields at Hermitage Primary School. The site is located on a very gentle sloping plateau, this sloping landform then becomes steeper through Roebuck Wood, visually enclosing the site to the south. To the east, again beyond the B4009, the landform slopes upwards to wooded hills, again enclosing views from the site. To the north west and north the gently undulating plateau continues as fields to the M4 (not overly visible from the site). Overall, the Levels of the site slope gently upwards from the north eastern corner at 117m AOD in a south west direction to levels at around between 120-125m AOD. The adjacent roads: B4009 and Manor Lane are set slightly in cuttings at lower levels to the site. A Public Right of Way crosses the site, linking Hermitage with Oare and is well used. The site is locally prominent but largely contained beyond the immediate adjacent areas. There is very limited connection with the M4 corridor to the north although traffic noise is audible from the site.

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is located as follows:

- Within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Adjacent a small length of the settlement boundary of Hermitage
- Within the setting of Hermitage and Oare and contributing to their physical separation and separate identities

VIEWPOINTS:



Photo 1: View from PRow which crosses the site looking west towards Oare, with Roebuck Wood visible on rising ground to the left. The wooded hill at Oareborough is just visible above the roofline at Oare (March 2022)



Photo 2: View from the PRow looking east towards the dwellings on the B4009/ Hampstead Norreys Road, with wooded hillside of Windmill Hill Plantation enclosing the view beyond (March 2022)



Photo 3: View from the PRow looking across the western part of the site, with pond to the left. The view extends and is enclosed by Roebuck Wood (March 2022)



Photo 4: View from the PRow looking northwards, with the low-lying development including the occasional dwelling and stable block visible adjacent Manor Lane, (located out of view in cutting). There are a few filtered views of moving traffic on the M4 through the intervening trees (March 2022)



Photo 5: A view from the field gateway from the B4009 looking west across the site towards Oare. St Bartholomew's Church bell gable is just visible within the treeline to the left (March 2022)



Photo 6: At the northern entrance to Hermitage, a view across the roundabout (B4009 with Manor Lane) into the site and across to Roebuck Wood (March 2022)



Photo 7: View from Manor Lane into the north western corner of the site. Buildings in Hermitage are barely discernible. The woodlands of Roebuck Wood link with other woodlands to the east (left in photo) creating a continuous wooded skyline (March 2022)



Photo 8: View from footpath on Open Access Land/Common Land to the south through trees down to the site, which is just visible as part of the open fields (March 2022)



Photo 9: View from the adjacent Manor Lane (set at a lower level in cutting) to adjacent site to the left (March 2022)

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for potential housing sites within West Berkshire



Photo 10: View from the cemetery at Saint Bartholomew's Church, looking east towards site, located beyond hedgerow. Windmill Plantation is visible as part of the wooded skyline (March 2022)



Photo 11: View from B4009/ Hampstead Norreys Road to entrance to PRoW which crosses the site. As shown the adjacent B4009 is set at a lower level with a well treed roadside hedgerow (March 2022)

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: High

- The site area is totally visible from adjacent public areas
- The site forms part of key views out of Hermitage and part of the rural setting of the settlement from views in
- The site forms part of the rural setting of Oare including the Grade II listed building: St Bartholomew's Church
- A large number of people can see the site from the adjacent B4009 (to the east), the approach to Hermitage from the north, the Public Right of Way, which crosses the site and from the eastern edge of Oare
- The site is visible and forms part of the characteristic AONB views out to wooded horizons

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- One medium arable field and part of another medium arable field, separated by well-defined hedgerow, which forms part of the mosaic of woodland, pasture, heathland and arable fields which characterises this area of the AONB
- Contains a pond, a characteristic landscape feature of this part of the AONB
- The site forms an open setting for the adjacent ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site: Roebuck Woodland
- Part of the open land in-between Hermitage and Oare, which provides an intact rural setting for both settlements
- Forms part of the rural setting for Manor Lane
- Traffic noise as in close proximity to M4

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

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/high

- The site has strong physical and visual links to the wider landscape and these outweigh any minor impacts from the adjacent urban edge

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

6. Landscape Value: Medium/high

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Local importance as part of undeveloped land between Hermitage and Oare which contributes to their separate rural settings and separate settlement identities

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

Relationship of site to Hermitage

- Short length of the eastern site boundary aligns adjacent roadside hedgerow of B4009/Hampstead Norreys Road, which forms the settlement boundary of Hermitage. This treed hedgerow limits intervisibility with the site and Hermitage
- Southern boundary aligns the grass school playing fields and Roebuck Wood (ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site)
- Northern site boundary aligns the sunken lane of Manor Lane which at the eastern end contains two - 2 storey detached properties (not within settlement boundary of Hermitage)
- Housing along the adjacent length of the B4009/Hampstead Norreys Road within Hermitage includes two storey semi-detached at the Hermitage end, however within the central section only includes a low-lying bungalow and a stable block
- Settlement on the west side of Hampstead Norreys Road generally comprise a line of single properties in a narrow band
- The site forms part of the open setting to Hermitage and its physical separation from Oare
- There is some intervisibility with Hermitage and to the west the rural hamlet of Oare

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Continuous relationship of open arable field and grass fields to the west, which also continue to the north beyond Manor Lane, before being severed by the M4
- Forms part of the open setting to Roebuck Wood to the south
- Part of the intrinsic mosaic of woodland, pasture and arable fields
- Part of an area of an established pattern of hedgerows, fields and woodland

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of landscape setting of Hermitage, which has strong links with the wider landscape
- Loss of open countryside area between Hermitage and Oare
- Impact on landscape setting of Oare and the landscape setting of the Grade II listed St Bartholomew's Church
- Impact on rural character of Manor Lane
- Impact on rural character of Public Right of Way (CHIE/24/1 which crosses the site
- Impact and loss of treed hedgerows and hedgerow across site
- Loss of pond and its open setting
- Noise levels are already compromised by the proximity to the M4, additional noise would not have a significant effect

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- A visible site, contributing to the rural setting of Hermitage
- Loss of local views, while largely screened from the wider AONB, due to wooded characteristic of character area
- Loss of amenity value with the impact on open views from Public Right of Way
- Loss of open setting and views across site to Roebuck Wood from B4009/Hampstead Norreys Road and Manor Lane
- Impact on rural views from Oare and from the graveyard of St Bartholomew's Church
- Impact on rural views from Manor Lane

Potential impact on key settlement characteristics

- Development across the whole of the site would reduce the physical gap between Hermitage and Oare and in particular compromise Oare's well intact rural setting and character of a traditional hamlet within the AONB
- Loss of views across to Roebuck Wood as approaching Hermitage which contributes to Hermitage's rural character
- Development across the whole site would extend development further northwards and eastwards at this location
- Loss of separate identities of Hermitage and Oare
- Development would widen the otherwise narrow settlement on the west side of Hampstead Norreys Road

Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB

- Extension of the urban form and loss of wooded views, as viewed from within the AONB
- Loss of views of key characteristics including the open views across to the wooded horizons
- Loss of open setting of the adjacent Roebuck Wood, an ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site
- Loss of rural character of Manor Lane, a characteristic sunken lane
- Loss of field pattern and arable fields and hedgerows which form part of the mosaic of woodland, pasture, remnant heathland and arable land
- Loss of pond and its open rural setting
- Loss of setting of the characteristic small hamlet of Oare
- Loss of the setting of Hermitage
- Increased light pollution into the open countryside
- Loss of amenity value of Public Right of Way

Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure

- A landscape buffer including tree/shrub and hedgerow planting along the northern edge would be necessary to retain the rural character of Manor Lane
- Views from the roundabout/junction with Manor Lane and B4009/Hampstead Norreys Road should be considered in detail, with views across to Roebuck Wood retained
- Views across to Oare, within its rural setting, especially views of the bell gable of St Bartholomew's Church should be retained
- Development should be of a lower density to allow significant tree planting within the development to allow a softer settlement edge
- Adequate space would need to be provided adjacent the pond to retain it as a feature on the edge of the development
- The existing Public Right of Way should be retained, conserved and enhanced, with adequate space to retain a rural character and views out to the wooded horizons and the hamlet of Oare
- Development should create a positive interface with the adjacent retained open countryside to the west and views from Oare, the north and the B4009/Hampstead Norreys Road

Conclusion and recommendations

- Development across the whole site would have a significant impact on key landscape characteristics and valued features of this area of the AONB and would not be appropriate
- Development across a small area in the eastern part of the site could be considered further, subject to the retention of boundary vegetation and the careful consideration of the footpath route. Development should be contained in the eastern part of site as previously indicated in Figure HER009.2. of the LCA 2014 and as shown in Figure 2 below:





- Development would be subject to the following requirements:
 - The provision of substantial woodland planting to contain the western side of the settlement, with open fields/hedgerows retained on the rest of the site to conserve the landscape character of the AONB and retain the rural setting of Oare
 - The preferred access is via the existing gap in the hedgerow on Hampstead Norreys Road subject to assessment of impacts on the remaining hedgerow
 - Containment of the settlement within a linear pattern and on the lower ground adjacent the B4009
 - Sensitive design to mitigate any impacts, particularly on the rural character of Manor Lane
 - The Public Right of Way through the site should be retained, within a landscape buffer which retains a rural character and clear views out to the wooded horizons and the hamlet of Oare, in particular the church
 - The retention and enhancement of existing tree belts and hedgerows as well as extensive new woodland planting to contain the western edge of the settlement
 - A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site

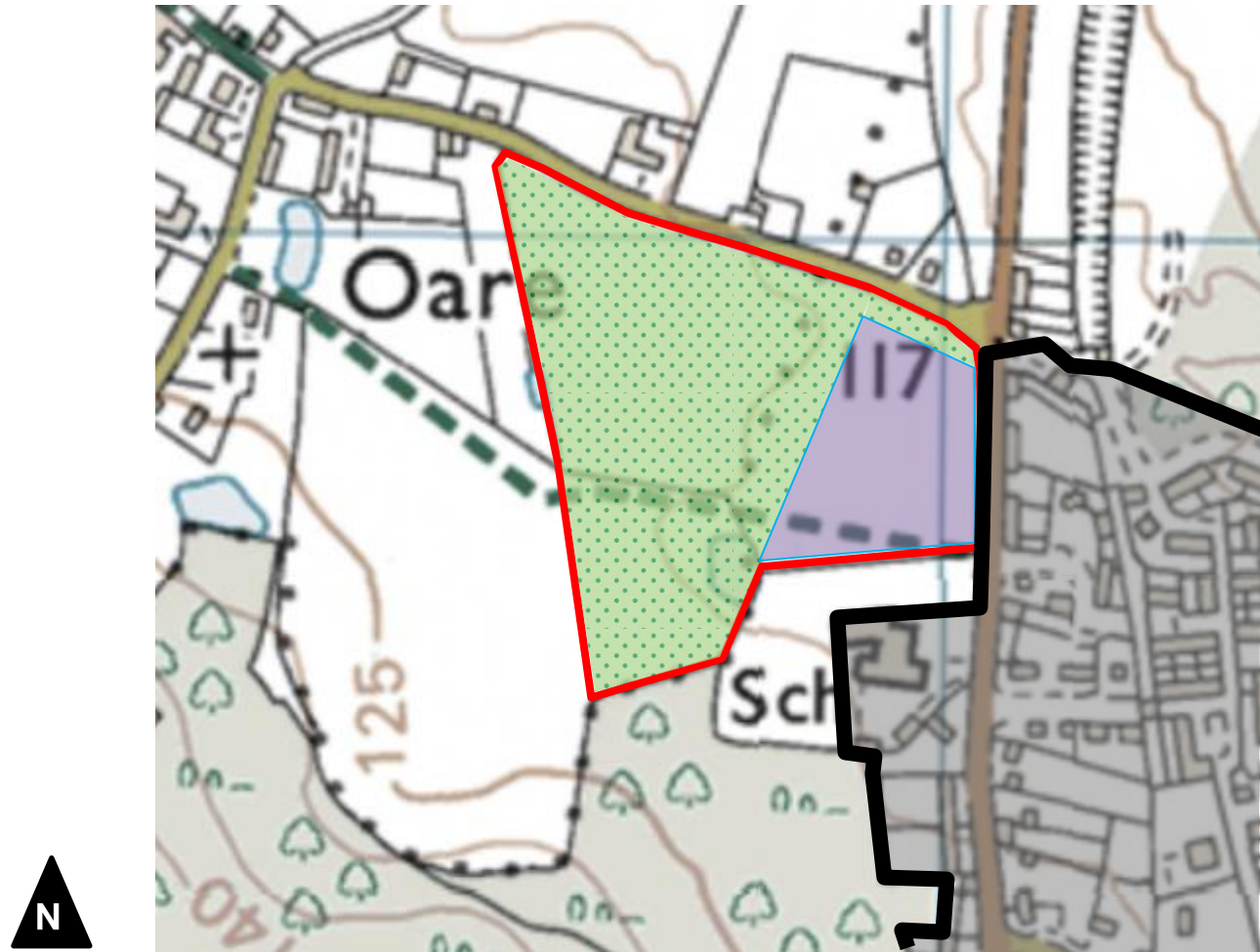
Cumulative impact of development with other potential housing sites for Hermitage

There is another site in Hermitage currently being assessed as a potential housing site, HER4 – land north of Station Road. It is to the south east of the village and has no physical or visual connection with HER5. In landscape terms there would therefore be no cumulative effect if both sites were to come forward. However, if a choice between HER4 and HER5 needed to be made, then in landscape terms, on balance, HER4 would be preferable.

With development already committed on sites north west of HER4 through policies HSA24 and HSA25 of the Local Plan, development on site HER4 would result in a less of an adverse impact on the AONB while also providing enhancements to the site and surrounding area. Any further development in the north part of Hermitage is more constrained by woodland, landform and the character of the landscape and settlement pattern.

Figure 2: Site: HER5: Land at North Hermitage

-  Site boundary
-  Settlement boundary
-  With potential for development
-  Landscape buffer



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