

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for: Lowesdon Works - Site 2: Land south of Lambourn Business Park

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CAPACITY STUDY 2022 RECORD SHEET

Site	Lowesdon Works - Site 2: land south of Lambourn Business Park
Date of site survey	16 th January 2022
Surveyors	LA
Weather/visibility	Low cloud
LCA	North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019 Landscape Character Appraisal to inform the Lambourn Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020

West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019 the site is located within *WD1: Shefford Wooded Downland*

Key Characteristics

- Strong rolling landform with scarp and dipslopes, underlain by a chalk plateau
- Mixed farmland, divided into large-scale fields bound by mature hedgerows and broken up by blocks of woodland
- Ridgetop woodlands and calcareous grasslands form important semi-natural habitats
- Visible archaeological remains from various eras of history
- Sparse settlement, comprising hamlets and scattered farms, cottages and stud farms
- Access via a variety of routes, including motorway and major roads contrasting with a network of rural lanes, byways, tracks and footpaths
- Sheltered, wooded character restricts views and creates an enclosed landscape which contrasts with panoramic views experienced from vantage points
- A traditional rural landscape with few modern intrusions

Valued Features and Qualities

- Nationally valued landscape which forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Well-wooded character, including areas of ancient semi-natural woodland
- Nationally and locally designated semi-natural habitats
- Strong rural character due to sparse settlement and limited modern influences
- Frequent archaeological features which create a strong sense of time-depth
- Expansive open views from higher ground
- Sense of enclosure and high levels of tranquillity

Detractors

- Over intensification of arable farming practices
- Lack of appropriate woodland management in some areas
- Noise and visual pollution created by the M4
- Ongoing pressure for development

- Increased traffic near Membury motorway service area as well as on the rural lane road network
- Localised modern intrusions on the landscape

Landscape Strategy

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the nationally designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Conserve woodland, trees and hedgerows within the landscape
- Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats including lowland calcareous grassland
- Conserve historic features within the landscape
- Conserve the sparsely settled and rural character of the landscape
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes and extensive Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

North Wessex Downs AONB LCA 2002 – The site is located within *LCA2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs*

Key Characteristics

- Strongly rolling chalk plateau landform incised by dry valleys with Clay-with-flint deposits capping higher sections of the plateau and softening landform
- A mosaic of woodland/mixed arable and pasture farmland. Large scale fields bounded by hedgerows, thick shelterbelts and distinctive ridge top woodlands. Unimproved chalk grassland retained on steep slopes
- Field patterns reflecting both formal and informal post medieval enclosure, plus many valley side woodlands which show signs of informal intakes by assarting
- High proportion of ancient semi-natural woodlands including ash-hazel coppice, with a rich ground flora
- A distinct landscape pattern around Woodlands St Mary and Lambourn Woodlands with a regular patterning of rectilinear fields, broad shelterbelts and ridge woodlands
- Isolated individual Bronze Age round barrows on ridgelines and a large prominent Iron Age Hillfort at Membury
- Settlement pattern typical of a wood pasture landscape, characterised by a high density of regularly spaced farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings along Roman Road, with few villages. Built form includes red brick, flint and render, weatherboard, tile and thatch
- A large number of equestrian centres, stud farms and increasing number of pony paddocks

Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural character of the Lambourn Wooded Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views contrasting with the strong wooded horizons, historic features including archaeological sites, the historic field pattern and road and lane network. 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, sympathetic management of commercial forestry plantations and restoration of hedgerows. Remnant chalk grassland is a feature along steep slopes and should be conserved with opportunities for habitat restoration to link existing isolated sites. The distinctive pattern of settlements with dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings 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

Landscape Character Appraisal to inform the Lambourn Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020

This appraisal provides a more detail assessment of the landscape of Lambourn Parish. The site is located within Wooded Downland (LCA2), described as an area comprising of arable fields and multiple stands of woodland that very likely formed a much bigger area of continuous woodland. Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LA2 are as follows:

- Ensure that the SSSIs within the LCA remain in 'favourable' condition, and that grassland habitats are conserved and enhanced.
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity value of the area through protection of the SSSI, LWS and priority habitats within this LCA and seek opportunities for maintaining/enhancing connectivity between these sites/ habitats
- Protect the rural setting and secluded nature of settlements and farmstead
- The settlement pattern throughout the area is dispersed and very low density; its character is enclosed and in harmony with the landscape

Landscape Designations

North Wessex Downs AONB

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

General visibility	Population	Mitigation potential
<p>Views into the site from: A number of filtered views up to site through roadside hedgerow from B4000 Lyedowns on B4000</p>	<p>Types of viewers: Vehicle travellers on B4000 Users of adjacent PEA Residents</p>	<p>Opportunities for mitigation and landscape compatibility of mitigation: A wooded downland landscape character area, where woodland and tree planting could be used as a mitigation measure to integrate and screen development proposals into the landscape. However, there is no physical western and southern boundary making the site very open to the surrounding and wider landscape</p>
<p>Views out of the site to: Adjacent field and down to hedgerow which aligns the B4000 and beyond</p>	<p>Magnitude of viewers (level of use and popularity): Located within AONB, would expect relatively high level of use</p>	<p>Impacts of mitigation: Could relate and integrate with existing surrounding landscape and vegetation pattern, enhancing the wooded landscape character of the area, however would take time to mature to be effective in screening views from the B4000</p>
<p>Does the site form part of a skyline? Yes – as seen from the B4000</p>	<p>Visual perceptions (activity and expectations of local visual receptors): AONB – expectations high of rural landscape</p>	
<p>Panoramic views: Due to elevated location, views south</p>		
<p>Landmark features: None</p>		
<p>Sensitivity score: Medium/low</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Medium</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Medium</p>
<p>Visual sensitivity score: Medium</p>		
<p>Additional comments: Due to the landform, elevated location and orientation, this only permits filtered views from the closest public highway (B4000) towards the site, partly visible within the foreground of the adjacent PEA</p>		

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Natural factors	Cultural factors	Perceptual features
<p>Topography and landform: Occupying a location on a sloping side of a gentle spur as part of the gently rolling landscape typical of the North Wessex Downs</p>	<p>Boundary features other than vegetation: None</p>	<p>Tranquillity – Noise levels: Occasional vehicular noise from vehicles accessing existing PEA Constant traffic noise from the busy B4000 and M4 further to the south</p>
<p>Geological features: None</p>	<p>Historic landscapes: None, as outside footprint of adjacent WWII dispersed camp, which formed one of twelve around Membury Airfield.</p>	<p>Tranquillity – Visual intrusion / detractors: Part of an open grass field, typical of this area of the AONB Adjacent PEA constitutes a mix of poor quality (although of cultural value) buildings with an adhoc character</p>
<p>Soil quality: Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage Grade 2 (very good)</p>	<p>Parkland features: None</p>	<p>Tranquillity – Light pollution/dark skies: Mid way between bright and dark – 1-2 (Nano Watts/cm2/sr) Main light pollution comes from Membury Services – 8-16 (Nano Watts/cm2/sr), located at a distance of circa 0.5km</p>
<p>Water features: None</p>		
<p>Landcover and land use: Southern part of site forms part of a grazed field The northern area of the site, includes a small compound with a woodland copse, an access driveway to adjacent southern part of PEA, an area of amenity grassland as part of usage of adjacent PEA (but not designated PEA)</p>	<p>Conservation Area: None</p>	
<p>Tree belts, individual trees and riverside trees: Northern boundary defined by an intermittent treed hedgerow Across the site on loose east west alignment along the driveway is a line of trees</p>	<p>Landscape features of LCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms part of the nationally valued North Wessex Downs AONB landscape • Many Public Rights of Way • Mixed farmland, divided into large-scale fields bound by mature hedgerows and broken up by blocks of woodland 	

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered, wooded character restricts views and creates an enclosed landscape which contrasts with panoramic views experienced from vantage points • Well-wooded character, including areas of ancient semi-natural woodland • High proportion of ancient semi-natural woodlands including ash-hazel coppice, with a rich ground flora • A distinct landscape pattern around woodland St Mary and Lambourn Woodlands with a regular patterning of rectilinear fields, broad shelterbelts and ridge woodlands 	
<p>Hedgerows and hedgerow trees: A northern hedgerow separates the site from the adjacent northern PEA An internal east-west hedgerow which includes a number of trees, separates the southern part of the site from the northern part The eastern site boundary hedgerow separates the site from the main PEA driveway</p>	<p>Built form: None, except driveway to southern area of adjacent PEA</p>	<p>Accessibility by public footpath: None</p>
<p>Woodland and copses: One small woodland copse</p>	<p>Setting of listed buildings: None</p>	<p>Open access areas: None</p>
<p>Wetland and meadow: Southern area of grassland could have meadow qualities</p>	<p>Scheduled Monuments: None</p>	<p>Recreational areas: None</p>
<p>Common land: None</p>	<p>Pattern of Protected Employment Area: Located between the main part of Lowesdon Works PEA and smaller fragmented PEA, the site would effectively join them up</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity - Elements of openness/enclosure: The northern part of the site is semi enclosed, while the southern part (small part of a larger field) is open to the south and west</p>

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

<p>Heathland: None</p>	<p>Contribution of private gardens to landscape character: None</p>	<p>Aesthetic sensitivity – landscape pattern: A woodland pattern with fields and lengths of hedgerows, including broadleaf and conifer grown for extraction. Well served by PRoW</p>
<p>Other significant vegetation cover: None</p>	<p>Cultural associations: None</p>	
<p>Priority Habitats/BAP/Phase I records: None The site boundary hedgerows would qualify as 'important' as regard to The Hedgerows Regulations 1997</p>	<p>Features of cultural importance: None</p>	
<p>Presence of SSSI/SINC/local wildlife designation/Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland: None on site</p>		
<p>Sensitivity score: Medium/high</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Medium/low</p>	<p>Sensitivity score: Medium/low</p>
<p>Landscape sensitivity score: Medium</p>		
<p>Additional comments:</p>		

Relationship with the wider landscape/Protected Employment Area

Adjacent Protected Employment Area (PEA)

The site is adjacent Lowesdon Works PEA, also known as Lambourn Woodlands Business Park which includes two areas, the main and larger area, to the north and a small area, across the main PEA driveway to the south east

Character of the Protected Employment Area (PEA)

Lowesdon Works PEA is characterised by modified ex WWII single storey buildings as stated by WBC Archaeology Service date (05/08/2021) in response to planning application 21/01766/COMIND... *They formed part of what was a dispersed site around Membury Airfield, constructed during the Second World War. Several airfields were created in Berkshire; Membury was authorised as an airfield in 1941, and used by the USAAF from 1942, being handed back to the RAF from 1945-46. Around the airfield itself were 12 dispersed sites with various functions. The Business Park was Site No 2, Communal, as is shown on a plan of 1944. Each building is numbered and named. From this source, it would appear that during the war, these were the uses of the Business Park Units: 1 (marked as 167) Dining Room 3 (marked as part of 156) Grocery and Provision Store 9 (marked as 160) Sergeants' Mess Business Park Units 4 and 5 do not appear to have been present on the 1944 plan but I would like their origin confirmed. These buildings, though altered since their original construction, contain heritage interest due to their historic link with the internationally important event of the Second World War*

The PEA now has a mix of businesses, with mainly informal areas of hardstanding for adjacent car parking. The buildings are low lying single storey buildings with pitched roofs where many are in a poor state of repair. Some recently have been knocked down, giving the overall character of the PEA a degraded appearance

Presence in a floodplain:

No

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside:

The southern part of the site is a small part of a large field of grass, which has a strong relationship with the rest of the field and the wider countryside. The northern part of the site beyond the field hedgerow has a stronger connection with the adjacent PEA

Character of adjacent village(s)/towns:

The site is separated from any villages or towns, with Lambourn circa 2.7 km from the site. The B4000 (Ermin Street) is characterised by intermittent residential properties and farmsteads, there is a concentration of properties at the junction of the B4000 and Hilldrop Lane, circa 230m from the site boundary

Historic links with the wider area if known:

None

Ecological links with the wider area if known:

None known





Recreational links with the wider area:

Part of the AONB, but not visible from any Public Rights of Way






VDS/Parish Plan – relevant extracts:

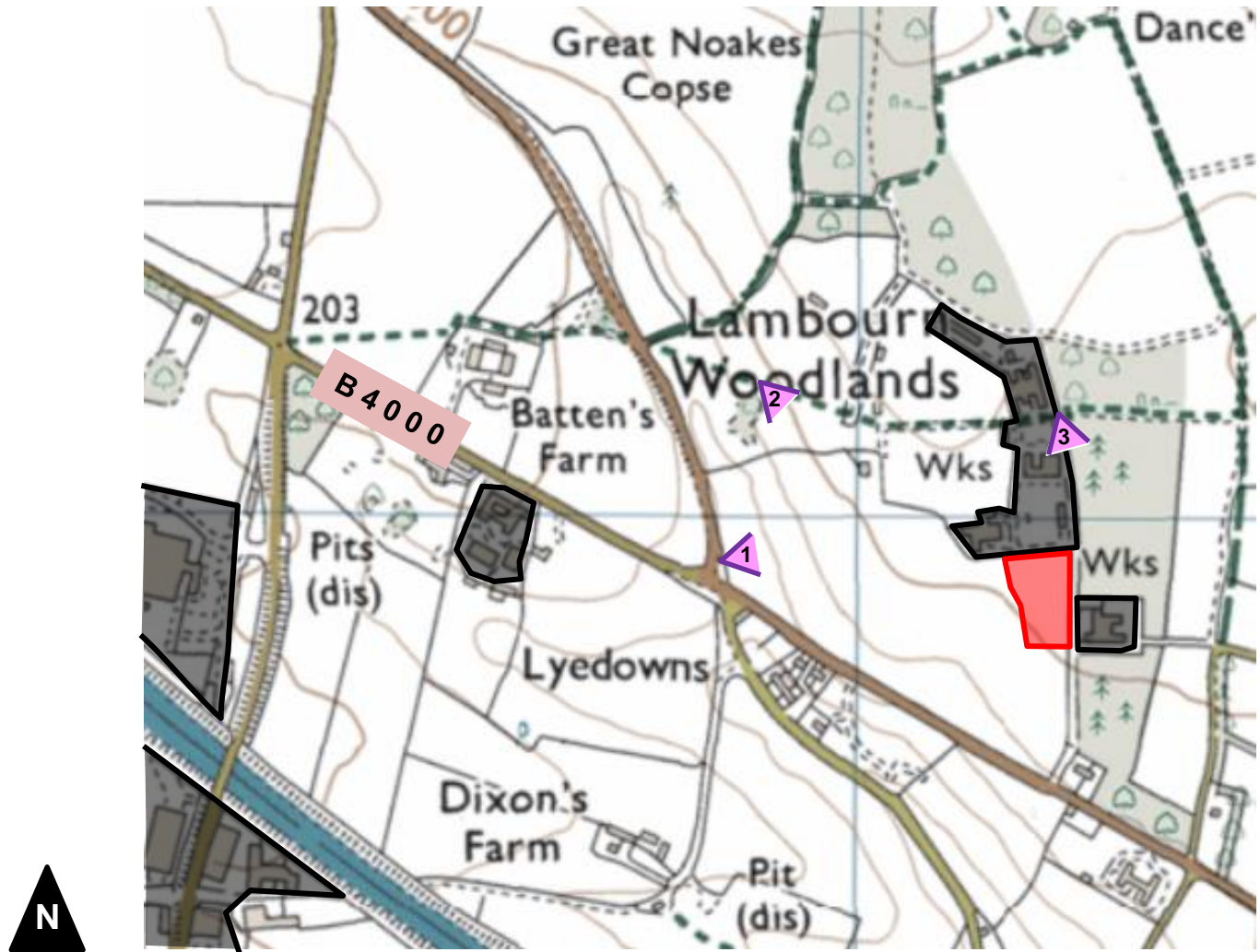
Lambourn Parish is currently preparing their NDP

Figure 1: Lowesdon Works - Site 2: land south of Lambourn Business Park

-  Site boundary
-  Protected Employment Area
-  North Wessex Downs AONB - complete area
-  Viewpoint photo

Landscape Capacity

-  High capacity
-  Medium/high capacity
-  Medium capacity
-  Medium/low capacity
-  Low capacity



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West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019

The site is located within *WD1: Shefford Wooded Downland* 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 woodland, trees and hedgerows within the landscape
- Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats including lowland calcareous grassland
- Conserve historic features within the landscape
- Conserve the sparsely settled and rural character of the landscape
- Conserve characteristic winding lanes and extensive Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

North Wessex Downs AONB LCA 2002

The site lies within the within *Character Area LCA2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs*

Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural character of the Lambourn Wooded Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views contrasting with the strong wooded horizons, historic features including archaeological sites, the historic field pattern and road and lane network. 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, sympathetic management of commercial forestry plantations and restoration of hedgerows. Remnant chalk grassland is a feature along steep slopes and should be conserved with opportunities for habitat restoration to link existing isolated sites. The distinctive pattern of settlements with dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings 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)
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- 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 Character Appraisal to inform the Lambourn Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020

Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LA2 are as follows:

- Ensure that the SSSIs within the LCA remain in 'favourable' condition, and that grassland habitats are conserved and enhanced.
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity value of the area through protection of the SSSI, LWS and priority habitats within this LCA and seek opportunities for maintaining/enhancing connectivity between these sites/ habitats
- Protect the rural setting and secluded nature of settlements and farmstead.
- The settlement pattern throughout the area is dispersed and very low density; its character is enclosed and in harmony with the landscape

Site description:

The site is in an elevated location, to the immediate south and slightly at a lower level to the adjacent part of the PEA to the north. Bordered by the driveway to the east, where beyond is the adjacent smaller parcel of the PEA; and open farmland (grassland) to the south and west. The site forms part of a grass field and contains a small woodland copse, access driveway to the northern PEA and amenity grassland with some small trees. The site is separate from the adjacent PEA by a treed hedgerow

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is located as follows:

- Set within the North Wessex Downs AONB

Viewpoints



Photo 1: View from the footpath (PRoW LAMB/20/3) looking towards the site, which is located beyond the rooftops of the existing PEA. Note long views to distant horizons



Photo 2: View from the footpath (PRoW LAMB/20/3) towards site, which is obscured by landform. Note existing ex WWII building on skyline, remnant of WWII camp



Photo 3: View from footpath (PRoW LAMB/20/3) within adjacent PEA looking towards site, which is screened by intervening buildings and trees

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium

- The site is elevated and located on a gentle sloping valley side, at a lower level from the adjacent PEA. There are only filtered views through the roadside hedgerow from the nearest highway B4000 of the open southern part of the site
- No views of the site from Public Rights of Way
- The site is well enclosed with woodland and the small fragmented PEA to the east, and the adjacent main PEA to the north preventing views from further locations to the north and east of the site, however is open along its western and southern side

2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- Located within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Includes part of a hedged field of grassland, a row of trees and a small woodland copse
- A partly enclosed landscape, with the southern part of the site, as part of a larger field of grassland more open
- Located on a gently sloping valley side at a lower level to the adjacent to a PEA
- Planting on the western and southern site boundary with tree planting could bring enhancements to the wider AONB and screen the site from the wider landscape and the B4000, but would take time to mature
- Woodland planting on the site boundary could link to the wider vegetation pattern and the wooded downland landscape character

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

4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/high

- The site, although is adjacent a PEA, has strong links with the wider landscape, especially the southern part which forms part of a larger grass field

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 Lowesdon Works Protected Employment Area

- Located adjacent and in-between the main part of Lowesdon Works PEA and the smaller fragmented part of it to the east

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Southern part of the site forms a small part of a larger hedged field, this part of the site connects with the wider landscape.
- The northern part of the site beyond the field hedgerow is semi separated from the adjacent PEA by another hedgerow with trees
- Beyond the adjacent PEA driveway, the site is contained by existing woodland

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Loss of part of a field of grassland, trees, small woodland copse and hedgerows
- Increased site traffic could impact on noise levels
- Tall, large-scale buildings would be out of character with the landscape resulting in an adverse impact
- External lighting could impact on dark skies and result in light pollution within the AONB
- Overall development could result in a more urban character impacting on the rural character of the area

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Potential adverse visual impact on filtered views through roadside hedgerow from B4000
- Not visible from Public Rights of Way

Potential Impact on existing Protected Employment Area

- The site would link the two existing separate parts of the PEAs; however, these are well integrated and screened from the wider landscape
- The site would extend the visual influence of the PEA by extending into an open field, with no physical boundary.

Potential impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB

- Loss of open land within the North Wessex Downs AONB
- Increased views of modern buildings within the North Wessex Downs AONB, from the B400, while new boundary mitigation planting would be suitable, this would take time to mature and be effective
- Long term opportunity to introduce tree planting to enhance the Downland woodland character of the area





Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure

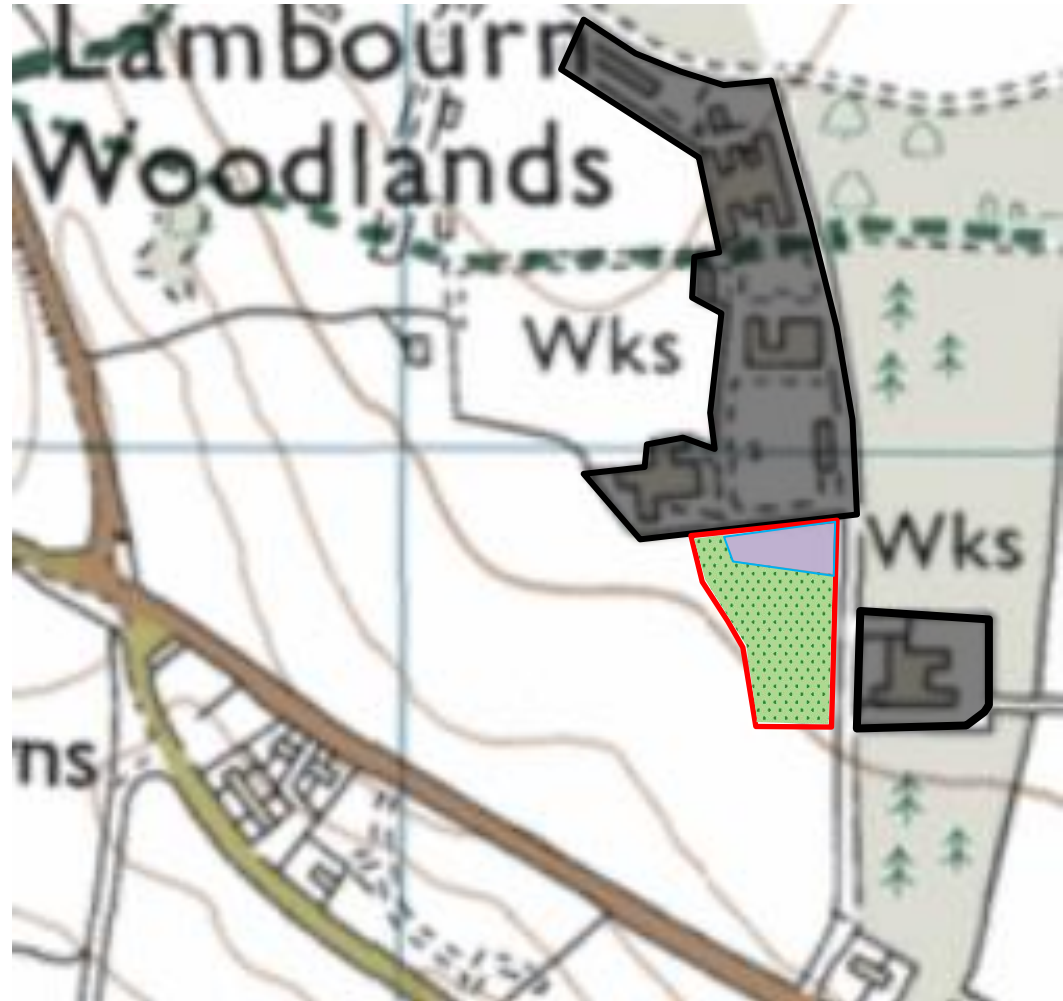
- Potential to enhance woodland character of the area and also improve views from the B4000, in particular the screening of the redundant buildings on the southern periphery of the existing PEA

Conclusion and recommendations

- Development across a small area of the northern part of the site could be considered, beyond the northern field hedgerow and access road. The rest of the site would be retained as a landscape buffer which should be planted as a native woodland between the proposed developable area and the adjacent field
- Limit height of buildings so they do not intrude above the treeline of the existing intermittent tree belt along the site boundary periphery, as would be visible from the B4000 and the wider landscape
- Buildings should be exemplary and suitable for a rural location
- Restrict external lighting and in places internal lighting to avoid further light pollution within the AONB
- Overall, any development on the site should retain a rural character

Figure 2: Lowesdon Works - Site 2: land south of Lambourn Business Park

-  The site
-  Protected Employment Area (PEA)
-  With potential for development
-  Landscape buffer



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