

NEWBURY

Assessment of Settlement

| | |
|---|--|
| Settlement | Newbury |
| North Wessex Downs AONB Character areas closest to sites : | Near to LCA 8B Winterbourne Farmland but separated by A34 Within NDLCALCT14 |
| Date of site survey | 1 May 2015 |
| Surveyor | BK |

Key landscape characteristics of LCA8B

- Lowland clay belt rising from the Lambourn Valley floor
- Hedgerows often in a poor condition
- More wooded area in the east (to the immediate west of the site)
- Mixed pattern of field enclosure
- Scattered farms along a series of tracks and rural lanes
- Extensive network of rights of way including the Lambourn Valley Way
- Linear tree belts
- Vulnerable to development (NDLCA LCT14)

Key visual characteristics of LCA8B

- Open large scale landscape

Key settlement characteristics of LCA8B

- Absence of settlement

Summary of the key characteristics of the settlement and landscape constraints on the extent and location of development

The site lies on a rising shoulder of land north of the village of Speen on the extreme western edge of Newbury. The town has expanded westwards on the lower slopes above the valley floor of the rivers Kennet and Lambourn, leaving open valley landscape corridors. A mix of inter-war suburban housing, with the historic core of Speen, and some rural very low density housing characterise the area of Speen in the vicinity of the site. Some of this is on the higher ground next to the site.

The AONB extends eastwards almost up to the edge of the town which is influenced by the highway infrastructure of the A34 and A4 but is otherwise well conserved especially along the valley floors and within the Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens of Benham Valence and Donnington Park. The site is separated from the wider landscape of the AONB and LCA 8A by the A34. It is important that any future development does not harm the landscape and visual setting of the AONB or the Registered Parks and Gardens. It will also be important to retain the riparian landscape character of the river valley floors.

The site lies within LLCA20A as defined in An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009.

Sources:

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002;

Additional information from:

- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
- Quality Design SPD- Part 3

A. Assessment of Potential Housing Site: NEW042

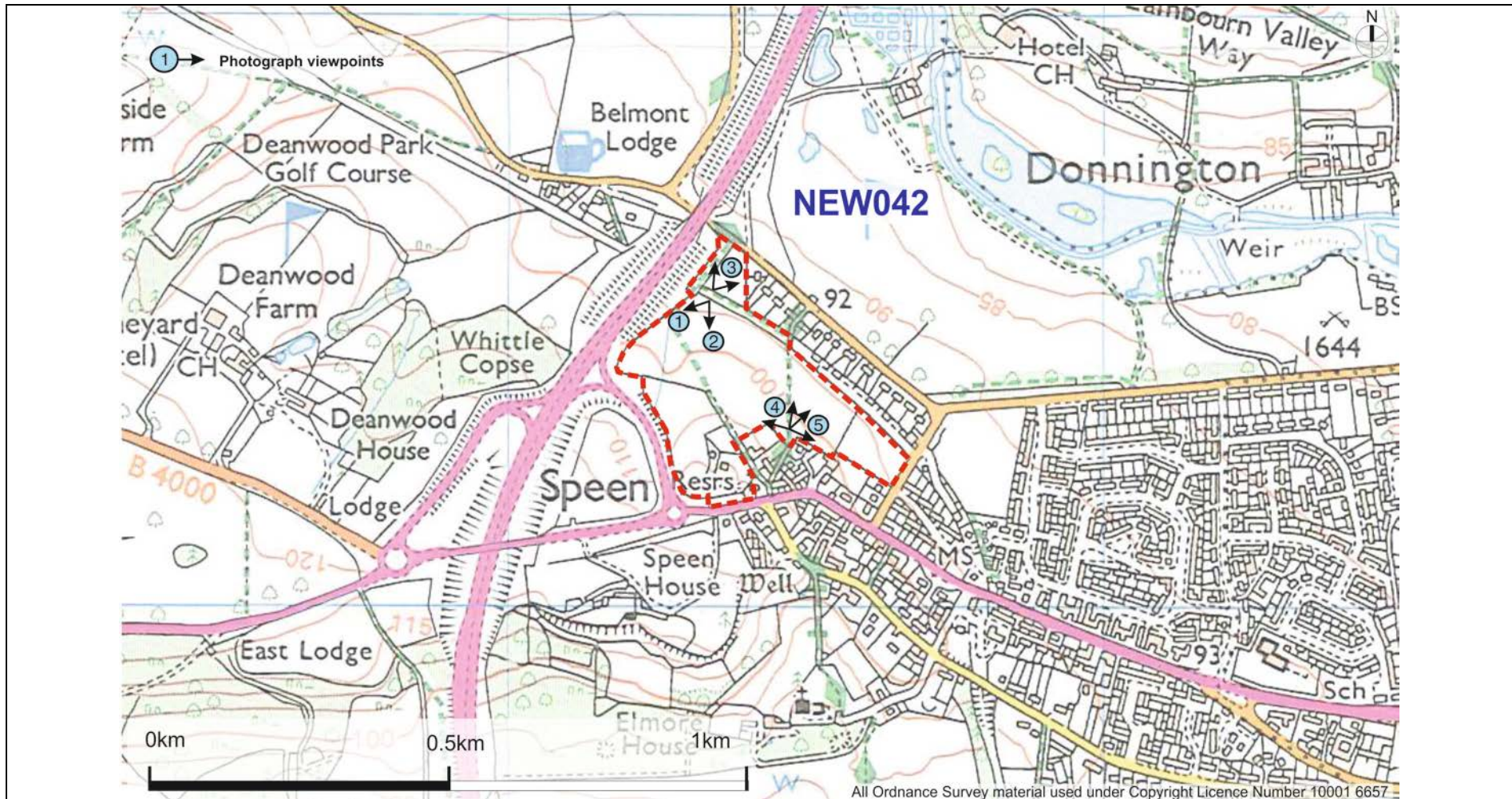


Figure NEW042.I: Site and viewpoint locations

An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009: LLCA20A: West Speen

LLCA20A: West Speen has an overall *medium to high sensitivity*.

West Speen lies on a generally gentle south facing slope, part of the gradually diminishing ridge between the Rivers Kennet and Lambourn. The southern part is generally open, and has strong links with the valley floor (LLCA8E), while the northern part is steeper and wooded. There are panoramic views south in places, to Beacon Hill, and north to Donnington Castle from the A34/A4 junction. Speen House and the tower of Speen church are landmark features. The Key elements of landscape sensitivity are:

- Grade 2 agricultural land in the south
- Contrast between north and south of the area: strong definition in north from woodland and tree belts; little definition in south, which is mainly open arable land, apart from trees along former railway route
- Long views, especially from the higher ground, across the Kennet valley to high ground to the south, with distant views of Beacon Hill
- Long views north to Donnington Castle from the A34/A4 junction *Wider landscape:* LLCA14A: *Ashmore Green and Lower Cold Ash Plateau Edge* has good landscape links with 15A to the west and 14F to the east. Intervisibility between these areas is good if broken up by the landform and vegetation. 14A contrasts with the character of 13C with the boundary marked by the change of slope.
- Very secluded in wooded area to north, and along the lane in the south, but the A34 is a major intrusion to much of the area, detracting from its otherwise very rural character
- Speen House is a landmark from within and outside the LLCA, including from the A34; Speen church tower is a local landmark
- Many features of archaeological interest, including extant earthworks around Speen House, church of Saxon origin, holy well, many listed buildings, unregistered battle site. Low, low to medium and medium historical sensitivity. Overall medium to high historic interest
- Mainly low to medium levels of tranquillity due to A34
- Some new housing on the edge of Speen, just outside the LLCA, intrusive on the otherwise wooded skyline
- Little built form within the area apart from Speen House, church and Elmore Abbey
- Contains a number of PROW including a designated recreational route, medium sensitivity
- Contains BAP priority habitat and good bird populations: medium biodiversity sensitivity
- Lady well, Benedictine abbey, Village Design Statement: high cultural sensitivity

Wider landscape: LLCA20A: West Speen has a strong connection with the valley landscape west of the A34, despite the physical severance, as well as strong continuity with the valley sides to the north and the south, and distant higher ground to the south.

Setting to the urban form: LLCA20 A: West Speen abuts the Speen area of Newbury, with a generally very soft boundary. A short part of the eastern boundary is more open to the back gardens of houses on Croft Lane. Like the northern part of LLCA11A, the open valley sides are very sensitive to built development, which could be very intrusive.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Viewpoint 1: View over western part of the site from line of disused railway along the northern boundary of the site



Viewpoint 2: View from same location looking east to edge of housing in Speen



Viewpoint 3: View over small northern part of the site close to Lambourn Road from line of disused railway along the northern boundary of the site



Viewpoint 4: View looking north-west over the site from the higher section of the Lambourn Way across the site with houses backing onto the site



Viewpoint 5: View from the same point at viewpoint 4 but looking northeast to the rear gardens and allotments to the east of the site

Site description

Site NEW042 lies to the north of the village of Speen. It forms an irregular area of land on rising ground between properties on Lambourn Road and properties on the A4 at Speen. To the west the site is bounded by the A34 and a major junction of the A34 with the A4 beyond which lies the open countryside of the North Wessex Downs AONB and Benham Valence Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden. The width of the A34 and the highway landform and planting tend to separate the site from the wider landscape. To the north beyond Lambourn Road lies Donnington Park, a Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden. To the east the site is enclosed by housing on three sides off Station Road, beyond which lies modern housing. To the south beyond the A4 lies the historic core of Speen. The site is mainly under grass with the exception of the most easterly part which is in use as allotments. The site is crossed by the Lambourn Valley Way and additional footpaths. The remains of an old railway line follow the line of The Sidings to the rear of the houses on the northern boundary.

| |
|---|
| <p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is enclosed in its eastern part by modern and older housing within the western edge of Newbury and the village of Speen • The site sits on the higher ground above the valley floors between 95 and 110m AOD as is typical of the settlement pattern in this area • It forms an open wedge between linear built form to the north and varied settlement pattern in the south along the A4 |
| <p>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is severed from the wider landscape by the A34 and its landform and planting • The site shares characteristics (open grassland, tree cover, undulating land form) with the landscape west of the A34 and the AONB but is heavily influenced by the surrounding townscape and highway infrastructure |
| <p>Impact on key landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of open grassland setting to the edge of the settlement • Potential loss of tree cover • Loss of definition of historic rail alignment • Urbanisation of the Lambourn Way across the site • Little impact on the nearby Grade II Registered Historic Parks and Gardens due to screening by existing built form and tree cover |
| <p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual impact on users of the Lambourn Valley Way and other footpaths • Prominence of housing on the higher ground |
| <p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little adverse impact on the character of the settlement • Mass and scale of any development needs to be modified to respect the character of the village of Speen • Development on this site would reflect location of settlement above the valley floors |
| <p>Summary of compliance with NPPF</p> <p>Development on this site would not result in harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.</p> |
| <p>Recommendations</p> <p>The site is recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site as shown in Figure NEW042.2 subject to the following requirements to conserve and enhance the landscape edge to Speen; and to maintain the character of Speen and west Newbury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitation of built form to below the higher ground as shown in Figure NEW042.2 to avoid introducing prominent development on the skyline • Retention of the allotments • A tree planted landscape buffer to the A34, slip road and A4 to maintain the rural character of the western approach into Newbury • Tree belts to be provided to the rear gardens of the adjacent houses linking into the tree line along the former railway line • Preferred access off Lambourn Road |

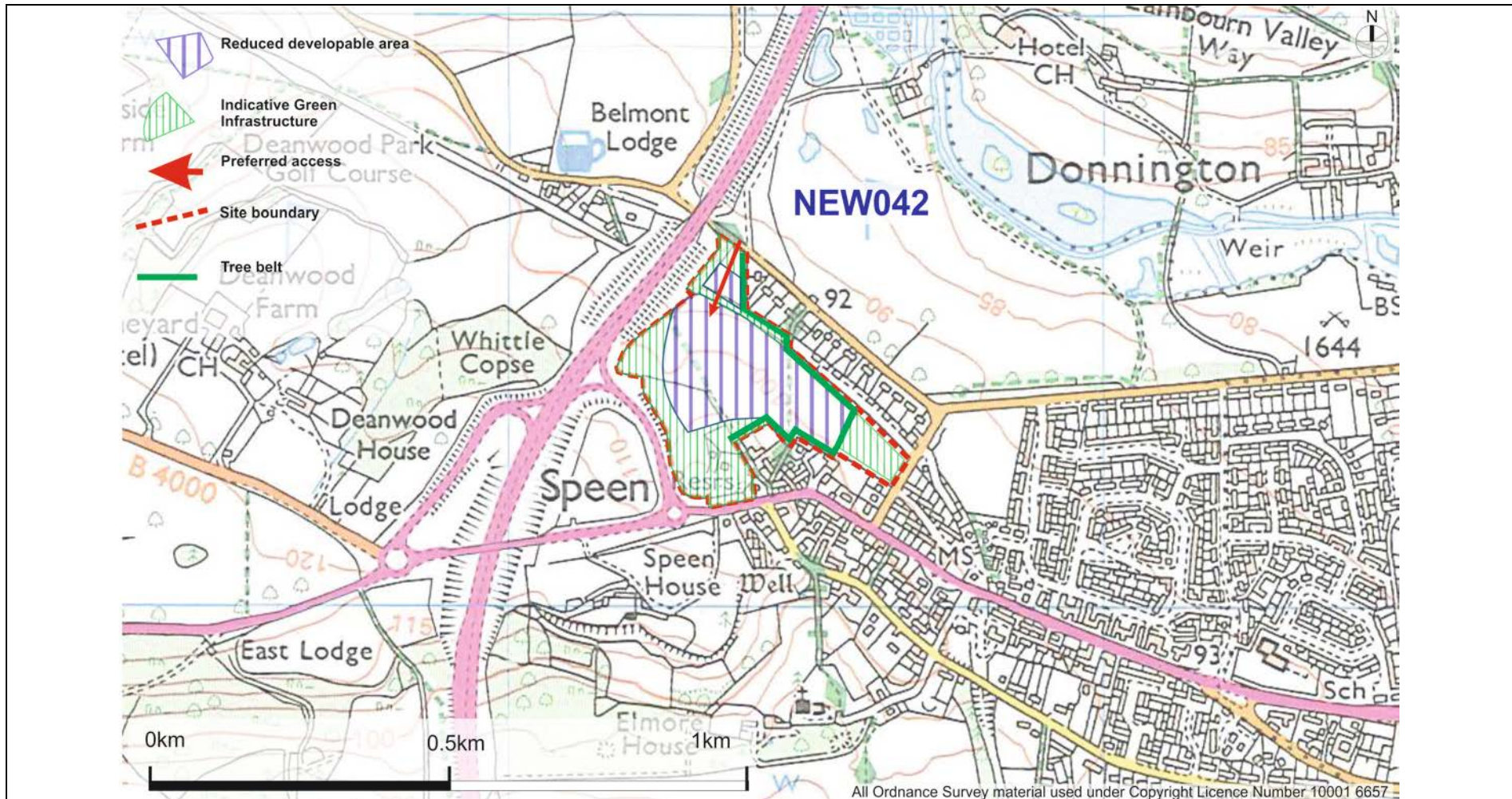


Figure NEW042.2: Potential development area, Green Infrastructure and preferred access