

**LAND SOUTH OF NEWBURY RACECOURSE,  
NEWBURY, WEST BERKSHIRE**

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
FOR  
PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**On behalf of  
NEWBURY RACECOURSE PLC**

**January 2021**

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**REV: A**

**Landscape  
Institute  
Registered  
Practice**

WH Landscape Consultancy Ltd  
Sandcliffe House  
Northgate Street  
Devizes  
Wilts  
SN10 1JT

**t: 01380 727539**

**e: [info@whlandscape.co.uk](mailto:info@whlandscape.co.uk)**

# APPOINTMENT

WH Landscape Consultancy Ltd (**WHLandscape**) has been appointed by Newbury Racecourse PLC to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the proposed residential development of Land south of Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, West Berkshire.

**WHLandscape** has an established track record of assessing development proposals. The practice has considerable experience in the field of landscape and visual assessment and uses tried and tested techniques developed and recognised by the Landscape Institute, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, and Natural England.

**This LVIA has been undertaken by:** Tom Allen BA (Hons) MA CMLI & Katherine Jones BA (Hons) DipLA CMLI.

**Checked by:** Will Harley BSc (Hons) CMLI

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This LVIA provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed residential development of land south of Newbury Racecourse, to the south east of the market town of Newbury. The site is in the administrative area of Berkshire County, specifically West Berkshire Council, and is located within the Civil Parish of Newbury. The findings of the assessment will be used to determine the suitability of the proposals, as well as to suggest appropriate mitigation measures if required.

**1.2** The site has been considered as a potential site within the Berkshire HELAA. This is a technical study that assists in identifying suitable land which is available for housing and economic development, the development potential of a site, and when development of a site is likely to occur. Although the site has been included within the HELAA, it does not necessarily mean that it is suitable or indeed available for development. Currently the suitability of this particular site, identified with the reference 'GRE3' is unknown, and is subject to a number of technical surveys, including the landscape assessment within this LVIA. In terms of the availability of the site, it is available and can be brought forward immediately for development by the site promoter, and the assessment for achievability concludes that development on the site is achievable. Stage 2 of the HELAA concludes that the site is potentially developable in part, subject to the conclusions of the relevant technical documents.

**1.3** The site has also been assessed in the Emerging West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037 Site Selection Background Paper. This paper has currently provided a recommendation that the site is not recommended for allocation, however, this is on the basis that like the HELAA, a suite of relevant technical documents, has not yet been provided to justify allocation. The provision of this LVIA will take into consideration the comments and issues raised concerning landscape in both the HELAA and the Site Selection Background Paper.

**1.4** The site in its entirety covers an area of 13.47 hectares (ha). The area promoted for residential development is 7.59ha, with an estimated developable area of 4.6ha. The proposed housing density is 35 dwellings per hectare, as suggested in the HELAA. The other 5.88ha is being proposed for open public space, which will provide an extension to the existing open public space on the sites western boundary.

**1.5** The application will see the development of the site, including:

- The construction of residential dwellings.

- The construction of an internal road system and the creation of associated parking/turning areas.
- The construction of a new access point and road, from Rosyth Gardens on the western boundary.
- The provision of landscaping and private amenity space for the residential properties.
- The provision of an extended open space area adjoining an existing area of open space.

**1.6** For this report, the policy context is taken from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019), the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012), and the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2017). The baseline landscape character has been taken from Natural England National Character Area Profile (NCA): 129. Thames Basin Heaths (2014), the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2019), and the North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment (2002).

## 2. SCOPE AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.1 The LVIA process is based on the following guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3rd ed. (GLVIA 3).
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.

2.2 The LVIA is a tool used to identify and assess the likely effects of change resulting from development, both on the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. Landscape Effects relate to changes to components of the landscape resource as a result of development. Visual Effects relate to the appearance of development, its effect on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by users of the landscape. The study area to be considered includes the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape with the potential to be influenced by the development.

### 2.3 BASELINE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY

2.3.1 The baseline study reviews the existing landscape and visual resources to determine and describe the conditions against which changes resulting from the development can be measured or predicted and assessed. The process comprises three stages, namely a desk study, field survey and baseline analysis. The baseline study helps identify the landscape and visual receptors which are considered susceptible to change as a result of the development and includes description, classification and evaluation. It forms the basis against which to assess the Magnitude of Effect and subsequently, the Significance of Effect of development on landscape and visual resources.

#### DESK STUDY RESOURCES

2.3.2 The following resources have been used to inform the field survey and the analysis:

##### *Mapping*

- Ordnance Survey maps and vertical aerial photography
- Definitive Rights of Way: Public Rights of Way Mapping (West Berkshire Council)
- Geology: Geology of Britain Viewer (British Geological Survey)
- Pedology: Soilscape Map (Soilscape)
- Designations: Magic Interactive Mapping – Core Strategy Policy Maps (West Berkshire Council)
- Heritage assets: The National Heritage List for England (Historic England)

### *Planning Policy*

- NPPF
- West Berkshire Core Strategy
- West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document

### *Character Assessment*

- NCA: 129. Thames Basin Heaths
- West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment
- North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment

### *Other Documents*

- Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)
- Emerging Draft West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037 – Site selection Background Paper
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Enhanced Phase I Ecological Assessment (Draft)

## FIELD SURVEY

**2.3.3** The desk study informs the field survey. Of particular relevance are the Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photography and the Landscape Character Assessments. The field survey is then used to gain a full appreciation of the relationship between the site and study area. The field work is supported by mapped viewpoints and photographic records, representative of, and relevant to, the development.

## BASELINE ANALYSIS

**2.3.4** The findings of the desk study and field survey inform the baseline analysis, which helps in determining the landscape value of the study area through description, classification and evaluation of the landscape and visual resources relevant to the application site and surrounding study area. Determining the value of the landscape as a resource helps in identifying specific landscape and visual receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development.

### *Landscape value*

**2.3.5** Landscape value is the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society; a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a variety of reasons, however having specific components of value does not mean an area is a valued landscape. Furthermore, while designations can be an indicator of value, the presence of detracting components may mean the value of a

designated area locally varies across its geographic extent. Moreover, as identified in GLVIA 3, “*the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value*”.

**2.3.6** Typically, value is determined against a series of predefined factors, to establish an overall landscape value of either Low, Medium, or High, with the importance of any designations also being taken into account. Additionally, the specific value of the site, as a component of the landscape resource, is also considered.

**2.3.7** When determining the value of the landscape resource, the following factors, adapted from Box 5.1 of GLVIA 3, are considered relevant to the assessment process:

- **Landscape Quality (condition):** A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements or features.
- **Scenic Quality:** The term used to describe landscapes which appeal principally to the senses (primarily, but not exclusively, visual).
- **Representativeness:** Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or elements or features, which are considered particularly important examples thereof.
- **Rarity:** The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Area (LCA) and/or Landscape Character Type (LCT).
- **Conservation Interests:** The presence of features of wildlife, earth science, archaeological or historical, and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape, as well as having value in their own right.
- **Recreational Value:** Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity, where experience of the landscape is important.
- **Perceptual Aspects:** A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities and/or tranquillity.
- **Associations:** Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or an event in history that contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area.

#### *Landscape Receptors*

**2.3.8** Landscape receptors will be selected to help ascertain the specific aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. Potential receptors include individual elements or features of the study area, both on and off site, as well as the distinct landscape character of the study area as a whole.



### *Visual Receptors*

**2.3.9** Visual receptors will initially be identified from where the desk study suggests that the proposed development may be visible, before being verified as part of the field survey. Views will primarily be recorded from Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and other areas with public access, as well as public roads with full public and permissive access. Residential views will be considered, where appropriate, through the use of representative viewpoints. It should be noted views may be recorded from areas which the desk study suggests have no intervisibility with the site, moreover not all potential visual receptors will be recorded during the field survey (e.g. if there is an obvious lack of intervisibility).

## **2.4 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS**

**2.4.1** The landscape assessment addresses changes in the fabric, character and/or key elements or features of the landscape resource. The visual assessment addresses changes in visual amenity, and the implication of those changes on specific visual receptors.

**2.4.2** The assessment of effects aims to:

- Estimate the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as a function of their value and their susceptibility to change.
- Identify the Magnitude of Effect of the development.
- Provide an assessment of the effects and, subsequently the Nature of Effect, in a logical and well-reasoned fashion.
- Indicate suitable mitigation measures.

**2.4.3** The LVIA will consider the likely effects of the proposed development in the context of Receptor Sensitivity in order to determine the significance of effect on landscape and visual receptors, with mitigation measures recommended if required. The overall landscape and visual effects of the development will then be reassessed to determine the effectiveness of the recommended mitigation at both implementation and at maturity.

**2.4.4** To be consistent, the determination of sensitivity and the prediction of magnitude have been guided by pre-defined criteria. However, by its very nature, the LVIA process requires a significant amount of interpretation and professional judgement.

**2.4.5** Designations which may affect the sensitivity of receptors, or how an effect may be perceived, will be taken into consideration where appropriate. In terms of listed buildings and other designated

heritage assets as receptors, this report will only consider the potential effects on the historic landscape settings of these structures/areas. It should be noted that, although a development may be visible from a listed building or other designated historic asset, this does not automatically mean that there is an effect on its historic landscape setting.

## LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

**2.4.6** Landscape Sensitivity is a function of the value of a landscape receptor, both as part of the landscape resource and as an individual component, and its ability to accommodate the development (susceptibility to change) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline condition and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.

**Table 1a: Landscape Receptor Sensitivity**

<b>Level of Sensitivity</b>	<b>Definition of Sensitivity</b>
<i>High</i>	Important landscapes and/or landscape components of high value with a high susceptibility to change.
<i>Medium</i>	Important/moderately valued landscapes and/or landscape components with a medium susceptibility to change.
<i>Low</i>	Moderately valued/relatively unimportant landscapes and/or landscape components with a low susceptibility to change.
<i>Negligible</i>	Degraded landscape tolerant of major change.

**2.4.7** The Magnitude of Landscape Effect is based on changes to the baseline condition of the landscape resource and/or specific landscape receptors. Factors such as, the nature of change, extent and scale of change, and the relationship to baseline characteristics are all considered.

**Table 1b: Magnitude of Landscape Effect**

<b>Level of Magnitude</b>	<b>Definition of Magnitude</b>
<i>Substantial</i>	Total loss or alteration of key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition (predevelopment).
<i>Moderate</i>	Partial loss or alteration of one or more key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the predevelopment condition will be partially changed.
<i>Slight</i>	Minor loss or alteration of one or more characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the baseline condition will be similar to the predevelopment circumstance.

<i>Negligible</i>	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the changes are barely distinguishable.
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## VISUAL ASSESSMENT

**2.4.8** Visual Sensitivity takes account of the value of routes/areas used by visual receptors including the extent to which attention is focused on the landscape, and the ability of specific views to accommodate the development. Certain views that are experienced may have a value attached through planning designations or in relation to heritage assets or may be indicated on maps or in guidebooks.

**Table 2a: Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

<b>Level of Sensitivity</b>	<b>Definition of Sensitivity</b>
<i>High</i>	Users of strategic rights of way, cycle paths, etc; important cultural, physical or historic features; views from beauty spots, picnic areas and principal views from residential properties. Places where the attention of the receptor is likely to be focused on the landscape.
<i>Medium</i>	Other public rights of way. Views from principal settlements and secondary views from residential properties. Places where the attention of the receptor may be focused on the landscape.
<i>Low</i>	Receptors engaged in activities other than for the appreciation of the landscape.
<i>Negligible</i>	Views from industrialised areas.

**2.4.9** The Magnitude of Visual Effect is based on the overall extent of the visibility. Factors such as distance from the development, duration of effect, screening, angle of view, backdrop to the development and extent of other development are all considered.

**Table 2b: Magnitude of Visual Effect**

<b>Level of Magnitude</b>	<b>Definition of Magnitude</b>
<i>Substantial</i>	Fundamental or very obvious change in the character, make-up and balance of the view. The proposals would be prominent or even dominant when considered in terms of the baseline condition. The established visual character would change.

<i>Moderate</i>	Moderate changes in the character, make-up and balance of the view, with the proposals noticeably distinct. This may lead to a change in the established visual character, depending upon the type of development proposed.
<i>Slight</i>	The proposals would be visible as a new feature. Change would be limited and would be unlikely to affect the established visual character as a whole.
<i>Negligible</i>	Virtually imperceptible change in the view. Whilst theoretically visible, the proposals would be faint, not legible or difficult for receptors to discern.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECT

**2.4.10** The Significance of Effect can be expressed as a correlation between the Magnitude of Effect and Landscape or Visual Sensitivity in a single matrix to determine significance as shown in Table 3. However, it must be noted that the matrix is not in itself a substitute for professional judgement, for which allowances must be made. Although mitigation measures are often proposed where the Significance of Effect is Minor or None, it is the Major and Major/Moderate categories which provide the highest level of significance in terms of effect on the landscape and visual resources.

**Table 3: Significance of Effect as a Correlation of Sensitivity and Magnitude Applicable to both the Landscape Resource and Visual Amenity**

Landscape or Visual Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect			
	<i>Substantial</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Negligible</i>
<i>High</i>	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor
<i>Medium</i>	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor
<i>Low</i>	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None
<i>Negligible</i>	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None	None

## NATURE OF EFFECT

**2.4.11** The calculation of a significant effect does not mean that change is Adverse; Nature of Effect is considered independently to the calculation of significance. Change as a result of development may be Positive or Adverse, to varying degrees, or Neutral. Neutral effects are those where change is considered to have neither a Positive nor Adverse effect on the landscape or visual resource being considered. Mitigation can change the Nature of Effect post development, with the aim being to lower the Magnitude of Effect and reduce Adverse effects as far as possible, ideally through mitigation measures that have a Positive effect on landscape and/or visual resources.

### 3. LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

**3.1** The following policy has been taken from the planning documents which are pertinent to the development of the site. The following policy extracts and, where applicable, excerpts of explanatory text, are relevant to the application. The policies listed will be used to guide the assessment and the mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

#### 3.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

**3.2.1** Originally published in March 2012, with subsequent revisions in July 2018 and most recently in June 2019, the NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. Of particular relevance to this assessment is Section 15. Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, specifically paragraph 170, which states that “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by”:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*

and:

- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*

**3.2.2** Also of relevance to this project is Section 12. Achieving Well-designed Places, specifically paragraph 127, which states:

*Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*

### **3.3 WEST BERKSHIRE CORE STRATEGY**

**3.3.1** Adopted by West Berkshire Council in July 2012, the West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document forms part of the Local Plan for the district. The Core Strategy sets out the overall planning strategy for the period up to 2026 and aims to make the different settlements within West Berkshire even more attractive places within which to live, work and enjoy leisure time.

#### **CORE POLICY CS14: DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

*New development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. Good design relates not only to the appearance of a development, but the way in which it functions. Considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate area, but to the wider locality. Development shall contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place.*

*Development proposals will be expected to:*

- *Create safe environments, addressing crime prevention and community safety.*
- *Make good provision for access by all transport modes.*
- *Ensure environments are accessible to all and give priority to pedestrian and cycle access providing linkages and integration with surrounding uses and open spaces.*
- *Make efficient use of land whilst respecting the density, character, landscape and biodiversity of the surrounding area.*
- *Consider opportunities for a mix of uses, buildings and landscaping.*
- *Consider opportunities for public art.*
- *Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural assets of West Berkshire.*
- *Provide, conserve and enhance biodiversity and create linkages between green spaces and wildlife corridors.*
- *Make a clear distinction between public and private spaces and enhance the public realm.*
- *Consider opportunities for including Home Zones where practicable.*

*All development proposals will be expected to seek to minimise carbon dioxide emissions through sustainable design and construction, energy efficiency, and the incorporation of renewable energy technology as appropriate and in accordance with Policy CS15: Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency.*

## **CORE POLICY CS17: BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY**

*Biodiversity and geodiversity assets across West Berkshire will be conserved and enhanced.*

*Habitats designated or proposed for designation as important for biodiversity or geodiversity at an international or national level or which support protected, rare or endangered species, will be protected and enhanced. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site or species in terms of its international or national importance.*

*Development which may harm, either directly or indirectly,*

- *locally designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites), or*
- *habitats or species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, or*
- *the integrity or continuity of landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna*

*will only be permitted if there are no reasonable alternatives and there are clear demonstrable social or economic benefits of regional or national importance that outweigh the need to safeguard the site or species and that adequate compensation and mitigation measures are provided when damage to biodiversity/geodiversity interests are unavoidable.*

*In order to conserve and enhance the environmental capacity of the District, all new development should maximise opportunities to achieve net gains in biodiversity and geodiversity in accordance with the Berkshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Berkshire Local Geodiversity Action Plan. Opportunities will be taken to create links between natural habitats and, in particular, strategic opportunities for biodiversity improvement will be actively pursued within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas identified on the Proposals Map in accordance with the Berkshire Biodiversity Action Plan.*

## **CORE POLICY CS18: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

*The District's green infrastructure will be protected and enhanced. The Council will work with partners, including Parish Councils and the community to address the District's green infrastructure needs and deficiencies as set out in the forthcoming Green Infrastructure SPD.*

*New developments will make provision for high quality and multifunctional open spaces of an appropriate size and will also provide links to the existing green infrastructure network. Specific standards for provision within new developments will be identified in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD and through the masterplanning for strategic sites.*

*Developments resulting in the loss of green infrastructure or harm to its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. Where exceptionally it is agreed that an area of green infrastructure can be lost a new one of equal or greater size and standard will be required to be provided in an accessible location close by.*

#### **CORE POLICY CS19: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

*In order to ensure that the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character of the District is conserved and enhanced, the natural, cultural, and functional components of its character will be considered as a whole. In adopting this holistic approach, particular regard will be given to:*

- a) The sensitivity of the area to change.*
- b) Ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character.*
- c) The conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of heritage assets and their settings (including those designations identified in Box 1(in the Core Strategy)).*
- d) Accessibility to and participation in the historic environment by the local community.*

*Proposals for development should be informed by and respond to:*

- a) The distinctive character areas and key characteristics identified in relevant landscape character assessments including Historic Landscape Characterisation for West Berkshire and Historic Environment Character Zoning for West Berkshire.*
- b) Features identified in various settlement character studies including Quality Design – West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document, the Newbury Historic Character Study, Conservation Area Appraisals and community planning documents which have been adopted by the Council such as Parish Plans and Town and Village Design Statements.*
- c) The nature of and the potential for heritage assets identified through the Historic Environment Record for West Berkshire and the extent of their significance.*

### **3.4 WEST BERKSHIRE HOUSING SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

**3.4.1** The Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) is the second DPD within West Berkshire's Local Plan. It was prepared following the adoption of the West Berkshire Core Strategy in July 2012. The role of the Housing Site Allocations DPD is to implement the framework set by the Core Strategy by allocating non-strategic housing sites for future growth across the District. It also includes a set of policies to guide housing development in the countryside.



## **POLICY C1: LOCATION OF NEW HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

The following excerpts from this policy are pertinent to this site.

*There will be a presumption against new residential development outside of the settlement boundaries. Exceptions to this are limited to rural exception housing schemes, conversion of redundant buildings, housing to accommodate rural workers, extension to or replacement of existing residential units and limited infill in settlements in the countryside with no defined settlement boundary. All proposals will need to satisfy the other policies in this section of the Plan.*

*Planning permission will not be granted where a proposal harms or undermines the existing relationship of the settlement within the open countryside, where it does not contribute to the character and distinctiveness of a rural area, including the natural beauty of the AONB or where development would have an adverse cumulative impact on the environment or highway safety.*

## **POLICY C3: DESIGN OF HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

*The design of new housing, including rural exception housing sites, conversions, extensions and replacement dwellings, must have regard to the impact individually and collectively on the landscape character of the area and its sensitivity to change.*

*Development should be designed having regard to the character of the area in which it is located taking account of the local settlement and building character. It should also have regard to 'Quality Design' – West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document, Conservation Area Appraisals and community planning documents such as Parish Plans and Town and Village Design Statements, the design principles set out in the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan and on the rural environment.*

## **4. BASELINE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY**

### **4.1 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT**

**4.1.1** The site is located on land south of Newbury Racecourse, set amongst the urban fringe landscape between the south-eastern edge of the town of Newbury and Greenham Common. Land to the north is defined by the heavily managed and open landform at Newbury Racecourse, with land to the north-east and east dominated by restored mineral extraction, and further managed land at Newbury and Crookham Golf Course to the south-east. Built form lies to the south and west, with clustered residential estate development set amongst a well-wooded landscape forming the south eastern fringe of Newbury.

**4.1.2** The site comprises a series of rough pasture enclosures, bound by woodland blocks and mature hedgerows. Young Copse, an area of Ancient Woodland, forms the north western boundary. Within the site a racecourse maintenance yard lies on its north-western extents, containing large, low profile agricultural form buildings and areas of hardstanding. The site has a north-easterly aspect, falling from approximately 110m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in its south-western corner to between 80 - 85m AOD at its northern boundary. The principle vehicular access into the site is currently being provided by an ancillary track from within the racecourse.

**4.1.3** In its wider context, Greenham Common lies to the south east, with a high recreational, ecological and historic value, including the Scheduled Monument buildings and landform of the cruise missile shelter complex. The market towns of Newbury and Thatcham lie to the north-west and north-east respectively, while the River Kennet and its associated river valley landform runs on an east/west axis to the north.

### **4.2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

**4.2.1** The following Landscape Character Assessments have been used to establish the baseline character of study area:

- NCA: 129. Thames Basin Heaths
- West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment

**4.2.2** Only the information pertaining to the LCAs and LCTs in which the site is located has been listed in order to help establish its unique landscape character as well as to determine the site's contribution

to the landscape character, elements, and features which define the wider landscape. It is important to note that, due to the extent of individual Character Areas and Types, some of the listed information may not be wholly relevant to the site and surrounding landscape.

## NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA PROFILES

**4.2.3** In 2012, Natural England, as part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, revised the National Character Area Profiles to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience. The site and entire study area fall within the NCA: 129. Thames Basin Heaths.

### **NCA: 129. THAMES BASIN HEATHS**

#### **Key Characteristics:**

- *Plateaux of Tertiary sands and gravels in the London Basin, with intervening river valleys flooded by London Clay. In the far west, Chalk forms the Hampshire Downs escarpment and the river beds of the Kennet and Pang.*
- *High woodland cover, offering an array of colour in the autumn. Conifers and large plantations on former heathland are dominant features in the east, while the west is scattered with small, semi-natural woodlands on ancient sites.*
- *Acid, leached soils mean that farming on the plateaux is limited to rough pasture, and that alternative land uses (such as forestry, golf courses and horse paddocks) have emerged. Heather, gorse, oak and birch all thrive here. Arable land and improved pasture are found in the valleys, on alluvium.*
- *Beyond the large areas of heathland and woodland, there is a patchwork of small to medium-sized fields with woods. The legacy of historic hunting forests includes veteran trees, ancient woods, ancient hedgerows and parklands. Historic meadows remain as fragments along watercourses.*
- *Prehistoric earthworks such as barrows and hill forts mark promontories on the plateaux. Archaeology is well preserved on historic heathland. Mosaics of open heathland and grassland with scrub, secondary woodland and plantation. Valley bogs, ponds and streams enhance diversity. Large, continuous mosaics are found in the east: they include Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Chobham Common National Nature Reserve (NNR).*
- *Historic commons offer tranquillity and unenclosed views, while other rights of access are enjoyed across farmland, canals and downland. Ministry of Defence ownership restricts (but does not entirely prevent) public enjoyment.*

- *'Churring' nightjars, dragonflies and purple heather are all readily identified with heathland. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA protects internationally important populations of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.*
- *Valley floors are wet with ditches, numerous watercourses, ponds, waterfilled gravel pits, reedbeds and carr. Historic features include mills, relict water meadows, and canals such as the River Wey Navigations.*
- *20th-century conurbations, including Camberley, sprawl along the Blackwater Valley, with associated roads (including the M3) dissecting heathland and woodland into blocks. Elsewhere, there are winding lanes and historic dispersed villages and farmsteads of traditional, locally-made brick and tile.*

## WEST BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

**4.2.4** In August 2019, Land Use Consultants, on behalf of West Berkshire Council, published the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment. The assessment process reviewed and consolidated the Council's existing landscape evidence base, providing a comprehensive and up to date landscape character assessment for all land outside defined settlement boundaries in West Berkshire. This information allows reasoned consideration of those issues affecting the landscape, which can be used as a basis for the development of appropriate recommendations for future landscape conservation and management. The site falls within Landscape Character Type WH: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic, and within that, Landscape Character Area WH2: Greenham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic.

### **SUMMARY**

*The area, which lies to the east of the southern part of Newbury and extends towards Brimpton, is defined by gentle undulating slopes, which rise to the flat-topped Greenham and Crookham Common. This is a large expanse of recovering heathland (common land), and is surrounded by valley woodlands. The western area, around the Common, has been greatly influenced by the former airbase. The eastern part of the character area around Brimpton and Crookham is distinguished by the presence of a mix of arable and pasture contained by a network of woodlands.*

*The area is bounded by the river Enborne to the east and south, which also marks the District boundary with Basingstoke and Deane. Newbury delineates the western boundary, with the river Kennet Valley marking the northern boundary. Boundaries of the LCA are principally determined by geology and topography relating to the sand and gravel on clay and the rising slopes above the valleys.*

### **KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- 1) ***Gently undulating slopes leading to flat-topped ridge at Greenham and Crookham Common***  
*The gravel-covered plateau is around 115 to 120m AOD. The plateau edge is relatively clearly defined by gentle slopes and wooded gullies, which descend through sandy Bagshot Beds to London Clay in the lowest valley bottoms. During World War II the plateau was artificially levelled and some of the gully heads filled in.*
- 2) ***Presence of surface water and small streams running parallel to ridges***  
*A direct consequence of the underlying geological and soil conditions is the presence of surface water due to impeded drainage caused by the subsurface pan of the podsol and low permeability of the clay. These conditions have resulted in the presence of surface springs at the interface with the clay and a highly divided network of small streams draining to the River Kennet to the north and River Enborne to the south.*
- 3) ***Large open expanse of heathland, surrounded by woodland***  
*A large, flat and open expanse of heathland and acid grassland covers Greenham and Crookham Common on the plateau, and areas of exposed gravels are also visible. Much of the Common is bounded by post and wire mesh fences and a ditch, although the land is publicly accessible. Surrounding the plateau are areas more typical of this landscape type, consisting of large, predominantly deciduous woodlands which form a regular pattern of linear ghyll woodlands in undulating wet gullies leading down to the Kennet and Enborne Valleys. Between these woods there is a mosaic of arable and pastoral land use.*
- 4) ***Legacy of the military airbase on Greenham and Crookham Common***  
*The former Greenham Common Airbase dominates the landscape. Although much of the defensive infrastructure and the peace camps have been demolished or removed, former military buildings lie around and within the Common and the former HQ buildings on the southwestern edge have been converted and, together with some new development, incorporated into Greenham Business Park. These include Listed Buildings and the former GAMA missile shelter complex which is a Scheduled Monument. The exclusion perimeter fence remained in place until 2000 before the Common was reopened with unrestricted public access. It is now a popular open space for local residents but still retains many tangible features of its military past such as the control tower, which has been renovated into a visitor centre and community hub, and missile shelters. The Common is now managed by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.*
- 5) ***Scattered dispersed settlements, separated by expanses of woodland and heathland in the west***  
*Greenham lies very close to the edge of Newbury in the west, creating a more suburban character. Settlement at Bury's Bank and scattered farms are separated by expanses of woodland, farmland and common land, while Crookham is now dominated by a caravan*

*parks. Brimpton in the west is more nucleated village, focused around the junction of Brimpton Road, Brimpton Lane, Crookham Common Road and Wasing Road.*

**6) An accessible landscape of open access land and rights of way**

*There are extensive areas of Open Access land on the Common, linked to a network of footpaths. The area is used extensively for leisure activities, both formally through golf courses e.g. Newbury and Crookham Golf Club, and informal recreation.*

**7) Open views from the plateau**

*Greenham Common provides views over the valleys to the north and south.*

**EVIDENCE OF PAST USE AND CULTURAL EVOLUTION**

**1) The heathland may have been in existence for several millennia as it is thought that it was created due to the exhaustion of the area's poor soil by farming up to the Bronze Age. The heathland was used as common grazing and a source of fuel from at least the medieval period and, unlike the majority of commons in the district, it remained unenclosed and in use into the 20th century. One of the earliest English golf courses existed on Crookham Common from the 1870s until the construction of the airbase (see below).**

**2) Historically the majority of fields were sited on the less undulating areas between dry valleys, and were irregular in shape. Most had been enclosed by the start of the 18th century. The settlements along the Enborne were supported by a mix of assart fields and a strip of enclosed riverside meadows, while most woodland areas were ancient or semi-natural.**

**3) Parklands are present in a few locations including Crookham House, and the more substantial Sandford Park, which was an Augustinian priory until the dissolution of the monasteries. Sandford Priory itself is a Grade I Listed Building; an important surviving 14th century house remodelled in the late 18th century, it is now used as a school. Capability Brown was involved in the design of the parkland, which is now a Registered Park and Garden. The land west of the A339 remains rural in character and combines blocks of ancient woodland, some uncommon types of pre-18th century fields, and the degraded remains of the western part of Sandford Park.**

**4) Prior to the late 20th century, rural settlement was limited to villages, hamlets and small unplanned squatter settlements around the Common. Brimpton contains a few Grade II Listed Buildings, and its historic core has been designated as a Conservation Area.**

**5) The establishment of the substantial and contentious airbase at Greenham and Crookham Common during the Second World War altered this landscape dramatically. It was operational from 1942 – 1994, initially as a WWII RAF base and later as a USAAF base housing cruise missiles with the capability to launch nuclear attacks on Russia. It occupied the majority of the contiguous commons of Greenham and Crookham. As well as the military infrastructure at the Common, the base also attracted long-term peace camps, particularly**

*around its gates, demonstrating against the presence of nuclear arms. Construction and landscaping occurred, including the erection of further buildings, runways and substantial new roads to replace the narrow lanes and tracks.*

- 6) *The base was decommissioned in 1994 and much of the land returned to the local authority. Restoration has removed most of the runway and associated structures with much of the site beginning to revert to heathland. Many of the surviving military buildings were altered as they were adapted to new uses, although a few have been retained for their historic interest, chiefly as a document of the response to the nuclear threat posed by Russia during the Cold War, and are designated heritage assets. The large sections of the Common which were not included within the airbase have become densely wooded, due to a lack of grazing and management. These areas changed from visually open to highly enclosed areas.*

#### **NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND PRIORITY HABITATS**

- 1) *The area is important for its heathland habitats with Greenham and Crookham Common forming the largest area of lowland heath in West Berkshire. The Common is particularly important for rare ground-nesting birds, including nightjar, woodlark and lapwing and is designated an SSSI.*
- 2) *There are also multiple areas of ancient woodland located on the slopes of the plateau, many of which are designated as ancient woodland, Local Wildlife Sites, and one SSSI at Bowdown and Chamberhouse Woods.*

#### **VALUED FEATURES AND QUALITIES**

- 1) *Extensive heathland, acid grassland and woodland*  
*The open expanse of heathland and acid grassland on Greenham Common combined with ancient woodland and linear ghyll woodlands create important habitats, with the heathland important for rare ground-nesting birds.*
- 2) *Scenic and open views from the plateau*  
*Sandleford Priory provides important open views southwards towards Penwood and Newtown. Greenham Common provides views over the valleys to the north and south.*
- 3) *Heritage and cultural associations*  
*The presence of the airbase and Ministry of Defence land at Greenham Common has had a significant impact in the 20th and 21st centuries. Although many of the buildings are non-traditional and utilitarian, they are evidence of the important phase of our culture and international relations, represented by the designation of surviving structures (Scheduled Monument and Listed Buildings). Sandleford Priory and parkland are also important parts of the historic environment in this area, evidence of time-depth beyond the military intervention.*
- 4) *Recreational value*

*Much of the Common is now publically accessible and used extensively for recreation and leisure by the local communities. The control tower has been renovated and is now used as a visitor centre and community hub.*

**5) Tapestry of agricultural land**

*The pattern of fields, woodland and commons separating settlements can give individual settlements an intimate and secluded feel, contrasting with the open nature of the Common.*

**DETRACTORS**

**1) Development pressure**

*The Newbury settlement boundary has extended into this area to account for allocated development, particularly at Sandleford Park, and there is continued pressure for further development south of Newbury and at Greenham Business Park. The rural settlements of Brimpton and Crookham Common have been extended resulting in a more modern suburban character.*

**2) Loss and decline of hedgerow boundaries**

*Loss of field boundary elements in the latter half of the 20th century, especially hedgerow boundaries and mature hedgerow trees, has reduced the variety and scale of the landscape in some areas, as seen between Brimpton and Hyde End. This is compounded in places by the need to enhance management of the remaining hedgerows.*

**3) Changing land use patterns resulting in gradual loss of landscape variation and biodiversity**

*The 20th century saw the majority of fields rationalised into larger and more regularly shaped holdings more suited to mechanised agriculture, and the removal of large numbers of field boundaries. Conversion to forestry and lack of management over the last century has led to the loss and decline of deciduous woodland, with its associated variety and ecological interest. Afforestation and, as a result of lack of grazing, the development of scrub woodland, resulted in a significant reduction in the extent of open heathland; however there has been a significant recovery of the heathland as a result of restoration projects.*

**4) Recreational pressure**

*The increase in recreational uses of the Common since it has been restored to publically accessible land has had an adverse impact on the local wildlife, particularly ground-nesting birds disturbed by dogs and walkers.*

**LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

**1) Restoration of heathland**

*This landscape type represents a major opportunity for further heathland restoration to link existing small, fragmented sites. Areas of recently wooded heath are a key target for restoration. The Living Landscape project led by West Berkshire Council and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust covers 27km<sup>2</sup> of the Common, and between*



***2010 and 2013 the project increased the area of heathland by 8%. The focus on restoration and management should continue.***

**2) Retain and enhance open views**

***The open views experienced from Sandleford Priory and Park and Cookham Common should be considered in all land management, which may include development outside of the District.***

**3) Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements**

***Seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of boundary hedgerows, and encourage restoration/reinstatement of hedgerows where appropriate particularly to provide further integration of development and along lanes.***

**4) Promote appropriate woodland management**

***This is particularly important for ancient and semi-natural woodland areas but also relevant to more recently planted woodland areas. Appropriate coppicing, pollarding, planting, thinning and management of invasive species and disease should all be encouraged. It is important to ensure that woodland boundaries are sensitive to landform, and potential for diversification of some plantations to include more broadleaved elements.***

**5) Balance recreational pressures**

***A balance should be found to enable local communities to use and enjoy the area for recreational and leisure activities, while continuing to conserve and enhance habitats to allow wildlife to thrive. The Greenham and Crookham Commons Management Plan sets out a zoning system which operates during the bird nesting season (March to July), and also aims to keep the Commons ‘wild’, with no provision of formal furniture or litter bins.***

**6) Ensure integration of new development into the landscape**

***Any new development should be integrated into the landscape. There is an opportunity to enhance the urban-rural interface in this area at Newbury. The distinction between separate settlements and the role of the landscape as a setting to the character of those individual settlements should be respected. Further opportunities for woodland planting and screening should be considered.***

**7) Conserve the strong time-depth experienced in the landscape**

***Conserve the setting and integrity of heritage features in the landscape, which provide a sense of time-depth and evidence of past land use in the area. In particular, seek ways to restore the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Sandleford Priory, which is on the Heritage at Risk Register, and maintain the historic interest of the military interventions at Greenham Common.***

**4.2.5** The site’s northern boundary also abuts Landscape Character Area LV1: Kennet Lower River Valley, the key characteristics of which, are also considered to be relevant.

## **SUMMARY**

*A valley formed by the River Kennet and its tributaries, characterised by a flat and wide valley floor. Pasture fields line the river course, with arable fields present further away from the Kennet. Mature woodland along the valley creates a semi-enclosed character, and provides a rural setting to Thatcham and Newbury. The area is well used for recreation, with Newbury Racecourse, the Kennet and Avon Canal/towpath and many public rights of way attracting visitors.*

*The area is centred on the wide valley floodplain of the River Kennet from Newbury in the west to near Theale in the east. It is bounded to the north and south by a change in topography, marking the rising slopes of the immediate valley sides. The northern edge of the floodplain (north of the A4), forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB.*

## **KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- 1) Distinctive flat and open lowland landscape, created by the River Kennet and associated channels and drainage ditches**

*Flat and open broad lowland floodplain, typically 500m to 2km wide, enclosed by well-defined slopes carved into the underlying chalk. The floodplain is defined by extensive alluvial deposits that mask the influence of the underlying chalk strata. There are numerous drainage ditches, and together with the canal system of locks, weirs and its various interconnections with the river, the hydrological system of the valley is complex.*

- 2) Principally pasture farmland used for cattle grazing, with some larger arable fields. Woodland occurs along the river corridor.**

*The floodplain is mostly pastoral farmland, principally used for cattle grazing. The fields are divided by gappy hedgerows and post-and-wire fences, although some areas still exhibit historic hedgerow patterns. Larger regular arable fields are located on higher ground and are mainly used for cereal production. Woodland is located along the river corridor. Past and present gravel workings also influence character.*

- 3) Internationally and nationally important wetland habitats along the valley floor**

*Many wetland habitats are found within the Kennet valley, including wet meadow, reed bed and open water as a result of former gravel workings, now regenerating. The majority of the River Kennet is nationally designated as a SSSI, and supports good populations of aquatic invertebrates, birds and fish. The Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain SAC is located in this area and is internationally recognised for its chalk stream habitat.*

- 4) Sense of time-depth with visible heritage features and historic settlements**

*Historic settlement cores occur at bridging points along the river corridor, including Conservation Areas at Woolhampton and Aldermaston. Other historic features include the remains of St John the Baptist church, a medieval field system and Monkey Marsh Lock along*

*the Kennet and Avon Canal (all of which are also Scheduled Monuments). Significant Mesolithic remains have been located along the river corridor.*

**5) *Sparingly settled, although influenced by Newbury and Thatcham***

*In the west of the area, modern urban development and industry within Newbury and Thatcham influence landscape character. Elsewhere, settlements are limited to nucleated clusters around former mills and small settlements such as Aldermaston and Woolhampton. Historic churches are often located at the heart of these settlements. There are scattered farms and hamlets often associated with mill buildings; public houses and lock-keepers cottages are associated with the canal.*

**6) *Many public rights of way, particularly along the river***

*The river corridor includes footpaths and towpaths, which provide access for cyclists and pedestrians. The Kennet and Avon Canal is also popular for canal boating. The rivers are extensively used for waterborne recreation and colourful boats and river barges are an important feature. Other recreational facilities include Newbury Racecourse and a golf driving range. Informal recreation includes the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre and the well-used public rights of way.*

**7) *Transportation routes, often parallel to the river corridor***

*Transport corridors follow the length of the valley, including the main railway line and the A4. Large gantries and overhead line equipment along the railway line can be visually intrusive. The electrification of this part of the railway line will also mean that trains will be larger and more frequent. Navigation of the Kennet and Avon Canals and River Kennet has resulted in the presence of numerous locks, weirs and sizable bridges, which are distinctive features within the landscape.*

**8) *Visually semi-enclosed, with strong rural qualities away from large settlements***

*The Kennet Valley landscape has a semi-enclosed visual character resulting from the well-developed tree cover along watercourses and the frequent blocks of woodland particularly on open valley slopes. Due to these obstructions, views can be funnelled in places. The unsettled character of the valley creates a rural, tranquil landscape away from the main urban settlements of Newbury and Thatcham. Noise and movement from transportation routes and overhead lines on the skyline can detract from views and perceptual qualities.*

## NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

**4.2.6** In 2002, Land Use Consultants, under the appointment of the (then) Countryside Agency produced the North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. The assessment seeks to identify the features and attributes that contribute to the special and distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs AONB. These include the physical, ecological, visual, historic

and cultural forces that have shaped the present day landscape. It also recognises the AONB today as a living and working landscape and considers the social, economic and recreational characteristics that contribute to its current character.

**4.2.7** The AONB lies around 4.5km to the north of the site, wrapping around to the south some 7km distant. The closest and most relevant landscape types fall within LCT 8: Lowland Mosaic. These areas of land occupy the low lying basin of gravel beds and clays which rise either side of the Kennet Valley. They are characterised by a strong woodland character, with widespread settlements linked by an intricate network of narrow rural lanes, winding through ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations and more open farmland areas. The assessment identifies this as a ‘secluded’ enclosed landscape, with a generally intact rural character.

### **4.3 THE STUDY AREA**

**4.3.1** Topographically, the landscape is characterised by gently undulating slopes flanking the River Kennet valley, which passes east-west through the study area. In the site context the Kennet Valley lies at approximately 65-75m AOD, rising to approximately 150m AOD on undulating land to the north at Cold Ash. On the southern valley side, these slopes rise to approximately 120m AOD on the flat-topped gravel covered plateau at Greenham and Crookham Common, which was artificially levelled during World War II. The plateau edge in this area is defined by a series of wooded gullies, with the site lying on the north western extent of this series of features.

**4.3.2** The geology of the study area is dominated by clays with sand and gravel deposits over. The Kennet Valley in this area is formed over Reading Beds (clay) and London Clay, with superficial valley gravel deposits over. On the valley sides, London Clays are overlain with Bagshot Formation (thin pale grey clay and fine-grained sand) and gravels which support the heath. The low permeability of the clays results in a significant presence of surface springs and small streams draining to the River Kennet. The soils of the study area reflect the valley topography, with loamy and clayey floodplain soils within the Kennet Valley, transitioning through slightly acid loamy and clayey soils on the valley sides to freely draining very acid sandy and loamy soils on the gravel plateau. The site area and its immediate surroundings have been provisionally classified as ‘non-agricultural’ land, but previously identified as Grade 3b (Moderate) quality agricultural land.

**4.3.3** Away from the main settlements, the predominant landuse is a mosaic of agriculture and woodland, with pasture fields lining the River Kennet floodplain. Sporadic residential and agricultural development extend across the valley sides. To the south Greenham and Crookham Common presents

a large, flat and open expanse of heathland and acid grassland surrounded by woodland. To the north development at Newbury and Thatcham form significant urban features, with suburban development extending towards the site at Greenham. Close to the site, smaller settlement at Bury's Bank and a farm are separated by significant woodland cover. Newbury Racecourse forms a distinctive feature in the immediate context of the site with unique land management practices and limited vegetation cover.

**4.3.4** Vegetation composition strongly reflects the underlying geology, soils, and hydrology with a diverse mosaic of wetland habitats, reed beds and floodplain meadow on the valley floor. These include a high density of ecologically important habitats, and internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, including the River Kennet Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), parts of the Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain Special Area of Conservation and the Thatcham Reedbeds SSSI. There is a significant woodland presence on the valley sides, many of which are Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites, and the nationally designated heathland habitat Greenham and Crookham Commons SSSI forms the largest area of lowland heath in West Berkshire. It should also be noted that the site is located within the Greenham and Crookham Plateau Biodiversity Opportunity Area, which ensures that the level of harm on Local Wildlife Sites and Geological Sites from proposed development is limited, and that no harm should come to the integrity or continuity of landscape features or importance for wild flora and fauna.

**4.3.5** The area has a long history of human use and occupation. Evidence of land-use in the deeper past comes chiefly from archaeological remains, including Iron Age and Roman field systems and trackways visible as cropmarks. The heathland was used as common grazing and a source of fuel from at least the medieval period. Above the river valley, historically the majority of fields were sited on the less undulating areas between dry valleys and were irregular in shape. Most had been enclosed by the start of the 18th century. Remnant post-medieval water meadows and traditional willow and hazel coppice are still present on the valley floor. The Kennet and Avon Canal (previously the Kennet Navigation (1723)) and the Berkshire and Hampshire railway (1847) are significant historical transport corridors for communication and trade. In terms of modern history, to the south of the study area, the former Greenham Common Airbase dominates the landscape, retaining many tangible features of its military past such as the control tower, which has been renovated into a visitor centre and community hub.

**4.3.6** The study area has a mix of housing styles and types, reflecting the contemporary designs of the period when the homes were built. There are a series of Conservation Areas within Newbury and Thatcham, as well as numerous listed buildings within the study area, the closest of which include: the Grade II\* listed *Church of St Mary*, adjacent to the proposed extended open space area to the south; The Grade II\* listed *Greenham Lodge*, and Grade II listed *Stable Block* to the south; and the Grade II listed barns at Pigeon's Farm to the east. There are also three Registered Park and Gardens within the study area, including: *Sandleford Priory*, which is the closest, and contains Grade I listed *Sandleford Priory* itself to the south; *Shaw House to the north-west*; and *Donnington Grove*, also to the north-west within which is the *Donnington Castle Scheduled Monument* and Grade I listed *Donnington Castle*. A small number of other Scheduled Monuments are located within the study area, the closest of which is the *Cruise Missile Shelter Complex*, *Greenham Common Airbase* located to the south of the site. Also of interest is the Registered Battlefield for the *Battle of Newbury 1643*, located to the west of the site.

**4.3.7** Access provision through the study area is high, with major links to Newbury and Thatcham. The A34, A339 and A4 serve as primary links, with numerous minor roads linking the smaller dispersed residential areas. The River Kennet and the Kennet and Avon Canal restrict vehicular access to an extent, with limited crossing points in the east of the study area. The mainline railway broadly follows the course of the river, with well-connected services to London, Reading and the South West. Minor residential roads run close to the site with Rosyth Gardens, just off Mandarin Drive, being the closest to providing a vehicular access.

**4.3.8** Pedestrian access through the study area is primarily provided by a series of footpaths and bridleways linking the towns of Newbury and Thatcham to Greenham Common. One of the bridleways passes close to the southern boundary of the proposed extended open space area. The Kennet and Avon Canal is a popular and well-used recreational route for both pedestrians and water users traversing the centre of the study area. To the north of the study area, pedestrian access is provided by a dense network of PRoW providing recreational access to the North Wessex Downs AONB. It should also be noted that the Lambourn Valley Way Recreational Route begins at the bottom of the valley, close to the western extent of the study area at Donnington.

## **4.4 BASELINE ANALYSIS**

**4.4.1** The findings of the desk study and field survey have been used to determine the landscape value of the study area, and subsequently identify specific landscape and visual receptors that have the

potential to be affected by the development. The effect of the development on these receptors will be calculated, leading to an overall determination of Significance of Effect on both the landscape resource and the visual amenity of the study area.

**4.4.2** It should be noted that, while specific receptors have been identified for consideration, this does not necessarily mean that they will be significantly and/or adversely affected by the proposals. Moreover, where there are Significant and/or Adverse effects on specific receptors, this does not mean that there will be Significant Adverse effects on the study area as a whole.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

**4.4.3** Beyond the built form of Newbury and Thatcham the area has a reasonably strong landscape quality and is largely representative of the descriptions and characteristics identified in the relevant character assessments. Overall, the key elements or features of the surrounding landscape are not particularly rare outside of the local context. However, the Common Land located within the study area is an unusual feature of local biodiversity and landscape interest. As regards the site itself, its current use for pastoral activities does not contribute to the wider area's perceived character on the edge of Newbury or Thatcham. Furthermore, it is isolated from the surrounding agricultural land uses by residential development, recreational land and dense woodland and tree belts.

**4.4.4** The scenic quality of the study area is varied. A large portion of the study area has been settled in the adjoining towns of Newbury and Thatcham. Beyond the towns, the majority of the landscape see a dispersed settlement pattern, with smaller pockets of residential and agricultural development, with a generally intact and well managed landscape structure. However, some components of the landscape resource, namely the transport corridors, are built form elements that fragment the countryside, notably detracting from the area's scenic quality, more so since the electrification of the railway. There are also large areas of industrial development on the edge of Newbury, as well as on the eastern edge of Thatcham, which are also detracting features in the landscape. There are long views across the landscape from elevated locations on the northern side of the valley. However, the presence of well hedged roadsides, field boundaries and woodland provide a higher level of visual enclosure on the valley floor, as well as the elevated southern valley side. As the site lies centrally to existing built form and recreational land, its tranquillity is limited, furthermore, as a component of the landscape, it does not contribute to the area's scenic quality.

**4.4.5** Although there are no statutory or non-statutory designations covering the site, there are many natural environment designations within the wider study area, including a number of SSSIs and Local Wildlife Sites, as well as a Local Nature Reserve and SAC. It should also be noted that parts of the study area are located within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. Furthermore, the North Wessex Downs AONB is located on the northern and north-eastern edge of the study area. There are several notable heritage designations within the study area, including a number of Grade listed buildings, the Conservation Areas across Newbury and Thatcham, a small number of Scheduled Monuments, and Registered Parks and Gardens, and a Registered Battlefield.

**4.4.6** The study area has an intrinsic level of recreational value due to its partial inclusion within the AONB. There are numerous PRoWs crossing the landscape, both through the AONB and providing access to it from the various settlements. Furthermore, there are numerous areas of Common Land, a golf course, and Newbury Racecourse within the study area. While the North Wessex Downs AONB is a nationally acknowledged landscape, it has no immediate associations with the site or its surroundings. Furthermore, there are no known associations to any particular people who may have provided the landscape within the study area with cultural prominence, however, the Registered Park and Garden at Sandford Priory was designed by Lancelot Brown in 1781.

**4.4.7** There are high levels of value provided by the number of landscape and historic designations covering the landscape. However, there are many detracting features within the study area, largely centered around the towns which lower the overall value of the landscape. As such, the overall value of the landscape is Medium - High, which means that it is considered to be a 'valued landscape' under Section 15, Paragraph 170, Bullet Point a), of the NPPF.

## LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

**4.4.8** The following landscape receptors have been identified as being aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposals:

- The established landscape components which define the landscape in which the site is located, including:
  - ♦ Local character, specifically the urban/rural interface on the edge of Newbury and Thatcham.
- The historic environment of the study area, and the site's relationship with listed and notable non-listed heritage assets.



- The local natural environment, and the site's relationship with notable natural environment designations.
- Existing on-site and boundary vegetation and its importance in respect of the site itself, as well as part of the wider study area.

## VISUAL RECEPTORS

**4.4.9** The following visual receptors locations have been identified as having potential intervisibility with the proposals:

- The Footpath and Bridleway to the south of the site.
- The PRow network in the wider area, particularly the elevated locations to the north.
- The Reading-Taunton railway line.
- The new residential development on the northern edge of Newbury Racecourse.
- The residential edge of Greenham.

## 5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

**5.1.1** The Landscape Value of the study area as a whole is Medium – High presenting as the urban fringe on the edge of Newbury and Greenham Common, with elements of agricultural and recreational land-uses beyond the towns of Newbury and Thatcham. The higher level of value afforded to the landscape is from its partial inclusion within the North Wessex Downs AONB, and the number of both natural environment and heritage designations located within the study area. The landscape value of the study area is lowered by the elements and/or features which detract from, or have little contribution to, the landscape as a whole i.e. the presence of busy transport links and industrial areas, as well as major infrastructure associated both with those links and the towns.

**5.1.2** The site is located outside of the AONB, but in a well-enclosed urban fringe location close to the valley floor on the southern edge of Newbury Racecourse, and the residential edges of Newbury and Greenham. As such, the overall Susceptibility to Change of the application site as a component of the landscape is considered *Medium*. There are examples of new development on the northern edge of the racecourse, some of which are still under construction. However, this is located closer to the more developed edge of Newbury. This means that the study area is capable of accommodating changes. Due to the location of the site, there will be a requirement for the development to be carefully designed to integrate the proposals into the landscape and respect the surrounding urban fringe character. As such, the Overall Landscape Sensitivity of the development area within the surrounding landscape is *Medium*.

**5.1.3** The development area consists of four small, enclosed fields, with an additional field proposed for an extension to an existing open space area. The proposed main access route into the site will also cross the northern boundary of an existing area of open space on the western boundary of the main development area. The additional 5.88ha of open space would significantly offset the removal of this part of the existing open space for use as the main route of access into the site. Although it makes up a small part of the rural fringe landscape surrounding Newbury and Thatcham, and is a key characteristic of the local area, it will be lost due to the development. However, it is isolated from the surrounding agricultural land uses in the wider area by residential development to the west and south, the racecourse to the north, a holiday park and disused quarry workings (now lake) to the north-east, and beyond the fields surrounding Pigeons Farm, the Newbury and Crookham Golf Course to the east. Aside from being part of the pastoral land use between the pattern of woodland on the undulating

valley side, the site does not embody any other specific features or elements defined as a key characteristic of the study area, as identified in the most detailed landscape character assessments.

**5.1.4** The study area as a whole is also concurrent with the broader key characteristics in that commons of heathland are features within the local landscape. The agricultural land, recreational uses, transport links with associated infrastructure, and historic military uses also had and continue to have had a local influence on character. Aside from the busy roads passing through the landscape, the settlements of Newbury and Thatcham and the smaller settlements surrounding the towns, the wider study area to the north and south has a higher level of tranquility. The proposals for the development of the site will not be in direct conflict with the study area's overall landscape character, and it will be located in close proximity to existing small scale and relatively low density settlement, which is characteristic of the character area in which it is located. In the wider landscape the development will be characteristic of other fringe development surrounding the towns. It is also for these reasons that the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB will remain unaffected by the proposals.

**5.1.5** It should be noted that although the proposals do not directly conflict with the broader key characteristics, pressure for development to the south of Newbury has been identified as a detractor in this particular landscape character area. However, the identified landscape strategy includes the conservation and strengthening of existing boundary elements, and to ensure the integration of new development into the landscape, particularly through the use of woodland planting and the consideration of screening. Both strategies are recommended to be employed as part of the development, with the recently planted woodland already providing a future screen to the currently open eastern end of the development area.

**5.1.6** The provision of a new formalised access into the site from Rosyth Gardens to the west will be a new feature as there is currently only field gate access into an adjacent area of open space. However, it will be designed sympathetically to ensure that it will be integrated into the wider roadside and will be seen in the context of the established residential road network. It is stressed within the HELAA that an additional access point is made available into the site to make the site viable for development. The suggestions provided within the HELAA include from Greyberry Copse Road; or through the woodland belt on the southern edge of the site onto Pigeons Farm Road. Following the suggestions provided in the HELAA the additional access into the site will be from Greyberry Copse Road. The access proposed will not be out of character for the local road network, and will be similar to the turning into Young Crescent further to the east along Greyberry Copse Road. There is also the potential for a new footpath

link between Bridleway GREE/3/1 and the new access road, which will cross the proposed extended open space, and the existing open space area.

**5.1.7** To accommodate the main access road into the site, the level of vegetation to be removed is limited to six trees that are located on its proposed route: a 'B' Grade ash, a 'C-B' Grade Goat Willow, and a group of four 'C' Grade ash, as per the *Arboricultural Impact Assessment (2019)* provided by SJ Stephens Associates. The trees located on the northern side of the road, associated with the Local Wildlife Site, as well as three trees located on the southern side, and where the route crosses the ditch into the development area will be retained and protected as appropriate. Sections of the road are recommended to be built using a no dig construction, where it will fall within root protection areas as per the *Arboricultural Impact Assessment*. A small number of trees will also need to be removed to accommodate the proposed additional access off Greyberry Copse Road. The replacement of the trees to be removed with suitable native species will be recommended as mitigation recommendations.

**5.1.8** While there will be an unavoidable loss of the fields as a result of the development, the internal boundary hedges with trees will be retained as far as possible due to their contribution to the mature landscape setting. The breaks to be made in the internal boundaries will be relatively small to allow for access into all areas of the site. It will be recommended that the access points are to be through existing gaps in the boundaries or where the level of existing vegetation is lower. In terms of boundary vegetation, this will be retained as far as possible and enhanced with supplementary planting as part of the landscape scheme. A recently planted woodland, which was recommended in the *Enhanced Phase I Ecological Assessment (Draft) (2019)* provided by Pro Vision Ecology will also contribute to the boundary landscape structure for the site, as well as ecological enhancement.

**5.1.9** To further ensure that the proposed development will have limited effect on both the internal and site boundary planting, suitable landscape buffers are required as per the recommendations in the *Ecological Assessment*. A detailed tree survey of the vegetation within and surrounding the main development area will also help to determine suitable buffer zones, particularly around the more mature trees, to ensure that the layout of the development avoids any root protection areas as far as possible. It is acknowledged that the site's existing landscape structure will play a key role in creating a setting for the development, as well as continuing to provide a key habitat and ecological resource, with links to the wider area. Overall, aside from the recent enhancements to the site's northern boundary, the site's boundaries are generally intact, with some additional sections needing to be

enhanced. These areas are shown on drawing *WHL-1099-09 Indicative Development Areas and Preliminary Mitigation* provided in this report.

**5.1.10** it is recommended that the proposals ensure that there is sufficient open space to further supplement the landscape structure around the site. This will allow for enhancements to the site's definition and containment within the wider area, as well as allowing for a net gain in green-infrastructure within the local area. Furthermore, an area of dedicated open space is located to the south-west of the main development area and will be an extension to an existing open space area adjacent to the development area's western boundary. These open space areas will also provide a landscape buffer, ensuring that the settlements of Newbury and Greenham do not coalesce, and that their individual identities remain intact. Issues surrounding surface and groundwater flood risk have been identified in the HELAA, therefore attenuation basins for the purpose of surface water runoff should be provided. These will also provide areas of public open space within the development area.

**5.1.11** The site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations. Furthermore, the development will not affect any off-site vegetation, with any new boundary landscaping being designed to protect the integrity of the surrounding tree and shrub cover. It will also not affect any surrounding natural environment designations, including the Local Wildlife Site located adjacent to the site's north-western corner, from a landscape or visual perspective. As the development is located within the Greenham and Crookham Plateau Biodiversity Opportunity Area, any development located here will need to deliver biodiversity enhancements in line with Policy CS17 of the *West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006 – 2026)* (2012).

**5.1.12** The site is located within an area rich with historic designated areas and structures and located close to the more recent historic military use of the land to the south of the site at Greenham Common. Although the site itself does not pose an obvious specific historic or architectural interest, the suitability study within the HELAA suggests evidence of medieval and post-medieval agricultural systems, and a house platform possibly associated with the medieval settlement close to the church. A Heritage Impact Assessment has been requested for the site within the HELAA to be undertaken to better understand the underlying archaeological potential for the site. However, from a landscape perspective, there will be no obvious effect from the proposals on the heritage assets within the wider study area, nor is the development considered to adversely affect the historic landscape settings of the surrounding heritage designations, due to a general lack of intervisibility. This includes the Grade II\* listed *St Mary's Church* which is located adjacent to the southern-most part of the site, this area of

land is proposed as part of an extension to an open space area and is not identified as an area for residential development. Furthermore, from where there is potential intervisibility between the site and the historic designations, their historic landscape settings will remain intact due to the existing high level of modern residential development surrounding them.

**5.1.13** In terms of the Overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect resulting from the proposals, any change has to be considered in terms of the key elements and features that will definitely be affected and those that will potentially be affected, as well as the importance of these elements and features as part of the wider landscape. While the proposals will result in a new area of built form, the landscape effect will be limited to the site itself with the loss of the agricultural land and the potential removal of a small sections of hedges with trees to accommodate the proposed accesses.

**5.1.14** There will be no other alteration of any key elements, features and characteristics of the baseline condition, furthermore although the site itself will change due to the proposals, the development will not significantly change the pre-development condition of the landscape as a whole. Additionally, although the pressure of development to the south of the site is seen as a detractor, there is scope within the development to undertake the strategies provided in the *West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment* (2019) to lower the landscape effect of the proposals on the receiving landscape. As such, the Overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect is Moderate. Therefore, the development proposals have an Overall Significance of Landscape Effect of *Moderate*, which is not significant when considered under the LVIA methodology used in the assessment.

**5.1.15** There are opportunities for the proposals to be successfully integrated into the urban fringe character of its location, and be in keeping with the prevailing rural and settled character of the wider study area with little effect on important elements and features of the receiving landscape. However, the proposals will result in an increase in built form in the local/immediate area, on land that has not previously been built on. As such, the Overall Nature of Landscape Effect is *Adverse*.

## **5.2 VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

**5.2.1** The recorded viewpoints (VP) can be used to predict possible effects from PRowS, roads, publicly accessible areas, and residential properties within the study area. Viewpoints have been determined from where the desk study suggested that the development areas may be visible, as well as observations during the field survey. The recorded Viewpoints are considered appropriate for the scale of the development and the prevailing topography and land cover. All the photographs were

taken using a digital equivalent of a 50mm focal length traditional 35mm SLR lens to represent most accurately the views as seen by the human eye.

**5.2.2** For the purpose of this assessment, close views are between 0m – 500m from the main development area, medium views are between 500m – 1500m, and long views from further than 1500m. Views are representative and not totally exclusive. (See Appendix 2: Viewpoint Photographs for enlarged copies of the selected viewpoints).

**5.2.3** The Viewpoints were visited in October 2020 when leaf cover was still relatively full. The seasonal differences (seasonality), in respect of potential effects arising from the varying degree of screening/filtering of views by vegetation that will apply in summer and winter, have been considered in the assessment of all recorded Viewpoints; as per the recommendation of GLVIA3. It is important to note that the recording of Viewpoints during different seasons is not a prerequisite of the consideration of seasonality, as GLVIA3 states:

*The timing of the assessment work and the project programme will also influence the practicality of covering more than one season.*

**Viewpoint 1:** A close distance view east towards the site, from the junction of Mandarin Drive and Rosyth Gardens, close to the site’s proposed access point.

**Approximate distance from site:** 15m

**OS map elevation:** 90m AOD



**ASSESSMENT:**

This viewpoint provides a view of the proposed main access into the site. Beyond the existing field access gate there is a view of an existing area of open space which is to be retained, aside from the proposed access road, which will run along its southern boundary. The development area itself is obscured from view by the trees alongside the road, and the dense woodland belt between the existing open space area and the development area.

	<p>Aside from the open view of the new access, which will be seen as a continuation of the current road leading to Rosyth Gardens, there are possible heavily filtered views during the winter months when leaf cover is lower.</p> <p>The gardens to the properties at Rosyth gardens are also well treed which will reduce the potential for residential views towards the development area. However, there may be heavily filtered, upper storey views from the end dwelling, closest to the access road.</p>
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate - Slight</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate - Moderate/Minor</i></p>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	<p>Although the proposals for the main development area will largely be indiscernible in the view, there will be a visual change to the road layout. This in turn will provide the residual effect of additional traffic passing the dwellings on this section of road and using the road junction. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 2:** An adjacent view north-east into the site, from Bridleway GREE/3/1 on the southern boundary of the site close to St Mary's Church.

**Approximate distance from site:** Adjacent

**OS map elevation:** 110m AOD



ASSESSMENT:	<p>This is a view into the proposed open space area, which is an extension to the existing open space to the north. There will be no change to the view itself, as any change to this area, will just be for the allowance of public access, and a potential footpath link through the open space.</p> <p>The main development area is obscured from view by dense woodland on the northern boundary of the open space, which will continue to obscure views through the winter months.</p>
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Negligible</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Minor</i></p>



<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>The main development proposals will be obscured from view. Any changes to the area of the site which can be seen are of a low key recreational use, rather than for built development and there will be no noticeable change to the view. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposals are <i>Neutral</i>.</p>
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**Viewpoint 3:** A close distance view north-east towards the site, from Footpath GREE/4/3, to the south-east of St Mary’s Church.

**Approximate distance from site:** 50m

**OS map elevation:** Between 115-120m AOD



<p>ASSESSMENT:</p>	<p>The site is obscured from view by intervening woodland to the south of the site. The dense nature of the woodland ensures that it will continue to obscure the development during the winter months, even when there is a lower level of leaf cover.</p>
<p>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i> <b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>None</i> <b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>None</i></p>
<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>As the entirety of the development will be obscured from view from this location, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 4:** A close distance view north towards the site, from the junction of Greyberry Copse Road and Young Crescent.

**Approximate distance from site:** 50m

**OS map elevation:** Between 95-100m AOD

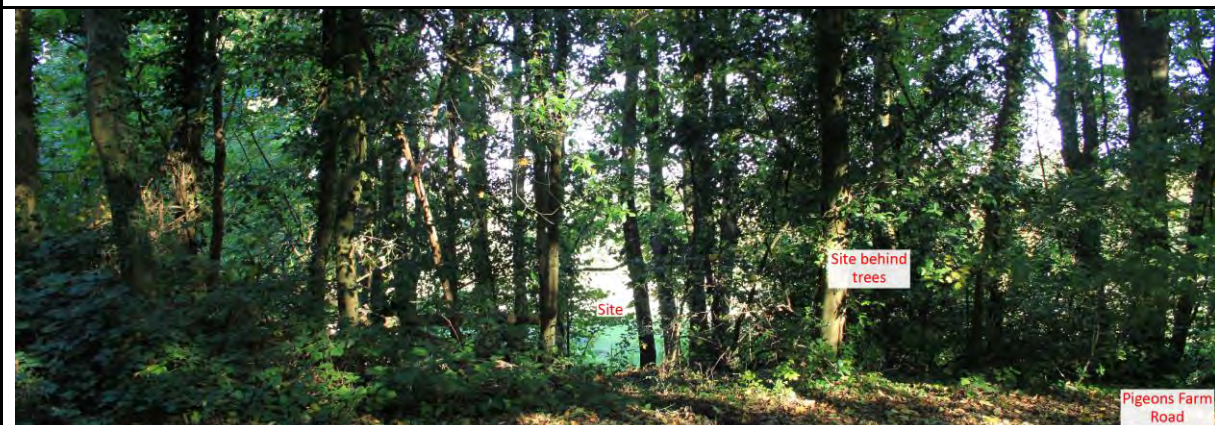


<p>ASSESSMENT:</p>	<p>The site is obscured from view by intervening woodland to the south of the site. The dense nature of the woodland ensures that the development will be obscured even during the winter months when there is a lower level of leaf cover. It should be noted that there will be residential views from the upper storeys of the dwellings on Young Crescent, above their garden boundary vegetation and into the development area.</p>
<p>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i> <b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>None</i> <b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>None</i></p>
<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>As the entirety of the development will be obscured from view from this location, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i>. However, there will be <i>adverse</i> effects on the views from the dwellings on Young Crescent.</p>

**Viewpoint 5:** A close distance view north towards the site, from Pigeons Farm Road, adjacent to the site’s southern boundary.

**Approximate distance from site:** 25m

**OS map elevation:** 100m AOD



ASSESSMENT:	<p>From this location on Pigeons Farm Road there is a slight gap in the vegetation which shows a partial view into the central section of the site, however, gaps within this woodland belt are uncommon. The woodland belt alongside the road is relatively dense, and generally obscures or heavily filters views into the development area. Due to the woodland belt, there is likely to be a substantial landscape buffer between the site boundary and the actual development area, which will see the proposals set back from the site boundary. Therefore, from where it can be seen through the vegetation, the development will not be prominent in the view.</p> <p>It should be noted that the views seen from the roadside will be similar to the views from the dwellings further to the east along this road.</p>
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Slight - Negligible</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate/Minor - Minor</i></p>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	<p>The proposals will largely be indiscernible through the roadside vegetation, however, from where it can be seen, there will be development on land that has not previously been built on. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 6:** A close distance view north towards the site, from Pigeons Farm Road, adjacent to the site's southern boundary.

**Approximate distance from site:** 25m

**OS map elevation:** Between 90-95m AOD



ASSESSMENT:	<p>From this location on Pigeons Farm Road there is a thinner area located in the woodland belt which shows a very heavily filtered view into the eastern section of the site. However, gaps within this woodland belt are uncommon. As with VP5 the woodland belt alongside this section of the road is relatively dense, and generally obscures or heavily filters views into the development area. However, unlike VP5, this location allows a view of the new residential development on the</p>
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	northern side of Newbury Racecourse, which at the time of writing is being built. Therefore, development will not be a new feature in this heavily filtered view. It should be noted that the views seen from the roadside will be similar to the views from the dwellings further to the west along this road.
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i> <b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Negligible</i> <b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Minor</i>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals will largely be indiscernible through the roadside vegetation. From where it can be seen, it will be in the context of existing built form in the view. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i> .

**Viewpoint 7:** A medium distance view south-east towards the site, from a pedestrian bridge over the railway line.

**Approximate distance from site:** 1015m

**OS map elevation:** N/A – On a bridge over a railway

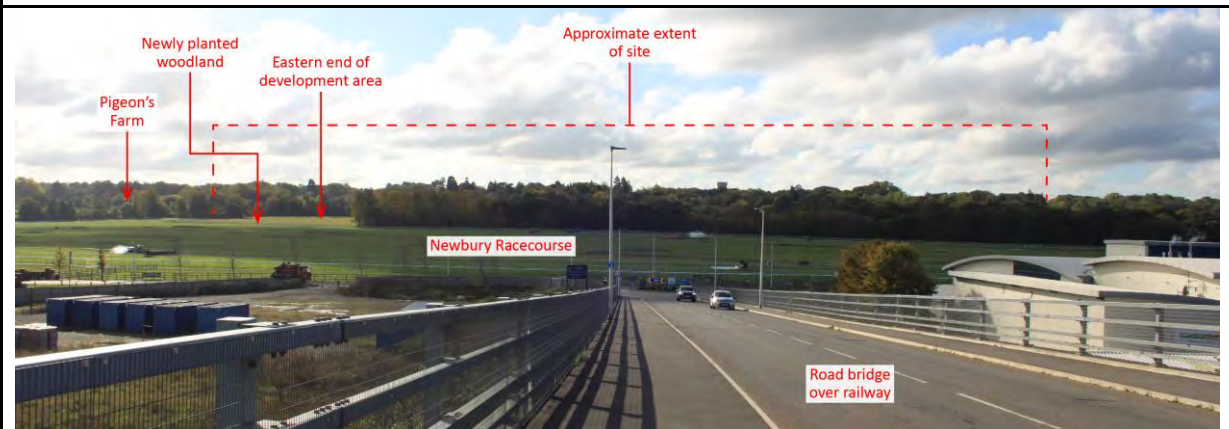


ASSESSMENT:	Although this bridge provides an elevated location, the site is obscured from view by the buildings on the edge of Newbury Racecourse.
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i> <b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>None</i> <b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>None</i>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	As the entirety of the development is completely obscured from view, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i> .

**Viewpoint 8:** A medium distance view south towards the site, from a road bridge over the railway line.

**Approximate distance from site:** 650m

**OS map elevation:** N/A – On a bridge over a railway



<p>ASSESSMENT:</p>	<p>The location of this viewpoint allows for an elevated open view towards the eastern end of the proposed development area. A new woodland block has recently been planted on the northern boundary of the eastern development area which, in time, will follow the line of the existing woodland and will eventually screen the development. However, until this woodland matures, there will be open views of the proposed dwellings on this section of the site. The development itself will be seen against a backdrop of woodland on sloping ground and will not break the skyline.</p> <p>Aside from the eastern end of the development area, the proposals will largely be obscured from view by the dense woodland belt along the southern edge of the racecourse. During the winter months when leaf cover is lower, the woodland will mostly continue to obscure the central section of the development. However, there may be filtered views of the ridgelines of the dwellings on the western end of the site, particularly on its more elevated south-western section.</p>
<p>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium - Low</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate – Moderate/Minor</i></p>
<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>Although development and infrastructure can be seen in the foreground of the view, the proposals will change the balance and make-up of the view of the southern side of the racecourse; and until the recently planted woodland reaches maturity, the proposals will be a prominent new feature on land that has not previously been built upon. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 9:** A medium distance view south-west towards the site, from a new public pedestrian route on the edge of the new residential development on the north-eastern corner of the racecourse.

**Approximate distance from site:** 605m

**OS map elevation:** Between 700-75m AOD



<p>ASSESSMENT:</p>	<p>The location of this viewpoint allows for an unrestricted view towards the eastern end of the proposed development area, with a partial view into the central section of the site. This is a similar viewpoint to VP8 in that the recently planted woodland block will, in time, follow the line of the existing woodland and eventually screen the development. However, until this woodland matures, there will be open views of the proposed dwellings on this section of the site. The development itself will be seen against a backdrop of woodland on sloping ground and will not break the skyline.</p> <p>The proposals in the central and western sections of the development will largely be obscured from view by the dense woodland belt along the southern edge of the racecourse, and the dwellings proposed on the eastern development area. During the winter months when leaf cover is lower, the woodland will mostly continue to obscure the central section of the development. However, there may be filtered views of the ridgelines of the dwellings on the western end of the site, particularly on its more elevated south-western section.</p>
<p>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate</i></p>
<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>The proposals will change the balance and make-up of the view of the southern side of the racecourse; and until the recently planted woodland reaches maturity, the proposals will be a prominent new feature on land that has not previously been built upon. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 10:** A medium distance view west towards the site, from Footpath GREE/6/3 close to Cherry Bird Park (holiday accommodation).

**Approximate distance from site:** 695m

**OS map elevation:** Between 70-75m AOD

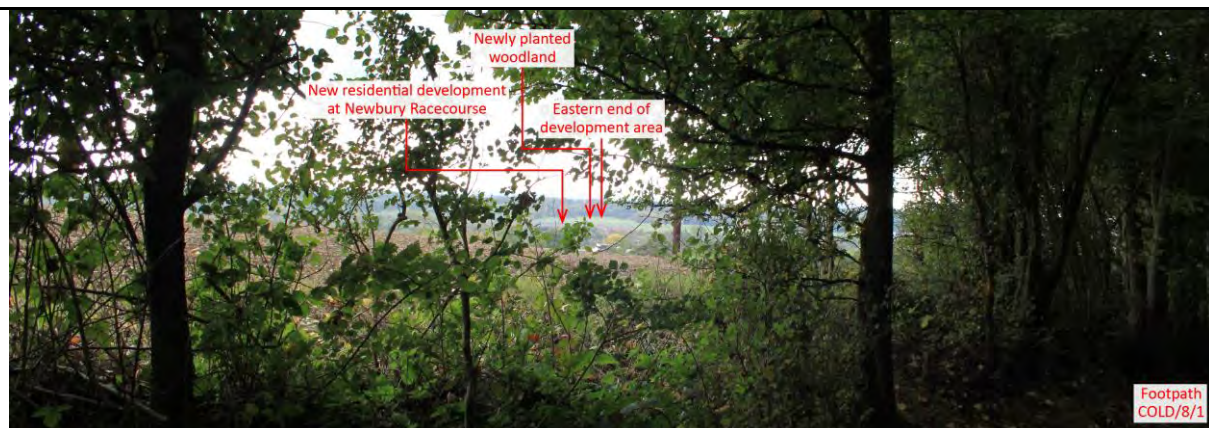


<p>ASSESSMENT:</p>	<p>The site is obscured from view by intervening trackside vegetation on the western side of the track, and field boundary vegetation further to the west. The development will largely continue to be obscured through the winter months due to the level of intervening vegetation. However, if there are views of the proposed development, they will be indiscernible in the view, from receptors using the footpath.</p>
<p>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i> <b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>None</i> <b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>None</i></p>
<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>As the entirety of the site is obscured from view, with any potential winter views of the development through the trackside and field boundary vegetation being indiscernible, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 11:** A long distance view south towards the site, from the Footpath COLD/8/1 on the edge of Sett Copse.

**Approximate distance from site:** 2540m

**OS map elevation:** 130m AOD



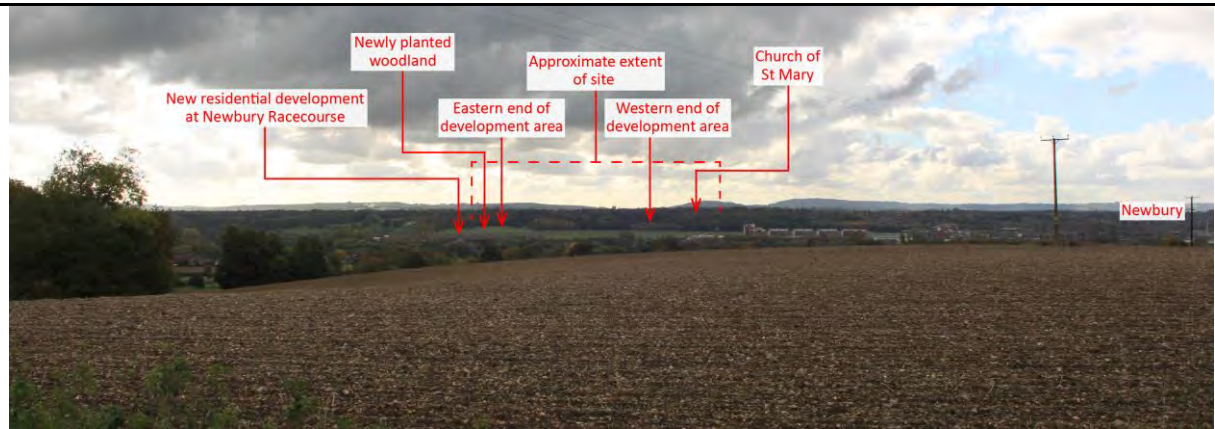
<p><b>ASSESSMENT:</b></p>	<p>This is an elevated view through a gap in the trackside hedge, which allows a view of the open eastern end of the development area. This is an uncommon view along this route due to the density of the vegetation further along the track in either direction, and as such the view is seen for just a short duration as receptors pass by this gap.</p> <p>The proposals will be seen against a backdrop of trees on sloping land and will not break the skyline. Although a woodland block has been recently planted on the site’s northern boundary, the development will be open in the view, and even at maturity, there will be filtered winter views of the ridgeline of the development, particularly of the dwellings on the southern edge of the site.</p> <p>Although not directly related to the newly built (and currently being built) residential development on the northern edge of Newbury racecourse, the proposals will be seen in the context of this built form.</p> <p>The rest of the development area is obscured by the trackside vegetation, and the woodland on the northern boundary of the site. There will be more open winter views from the track due to the lower level of leaf cover on the trackside vegetation, however, any views of the ridgelines of the buildings on the central and western parts of the site will be largely indiscernible due to distance and softening of the views from the aforementioned woodland.</p>
<p><b>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</b></p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Slight</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate/Minor</i></p>
<p><b>NATURE OF EFFECT:</b></p>	<p>Although the proposals can partially be seen from this location, they will not change the make-up and balance of the view due to the level of new development which can already be seen. However, the proposals will be seen on land that has not been previously developed. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i>.</p>



**Viewpoint 12:** A long distance view south towards the site, from Footpath COLD/8/2 between Sett Copse and Henwick Manor.

**Approximate distance from site:** 2595m

**OS map elevation:** Between 130-135m AOD



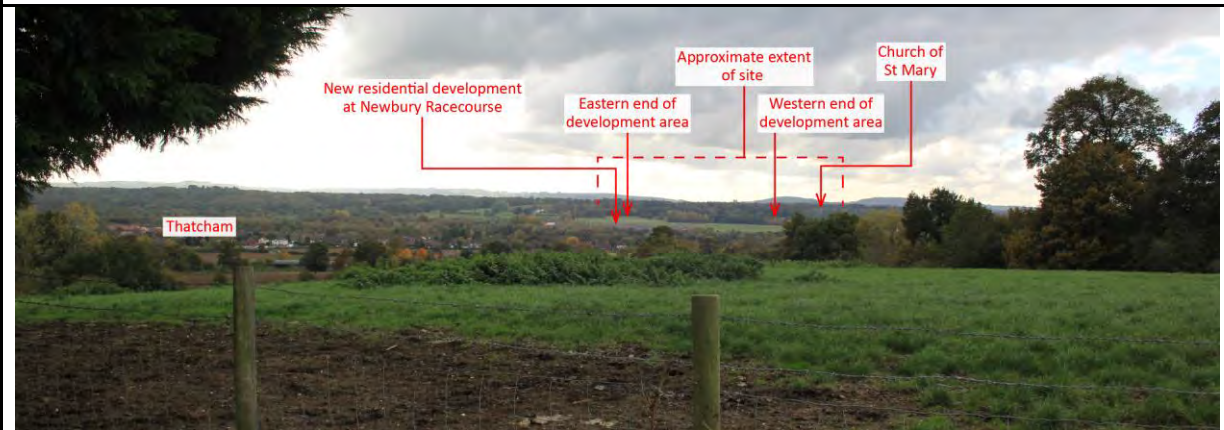
<p><b>ASSESSMENT:</b></p>	<p>This is an elevated partial open view towards the development area, through a gap in an otherwise dense field boundary hedgerow. The eastern end of the development is open in the view, but will be seen in the context of newly built residential development on the northern edge of Newbury Racecourse, and other built form related to the Racecourse.</p> <p>As with VP11 the proposals will be seen against a backdrop of trees on sloping land and will not break the skyline. The recently planted woodland on the site's northern boundary, will eventually help to integrate the development into its surroundings, and largely screen it from view. It should be noted that even at maturity there will be filtered winter views of the rooflines of the dwellings, particularly of those located on the southern edge on this part of the site.</p> <p>The rest of the development area is largely obscured by the woodland on the northern boundary of the site. Due to the elevated location of the viewpoint, there will be a view above the northern boundary trees onto the more elevated western section of the development area. Also, as the central section of the site will continue to be obscured by the northern boundary woodland, the western and eastern ends of the development will be seen as separate from each other.</p> <p>It should be noted that this is a short duration view as receptors pass this gap in the field boundary hedgerow.</p>
<p><b>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</b></p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate - Slight</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate – Moderate/Minor</i></p>
<p><b>NATURE OF EFFECT:</b></p>	<p>Although the proposals will be a noticeable new built form feature in the landscape, they will be seen as part of a much wider panorama that includes the built form associated with Newbury Racecourse, and of the town of Newbury itself. However, although the proposals will not change the make-up and balance</p>

of the view, they will be seen on land that has not previously been built upon. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Adverse*.

**Viewpoint 13a:** A long distance view south towards the site, from Footpath COLD/8/2, close to the junction with Footpath THAT/11/2 on the edge of Henwick Manor.

**Approximate distance from site:** 2585m

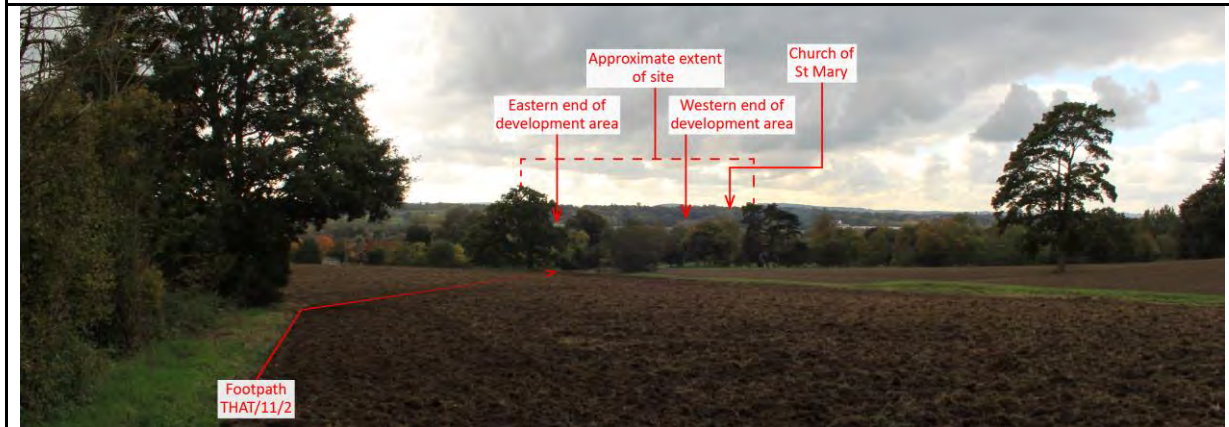
**OS map elevation:** Between 125-130m AOD



**Viewpoint 13b:** A long distance view south towards the site, from Footpath THAT/11/2 between Henwick Manor and Lower Henwick Farm.

**Approximate distance from site:** 2405m

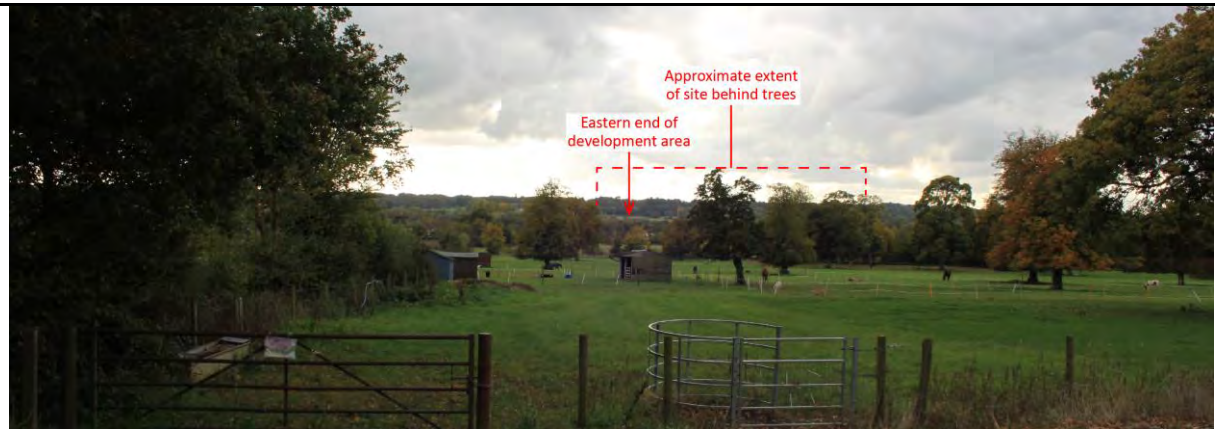
**OS map elevation:** 110m AOD



**Viewpoint 13c:** A long distance view south towards the site, from the track to Lower Henwick Farm, on the junction of Footpaths THAT/11/1 and THAT/11/2.

**Approximate distance from site:** 2135m

**OS map elevation:** 95m AOD



<p>ASSESSMENT:</p>	<p>This is a series of elevated viewpoints showing the views towards the site, as receptors follow the route of the footpaths south down the valley side. The view from VP13a is the most open and is very similar to the view from VP12, in which both the eastern and western sections of the development area can be seen. VP13b allows a reduced view of the development areas due to the level of intervening tree cover, and although the proposals can be seen in these areas, they will consist of partial and filtered views of other development in the landscape due to the softening provided by intervening trees. It should also be noted that the distance from the development, alongside the intervening vegetation, works as a mitigating factor in this particular view as the development will be less discernible as a feature in the landscape.</p> <p>VP13c provides an open view of the eastern part of the development area, which is framed by trees in the foreground of the view. From this particular location the views of this part of the development area will be significantly reduced once the recently planted woodland has established and matured.</p> <p>Although the development will be noted as a new built form feature in these views, it will be seen in a wider panorama, which largely sees other built form development, or field based (equestrian) paraphernalia in the view.</p>
<p>SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:</p>	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate - Slight</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate - Moderate/Minor</i></p>
<p>NATURE OF EFFECT:</p>	<p>Although the proposals will be a noticeable new built form feature in the landscape, they will be seen as part of a much wider panorama that includes other built form. Although the proposals will not change the make-up and balance of the view, they will be seen on land that has not previously been built upon. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Adverse</i>.</p>

**Viewpoint 14:** A long distance view south-west towards the site, from Footpath COLD/1/4 close to Ashmore Green.

**Approximate distance from site:** 3520m

**OS map elevation:** Between 105-110m AOD



**ASSESSMENT:** The site and proposed development area are obscured from view by intervening vegetation, and landform. Distance will also be a mitigating factor for this viewpoint.

**SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:**  
**Receptor Sensitivity:** *Medium*  
**Magnitude of Effect:** *None*  
**Significance of Effect:** *None*

**NATURE OF EFFECT:** As the entirety of the development will be obscured, even during the winter months, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Neutral*.

**Viewpoint 15:** A long distance view south-west towards the site, from the Footpath Cold/15/1 close to Cold Ash.

**Approximate distance from site:** 3610m

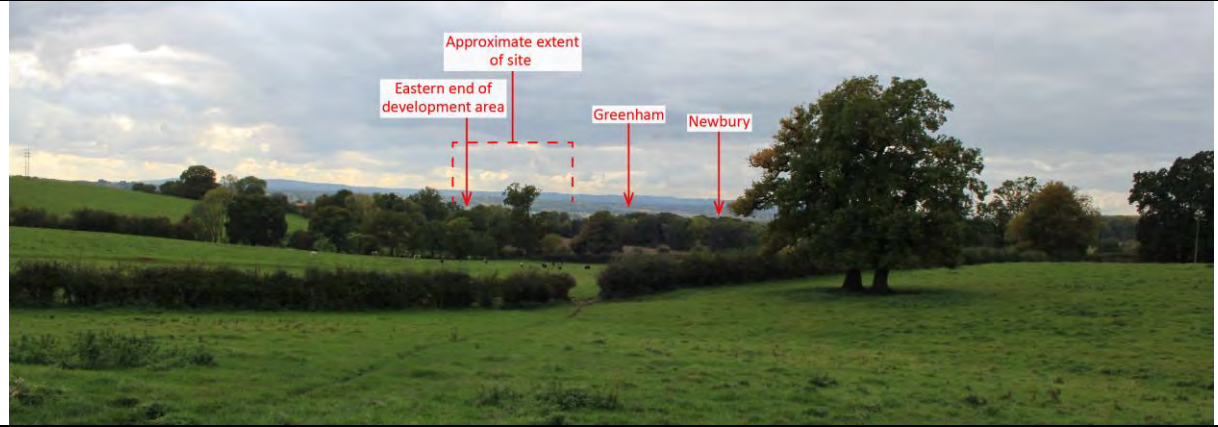
**OS map elevation:** 115m AOD

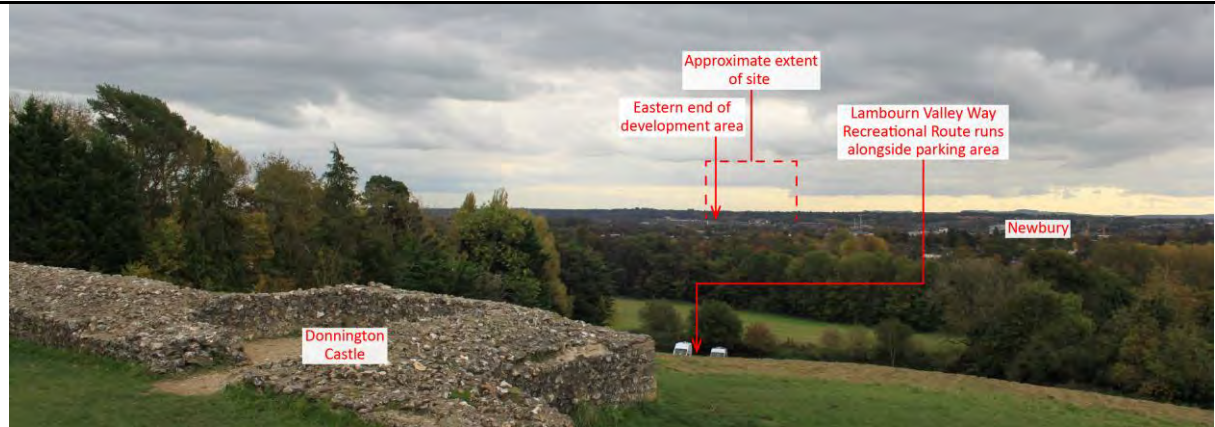


**ASSESSMENT:** The site is obscured from view by intervening vegetation, and landform.

**SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:**  
**Receptor Sensitivity:** *Medium*  
**Magnitude of Effect:** *None*

	<b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>None</i>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	As the entirety of the development will be obscured, even during the winter months, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i> .

<p><b>Viewpoint 16:</b> A long distance view south-west towards the site, from Footpath THAT/6/1 close to Park Farm.</p> <p><b>Approximate distance from site:</b> 4170m</p> <p><b>OS map elevation:</b> 125m AOD</p>	
	
ASSESSMENT:	<p>This is an elevated glimpsed partial view towards the eastern section of the development area, through a gap in the treeline. The rest of the development area is obscured by intervening woodland, with potential winter views of the rooflines when there is a lower level of leaf cover, however, these will be indiscernible against the woodland.</p> <p>Although the site is theoretically visible it will be seen in a wider panorama which includes other areas of development. Furthermore, distance is a mitigating factor from this viewpoint location at beyond 4000m from the site, with the view itself being at almost 90° from the direction of travel, which will further limit the prominence of the proposals at this distance.</p>
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>Medium</i></p> <p><b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Negligible</i></p> <p><b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Minor</i></p>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	<p>Although the proposals will be theoretically visible, they will be seen as part of a much wider panorama that includes other built form. Furthermore, the distance is a mitigating factor with views of the development being largely indiscernible from this viewpoint location. As such the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i>.</p>

<p><b>Viewpoint 17:</b> A long distance view south-east towards the site, from Donnington Castle.  <b>Approximate distance from site:</b> 4035m  <b>OS map elevation:</b> 125m AOD</p>	
	
ASSESSMENT:	<p>The site is largely obscured from view by the woodland on the site’s northern boundary, and the buildings associated with Newbury Racecourse. However, there will be a glimpsed view of the more open eastern end of the development area between the buildings. Although this part of the development is theoretically visible, it is part of a much wider panorama, and will be seen in the context of the existing built form in the foreground. Distance from the site is also a mitigating factor to be considered.</p>
SIGNIFICANCE CALCULATION:	<p><b>Receptor Sensitivity:</b> <i>High</i>  <b>Magnitude of Effect:</b> <i>Negligible</i>  <b>Significance of Effect:</b> <i>Moderate/Minor</i></p>
NATURE OF EFFECT:	<p>Although theoretically visible, the development area will not be seen out of context of the development already shown in the view, nor will it be a prominent feature in the landscape. As such, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is <i>Neutral</i>.</p>

#### POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL VIEWS (NOT RECORDED)

**5.2.4** Although the majority of the site is relatively well contained, there are potential views from residential properties in the study area, the most notable being those from the newly built dwellings on the northern edge of Newbury Racecourse. Further to the north are potential views from dwellings on the valley side on the northern edge of Newbury, as well as from dwellings on the edges of Ashmore Green and Cold Ash. To the south and west of the site, there are also potential views from the dwellings at Greenham. To the east, and further to the south, west and north, views towards the development area are obscured by intervening landform, vegetation and built form.

**5.2.5** As regards the residential views from the west, these are associated with views from the dwellings on Rosyth Gardens from where the main access point is to be located. From here there will be views from these dwellings of the traffic using the road. The house closest to the road as seen in VP1 will also have a heavily filtered upper storey view of the road and towards the development area from the rear of the property. The dwellings to the south, are those located at Young Crescent, and those along Pigeons Farm Road. From Young Crescent there will be upper storey views into the development areas through boundary and garden vegetation; while the dwellings on Pigeons Farm Road will have very heavily filtered winter views into the southern part of the development area, as shown in VPs 5 & 6.

**5.2.6** The views from the new development on the northern edge of the racecourse are the most open towards the development, and although the majority of the development will be obscured by the woodland on the site's northern boundary there will be open upper storey views of the eastern development area. The potential residential views from the more elevated locations to the north and north-east will be upper storey views. These are likely to be partial and filtered views dependent on the angle of the view, and will also be of the eastern end of the development. Furthermore, the development will be seen as part of a wider panorama, with distance also being a mitigating factor.

**5.2.7** From the identified residential views there will be limited change to the current visual character, aside from the views from the new development across the racecourse, which will see a change to the make-up and character of the view. Although views from some of the identified residential properties will not be fully mitigated against, boundary enhancements as well as strategic and on-site planting will help to soften views into/across the development area. negated

## SUMMARY OF VISUAL EFFECTS

**5.2.8** The Overall Visual Sensitivity of the study area is considered *Medium*. Its visual character is largely defined by a mixture of developed townscape and rural countryside, with agricultural, industrial and recreational uses, as well as an established landscape structure that restricts the number of potential long-ranging views. The central and western sections of the site are generally well contained by the topography of the surrounding landform, as well as the high level of existing vegetation cover surrounding the site. However, the eastern end of the development is less contained particularly on its northern boundary due to a more open boundary structure; although a recently planted woodland on the northern boundary will help to contain the site in the future, once it matures.

**5.2.9** The majority of views are from PRoWs or footways to the north-west, north and north-east of the site, or from residential streets to the south and west of the site. The anomalies to this are the roadside view from a bridge over the railway line to the north, and a view from the bridleway that runs adjacent to the south-western site boundary. Although there are views towards the site from the surrounding area, they are largely partial, glimpsed, or heavily filtered. There are no open views showing the site in its entirety due to the dense intervening vegetation, landform, and existing built form.

**5.2.10** The visual envelope is varied, with views from a close proximity being limited to those adjacent to, or very close to the site to the south and west. Views from a northern direction (from where there are more open views towards the site) are from medium or long distance views, and are spread across the northern side of the valley. However, none of these longer distance views are located within the AONB due to distance and a general lack of intervisibility. Aside from the VP2 there are no open views into the site from the south or west, as they are all partial or very heavily filtered. VP2 itself has an open view into the proposed extended open space area, which will see no change aside from any landscape management practices undertaken. There will be no view into the actual development area from this viewpoint, even during the winter months due to the high level of intervening vegetation.

**5.2.11** From the north-west, north and north-east from where there are views, these will generally be partial in nature with most views being of the currently more open eastern section of the development area. However, from a small number of viewpoints there are also glimpsed views of the elevated south-western part of the development area. Generally, the central and western section of the development area are obscured from views from the north by the woodland on the northern boundary, however, there are potential heavily filtered winter views of the rooflines of the dwellings. To the east, south, west and north beyond the adjacent and close distance viewpoint locations and potential residential views, the views are obscured by the intervening vegetation, landform or built form.

**5.2.12** The most notable views of the development are the ones located directly to the north from a medium or long distance, namely those represented by VPs 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13a, b & c. From these locations change will be most apparent, and in some cases will show the proposals together with existing built form in the wider landscape. Beyond these viewpoint locations, particularly beyond 3000m of the site, the views are largely obscured by intervening landform or vegetation as shown in VP14. To the north-east, these longer distance views are generally obscured, with any potential views



not being significant due to distance and the development being glimpsed between treelines as part of a much wider panorama.

**5.2.13** VP17 is the most sensitive view towards the site as it is located on the site of the Grade I listed Donnington Castle which is located within the Donnington Castle Scheduled Monument, and the wider Grade II listed Donnington Grove Registered Park and Garden. However, as seen from the assessment, VP17 shows the site to be generally well obscured by the woodland on the northern boundary of the development area, and the buildings associated with Newbury Racecourse. Furthermore, although there will be a glimpsed view of the eastern part of the development area, the distance of the development from this viewpoint location means that it will be indiscernible against the existing built form in the wider panorama.

**5.2.14** While the development will see a change in the character of the site as a result of the change of use and new built form, the overall effect on the visual amenity of the study area will be limited due to the containment of much of the site in the wider landscape. Furthermore, the most notable views of the development are located within a narrow band of land through the study area almost directly to the north of the site. Therefore, although it is accepted that there will be localised effects to the visual character from where the development can be seen from this narrow band, the proposals would be unlikely to affect the established visual character of the study areas as a whole. As such the Overall Magnitude of Visual Change is *Moderate – Slight*, resulting in the Overall Significance of Visual Effect being *Moderate - Moderate/Minor*, which is **not** significant when considered under the LVIA methodology used in the assessment.

**5.2.15** Although views towards the development are relatively limited, from where there are views, parts of the development will be seen as a new feature in the local area. Most views of the site are generally partial or heavily filtered, with the majority of longer distance views beyond those directly to the north, being obscured by the prevailing landform, built form, or by dense intervening vegetation. The development will not discernibly change the visual character beyond the local area identified to the north of the site; however, it will be seen on land that has not been previously built on. As such, the Overall Nature of Visual Effect is considered to be *Adverse*.

**5.2.16** It should be noted that a woodland block has recently been planted on the northern boundary of the eastern end of the site, therefore, although there are currently open views into this area, the woodland will provide future screening.

## **5.3 CONSTRUCTION EFFECTS**

**5.3.1** There will be construction effects throughout the development of this site, both on local receptors as well as wider area receptors. Aside from views of the plant machinery and materials, the more local receptors may also be affected by issues with noise and dust. Therefore, to reduce the construction effects on both landscape and visual receptors, materials and equipment should be appropriately stored within the site, as well as being stored away from retained trees and hedges to avoid damage. To avoid detrimental effects from noise pollution on the neighbouring residential edge of Greenham, work on-site should be limited to a set of pre-approved working hours. Furthermore, preventative measures should be undertaken to ensure that dust created throughout the construction period is reduced as much as possible.

**5.3.2** Although there will be construction effects associated with the development, they will be of a temporary nature and will have no lasting effects on the recorded landscape and visual receptors.

## **5.4 RESIDUAL EFFECTS**

**5.4.1** Following the construction of the development, the landscape structure will be repaired and enhanced as part of the mitigation proposals. The aim of the mitigation proposals is to integrate the development into its surroundings, which, at maturity the proposed mitigation vegetation and the recently planted woodland will achieve. While there will continue to be filtered views from the local area, including from the residential edge of Greenham, and the elevated PRoWs crossing the landscape to the north, the effect of the proposals will be significantly reduced. The mature trees and hedges will break up and soften views of the development area, while also becoming part of, and contributing to the wider landscape structure.

**5.4.2** There will potentially be secondary residual effects as a result of increased traffic through Rosyth Gardens and Mandarin Drive, as well as light spill from the development. However, the effects from the light spill will be significantly reduced at maturity of the proposed mitigation vegetation and the recently planted woodland. From where the light spill is visible it will be in the context of development in the wider area, including in places the edges of Newbury and Greenham. Overall, although there will be a change for both the landscape and visual receptors, any residual effects on them will not be significant, and there will be benefits to the local landscape structure, with biodiversity and ecological enhancements also being achieved.

## 6. MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

**6.1** The following recommendations are appropriate to reduce the significance of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, with the aim being to further integrate the site into the landscape while providing enhancements to the area's landscape structure through recommendations of planting and management. The following recommendations provide a general idea of how best to address potential effects through a broad level of structural landscaping, and as such will be incorporated into the '*Indicative Development Areas and Preliminary Mitigation*' plan for the site.

**6.2** Mitigation measures will mainly focus on the retention, enhancement and management of existing boundary vegetation, particularly the woodland belt on the southern boundary of the site; and supplementing the recently planted woodland on the north-eastern boundary of the site. It is also recommended that the proposed extension to the open space area is managed appropriately to allow for use by the public, while also according with policy CS17 as regards the biodiversity opportunity area designation. New planting will supplement the existing landscape structure around the site, in particular gapping up areas of hedgerow fragmentation, as well as creating structure within the development itself, and the softening of the route of the main access road into the site, through the use of strategic tree planting.

**6.3** The aim is to not only further integrate the proposed development into the landscape, but by incorporating the recommendations from other disciplines i.e. ecology and arboriculture, also provide landscape and ecological enhancements. The proposals at this stage include broad level structural enhancements, which recommend using a scheme of new planting and management using native species characteristic of the area. However, for the success of the development it is key that a comprehensive landscape scheme be provided at a later stage in the design process to ensure that an appropriate landscape setting is attained.

### *General:*

- A traditional form and a palette of materials characteristic of those used in the study area, particularly neighbouring development should be used.
- The vehicular access through the internal hedges with trees are to be designed to ensure that disruption to the boundary vegetation is limited as far as possible.
- Low level lighting should be used across the site to minimise light spill so as not to affect wildlife, or neighbouring development.

- The proposed vehicular access should be constructed prior to any other on-site works commencing.
- Attenuation features should be located on the eastern end of the development area, if possible, to reduce the level of development in this location.
- If the development is to be phased, it is recommended that the area on the eastern end of the development is part of the final phase of construction. This is to allow for the recently planted woodland on the northern boundary of this area to have time to grow and provide a higher level of containment.

*Management and Enhancement of Existing Vegetation:*

- Existing poor quality/diseased vegetation or invasive species should be removed and replaced if necessary/appropriate.
- Suitable root protection area stand-offs and protection measures should be applied around all vegetation to be retained.
- All retained vegetation should be appropriately managed, with a focus on undertaking remedial work, including thinning, removal of low growth and crown raising, as necessary.
- Existing boundary hedgerows, particularly the eastern and southern boundaries to be gapped up with native species as appropriate. Internal hedges should also be gapped up where needed.

*Proposed Structural Mitigation and Planting:*

- The following recommendations should be taken into account in respect of plants being used for mitigation purposes:
  - All new planting, including planting for the purposes of replacement should comprise appropriate species, with domestic planting being restricted where the site borders the countryside.
  - At planting, a range of tree sizes should be used to create instant impact and structure.
- Additional tree and hedge planting should take place on the north-eastern boundary, to supplement the recently planted woodland and create a more 'instant' structure on this boundary.
- Additional tree and hedge planting should take place on the boundaries identified on the plan, adjacent to the neighbouring dwellings at Young Crescent.
- Additional tree and hedge planting should take place where there are gaps in the existing vegetation, particularly on the northern part of the site.

- Additional structural tree and hedge planting should take place along the southern side of the main access road into the site to create an attractive entrance to the development and soften the roadside on the edge of an existing open space area.
- Mixed native hedging should be established where needed on the site boundaries, and internal field boundaries, to supplement the existing hedgerow structure. A dense hedgerow structure should be maintained by not allowing hedgerow species to grow to tree sized proportions.

*Proposals Recommended for the Internal Structure and On-Site Planting:*

- Feature tree planting, using large native species, should take place within the site, to create interest and serve as visual amenity features, as well as add varied structure to the development.
- Strategic tree planting should take place within and around the site, to create structure and to break up views across the development area.
- A mix of domestic and native trees, shrubs and hedging should be used within the site as appropriate, to create a setting for the development. However, the use of domestic species should be limited where the site borders public open space.
- Domestic planting should be undertaken on the house frontages to provide an attractive setting to the development.

**6.4** It should be noted that a generic 15m landscape buffer has been shown on the *'Indicative Development Areas and Preliminary Mitigation'* plan from any existing boundary and internal vegetation. This has been provided to show the maximum buffer needed for the potential root protection areas of the mature trees located on the site. It should be noted that these buffer areas are likely to be reduced once a detailed survey of the trees and other vegetation has been undertaken, upon which a more accurate development area can be shown.

**6.5** Another consideration for the development, particularly on the southern edge of the site will be the potential for shading across the development area. A detailed tree survey will also provide a better understanding of the effects of shading on the site.

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

**7.1** The key considerations when determining the acceptability of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposals are the receptors that will be potentially affected by the development and how far any effects are/can be mitigated. Of particular importance to the consideration of the developments overall effect is whether the development will have notable significant effects on the landscape character and visual amenity of the study area, over and above that of the existing site, while addressing concerns expressed in the Site Selection Background Paper. As well as the suitability of the site for development in a landscape and visual context as per the requirement for this assessment as part of the HELAA.

**7.2** As a result of the assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects, it has been determined that, due to the site's level of containment within the landscape by surrounding vegetation cover and landform, and its location within close proximity to existing settlement, any potential effect on landscape and visual receptors will be lessened and change will be localised. Overall, the proposed development beyond the site itself and its immediate surroundings, will not be significantly detrimental to any of the key characteristics or descriptions of the surrounding landscape as identified in this document or the Site Selection Background Paper.

**7.3** Taken as a whole, the development will have an overall *Moderate – Moderate/Minor* effect, which is **not** considered significant under the LVIA methodology used in this assessment, with the overall Nature of Effect of the development pre-mitigation being *Adverse*. However, there will be some localised benefits in respect of the enhancement of the current green infrastructure within and around the site. These benefits will be further enhanced by the proposed additional green infrastructure. The mitigation and enhancement recommendations detailed in Section 6 have been developed in response to the findings of the landscape and visual assessment undertaken in Section 5, as well as the strategy recommendations provided in the *West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment* (2019), and seek to further lessen the effects of the proposed development, while also providing enhancements where necessary. Woodland planting on the northern boundary has already been undertaken, as per the recommendations within the ecology survey.

**7.4** To ensure that the level of vegetation removal to accommodate the site and its access points remains low, it is recommended that the second access is taken via Greyberry Copse Road, as this presents the option provided in the HELAA with the lower amount of potential vegetation removal. This access option is shown on the '*Indicative Development Areas and Preliminary Mitigation*' plan.

Furthermore, the area of the site that the western option leads into is unlikely to be viable for housing development due to the extent of the potential landscape buffers that will need to be imposed in this area.

## EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

**7.5 At Implementation:** The Overall Significance of Effect and Nature of Effect will remain largely the same. In both instances, while removal of inappropriate vegetation, and general remedial work will be an improvement to the area, any changes associated with the mitigation will primarily become apparent when planting reaches maturity.

**7.6 At Maturity:** The Overall Significance of Effect will be reduced to *Minor* with the development being better integrated into the landscape. While there will be limited adverse effects as a result of some tree and hedge removal, and development on agricultural land, these will be effectively off-set by the proposed landscape enhancements both within and on the edge of the site. Furthermore, the use of structural planting within the development will break up the on-site built form. The overall nature of effect will remain *Adverse*, however there will be notable benefits in respect of the provision of additional tree and hedgerow cover, as well as enhancements to the green infrastructure network around the site, with a hierarchy of tree ages also being established in the area.

## EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON VISUAL RECEPTORS

**7.7 At Implementation:** Effects will be largely the same from the majority of Viewpoints. However, new larger structural planting will help to soften views of the built form, particularly on the eastern end of the development area. Additionally, the use of larger tree stock will help break-up views from the wider landscape and create ‘instant’ structure around the development.

**7.8 At Maturity:** The overall Significance of Effect will be reduced to *Minor* with the site being better contained within the landscape. Additional planting will help filter, and in places screen views and create a more appropriate setting for the development, specifically in respect of views from the north, and the adjacent residential development on the edge of Greenham. There will be some residual, adverse effects in respect of views of the site access and in turn the traffic using it from the neighbouring dwellings at Rosyth Gardens and on Mandarin Drive, however, these will be localised. The overall Nature of Effect will be reduced to slightly *Adverse*, however, the additional planting within and around the site will have localised benefits in respect of visual amenity.

**7.9** Mitigation and enhancement measures will mean that the development can be integrated into the wider landscape through a comprehensive scheme of structural and strategic planting. Taken as a whole, the proposed development post-mitigation will have a *Minor* effect, with the effect on specific receptors being reduced, as well as there being localised biodiversity benefits as a result of the establishment of new areas of green infrastructure.

**7.10** Taking account of the proposed landscape mitigation and enhancement recommendations, the proposed development can largely be undertaken in compliance with the relevant guidance and policies in the NPPF, and the West Berkshire Core Strategy. Although the site is located beyond the existing settlement boundary, it is also largely compliant with the relevant policies within this document.

**7.11** This LVIA has been provided as part of the evidence base to justify the suitability of this site for its inclusion within the Local Plan. As such, the assessment has responded to the concerns and potential issues identified in the Berkshire HELAA and the Site Selection Background Paper; and in conclusion it is considered that from a landscape and visual perspective, with a design and layout sensitive to its location, this site is suitable for allocation in the Local Plan, for residential development.



## 8. REFERENCES

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## CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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## Other Documents

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Pro Vision Ecology, (2019). *Enhanced Phase I Ecological Assessment (Draft)*

West Berkshire Council, (2020) *Emerging Draft West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037 – Site selection Background Paper*

## ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL



- Site boundary
- Off-set from site boundary
- Public rights of way
  - Footpath
  - Bridleway
  - Byway open to all traffic
  - Restricted byway
- Other public access
  - Recreational route
  - Traffic free cycle route
- Roads
  - Main road
  - Secondary road
  - Road generally more than 4m wide
  - Road generally less than 4m wide
  - Other road, drive or track
- Railways
  - Track multiple or single

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**WHLandscape**  
 Landscape Architecture & Urbanism  
 Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,  
 Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
 t: 01380 727539 e: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse  
 Client: Newbury Racecourse PLC  
 Drawing No: WHL-1099-01  
 Date: Oct 20  
 Scale: 1:2500 @ A1

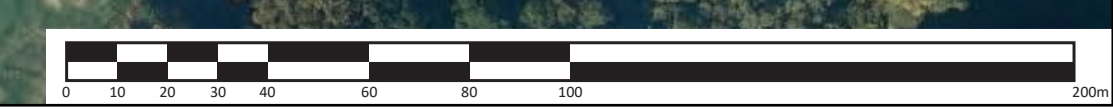
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Site

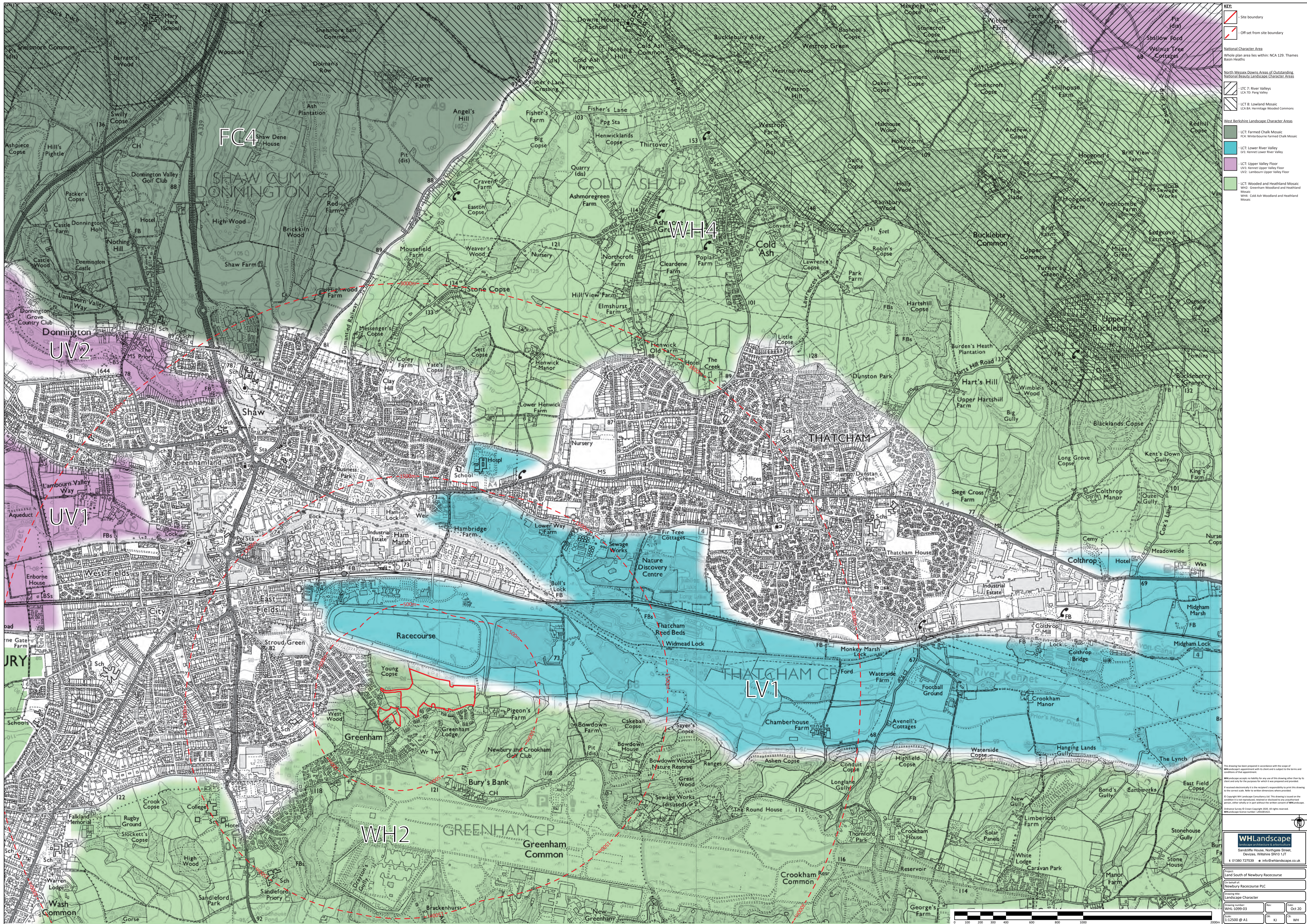


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**WHLandscape**  
Landscape Architecture & Architecture  
Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,  
Devon, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
t: 01380 727539 e: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse			
Owned by: Newbury Racecourse PLC			
Drawing title: Vertical Aerial			
Drawing number: WHL-1099-02	Rev: 01	Client: Newbury Racecourse	Date: Oct 20
Scale: 1:1500 @ A1	Drawn by: RJ	Checked by: WH	





- KEY**
- Site boundary
  - Off-set from site boundary
- National Character Area**  
Whole plan area lies within: NCA 129, Thames Basin Heaths
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Areas**
- LCT 7: River Valleys  
LCA 70: Pang Valley
  - LCT 8: Lowland Mosaic  
LCA 8A: Heerage Wooded Commons
- West Berkshire Landscape Character Areas**
- LCT: Farmed Chalk Mosaic  
FC4: Watercourse Farmed Chalk Mosaic
  - LCT: Lower River Valley  
LV1: Kennet Lower River Valley
  - LCT: Upper Valley Floor  
UV1: Kennet Upper Valley Floor  
UV2: Lambourn Upper Valley Floor
  - LCT: Wooded and Heathland Mosaic  
WH2: Greenham Woodland and Heathland Mosaic  
WH4: Cold Ash Woodland and Heathland Mosaic

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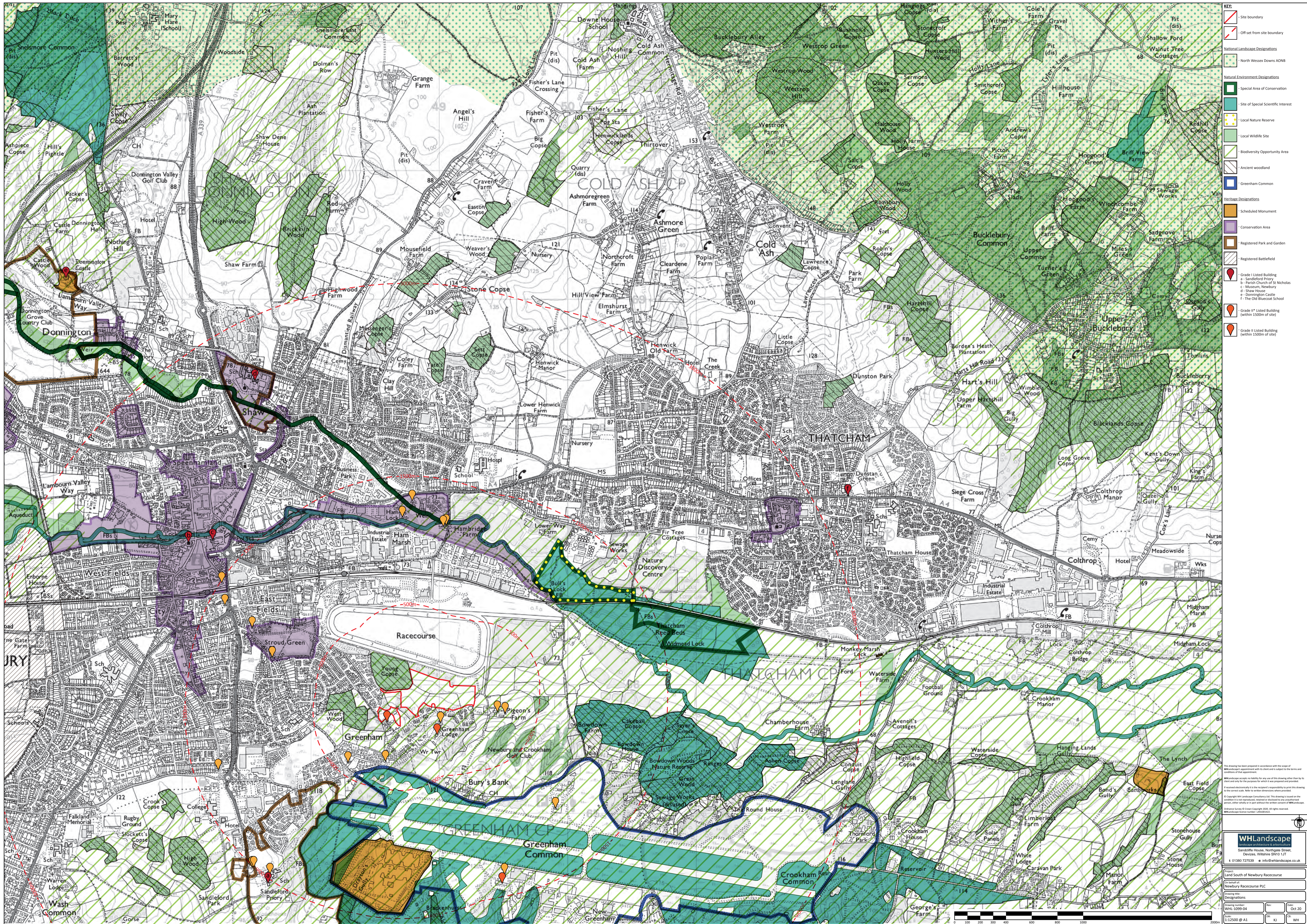
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Wiltshire Landscape Character Study: 10002022

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Landscape architecture & arboriculture  
Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,  
Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
t: 01380 727539 e: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse  
Client:  
Newbury Racecourse PLC  
Drawing title:  
Landscape Character  
Drawing number:  
WHL-1099-03  
Drawing date:  
11/10/20  
Scale:  
1:2500 @ A1  
Author:  
DJ  
Check:  
KH  
Drawn:  
WH



- KEY**
- Site boundary
  - Off-set from site boundary
  - National Landscape Designations**
  - North Wessex Downs AONB
  - Natural Environment Designations**
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Local Nature Reserve
  - Local Wildlife Site
  - Biodiversity Opportunity Area
  - Ancient woodland
  - Greenham Common
  - Heritage Designations**
  - Scheduled Monument
  - Conservation Area
  - Registered Park and Garden
  - Registered Battlefield
  - Grade I Listed Building
  - Grade II\* Listed Building (within 1500m of site)
  - Grade II Listed Building (within 1500m of site)

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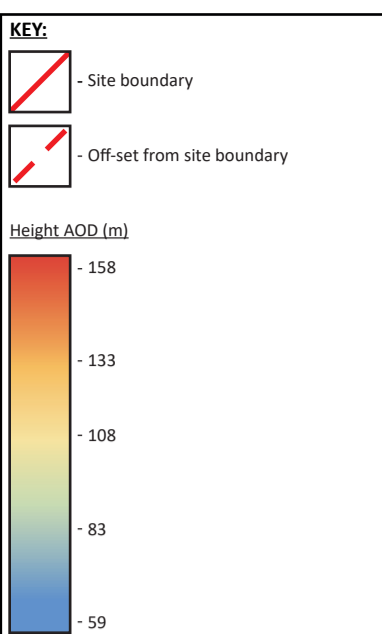
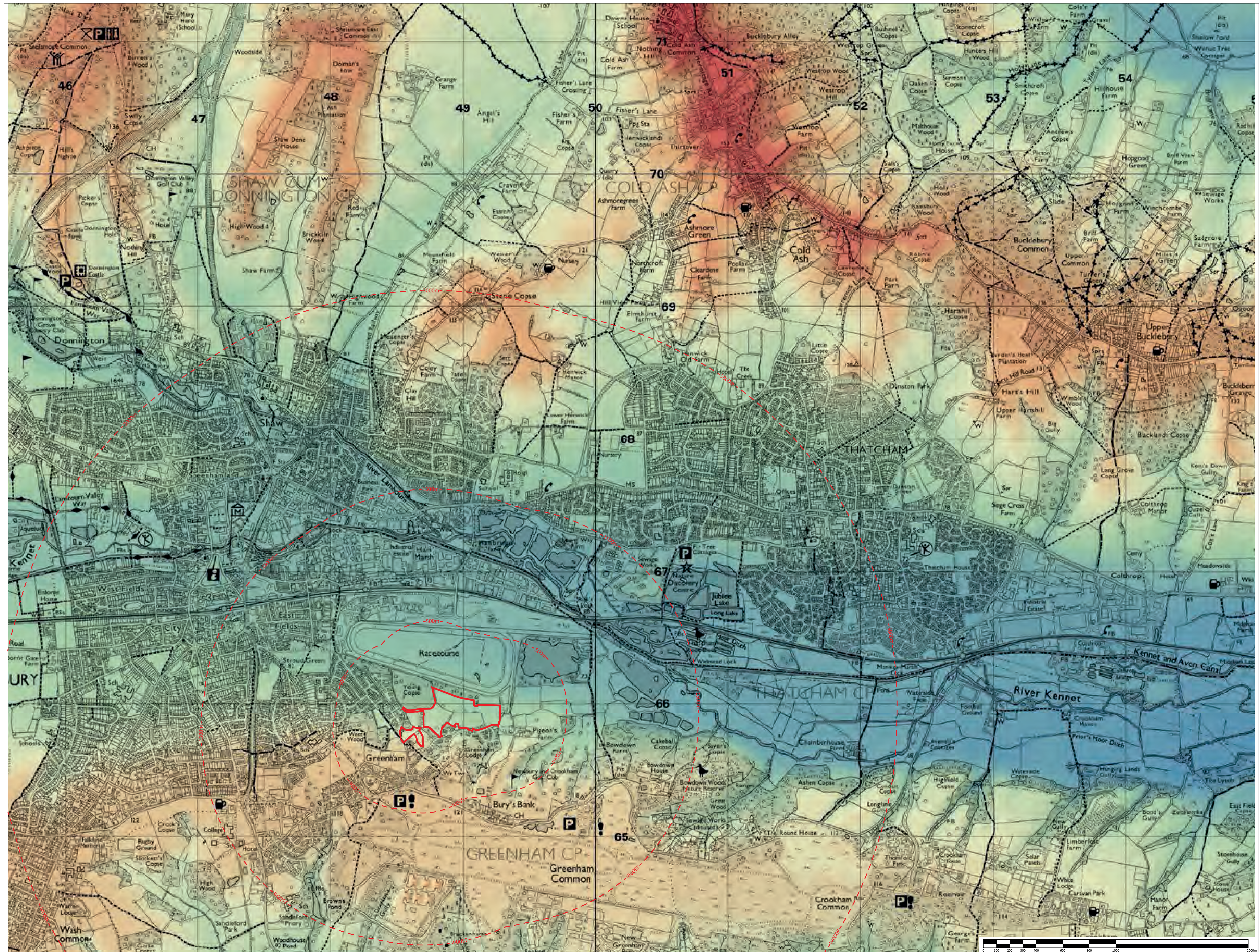
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 Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,  
 Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
 t: 01380 727238 e: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse  
 Client: Newbury Racecourse PLC  
 Drawing title: Landscape Construction  
 Drawing number: WHL-1099-04  
 Drawing date: 04 Oct 2023  
 Scale: 1:2500 @ A1  
 Date: 04 Oct 2023  
 Author: JH  
 Checker: JH  
 Approver: WH



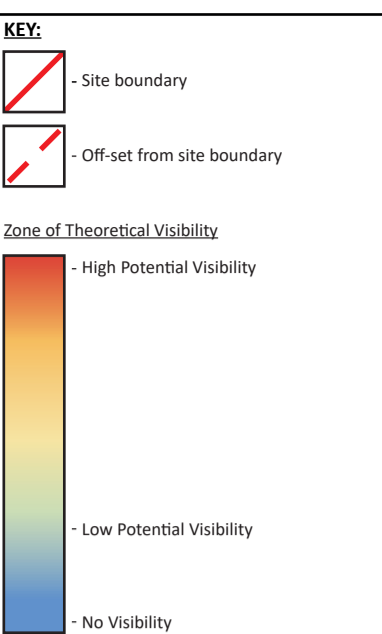
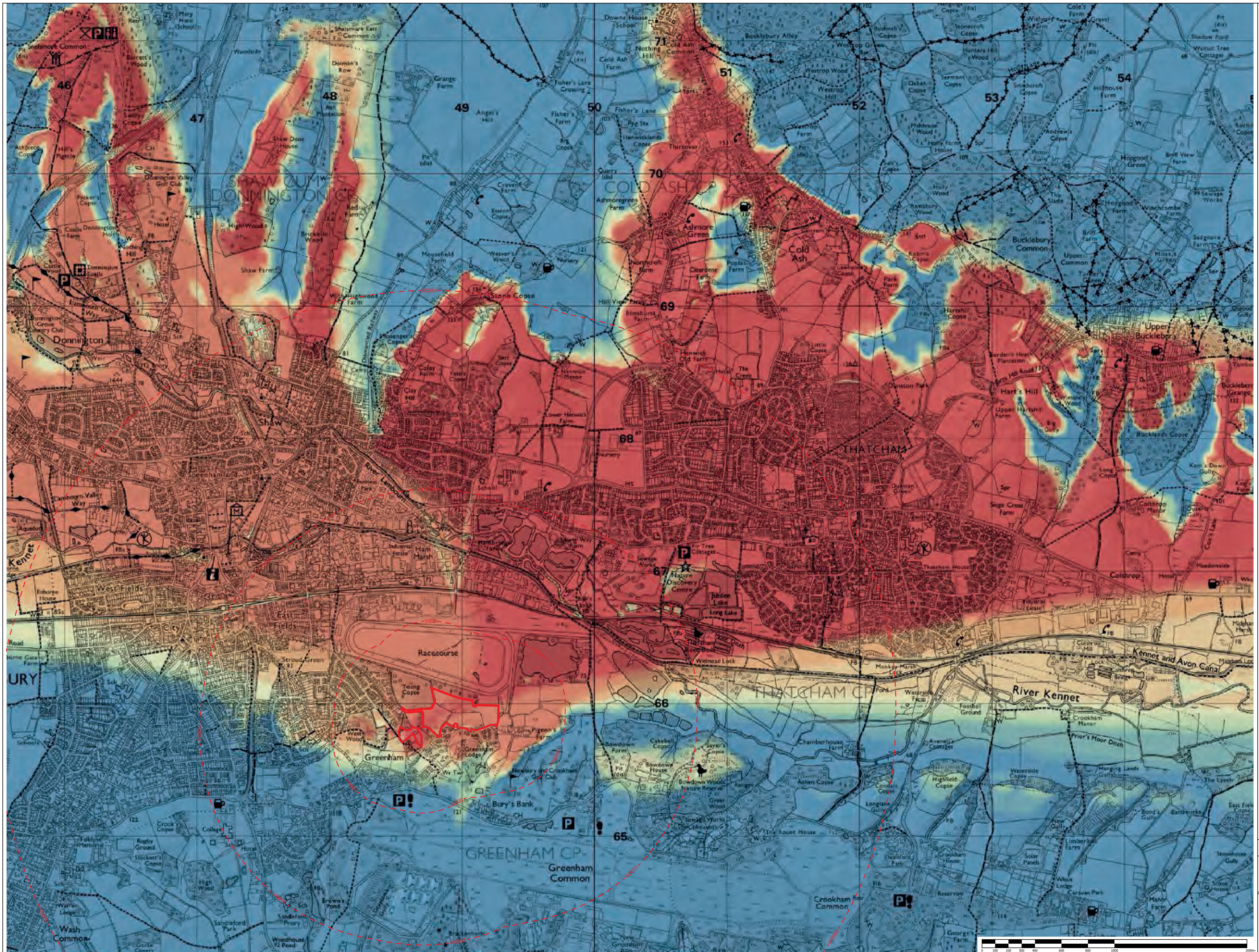
Notes:  
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 Sandcote House, Northgate Street,  
 Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
 t: 01250 727530 e: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse  
 Client:  
 Newbury Racecourse PLC  
 Drawing title:  
 Topography  
 Drawing number:  
 WHL-1099-05  
 Date:  
 Oct 20  
 Scale:  
 1:12500 @ A1  
 Author:  
 NM/TA  
 Checker:  
 WH





**Notes:**  
 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrates the extent to which the site as a whole is potentially visible from the surrounding area (1.6m high receptor). The plan has been prepared using GIS computer software (MapInfo) and Ordnance Survey landform data, and as such does not take into account built form or vegetation present within the landscape. Field verification is required to refine the accuracy of the ZTV.

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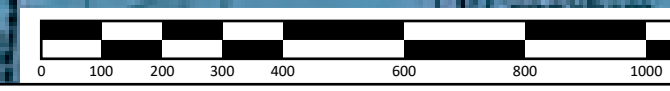
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 Sandfield House, Northgate Street,  
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 T: 01380 727539 E: info@whlandscape.co.uk

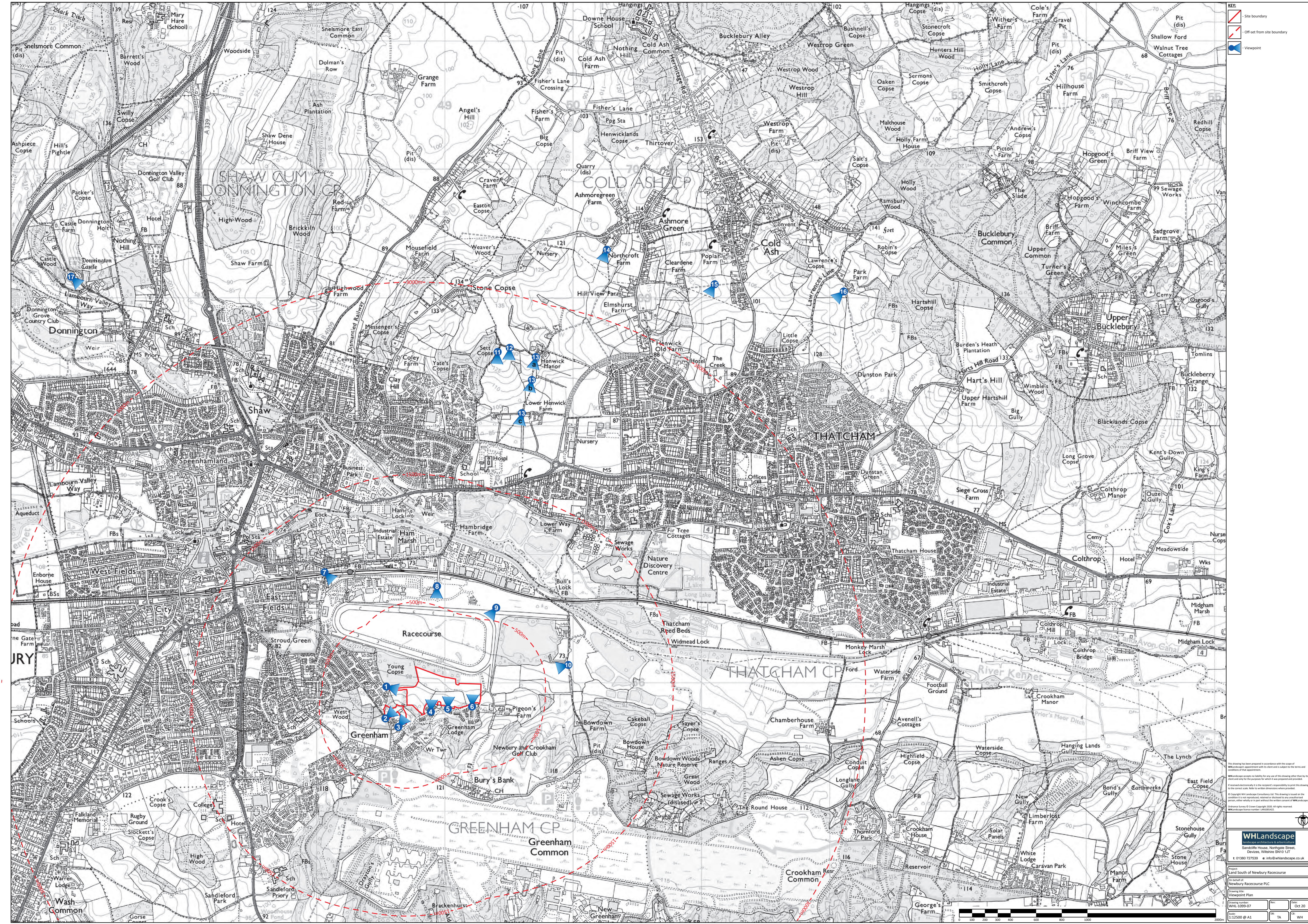
Client:  
 Land South of Newbury Racecourse

Project:  
 Newbury Racecourse PLC

Drawing title:  
 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

Drawing number: WHL-1099-06	Date: Oct 20
Scale: 1:12500 @ A1	Drawn by: NH/TA
	Checked by: WH



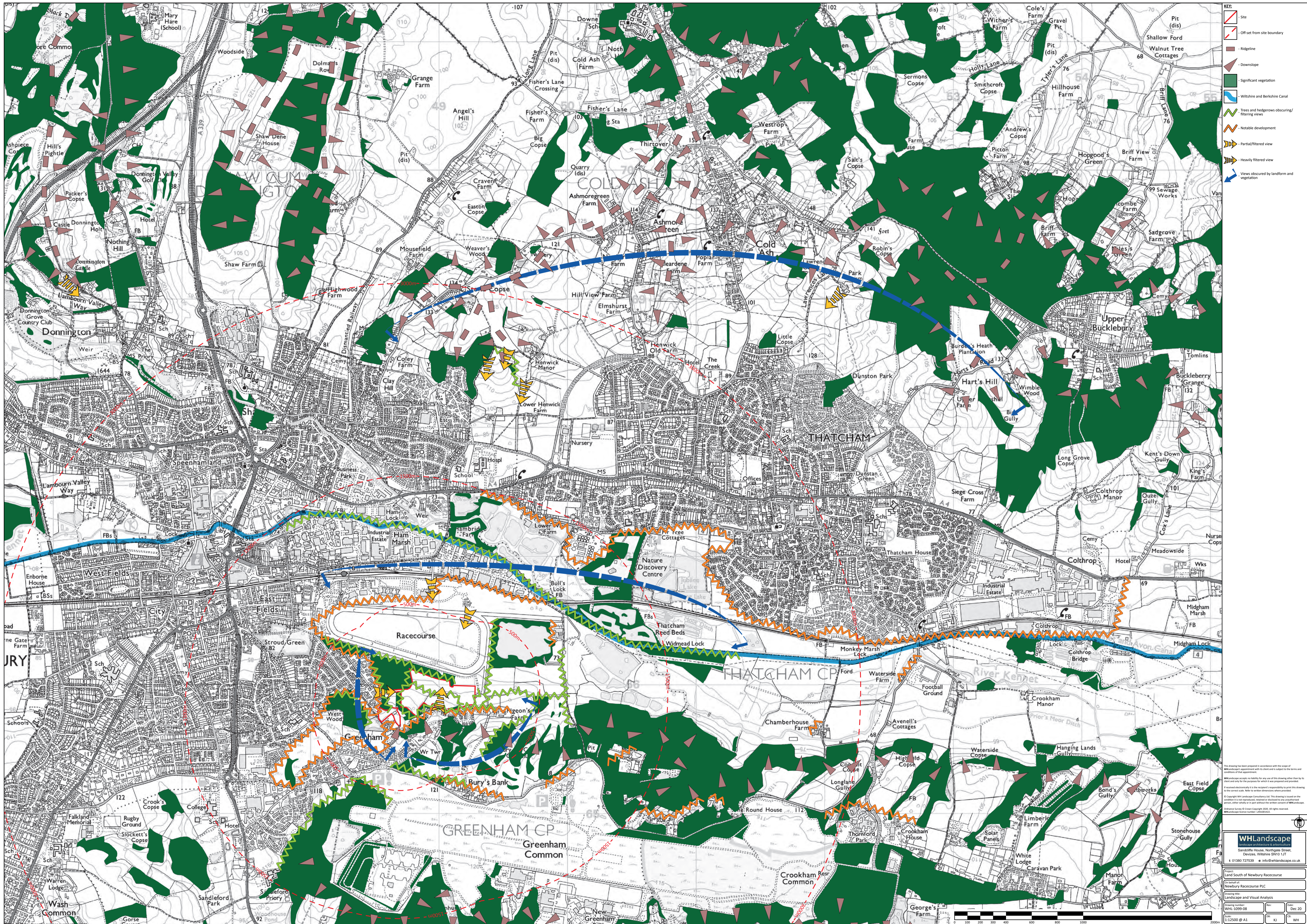


- KEY:
- - - Site boundary
  - - - Off-set from site boundary
  - ▶ Viewpoint

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 Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,  
 Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
 T: 01380 727539 E: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse Proposed Plan Newbury Racecourse PLC	
Drawing number: WHL-1099-07	Date: Oct 20
Scale: 1:12500 @ A1	Drawn by: TA
Checked by: WH	



- Site
- Off-set from site boundary
- Ridgeline
- Downslope
- Significant vegetation
- Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal
- Trees and hedgerows obscuring/filtering views
- Notable development
- Partial/filtered view
- Heavily filtered view
- Views obscured by landform and vegetation

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 Landscape Architecture & Architecture  
 Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,  
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 T: 01380 727238 E: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Land South of Newbury Racecourse  
 Client: Newbury Racecourse PLC  
 Drawing No: WHL-1099-08  
 Date: 12/2020 @ A1



- KEY:**
- Site boundary
  - Existing woodland, hedge and other vegetation to be managed, and enhanced where necessary
  - Recently planted woodland
  - Areas identified for structural planting and landscape enhancements
  - \*Indicative 15m landscape buffer from all on-site and boundary vegetation
  - Potential areas for development (Dwellings to be a maximum of 2 1/2 storeys in height)
  - Indicative route of main road access and secondary access

\*The landscape buffers have been taken from the edge of the planting shown on the provided topographical survey plan, which is intended for information purposes only.

The landscape buffers are 15 metres in width to allow for the maximum root protection areas of the trees both within the site and on the site boundaries.

The landscape buffers are subject to change on receipt of a detailed tree survey and up-to-date topographic survey, which will provide a more accurate representation of the developable areas.

It should be noted that a detailed tree survey will also help to determine the level of shading across the southern edges of the potential development areas.

If construction is to be phased, ensure that the eastern-most field is in the last phase of the development. This will allow for the recently planted woodland to begin to grow and establish itself as a defined boundary for the site.

If appropriate, use the eastern-most field for the construction of less intrusive features of the development i.e. an attenuation basin, to reduce the level of built form on this part of the site.

Potential Development Areas  
To include:  
- Internal road network with parking and turning areas  
- Dwellings with private amenity space  
- Public realm/street planting

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To include:  
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- Dwellings with private amenity space  
- Public realm/street planting

Large sized trees to be planted alongside a hedge to supplement the recently planted woodland area and create a more instant level of planting on this boundary.

Additional tree and hedge planting to enhance the existing boundary planting.

Areas identified for structural landscape enhancement. i.e. additional tree and hedge planting.

Location of the proposed second access off Greyberry Copse Road will see the removal of a small number of trees.

Structural planting alongside the proposed access route to provide an appropriate setting for the entrance to the development, and reduce the effect of the road on the existing open space area.

Proposed Main Access Road

Existing Open Space Area

Existing Woodland

Proposed Extended Open Space Area - To be managed as appropriate

Proposed Extended Open Space Area - To be managed as appropriate

Existing Woodland

Existing Woodland

Existing Woodland

Play Area

El Sub Sta

Greyberry Copse Road

PIGEONS FARM ROAD

Racecourse

FLAT WIDE RM AUG 2008

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Original base plans provided by Newbury Racecourse.  
Drawing Title: Topographic, On and Additional Data for Information Purposes Only.  
Drawing Number: 15099-09  
Drawing Date: September 2008

**WHLandscape**  
Landscape architecture & arboriculture  
Sandlife House, Northgate Street,  
Oxford, Wiltshire SN10 1JT  
t. 01300 727530 e. info@whlandscape.co.uk

Client of Newbury Racecourse PLC			
Drawing Title: Landscape Development Areas and Preliminary Mitigation			
Drawing Number: WHL-1509-09	Rev:	Issue:	Jan 21
Scale: 1:1000 @ A1	Drawn by:	Checked by:	WH

