

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT,
LAND NORTH OF ARBORFIELD ROAD,
SHINFIELD,
BERKSHIRE.

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by Bellway Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) relating to the full application seeking the development of up to 191 residential dwellings with landscaping and associated infrastructure (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') on land north of Arborfield Road, Shinfield (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). The location and context of the Site is illustrated on **ASP1** Site Location Plan and **ASP2** Site and Setting Plan.
- 1.2. A detailed appraisal of the surrounding study area has been undertaken using Ordnance Survey data, historical map data, local policy, and published character assessments. This has informed the on-site field analysis to identify key viewpoints, analyse the landscape character and visual environment of the local area, and determine the extent and significance of any potential landscape and visual effects.
- 1.3. The assessment of effects has been derived from guidance provided within Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in April 2013. The methodology is contained within **Appendix 1** of this document.
- 1.4. The LVIA will take the following format:
 - Review of landscape-related policy – national and local policy context reviewed with any designations identified (Section 2);
 - Baseline assessment – review of the existing landscape character and visual environment (Section 3);
 - Description of the proposals – introducing the Proposed Development and the associated landscape proposals and associated mitigation (Section 4);
 - Assessment of effects – using an established methodology based on the guidance of GLVIA3, the potential effects of the proposals upon the existing landscape character and visual environment will be assessed (Section 5);
 - Conclusions will be drawn (Section 6).
- 1.5. This assessment should be read alongside the other supporting material which accompanies this application.

2. LANDSCAPE-RELATED POLICY

- 2.1. The Site lies on the eastern edge of Shinfield, a village within the borough of Wokingham in Berkshire, and is covered by Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC) adopted Wokingham Borough Local Plan, including the Core Strategy (Adopted January 2010), which sets out policies and strategies for the area until March 2026, and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (Adopted February 2014), which builds on the strategy set out in the Core Strategy and provides more detailed policies for managing development. The 'made' Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017) contains relevant policies to guide development at a more local level.
- 2.2. The Site is located directly adjacent to the eastern built-up edge of Shinfield, with the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road bounding the Site to the east, and it lies within a Strategic Development Location (WBC, Adopted Policies Map). This application forms Phase 2 of the approved development associated with Cutbush Lane immediately to the north (planning ref: 181499).
- 2.3. A number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are considered relevant to this application including South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location SPD (2011), Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012) and the Shinfield School Green Village Character Statement (2008), all of which provide design guidance and principles for development in the area in which the Site is located.
- 2.4. It is understood that WBC are currently preparing the emerging Local Plan Update that will put in place a new planning strategy for the period up to 2040. Once adopted, this will replace the current Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery documents of the adopted Local Plan. As this document is at the early stages of development, it is currently deemed to be of limited planning weight and has not been considered further in this LVIA except for coverage on valued landscapes (WBC Topic Paper – Valued Landscapes, 2020; see Section 3).
- 2.5. The Site lies partly within the 5km mitigation zone and partly within the 7km mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA), a designation to the south aimed at protecting ground nesting birds.
- 2.6. The Site is not covered by any qualitative landscape designations either at a national or local level.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

- 2.7. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2023. The document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The document places an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable growth whilst also protecting the environment.
- 2.8. Paragraph 7 states that: *"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development [...]"*
- 2.9. Paragraph 8 states that: *"Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways [...]"* including *"an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."*
- 2.10. Paragraph 11 states that: *"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development."*

For **plan-making** this means that:

- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type, or distribution of development in the plan area; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

For **decision-taking** this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

2.11. Design is dealt with in Chapter 12 which sets out the objectives for achieving “well-designed and beautiful places”. Paragraph 135 states that: “*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);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and

where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

2.12. Chapter 15 deals with the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Paragraph 180 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);*
- 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;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality [...]; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”*

2.13. The document also highlights the requirement for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment in Chapter 16, with designated heritage assets being afforded a level of protection and conservation commensurate with their level of heritage significance. New development should take into account the importance of the historic feature, and paragraph 203 states that: *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”*

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 2.14. Those categories within the PPG that are of relevance to landscape and visual matters in relation to this Site are set out below.

Design: Process and Tools

- 2.15. The PPG states that well-designed places can be achieved by taking a pro-active and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process. The guidance sets out processes and tools that can be used through the planning system. The guidance is to be read alongside the National Design Guide.

National Design Guide

- 2.16. The importance of design is a key focus within the guide as is the local and wider context and character of the Site.

Green Infrastructure

- 2.17. The PPG highlights the multifaceted benefits delivered through Green Infrastructure and recognises how it can be used to reinforce and enhance local landscape character and contribute to a sense of place.

Landscape

- 2.18. The PPG refers to the NPPF and the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the provision of strategic policies to provide the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. Adverse landscape impacts are to be avoided and mitigation measures employed where necessary.
- 2.19. Landscape Character Assessment is a process used to explain the type and characteristics of landscape in an area. Natural England has used Landscape Character Assessment to identify 159 National Character Areas in England which provide a national level database. Landscape Character Assessment carried out at a county or district / borough level may provide a more appropriate scale for assessing the likely landscape and visual impacts of individual proposals.

- 2.20. The NPPF and PPG have been of material consideration as part of the assessment of the Site and its setting, and the proposals shall take on board the overall framework guidance and principles contained within the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy

Wokingham Borough LDF Adopted Core Strategy (January 2010)

- 2.21. The adopted Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework - Adopted Core Strategy forms the overarching planning document for WBC.
- 2.22. The following policies considered of most relevance in landscape and visual terms to the Proposed Development are:
- Policy CP1 – Sustainable Development;
 - Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development;
 - Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
 - Policy CP9 – Scale and location of development proposals; and
 - Policy CP19 – South of the M4 Strategic Development Location.
- 2.23. Policy CP1 emphasises that development should *‘maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment’* and *‘provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes.’*
- 2.24. Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that:
- a) *“Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
 - b) *Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure, and adaptable scheme;*
 - c) *Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
 - f) *Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*

g) Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;"

- 2.25. Proposals should also take into account WBC's Landscape Character Assessment and the vegetation in the area. Areas within the Borough of importance in landscape terms include Areas of Special Landscape Importance and Sites of Urban Landscape Value. The Site is not identified as lying within an area of landscape importance, though it is noted that land to the east associated with the River Loddon is associated with an emerging valued landscape.
- 2.26. Policy CP8 states that development likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate adequate mitigation and avoidance measures for any potential adverse effects on this. Policy CP8 is aligned with Policy NRM6 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area of the now abolished South East Plan, with this policy remaining in place as part of the adopted WBC development plan. The Site is identified as partly lying within the 5km zone of influence of this SPA and is therefore required to contribute to Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) provision at a minimum of 8ha/1,000 population. The remainder of the Site lies within the 7km zone of influence.
- 2.27. Policy CP9 seeks to identify the location and scale of development proposals and states that these must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at the location along with accessibility. The Site is identified as lying within a Strategic Development Location (SDL; see CP19 – South of the M4 Strategic Development Location).
- 2.28. Policy CP19 states that within the identified area 'South of the M4', a '*sustainable, well designed mixed use development will be delivered by 2026*', including the phased delivery of around 2500 dwellings. Development will be guided by a Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document. The extents of this SDL are illustrated on **Figure 2.1** below:

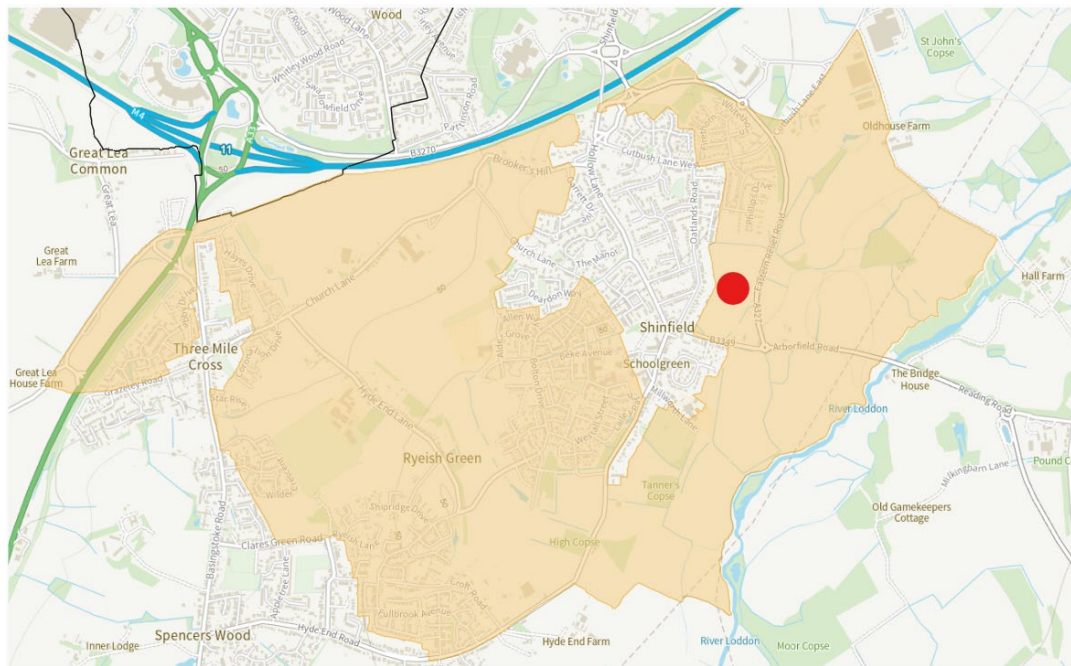


Figure 2.1: Extents of South of M4 Strategic Development Location as per WBC's adopted interactive Planning Policies and Constraints Map. Location of the Site in red.

Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014)

- 2.29. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) provides additional detailed policies when considering development proposals, allocates sites for development and sets boundaries as shown on the adopted Policies Map.
- 2.30. The following policies are considered to be of relevance to this application in landscape and visual terms:
- Policy CC01 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development;
 - Policy CC02 – Development Limits;
 - Policy CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping;
 - Policy TB08 – Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development; and
 - Policy TB21 – Landscape Character.
- 2.31. Policy CC01 states that WBC will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of development as per the NPPF.

- 2.32. Policy CC02 establishes the development limits for each settlement as defined on the adopted Policies Map. The Site lies adjacent to the development limits of Shinfield. However, the policy states the following:

“Development proposals within the areas allocated as SDL in the adopted Core Strategy (policies CP18-21) will be permitted that are within the identified development limits [...]”

- 2.33. Policy CC03 relates to Green Infrastructure, trees and landscaping. It is noted that Arborfield Road that bounds the Site to the south forms a ‘Green Route’. The policy states:

2. *“Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:*
 - a) *Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough’s Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development*
 - b) *Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways*
 - c) *Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside*
 - d) *Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.*
3. *Development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.*
4. *Development proposals within the River Valley areas shall improve or contribute toward:*
 - a) *The establishment of a Loddon/Blackwater riverside footpath and bridleway, as defined on the Policies Map, to accommodate dual use [...]*
 - c) *Opportunities for improvements to green infrastructure to help minimise flood risk.”*

- 2.34. Policy TB08 establishes the required standards for proposed residential development in terms of the quantum of open space, sport and recreation facilities.

2.35. Policy TB21 relates to landscape character, and it is stated that proposals should be consistent with the Borough Design Guide SPD (2012), which provides further information on landscape. The policy states:

- *“Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.*
- *Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.”*

Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017)

2.36. The Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) was ‘made’ in February 2017 and covers the period 2016-2026. The objectives of this plan are as follows:

- *“To ensure the new developments enhance the character of existing settlements.*
- *To develop a vibrant and prosperous neighbourhood by encouraging development that supports a good range of housing, schools, shops and services that meet the needs of local people and protects the quality of the local environment.*
- *To provide new and diverse leisure and recreational activities in order to promote healthy and crime free lifestyles for everyone.”*

2.37. The plan contains a number of policies, several of which are considered relevant to this application in landscape and visual terms. These are listed below:

- Policy 1 – Location of Development;
- Policy 2 – General Design Principles; and
- Policy 6 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland.

2.38. Policy 1 states that development within the Development Limits of settlements will be supported, while development adjacent to the Development Limits will only be supported if the benefits of the development outweigh the adverse impacts. See **Figure 2.2** below. It is noted that the Site lies within the defined boundary of the SDL as per **Figure 2.1**.



Figure 2.2: Extract from Figure 2 of the SNP demonstrating Shinfield Development Limits south of the M4. Location of the Site in blue.

2.39. Policy 2 provides a set of general design principles for new residential developments, promoting the preservation of local distinctiveness and the creation of safe and sustainable environments. Those principles of particular relevance in landscape and visual terms are the following:

- *“Use of quality materials that complement the established built environment around the development site;”*
- *“Compatibility with the scale and features of existing buildings in the locality;”*
- *“Creation of suitable site layout that provides sufficient spacing between buildings to maintain privacy and amenity for any new and existing residential properties;”*
- *“Allowance of appropriate space for hard and soft landscape works, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas;”*
- *“Provision of appropriately high quality and high specification sustainable landscape works and tree planting, particularly at settlement boundaries, in the public realm and along designated green routes and green route enhancement areas (existing and proposed);” and*
- *“Design of road and service layouts to ensure the sustainable retention, where appropriate, of existing landscape features, including trees and historic landscape features, and to allow space for new sustainable landscape works without the need for maintenance and upgrades to services damaging landscape works, as they mature.”*

2.40. Policy 6 seeks to retain trees, hedgerows and woodlands where appropriate and ensure that adequate offsets are provided for retained vegetation. Where provided,

buffer zones should comprise appropriate native species, should be made publicly accessible where possible, and should be adequately maintained.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location (October 2011)

- 2.41. The adopted South of the M4 Strategic Development Location SPD provides a design guide for future development within this SDL to help deliver high-quality extensions to Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross that are well connected and provide enhanced services and extensive public open space, while retaining the separate identity of these settlements. It does not contain detailed proposals but is a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- 2.42. Section 4 of this SPD provides a set of design principles to guide the design of the Southern of the M4 SDL. A number of those principles refer to the landscape character, landscape framework, landscape connectivity, enhancement of ecological habitats and biodiversity. These principles have been considered as part of an iterative design process.
- 2.43. An extract of those design principles considered relevant in landscape terms is provided for reference within **Appendix 3**.

Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012)

- 2.44. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD (2012) promotes well-designed developments that complement and enhance the existing character of the receiving context. It contains general design guidance for all development sites along with more specific landscape-related guidance to help inform the design process, such as within Section 4 – Residential, Section 5 – Streets & Spaces and Section 8 – Rural & Settlement Edge. This guidance has been carefully considered and has informed the design process where appropriate.
- 2.45. Section 4: Residential provides a set of guidelines that are relevant in landscape terms. It is stated that residential development should contribute positively to the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area, incorporating existing characteristics and features of a site and its context. Proposals should be designed

to minimise and / or mitigate any potential adverse environmental impacts, while establishing a sense of place. The height and massing of the proposed built form should be sympathetic to its receiving context. High-quality and well-integrated public open space should be provided, and new development should front onto existing areas of open space where possible. The existing mature landscape such as trees and hedgerows should be retained, and development should be designed to protect the visual amenity of existing properties.

- 2.46. Section 5: Streets & Spaces also contains useful landscape-related guidelines, including providing coherent, well-connected and sustainable street scenes that respond positively to local context, for example the local topography and boundaries and existing routes. The need for streets and spaces to be safe, convenient and attractive for all and linked to existing areas is also emphasised. Public spaces should be appropriate to the location of the site and the nature of development and should incorporate a range of informal activities along with a more formal role. These spaces must contribute to the character, identity and environmental quality of the area. Open space tree and street tree planting contribute to the character of these spaces and are generally expected as part of any development proposal, along with sustainable drainage features.
- 2.47. Section 8: Rural and Settlement Edge provides guidance surrounding new development and the wider landscape and how features that contribute to the wider landscape character and biodiversity should be retained and enhanced. It also outlines new development on the edge of settlements must demonstrate how the transition between open countryside and development form has been considered and how harm to the setting of villages would be avoided. The design proposals should contribute to the character and local identity of settlements through the choice of materials and scale and massing of the proposed built form.
- 2.48. With regard to specific guidance for development on settlement edges, RD9 states the following:

“The location, siting and design of new development on the edge of settlements must be carefully designed to:

- *Create an edge to the built up area with a character that relates to the local pattern; and*

- *Incorporate soft landscape to soften the edge of settlements and to help integrate new housing into its rural setting.”*

2.49. An extract of the General Principles and Residential Design Checklist from this SPD is provided for reference within **Appendix 4**.

Shinfield School Green Village Character Statement (2008)

2.50. This Village Character Statement seeks to ensure that the special character of the village will be protected and enhanced when new development takes place. It presents guidelines that must be followed before any development is considered.

2.51. Regarding characteristic vegetation cover in and around the village, the following is provided:

“Hedgerows of hawthorn, hazel, dog rose, honeysuckle and blackthorn form boundaries to lanes and fields along with old oak trees, some 70 to 150 years old, elder, ash and willows are found in the hedgerows, fields and gardens. There are currently 34 veteran trees identified in Shinfield School Green Village. In the ditches there are tall iris, ferns, rushes, reeds, sedges and willow herbs.”

2.52. A set of residents’ aspirations for the village are included as part of this Village Character Statement. Several of the aspirations are landscape-related, including maintaining village separation, retaining the village ‘feel’ and landscape features such as trees and hedgerows, offering better provision for recreation, protecting and enhancing public open spaces, and providing better access into the immediate countryside and beyond.

Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy (November 2013)

2.53. This document provides clear guidance on the approach to the application of open space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development as identified in Policy TB08 of the MDD (2014). The purpose of the Strategy is to consider how the network of open spaces and sports facilities across the Borough are planned, managed, protected, designed and maintained.

3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

- 3.1. The Site itself is situated on the eastern edge of Shinfield, a village located less than 5km south of Reading town centre. For the most part, it comprises a large geometric, arable field but there are areas of native scrub and tree groups in its eastern extents by a drainage channel that runs parallel to the A327 Eastern Relief Road before running off-site under this road. An area of hardstanding associated with an existing building characterises the south-eastern corner of the Site. The existing boundary vegetation structure on-site and in its immediate setting provides a degree of physical and visual enclosure to the Site. The location of the Site is illustrated on **ASP1** Site Location Plan.
- 3.2. Residential development associated with Oatlands Road to the west, the recent Phase 1 development to the north and Arborfield Road to the south bounds the Site and creates a further degree of visual enclosure, exerting an urban influence on the Site itself. This is further emphasised by the A327 Eastern Relief Road, which bounds the Site to the east and extends northwards from the roundabout on Arborfield Road to the south, past areas of recent residential development including the Phase 1 development (planning ref: 181499) and Littlebrook (ref: O/2013/0101), along with recent development associated with the Thames Valley Science Park (ref: O/2009/1027). The M4 Motorway and built up suburbs of Reading are located approximately 850m north of the Site.
- 3.3. A small, private allotments is located by the south-western corner of the Site accessed off Arborfield Road. It is also noted that beyond the south-eastern corner of the Site, Parrot Farmhouse is a residential property situated to the west of the roundabout where Arborfield Road meets the Eastern Relief Road. Several properties associated with the former Magpie and Parrot public house are located on the northern side of Arborfield Road east of this roundabout.
- 3.4. The localised and wider landscape to the east and south of the Site comprise a pattern of low-lying arable and pastoral fields that are generally bounded by established hedgerows or mature treebelts and woodland blocks. This flat, low-lying valley landscape forms the River Loddon floodplain, with the river itself situated approximately 500m to the south-east at its nearest point and characterised by extensive areas of riparian tree planting. Land south of Arborfield Road forms part of Langelly Mead SANG, a new area of publicly accessible greenspace that wraps around the south-eastern extents of the village between the settlement and the river.

Beyond the river to the east and south-east, the pattern of pastoral and arable fields interspersed with woodland blocks continues albeit larger, arable fields characterise the land away from the river corridor.

- 3.5. The Site and its setting are illustrated on **ASP2** Site and Setting Plan.

Vegetation Cover

- 3.6. For the most part, the Site comprises a greenfield, undeveloped parcel of arable land, with areas of native scrub and native tree groups characterising the eastern boundary between the Site and the Eastern Relief Road, both on-site and off-site. The northern Site boundary is open given that the Phase 1 boundary extends south of the established tree line and hedgerow that separates the Site from the recent built form to the north. An established, intact native hedgerow characterises the southern Site boundary with Arborfield Road and an intact native hedgerow defines the arable extents of the Site from the area of hardstanding in its south-eastern corner. The western Site boundary is partly vegetated with native scrub forming a buffer to the rear gardens of properties associated with Oatlands Road.
- 3.7. An Arboriculture Impact Assessment (AIA) has been undertaken as part of the planning application by Aspect Arboriculture Ltd. While the majority of trees and hedgerows assessed are deemed to be in a satisfactory condition, the AIA should be consulted for further information and recommendations regarding this vegetation.
- 3.8. It is understood that as per WBC's Protected Tree Map (online resource), there are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) either on the Site or within its localised setting.
- 3.9. In the wider landscape setting to the east and south, the landscape is characterised by field boundary vegetation, woodland blocks and riparian planting along the River Loddon corridor. A number of the woodland blocks comprise ancient woodlands, including Tanner's Copse Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) approximately 590m south of the Site, Rounds Copse 820m south-east and Moor Copse 1.1km south-east.
- 3.10. The existing vegetation cover associated with the Site and its setting is illustrated on **ASP2** Site and Setting Plan.

Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)

- 3.11. The Site itself is not publicly accessible. There is, however, a permissive route directly north of the Site that runs along the southern side of the established vegetation that separates the Site from the recent Phase 1 development. This route connects PRoW SHIN7, which runs along the western boundary of the Phase 1 development before cutting between the rear garden of existing properties and continuing south along Oatlands Road, to PRoW SHIN6 located on the eastern side of the A327 Eastern Relief Road, which runs broadly north – south between Cutbush Lane East and Arborfield Road.
- 3.12. A number of other PRoWs run through the wider landscape to the east and south-east, including:
- PRoW SHIN4 – beginning off Cutbush Lane East to the north-east and running south-eastwards across the River Loddon floodplain;
 - PRoW SHIN5 – connecting PRoW SHIN4 with Arborfield Road to the east, running through the fields associated with the River Loddon floodplain; and
 - PRoW ARBO20 – beginning off Arborfield Road to the south-east and running south through the agricultural landscape onto Swallowfield Road.
- 3.13. **ASP1** Site Location Plan, **ASP2** Site and Setting Plan and **ASP3** Designation Plan illustrate the extent of the Public Right of Way network within the localised and wider setting of the Site.

Topography

- 3.14. The topography of the Site is relatively level with a gentle slope down from approximately 48.5m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the north-western extents of the Site to approximately 40.5m AOD in the Site's south-eastern corner.
- 3.15. The localised and wider context of the Site to the east and south is that of a gently sloping, low-lying valley landscape associated with the River Loddon and its floodplain. A ridgeline defines the landscape to the west characterised by the western extents of Shinfield and this continues to the south-west incorporating Spencers Wood. To the north, a localised highpoint is associated with the southern extents of Reading north of the M4, where land rises above the 80m AOD contour line at Nores Hill.

- 3.16. The topography of the Site and its localised and wider context is illustrated on **ASP4** Topography Plan.

Cultural and Settlement Pattern

- 3.17. Nowadays, the village of Shinfield displays a nucleated settlement pattern, located to the south of the M4 and Reading. Its name is derived from the pastoral fields and wet meadows that flood regularly in the eastern extents of the parish where land slopes down to the River Loddon and its floodplain. The village is dissected by major roads and was historically situated within open farmland characterised by old hedgerows and trees including woodland and copses.
- 3.18. The wider parish of Shinfield is comprised of a number of settlements, including Three Mile Cross to the west and Ryeish Green and Spencers Wood to the south-west. The area has undergone significant settlement expansion since the 20th Century, which has eroded much of the rural character of the area, particularly to the north, and has resulted in the loss of medium to large-scale fields that once surrounded the area. This is evidenced by the OS Map data from 1888-1915.
- 3.19. Shinfield itself has expanded dramatically either side of Hollow Lane that forms a spine road through its centre. The village continues to grow with modern development recently erected to the north of the Site, including the Phase 1 development. Large-scale development is also taking place in the southern extents of the village, which has increased the sense of coalescence between the various settlements within the parish.

Designations

- 3.20. The Site is not considered to have a close relationship with any heritage assets or designations.
- 3.21. It is noted that a number of listed buildings are located in the wider setting, most notably the grade I listed Church of St Mary approximately 620m to the west. The closest listed building is 'The School', which forms part of Shinfield Infant and Nursery School located approximately 280m to the south-west. The Site is

separated from these historic assets by the intervening built form, ensuring that there is no relationship between the Site and these heritage assets.

- 3.22. Listed buildings located in the wider setting to the east, for example the grade II listed 'Bridge House' south of the A327 Arborfield Road approximately 670m from the Site, are highly contained by the intervening vegetation structure and there is similarly no relationship between the Site and these assets. No Conservation Areas are within the vicinity of the Site.
- 3.23. Swallowfield Park is a large grade II listed registered park and garden located approximately 1.7km south of the Site albeit the intervening settlement built form and vegetation structure ensure there is no relationship between the Site and this designation. No other registered park and garden is located within 3km of the Site, noting that the western extents of the grade II* listed Bearwood College lies 3km to the east.
- 3.24. Two Ancient Monuments are located within the study area, namely 'Bartholomew's Church' located 1.15km east of the Site and the 'Moated site at Kenney's Farm' approximately 1.9km to the south-east. The intervening vegetation cover prevents any relationship between these Ancient Monuments and the Site, however.
- 3.25. The various designations listed above are illustrated within the wider context of the Site on **ASP3** Designation Plan.

National Landscape Character

- 3.26. Natural England have produced a countrywide landscape character assessment, National Character Area Profiles (2014), resulting in the National Character Areas (NCAs). The assessment identifies 159 broadly homogeneous zones that can be categorised in terms of their distinct and recognisable character at the national scale.
- 3.27. It is identified that the Site lies on the border of two of these NCAs: the northern half of the Site is covered by **NCA 115: Thames Valley**, while the southern half of the Site is covered by **NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths**.
- 3.28. The approximate location of the Site in relation to these landscape character areas is provided in **Figure 3.1** below:

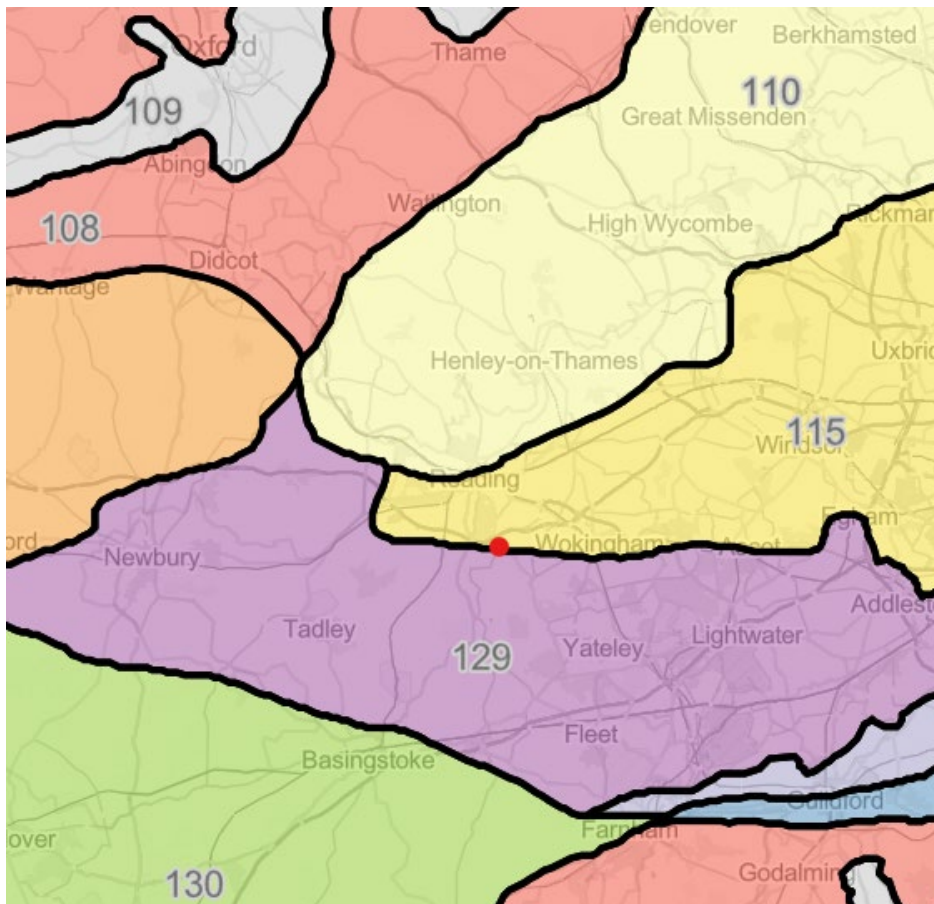


Figure 3.1: National Character Area Map (interactive; accessed from <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk>). Indicative location of the Site shown in red.

- 3.29. The northern extents of the Site lie within the western extents of NCA 115: Thames Valley, a summary of which is provided as follows:

“The Thames Valley is a mainly low-lying, wedge-shaped area, widening from Reading, which includes Slough, Windsor, the Colne Valley and the southwest London fringes. The River Thames provides a unifying feature through a very diverse landscape of urban and suburban settlements, infrastructure networks, fragmented agricultural land, historic parks, commons, woodland, reservoirs and extensive minerals workings.”

- 3.30. The southern extents of the Site lie within the northern extents of NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths, which is summarised as follows:

“The Thames Basin Heaths National Character Area (NCA) stretches westwards from Weybridge in Surrey to the countryside around Newbury in Berkshire. The London greenbelt incorporates countryside around Chobham and the rivers Wey and Mole. West of the greenbelt, 20th-century development has given rise to large conurbations including Camberley and the ‘new town’ of Bracknell. Among these conurbations, gardens amount to a significant area of greenspace, with rhododendron being a particular feature, and a major road network incorporates the M25 and M3. This densely settled area can be a significant source of pollution and rapid run-off.”

- 3.31. It is considered that the national study provides a useful introduction to the overall character of the wider landscape setting, providing a broad-brush overview of the landscape context in which the Site is set. However, these landscape character areas are too broad to apply the characteristics at a more site-specific level.

District / Borough Landscape Character

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

- 3.32. At a more local level, the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019) identifies the Site as being covered by two Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) – **LCA A2: Loddon River Valley** and **LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay**, with the majority of the Site covered by the former and its north-western extents covered by the latter. The location of the Site in relation to these LCAs and the adjoining LCAs is illustrated on **ASP5** Landscape Character Plan.

LCA A2: Loddon River Valley

- 3.33. LCA A2 is described as occupying “[...] *the flat alluvial floodplain of the River Loddon and its tributaries the Broadwater and the Blackwater. An agricultural landscape of irregular fields, with large-scale arable fields on better drained areas and small scale wet meadows on frequently flooded land adjacent to the river. A largely peaceful area, disturbances comes from major roads which cross the floodplain including the M4, and adjacent developments in Earley, Winnersh, the expanding settlement of Shinfield and new Science and Innovation Park.*”
- 3.34. The extents of LCA A2 are illustrated on **Figure 3.2** below:

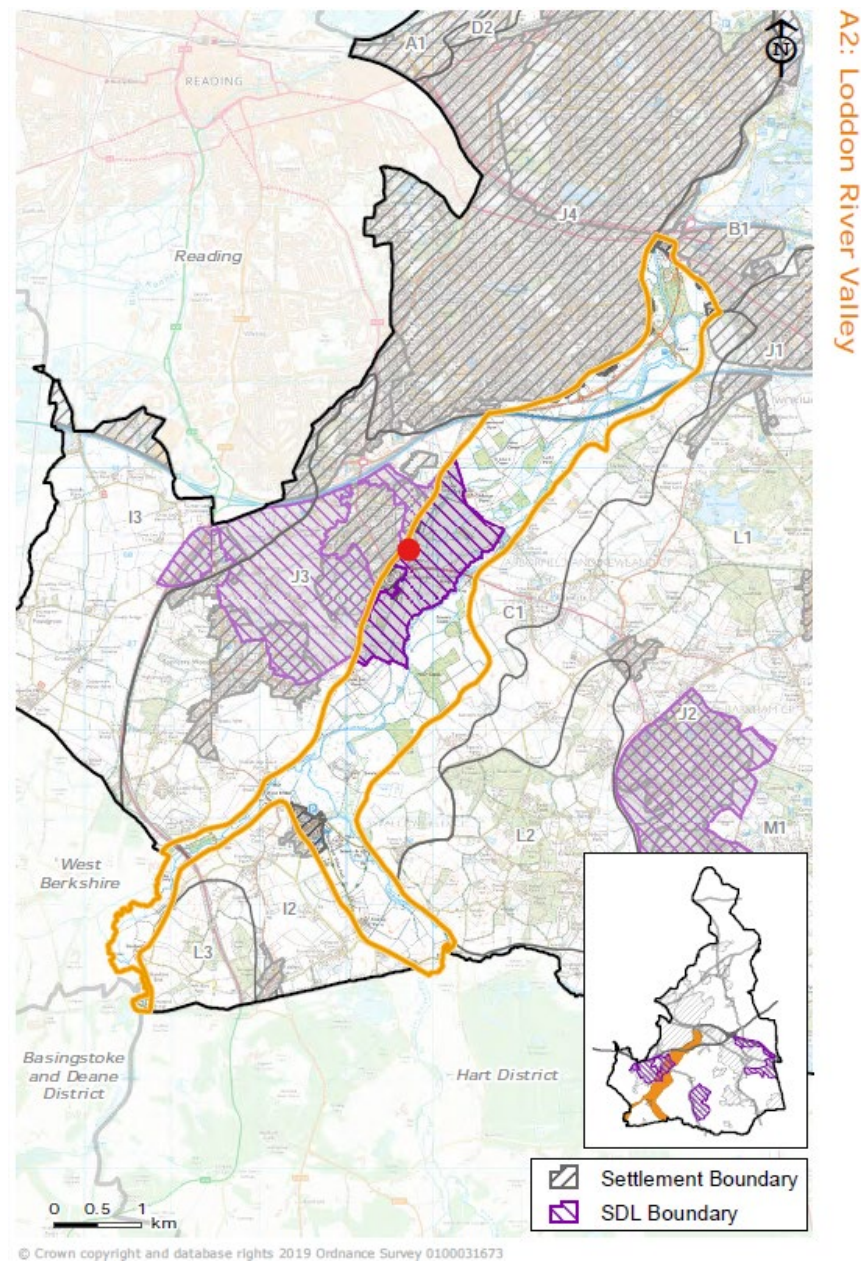


Figure 3.2: Extents of LCA A2 as shown on p.51 of the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019). Indicative location of the Site shown in red.

3.35. The key characteristics of LCA A2 deemed to be of most relevance to the Site and its immediate setting include:

- ***“A broad, flat alluvial floodplain around 40-45m AOD underlain by riverine alluvium and river terrace deposits [...]***
- ***The River Loddon follows a meandering course within braided channels [...]***

- **A wooded backdrop** is provided by scattered blocks of deciduous woodland and copse, interlinked woodland belts and scattered mature trees and scrub [...]
- **Pasture and arable farmland in medium and large irregular geometric fields**, divided by post and wire fencing, post and rail fencing, gappy hedgerows and drainage ditches. The areas closest to the river are affected by flooding and are characterised by pasture and wet meadow.
- **Wetland character**, including BAP priority habitats of floodplain grazing marsh, wet woodland, lowland fen and lowland meadows which contain characteristic features such as willow pollards [...]
- **Low-density scattered settlement pattern of villages and farmsteads** characterised by traditional warm red brick and timber framed vernacular [...]
- **Tranquil and rural character away from river crossings and visual influence of large scale settlement in adjacent areas [...]**
- **Little public access to the floodplain [...]** Busy roads cross the floodplain, including the A33, M4 and Winnersh and Shinfield Eastern Relief Roads, and create physical and visual severance along the floodplain.
- **Pylons, residential and commercial development** are distinctive visual features in this open and flat landscape, with development very visible along the edges of this character area. The new landmark Science and Innovation Park building at Shinfield is a notable feature in the landscape.”

3.36. A set of ‘Valuable Landscape Attributes’ are provided for LCA A2, with those considered relevant to the Site and its setting provided below:

- **“The naturalness of the meandering course of the River Loddon and wide floodplain landscape** which provide a strong sense of place.”
- **“The wooded backdrop of mature broadleaved woodland copses and natural riparian corridors** including ancient woodland which provides scenic quality and a sense of place, as well as framing views across, into and out of the area.”
- **“Important wetland features/habitats [...]**”

- ***“Localised areas with a strong sense of tranquillity particularly in the south, with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies away from roads and visual influence of large scale settlement in adjacent areas.”***

- 3.37. The landscape condition of LCA A2 is described as being perceived as ‘moderate’ as a result of the meandering course of the river and the flat floodplain that is intact, along with the remote and rural character of this LCA in general and the riverside features and wetland habitat features. It is noted, however, that large-scale development and busy infrastructure corridors in the northern extents of the LCA fragment this landscape.
- 3.38. It is noted that the previous Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2004) concluded that the LCA A2 landscape is of ‘high’ overall quality, with a ‘strong’ character and ‘moderate’ condition. It was attached a ‘high’ sensitivity given that many of its key characteristics would be difficult to recreate, such as the naturalness of the river course and its associated habitats.
- 3.39. The overarching landscape strategy for LCA A2 is to *“conserve and enhance the current rural character with its typical river valley components and sense of remoteness.”* For development, the aim is to *“conserve the sparse settlement pattern, minimising influence from adjacent landscape areas.”*
- 3.40. A set of landscape guidelines to achieve the landscape strategy are included within the assessment, with the most relevant to this application included below:
- ***“Conserve the scenic quality and naturalistic character of the river corridor and tributary streams particularly from development [...]***
 - ***Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally occurring native species in order to create green links to other woodland habitats and to dampen extreme river flows within river catchments [...]***
 - ***Reinstate or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so [...]***
 - ***Conserve and protect the landscape pattern of mixed pasture and arable fields [...]***
 - ***Conserve, enhance and manage wetland habitats [...]***

- **Conserve the rural character of the river corridor**, to protect the individual identity of settlements such as Swallowfield, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation.
- **Maintain the rural character and sparse settlement pattern** of dispersed farms through control of new development and avoiding the spread of development onto the floodplain, particularly in relation to the South of the M4 SDL.
- **Enhance sense of place through careful design** (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – as well a sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.
- **Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements** e.g. pylons on the visually sensitive landscape.
- **Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads**, particularly in relation to the new Shinfield Eastern and Winnersh Relief Roads. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures.
- **Protect the strong perceptions of tranquillity/remoteness in the landscape**, including the experience of dark skies, through the management of development, ensuring development, including infrastructure, does not spread onto the floodplain [...]

LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay

3.41. LCA J3 is described as “an undulating landscape of large arable field with some pasture. Ongoing development in the north of the area, part of the South of the M4 SDL, is increasing the settled character of the area adding to the urbanising influence of its proximity to Reading. The south remains rural with a number of woodlands, remnant parkland and open pasture.”

3.42. The extents of LCA J3 are shown in **Figure 3.3** below:

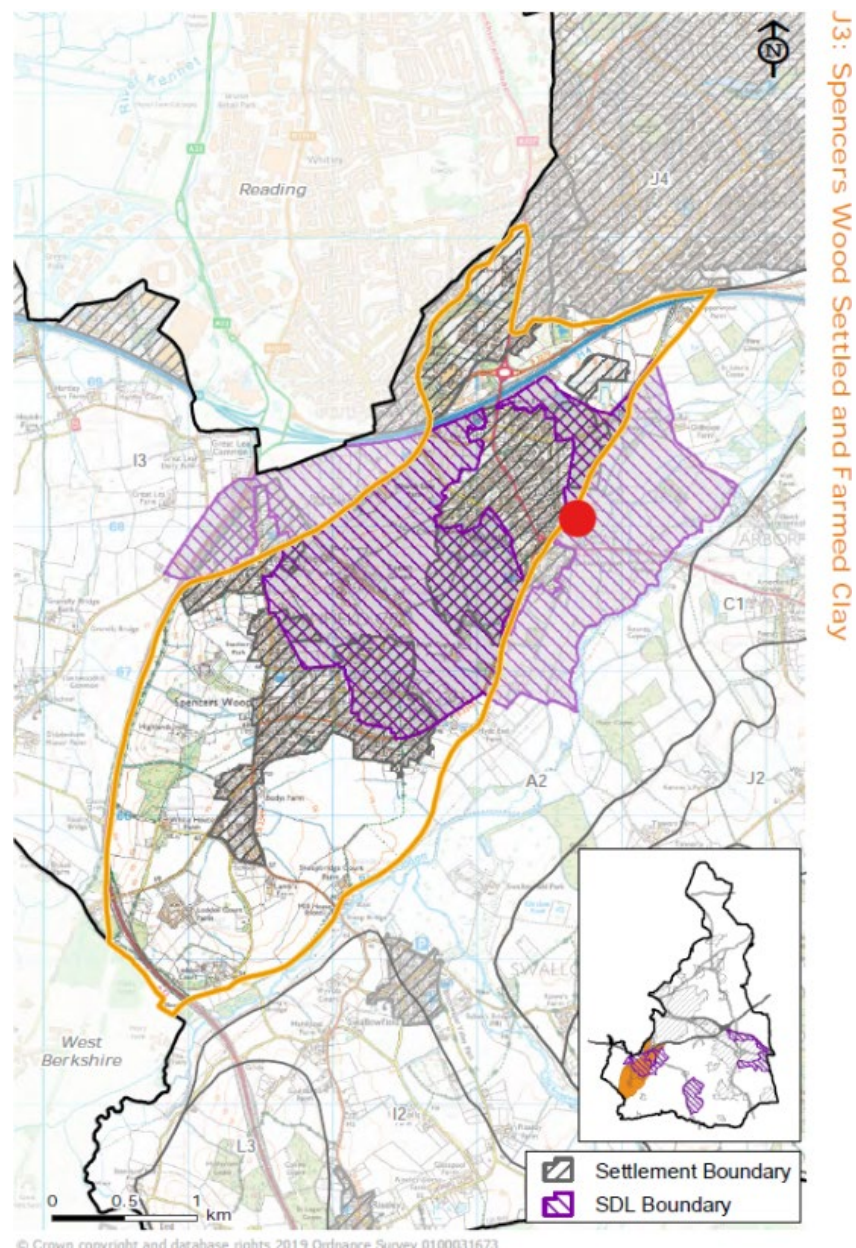


Figure 3.3: Extents of LCA J3 as shown on p.247 of the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019). Indicative location of the Site shown in red.

- 3.43. Although the north-western extents of the Site are covered by LCA J3, the extent of surrounding settlement built form to the north and west now ensures that the Site is separated from the wider landscape associated with this LCA. In terms of those key characteristics of LCA J3 that are considered to remain relevant to the Site and its setting, these are provided as follows:

- ***“Densely settled landscape, with new large-scale residential estate development around the substantially 20th century settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross, as part of South of the M4 SDL.”***

- 3.44. None of the ‘Valuable Landscape Attributes’ of LCA J3 are considered relevant to the Site and its setting as a result of the settlement built form that characterises the northern extents of the LCA.
- 3.45. In terms of the landscape condition of LCA J3, this is described as ‘good’ as a result of the surviving field patterns, historic parkland remnants, woodland blocks and hedgerow network. However, the South of the M4 SDL and other development in the northern extents of the LCA, including the southern edge of Reading, have fragmented the rural character of this landscape and major transport corridors have increased noise pollution and movement.
- 3.46. It is noted that the previous Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2004) concluded that the LCA J3 landscape is of ‘moderate’ overall quality, character and condition. It was attached a ‘moderate’ sensitivity given that many of its key characteristics would be difficult but not impossible to recreate.
- 3.47. The overarching landscape strategy for LCA J3 is *“to conserve and enhance the rural character of the agricultural landscape.”* Regarding development, the aim is to *“conserve the rural character of the landscape and gaps between settlement while maintaining the integrity of settlement identity.”*
- 3.48. The Landscape Guidelines for LCA J3 considered relevant to this application are provided below:
- ***“Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries, hedgerows and large-species trees to provide visual screening and a positive interface between the built up and rural areas.”***
 - ***“Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) [...]”***
 - ***“Use appropriate woodland, hedgerow and tree planting to help integrate roads into the landscape including the Shinfield Eastern Relief***

Road. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures.”

- **“Reduce and prevent further noise and light pollution through the sensitive siting of any new development, including infrastructure, and especially any proposed night-time lighting.”**

3.49. Extracts of LCAS A2 and J3 from the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019) are provided for reference in **Appendix 5** of this LVIA.

Topic Paper – Valued Landscapes (January 2020)

3.50. This document was prepared by WBC to accompany the Draft Local Plan Update consultation and provides background evidence and justification for WBC’s designation of Valued Landscapes as per emerging Policy NE6 of the Draft Local Plan.

3.51. It is noted that land directly east of the Site forms one of eleven identified Valued Landscapes as part of this topic paper known as ‘River Loddon Valued Landscape’, which extends the entire length of the river within the Borough and covers the flat alluvial river floodplain.

3.52. A map of the southern extents of the River Loddon Valued Landscape relevant to the setting of the Site is provided in **Figure 3.4** below:

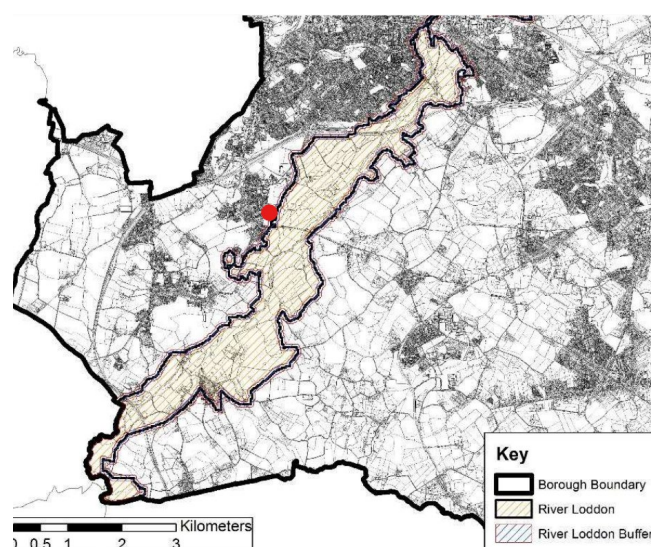


Figure 3.4: Southern extents of the River Loddon Valued Landscape as identified on p.99 of the Topic Paper – Valued Landscapes (2020). Location of the Site in red.

- 3.53. This landscape is described as a significant green and blue infrastructure corridor running diagonally along the southern half of the Borough and is valued for its character and appearance, biodiversity, history, perceptual qualities, recreational value and associations.
- 3.54. With regard to the section of this landscape that falls within LCA A2, it is stated: *“Although development pressure continues for housing and of busier and faster moving roads, the southern part of the LCA still demonstrates many characteristics of the natural river and floodplain.”*

Aspect Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.55. While the national and borough Landscape Character Assessments provide a good assessment and overview of the quality and character of the landscape within which the Site is set, it is considered that they represent a broad-brush approach and do not necessarily reflect the qualities of the Site itself and its immediate localised setting. As such Aspect has undertaken a more localised landscape character assessment of the Site, the eastern settlement edge of Shinfield and the immediate surrounding landscape.
- 3.56. It is considered that whilst the Site is located outside the existing development limits of the village itself, it displays a stronger relationship with the adjacent housing developments than with the rural low-lying River Loddon valley landscape to the east as a result of the urbanising influence of the surrounding built form. The Eastern Relief Road has also redefined the built edge of Shinfield, forming a notable component in the localised setting that creates a defensible edge to the Site and has severed the connection between the Site and the undeveloped countryside beyond this road to the east. The recent Phase 1 development to the north has further provided a residential influence on the Site and the arable land use of the Site no longer relates well to the prevailing localised context.
- 3.57. The Site is considered to be further contained and enclosed from the localised landscape setting to the east by the existing vegetation structure along the eastern Site boundary, characterised by native shrub planting and native tree groups. Although gappy in places, this vegetation structure has further established a degree of separation from the adjoining rural landscape associated with the river floodplain as well as from the wider rural landscape to the east and south-east.

- 3.58. Overall, it is considered that the Site has become increasingly influenced by the surrounding components of the built up area of Shinfield, which have exerted a strong settlement edge character on the Site itself. The connection between the Site and the rural landscape to the east has been severed by the Eastern Relief Road which further ensures that the Site relates more closely to the settlement than to the countryside to the east.
- 3.59. To assess the effects on the landscape resource, GLVIA3 provides several definitions for landscape susceptibility, landscape value and finally landscape sensitivity, as follows:
- Landscape Susceptibility: *“the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific Proposed Development without undue negative consequences”*;
 - Landscape Value: *“the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons”*; and
 - Landscape Sensitivity: *“a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”*
- 3.60. In terms of landscape sensitivity, there are several factors that both influence and affect the value of the landscape character of the Site and its setting, and their susceptibility to change. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development can be categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible. This considers the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society.

Landscape Susceptibility

- 3.61. In terms of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to accommodate change of the type proposed, it is considered that the presence of the existing settlement edge immediately to the north, south and west reduces the susceptibility of the Site and its localised setting to change resulting from residential development. The established vegetation structure located along much of the Site’s boundaries and within the localised landscape creates a robust external edge to the Site and forms a

defensible boundary between the settlement fringe and rural setting to the east and south. It is considered that the Eastern Relief Road has redefined the development limits, with the Site itself now isolated from the wider countryside and with former fields to the north having been developed for residential use. The susceptibility of the Site itself is therefore considered to be **low**.

- 3.62. The localised setting is considered to comprise the existing built form to the north, south and west along with the Eastern Relief Road and adjoining fields to the east, and the northern extents of Langely Mead SANG to the south.
- 3.63. Regarding the built form that characterises the immediate setting of the Site to the north, south and west, it is considered that the extent of previous change on the landscape ensures that this would similarly be of **low** susceptibility to further change of the residential type proposed.
- 3.64. The adjoining fields east of the Eastern Relief Road and the northern extents of Langely Mead SANG are physically connected to the wider River Loddon landscape setting to the east and south respectively. However, it is considered that the susceptibility of these areas of the localised setting to change of the type proposed is reduced by the presence of the existing settlement edge and road infrastructure. It is therefore considered that this landscape would display a **medium** susceptibility to change of the type proposed.
- 3.65. The wider landscape setting is considered to include land where the Site and its localised setting are perceived. This is mostly limited to the River Loddon floodplain to the west of the river itself, extending as far as the vegetation boundaries defined by PRoW SHIN4 to the north-east and the northern half of Langely Mead SANG to the south. The wider agricultural landscape south-east of the river extending to the A327 Observer Way and as far as the Observer Way bridge is also considered to form part of the wider landscape setting.
- 3.66. This landscape is mostly undeveloped aside from several existing properties south of the A327 Arborfield Road and is considered to be less influenced by the recent and ongoing built form development as part of the South of the M4 SDL, albeit adversely affected by the A327 where this cuts through the landscape. It is considered that the undeveloped, rural character of the wider landscape setting typically displays a **high** susceptibility to change of the type proposed.

Landscape Value

- 3.67. GLVIA3 sets out at Box 5.1 a range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes. This has been reviewed and updated in light of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 '*Assessing landscape value outside national designations*' (TGN 02/21) and the below assessment considers the updated guidance.
- 3.68. Table 1, below, seeks to assess the landscape value of the Site in relation to its localised setting based on the amended Box 5.1 & TGN 02/21 criteria.

Table 1: Assessment of Landscape Value of the Site in relation to the localised setting

Factor	Definition	Assessment of Value
Natural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	Low – The existing vegetation structure associated with the Site and its localised setting are likely to be of some ecological interest. The arable land use of much of the Site along with the surrounding built form and road infrastructure limit the natural heritage value of this landscape in relation to the fields that form part of the River Loddon floodplain to the east and south.
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	Low – It is understood that neither the Site nor its localised setting form part of a heritage or archaeological site. There are no Conservation Areas or historic assets such as listed buildings within the localised setting.
Landscape Condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.	Low / Medium – In terms of landscape condition, the localised landscape has undergone significant landscape change in the form of residential built form that now influences the Site to the north, south and west, as well as the installation of the Eastern Relief Road. The existing vegetation structure comprises established native boundary vegetation and trees of varying condition, with some areas intact and others gappy. Areas of native planting along the eastern Site boundary and Eastern Relief Road are still establishing in places. It is noted that off-site to the north, the established vegetation line that separates the Site from

Factor	Definition	Assessment of Value
		the Phase 1 development is a notable component of the localised setting and appears in good condition. Internally, there are few landscape features of note within the Site itself, with this mostly comprising an arable field.
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.	None – Regarding literary, artistic and historic associations, there are no known links with regard to the Site or its localised setting.
Distinctive-ness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity.	Low – The Site itself is mostly comprised of a large ordinary arable field, with an area of native scrub along its eastern extents and an area of hardstanding associated with a building in its south-eastern extents. It does not contain any features of note aside from several established trees and boundary vegetation. The Site is considered to be well contained from the fields to the east and south associated with the River Loddon floodplain as a result of the intervening roads and boundary vegetation.
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.	Low / Medium – The localised PRoW network includes PRoW SHIN7 that runs along the western boundary of the Phase 1 development to the north and along Oatlands Road to the west before emerging onto Arborfield Road, albeit this path offers little recreational value given the built form influence. PRoW SHIN6 runs broadly north – south through the grassland fields on the eastern side of the Eastern Relief Road. A permissive route runs along the established vegetation line to the north and provides connectivity between these routes, offering a link to the wider countryside to the east. This permissive route is temporarily closed, however due to the Phase 1 development. It is noted that an approved play space associated with Phase 1 by the north-eastern extents of the Site will offer formal play space opportunities once constructed. Langely Mead SANG is a new, publicly accessible greenspace and resource to the south of Arborfield Road. The Site itself is not publicly accessible, however, and is therefore considered to be of limited recreational value.
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.	Low / Medium – In terms of the scenic quality of the Site in relation to its localised setting, as demonstrated by the visual assessment (Refer to Appendix 2), there is some intervisibility between the Site and its setting

Factor	Definition	Assessment of Value
		to the east, albeit this is largely limited as a result of the intervening boundary vegetation structure. There are few landscape features of note that contribute to the scenic quality of the area, although the established vegetation to the north, several of the more established tree groups along the eastern boundary and views of the established field boundary vegetation to the east and south-east provide some scenic value. The Site itself appears unremarkable with the existing built edge of Shinfield forming a backdrop to the north, south and west.
Perceptual (Wildness & Tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.	Low – The extent of surrounding residential development and the proximity of the Eastern Relief Road and to a lesser degree Arborfield Road, significantly affect the perceived tranquillity of the Site and together with the predominantly arable land use of the Site ensure that any sense of remoteness has been eroded on the Site itself. It is noted that to the east and south within the River Loddon floodplain, the perceived tranquillity and remoteness increase as distance from the built-up area and road corridors increases.
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.	Low / Medium – The Site is surrounded by built form components and is considered to be limited in terms of contributing to the healthy functioning of the landscape. The adjoining fields east of the Eastern Relief Road and the northern extents of Langely Mead SANG function as part of the River Loddon floodplain, however, and is considered to elevate the overall functional value of the Site which contains a drainage channel that feeds into one of these fields to the east. The established vegetation on-site and in its immediate setting is also considered to contribute to the local green infrastructure network.

3.69. Given the above assessment, it is considered that the Site would typically be of **low / medium** landscape value.

3.70. Regarding the localised setting to the east and south, this is considered to be of greater value, as demonstrated by WBC's Topic Paper – Valued Landscapes (2020), which states the case for land to the east and south associated with the River Loddon to be recognised as a 'valued landscape' as part of the emerging Draft Local Plan. Indeed, away from the settlement edge and busy A327 road corridor that cuts through the landscape, the wider landscape setting is deemed to be of considerably higher value than the Site itself, with this landscape mostly

undeveloped and comprising the river floodplain. The settlement built form and A327 road corridor in the localised setting, detract from the overall value of this landscape, however. As such, the landscape value of the localised landscape setting is therefore considered to be **medium**.

- 3.71. Regarding the localised setting to the north, south and west, it is considered that this would be of **low** landscape value given the extent of the built form that has eroded the historic landscape character of the area.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.72. The Site is located within a settlement edge location, which is further compounded by the A327 Eastern Relief Road that has severed the physical connection between the Site and the localised landscape to the east. The Site is not remarkable in terms of its land use, features, and elements and does not include any features which elevate it above an ordinary landscape. The Site therefore does not represent a “valued landscape” in relation to paragraph 180(a) of the NPPF. The Site is not adjacent to any locations which are washed over by any qualitative landscape designations. The Site’s location within the South of the M4 SDL and the changing nature of the landscape context as a result of this is noticeable, with the Eastern Relief Road and Phase 1 development a product of this. When both value and susceptibility of the landscape resource are considered together, it is considered that the Site itself would typically be of **low** landscape sensitivity.
- 3.73. With respect to the localised landscape setting to the east and south there are several built form elements that have permanently affected the tranquillity and remoteness of the area, most notably the A327 road corridor that cuts through the landscape. Despite this land forming part of the river floodplain, it is considered that the influence of the settlement edge and the road infrastructure reduces the overall sensitivity of these field parcels to **medium**.
- 3.74. The localised settlement edge setting to the north, south and west characterised by the built form would be of **low** sensitivity given the previous landscape change that has resulted in significant settlement expansion.
- 3.75. Regarding the wider landscape setting to the east and south, it is considered that this landscape displays a strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness away from the settlement edge and busy road corridors. The River Loddon and its flat, low-lying

valley floodplain are prominent features of this landscape that are considered to be broadly highly susceptible to change and of high value. Overall it is considered that the landscape sensitivity of the wider landscape setting is **medium / high**.

- 3.76. Table 2, below, provides a summary of the considered overall landscape sensitivity of the Site, the localised and wider landscape setting and the urban setting.

Table 2: Landscape Sensitivity

Area	Landscape Sensitivity
The Site Itself	Low
Localised Setting: Surrounding settlement edge to the north, south and west, Eastern Relief Road and adjoining fields to the east, and northern extents of Langely Mead SANG to the south.	Low – Medium
Wider Landscape Setting: Valley landscape west of the River Loddon to the north-east, east and south of the Site, including the rural landscape south-east of the river extending to A327 Observer Way.	Medium / High

- 3.70. In accordance with GLVIA3 (paragraph 5.33), Aspect has identified the key landscape receptors that contribute to the character of the Site and which may be affected by the Proposed Development. These, and their considered sensitivity, are set out below in Table 3.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Key Landscape Receptors

Landscape Receptor	Comments	Sensitivity
Vegetation Cover	The existing boundary vegetation mostly comprises native hedgerows, and hedgerow trees. Generally intact and appears to be in good condition overall. Important in providing a degree of enclosure and containment to the Site and within the localised and wider landscape setting.	Medium – High
Topography	The Site forms part of the characteristic broadly flat, low-lying valley landscape associated with the River Loddon.	High
Land Use	The Site comprises a large, ordinary arable field which now appears isolated from the surrounding landscape given the change in land use to accommodate surrounding development.	Low

Landscape Receptor	Comments	Sensitivity
Permissive Route (by northern Site boundary)	This route is considered to be of low sensitivity due to its location on the settlement edge, the recent construction of the Phase 1 development and ongoing construction of the approved play space and the installation of the Eastern Relief Road that directly affect this route.	Low
PRoW SHIN6	This footpath is a recreational resource in the localised and wider landscape to the east, though its location in close proximity to the Eastern Relief Road ensures that the overall sensitivity is reduced.	Medium
PRoW SHIN7	The route of this footpath is now entirely characterised by residential development as a result of the Phase 1 development and given the extent of landscape change on this receptor, it is considered to be of low susceptibility to further residential change.	Medium / Low
Private Allotments	Local landscape resource by the south-western corner of the Site considered to be of low susceptibility to change given its location on the settlement edge and of low value.	Low
River Loddon	A unique, meandering feature of the rural landscape to the east that is irreplaceable and therefore of high sensitivity.	High
River Loddon Floodplain	This landscape resource ensures the healthy functioning of the River Loddon landscape. Evidence of previous change, most notably the A327 road corridor is considered to reduce the overall sensitivity of this feature, particularly in the localised setting.	Medium / High
Langely Mead SANG	A new area of publicly accessible natural green space to the south of Arborfield Road that is currently establishing. Influenced by the existing settlement edge built form and A327 / Arborfield Road corridors that reduces the overall sensitivity of this receptor.	Medium / High
LCA A2: Loddon River Valley	Identified as displaying a 'high' sensitivity in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2004). Largely undeveloped. Many of its key characteristics would be difficult to recreate, such as the naturalness of the river course and its associated habitats.	High
LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay	Identified as displaying a 'moderate' sensitivity in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2004). Contains several settlement areas including the majority of Shinfield where recent development has taken place. Many of its key characteristics would be difficult but not impossible to recreate.	Medium

3.71. As is demonstrated by Table 3, many of the identified landscape receptors are considered to be sensitive features that may experience adverse landscape effects unless carefully considered as part of the development proposals.

Visual Baseline Assessment

- 3.72. Several viewpoints have been identified to demonstrate the visibility of the Site within the localised and wider setting. The views have been informed by a thorough desk study and field assessment and are taken from publicly accessible locations. Although not exhaustive, these viewpoints are considered to provide a fair representation of the visual environment within which the Site is set. The visual analysis seeks to identify the key visual receptors and views that will, potentially, experience the greatest degree of change as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 3.73. The visual assessment is included within **Appendix 2** and the baseline studies have fully considered the various factors required, as detailed in Section 6 of GLVIA3 and the Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/19.
- 3.74. The photographs were taken in May 2024 by a qualified Landscape Architect using a 35mm equivalent digital SLR camera at a 50mm focal length in line with LI Tech Note 06/19. The weather was overcast albeit with good visibility in general. The full assessment of effects upon the visual environment and each viewpoint is detailed in Section 5 of this report.
- 3.75. Table 4, below, identifies the locations of the identified viewpoints, together with the key receptors and considered sensitivity.

Table 4: Baseline Visual Assessment

Viewpoint	Location	Distance and Direction from Application Site	Receptors	Sensitivity
1	Alexander Walk (Phase 1)	75m, north	Pedestrians / Cyclists / Residents	Medium
2	Shepherd Road by Tapping Way (Phase 1)	165m, north	Residents	Low
3	PRoW SHIN7 along Oatlands Road	75m, west	Users of PRoW / Residents	Medium / Low High
4	B3349 / Hollow Lane / Arborfield Road / Beke Avenue Roundabout	150m, west	Road Users	Low

Viewpoint	Location	Distance and Direction from Application Site	Receptors	Sensitivity
5	Arborfield Road by Vickers Close	50m, south-west	Road Users	Low
6	Langely Mead SANG	315m, south	Users of SANG	High
7	Langely Mead SANG	675m, south	Users of SANG	High
8	Langely Mead SANG	520m, south	Users of SANG	High
9	A327 roundabout where Arborfield Road connects onto Eastern Relief Road	100m, south-east	Road Users	Low
10	A327 Eastern Relief Road	10m east of south-eastern corner	Road Users	Low
11	Permissive Route by the A327 Eastern Relief Road	30m, north-east	Users of Permissive Route / Road Users	Medium Low
12	PRoW SHIN6, north of properties associated with the former Magpie and Parrot Public House	160m, east	Users of PRoW	High
13	PRoW SHIN4, south of the industrial units off Cutbush Lane East and Oldhouse Farm	635m, north-east	Users of PRoW	High
14	PRoW SHIN5 in open countryside to the east	700m, east	Users of PRoW	High
15	PRoW ARBO20 in open countryside to the south-east	760m, south-east	Users of PRoW	High
16	PRoW ARBO20 in open countryside to the south-east	1.75km, south-east	Users of PRoW	High
17	A327 Observer Way	2.05km, south-east	Road Users	Medium (Motorists = Low)
18	PRoW ARBO17 by Observer Way Bridge	2.65km, south-east	Users of PRoW	High

3.76. As an overview, views of the Site from publicly accessible locations are highly localised as a result of the established boundary vegetation, the adjoining built up edge to the north, south and west, and the extent of intervening boundary vegetation and woodland blocks in the countryside to the east and south-east. Some views into the Site are available from certain areas within the Phase 1 development to the

north, the local PRoW network to the east, the permissive route by the A327 Eastern Relief Road to the east, and glimpsed, fleeting views from the road itself and Arborfield Road to the south-east. The existing built up edge is also apparent in these views, however. Middle and longer distance views are mostly contained by the aforementioned extent of intervening vegetation structure and low-lying landscape.

3.77. The identified visual receptors and their attached sensitivity (in brackets) are listed below, along with a brief description of the extent of views of the Site:

- **Users of PRoWs / Permissive Routes**

- **PRoW SHIN4** – despite the presence of industrial built form to the north of this route and outbuildings associated with Oldhouse Farm, it is considered that receptors along this route would typically be of **high** sensitivity, with a primary focus on the landscape. Site typically not perceived as a result of the intervening vegetation and hedgerow structure that lines this route (Viewpoint 13);
- **PRoW SHIN5** – located in the open countryside to the east, users of this route would typically be of **high** sensitivity with a focus on the surrounding landscape. Eastern Site boundary vegetation partially glimpsed in the context of the intervening vegetation structure, with glimpsed views of the existing built form on the eastern settlement edge from along this route (Viewpoint 14);
- **PRoW SHIN6** – traversing the countryside to the east of Shinfield and the A327, the primary focus of users is on the landscape and receptors would therefore typically be of **high** sensitivity. It is noted that tranquillity levels are adversely affected by the Eastern Relief Road where the route runs in close proximity to it, leading to reduced sensitivity levels in places. Views of the Site are limited to passing views of the boundary vegetation beyond the A327 with glimpsed views of the settlement built form beyond (Viewpoint 12).
- **PRoW SHIN7** – running along Oatlands Road and along the western boundary of the Phase 1 development to the north, it is considered that users of this PRoW would be of a reduced, **medium / low** sensitivity due to the existing extent of housing that highly limits any appreciation

of the landscape from along this route. Views of the Site are limited by the intervening built form and vegetation structure (Viewpoint 3).

- **Permissive Route adjacent to northern Site boundary and by A327 Eastern Relief Road** – running off SHIN7 and parallel to the south of the existing vegetation that defines the Site from the Phase 1 development before crossing the Eastern Relief Road and connecting onto PRoW SHIN6. Temporarily closed at the time of writing. The influence of the built form and A327 road corridor reduces the overall sensitivity of users of this route to **medium**. The established eastern boundary vegetation largely contains views of the internal areas of the Site from this route by the A327 (Viewpoint 11). Open views of the Site likely from the stretch of permissive route that is temporarily closed.
- **PRoW ARBO17** – from a stretch of this route on elevated ground to the south-east, the wider village of Shinfield is perceived, with the southern extents of Reading lying on elevated ground beyond. The primary focus of users is on the landscape and therefore users of this PRoW would typically be of **high** sensitivity. The Site itself is not perceived as a result of the intervening vegetation structure. (Viewpoint 18).
- **PRoW ARBO20** – traversing the river Loddon valley landscape to the south-east, with the primary focus of users on the surrounding countryside. Receptors are considered to be of **high** sensitivity. From a short section of this route south of the grade II listed Bridge House, filtered views of the Shinfield built form are afforded, with glimpsed views of the Site boundary vegetation (Viewpoint 15). The extent of intervening boundary vegetation and woodland blocks prevents views of the Site from along this route further south, however (Viewpoint 16).
- **Users of Alexander Walk (Pedestrians and Cyclists)** – extending along the eastern extents of the Phase 1 development and experienced by pedestrians and cyclists engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape and therefore of **medium** sensitivity. Views of the Site are mainly limited by the residential built form, though the Site is clearly perceived from this route in its southern extents (Viewpoint 1), beyond the approved play space area currently under construction.

- **Road Users**

- **A327 Eastern Relief Road** – Users of this ‘A’ road pass through the area at speed and would typically be of **low** sensitivity as a result. The established vegetation associated with the eastern Site boundary mostly contains the internal areas of the Site beyond, though some fleeting views of the Site are afforded from this road corridor (Viewpoints 10-11).
 - **Arborfield Road** – from a stretch of this road along the southern Site boundary extending to the south-east beyond the roundabout connecting this road with the A327 Eastern Relief Road. The attention of receptors along this route is considered to be focused away from any appreciation of the landscape and therefore the sensitivity of road users is **low**. The Site itself is well contained from this section of road by the established vegetation along the southern Site boundary (Viewpoint 5) and the intervening vegetation by the roundabout (Viewpoint 9). The existing built form of Shinfield is partially glimpsed beyond, however.
 - **B3349 / Hollow Lane / Arborfield Road / Beke Avenue Roundabout** – Located within the built form, the focus of pedestrians and motorists is typically away from an appreciation of the landscape and both are of **low** sensitivity as a result. The internal areas of the Site are not visible from this location, though the southern boundary vegetation is viewed from the junction with Beke Avenue looking east (Viewpoint 4).
 - **A327 Observer Way** – From a stretch of this road corridor either side of the junction with Swallowfield Road in the wider countryside to the south-east. **Motorists** would typically be focused on the road ahead rather than the landscape and would be of **low** sensitivity, whereas **pedestrians** would have a greater appreciation of the landscape albeit in the context of this ‘A’ road and are therefore considered to be of **medium** sensitivity. The Site itself is not perceived though the settlement of Shinfield is glimpsed through the intervening vegetation structure (Viewpoint 17).
- **Users of Langely Heath SANG** – new publicly accessible green space on the south-eastern edge of Shinfield. Users primarily focused on the

surrounding landscape and subsequently considered to be of **high** sensitivity. Views of the Site itself are limited as a result of the intervening built form and the vegetation structure in the southern extents of the Site, which is perceived from the northern extents of the SANG only. It is noted that some of the built form associated with the Phase 1 development is partly glimpsed from this SANG. (See Viewpoints 6-8).

- **Residents**

- **Oatlands Road** – to the west with primary views of the Site and therefore typically of **high** sensitivity.
- **Phase 1 development** – to the north with residents typically of **low** sensitivity given that this constitutes recent development. Residents on the southern edge of this development along **Jerome Row** whose properties face the Site would typically be of higher, **medium** sensitivity. Views of the Site itself are limited by the established intervening vegetation structure albeit with channelled views from the main road corridors running through this development (Viewpoint 2).
- **Arborfield Road** – including properties on the southern side of Arborfield Road with primary views of the Site and therefore of **high** sensitivity, **Parrot Farmhouse** by the south-eastern boundary similarly with primary views of the Site and of **high** sensitivity, and **properties associated with the Magpie and Parrot former public house** to the south-east, with oblique views of the Site and therefore of **medium** sensitivity. The established intervening vegetation including boundary vegetation on the Site itself provides a good degree of visual containment despite the proximity of these properties.

3.78. Overall, views of the Site itself are typically highly localised as a result of the adjacent built form, established Site boundary vegetation and the extent of field boundary vegetation and woodland blocks in the wider landscape to the east and south-east. Clear views of the Site itself are mostly limited to views from adjacent properties. From publicly accessible locations, the internal areas of the Site are only clearly perceived from the permissive route to the north and from certain areas of the Phase 1 development to the north, while the Site's boundary vegetation forms a component of views in the localised setting of the Site.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

- 4.1. Full details of the Proposed Development are provided within the Design & Access Statement and supporting material which accompany the planning application. This is a full application seeking the development of up to 191 residential dwellings with landscaping and associated infrastructure. The proposed dwellings consist of a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties, as well as apartments, alongside associated car parking and garages, access roads, footpaths, drainage proposals, a play space area, open space and landscaping.
- 4.2. Detailed Hard and Soft Landscape Plans have been prepared by Aspect and are submitted separately.
- 4.3. The Proposed Development has been developed to ensure that a carefully considered and sensitive development approach is achieved. From the outset, the proposals have sought to respond to the opportunities and constraints identified by the various technical assessments undertaken as part of the application. The layout has been carefully developed to complement the receiving landscape and settlement edge setting. The proposals do not extend beyond the redefined edge associated with the Eastern Relief Road and incorporate an enhanced eastern landscape buffer to minimise impacts upon the localised and wider Loddon River valley setting. It is intended that all built form on the Site would incorporate a simple palette of materials that have been informed by the local setting and vernacular.

Landscape Strategy

- 4.4. The proposals have sought to maintain and enhance the well-established structural landscape along the eastern Site boundary in order to maintain the amenity of the surroundings and to ensure that the proposals can be successfully integrated into the setting without significant adverse effects (Refer to **ASP6** Landscape Strategy Plan). Key landscape features around the Site will be retained, where possible, and mitigated for on-site where the loss of such features is considered unavoidable. The proposals have been informed by the detailed arboricultural assessment that accompanies the application.
- 4.5. The development of the Site has been informed by the landscape and visual assessment in order to ensure that a carefully considered and sensitive approach is achieved. The landscape proposals have been informed by the landscape strategies

and relevant guidelines for LCA A2: Loddon River Valley and LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019). Landscape-related design guidance within the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012), the South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location SPD (2011) and relevant guidance and aspirations within the Shinfield School Green Village Character Statement (2008) have also informed the landscape proposals along with adopted local policy.

- 4.6. The existing vegetation to the field boundaries and along the Eastern Relief Road creates established landscape features within and around the site. This existing vegetation will form the basis of new public open spaces and green infrastructure to integrate the proposed built form elements. The layout includes a central open space at the heart of the development, along with areas of strategic planting along the Site boundaries and an extensive open space along the eastern extents of the Site, providing an enhanced degree of separation and a robust green buffer from the wider countryside setting.
- 4.7. An integrated network of green infrastructure has been incorporated within the design and the key elements of the landscape strategy are provided below:
- Approved Phase 1 play space to benefit from natural surveillance from properties on the northern development edge;
 - Key vegetation sensitively considered through the provision of appropriate development offsets, with outward-facing development establishing a positive development edge;
 - Alexander Walk, an existing pedestrian and cycleway along the eastern edge of the Phase 1 development, to be extended through the proposed open space, providing a link between Cutbush Lane to the north and Arborfield Road and Langely Mead SANG to the south;
 - Footpath links onto the nearby permissive route and PRoW SHIN7 to improve connectivity and encourage access into the countryside to the east;
 - Retained native trees and scrub in the eastern extents of the Site to be enhanced with further native planting of local prevalence to highly contain the Site within the built form context and ensure a strong degree of separation from the landscape to the east. This will complement the existing vegetated character of the eastern boundary of the Phase 1 development to

the north, as well as further assist in integrating the Eastern Relief Road within the landscape;

- Proposed attenuation basin in the eastern extents of the Site to promote sustainable drainage solutions along with informal recreational opportunities;
- Species-rich wildflower grassland to provide biodiversity enhancements and visual interest within open space areas;
- Mown grass paths to promote alternative routes through the open space, offering a more integrated user experience;
- Tree-lined primary street to form a continuation of the Phase 1 street scene and establish a green spine running through the development;
- Central open space to form an inviting, multifunctional space for the community, offering informal play space opportunities and providing a meeting point at the heart of the scheme. This space is physically and visually connected to the linear open space in the eastern extents of the Site through the design layout;
- Ornamental shrub planting and clipped, low-growing hedgerows to plot frontages to provide a high-quality landscape setting within the development, offering seasonal and year-round interest;
- Arborfield Road frontage to provide a gateway into the development, with feature tree and shrub planting proposed either side of the site entrance; and
- Replacement mixed native hedgerow planting and native tree planting to mitigate for the required vegetation loss along Arborfield Road. This will retain the vegetated character along the road corridor, once established.

- 4.8. The proposals seek to incorporate a robust landscape strategy that will provide structure to the proposed built form and complement the surrounding existing vegetation and wider green infrastructure. This green strategy will not only contribute to the sustainability of the Site, but will also assist in generating a high-quality settlement edge development that improves connectivity within the localised setting. The use of an appropriate palette of native species around the Site will not only contribute positively to local biodiversity but also to local landscape character.

5. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

- 5.1. To assess the nature of the change arising from the Proposed Development, it is appropriate to appraise the impact of the proposals upon the existing landscape character and visual environment within which the Site is situated.
- 5.2. To assess the effect of a development on the receiving environment, it is important to understand the quality and sensitivity of the landscape, the sensitivity of visual receptors, and the magnitude of change.
- 5.3. The assessment of effects has been derived from guidance provided within GLVIA3. The methodology is contained within **Appendix 2** of this document.

Effect upon Landscape Character

National Landscape Character

- 5.4. It is considered that the Proposed Development could be integrated without any overall adverse harm to the character or qualities of either NCA 115: Thames Valley or NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths. Within the context of these vast landscape character areas, the Proposed Development would represent a highly localised settlement edge development within an evolving landscape that is already heavily influenced by built form components in the extents of these NCAs that wash over the Site and its setting. As such, a no change magnitude is anticipated on these character areas, giving rise to a significance of effect of **None** at Year 1 and Year 10 on the wider landscape covered by NCA 115 and NCA 129 respectively.

District / Borough Landscape Character

- 5.5. As set out within Section 3 of this LVIA, the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019) places the Proposed Development within LCA A2: Loddon River Valley and partly within LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay, which covers the north-western extents of the Site.

Effects on LCA A2: Loddon River Valley

- 5.6. The overall sensitivity of the LCA A2 landscape is considered to be **high**, as per Table 3 of this LVIA.
- 5.7. Considering the scale of this LCA, the location of the Site itself on the settlement edge of Shinfield, and the size, scale and type of the Proposed Development, the overall magnitude of change on this LCA would be no greater than **negligible / no change** and effects would be highly localised.
- 5.8. Although the Proposed Development would introduce new built form onto what is a mostly undeveloped land parcel, this would be in the context of the adjacent settlement built form, which includes residential properties to the north and south that have extended into the LCA. The landscape proposals include the provision of an enhanced and robust landscaped eastern boundary to further the degree of separation between the Site and the localised and wider landscape associated with LCA A2. Furthermore, the River Loddon and its floodplain would not be materially affected by the Proposed Development given the settlement fringe character of the Site and the Eastern Relief Road, which has severed the relationship between the Site and the localised landscape to the east.
- 5.9. Table 5, below, assesses the likely effects of the Proposed Development upon the relevant key characteristics and Valuable Landscape Attributes of LCA A2:

Table 5: Potential effect of the Proposed Development upon LCA A2

Key Characteristics of LCA A2: Loddon River Valley	Potential Effect of the Proposals
<i>"A broad, flat alluvial floodplain around 40-45m AOD underlain by riverine alluvium and river terrace deposits [...]"</i>	Negligible Neutral – It is understood that the majority of the Site itself, including all of the proposed developable area, lies within Flood Zone 1, with the exception being the eastern extents of the Site. The Proposed Development does not seek to significantly alter the topography of the Site and would not affect the functionality of the floodplain. The conversion of an isolated arable field land to residential would therefore represent a barely perceived change if any on this key characteristic that would neither add nor detract from this key characteristic.
<i>"The River Loddon follows a meandering course within braided channels [...]"</i>	None – The Proposed Development would not change the course of the river and would be well contained from this feature through the combination of existing intervening

	vegetation and the landscape proposals along the eastern boundary of the Site. A no change magnitude is therefore anticipated on this receptor.
<i>“A wooded backdrop is provided by scattered blocks of deciduous woodland and copse, interlinked woodland belts and scattered mature trees and scrub [...].”</i>	Negligible / None Beneficial – Once established, it is considered that the landscape proposals along the eastern boundary would strengthen the existing vegetation structure in this location and would result in an enhanced vegetation structure in the localised landscape. It is considered this would represent a barely perceived yet beneficial change if any on the wider LCA.
<i>“Pasture and arable farmland in medium and large irregular geometric fields, divided by post and wire fencing, post and rail fencing, gappy hedgerows and drainage ditches. The areas closest to the river are affected by flooding and are characterised by pasture and wet meadow.”</i>	Negligible Adverse – The Proposed Development would result in the loss of a large, geometric arable field albeit this is considered to be isolated as a result of the loss of surrounding arable fields to development and with the introduction of the Eastern Relief Road that has severed the connection between the Site and the wider LCA A2 landscape.
<i>“Wetland character, including BAP priority habitats of floodplain grazing marsh, wet woodland, lowland fen and lowland meadows which contain characteristic features such as willow pollards [...].”</i>	None – The Site does not form part of a BAP priority habitat and does not contribute strongly to the wetland character of the LCA. The Proposed Development would be highly contained from the wetland character of the wider landscape covered by LCA A2 and would therefore not result in any harm to the wider LCA A2 landscape, noting some highly localised change on land directly to the east is likely. Overall, a no change magnitude is therefore anticipated on this key characteristic.
<i>“Low-density scattered settlement pattern of villages and farmsteads characterised by traditional warm red brick and timber framed vernacular [...].”</i>	Negligible Adverse – The Proposed Development would introduce further residential built form into this character area that remains largely undeveloped for the most part. However, as established, the Site is considered to relate more closely to the built form context of Shinfield than the river floodplain to the east. It is considered that the Proposed Development would complement the existing residential built form character in its localised setting and would result in little effect on the wider LCA.
<i>“Tranquil and rural character away from river crossings and visual influence of large scale settlement in adjacent areas. [...].”</i>	Negligible / None Adverse – The tranquillity and rural character of the adjoining fields east of the Eastern Relief Road is already considered to be affected by this road corridor and the Proposed Development would be well contained beyond a landscape buffer along the eastern Site boundary to minimise any further effects on this characteristic. The wider landscape associated with LCA A2 would remain unaffected in this regard.
<i>“Little public access to the floodplain [...] Busy roads cross the floodplain, including the A33, M4 and Winnersh and Shinfield</i>	None – The setting of the permissive route to the north off-site would be enhanced, encouraging public use of this path that crosses the Eastern Relief Road and provides access onto PRow SHIN6 within the floodplain. The Proposed

<i>Eastern Relief Roads, and create physical and visual severance along the floodplain."</i>	Development would not result in any direct change to this characteristic, however.
<i>"Pylons, residential and commercial development are distinctive visual features in this open and flat landscape, with development very visible along the edges of this character area. The new landmark Science and Innovation Park building at Shinfield is a notable feature in the landscape."</i>	Negligible Beneficial – Although the Proposed Development would introduce further residential built form into this LCA, the landscape proposals would highly integrate this into the landscape once established. This would not only highly contain the proposed built form but would also further contain the wider settlement of Shinfield beyond to reduce the influence of the built form on the wider LCA.
Valuable Landscape Attributes of LCA A2: Loddon River Valley	Potential Effect of the Proposals
<i>"The naturalness of the meandering course of the River Loddon and wide floodplain landscape which provide a strong sense of place."</i>	None – The Site is not considered to make a strong contribution to the River Loddon and its floodplain as a result of the surrounding built form influence, including the Eastern Relief Road that has severed connections between the Site and the landscape to the east. The land use of the Site is now in contrast to the surrounding context given the loss of arable fields to development. The Proposed Development would therefore have no effect on this attribute.
<i>"The wooded backdrop of mature broadleaved woodland copses and natural riparian corridors including ancient woodland which provides scenic quality and a sense of place, as well as framing views across, into and out of the area."</i>	Negligible / None Beneficial – See key characteristic relating to wooded backdrop above.
<i>"Important wetland features/habitats [...]"</i>	None – The Proposed Development would not result in adverse effects on any important wetland features / habitats, with appropriate mitigation in the form of SuDS and replacement planting provided on-site to offset any losses or alterations to wetland features such as native scrub and the existing drainage channel.
<i>"Localised areas with a strong sense of tranquillity particularly in the south, with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies away from roads and visual influence of large scale settlement in adjacent areas."</i>	Negligible / None Adverse – See key characteristic relating to tranquillity above.

- 5.10. In summary, the Proposed Development would not result in any significant adverse effects upon the key characteristics or valuable landscape attributes of LCA A2, with Negligible Adverse effects anticipated at most on the characteristic land use of this landscape and in relation to its established low-density scattered settlement pattern.
- 5.11. Overall it is considered that the settlement fringe character of the Site and the installation of the Eastern Relief Road to the east ensures the Site itself no longer relates well to the wider undeveloped land associated with LCA A2. The existing vegetation in the localised and wider setting ensure that the character of this landscape would remain largely unaffected by the proposals. The long-term effect on this LCA is therefore considered to be no greater than **Negligible Adverse**.

Effects on LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay

- 5.12. The overall sensitivity of the LCA J3 landscape is considered to be medium, as per Table 3 of this LVIA.
- 5.13. Considering the extent of existing, recent and ongoing built form development associated with the northern extents of this LCA, the Proposed Development would likely form a compatible addition to this changing landscape context, especially given that the immediate context of the Site in relation to this LCA is characterised by the built form of Shinfield. This ensures that the Site does not relate closely to the wider key characteristics of the LCA or any of its valued landscape attributes, with the Site only relatable to the **“Densely settled landscape, with new large-scale residential estate development”** key characteristic of the LCA.
- 5.14. The size, scale and type of development proposed would be in keeping with the surrounding built form context. As such, it is considered that there would be no change on the existing character of the LCA, resulting in effects of **None**.

The Site Itself

- 5.15. Aspect's character assessment of the Site and its localised setting identifies that the Site is heavily influenced by the proximity of urbanising features such as the adjacent residential areas to the north, south and west and the nearby road corridors including the Eastern Relief Road that has redefined the eastern settlement edge and forms a clearly defined boundary to the Site. The Site itself is relatively enclosed by established vegetation within its eastern extents, which would

largely be retained as part of the proposals. Additional planting would be implemented along the eastern Site boundary and internally (Refer to ASP6 Landscape Strategy Plan). This would ensure an enhanced and robust edge to the proposals and would create an appropriate transition with the rural River Loddon landscape to the east, complementing the existing boundary treatments associated with the Phase 1 development to the north.

- 5.16. It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would affect the character of the Site itself, permanently changing it from mostly agricultural land on the edge of Shinfield to a residential development. However, this would be the same for any new development on a settlement edge. An unavoidable initial high magnitude of change would likely occur at **Year 1** given this change, which when combined with the low sensitivity of the Site itself would lead to a material change and a **Moderate Adverse** effect on a receptor considered to have the ability to accommodate change of the type proposed as a result of the settlement edge location and influence of existing built form.
- 5.17. By **Year 10**, it is considered that the Proposed Development would have established on the Site and the landscape proposals would similarly have established to soften the impact of the built form and strengthen the landscape structure of the Site, for example along its eastern extents with the provision of a high-quality linear open space. Proposed tree planting and open spaces would mitigate the vegetation removal and would provide a robust landscape structure to the Site's boundaries, contributing positively to the landscape setting. The overall magnitude of change would therefore likely reduce to medium once the proposals have established, giving rise to a permanent **Moderate / Minor Adverse** effect on the Site itself.
- 5.18. Table 3, in Section 3 of this LVIA, identifies key landscape receptors associated with the Site and its setting and assesses their sensitivity to change of the type proposed. Table 6, below, assesses the potential effect of the Proposed Development upon each of the identified receptors.

Table 6: Assessment of effects upon identified landscape receptors

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude Year 1	Effect Year 1	Magnitude Year 10	Effect Year 10
Vegetation Cover	Medium – High	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Medium	Moderate Beneficial
Assessment: The Proposed Development would require the removal of several areas of existing vegetation on-site, including the established hedgerow along Arborfield Road to accommodate site access, visibility splays and a new pavement on the eastern side of this access. Existing vegetation along the south-western boundary would also be removed to accommodate the layout, as would hedgerows and trees in the south-eastern extents of the Site to install the attenuation basin and incorporate the existing area of hardstanding in the south-eastern corner into the open space proposals. This vegetation loss would initially lead to a perceived, medium magnitude of change, given the extent of removal, though this would not result in a significant change on this receptor, therefore effects no greater than Moderate Adverse are anticipated at Year 1. By Year 10, the landscape proposals would have established, which include native hedgerow and native tree mitigation planting along with areas of native scrub to enhance open space areas and form a robust eastern boundary. This would likely negate any initial adverse effects and would see beneficial change on this receptor, with the proposals strengthening the key areas of vegetation along the eastern boundary that would complement the existing vegetation cover to the east of the Phase 1 development. As such, this would remain a perceived change albeit once that results in a beneficial material effect on the vegetation cover on the Site and in its immediate setting.					
Topography	High	Negligible / No Change	Negligible Adverse	Negligible / No Change	Negligible Neutral
Assessment: The Proposed Development would require groundworks to accommodate the built form, as well as the creation of a SuDS attenuation basin in the eastern extents of the Site. Once complete, the Proposed Development would result in a barely perceived change if any when compared to the existing topography of the Site. While the attenuation basin would contribute to a Negligible Adverse effect at Year 1, it is considered that by Year 10, this would have become an integrated feature of the public open space and would neither add nor detract from this receptor, giving rise to a Negligible Neutral long-term effect.					

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude Year 1	Effect Year 1	Magnitude Year 10	Effect Year 10
Land Use	Low	High	Moderate Adverse	High	Moderate Adverse
	Assessment: The Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of an arable field to residential development. This would result in a high magnitude of change on this receptor, giving rise to a permanent Moderate Adverse effect at Year 1 and Year 10.				
Permissive Route (by northern Site boundary)	Low	High	Moderate Adverse	High / Medium	Moderate Adverse
	Assessment: Initially, the Proposed Development would result in an unavoidable high magnitude of change given that the built form would replace the existing arable field and would form a prominent component of the immediate setting to this route. The built form would be appropriately offset from this path to retain a degree of openness. By Year 10, the Proposed Development would have integrated into it receiving landscape setting and the landscape proposals, which include native tree planting along the development edge, would have established to soften the built form. As such, it is considered that the initial high magnitude of change would have reduced slightly to high / medium. A permanent Moderate Adverse effect is anticipated on this receptor given that this would remain a material change.				
PRoW SHIN6	Medium	Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Negligible	Minor Adverse
	Assessment: A degree of separation is already established between the Site and this route to the east as a result of the Eastern Relief Road and the intervening vegetation structure. The Phase 1 development has extended the settlement eastwards within the setting of this footpath; therefore the Proposed Development would be in the context of this and would represent a minor change at Year 1 giving rise to a low magnitude of change and a Moderate / Minor Adverse effect. By Year 10, once the landscape proposals establish along the eastern boundary to further contain the proposals, the overall magnitude would likely reduce to negligible, giving rise to a permanent Minor Adverse effect at most.				
PRoW SHIN7	Medium / Low	Negligible / No Change	Negligible / None Neutral	Negligible / No Change	Negligible / None Neutral
	Assessment: This route is strongly influenced by the existing built form and would experience little to no change as a result of additional residential built form within its setting. The Site itself is physically separated from this route by the established vegetation line to the north and by the properties along the eastern side of Oatlands Road to the west. As such, it is				

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude Year 1	Effect Year 1	Magnitude Year 10	Effect Year 10
	considered that the Proposed Development would neither add nor detract from the existing character of this route, resulting in a Negligible / None Neutral effect at Year 1 and Year 10.				
Private Allotments	Low	Medium	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Medium / Low	Minor Adverse
	Assessment: The Proposed Development would result in additional residential development in the setting of this receptor, which would further enclose this within the built form. The existing vegetation structure that defines the boundary between the Site and this receptor would be retained and enhanced through further boundary enhancements and native tree planting. It is considered that the Proposed Development would represent a perceived change at Year 1 giving rise to a Moderate / Minor Adverse effect. As the landscape proposals establish and the existing vegetation further matures, this would help to contain the proposed built form, reducing the overall magnitude slightly. This would likely result in an effect on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor – Minor effect given the existing influence of the built form on this receptor.				
River Loddon	High	No Change	None	No Change	None
	Assessment: As a result of the settlement edge location of the Site and the distance and extent of intervening vegetation between the Site and this landscape receptor, the Proposed Development would form a compatible and well-integrated addition to its setting and would not result in any further adverse effects on its character.				
River Loddon Floodplain	Medium / High	Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Negligible	Minor Adverse
	Assessment: A degree of separation has been established between the Site and this receptor as a result of the intervening vegetation structure. The proposals would further introduce built form into the immediate setting of this receptor but the extent of existing residential built form in the localised setting would likely result in a low magnitude of change at Year 1. This would likely once the landscape proposals established to further contain the built form within its settlement edge location, giving rise to effects on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor – Minor effect by Year 10.				

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude Year 1	Effect Year 1	Magnitude Year 10	Effect Year 10
Largely Mead SANG	Medium / High	Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Negligible	Minor Adverse
Assessment: A degree of separation is established between the Site and this new receptor as a result of the intervening vegetation structure and settlement built form. The proposals would further introduce built form into the immediate setting of this receptor. The extent of existing residential built form in the localised setting would likely result in a low magnitude of change at Year 1 reducing to negligible by Year 10 once the landscape proposals have established to further contain the built form within its settlement edge location. This would lead to effects on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor – Minor effect.					

- 5.19. The assessment of key identified landscape receptors indicates that none of these would likely experience significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development either at Year 1 or Year 10. It is acknowledged that some material change would occur on several of these receptors albeit it is considered that these would have the ability to accommodate change of the type proposed mainly as a result of the settlement edge location of the Site and the previous extent of landscape change in the localised setting. Initial Moderate Adverse effects on the vegetation cover of the Site as a result of vegetation loss mainly along the southern boundary would be appropriately mitigated for and the extent of landscape proposals would ensure that long-term beneficial change occurs on this receptor once this planting establishes.

Localised Setting

- 5.20. While the Proposed Development would represent an initial high degree of change on the Site itself, the extent of change within the localised setting would be greatly reduced given the settlement edge context and existing vegetation structure that limits intervisibility with the Site. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would represent a low degree of deterioration to the composition of the landscape to the east and south at **Year 1**. This would likely give rise to a **Moderate / Minor Adverse** effect at most on the **localised landscape setting** to the east and south, with this landscape considered to have the ability to accommodate change of the type proposed given the existing presence and influence of the surrounding built form components. The proposals would not result

in significant vegetation loss nor would they introduce alien components into the existing settlement edge context.

- 5.21. The **existing settlement edge to the north, south and west** would similarly experience a low degree of change at **Year 1** given the extent of recent change in its immediate setting and this would therefore give rise to **Minor Adverse** effects.
- 5.22. The proposed landscape treatments would ensure that a robust green edge to the development is achieved once the planting establishes, forming an appropriate transition between the built form and the wider low-lying rural landscape, as illustrated on **ASP6** Landscape Strategy Plan. It is therefore considered that by **Year 10**, the overall magnitude of change on the **localised landscape setting** to the east and south would reduce to negligible. The Proposed Development would represent a barely perceived addition to the localised setting and would result in an overall **Minor Adverse** effect.
- 5.23. Once the proposed built form has integrated into the receiving settlement edge context, it is considered that the overall magnitude of change on the **existing settlement edge to the north, south and west** would similarly reduce to negligible, with the Proposed Development complementing and strengthening the existing settlement pattern in east of the village and providing greater connectivity between the built form. Effects would therefore likely reduce to permanent **Negligible Adverse** effects by **Year 10**.

Wider Landscape Setting

- 5.24. The proposals have been informed by the settlement edge context of the Site and would deliver a high-quality, sympathetic development that could be integrated into the wider setting with little to no change the wider landscape context. As a result of the intervening vegetation structure and settlement edge context of the Site itself, the Proposed Development would be well integrated from the wider landscape to the east and south from day one. At **Year 1**, it is considered that this would therefore represent a barely perceived change on the character of the wider setting, giving rise to a negligible magnitude of change and a **Minor Adverse** effect at most on this medium / high sensitivity receptor.
- 5.25. By **Year 10**, and once the landscape proposals that form an integral part of the Proposed Development have established, the built form would be further contained

from the wider landscape setting as a result of the establishment of a robust green edge along the eastern extents of the Site. This would give rise to a barely perceived change if any on the character of this landscape, with effects anticipated to reduce to **Negligible Adverse**.

- 5.26. It is concluded that while the Proposed Development would give rise to an unavoidable material change on the Site itself, along with some change within the localised and wider context of the Site, the above assessment demonstrates that the receiving landscape has the ability to accommodate such change without resulting in any significant adverse effects either on its key characteristics or on the identified key landscape receptors. The scope for new planting within the Site also represents an opportunity to enhance the landscape setting of Shinfield and to increase biodiversity levels on the Site itself through the provision of high-quality open space.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 5.27. As detailed within Section 3 of this LVIA, several viewpoints have been identified to demonstrate the visibility of the Site within the localised and wider setting as experienced by the identified visual receptors. The views have been informed by a thorough desk study and several field assessments and are taken from publicly accessible viewpoints. Although not exhaustive, these are considered to provide a fair representation of the visual environment within which the Site is set. The visual analysis seeks to identify those views that would, potentially, experience the greatest degree of change as a result of the proposals. The viewpoints are illustrated on the Viewpoint Location Plan within **Appendix 2**.
- 5.28. Table 7, below, undertakes an assessment of the effects arising from the Proposed Development upon each of the views.

Table 7: Effect upon the Visual Environment

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
1	Alexander Walk (Phase 1)	Medium	Medium		Moderate Adverse	
				Medium / Low		Moderate / Minor Adverse
NOTES: Taken from the southern extents of Alexander Walk that forms part of the Phase 1 development to the north, looking south towards the approved play space currently under construction and the Site beyond. Views typically experienced by pedestrians and cyclists of medium sensitivity. The Proposed Development would result in the loss of perceived open space to residential built form that would extend up to the southern boundary of the play space area. It is noted that existing properties along Arborfield Road form the backdrop in views and as such, the Proposed Development would not introduce prominent new components into the view. At Year 1, it is considered there would be a perceived change in views from this location, resulting in a medium magnitude of change and a Moderate Adverse significance of effect. By Year 10, the landscape proposals, which include street tree planting, open space native tree planting and native shrub planting along the development edges, would have had time to establish alongside the intervening planting associated with the Phase 1 development. This would ensure that the built form becomes further integrated into views from the southern edge of the Phase 1 development such as along Alexander Walk. It is therefore anticipated that the overall magnitude of change would reduce slightly to medium / low, which would give rise to a Moderate / Minor Adverse effect on pedestrians and cyclists from this stretch only.						
2	Shepherd Road by Tapping Way (Phase 1)	Low	Low		Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Negligible Neutral
NOTES: Taken from within the Phase 1 development along Shepherd Road where this is intersected by Tapping Way, looking south towards the Site. Views typically experienced by residents considered to be of low sensitivity. It is considered that views towards the Site from within the Phase 1 development would initially undergo a low degree of change as a result of the Proposed Development given the presence of the intervening built form that forms the main component of these views and the retained boundary vegetation that separates the Site from this development, filtering views of the Site itself. The channelled nature of these views from Shepherd Road is already characterised by existing residential properties in the distance associated with Arborfield Road. The Proposed Development would represent a minor component of these views. It is therefore anticipated that the significance of effect on views from within the Phase 1 development would be no greater than Minor Adverse at Year 1.						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
	By Year 10, the intervening vegetation structure would have further matured and the landscape proposals for the northern extents of the Site, which include native tree planting and native shrub planting within open space, along with street tree planting along the spine road, would have established to further integrate the proposed built form. As a result, it is considered that the magnitude of change would reduce to negligible, with the Proposed Development forming a barely perceived change on existing views. A Negligible Neutral effect is therefore anticipated given that this would lead to little effect on the composition of the view and with this change neither adding nor detracting from views once the landscape proposals have established.					
3	PRoW SHIN7 along Oatlands Road	Medium / Low	Low		Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Negligible Adverse
NOTES: Taken from Oatlands Road, a private road that forms part of PRoW SHIN7 within the existing built form to the west of the Site, looking south-east. The existing residential built form prevents views of the Site itself, though glimpsed views of elevated wooded ground in the distance are afforded between properties. Experienced by PRoW users considered to be of medium / low sensitivity.						
It is considered that the Proposed Development would be well contained by the existing built form along this road, albeit with the roofscape of several properties likely to be perceived in between these dwellings, partly replacing the glimpsed views of the elevated wooded ground to the south-east. This would likely represent a low degree of deterioration on views at Year 1 given that the existing built form would remain the main component of views. It is anticipated that effects would be on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor – Minor effect, with views considered to have the ability to accommodate the proposed change given their existing residential character. A Minor Adverse effect is therefore anticipated on PRoW Users along this route at most at Year 1.						
By Year 10, any glimpsed views of the proposed built form would have become integrated into views along this road and the overall magnitude of change would be no greater than negligible given that there would be a barely perceived change on these views. The overall effect on PRoW users would therefore likely be on the lower end of a Minor – Negligible effect given that the change would represent little effect on a view that is considered to have the ability to accommodate the change proposed. A Negligible Adverse effect is therefore anticipated.						
4	B3349 / Hollow Lane / Arborfield Road / Beke Avenue Roundabout	Low	Negligible / No Change		Negligible / None Adverse	
				Negligible / No Change		Negligible / None Neutral
NOTES: Taken from the roundabout to the west of the Site, looking east. The southern boundary vegetation of the Site itself is glimpsed in fleeting views beyond the intervening built form. Views typically experienced by road users of low sensitivity.						
The Proposed Development would result in little to no change in the composition of views from this location, noting that the southern extents of the built form would likely be visible above the existing southern Site boundary vegetation along						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
	Arborfield Road, which would partly result in the loss of views towards elevated ground to the east. This would affect a very short section of the view, however, which is not considered to form an important component of this and with the existing intervening built form remaining the major component of views. It is therefore considered that a negligible / no change magnitude would occur at Year 1 and Year 10. Initially, this would likely result in a Negligible / None Adverse effect given the partial loss of views of the wider landscape. However, it is considered that by Year 10, this change would have become integrated into views from this location and would neither add nor detract from the visual experience, resulting in a Negligible / None Neutral effect on this receptor.					
5	Arborfield Road by Vickers Close	Low	Medium		Moderate / Minor Adverse	
				Low		Minor Adverse
NOTES: Taken from Arborfield Road by the junction with Vickers Close, looking north-east towards the southern extents of the Site. Established vegetation characterises the northern side of Arborfield Road and is a prominent feature of the view. Views typically experienced by road users of low sensitivity. The Proposed Development would initially result in the partial loss of the vegetation structure along the southern Site boundary to accommodate site access and a new pavement on the northern side of this road. The proposed built form would be set back from this boundary to reduce the visual impact of the Proposed Development, however, with a landscape buffer and replacement mixed native hedgerow planting to provide a further degree of mitigation by Arborfield Road. At Year 1, the southern extents of the development would be visible beyond the existing vegetation structure from this location and would be perceived beyond the establishing mitigation planting in fleeting views by road users. The loss of vegetation to accommodate site access would result in a highly localised perceived change and a Moderate / Minor Adverse effect. By Year 10, it is considered that the proposed mitigation would have established to largely restore the vegetated character along the northern side of Arborfield Road, with the proposed built form further contained beyond. The overall magnitude of change on this receptor would therefore likely reduce to low, which would give rise to a Minor Adverse effect at most on this receptor.						
6	Langely Mead SANG	High	Low / Negligible		Moderate / Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Minor Adverse
NOTES: Taken from the northern field associated with Langely Mead SANG and representative of views by SANG users of high sensitivity in this location looking north towards the Site.						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
	The Proposed Development would be partly contained beyond the intervening vegetation structure, from day one, although the southern extents would be visible given the removal of the southern Site boundary vegetation. The existing Shinfield built form is an integrated component of the view therefore the proposed built form would be in keeping with the existing visual baseline. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would be a minor component of this view at most, giving rise to an effect on the lower end of a Moderate – Moderate / Minor effect at Year 1. As the Proposed Development is further integrated into the receiving context through the establishment of the landscape proposals, which include mixed native hedgerow mitigation planting, native tree and shrub planting in the open space along the south-eastern extents of the Site, along with a landscape buffer between the proposed built form and the southern Site boundary, the proposed built form would be highly contained. By Year 10, the overall magnitude of change would therefore likely reduce to negligible, giving rise to an effect on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor effect, resulting in a Minor Adverse effect on SANG users in the northernmost field of Langely Mead SANG.					
7	Langely Mead SANG	High	Negligible / No Change		Negligible Neutral	
				Negligible / No Change		Negligible Neutral
NOTES: Taken from within Langely Mead SANG in the field south of Viewpoint 6, looking north towards the Site. Views experienced by SANG users of high sensitivity. The intervening field boundary vegetation and established tree line that extends off Millworth Lane ensure that the Site itself is not perceived. There are glimpsed views of the eastern extents of the built form associated with the Phase 1 development, albeit this appears well integrated by the intervening vegetation structure. The Proposed Development would likely result in little to no change given that the proposed built form would be highly contained by the intervening vegetation and built form. As such, a negligible / no change is anticipated at Year 1 and Year 10. Given the minimal change anticipated on views from this location, it is considered that the Proposed Development would neither add nor detract from the view and would give rise to a Negligible Neutral significance of effect. Similar effects would likely occur when heading north along the boardwalk in the adjoining field to the south-east, with all other areas of the SANG to the south and west remaining entirely unaffected by the Proposed Development.						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
8	Langely Mead SANG	High	Negligible		Minor Adverse	
				Negligible / No Change		Negligible Adverse
NOTES: Taken from a smaller field in the northern extents of Langely Mead SANG by the River Loddon, looking north towards the Site. Views experienced by SANG users of high sensitivity. The settlement is more apparent from this location, albeit appearing well integrated into the landscape as a result of the existing vegetation structure. Some of the Phase 1 development is perceived along with Thames Valley Science Park in the background. At Year 1, it is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a barely perceived change in comparison to the existing visual baseline, giving rise to a negligible magnitude of change. Initially, this would likely result in an effect on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor effect given the existing extent of the built form in the view. By Year 10 and once the landscape proposals have established, the overall magnitude would likely reduce to negligible / no change with the built form highly contained by the intervening vegetation cover. This would result in a long-term Negligible Adverse effect at most on SANG users in this location.						
9	A327 roundabout where Arborfield Road connects onto Eastern Relief Road	Low	Low		Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Negligible Adverse
NOTES: Taken from the A327 Arborfield Road to the east of the roundabout where this road meets the Eastern Relief Road, looking north-west towards the Site. Fleeting views typically experienced by road users of low sensitivity. The Proposed Development would be well contained by the established intervening vegetation structure, part of which lies off-site and serves to highly contain views of the existing built form, including Parrot Farmhouse on the northern side of Arborfield Road. The proposed built form may be glimpsed in fleeting views along this road corridor, though this would likely form a minor component of the view, with the intervening vegetation remaining a prominent feature. Existing glimpsed views of the settlement edge would be replaced in part by the Proposed Development, which would not introduce alien components into the view. The magnitude of change at Year 1 would therefore be considered low giving rise to a Minor Adverse effect on road users. By Year 10, the landscape proposals for the open space in the eastern extents of the Site would have established to provide a further layer of containment to the proposed built form in fleeting views along this road corridor, with the Proposed						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
	Development likely to have little effect on existing views. As such, the magnitude of change would reduce to negligible, resulting in an overall Negligible Adverse significance of effect on road users.					
10	A327 Eastern Relief Road	Low	Low		Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Negligible Adverse
NOTES: Taken from the A327 Eastern Relief Road, looking across the Site. Fleeting views experienced by road users of low sensitivity.						
From this location, the existing vegetation would be partly removed to accommodate the proposed attenuation basin, which would form an integrated feature of the public open space in the eastern extents of the Site. The proposed built form would be located beyond this and would largely replace existing views of the residential properties along Oatlands Road that currently define the eastern settlement edge of Shinfield in this location. Any views would be fleeting, with motorists passing at speed on this stretch of 50mph road that runs parallel to the Site. At Year 1, it is considered that the Proposed Development would represent a low magnitude of change given the extent of retained vegetation along the eastern Site boundary and the fleeting nature of the views. The proposed built form would likely result in a low degree of deterioration in these views at most. This would give rise to a Minor Adverse effect on road users passing by the Site typically at speed. By Year 10, the landscape proposals for the public open space along the eastern extents of the Site, which includes native tree and shrub planting, would have matured to further integrate the proposed built form beyond. The attenuation basin would also be well integrated into this space through appropriate native riparian planting. It is therefore considered that the overall magnitude of change would reduce to negligible given that the Proposed Development would be a barely perceived addition to the existing view. With the built form highly integrated and contained within these fleeting views, it is anticipated that this would give rise to reduced, Negligible Adverse effects on road users passing by on this section of the Eastern Relief Road.						
11	Permissive Route by the A327 Eastern Relief Road	Medium	Low		Moderate / Minor Adverse	
				Negligible		Minor Adverse
NOTES: Taken from the Permissive Route by the A327 Eastern Relief Road, looking towards the Site. The existing roadside vegetation highly contains views of the Site, especially when this vegetation is in leaf. Views experienced by walkers of medium sensitivity.						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
	The Proposed Development would typically only be perceived from this location in the winter months, with the exception of its northern extents beyond the approved Phase 1 play space. This would appear in the context of the Phase 1 development to the north. As such, a low magnitude of change is anticipated at Year 1, leading to a Moderate / Minor Adverse effect. By Year 10, a further layer of containment would be provided by the Proposed Development in the form of the landscape proposals, which include street tree planting along with native tree and shrub planting in open spaces around the development edge. This would ensure that views of the northern extents of the built form, and the wider built form across the Site when perceived in winter views, would be softened from this location, resulting in an overall barely perceived addition to the existing visual baseline and giving rise to a Minor Adverse effect on walkers. Regarding motorists travelling southbound along the A327 in this location, typically of low sensitivity, it is considered that effects would be reduced on this receptor given the direction of travel and with the Phase 1 development already forming a component of the visual experience when travelling along this road corridor from the north. At Year 1, this would likely result in a negligible magnitude of change and a Negligible Adverse effect, reducing to a Negligible Neutral effect by Year 10 once the Proposed Development has integrated into its setting.					
12	PRoW SHIN6, north of properties associated with the former Magpie and Parrot Public House	High	Low	Negligible	Moderate Adverse	Minor Adverse
	NOTES: Taken from a section of PRoW SHIN6 to the east of the A327 Eastern Relief Road and north of properties associated with the former Magpie and Parrot Public House. Views experienced by PRoW users of high sensitivity, with glimpsed views of some properties associated with the eastern settlement edge of Shinfield. The Proposed Development would likely be partly visible from this stretch of PRoW, with the roofscape of some of the proposed built form glimpsed beyond the intervening vegetation. However, views of this built form would replace existing views of properties on the eastern settlement edge and would form a minor component of the view given the extent of the intervening vegetation structure. A low magnitude of change is therefore anticipated at Year 1 on this receptor. It is considered that this would give rise to a Moderate Adverse effect as the built edge would appear more prominent in views from this stretch of PRoW.					

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
	By Year 10, the landscape proposals along the eastern boundary would have established to further contain the Proposed Development and soften views of the proposed built form from this stretch of PRoW. The overall magnitude of change would likely reduce to negligible as a result, giving rise to effects on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor effect given the degree of containment afforded to the proposals. This would result in a Minor Adverse effect on this receptor.					
13	PRoW SHIN4, south of the industrial units off Cutbush Lane East and Oldhouse Farm	High	No Change		None	
				No Change		None
NOTES: Taken from PRoW SHIN4 to the north-east of the Site, from an opening in the hedgerow vegetation that lines both sides of this route from this stretch of PRoW. View experienced by PRoW users of high sensitivity, with glimpsed views of the Phase 1 development from this location. It is considered that as a result of the intervening vegetation structure and the hedgerow that lines the majority of this stretch of PRoW, the Proposed Development would be highly contained from day one and would not affect the visual amenity of PRoW users along this route. As such, there would be a no change magnitude, giving rise to a significance of effect of None.						
14	PRoW SHIN5 in open countryside to the east	High	Low		Moderate Adverse	
				Negligible		Minor Adverse
NOTES: Taken from a section of PRoW SHIN5 to the east and looking towards the Site, with the existing settlement edge, including the eastern extents of the Phase 1 development, glimpsed in views experienced by PRoW users of high sensitivity. The Proposed Development would be perceived from this stretch of PRoW albeit with well contained by the intervening vegetation structure that highly integrates the existing built form. At Year 1, it is considered the proposed built form would form a minor component of the view, which is already characterised in part by built form components. This would result in a low magnitude of change and a Moderate Adverse effect on PRoW users. By Year 10, the landscape proposals within the proposed public open space along the eastern extents of the Site would have established to provide a further layer of containment to the proposals. Views of the built form would be softened, leading to a reduced, negligible magnitude of change and with effects anticipated to be on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor effect. An overall, Minor Adverse effect is therefore anticipated on this receptor, with effects reducing as distance increases.						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
15	PRoW ARBO20 in open countryside to the south-east	High	Negligible / No Change		Negligible Adverse	
				Negligible / No Change		Negligible Neutral
NOTES: Taken from a short section of the wider PRoW network within the River Loddon valley to the south-east where glimpsed views of the Shinfield settlement edge are afforded, south of the grade II listed Bridge House. Views experienced by PRoW users of high sensitivity. The Proposed Development would be well integrated into the view from day one as a result of the intervening vegetation structure. Should the proposed built form be partially perceived, this would be in the context of existing views of the built form on the south-eastern edge of Shinfield and would represent a barely perceived change if any, and therefore a negligible / no change magnitude at Year 1. This would have little effect on the existing view form this short stretch of PRoW, giving rise to a Negligible Adverse effect. By Year 10, the landscape proposals associated with the Proposed Development, in particular the proposed native tree and shrub planting within the public open space along the eastern boundary, would have established to further soften any views of the proposed built form, which would be highly integrated into the view. As such, it is considered that while the magnitude of change would likely remain minimal, the overall effect would neither add nor detract from the existing visual amenity of PRoW Users in this location, giving rise to a Negligible Neutral effect.						
16	PRoW ARBO20 in open countryside to the south-east	High	No Change		None	
				No Change		None
NOTES: Taken from PRoW ARBO20 and representative of views experienced by PRoW users of high sensitivity on this route south of Viewpoint 15. The intervening vegetation structure associated with the River Loddon valley, which includes woodland blocks, highly contains views of the settlement of Shinfield, though some built form such as the Thames Valley Science Park building is glimpsed from certain locations. The Proposed Development would not be perceived from along this PRoW south of Viewpoint 15, however, as a result of the extent of the aforementioned vegetation structure. As a result, there would be a no change magnitude, giving rise to a significance of effect of None at Year 1 and Year 10.						

Viewpoint(s)	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change Year 1	Magnitude of Change Year 10	Significance of Effect at Year 1	Significance of Effect at Year 10
17	A327 Observer Way	Medium	Negligible / No Change		Negligible / None Adverse	
				Negligible / No Change		Negligible / None Neutral
NOTES: Taken from along the pavement of the A327 Observer Way, looking north-west towards Shinfield and Reading, with glimpsed views of the built form visible in the distance. Views experienced by pedestrians and cyclists of medium sensitivity. It is considered that the Proposed Development would likely result in little to no change on this receptor given the distance involved and the existing filtered nature of views of the Shinfield built form, that would likely remain. A negligible / no change magnitude is therefore anticipated. At Year 1, it is considered that the effect on this receptor would be minimal given the composition of the existing visual baseline, resulting in a Negligible / None Adverse effect at most. By Year 10 and once the landscape proposals have established to further contain the proposed built form within its localised setting, the overall effect would neither add nor detract from the view, giving rise to a Negligible / None Neutral effect. Regarding motorists heading north-west along this road corridor, it is considered that this receptor would be of low sensitivity and that the fleeting nature of views would ensure that this receptor experiences no effect.						
18	PRoW ARBO17 by Observer Way Bridge	High	No Change		None	
				No Change		None
NOTES: Taken from higher ground associated with PRoW ARBO17 by Observer Way Bridge, looking north-west towards Shinfield and the southern extents of Reading that lie on elevated ground. Views experienced by PRoW users of high sensitivity. Despite the Shinfield settlement built form appearing visible in views from this location, the distance involved and degree of integration afforded to the built form by the intervening vegetation structure would ensure that the Proposed Development would neither add nor detract from the visual amenity of the existing view. As such, it is considered that there would be a no change magnitude, giving rise to a significance of effect of None at Year 1 and Year 10.						

5.29. As identified by the visual assessment, views of the Site are highly localised owing to a combination of the low-lying landform, the existing settlement built form and the

existing mature vegetation around the settlement edge and in the wider landscape to the east and south-east. These features of the localised and wider context ensure that views of the Proposed Development would be mostly limited to the localised setting and the proposed built form would appear in the context of the existing built form associated with the eastern extents of Shinfield.

- 5.30. Regarding views from publicly accessible areas, it is considered the Proposed Development would be well integrated into the surrounding landscape and, where perceived, would be viewed in the context of the existing built form components. While the proposals would represent a degree of change within localised views, effects would reduce as the landscape proposals establish, particularly regarding views from the countryside to the east and south through the reinforcement of existing native planting along the eastern Site boundary. By Year 10, the proposals would be highly integrated into the receiving landscape context.
- 5.31. Regarding residential amenity, it is acknowledged that initially, the Proposed Development would likely result in a high magnitude of change on residents of properties along Oatlands Road and Arborfield Road to the west and south of the Site respectively (Viewpoints 3-5). This would lead to significant adverse effects, though it is highlighted that the layout of the Proposed Development has sensitively considered residential amenity through appropriate development offsets and mitigation planting where necessary. Once the proposals have established, it is considered that effects would reduce to non-significant effects on these visual receptors albeit with a material change to their visual amenity remaining.
- 5.32. Residents of properties along Jerome Row on the southern edge of the Phase 1 development to the north would likely experience non-significant effects given the robust nature of the retained established vegetation line that separates this recent development from the Site itself (Viewpoint 1).
- 5.33. Regarding residential amenity of properties associated with the Magpie and Parrot former Public House (Viewpoint 12), given the degree of intervening vegetation structure, it is considered that the Proposed Development would not result in any significant effects either at Year 1 or Year 10.
- 5.34. It is therefore considered that the proposals could be accommodated without resulting in any long-term significant adverse effects on the receiving visual environment either from within the localised or wider setting of the Site.

Effect upon Landscape-related Policy

- 5.35. Both national and local policy guidance seeks to ensure that new development should promote good design which responds to the character of the setting ensuring that the proposals are integrated within their context. It is considered that the Proposed Development has been carefully designed with this context in mind and, as such, a sympathetic and appropriate development would be achieved on the eastern settlement edge of Shinfield that would complement the surrounding built form and would not significantly affect the receiving landscape.
- 5.36. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF seeks to promote sustainable development unless any harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits of the proposals. It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would result in a degree of change albeit this would be mostly limited to the Site itself and effects would be highly localised and non-significant. This is not considered so great as to outweigh the benefits of the scheme significantly or demonstrably.
- 5.37. Furthermore, as set out within Section 2 of this LVIA, it is considered that the Site does not represent a “valued landscape” with reference to paragraph 180(a) of the NPPF. It is considered that the proposals are of high quality and respond positively to the localised landscape and settlement edge setting and respect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside to the east and south.
- 5.38. It is considered that the Proposed Development complies with the relevant landscape-related adopted policies and guidance of the adopted Wokingham Borough Local Plan, Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017) and Supplementary Planning Documents including the South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location SPD (2011) and the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD (2012). Therefore effects are mitigated / reduced as far as considered reasonable by policy.
- 5.39. It is concluded that the Site represents an appropriate location for development and that the Proposed Development would present social and environmental benefits, a high-quality design that is commensurate with the landscape setting and enhancements to the localised landscape character that favour the sustainability of this Site in policy terms.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

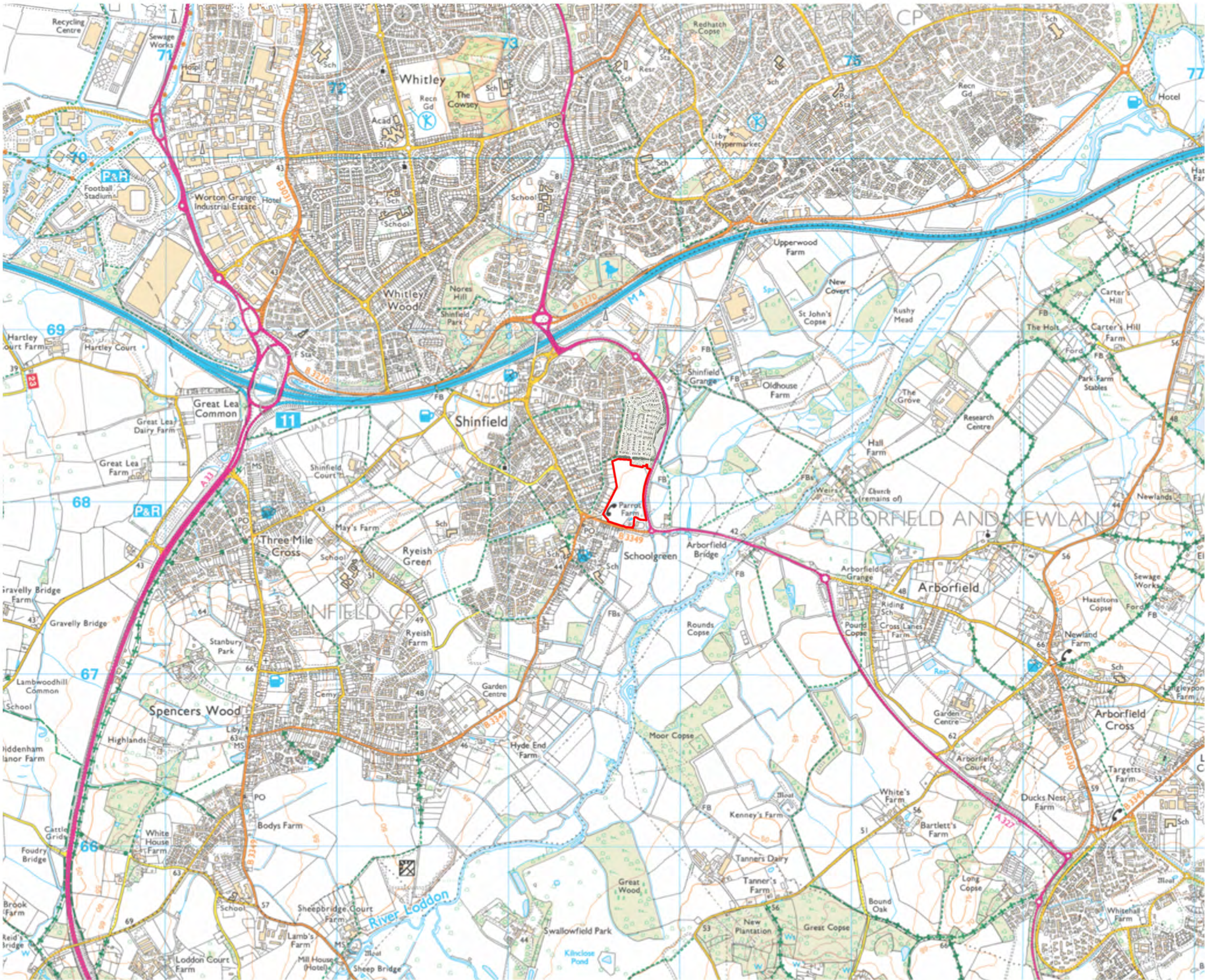
- 6.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by Bellway Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) relating to the full application seeking the development of up to 191 residential dwellings with landscaping and associated infrastructure (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') on land north of Arborfield Road, Shinfield (hereafter referred to as the 'Site').
- 6.2. The Site itself is situated on the eastern edge of Shinfield, a village located less than 5km south of Reading town centre. For the most part, it comprises a large geometric, arable field but there are areas of native scrub and tree groups in its eastern extents by the A327 Eastern Relief Road. An area of hardstanding associated with an existing building characterises its south-eastern corner.
- 6.3. It is considered that the Site has become increasingly influenced by the surrounding components of the built up area of Shinfield to the north, south and west, which have exerted a strong settlement edge character on the Site itself. In contrast, the connection between the Site and the rural landscape to the east has been severed by the Eastern Relief Road, which has further ensured the Site relates more closely to the settlement than to the countryside to the east. In addition, the existing Site boundary vegetation structure provides a strong degree of physical and visual separation between the Site and the adjoining rural landscape.
- 6.4. The Site is not subject to any national or local qualitative landscape designations and is not considered to represent a "valued landscape" in relation to paragraph 180(a) of the NPPF.
- 6.5. In terms of landscape character, the Site is located within National Character Area NCA 115: Thames Valley and NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths. At a more local level, the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019) places the Site mostly within LCA A2: Loddon River Valley and partly within LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay.
- 6.6. The proposals for the Site have been informed by this landscape and visual assessment in order to ensure that a carefully considered and sensitive approach is achieved. The landscape proposals have also been informed by the landscape strategies and relevant guidelines for LCA A2: Loddon River Valley and LCA J3:

Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC; 2019). Landscape-related design guidance within the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012), the South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location SPD (2011) and relevant guidance and aspirations within the Shinfield School Green Village Character Statement (2008) have further informed the landscape proposals along with adopted local policy.

- 6.7. In terms of the effect of the Proposed Development upon the receiving landscape character, it is considered that while the Proposed Development would give rise to an unavoidable material change on the Site itself, along with some change within the localised and wider context of the Site, the receiving landscape has the ability to accommodate such change without resulting in any significant adverse effects on any of the key characteristics, sensitivities or valued attributes of the relevant character areas within published assessments, or on the identified key landscape receptors.
- 6.8. The proposals seek to incorporate a robust landscape strategy that would provide structure to the proposed built form and complement the surrounding existing vegetation and wider green infrastructure. This would not only contribute to the sustainability of the Site, but would also assist in generating a high-quality settlement edge development that enhances the landscape setting of Shinfield, improves connectivity within the localised setting and provides new, high-quality open space for the benefit of the community and wildlife. The use of an appropriate palette of native species around the Site would contribute positively to the local landscape character and biodiversity.
- 6.9. It is concluded that the Proposed Development would not result in any significant adverse landscape effects either on the relevant character areas within published assessments, the Site itself or its localised and wider setting.
- 6.10. Regarding the existing visual baseline, views of the Site itself are typically highly localised as a result of the adjacent built form, established Site boundary vegetation and the extent of field boundary vegetation and woodland blocks in the wider landscape to the east and south-east. Clear views of the Site itself are mostly limited to views from adjacent properties. From publicly accessible locations, the internal areas of the Site are only clearly perceived from the permissive route to the north and from certain areas of the Phase 1 development to the north, while the Site's boundary vegetation forms a component of views in the localised setting of the Site.

- 6.11. In terms of the effect of the Proposed Development upon the receiving visual environment, it is considered that views of the Proposed Development would be mostly limited to the localised setting, with the proposed built form well integrated into views by the existing and proposed intervening vegetation. Where perceived, the built form would be viewed in the context of the existing built form components that surround the Site. While the proposals would represent a degree of change within localised views, effects would reduce as the landscape proposals establish, particularly regarding views from the countryside to the east and south through the reinforcement of existing native planting along the eastern Site boundary. By Year 10, the proposals would be highly integrated into the receiving landscape context.
- 6.12. It is considered that the proposals could be accommodated without resulting in any long-term significant adverse effects on the receiving visual environment either from within the localised or wider setting of the Site.
- 6.13. Both national and local policy identify that there is a general presumption in favour of sustainable development unless any significant impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. It is considered that the Site and receiving environment have the capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development and that this would represent a sustainable and appropriate development within a settlement fringe location, with clear opportunities to provide landscape enhancements to the Site and its setting.
- 6.14. It is considered that the Proposed Development complies with the relevant landscape-related adopted policies and guidance of the adopted Wokingham Borough Local Plan, Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017) and Supplementary Planning Documents including the South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location SPD (2011) and the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD (2012). Therefore effects are mitigated / reduced as far as considered reasonable by policy.
- 6.15. It is therefore concluded that the Proposed Development could be integrated into this location and is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

ASPECT PLANS



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0m 200m 400m 1km

Key:

- Application Site Boundary
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- National Trail/ Long Distance Route
- Motorway
- Main Road
- Cycle Trail
- Contours

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield
Site Location Plan

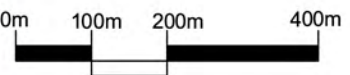
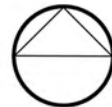
CLIENT
Bellway Homes Thames Valley

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:20,000@ A3	APR 2024	AS	JM

DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION
8395 / ASP1 / SLP	



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- Key:
- Application Site Boundary
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Woodland

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield
Site & Setting Plan

CLIENT
Bellway Homes Thames Valley

SCALE 1:10,000 @ A3	DATE APR 2024	DRAWN AS	CHK'D JM
DRAWING NUMBER 8395 / ASP2 / SS		REVISION	



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- Key:
- Application Site Boundary
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Listed Buildings
 - Woodland
 - Park and Garden
 - Scheduled Monument

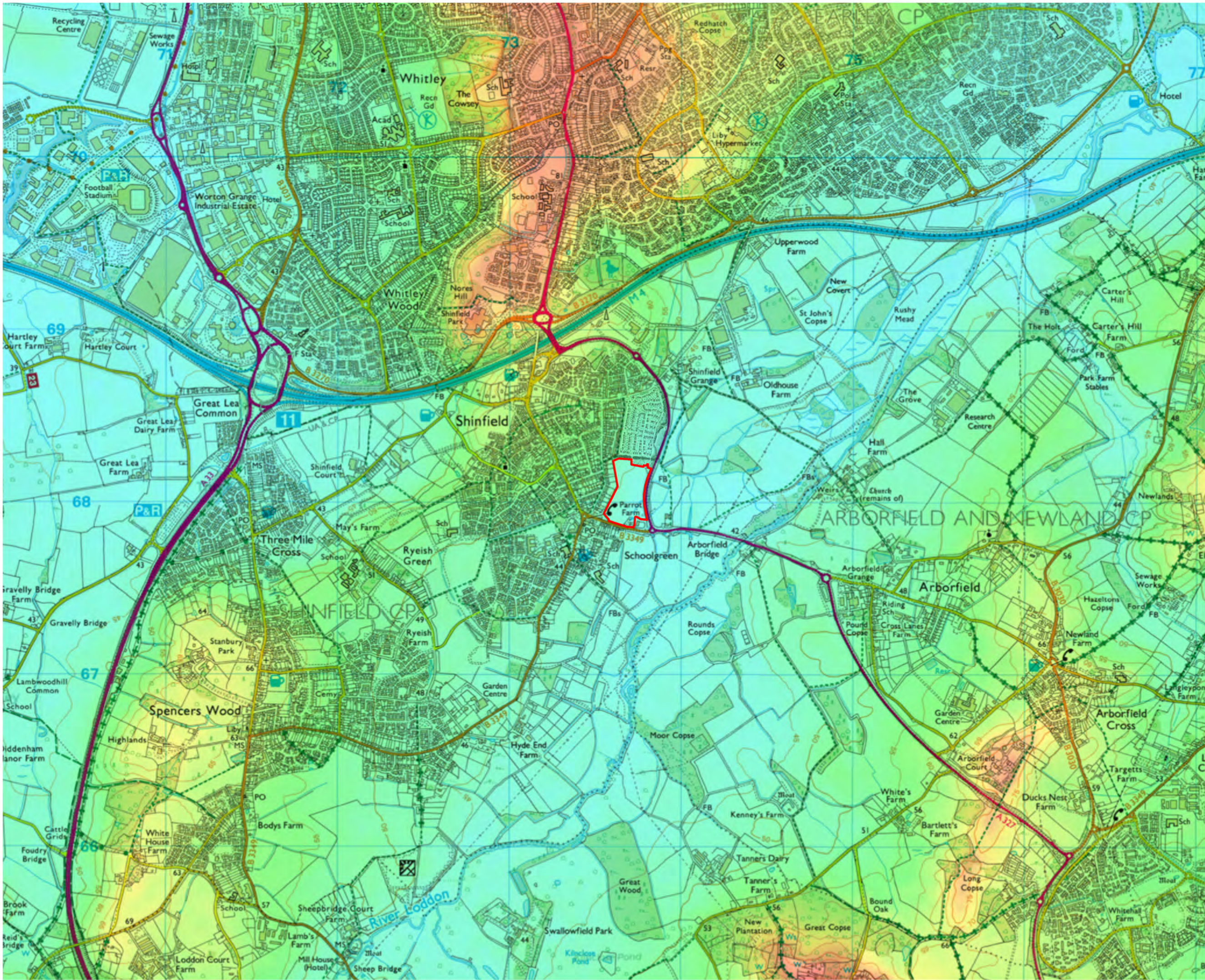
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REVISIONS				

aspect landscape planning

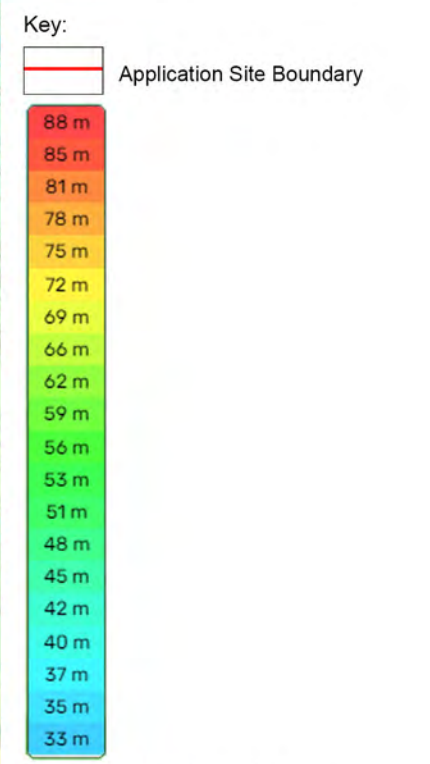
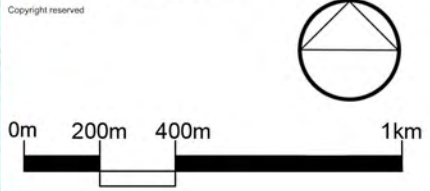
TITLE
Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield
Designation Plan

CLIENT
Bellway Homes Thames Valley

SCALE 1:20,000@ A3	DATE APR 2024	DRAWN AS	CHK'D JM
DRAWING NUMBER 8395 / ASP3 / DP		REVISION	



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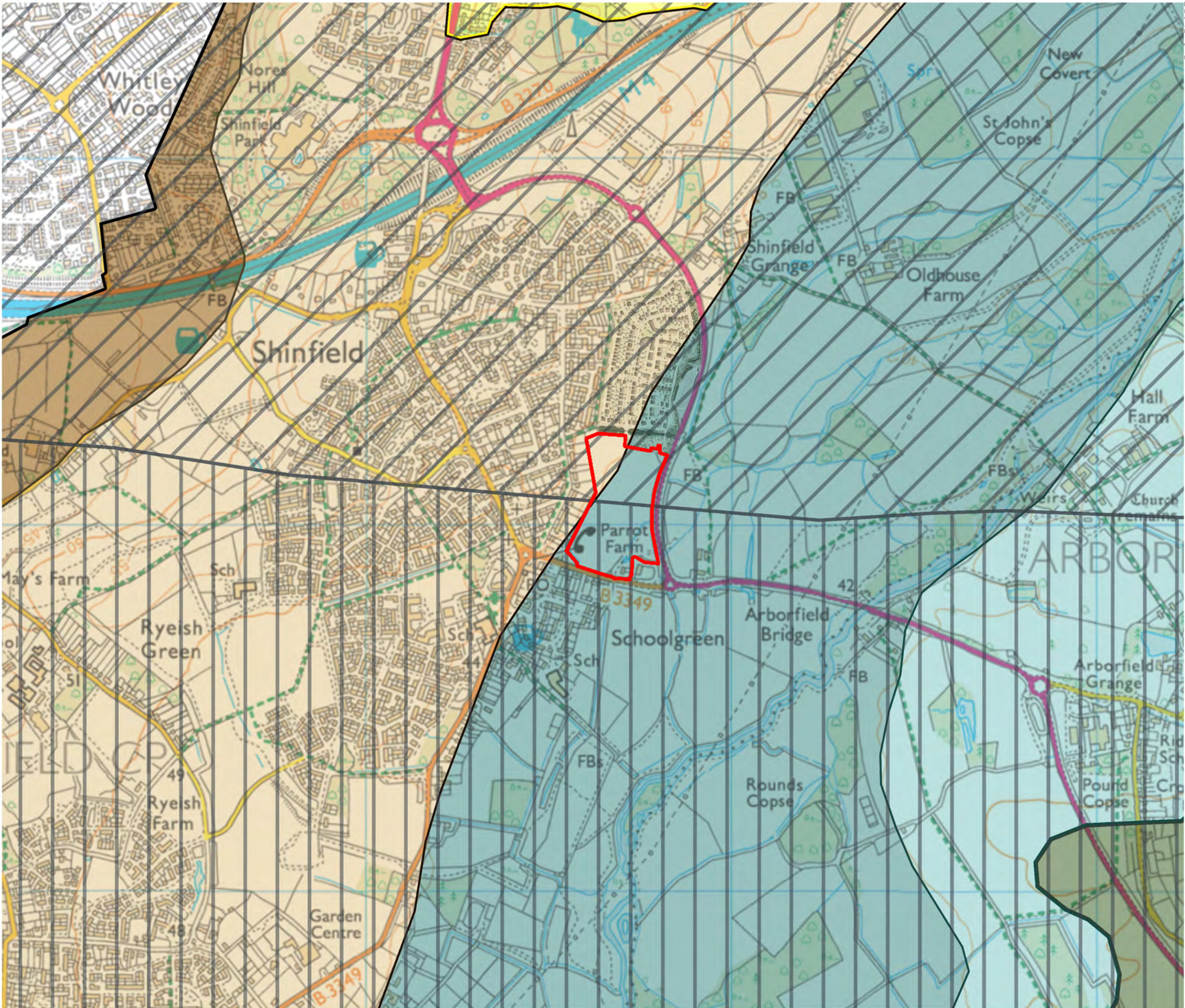
REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield
Topography Plan

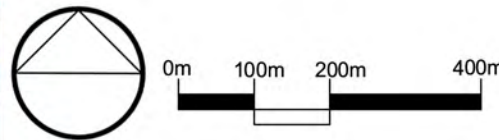
CLIENT
Bellway Homes Thames Valley

SCALE 1:20,000@A3	DATE APR 2024	DRAWN AS	CHK'D JM
DRAWING NUMBER 8395 / ASP4 / TP		REVISION	



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Key:
 Application Site Boundary (Phase 2)

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2019

-  LCA A2: Loddon River Valley
-  LCA C1: Arborfield River Terrace
-  LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay
-  LCA J4: Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay
-  LCA L2: Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay
-  LCA I3: Grazeley Farmed Clay Lowland
-  Wokingham District Boundary

- National Character Areas (NCAs)
-  NCA 115: Thames Valley
 -  NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

aspect landscape planning

TITLE
Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield
Landscape Character Plan

CLIENT
Bellway Homes Thames Valley

SCALE 1:10,000@A3	DATE JUNE 2024	DRAWN AS	CHK'D IC
DRAWING NUMBER 8395 / LCP / ASP5		REVISION	

Native Shrub & Hedge Planting

Viburnum opulus
Viburnum lanata
Rhamnus cathartica
Prunus spinosa
Ligustrum vulgare
Corylus avellana
Cornus sanguinea



Mixed Native Hedgerows

5% Viburnum opulus
5% Ligustrum vulgare
10% Viburnum lanata
10% Prunus spinosa
10% Corylus avellana
10% Acer campestre
50% Crataegus monogyna



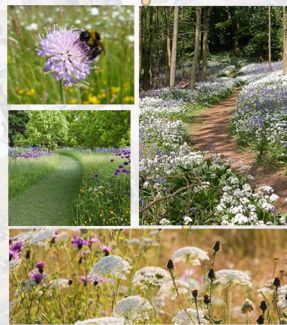
Ditch and Swale Wetland Meadow'

Emorsgate Wet Grass Mix EM8, Potentilla palustris, Juncus effusus, Iris pseudacorus, Filipendula ulmaria, Sagittaria sagittifolia, Caltha palustris



Species Rich Wildflower Grass

Emorsgate EM2 General Purpose Meadow Mix, EH1 Hedgerow Mix & EM10 Tussock Mix



Native Bulb Planting

Hyacinthoides non-scripta, Galanthus nivalis, Narcissus pseudonarcissus



Open Space & Native Boundary Trees

Acer campestre
Alnus glutinosa
Betula pendula
Carpinus betulus
Corylus avellana
Crataegus monogyna
Fagus sylvatica
Malus sylvestris
Prunus avium
Quercus robur
Salix alba
Sorbus aria
Sorbus aucuparia
Tilia cordata



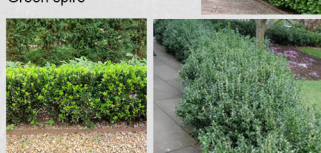
Internal Ornamental & Street Trees

Corylus columna 'Te Terra Red'
Magnolia Sp.
Tilia cordata 'Rancho'
Acer campestre 'Streetwise'
Betula pendula
Carpinus betulus 'Lucas'
Betula utilis 'Edinburgh'
Corylus columna
Malus triobata
Malus sylvestris



Ornamental Hedge Planting

Sacococca confusa
Prunus sp.
Euonymus japonicus 'Green spire'



Ornamental Shrubs

Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote'
Rosmarinus officinalis
Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald Gaiety'
Carex oshimensis 'Evergold'
Skimmia japonica 'Rubella'
Hebe 'Sutherlandii'



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Key:

- Site Boundary
- Existing Public Right of Way
- Existing Permissive Route
- Existing vegetation to be retained
- Proposed Street Tree Planting
- Proposed Native Tree Planting
- Proposed Ornamental Shrub Planting
- Proposed Native Shrub Planting
- Proposed Ornamental Hedge Planting
- Proposed Native Hedge Planting
- Proposed Native Bulb Planting
- Proposed Feature Shrub Planting
- Proposed Basin
- Proposed Wetland Mix
- Proposed Wildflower Mix
- Proposed Mown Footpath
- Proposed Benches
- Proposed Short Span Timber Bridge
- Proposed Informal Boulder Seating

The landscape proposals have been informed by the landscape strategies and relevant guidelines for LCA A2: Loddon River Valley and LCA J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LUC: 2019). Landscape-related design guidance within the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012), the South of the M4 – Strategic Development Location SPD (2011) and relevant guidance and aspirations within the Shinfield School Green Village Character Statement (2008) have also informed the landscape proposals along with adopted local policy.

- Approved Phase 1 play space to benefit from natural surveillance from properties on the northern development edge.
- Key vegetation sensitively considered through the provision of appropriate development offsets, with outward-facing development establishing a positive development edge.
- Alexander Walk, an existing pedestrian and cycleway along the eastern edge of the Phase 1 development, to be extended through the proposed open space, providing a link between Cutbush Lane to the north and Arborfield Road and Langely Mead SANG to the south.
- Footpath links onto the nearby permissive route and PRoW SHIN7 to improve connectivity and encourage access into the countryside to the east.
- Retained native trees and scrub in the eastern extents of the Site to be enhanced with further native planting of local prevalence to highly contain the Site within the built form context and ensure a strong degree of separation from the landscape to the east. This will complement the existing vegetated character of the eastern boundary of the Phase 1 development to the north, as well as further assist in integrating the A327 Eastern Relief Road within the landscape.
- Proposed attenuation basin to promote sustainable drainage solutions along with informal recreational opportunities provided by kick about area and informal boulder seating.
- Species-rich wildflower grassland to provide biodiversity enhancements and visual interest within open space areas.
- Mown grass paths to promote alternative routes through the open space, offering a more integrated user experience.
- Tree-lined primary street to form a continuation of the Phase 1 street scene and establish a green spine running through the development.
- Central open space to form an inviting, multifunctional space for the community, offering informal play opportunities and providing a meeting point at the heart of the scheme. This space is physically and visually connected to the linear open space in the eastern extents of the Site through the design layout.
- Ornamental shrub planting and clipped, low-growing hedgerows to plot frontages to provide a high-quality landscape setting within the development, offering seasonal and year-round interest.
- Arborfield Road frontage to provide a gateway into the development, with feature tree and shrub planting proposed either side of the site entrance.
- Replacement mixed native hedgerow planting and native tree planting to mitigate for the required vegetation loss along Arborfield Road. This will retain the vegetated character along the road corridor and protect the existing visual amenity of residential properties to the south.
- Existing onsite watercourse to be retained and enhanced. Proposed swale set within wildflower planting, to benefit biodiversity and create an attractive natural feeling pathway.

D	22.08.24	Updated to latest layout	AS	SP
C	19.08.24	Updated to latest layout	AS	CW
B	12.08.24	Updated to latest layout	BS	SP
A	02.08.24	Updated to latest comments	BS	SP
REV	DATE	NOTE	BS	DRAWN

REVISIONS

aspect landscape planning

TITLE

Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield
Landscape Strategy Plan

CLIENT

Bellway Home Thames Valley

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:1,500 @ A3	JUNE 2024	AS	IC
DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
8395 / ASP6 / LSP	D		

APPENDIX 1

ASPECT LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT METHODOLOGY

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 1.1. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment have jointly published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition 2013 (GLVIA3) that gives guidance on carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), either as a standalone appraisal or part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This methodology takes on board the above guidance.
- 1.2. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and how the development will affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.
- 1.3. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. This process will identify and assess the potential effects of a development on the landscape resource and the visual environment.

1. Baseline study

Landscape

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Outline the planning policy context, including any landscape designations.
- Establish the landscape baseline through a site visit and an assessment of published Landscape Character Assessments to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor), at community, local, national or international levels where appropriate.

Visual

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Identify the extent of visual receptors within the study area, with the use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) where appropriate, and establish the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals.

2. Project description

The baseline study highlights clear opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The aspects of the scheme at each phase that will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape and visual amenity will need identifying. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design as a response to the local landscape and visual environment.

3. Description of Effects

The level of effect on both landscape and visual receptors should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the **magnitude**, i.e. the degree of change, together with the **sensitivity** of the receptor.

This will identify whether the effects are:

Adverse or Beneficial - beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character or view. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view. Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the landscape quality and character of an area or view.

Direct or Indirect – A direct effect will be one where a development will affect a view or the character of an area, either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect will occur as a result of associated development i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.

Short, Medium or Long Term – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 10, following completion of the development.

Reversible or Irreversible – can the resulting effect of a development be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.

4. Significance of Effects (EIA only)

A final judgment on whether the effect is likely to be significant, as required by the Regulations. The summary should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative / adverse effects. Mitigation measures need to be identified that may reduce the final judgement on the significance of any residual negative effects in the long term.

Assessing effects

Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.4. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society. The following table explains each threshold and the factors that make up the degree of sensitivity.

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
High	Landscape resource where there is a high susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of high value, have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, relatively intact and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets. Typical examples may be of National or County importance e.g. within the setting of National Parks, National Landscapes (AONB's), Conservation Areas etc.
Medium	Landscape resource where there is a medium susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of medium value, good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or of cultural value locally. Typical examples may be designated for their value at District level.
Low	Landscape resource where there is a low susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of low value, and contain evidence of previous landscape change.
Negligible	Landscape resource where there is little or no susceptibility to change. Typical landscapes are likely to be degraded, of weak landscape structure, intensive land uses, and require landscape restoration.

Visual Sensitivity

- 1.5. The sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change, and is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.

Table 2: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
High	Viewers on public rights of way whose prime focus is on the landscape around and are often very aware of its value. Occupiers of residential properties with primary views affected by the development. Examples include users of National Trails, Long Distance Routes or Sustrans cycle routes, or within the setting of a listed building.
Medium	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views affected by the development, and users of rural lanes and roads. Examples include viewers within moderate quality landscapes, local recreation grounds, and outdoor pursuits.
Low	Viewers engaged in outdoor sport or recreation whose prime focus is on their activity, or those passing through the area on main transport routes whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape.
Negligible	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity, and not susceptible to changes in the surrounding landscape.

Effect Magnitude

- 1.6. The magnitude of change relates to the degree in which proposed development alters the fabric of the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

Table 3: Magnitude of Change

Magnitude	Effect Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a landscape or view.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement or constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape or view.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape or view.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view.
No Change	It is also possible for a landscape or view to experience no change due to being totally compatible with the local character or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

Significance Threshold

- 1.7. The magnitude of change is then considered against the sensitivity of the landscape resource as a receptor or the existing character of the panorama / view. In formulating the significance of effect, reasoned professional judgement is required which is explained within the assessment. This is carried out both in terms of the predicted effects on landscape character or on visual amenities. The significance thresholds are predicted as Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible and None, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects should be demonstrated at different stages (construction stage, operational stage year 0, and year 10).

Table 4: Significance of Effect

Significance	Threshold Definition
Major	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view, that has little or no ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a damaged landscape or view.
Moderate	A medium magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that may have the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Minor	A low magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that has the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Negligible	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape or view that has the ability to accommodate change.
None	It is also possible for a magnitude of change to occur that results in a neutral effect significance due to the change being compatible with local character or not visible.

- 1.8. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix will be used to determine the significance thresholds, through determining the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change.
- 1.9. In terms of assessing whether the effects are significant or otherwise, it is noted that para 5.56 of GLVIA3 states that there are no “hard and fast rules” about what makes a significant effect. For the purposes of this assessment significant landscape or visual effects are those effects considered to be greater than moderate, shaded below in Table 5.

Table 5: Measuring Significance of Effect

	Sensitivity of Receptors				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ None

- 1.10. It should be noted that where there is no perceptible change in terms of the effect magnitude regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be none.
- 1.11. A written statement summarising the significance of effects is provided, assisted by the tables and matrices. The final judgement relies on professional judgement that is reasonable, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development in the final assessment.

Assessing cumulative effects

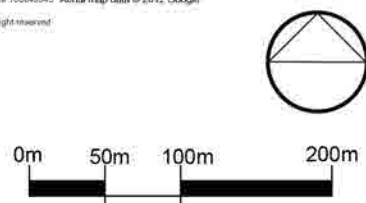
- 1.12. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint and/or sequence of views. The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and what planning stage is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined should be included.

APPENDIX 2

VISUAL ASSESSMENT



NOTES:
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- Key:
- Application Site Boundary
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Viewpoint Location

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				
aspect landscape planning				
TITLE				
Land North of Arborfield Road, Shinfield				
Viewpoint Location Plan				
CLIENT				
Bellway Homes Thames Valley				
SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D	
1:5,000 @ A3	JUNE 2024 AS	AS	JM	
DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION			
8395 / VLP				



Viewpoint 1 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473806 N 168271

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 13:00

AOD & Viewing height: c. 40.5m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 1 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 1 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 2 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473713 N 168401

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 09:57

AOD & Viewing height: c. 46m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 2 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 2 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 3 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473541 N 168174

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 12:52

AOD & Viewing height: c. 50.8m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 3 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 3 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 4 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473402 N 167917

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 12:46

AOD & Viewing height: c. 47m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 4 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 4 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 5 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473515 N 167890

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 12:44

AOD & Viewing height: c. 44.3m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 5 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 5 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 6 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473711 N 167532

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 12:33

AOD & Viewing height: c. 38.9m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 6 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 6 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 7 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473682 N 167194 Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 12:11 AOD & Viewing height: c. 40m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 7 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 7 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 8 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473796 N 167332

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 12:29

AOD & Viewing height: c. 40m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 8 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 8 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 9 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473855 N 167829

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 11:43

AOD & Viewing height: c. 38.4m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

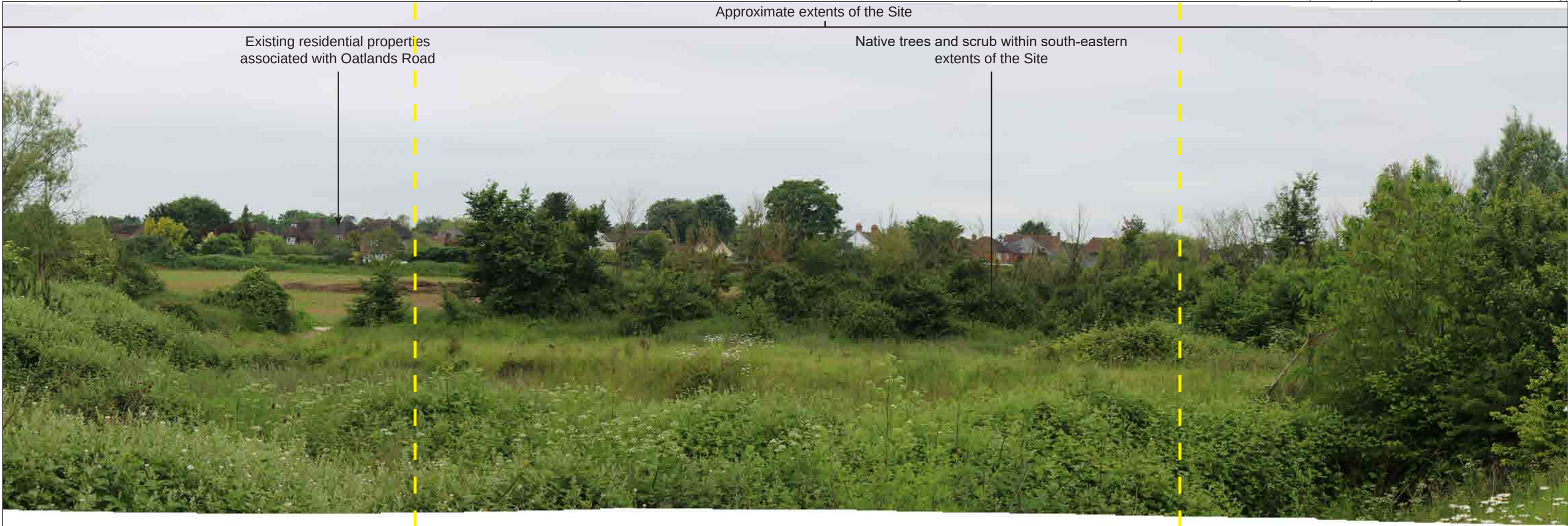
Viewpoint 9 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 9 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 10 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473803 N 167914 Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 11:50 AOD & Viewing height: c. 39m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 10 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 10 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 11 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473849 N 168215

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 10:18

AOD & Viewing height: c. 40.6m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

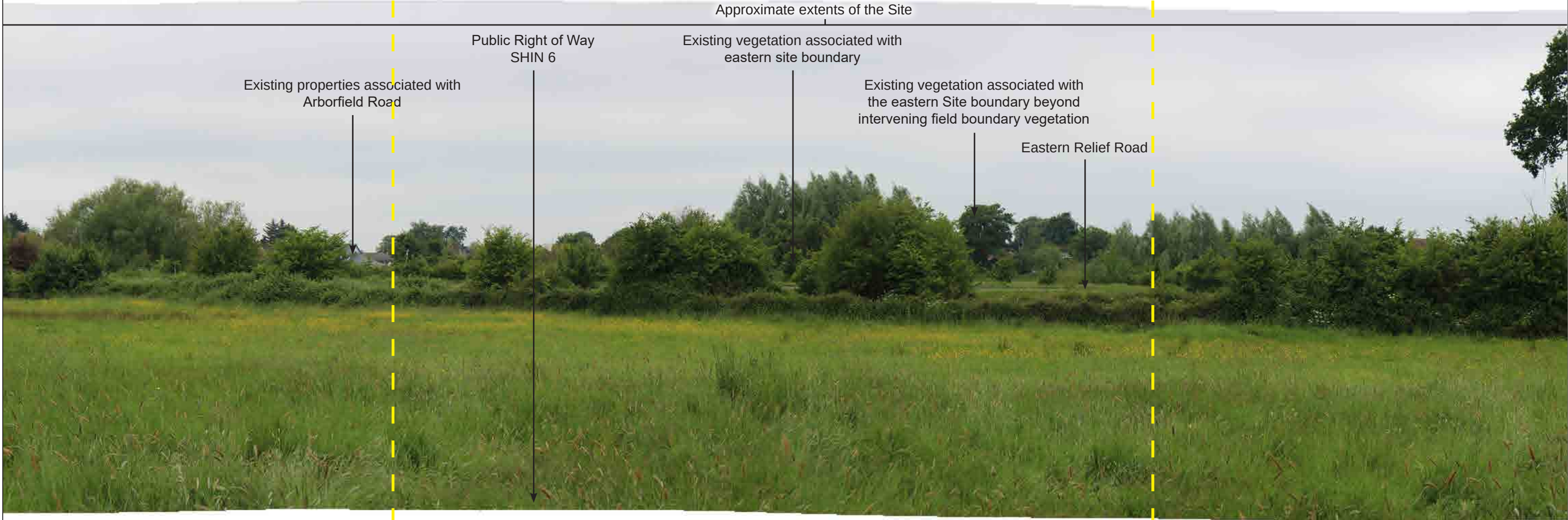
Viewpoint 11 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 11 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 12 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 473940 N 167941 Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 10:31 AOD & Viewing height: c. 39.6m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 12 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 12 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 13 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 474377 N 168583

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 11:00

AOD & Viewing height: c. 40m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 13 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 13 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 14 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



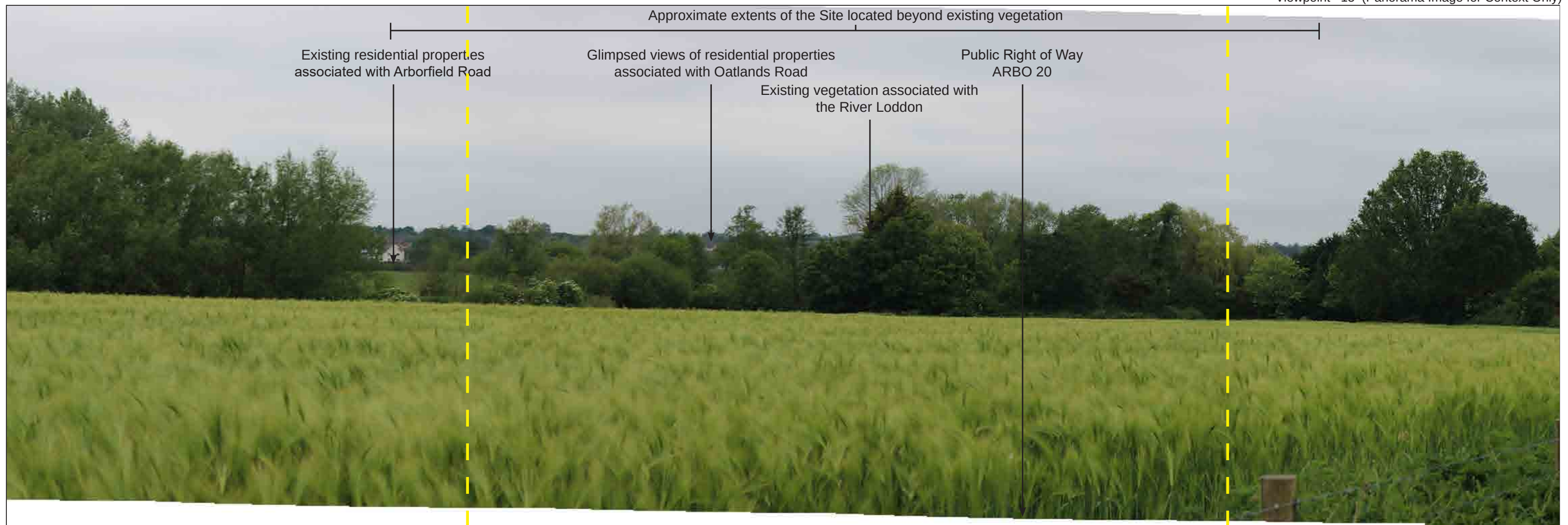
Viewpoint Coordinates: E 474472 N 168022 Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 11:22 AOD & Viewing height: c. 38m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 14 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 14 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 15 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 474467 N 167531

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 13:40

AOD & Viewing height: c. 44m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

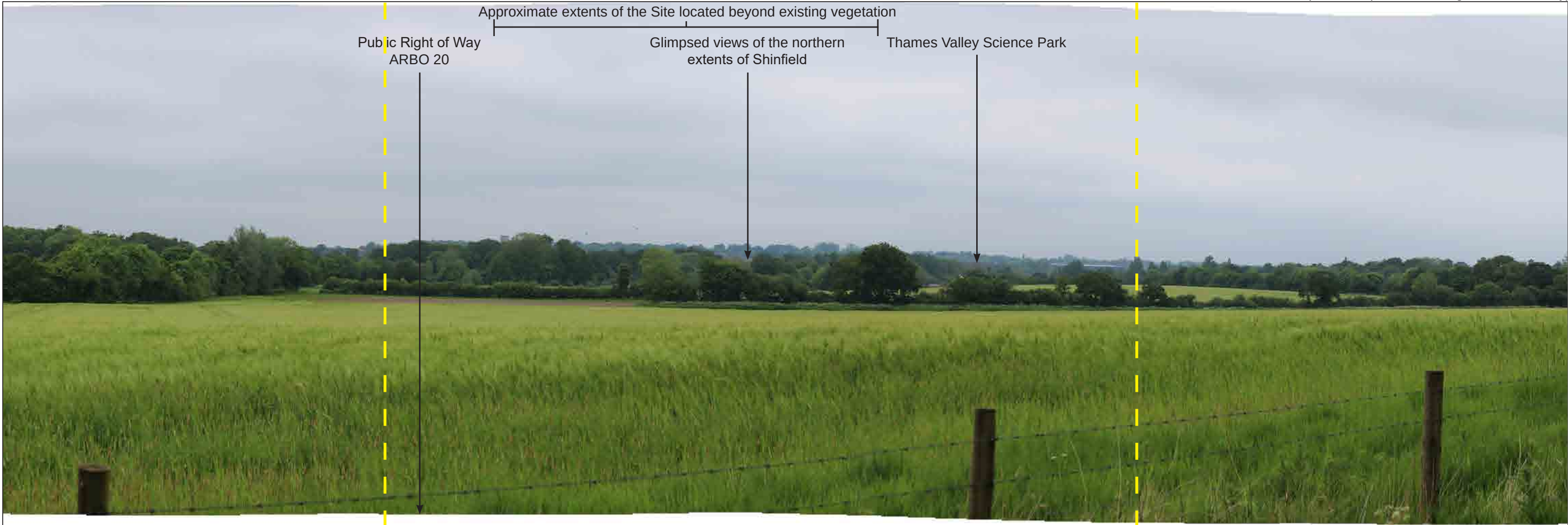
Viewpoint 15 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 15 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 16 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



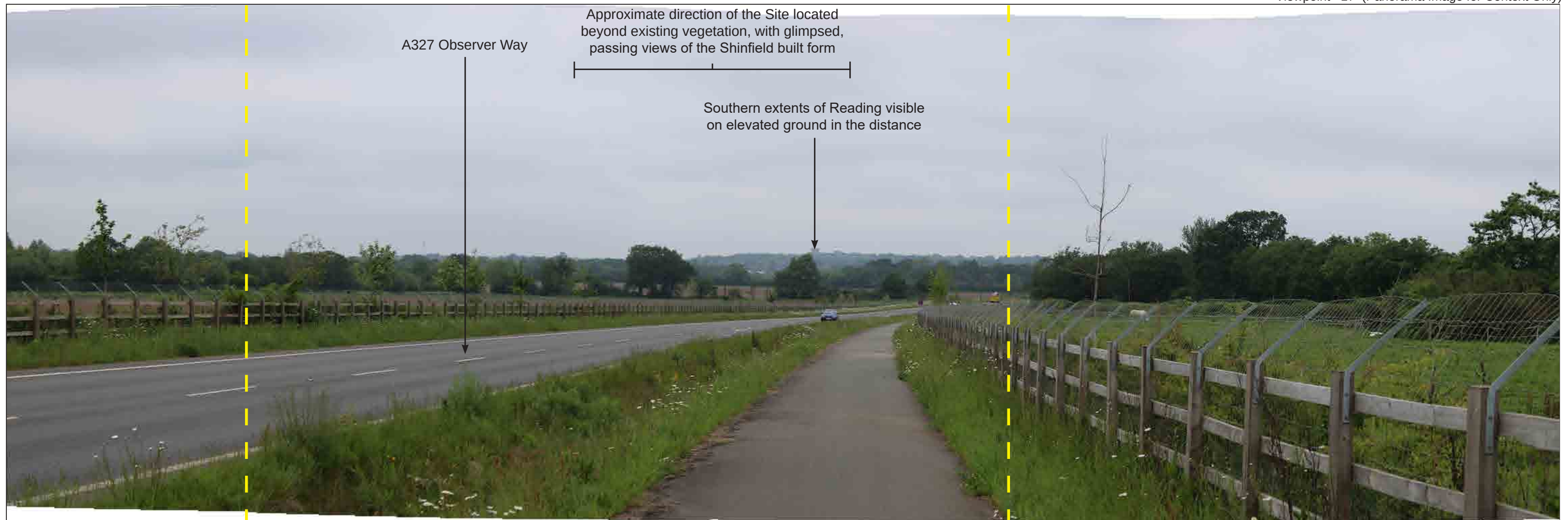
Viewpoint Coordinates: E 474810 N 166507 Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 13:56 AOD & Viewing height: c. 48.3m AOD 1.6m Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility. Viewpoint 16 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 16 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 17 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 475368 N 166658

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 14:55

AOD & Viewing height: c. 54m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

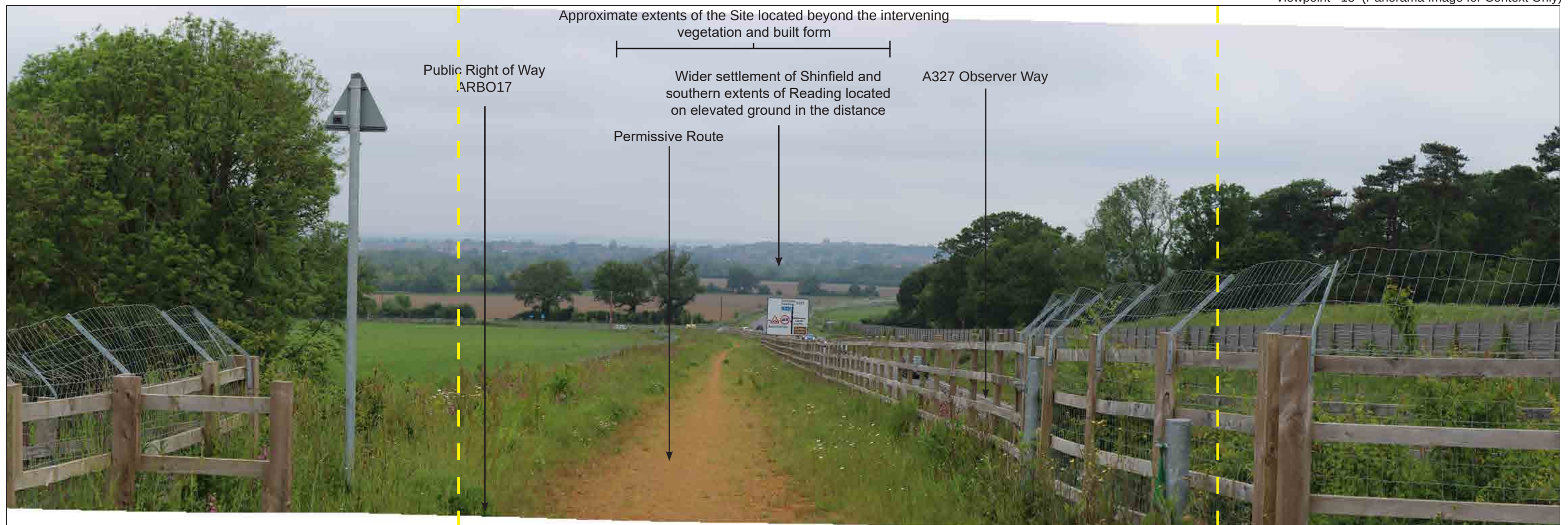
Viewpoint 17 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 17 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 18 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 475772 N 166283

Date & time of photograph: 21/05/2024 14:41

AOD & Viewing height: c. 72.3m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 18 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 18 (Single Frame Image)

APPENDIX 3

EXTRACT OF RELEVANT DESIGN PRINCIPLES FROM THE SOUTH OF
THE M4 – STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATION SPD (2011)

South of the M4 Strategic Development Location

Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted October 2011



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Section 4: Key Design Principles

4.1.1 This section takes each component of the Preferred Spatial Framework Plan and provides a set of principles to guide the design of the SDL, both at the Outline application stage and for any subsequent Reserved Matters applications.

4.1.2 These principles are seen as a starting point for ongoing design, and are by no means exhaustive. Applicants are expected to develop and refine these ideas at the Outline and Reserved Matters stages, and to demonstrate how they have taken account of these principles through their Design & Access Statements and applied these to the development as a whole as well as individual sites within the SDL.



Hedgerows and hedgerow trees define the pattern of fields across parts of the SDL. They should be a design consideration informing the master plan process.

4.1.3 Reference is made to the WCS Appendix 7 Concept Statement requirements. In evolving these, a list of development requirements are grouped under a number of design and development principles. Applicants are required to respond directly to these objectives and themes through their Design and Access Statements, in order to demonstrate and explain how they have been taken into account.



Parts of the SDL have an open field pattern which contrasts with a more intimate and enclosed character elsewhere. These contrasting characters should be carefully considered as part of the master planning process.



The character of this footpath contributes to the landscape character of the SDL.



A number of small lanes run through the SDL contributing to its overall character particularly where there is a robust framework of hedgerows and trees alongside.

1. Landscape Framework

The Core Strategy requires:

- A well connected network of open space to include provision for formal and informal recreation, SANGs provision, and mechanisms to mitigate against noise and odour;
- Separation between the SDL settlements and between them and development to the north of the M4, and the maintenance of their distinct identities;
- Retention of the existing flood capacity of the Loddon Valley floor and use of parts of the floodplain within the greenspace network;
- A positive response to the topography of the SDL and existing tree planting, which should be incorporated into the layout;
- The provision of a robust new landscape framework, related to existing woods and hedgerows, to soften the boundaries between the built and open areas of the SDL and its relationship with the wider countryside; and
- Public art should be integrated into the design of the development.

The following design principles build on this requirement:

Design Principle 1a: The landscape design should draw on the existing landscape context which is a unique and distinctive element of the SDL and will assist in delivering a strong character providing an enviable setting for development. This in turn has significant potential to enhance development values within the SDL.

Requirements

- 1a(i): The landscape framework should seek to retain all important existing landscape features, including the local topography, hedgerows, the existing tree pattern, watercourses, ponds, wetland areas and grassland. The applicants should demonstrate how these have influenced the planning application masterplan, and how they will be incorporated into the landscape framework and within proposed development areas.
- 1a(ii): The existing network of footpaths and bridleways should be retained, allowing for the diversion and replacement of lengths where realignment would benefit masterplanning and circulation.
- 1a(iii): The existing landscape character zones across the SDL and beyond its boundaries should inform the landscape framework, and in turn the landscape treatment within the new residential neighbourhoods. The applicants should set out their analysis of the existing landscape character, and clearly explain how these have influenced the planning application masterplan, and how new development will respond to this important context.
- 1a(iv): Between the expanded residential developments of Spencers Wood and Shinfield the open area should be a minimum of 500m, and between Ryeish Green and Shinfield it should be a minimum of 350m. These distances are considered appropriate to allow for a mixture of formal and informal open

space provision and continuing agricultural use. It is envisaged that once established, these spaces will be protected from future development in perpetuity, in the long term interests of the local community and to ensure the ongoing distinction of the individual settlements.

- 1a(v):** No development should occur to the north of, nor on the north slopes of the landscape ridge in order to retain separation with development north of the M4. This excludes the intended expansion of Three Mile Cross.

Design Principle 1b: The landscape framework should aim to protect and enhance ecological habitat and biodiversity across the SDL.

Requirements

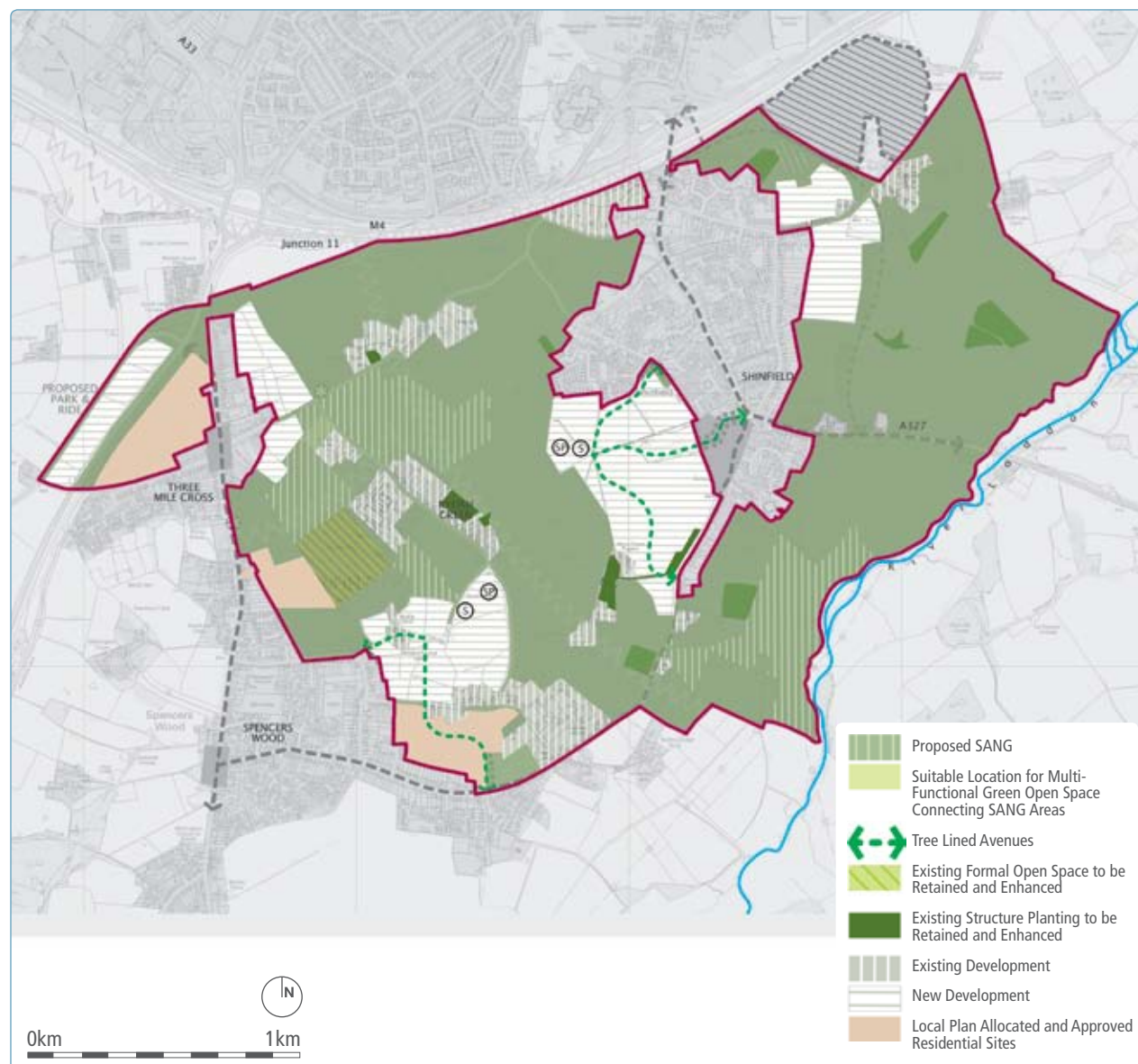
- 1b(i):** In seeking to retain and enhance the existing landscape features, consideration should be given to the protection of all important ecological habitat and biodiversity features of the SDL. No development will be allowed within 15m of copses and ancient woodlands.
- 1b(ii):** Any impact on the ecological habitat and biodiversity of the SDL as a result of built development should be mitigated against in a manner which enriches and enhances the overall habitat and biodiversity assets of the SDL. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that proposals for the protection and enrichment of habitat and biodiversity across the SDL are capable of delivery and, where necessary, ongoing maintenance, within the wider landscape framework.

Design Principle 1c: The landscape framework should introduce new landscape and green infrastructure features to the SDL in order to enhance and protect the residential setting and quality. Landscape design within the SDL should relate to place making at both the strategic and local level, in order to create a living and engaging landscape.

Requirements

- 1c(i): Public open space should be provided in accordance with Appendix 4 of the WCS and/or any subsequent DPD adopted by the Council.
- 1c(ii): A flood risk assessment should be prepared and a comprehensive system for water management should be provided, which takes account of existing SDL features. All measures will need to be agreed with the Environment Agency, who supports the principle of comprehensive water management plans for the SDL. The new system should include, at least:
 - *measures for flood prevention and protection;*
 - *new ponds, which can enhance the recreational and visual qualities of the SDL;*
 - *wetland areas; and*
 - *intended maintenance measures.*
- 1c(iii): New planting will be carried out across the SDL to enhance the existing planting. New native woodland and tree planting, new hedgerows, grasslands and wild flower meadows should be considered and proposed through the landscape framework.

Figure 4.1: Landscape Framework Diagram



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Small ponds and watercourses are an important asset and may be incorporated as part of the wider landscape and surface water drainage strategy for the SDL.

- 1c(iv): Transition areas are required to ensure new development adjacent to existing homes is designed with minimal impact on the residential amenity and privacy of existing residents. When considering the transition between new and existing developments a thoughtful approach should be used to help enhance the interface between existing and proposed developments such as shared public open spaces, pedestrian, vehicular and/or landscape connections. In particular, the sensitive introduction of new planting should be considered where appropriate to break up continuous lines of development and help enhance and protect the distinct residential setting of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. Where existing properties back onto the development land, generous rear boundary planting is encouraged to soften views from existing properties.



Allotment gardens should form an integral part of the landscape framework.



Outdoor play space must be conveniently located close to residential areas like this example at Skylark Way, Shinfield.

1c(v): In addition to open space requirements, proposals for allotments and orchards should be made in order to promote local food production. These should be easily accessible for residents, and can form attractive and interesting focal points within residential neighbourhoods; on this basis they should not necessarily be located in peripheral locations, but should be integrated as part of the living landscape.

1c(vi): Provision for sports and play is essential to promote opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles. Playing fields should be provided and designed with regard to Sport England guidance, design guidance from sporting National Governing Bodies, and the principles set out in Fields in Trust: Planning & Design for Outdoor Sport and Play. This will include provision for:

- *Outdoor sports pitches, including natural turf pitches in suitably level and easy draining locations;*
- *Sports provision for indoor and outdoor activities such as badminton, tennis, bowls and basketball; and*
- *Changing facilities, club storage facilities, lighting and safe parking (including secure cycle parking).*

Shared and dual use of indoor and outdoor sports facilities between new schools and clubs should be thoroughly explored with the Local Education Authority, local stakeholders and community groups. Where this is proposed the applicants will be required to demonstrate that such agreements with the LEA can be delivered.

Provision for play will include

- *Designated play areas (NEAPs, LEAPs, Local Landscaped Area for Play, and LAPs) within or in immediate proximity to residential areas. All play areas should benefit from casual safety surveillance, by direct overlooking from adjacent and surrounding development, and by proximity to routes and connections through and across the SDL;*
- *Other outdoor play and recreational facilities, including Multi Use Games Areas, Skate Parks, BMX Tracks, Youth Shelters, at safe and appropriate locations;*



At New Hall in Harlow careful attention to detail, a unified palette of materials and street tree planting create a high quality tertiary street that accommodates all users.



In Exeter a modern extension to a listed mill building utilises a low maintenance sedum roof that minimises rainwater run-off and provides a valuable city centre habitat.

- 1c(vii): Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) should be provided in accordance with the requirements of the WCS, and will therefore be based on a formula of 8 hectares per 1000 population assuming an average household size of 2.4 persons per dwelling for development land within 5 km radius of the Special Protection Area, and 1.73 ha per 1000 population for the development land lying between 5 and 7 km from the Special Protection Area. It should take full account of the design criteria and specification of Natural England. WBC will put in place measures to protect SANG in perpetuity. Regard should also be given to the Thames Basin Heath's Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMB) project, for which a planning contribution may be sought.

Design Principle 1d: The design of the village landscape will contribute to the sustainability, ecology, and amenity of the development.

Requirements

- 1d(i): Streets should be characterised by well maintained planting, to include street trees of an appropriate scale and robustness. Existing hedgerows may be incorporated into new streets where possible and steps should be taken to ensure their protection during construction and thereafter.
- 1d(ii): SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) will be required to permeate built-up areas of the SDL. Where SUDS features are present in streets they should be designed to fit that context, and to be an integral part of the street. The choice of surface materials for hard landscape areas will take into account the opportunity for comprehensive SUDS; this will need to be demonstrated at the Reserved Matters stage as detail landscape schemes begin to emerge.



Sustainable Urban Drainage principles have been built into the layout of The Carillons, Wokingham providing a strong setting for development and an important open space network.



The landscape framework must provide for a variety of informal recreational activities as well a mix of habitats as at this green space in Wokingham.



Footpaths provide ready access to this open space at The Carillons in Wokingham.

- 1d(iii): Play areas are expected to be designed on an individual basis to respond to their context. Therefore, those within the built areas will have a different design approach to those located in areas of strategic open space.
- 1d(iv): Opportunities for the use of green and brown roofs and green walls should be pursued for public and community buildings. The primary schools in particular are considered suitable candidates for these features, as green roofs and walls will aid natural cooling and insulation. In addition, schools should benefit from outdoor classrooms and good levels of sun-shading.

Design Principle 1e: The landscape framework should include high levels of connectivity between areas of open space, green infrastructure, sports and play areas in order to ensure good access and use.

Requirements

- 1e(i): A system of local recreational routes should cross the SDL and make provision for walking and cycling. Where possible, these routes should seek to enhance existing Sustrans routes and connect to existing and new public rights of way and bridleways so as to afford access beyond the SDL boundaries.
- 1e(ii): These routes should be regarded as green corridors, and should in themselves enhance ecological connections around the SDL.
- 1e(iii): Particular attention should be given to providing good connections between and within the proposed SANG and the residential neighbourhoods.



Public art is an important component in the design of the landscape framework. This example is in Campbell Park, Milton Keynes.

- 1e(iv):** Public art should feature as an integral component of the landscape framework. Installations and art features should be located where they can be encountered as people move around the SDL, so that they can be enjoyed by a greater number of people. Art which draws inspiration from local traditions or history, or providing a strong statement relating to the location as a place will be encouraged. To ensure this is achieved, a strategy for public art should form part of the planning application process. The strategy should identify themes and locations (within both built areas and open landscape areas) for public art, and make clear the methods of funding and delivery that will be brought forward as the development progresses.

Design Principle 1f: A system of landscape management should be put in place to ensure ongoing maintenance, enhancement and stewardship of the landscape.

Requirements

- 1f(i):** The applicants should enter into discussions with the Wokingham Borough Council with regard to the ongoing management and maintenance of all of the landscape elements of the development. Innovative strategies and alternative mechanisms for maintenance by the Council should be tabled for discussion at an early stage in the masterplanning process. These matters will be the subject of Section 106 legal agreements to ensure that they are both achieved and retained.

APPENDIX 4

EXTRACT OF THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND RESIDENTIAL DESIGN
CHECKLIST FROM THE WOKINGHAM BOROUGH DESIGN GUIDE SPD
(2012)



[Click to begin](#)

Wokingham Borough Council

Borough Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document

June 2012



General Principles

Section 2

Main contents

Section 2 General Principles

- 2.1 Scope of guidance
- 2.2 Context and character
- 2.3 Connection and accessibility
- 2.4 Vibrant communities
- 2.5 Environmental sustainability
- 2.6 Inclusive process



2 General principles

2.1 Scope of guidance

This guide provides general design guidance for all development sites and detailed design guidance for certain topics, these being residential, streets and spaces, car parking and non-residential development issues. It is generally assumed that detailed scheme proposals will be prepared, rather than a masterplan.

This guide provides topic-based design guidance for residential development; streets and spaces; parking; non-residential development (including shopfronts); and rural development.

The Core Strategy makes it clear that good design (as defined in Section 1.4) is important for all development proposals, regardless of the proposed use, scale of development or location.

A number of key urban design objectives, or principles, can be identified from the Core Strategy spatial objectives, vision and strategy and strategic policies, as follows:

Context and character

- Responding positively to the existing context (CP3);
- Retaining or enhancing the high quality of the built and natural environment, including its historic character (CP1, CP14);
- Responding appropriately to the existing character and identity of the area (CP3, CP11); and
- Relating well to neighbours (CP3);

Connection and accessibility

- Providing facilities to promote all modes of transport, including in particular walking, cycling and public transport (CP1, CP6); and
- Reducing the need to travel, through the location of development to promote integration and accessibility (CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6);

Sustainable communities

- Providing functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes that will stand the test of time (CP1, CP2, CP3);
- Ensuring a high quality design of development proposals (CP3);
- Contributing to sense of place (CP3); and
- Meeting the needs of users without a negative impact on others (CP3);

Sustainable development

- Making the most of the site's potential, minimising and/or mitigating environmental impacts (CP1);
- Contributing to the goal of reaching zero carbon development (CP1);
- Using the full potential of the site and contributing to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses (CP3);
- Minimising risks of flooding (CP1); and
- Maintaining or enhance biodiversity (CP3, CP7);

Inclusive design process

- Involving interested groups and communities in the delivery of development.

More →



Figure 2.1: New development should respond positively to the existing context as here at Ingress Park, Greenhithe



Figure 2.2: New development should promote walking and cycling as here at the Watercolour development in Surrey

Section 2 General Principles

2.1 Scope of guidance

2.2 Context and character

2.3 Connection and accessibility

2.4 Vibrant communities

2.5 Environmental sustainability

2.6 Inclusive process

2 General principles

2.2 Context and character

To retain the quality of a local environment, it is essential that development proposals are designed to respond positively to their context.

New development should relate well to its surroundings. It should not ignore the existing environment but should respond to it, where possible enhancing it, exploiting site features and incorporating them into the proposals.

G1: Development must respond positively to its site and local context, including;

- Topography and orientation of the site;
- Existing natural and landscape features of value, including the countryside, the Green Belt, mature trees, hedges and field patterns, ponds, rivers and wetlands etc;
- Heritage assets and their settings, for instance archaeological features, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and conservation areas;
- The local settlement pattern and network of routes; and
- Neighbouring properties.

Section 3A.2.3 in Design Process outlines the issues that may be relevant to an appraisal of the context.

The majority of new development in the borough will be sited in or close to existing residential character areas in established settlements. The Core Strategy emphasises that it is important for proposals to reflect some of the positive characteristics of the locality and to grasp any opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area.

G2: Development must create a sense of place that responds positively to the character of the local area in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape and public realm qualities.

Section 3B: Local Character identifies a number of different character areas that can be found in Wokingham Borough and summarises their characteristic features. It is a starting point for identifying the local character of an area, although, for each site, it is also essential to assess the character of its context.

2.3 Connection and accessibility

The Core Strategy (CP6) aims to manage travel demand by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport provision, wherever appropriate, both within a site and between a site and the surrounding area, in particular to local destinations. A network of streets creates a robust and flexible movement network with good connections and simple and direct routes for all to use.

G3: Development proposals should where possible create, or add to, a connected network for movement that is easy to navigate, safe and comfortable to use, for all modes of transport. In particular, design should promote walking and cycling, and public transport access.

The physical relationship between residential areas, facilities and services, open spaces and employment and their accessibility to one another, influence the need to travel.

More →



Figure 2.3: Development should create attractive, convenient and accessible pedestrian connections which are well integrated into public spaces and streets, Newhall, Harlow



Figure 2.4: Development should create a sense of place through a combination of good quality architecture, urban design, landscape and public realm as here at Bishops Walk, Ely

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Section 2 General Principles

- 2.1 Scope of guidance
- 2.2 Context and character
- 2.3 Connection and accessibility
- 2.4 Vibrant communities
- 2.5 Environmental sustainability
- 2.6 Inclusive process

Cross references

3A.2.3 Appraisal of the context

3B Local character

2 General principles

G4: Development proposals should connect places together, in particular providing safe pedestrian and cycle links between residential areas, community facilities and services, open spaces and local employment opportunities.

2.4 Vibrant communities

The Core Strategy requires development to contribute towards creating more sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long-term needs. Built development and the public realm should be designed to work well, so that people want to use them now, and to be capable of being adapted for continued use in the future. This means safe and secure environments that are accessible to all.

G5: Development proposals must be designed to create a sense of place, with an attractive, safe, public realm that is accessible to all.

G6: Development proposals must be designed to provide high quality, functional, accessible, secure and adaptable buildings for their users.

G7: Development proposals should incorporate a mix of uses that are compatible with one another, so that they contribute towards the vitality of places, in particular to centres.

2.5 Environmental sustainability

The Core Strategy promotes sustainable development requiring proposals to be well adapted to their environments.

This means responding to environmental issues on and around a site, such as biodiversity, to avoid harm and where possible enhance the quality of environment.

G8: Development proposals should minimise their environmental impact and, where mitigation is necessary, this should be designed into proposals as a positive feature, wherever possible.

Environmental issues, such as conserving energy and water, avoiding flood risk and adopting sustainable forms of drainage, can play a key role in addressing future climate change.

G9: The layout and design of development proposals should contribute towards climate change mitigation, in particular by minimising energy and water consumption.

2.6 Inclusive process

The Council is committed to promoting inclusivity. One of the Core Strategy's sustainability objectives is to involve local people and interest groups in determining the future pattern of development in the Borough. Design & Access Statements are also required to demonstrate community and professional involvement. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out the minimum requirements for applicants in terms of pre-application consultation, relative to the type and scale of the development proposal.

G10: In formulating development proposals, applicants and their teams should engage with neighbours, the wider local community and other stakeholders and should respond to issues raised through this process.



Figure 2.5: New development should add to the vibrant character of existing settlements, Wokingham Town Centre



Figure 2.6: Good design is an inclusive process involving key stakeholders from the early stages of a project

Section 2 General Principles

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Residential

Section 4

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4 Residential

4.1 Introduction

Wokingham Borough is an attractive and popular place to live. The area includes urban and suburban neighbourhoods, villages and also some development in the countryside.

It is a key objective of the Core Strategy to retain and enhance the attractiveness of the borough's environment through well designed and inclusive development. The majority of development that takes place in Wokingham Borough is residential, ranging in size from domestic extensions, through to individual houses, infill sites, to larger areas of new housing (often called estates).

The quality of new housing, at all scales, is therefore of particular importance.

Most housing development will take place in the defined SDLs. The remaining housing will generally be developed on allocated sites in, or on the edge of, defined settlements. There may be some exceptions, where extensions or new buildings are proposed in the countryside.

This section provides detailed design guidance for all residential development proposals. However it does not address strategic design or masterplanning issues. For SDL sites, these are also covered by location-specific guidance in the form of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents. Where any site is likely to be developed by a number of developers, or in phases, then a masterplan should be prepared to coordinate development. Refer also to Section 3A: Design Process.

Developers should also refer to other legislative requirements that apply to specific locations or types of development.

4.2 Character and context

R1: Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This may be achieved through blending in with a strongly positive existing character, responding where relevant to the positive elements of its historic context or, where the site is large enough to allow for a distinctive identity to be created, by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing.

The character of a place is created by the design of all the different elements and the degree of consistency or variety, including:

- the network and hierarchy of movement, creating streets;
- the layout of development blocks and plots;
- the arrangement and form of buildings, including the building line and gaps between buildings;
- open spaces;
- the architectural design of buildings;
- the hard and soft landscape design of plots, boundaries, streets and spaces, parking areas; and
- the details, decorative elements, materials and planting.

In different places, these elements contribute in varying degrees to the character. For instance in an urban centre such as Wokingham, the form and arrangement of buildings contributes significantly, whereas in the ex-woodland areas, the landscape plays the most significant role. [More →](#)



Figure 4.1: The existing residential areas have a wide variety of character, ranging from urban terraces in historic cores of towns and enclosed villages such as Twyford (top), through suburban areas such as Finchampstead (middle), to 1960s developments such as Woodley (bottom)

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Cross references

3A Design Process

4 Residential

4.13 Residential design checklist

1. Do the proposals contribute positively and appropriately towards local character?
2. Do they relate well to their context, including both the existing site and neighbouring properties?
3. Are the proposals well connected into the existing street network and designed to contribute to a clear street hierarchy?
4. Does the scheme accommodate cars, without them dominating the layout or street scene?
5. Will the streets have a sense of place as well as accommodating movement?
6. Will there be a clear distinction between public and private areas?
7. Will buildings provide natural surveillance and activity on all of their street frontages?
8. Do the proposals have a coherent building line that defines the street space?
9. Will the proposed heights of buildings relate well to their surroundings, including building heights, size of spaces, importance of routes, distance from street?
10. Is the building taller than its surroundings and if so is it in a potential landmark location of exceptional design, quality and be appropriate for the area?
11. Does the proposed density lead to a scheme that relates well to the character and form of the local area taking into account the height, bulk and massing of buildings, the spaces and gaps around them, and the area required for parking?
12. Do the proposals create street scenes with a coherent and appropriate character, in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour, particularly in areas where buildings are an important component of local character?
13. Do boundary treatments contribute to the quality of the public realm and to local character?
14. Do the proposals integrate high quality, well-supervised, public open space into the development?
15. Will the proposed hard and soft landscape create a high quality setting that is appropriate to local character?
16. Does the scheme provide residents with reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms?
17. Will residents have easy access to some form of amenity space?
18. Will the accommodation provide adequate internal space in a layout that allows for a variety of lifestyles and patterns of use?
19. Will new and existing housing receive appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight?
20. Is the building carefully designed, with a coherent design approach that includes its form, elevations, and detailing, regardless of its architectural style?
21. Does the design integrate detailed elements, such as bin stores, meter boxes, letter boxes, satellite dishes, cycle storage etc, into the overall proposals to avoid future clutter?
22. Does the layout contribute towards environmental sustainability, in particular to mitigating climate change?.
23. For any scheme of 'backland development', is the scheme located and designed so that:
 - it does not harm existing local character of the local area?
 - it relates positively to the existing layout and urban form?
 - it maintains the quality of environment for existing residents? and
 - it creates a satisfactory living environment for the new and existing home or homes?
24. For proposed alterations or extensions to existing dwellings, is the proposal well-designed in relation to the original building, to neighbouring properties and to the character of the local area?

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3A.4 Design checklist



APPENDIX 5

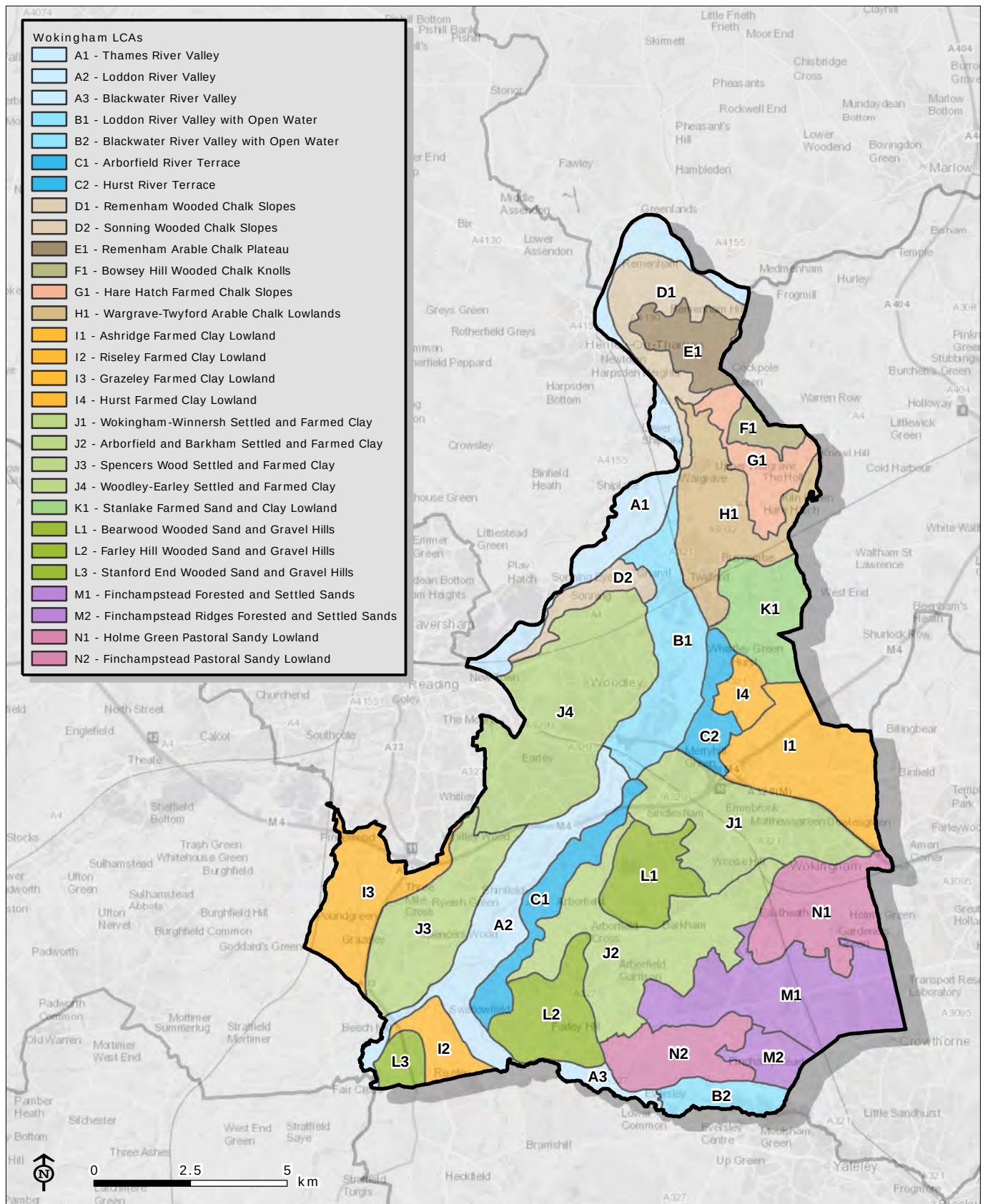
EXTRACTS OF LCA A2 & LCA J3 FROM THE WOKINGHAM BOROUGH
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (LUC; 2019)



www.landuse.co.uk

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment

Prepared by LUC for Wokingham Borough Council
November 2019



Wokingham Borough boundary

Wokingham Landscape
Character Assessment

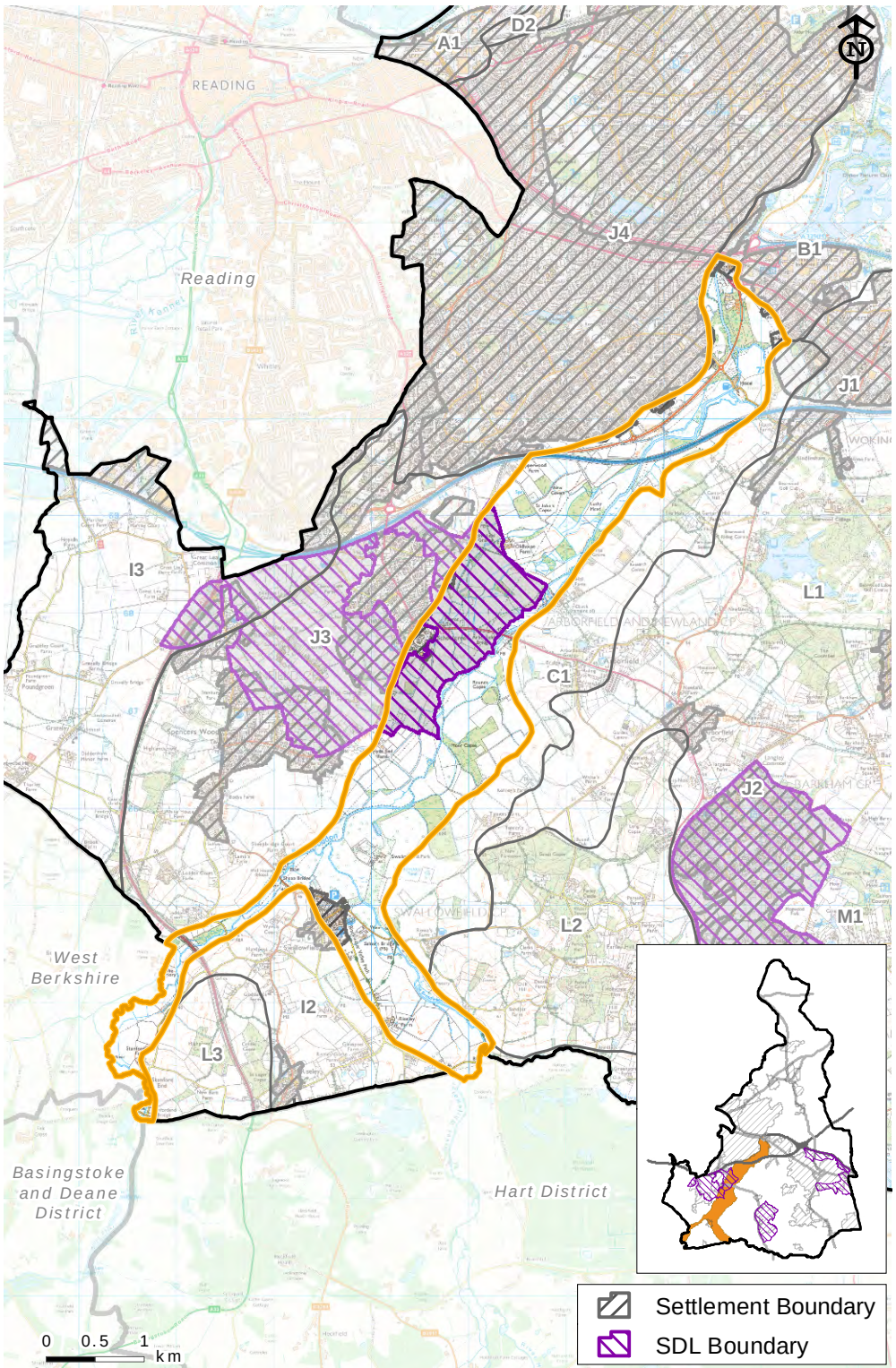
Figure 4.2: Landscape
Character Areas

LUC

Source: LUC, Campaign to Protect Rural England

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

Map Scale @ A4: 1:140,000



SUMMARY

This area occupies the flat alluvial floodplain of the River Loddon and its tributaries the Broadwater and the Blackwater. An agricultural landscape of irregular fields, with large scale arable fields on better drained areas and small scale wet meadows on frequently flooded land adjacent to the river. A largely peaceful area, disturbance comes from major roads which cross the floodplain including the M4, and adjacent developments in Earley, Winnersh, the expanding settlement of Shinfield and new Science and Innovation Park.

The southern boundaries of this area are defined by the borough boundary, although the character area extends into the adjoining districts (West Berkshire and Hart). The northern boundary is confined by the industrial edge of Winnersh and the Loddon Bridge, where industry and infrastructure mark the end of the tranquil rural landscape of the Loddon Valley. The eastern and western boundaries are defined by the geological extent of the river alluvium and river terrace deposits which occupy the valley floor and marked changes in topography on the valley sides of the adjacent character areas.



Key Characteristics

- A broad, flat alluvial floodplain around 40-45m AOD underlain by riverine alluvium and river terrace deposits. The alluvial soils are affected by high groundwater levels, while the loamy soils on the low ridges of the river terrace gravels are better drained and in use as arable fields.
- The River Loddon follows a meandering course within braided channels. There are a system of sluices and weirs along the course of the river, at Arborfield, Sheep Bridge and Stanford End. Streams and tributary rivers join the Loddon including the rivers Broadwater and Blackwater in the southeast of the area. There are ponds, oxbow lakes and pools of standing water on the valley floor.
- A wooded backdrop is provided by scattered blocks of deciduous woodland and copses, interlinked woodland belts and scattered mature trees and scrub. The semi-natural woodlands include frequent areas of Ancient Woodland, all of which are designated as LWSs.
- Pasture and arable farmland in medium and large irregular geometric fields, divided by post and wire fencing, post and rail fencing, gappy hedgerows and drainage ditches. The areas closest to the river are affected by flooding and are characterised by pasture and wet meadow.
- Wetland character, including BAP priority habitats of floodplain grazing marsh, wet woodland, lowland fen and lowland meadows which contain characteristic features such as willow pollards. Six areas with wetland character are designated as LWS. South of Sheepbridge an area of waterlogged hay meadow is designated as the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI, which supports nationally important populations of fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*) and the Loddon pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*), while the full length of river north of Sheepbridge is an LWS.
- Important historic riverside features include traditional brick humpback bridges and water mills e.g. Sindlesham Mill and Sindlesham Bridge and the Mill at Swallowfield (all Grade II listed). Moated sites are present at Beaumy's Castle and Sheepbridge Court and designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- Extensive designed parkland landscape at Swallowfield Park (designated as a Registered Park and Garden) which leads down to the River Loddon with grassland and mature oaks and specimen trees including cedars of Lebanon, and a Grade II listed 18th century bridge.
- The GHQ Stop Line (General Headquarters Line), a defensive zone built during the summer of 1940 to contain the threatened German invasion ran east from Bristol to the Thames Estuary and included a section along the Foudry Brook, the Loddon, the Broadwater and the Blackwater.
- Low-density scattered settlement pattern of villages and farmsteads characterised by traditional warm red brick and timber framed vernacular evident in cluster of listed buildings in Swallowfield village Conservation Area.
- Tranquil and rural character away from river crossings and visual influence of large scale settlement in adjacent areas. The south of the area is also a resource of 'dark skies'.
- Little public access to the floodplain except for the Blackwater Valley Path which runs south and east of Swallowfield. Busy roads cross the flood plain, including the A33, M4 and Winnersh and Shinfield Eastern Relief Roads, and create physical and visual severance along the floodplain.
- Pylons, residential and commercial development are distinctive visual features in this open and flat landscape, with development very visible along the edges of this character area. The new landmark Science and Innovation Park building at Shinfield is a notable feature in the

landscape.

Natural Landscape

- A2.1 The character of the Loddon River Valley is influenced by the River Loddon, a tributary of the Thames. The river occupies only a small part of the floodplain and its presence is only revealed close to its banks or in the tranquil water meadows that lie alongside the river. The river is branched and braided, for example north of Arborfield Bridge where a system of sluices and weirs mark the site of the old Arborfield Mill, now a water pumping station. The river also branches significantly at Salter's Bridge, Swallowfield and at Sindlesham Mill, north of the M4. There are also numerous ponds, oxbow lakes and pools of standing water on the valley floor.
- A2.2 The landform comprises a flat floodplain that lies between 40 and 45m AOD. It is underlain by riverine alluvium and younger River Terrace deposits of the Loddon and Brickearth. These give rise to Pelo-Alluvial Argillic Gley soils that are affected by high groundwater levels. The loamy soils that overlie the younger river terrace gravels are better drained and are in use as arable fields. The areas closer to the river are affected by short term flooding and are characterised by pasture and wet meadow. The wet meadows are an important resource and wet woodland provides a sense of enclosure and hidden character that contrasts with the open floodplain beyond. The presence of pollarded willow is characteristic of the river corridor.
- A2.3 The landscape is dominated by mixed agriculture of irregular fields, with large-scale arable fields occupying better drained areas and small scale wet meadows occurring on frequently flooded land adjacent to the river. The fields are divided by drainage ditches and post and wire fencing. Where hedgerows occur they are low flailed, species poor and discontinuous, forming the remnants of a former network.
- A2.4 BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland and coniferous copses and coverts form isolated geometric blocks within the wider mixed farmland. These woodlands provide shelter for wildlife as well as a green backdrop to views across the floodplain. The historic parkland of Swallowfield Park, imparked by Edward III and a royal residence until the Tudor era, has a localised influence on the character of the floodplain with scattered parkland trees (mature oaks) and woodland belts forming features within the open floodplain.
- A2.5 The Loddon River Valley character area has retained significant biological interest and is characterised by scattered BAP priority habitats including wet woodlands and grasslands, which are now mostly restricted to the banks of the river channel. The valley is particularly notable for the nationally important Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI, which comprises a 4km stretch of the River Loddon together with a series of traditionally managed, seasonally waterlogged hay meadows. This site supports rich plant communities and is of special interest for its thriving populations of two rare plants, the fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*) which is now mainly confined to scattered localities in southern Britain, and a national stronghold of Loddon pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*). The site is also associated with a number of notable aquatic and wetland mollusc species, including two rare pea mussels (*Pisidium moitessierianum* and *P. tenuilineatum*), and two rare snails *Vertigo antivertigo* and *V. moulinsiana*.
- A2.6 The valley also supports twelve areas designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), for their woodland, wet woodland and fen habitats. These include four Ancient Woodlands. The wet woodlands are dominated by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) and are particularly notable for supporting important populations of Loddon lily (*Leucojum aestivum*).

Cultural Landscape

- A2.7 As with the Thames Valley, the Loddon was an early focus of human activity and cultivation of the fertile valley floor may have commenced during the Neolithic with cultivation on the valley sides leading to alluvial deposition on the floodplain below. Cropmarks, including ring ditches, and Bronze Age finds, provide evidence of continuous prehistoric/Romano-British settlement and

farming along the Loddon. The Roman road between London and Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester), known locally as the Devil's Highway, runs for a short length across the LCA at Riseley Common.

- A2.8 The area was part of the Royal Forest of Windsor from Norman times but before that, the "-feld" element of place names such as Arborfield and Swallowfield, suggests a largely open and cultivated landscape during the Saxon period. The focus of medieval and later settlement was on the valley sides, with settlement on lower ground consisting mainly of dispersed farmsteads sited at the edges of the floodplain, probably set within open fields along the river gravels and common meadows on the floodplain.
- A2.9 The large straight-sided fields along most of the valley indicate Parliamentary enclosure of early 19th century. Small areas with less regular fields interspersed with small parcels of woodland, shown on the first edition OS map, indicate earlier assart enclosures, although few traces of these survive due to recent amalgamation of fields.
- A2.10 This area has the greatest concentration of moated sites in the borough, due to its physical, defensive, features. In the medieval period the construction of moats was a popular way of enhancing the status and appearance of a manor, or other large house, such as that at Sheepbridge Court. The moated site at Beaumy's Castle is a rare example of one which was designed for defensive purposes. A number of 17th and 18th century country houses were surrounded by areas of landscaped parkland. Traces of parkland are still visible around the site of the now demolished Arborfield Hall, and at Swallowfield Park (Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden), which incorporates the woodland and open parkland of an earlier medieval deer park. Swallowfield Park also has an old walled garden, now planted in the Arts and Crafts Style, and a woodland walk leading down to the quiet flowing River Loddon.
- A2.11 A more recent historic feature of the Loddon Valley is the GHQ Stop Line, a defensive zone built during the summer of 1940 to contain the threatened German invasion. The line ran east from Bristol to the Thames Estuary and included a section through the borough. This swathe of World War II defences consists of pillboxes (concrete defensive bunkers often hexagonal in shape) and the fortified natural defences of the rivers Loddon, Broadwater and Blackwater (including in-built chambers for demolition charges in the local bridges).
- A2.12 The Loddon River Valley has a rural, remote character with a dominant settlement pattern of very low density scattered built features, typically traditional brick and timber framed farmsteads, mills and humpbacked bridges at crossing points of the river. Often the settlements associated with water mills, for example old Arborfield village, which was moved post 1607, are located on the adjacent higher ground of the older river terraces or clay farmland and linked to the valley floor by rural tracks and lanes. The village of Swallowfield, which has a Conservation Area, is unusual in that it occupies a site on the valley floor.
- A2.13 The traditional built features within the valley are constructed from traditional warm red brick and timber framing of the 17th and 18th century, with clay tile roofs. This is seen in the scattered farmsteads, mill buildings, bridges and village of Swallowfield. Agricultural buildings often combine the use of weatherboarding with red brick and typically have half-hipped roofs. Flint is also seen in decorative use on gate posts or on churches and in all cases attention to detail is a characteristic of the built environment. There is a range of materials present where new built development has spread onto the valley floor, for example on the edge of Shinfield.
- A2.14 There is a loose network of lanes serving this primarily agricultural landscape, with a limited number of river crossing points. The presence of post-medieval mills at a number of these and other points, e.g. Sheepbridge Mill, Sindlesham Mill, Stanford End Mill, probably reflects the locations of earlier mills.
- A2.15 The floodplain is largely inaccessible by foot apart from public footpaths at the river crossings at Salter's Bridge, Arborfield/Shinfield and Loddon Bridge, and remains a remote, agricultural landscape. There is little use of the river for pleasure craft and limited opportunity for recreation including fishing.
- A2.16 Major infrastructure crosses the valley including the A33 in the south, and the M4, A327 and the new Winnersh Relief Road and Shinfield Eastern Relief Road. The B3270 is also very busy, and lit at night. The main line railway from Reading to Waterloo crosses the valley at Loddon Bridge on the northern border of the area.

Perceptual Landscape

- A2.17 The Loddon valley floor has largely retained a tranquil and remote rural character with limited development. There are, however, views to substantial areas of built development in adjacent areas, for example the residential outskirts of Reading which have a localised impact on tranquillity.
- A2.18 Pylons are detracting features of the valley floor, prominent in views across this open landscape. From the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road and the A327 commercial and residential development is evident on the edges of Shinfield and Arborfield.
- A2.19 In Swallowfield there are views to the Swallowfield Park parkland. South of Sheepbridge views are channelled along the river itself, creating a more enclosed and secluded character.
- A2.20 In his book, 'Our River' George Dunlop Leslie RA recalls collecting foliage and dried reeds at Wargrave, which he took away with him and used to create the pictures painted of the River Loddon.
- A2.21 The critic J.C. Loudon remarked of Swallowfield Park, in 1831, that *'The situation is nearly flat, with a stream passing through it. The house is a large plain building, lately put in thorough repair; and the gardens and grounds are undergoing essential ameliorations'*.
- A2.22 The village of Swallowfield has associations with Miss Mary Russell Mitford who wrote a diary published as 'Our Village' which became a contemporary classic. In 'Our Village' she asks of the *"brimming Loddon"*:
- "Is it not a beautiful river? Rising level with its banks, so clear and smooth and peaceful, giving back the verdant landscape and the clear blue sky, and bearing on its pellucid stream the snowy water-lily, the purest of flowers, like the lady in 'Comus'".*

Valuable Landscape Attributes

- The naturalness of the meandering course of the River Loddon and wide floodplain landscape which provide a strong sense of place.
- The wooded backdrop of mature broadleaved woodland copses and natural riparian corridors including ancient woodland which provides scenic quality and a sense of place, as well as framing views across, into and out of the area.
- Important wetland features / habitats including BAP priority habitats wet woodland and floodplain grazing marsh remnants designated as LWSs, and the nationally important Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI that are uncommon in the borough and provide important ecological habitats.
- Historic riverside features including medieval moated sites, old brick watermills and bridges, the registered historic parkland at Swallowfield and the GHQ Stop Line and associated Second World War features which follow the course of the rivers.
- Sparse settlement pattern of farmsteads and the village of Swallowfield, characterised by a strong local vernacular which contribute to the scenic quality of the area and impart a sense of time depth.
- Remote and rural landscape in the south of the area due to the limited access to the floodplain and absence of development on the valley floor.
- Localised areas with a strong sense of tranquility particularly in the south, with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies away from roads and visual influence of large scale settlement in adjacent areas.

Landscape Condition

The meandering course of the river and the flat floodplain landscape is intact. For the most part this is a remote and rural landscape with characteristic riverside features and important wetland habitats which contribute to the overall perception of a landscape in moderate condition. However, views to adjacent large scale development and busy infrastructure corridors, particularly in the north of the area fragment the rural landscape. There are opportunities for improvement and particular enhancement to habitat interconnectivity.

Key Issues

- Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and wet woodland as a consequence of pathogens and climate change. Climate change is also likely to result in increased seasonal variation in river flows and greater flooding which may impact riverside vegetation.
- Hedgerow loss associated with past expansion of fields and intensification of agriculture. The post and wire fencing present is less aesthetically pleasing than a robust hedgerow network would be.
- Incremental loss of species rich grassland due to increasingly intensive grassland management/conversion to arable land.
- Decline in demand for traditional countryside products leading to loss of rural features including pollarded willows on waterside pasture.
- An area of land south of the A327 has been identified as a potential site for extraction of 3.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel which will impact on the tranquillity and rural character of the area but may provide new recreational and biodiversity opportunities depending on the restoration design and management.
- Decline or decay of historic features including the parkland at Swallowfield Park and the GHQ Stop Line.
- Drainage operations associated with development and agriculture affecting river levels and wetland habitats. Climate change is also likely to result in increased seasonal variation in river flows.
- Pressure for new residential and commercial development and supporting infrastructure both inside and outside the area is continuing to push onto the floodplain and impacting landscape character and with potential for impacts on the rurality and tranquillity of the area. Potential development of a new settlement at Shinfield (Land south of M4 SDL) may affect the tranquillity and character of the river valley at Shinfield.
- There is continuing pressure for new industrial developments, sewage treatment works and commercial premises in the river valleys, often associated with the major transport corridors.
- Increasing use of road network, leading to continuous presence of background traffic noise from the M4 and other major roads across the floodplain including the extension of the Winnersh Relief Road, Shinfield Eastern Relief Road and upgrades to the B3270 and A327.
- Increasing demand for residential, commercial and agricultural large-scale buildings leading to visual intrusion of these elements, including development within the South of the M4 SDL and expansion of the Science and Innovation Park.
- This character area contains a reservoir of 'dark skies', particularly to the south of the area. Light pollution is a key issue affecting the night landscape.

- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the open landscape.

Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Loddon River Valley* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the current rural character with its typical river valley components and sense of remoteness.

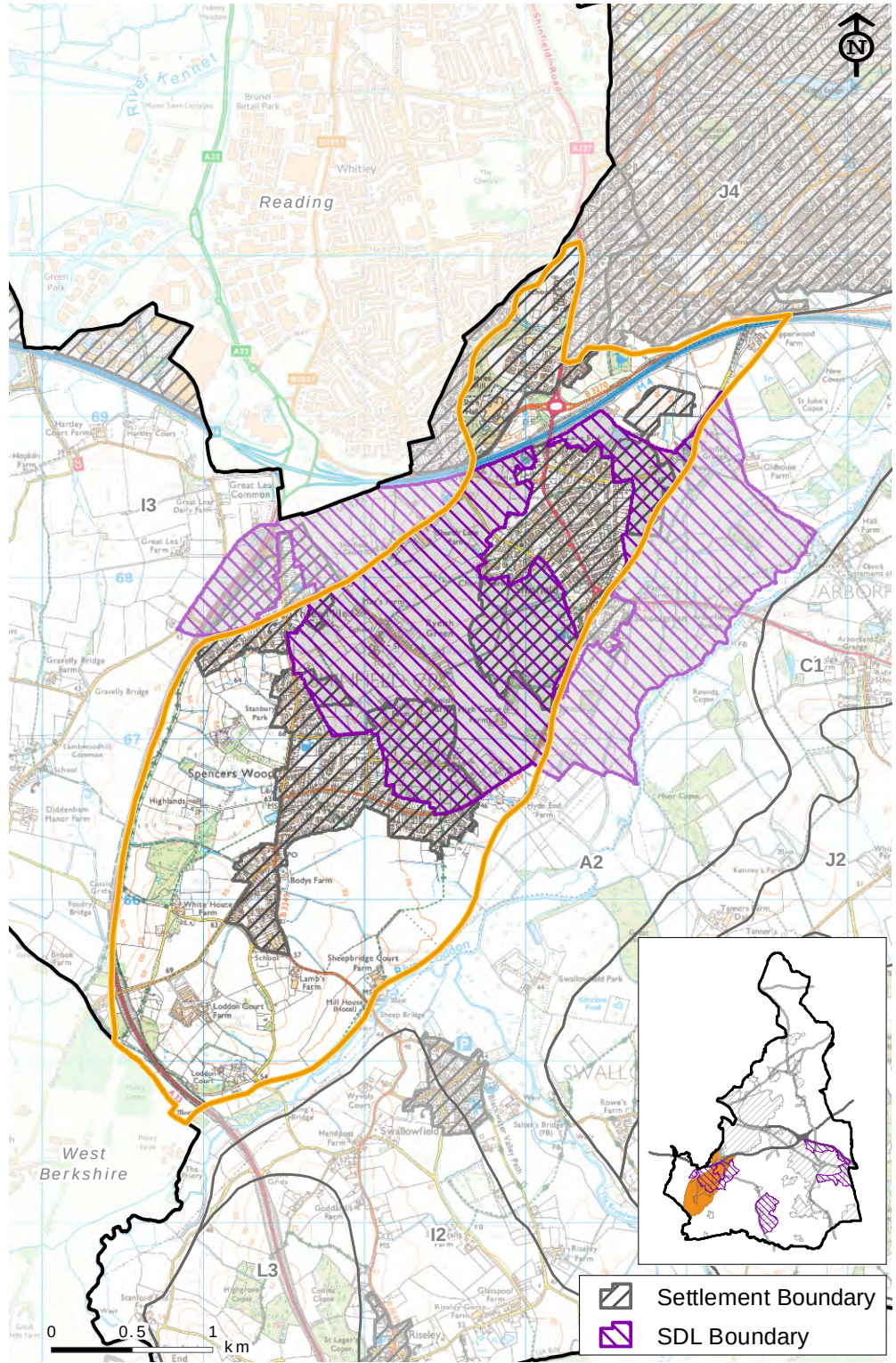
The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the natural habitats including areas of wet woodland and wet meadow. Restore or reinstate hedgerow boundaries with native species and the re-creation of permanent pasture alongside the river.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern minimising influence from adjacent landscape areas.

Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve the scenic quality and naturalistic character of the river corridor and tributary streams particularly from development, intensification of land use and encroachment by scrub and secondary woodland.
- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally occurring native species in order to create green links to other woodland habitats and to dampen extreme river flows within river catchments. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Reinstall or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so. There has been recent planting of new hawthorn hedgerows, and this should be encouraged and continued but with a wider diversity of species.
- Manage and enhance the wildlife interest of agricultural fields by encouraging the creation of uncultivated field margins and other wildlife-friendly farming methods around intensively farmed fields.
- Conserve and protect the landscape pattern of mixed pasture and arable fields and encourage environmentally beneficial management. Encourage the appropriate management of grassland by grazing, particularly at Stamford End Meadows. Consider re-creation of lost wet meadows.
- Conserve, enhance and manage wetland habitats, including BAP priority habitats, particularly from development or changes in land use. The majority of this area is part of the Loddon Valley South BOA. This network of natural habitats has been identified as a target for habitat creation and restoration and positive management of lowland meadow, wet woodland and parkland. The 2003 Environment Agency biodiversity strategy for the Loddon catchment should be used.
- Maintain the prevailing hydrology and water tables to enable anaerobic conditions to preserve archaeological sites in low lying wetland areas, particularly along river corridors.
- Ensure restoration plans for gravel extraction sites are in keeping with character of the landscape and encourage opportunities for habitat creation. Resist proposals that would impact on the intactness or integrity of the landscape or change landscape character.
- Conserve the scenic value of Swallowfield and its Conservation Area and other listed buildings, moated sites, the Registered Park and Garden at Swallowfield and features associated with the GHQ Stop Line.

- Conserve the rural character of the river corridor, to protect the individual identity of settlements such as Swallowfield, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation. In particular protect the sensitive areas of open land between Earley and Winnersh.
- Maintain the rural character and sparse settlement pattern of dispersed farms through control of new development and avoiding the spread of development onto the floodplain, particularly in relation to the South of the M4 SDL.
- Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – as well as sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.
- Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements e.g. pylons on the visually sensitive landscape.
- Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads, particularly in relation to the new Shinfield Eastern and Winnersh Relief Roads. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures.
- Protect the strong perceptions of tranquillity/remoteness in the landscape, including the experience of dark skies, through the management of development, ensuring development, including infrastructure, does not spread onto the floodplain and that technical solutions to noise and light pollution are used where possible



SUMMARY

An undulating landscape of large arable fields with some pasture. Ongoing development in the north of the area, part of the South of the M4 SDL, is increasing the settled character of the area adding to the urbanising influence of its proximity to Reading. The south remains rural with a number of woodlands remnant parklands and open pasture.

The Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay is a locally prominent clay ridge that separates A2: Loddon River Valley on its eastern edge from I3: Grazeley Farmed Clay Lowland on its western boundary. Both boundaries are defined by topography, where the clay ridge ends. The northern boundary extends into the urban edge of Woodley-Earley, and the southern boundary by the borough boundary, although the landscape character extends into West Berkshire.



Key Characteristics

- Rolling clay ridge above the Loddon Valley to the east and the lowlands to the west, rising to a flat sandy plateau at 66m AOD.
- Small scattered mixed deciduous woodland blocks and copses including some of ancient origin, many designated as LWS, most located on the steep west and south facing slopes of the ridge.
- Fragmented unimproved meadow habitats, with BAP priority habitat lowland meadow, are found on lower slopes, for example Clare's Green Road LWS.
- Large arable fields with some pasture, with an intact hedgerow network and hedgerow oaks. Horse paddocks feature on the edge of settlements or around large farmsteads e.g. Sheepridge Court and Loddon Court Farms. Smaller and irregular field boundaries around Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood are still evident, indicating early enclosure.
- Remnant parkland at Shinfield Grange, Loddon Court, Shinfield Lodge, Stanbury Park and Highlands. A number of these are clustered along the top of the ridge overlooking the clay lowlands of Grazeley to the west. These parklands contain BAP priority habitat lowland wood pasture and parkland and ancient woodland. Visually prominent parkland veteran trees include many Wellingtonias, there is a prominent avenue of these trees along the drive to Wellington Court, originally the Stanbury Park estate.
- The GHQ Stop Line and associated Second World War features built during the summer of 1940 to contain the threatened German invasion.
- Densely settled landscape, with new large-scale residential estate development around the substantially 20th century settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross, as part of South of the M4 SDL.
- To the south of the area, settlement is more scattered with traditional farmsteads many with a strong vernacular of polychromatic Reading brick and weatherboarding. A number of farmhouses are listed including Grade II* Sheepridge Court. There is a permanent mobile home site at Loddon Court Farm and some agricultural buildings have been converted to other uses e.g. Lambs Farm Business Park.
- Network of rural lanes bordered by water-filled ditches connect the original settlement pattern. Some B roads have urbanised features including kerbs and pavements. The A33 form the western border and is very busy, while the M4 crosses the area north of Shinfield, and introduces noise and movement.
- Sense of elevation from the ridgeline and good views over surrounding lowlands including to the Loddon valley and over West Berkshire.

Natural Landscape

- J3.1 The Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay is characterised by a prominent, undulating clay ridge between two lowland areas of A2: Loddon River Valley to the east and I3: Grazeley Farmed Clay Lowland to the west. The landscape rises to a flat, sandy plateau of 66m AOD at Stanbury Park, deposited as a fifth level terrace of a proto-Thames. The sandy soils of the plateau are acidic and give rise to distinctive vegetation and historic land use of common land around Spencers Wood. There are a number of River Terrace Gravel deposits throughout the area.

- J3.2 The flat plateau area was formerly Spencerswood Common but all common land has now been enclosed. The former common is now a network of fields, woodland and parkland and is characterised by acid-loving species such as Scots pine, birch, holly and rhododendron.
- J3.3 Elsewhere, the rolling agricultural landscape is characterised by a variety of field sizes divided by largely intact hedgerows and mature hedgerow oaks. Arable fields are most prominent, although there is pasture and horse grazing, particularly on the edge of settlements. Temporary planning permission was granted for a solar farm at Sheepridge Court.
- J3.4 There are a number of woodlands, mixed woodland belts and tree clumps associated with designed landscapes or remnant deciduous copses. Much of the woodland, including areas to the north of the M4, contain BAP priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland and are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). There are areas of ancient woodland, with a history of coppice with standard management. Often this traditional management has ceased, but at Pearman's Copse LWS and LNR this management system has been reintroduced. Old ash stools with field maple (*Acer campestre*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) dominate Pearman's Copse, and it supports a rich woodland flora with around 27 ancient woodland indicator species and a good range of woodland invertebrates.
- J3.5 There are small fragmented areas of unimproved neutral grassland, some recorded as BAP priority habitat lowland meadows. Clare's Green Road Grassland LWS is designated for its botanical interest.
- J3.6 The presence of parkland is a feature of the landscape, with remnant parklands around Loddon Court, Highlands and Shinfield Park at Nores Hill, some of which is BAP priority habitat lowland wood pasture and parkland. Parkland trees stand out as features against the skyline including individual Wellingtonias and especially the avenue of *Wellingtonias* along the drive to Wellington Court, previously the Stanbury Park estate. The Highlands site is visually open and is a defining feature on the edge of Spencers Wood.
- J3.7 A small area between Loddon Court and Sheepbridge Court Farm is part of the Loddon Valley South BOA. This is mainly concentrated along the course of the River Loddon and Broadwater in A2: Loddon River Valley however the farmland bordering the Loddon is potentially important for farmland birds.
- J3.8 Residential development is a significant land use. Boundaries include rows of conifers and suburban fences that have eroded the rural character of the ridge in places and contrast with the native hedgerows and hedgerow trees of the surrounding farmland. Other features that have an urbanising influence on the landscape are street lighting, white lines and road signs, kerbs and pavements, lay-bys and municipal street furniture along with disturbance generated by road users.
- J3.9 The public open space and SANGS created as part of the South of the M4 SDL between the settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross is important in maintaining the separation and landscape setting of the three settlements. The southern settlement edge of Spencers Wood is defined by roadside and hedgerow trees.

Cultural Landscape

- J3.10 In common with clay soils found elsewhere in the borough there is little evidence for extensive prehistoric or Romano-British settlement of this area at the edge of the Loddon river valley. By Saxon times it appears likely that settlement and agriculture expanded onto previously marginal areas - the "-feld" element in the name of Shinfield, a Domesday settlement, suggesting a largely open and cultivated landscape in the Saxon period.
- J3.11 In the medieval period in this area, forest law protected the Crown's hunting, timber and other rights over both private and common land in the face of pressure from assart incursions into the woodland for cultivation and pasture. The piecemeal clearance of woodland to form cultivable land by assarting, and later by agreement, continued until the 18th century.
- J3.12 The first edition OS map shows the area to contain numerous small irregular fields with wavy boundaries, indicative of early enclosure of former open fields, as well as of heath and common as

at Spencers Common. Some of the common still existed at the time the map was drawn. With adjoining landscapes of the Loddon (A2, C1) and Farley Hill (L2) these form the largest area of early enclosure landscape in the borough. Some fields around Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood still show this early enclosure pattern, although much of this has been lost through expanding development or amalgamation of fields.

- J3.13 Spencers Wood takes its name from the Despencer family who owned Beaumys Castle (located on the River Loddon) an important medieval family. Beaumys was later held by Nicholas de la Beche (Seneschal of Gascony and Governor of Edward III's heir the Black Prince) after whom Beech Hill is named.
- J3.14 There was a loose network of winding country lanes, but few major roads until the 18th century. The road between Reading and Basingstoke (now the A33), was established in 1718 and was one of the earliest turnpike roads in Berkshire.
- J3.15 The traditional settlement pattern was of small agricultural settlements at Shinfield and Three Mile Cross, surrounded by quite closely spaced medieval/post medieval farmhouses. The rural farmsteads are often timber framed infilled with soft polychromatic Reading brick with half-hipped clay tiled roofs and brick walls as boundary features. A number of these farmhouses are now listed buildings including the Grade II* Sheepridge Court. Weatherboarding is a distinctive feature. Some of these traditional agricultural buildings are now encapsulated within more recent suburban development where they form landmark buildings. Traces of areas of landscaped parkland associated with country houses are still evident to varying degrees around Shinfield Park (The Grove), Stanbury Park, Highlands and Loddon Court.
- J3.16 The area saw rapid expansion during the Victorian and post-Victorian periods resulting in developments of Victorian semi-detached properties at Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Shinfield.
- J3.17 These settlements are now expanding, as part of the South of the M4 SDL, with estate-type developments with public open space and SANGS between the settlements. The modern built development shows a large range of different house styles and use of materials, with little consistent character of form, although brick is the most common material. The Thames Valley Science Park, in the north of the area between the M4 and Cutbush Lane East, is under development. This includes the Gateway building, which is clad in corten steel giving it a distinctive red appearance and making it highly visible across the landscape. The new Shinfield Relief Road was opened in 2017, connecting the Blackboy Roundabout north of the M4 with the A327 (in A2). This provides access to the Thames Valley Science Park and new development as part of the South of the M4 SDL.
- J3.18 Other significant 20th century additions are the Second World War pillboxes and buried tank ditch located on the southern end of the clay ridge and form part of the defensive GHQ Stop Line, built in 1940 and which extends east along the River Loddon and northwards along the Foudry Brook.
- J3.19 A network of footpaths and narrow tracks provide opportunities for informal recreation, and give the area beyond the settlement a rural character.

Perceptual Landscape

- J3.20 The M4 in the north of the area and the A33 dual carriageway along the western boundary introduce noise and movement into the area although the A33 corridor is well-treed and in a cutting adjacent to the southern end of the clay ridge reducing impacts. Views to Reading and the built up areas north of the M4 introduce an urbanising element.
- J3.21 Away from these transport corridors and settlements, particularly south of Spencers Wood, the area retains a rural character, with views over the surrounding lowland landscapes of the Loddon valley and the arable fields around Grazeley. From the south of the area there are views across West Berkshire towards Stratfield Mortimer and other nearby villages. There are areas along the southern boundary of the area with high levels of tranquillity and dark night skies.
- J3.22 The slopes of the clay ridgeline provide physical and visual separation between the settlements of Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross.

J3.23 Mary Russell Mitford, author of 'Our Village' often walked along Woodcock Lane (a footpath now running along the A33 Swallowfield bypass) of which she wrote:

"In that very lane am I writing on this sultry June day, luxuriating in the shade, the verdure, the fragrance of hayfield and beanfield, and the absence of any noise except the song of birds and the whir of a thousand forms of insect life so often heard among the general hush of a summer noon".

Valuable Landscape Attributes

- Remnant historic parklands and visually prominent parkland trees, including many Wellingtonias, especially the avenue of this species which provide time-depth, visual diversity and a sense of orientation to the landscape.
- Pattern of arable and pastoral fields, which provide a rural character away from the urban areas and provide an important separation between settlements.
- Small-scale woodlands provide visual diversity in the landscape, as well as ecologically important habitats.
- Strong hedgerow network with standard oaks provides a wooded character and visual interest within the rural landscape.
- Network of rural lanes bordered by water-filled ditches provide evidence of the original settlement pattern.
- Views to the surrounding lowlands provide a sense of place and of orientation.
- Undeveloped slopes of the clay ridgeline which is visually prominent and provides separation between settlements.
- The GHQ Stop Line and associated Second World War features which follows the course of the Foudry Brook crossing the southern end of the clay ridge and along the River Loddon.
- Open area of former common land to the west of Basingstoke Road at 'Highlands'.
- Beaumys Castle, a rare example of a defensive moated site in medieval times and on the front line of the GHQ defence in the Second World War.
- Isolated traditional farmsteads and their associated buildings, particularly in the south of the LCA.

Landscape Condition

The survival of former field patterns, the remnants of historic parklands, woodland blocks and the hedgerow network are in good condition. The new South of the M4 SDL and other development, and urban edge of Reading fragment the rural character of the northern part of the area, while the major transport corridors introduce noise and movement, except where well screened by ground modelling or trees.

Key Issues

- Loss of deciduous woodland or changes in woodland structure due to loss of species diversity of the traditionally coppiced woodlands have occurred in the past through cessation of coppice management, leading to a change in character. However, there are positive signs that woodlands are being brought back into management.
- Effects on tree heath or species composition of woodland as a consequence of pathogens and

climate change.

- Hedgerow and tree loss and soil erosion associated with settlement expansion and intensification of agriculture.
- Past use of fertilisers and pesticides resulted in a polluted run-off affecting water quality and biodiversity within the water filled ditches
- Potential for agricultural land to be kept in 'hope' value, and therefore not well managed, particularly around settlement edges and on the urban fringe.
- Pressure for horse/pony paddocks, particularly at settlement edges leading to a decrease in rural intactness.
- Drainage operations have resulted in loss of wetland habitats. This threat continues as a result of drainage schemes associated with new building works and agriculture.
- Lack of the recruitment of young trees (through natural regeneration or planting) required to rebalance the age structure of parkland and hedgerow trees is an on-going threat to the character of the landscape.
- Pressure for large scale residential development and supporting infrastructure, such as the South of the M4 Strategic Development, impacting landscape character and leading to further pressure to amalgamate the separate settlements
- Pressure to develop the undulating slopes of the clay ridgeline which are visually prominent.
- Pressure for new commercial premises, including the further major expansion of the Thames Valley Science Park, over a 20 year period.
- Increased traffic on rural roads due to expanding residential development leading to further loss of tranquillity, and erosion of road version and demands for upgrading the winding network of rural lanes with new signage, line painting and widening threatening the intimate rural character of the lanes.
- There is continuing pressure for new roads or additional lanes on existing roads, associated with the South of the M4 SDL particularly in this well populated and commercially vibrant area, leading to visual intrusion of transport corridors and fragmentation of the landscape.
- Light pollution at night causing 'sky glow'.
- Increasing demand for communication masts, pylons and poles leading to visual intrusion of these elements in the open landscape.
- Decline or decay of historic features including those of the GHQ Stop Line.

Landscape Strategy

To maintain the landscape character of the *Spencers Wood Farmed and Settled Clay* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the rural character of the agricultural landscape. The key aspects to be enhanced and actively managed are the pattern of hedgerows, remnant parkland, trees and avenues, views to the Loddon Valley and west Berkshire, the rural character of the lanes, and the GHQ Stop Line. There are opportunities for woodland planting to integrate the M4, busy roads and expanding urban fringes of Reading, in particular around the expanding settlements of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross as part of the South of the M4 SDL.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the rural character of the landscape and gaps between settlements while maintaining the integrity of settlement identity.

Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape. Conserve ancient woodlands and woodland copses. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Manage and enhance the wildlife interest of agricultural fields by encouraging the creation of uncultivated field margins and other wildlife-friendly farming methods around intensively farmed fields.
- Conserve and manage hedgerows with standard oaks as important wildlife habitats and landscape features, as well as the links they provide across the landscape and between areas of woodland. Reinstall or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so. Plan for the next generation of hedgerow trees with a programme of tree planting.
- Conserve and protect the landscape pattern of mixed pasture and arable fields and encourage appropriate management of grassland by grazing.
- Manage the integration of equine related activities into the landscape through the maintenance of existing boundaries or restoration of hedgerows and control of associated built elements.
- Conserve and protect the parkland landscapes associated with former manor houses, particularly in areas of BAP priority habitat lowland wood pasture and parkland. Plan for the next generation of parkland and avenue trees.
- Conserve features associated with the GHQ Stop Line.
- Conserve, enhance and manage woodland and meadow habitats, particularly BAP priority habitats and LWS, from development and changes in land use. An area of land between Sheepridge Court and Loddon Court Farm is part of the Loddon Valley South BOA. The farmland bordering the Loddon is potentially important for farmland birds such as Yellowhammer. An appropriate woodland and meadow management regime is critical.
- Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries, hedgerows and large-species trees to provide visual screening and a positive interface between the built up and rural areas.
- Conserve the open and rural character of the farmed landscape which provides a physical and visual separation or gaps between settlements. Protect the individual identity of towns and villages, and retain their sense of physical and visual separation. Resist pressure for development on the slopes or the ridgeline which provides physical and visual separation between settlements, particularly Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross.
- Maintain and enhance the character of rural lanes resisting unsympathetic highways improvements, infrastructure and signage, particularly in the most rural areas.
- Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.
- Use appropriate woodland, hedgerow and tree planting to help integrate roads into the landscape including the Shinfield Eastern Relief Road. Encourage retention of wooded edges and boundaries along roads and minimising fencing and other boundary structures.

- Take care in the siting and design of vertical elements e.g. communication masts and the siting and design of large agricultural buildings so they do not impact on the valuable characteristics of this landscape.
- Reduce and prevent further noise and light pollution through the sensitive siting of any new development, including infrastructure, and especially any proposed night-time lighting.

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