

Strowdes Estate Landscape Visual Appraisal

Introduction (Site context map - 1km)



Figure 2 : Site Location and Context

Drawing notes

Estate Boundary

Other site boundaries

Application Site Boundary

1km Buffer

0

200

1000

1800 M

Image data sources

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Bradley-Hole Schoenaich Landscape

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Methodology

2.1: This appraisal considers two separate, but inter-linked issues as follows:

- Landscape Issues: The physical and cultural characteristics of the Site and its surroundings, and the landscape character of the local area; and
- Visual Issues: Views from visual receptors surrounding the Site and the amenity value of these views.

2.2: In considering these issues the standard industry guidance for good practice, on which the methodology adopted for this appraisal is based, includes the following guidance:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) 2013; and
- 'Landscape Character Assessment', the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) 2002.

The methodology adopted comprised a combination of desktop and field studies including the following:

- An overview of statutory plans and other data regarding relevant designations and planning policies for the area;
- A topographical analysis of the Site, using OS profile data, to establish the topography of the area and zone of theoretical visibility of the Site itself;
- An assessment of the landscape character of the Site, together with the sensitivity of the landscape to change. This includes the classification of the landscape into units of distinct and recognisable character;
- Identification of representative viewpoints and classifications of sensitivity;
- Consideration of the likely potential landscape and visual effects which might result from the proposed scheme options.

2.3: The visual analysis is based on views from external spaces within the public domain and not from inside buildings or private spaces. (Views from within the private grounds and from within the adjacent listed parkland are included for information only). Photographs were taken from selected viewpoints with a digital camera with the equivalent of a 50mm lens.

2.4: Where consideration is given to the likely potential

landscape and visual effects which might result from the proposed scheme options, the process of landscape and visual impact assessment is referred to. Whilst impact assessment is not carried out in this appraisal, the potential landscape and visual effects are considered with an understanding of the assessment process and include the following elements:

- The sensitivity of the affected landscape;
- The sensitivity of the visual receptor; and
- The nature and extent of the potential change that would occur.

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Landscape and Visual Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy (2021)

3.1.1: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. In describing the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, paragraph 174 (a) states policies and decisions should be “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);

Regional Planning

Wokingham Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment 2019

3.1.2: The Site lies within the Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau. The southern parkland area, associated with the Stowdes Estate, lies within the adjacent Remenham Wooded Chalk Slopes.

For the E1 ‘Remenham Arable Chalk Pasture’ LCA, it states: Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau has a moderate sensitivity with the overall strategy being to enhance the existing character.

It is characterised by:

A flat, elevated and open landscape dominated by arable farmland. Settlement is restricted to the linear cluster of buildings at Remenham Hill. The designed estate landscape at Park Place results in there being little public access. There are impressive views of the wooded hills of High Knowl and Bottom Boles Wood to the south.

In the ‘Key Characteristics’ section, it highlights the following relating to scenic quality and expands upon them in the text:

Predominantly flat landform with upland ‘plateau’ character, underlain predominately by Chalk; large scale agricultural landscape intensively farmed for arable production; large open fields with relatively few hedgerow trees; restored hedgerows and shelterbelt planting along the rural lanes; generally unwooded, although shelterbelt planting and strips of both mixed and priority habitat lowland mixed deciduous woodland can be found along rural lanes and tracks with larger copses within Park Place estate; valuable semi-natural

habitats including local wildlife sites;designed landscape at Park Place (Grade II* Registered Park and Garden) on the plateau edge and exploits views over the Thames to the Chilterns; new estates recently created to the east of Park Place with new country mansions set in mature parkland; largely unsettled landscape characterised by scattered farmsteads and individual houses linked by narrow lanes; Remenham Hill is the only settlement and consists of a ribbon of large, detached 19th and 20th century houses.

Other Related Designations and Environmental Considerations

Valued Landscapes Topic Paper January 2020

3.1.3: The Valued Landscape Topic Paper identifies the Chiltern Chalks as one of the areas within the study. It describes the area as:

The Chilterns Chalk Valued Landscape sits on a chalk plateau to the east of Henley-on-Thames. It is bounded by the River Thames Valued Landscape along roads traversing the foot of the chalk scarp roughly along the 40m contour to the west and north. To the south it meets the Bowsey Hill Valued Landscape to the south-east. The Valued Landscape shown in the borough’s Local Plan Update stops at the boundary with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. However, the Valued Landscape itself may continue across the boundary into the neighbouring area. In addition, this Valued Landscape shares many characteristics with the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which lies to the north, just a short distance across the River Thames Valued Landscape.

The Valued Landscape incorporates two Landscape Character Areas (LCA): D1 ‘Remenham Wooded Chalk Slopes’ and E1 ‘Remenham Arable Chalk Pasture’ as categorised in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA) (2019).

Rarity – Assessing rarity of landscape types and individual features is difficult, but a number of sources can assist. The Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment (WDLCA) (2004) provided an indication of this in the assessment of sensitivity where it assessed the re-creatability of landscape elements. Helpfully, it identifies a comprehensive list of nationally important elements: the ancient woodland, remnant chalk grassland, historic

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Landscape and Visual Planning Policy Context

parkland and gardens of Park Place and Temple Combe, the dramatic landform, the perceptual characteristics (remoteness), the intervisibility of the landscape with the River Thames [Valued Landscape], and most importantly the Chilterns AONB.

On the plateau, the WDLCA (2004), whilst acknowledging the only local (borough) importance of the landuse pattern, places particular importance on the flat landform, the sense of openness and views.

All of these features are highlighted in the most recent Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019). However, a new element should be included, which is the inter-visibility of the landscape with the Bowsey Hill Valued Landscape. A further element which is often overlooked is the underlying chalk geology and calcareous soils.

Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update : Proposed Submission Plan 2023-2040 (To be potentially adopted 2026)

Policy NE6: Valued Landscapes

3.1.4: This policy designates 13 specific areas within the borough as Valued Landscapes, recognised for their distinctive landscape character and special qualities. The Estate site lies within the Remenham Chalk Valued Landscape, one of the borough's designated areas of particular landscape importance.

Development within or affecting these landscapes must protect their distinctive features and character, having regard to key landscape attributes, including:

1. Landscape quality (condition)
2. Scenic quality
3. Rarity
4. Representativeness
5. Conservation interests
6. Recreation value
7. Perceptual aspects
8. Associations

Proposals will only be supported if they protect, and where possible, enhance or integrate with these valued characteristics. Development that would harm these qualities will only be permitted if the benefits clearly outweigh the

harm.

The policy is informed by the Landscape Character Assessment and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) to ensure decisions are based on an objective understanding of landscape value.

While these 13 areas are formally identified, the policy can also apply to other valued landscapes identified through future assessments or mechanisms.

Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Managing Development Delivery 2014 Policy TB21 (Landscape Character)

3.1.5: The Landscape Character Policy calls for:

1. 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.
2. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

Public Rights of Way

3.2: The Chiltern Way wraps around the north and east of the Site, for a short period, running directly beside the development. The Chiltern Way loops over the River Thames and runs along the west bank of the river. To the south east, the PROW of Penny Lane crosses other public footpaths that cross Crazies Hill and head north west towards the Site. Despite the proximity and number of public footpaths, views into the Site is completely screened by intervening topography, mature hedgerows and woodlands. (Refer Figure 3)

Tree Preservation Orders

3.3: There are a number of trees with tree preservation orders on the Site, TPO refs 345 – 1987 (A1), 345 – 1987 (G1) and 345 – 1987 (G3). An Arboricultural Report has been undertaken to identify whether trees adjacent to the Site will be impacted by the works or the construction process.

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Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Listed Gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

3.4: The Site is not within a Conservation Area.

3.5: There are a few listed buildings within the study area, all of which are listed Grade II, none of which have visibility of the Site. (Refer Figure 4)

3.6: The Site lies within the Grade II* listed registered Parks and Gardens of Park Place and Temple Combe. (Refer Figure 4)

Historic Setting

3.7: The first edition ordnance survey plan of 1895 (Refer Figure 5) shows the Site within its context to the west of Park Place.

The Site lies close to what was Kenton's Farm complex. This area was characterised as parkland, with structural belts of woodland and individual parkland tree groups, set within open parkland.