

# VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## PHASE I LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF EIGHT ADDITIONAL CONTINGENCY HOUSING SITES AT EAST HANNEY, KINGSTON BAGPUIZE, HARWELL OXFORD CAMPUS, PROPOSED OXFORD GARDEN CITY SITE, SOUTH SHRIVENHAM AND SOUTH RADLEY

SITES ASSESSED IN ADDITION TO  
*VALE OF WHITE HORSE LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY 2014: CONTINGENCY SITES (FEB. 2014)*

### PHASE I REPORT

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## **I. Introduction**

- I.1 Following the publication of the *Vale of White Horse Landscape Capacity Study 2014: Contingency Sites* in February 2014, the Vale of White Horse District Council held an additional housing consultation as part of the preparation of the Local Plan 2031. Arising from this consultation the Council received a request for a number of additional sites to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan. From this, a short list of eight sites was selected to be considered further as part of a Phase I landscape assessment.
- I.2 This report comprises the Phase I initial landscape and visual assessment of eight sites: Land south of East Hanney (site 13); two at Kingston Bagpuize (sites 48 and 49); two at Harwell Oxford Campus (sites 50 and 51); a large area to the west of Didcot promoted as a potential Oxford Garden City site (site 52); South West Shrivenham (site 53); and South Radley (site 54). The Phase I assessment includes a site familiarisation, review of relevant landscape character assessments and settlement pattern and a preliminary landscape and visual sensitivity assessment. It sets out preliminary recommendations on whether each site has some potential for housing.
- I.3 The full study *Vale of White Horse Landscape Capacity Study 2014: Contingency Sites* (February 2014) sets out a summary of relevant local plan policies, principles of development within the North Wessex Downs AONB and the role of sites in providing areas of open countryside between settlements.

## 2. Overview of existing landscape character assessment

2.1 The 8 contingency site options fall within the following local landscape character areas and landscape types as defined in the Vale of White Horse District Council's Planning Advisory Note 2006; North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study 2004 (OWLS). These are set out below.

**Table 1: Landscape character of sites**

Landscape character area	OWLS (landscape character types)	Contingency site options	Key characteristics / guidance
<b>AONB 5C: Hendred Plain</b>	LCT12 Rolling Farmland	<p>50: North west of Harwell Oxford Campus</p> <p>51: South of Harwell Oxford Campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level topography dipping gently north</li> <li>• Largely arable with large regular parliamentary enclosure fields</li> <li>• Shelter belts</li> <li>• Settled landscape of springline villages of mainly clustered form</li> <li>• Quiet rural area</li> <li>• Significant development at Harwell Oxford Campus</li> <li>• Open landscape vulnerable to large scale development</li> <li>• Sensitivity of the edge of the AONB at Wantage and Harwell to new development</li> <li>• Need to conserve the distinctive settlement pattern of nucleated villages along the spring line</li> <li>• Need to conserve the skyline of the higher hills</li> </ul>

Landscape character area	OWLS (landscape character types)	Contingency site options	Key characteristics / guidance
<b>VWH North Vale Corallian Ridge</b>	LCT19 Wooded Estatelands	<p>48: Kingston Bagpuize East</p> <p>49: Kingston Bagpuize South</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly undulating rolling topography with localised steep slopes</li> <li>• Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable size</li> <li>• Large parklands and mansion houses with estate character</li> <li>• Regularly shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields</li> <li>• Medium to large fields</li> <li>• Thorn and elm hedges</li> <li>• Views to area from the Vale</li> <li>• Views through tree cover and framed by woodland</li> <li>• Abingdon is sited on the junction of the Rivers Thames and Ock</li> <li>• Settlement pattern of nucleated villages on the hill tops and along the springline with low density of dispersed settlement</li> <li>• Small villages of strong vernacular character</li> <li>• Conserve and maintain semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland. Promote the establishment and management of medium to large-scale deciduous and mixed plantations in areas where the landscape structure is particularly weak</li> <li>• Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species</li> <li>• Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type</li> <li>• Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows and, where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle</li> <li>• Conserve parklands and their associated landscape features such as stone walls, lakes, mature trees and woods</li> <li>• Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly within parklands</li> <li>• Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting</li> <li>• Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as quarries, landfill sites, airfields and large-scale development, such as new barns and industrial units, with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area</li> <li>• Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements</li> </ul>

Landscape character area	OWLS (landscape character types)	Contingency site options	Key characteristics / guidance
	LCT15 Terrace Farmland	54: South Radley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad flat or low lying gravel terraces gently rising from the Thames valley floor</li> <li>• Medium scale arable fields close to Radley with some semi-improved grassland</li> <li>• Absence of field boundaries</li> <li>• Localised tree lined ditches</li> <li>• Sparse tree cover and woodland uncommon</li> <li>• Open large scale landscape</li> <li>• Parkland at Wick Hall</li> <li>• Open views with filtered views through tree lined streams</li> <li>• Abingdon is sited on the junction of the Rivers Thames and Ock</li> <li>• Small and large nucleated villages outside of Abingdon</li> <li>• Strengthen the field pattern by planting up new and gappy hedges, particularly along roadsides, using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as crack willow, oak and ash</li> <li>• Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and, where appropriate, pollarding willows</li> <li>• Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as crack willow, oak and ash</li> <li>• Safeguard, maintain and enhance the characteristic landscape features of existing parklands including mature trees, avenues of trees, lakes, woods and walls</li> <li>• Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</li> </ul>
<b>VWH Lowland Vale</b>	LCT1 Alluvial Lowlands	52: Oxford Garden City (south part)  13: Land south of East Hanney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive alluvial flats and gravel terraces</li> <li>• Flat open landscape</li> <li>• Low hills formed from Kimmeridge Clays protruding through alluvial flats and gravel terraces</li> <li>• Arable farming on large regular fields</li> <li>• Chequer board agricultural landscape</li> <li>• Sparsely wooded and few hedgerows</li> <li>• Small tree clumps, particularly around villages, farmhouses and in some fields</li> <li>• Pattern of hedged fields is a distinctive feature, although it is not always obvious where it is flat</li> </ul>

Landscape character area	OWLS (landscape character types)	Contingency site options	Key characteristics / guidance
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many internal field hedges south of Abingdon are fragmented and gappy, particularly where they enclose arable land</li> <li>• In need of landscape enhancement (tree and hedgerow planting, small woodlands and tree belts)</li> <li>• Detracting elements (eg Didcot Power Station, A34)</li> <li>• Long views over open landscape (including to Didcot power station and associated power lines)</li> <li>• Long views to the Chilterns and Berkshire Downs</li> <li>• Views to the Corallian ridge</li> <li>• Abingdon is sited on the junction of the Rivers Thames and Ock</li> <li>• Small to medium-sized rural villages and dispersed farms</li> <li>• Largely located on raised gravel patches, numerous nucleated village settlements are often found centred around village greens with churches as focal points</li> <li>• Urban activity at Abingdon</li> <li>• Impact of new roads and road improvements</li> <li>• Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as willow and ash</li> <li>• Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type</li> <li>• Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows</li> <li>• Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses</li> <li>• Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses, such as industrial estates, gravel pits, landfill sites, airfields and the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</li> </ul>
	LCT3 Clay Vale	52: Oxford Garden City (small part in north west)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A flat, low-lying landform</li> <li>• Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized hedged fields</li> <li>• Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees</li> <li>• Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars</li> <li>• Small to medium-sized nucleated villages</li> </ul>

Landscape character area	OWLS (landscape character types)	Contingency site options	Key characteristics / guidance
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dominated by improved and semi-improved grassland which is often located around settlements and adjacent to small streams and watercourses</li> <li>Well-defined network of intact hedges</li> </ul>
	LCT12 Rolling Farmland	53: South West Shrivenham (north-east part)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prominent rolling landscape</li> <li>Large geometric intensively managed arable fields enclosed by weak hedgerows</li> <li>Thinly distributed hedgerow trees</li> <li>Locally prominent blocks of ancient woodland</li> <li>Localised small streams providing some variation to the open intensively managed landscape.</li> <li>Open distant views are common</li> <li>More filtered views where fields are better enclosed</li> <li>Small to medium sized villages, of a nuclear pattern originally and better preserved at Shrivenham</li> <li>Shrivenham is typical of villages on the spring line at the foot of the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash</li> <li>Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type</li> <li>Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows</li> <li>Promote the sustainable management of existing ancient semi-natural woodland to safeguard its long-term survival</li> <li>Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak and ash</li> <li>Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</li> </ul>

Landscape character area	OWLS (landscape character types)	Contingency site options	Key characteristics / guidance
	<b>LCT10 River Meadowlands</b>	52: Oxford Garden City (north part)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a linear riverine landscape with a flat, well-defined alluvial floodplain. It has pastoral character with meadows, wet and semi-improved pasture. Flat, low-lying topography with seasonally flooded alluvial floodplains</li> <li>• Meandering river channels</li> <li>• Grazing meadows and small fields of permanent pasture</li> <li>• Riparian character with a strong pattern of riverside willows and tree-lined ditches.</li> <li>• Sparsely settled with a few roads</li> <li>• Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland particularly on land adjacent to rivers and other watercourses</li> <li>• Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash</li> <li>• Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type</li> <li>• Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined rivers and other watercourses by planting willows and alders and, where appropriate, pollarding willows</li> <li>• Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as willows and alders</li> <li>• Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns with the judicious planting of appropriate tree and shrub species characteristic of the landscape type. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</li> <li>• Maintain high standards of restoration at gravel pits to accommodate a range of after-uses that integrate successfully with the character of the surrounding landscape</li> </ul>



### **3. Phase I Assessment**

- 3.1 The sites are all subject to landscape and visual constraints to a greater or lesser degree. The purpose of this Phase I assessment is to identify over-riding constraints based on the presence of environmental designations and on the contribution to site makes to local landscape character and the wider landscape; on visual prominence; and on the relationship of the site to the settlement pattern (as defined by the local landscape).

#### **Relationship with the wider landscape**

- 3.3 Each site has been assessed for its importance, and contribution, to the adjacent wider rural landscape and the degree to which it shares common characteristics with the wider landscape.

#### **Visual prominence**

- 3.4 Each site has been assessed for its level of visual prominence in the landscape. At this stage this is based on views out from the site (with some exceptions where views into the site were particularly noted). Some sites were noted as widely prominent, others locally prominent.

#### **Relationship to settlement**

- 3.5 Each site has been assessed for the level of urbanising influence from the adjacent built form, the degree of enclosure by the existing settlement, and the pattern of uses and development within the settlement.

#### **Recommendations**

- 3.6 The recommendations in the following Table 2 are based on an initial assessment of each site following site visits, a review of the relevant landscape character assessment and a preliminary assessment of potential visual impacts. They identify those sites that may present an opportunity for housing and those sites which have over-riding landscape or visual constraints which make it unlikely that they would be suitable for housing.
- 3.7 Table 2 below sets out the Phase I assessment and recommendations.

**Table 2: Assessment of Sites**

Site no.	Settlement	Designations	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Recommendations – subject to more detailed review	Proceed to Phase 2
<b>13: Land south of East Hanney</b>	East Hanney	Lowland Vale	North-west part is typical of pattern of pasture with trees forming the pastoral landscape setting to the village and lies adjacent to Letcombe Brook; East and south part is part of a large arable field extending to Bradfield Grove Farm typical of the LCT	Highly prominent in views from the south and Summertown; Potential views from AONB 6km to the south	Northern section contributes to setting to Mill buildings and Conservation Area; Whole site out of scale with village pattern; The site lies beyond southern extent of village, extending into open countryside; Part of open landscape which contributes to maintaining the separate identity of Grove and East Hanney	Some very limited potential for development. This would be restricted to the north-edge of the contingency site within the area of grassland to link with the adjacent houses. Development elsewhere would result in harm to the wider landscape, the settlement pattern and its landscape setting, and in a visual impact on the southern approach to East Hanney	NO – only suitable for very small scale housing next to Summertown
<b>48: Kingston Bagpuize East</b>	Kingston Bagpuize	North Vale Corallian Ridge	Somewhat typical of LCA, but also to adjacent LCA Rolling Farmland to north. Cut off from countryside to north by A420 which forms the northern site boundary. Part of farmland setting to north east side of Kingston Bagpuize.	North field is locally prominent in views from two busy roads. Southern field is open to views from a PRow and a quieter road.	Part of western boundary is adjacent to settlement, with the south west corner close to the Conservation Area (towards the eastern edge of the village); The village edge adjacent to the site is largely well vegetated; To the south of the site, low density built form extends along	Some potential for development subject to more detailed study, particularly of the settlement pattern and Conservation Area	YES

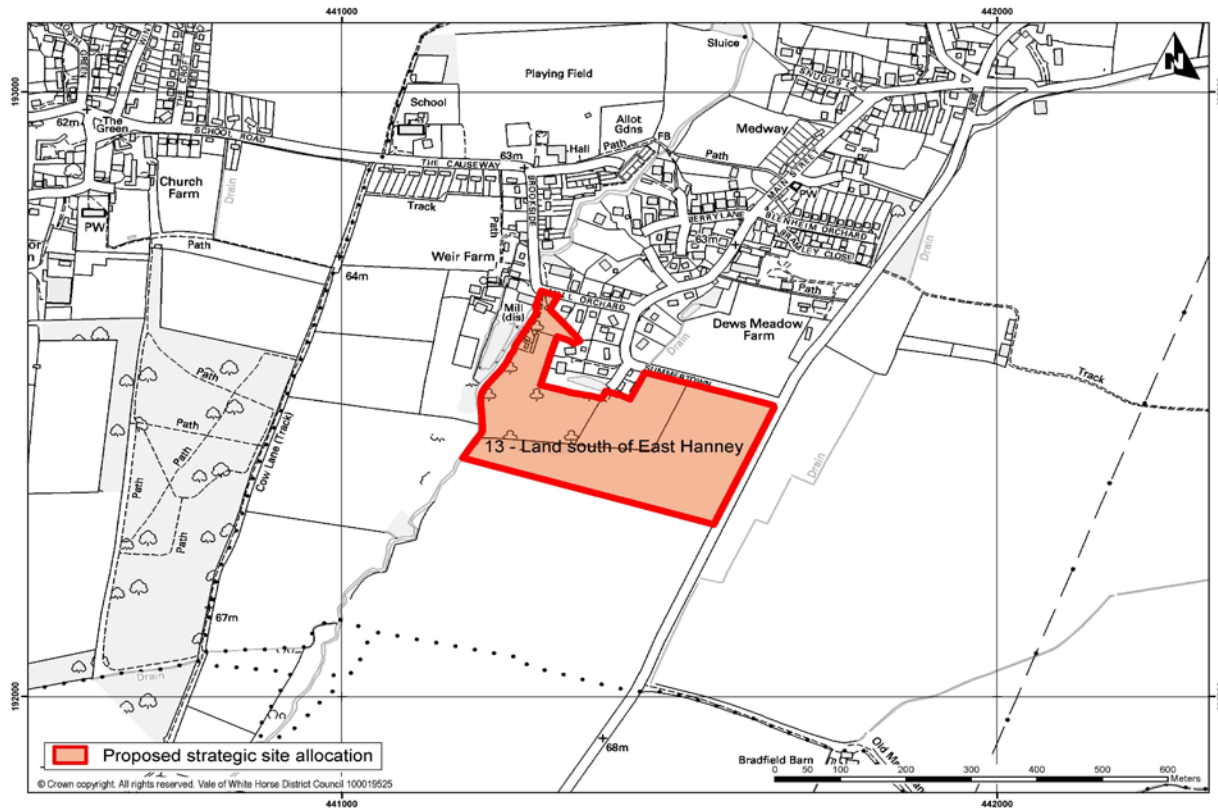
Site no.	Settlement	Designations	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Recommendations – subject to more detailed review	Proceed to Phase 2
					Oxford Road, the eastern extent of which lines up with the eastern edge of site, delineated by Aelfrith's Dyke; Modern housing to the north and centre of the village extends up to the A420 as does the northern edge of the site		
<b>49: Kingston Bagpuize South</b>	Kingston Bagpuize	North Vale Corallian Ridge	Generally typical of LCA though largely flat and north field is pasture. Strong links with the countryside to the south.	Large, open prominent field to south. North field less prominent.	North field lies adjacent to settlement on northern and eastern sides, though edge of settlement is generally well vegetated; The southern boundary of the north field lines up with the southern edge of settlement; The southern field extends well beyond the settlement limit	Potential harm to landscape character and settlement pattern	NO
<b>50: North West of Harwell Oxford Campus</b>		North Wessex Downs AONB	Western field typical of LCA - though partly enclosed – but strongly linked to landscape to north.	Visually contained with few publicly available views, though Icknield Way passes along southern	Eastern part of site contains housing and is adjacent to the campus to the south, with the A4185 forming the	Potential for housing on this site subject to more detailed study	YES

Site no.	Settlement	Designations	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Recommendations – subject to more detailed review	Proceed to Phase 2
			Eastern part contains housing and parkland-type landscape linked to campus to the south.	boundary. Northern part of western field visible from the north.	eastern boundary; The western field is adjacent to the campus grounds and sewage works to the east		
<b>51: South of Harwell Oxford Campus</b>		North Wessex Downs AONB	Open, large-scale rural landscape typical of LCA	Visually prominent from the AONB to the south including from the Ridgeway national trail and parking area less than 1km to the south, as well as other local footpaths, the A34 and local road to West Ilsley	Part of northern boundary adjacent to new housing site, but separated by strong tree belt; A34 forms the eastern boundary; Much of site remote from any settlement	Potential for harm to the AONB	NO
<b>52: Oxford Garden City</b>	Adjacent to / between Marcham, East Hanney, Steventon	Lowland Vale  Area for Landscape Enhancement (eastern part of site)	Large site covering 3 different LCTs, with the landscape typical of the LCTs but forming a strongly linked, low-lying and gently undulating landscape overall. This is defined by the ridges to the north and south, is sparsely settled and generally more rural and tranquil to the centre and east. Character changes are apparent	Variable but largely flat and open, with little woodland. Increased degree of enclosure south of Marcham created by riverine trees and shelterbelts. Not widely accessible by road but with a number of PROWs across the site. Long and wide views available particularly from western edge, including north to the	Generally unsettled except the 3 villages at the edges (Marcham to the north, East Hanney to the south west and Steventon to the south east) and with the A34 defining part of the eastern boundary, with Drayton beyond; The south eastern section is most influenced by the A34 and the proximity of Drayton, Milton and Didcot	Potential for limited housing on this site subject to more detailed study, but most likely to be small areas associated with existing settlements. The whole area is not suitable for a new garden city settlement due to a number of important landscape and visual constraints, including harm to landscape character, presence in flood zone and visual harm	NO – not as a potential garden city location

Site no.	Settlement	Designations	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Recommendations – subject to more detailed review	Proceed to Phase 2
			between the north and south parts of the site, with more woodland and enclosure in the north. The small area of LCT3 Clay Vale towards the north west corner is less obviously distinct. Much of the northern and western parts of the site (mostly within LCT10 River Meadowlands) are within the flood plain of the River Ock and its tributaries	Corallian Ridge, south to the North Wessex Downs and east, where Didcot power station is most visible.			
<b>53: South West Shrivenham</b>	Shrivenham	Lowland Vale  Line of the Wilts and Berks Canal to the south	Open landscape setting to Wilts and Berks Canal. Typical of open rolling landscape around Shrivenham but also a transitional landscape with the Clay Vales to the south	Strong visual links with higher ground to the south in the North Wessex Downs. Locally enclosed	In area of very low density on south-west edge of village; Exposed new housing development to north and modern estates to east of Station Road	Some potential for development but would be limited to the north-east quadrant of the contingency site to link with the adjacent existing settlement in order to avoid harm to the wider landscape, the nuclear settlement pattern and the potential visual impacts on the setting of the AONB	YES
<b>54: South</b>	Radley	North Vale Corallian Ridge	North and western part are small in scale	Exposed to views from higher ground	Northern part is in recreational and	Recommended for removal from Green Belt	YES

Site no.	Settlement	Designations	Relationship with the wider landscape	Visual prominence	Relationship with settlement pattern	Recommendations – subject to more detailed review	Proceed to Phase 2
<b>Radley</b>		Green Belt	and not typical of the wider landscape in LCT15 Terrace Farmland. Eastern part is in arable use and reflects the LCT15 Terrace Farmland pattern	to the west including Nuneham Park. Potential views from the river Thames but likely to be screened	communal use related to the settlement; Western part is influenced by mixed built from either side of Thrupps Lane; Eastern part adjoins Gooseacre but less well related to the settlement	in Phase 3 Green Belt Review February 2014 Some potential for development subject to more detailed study, particularly of the potential visual impact on the views from the west and potential harm to the wider landscape. Major tree planting along the eastern boundary would not be out of keeping if designed to link into existing tree cover and reflect local vegetation patterns	

Site 13: Land south of East Hanney



**Site 48: Kingston Bagpuize East**

