



VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY 2014: SITE OPTIONS

Vale of White Horse District Council
Kirkham Landscape Planning Limited
The Terra Firma Consultancy Limited

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1. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

1.1. Landscape Capacity Study: Contingency Sites (LCSCS)

The Landscape Capacity Study: Contingency Sites comprises two main sets of documents:

- A set of summary Site Reports covering each contingency site. Where a contingency site has been sub-divided into landscape character areas, a separate Report has been prepared for each sub area;
- A set of Record Sheets of each contingency site (and those of the sub areas where they vary within the site). These record the intrinsic landscape and visual attributes; the relationship between the site and the settlement edge and the wider landscape; and evidence of landscape value. These Record sheets are included in Appendix A.

1.2. Record Sheets

The information set out in the Record sheets sets out an objective record of the attributes of each site on which a professional assessment of sensitivity and capacity can be made. This information is used to inform landscape and visual sensitivity, wider sensitivity and landscape value. A description of the Methodology is set out under Section 3.

1.3. Site Reports

- 1.3.1 Each Site Report sets out the process of analysing the landscape sensitivity and capacity of each site, identifying the key elements that support the conclusions. Each Site Report includes a plan showing the extent of the site option and the landscape capacity for the whole site (or occasionally sub-divided into site based landscape character areas) with the location of the key viewpoints illustrated in the photographs. The photographic material is selected to illustrate particular features of significance which have been raised in the text.
- 1.3.2 The Site Report goes on to identify that part of the site option that may be able to accommodate development without significant harm to the landscape and visual qualities of the site, its landscape setting, the landscape setting of local heritage, cultural and ecological assets and the distinctive settlement pattern of the adjoining settlement or distinctive and separate character of nearby settlements. In some cases, the whole site may be identified as suitable for development but most commonly the Site Report will identify a part of the site as suitable for development. In other cases the whole site may be considered unsuitable and may be recommended as not applicable for further consideration on landscape and visual grounds. These conclusions include the key factors supporting the recommendation.

- I.3.3 Where a site option has some capacity for development, the Site Report sets out the area of potential for development (which may often be a reduced area), and the maximum housing capacity of the site option, subject to a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment of the site at the planning application stage. The area is plotted on a second plan with recommendations for Green Infrastructure to integrate the site into the landscape, or adjacent townscape, and to provide links with adjacent landscape assets.

1.4. Summary of Recommendations

- I.4.1 The conclusions and recommendations of the site Reports are brought together in Table A enabling a comparison of the relative landscape capacity of each site and potential for Green Infrastructure.

1.5. Supporting Figures

Figure A: Location of contingency site options

Figure B: Landscape designations

Figure C: Vale of White Horse landscape character areas and OWLS landscape character types

Figure D: Bio-diversity

Figure E: Heritage

Figure F: Recreation

Figure G: Topography and flood zones

1.6. Supporting Appendices

Appendix A: Site Record Sheets (field notes)

Appendix B: Bibliography

Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. General

- 2.1 Vale of White Horse Council appointed Kirkham Landscape Planning Limited in partnership with The Terra Firma Consultancy Limited in July 2013 to produce a Landscape Capacity Study of Contingency Sites (LCSCS) in the Vale of White Horse. The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029 Part I Consultation Draft, February 2013, identifies a number of new homes to be provided in the area for the plan period until 2029. The housing target in the LPP1 consultation draft was based on the South East Plan target, rolled forward to 2029. However, an update to the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is currently being prepared, and will inform the housing figures in the final plan. A ‘contingency sites’ exercise has therefore been undertaken; to inform the identification of additional sites should these be needed in the final plan. This Landscape Capacity Study forms part of the evidence base for the contingency sites exercise.
- 2.2 The council undertook a site sift exercise, to identify those sites which are considered worthy of further consideration. This Study will provide the landscape evidence base to inform the Council’s contingency site evidence base. The distribution of the site options is identified in Figure A.
- 2.3 The Vale is an area of high landscape quality, with significant areas designated AONB or as local landscape character areas. It is therefore important that the selection of potential additional strategic housing sites for the Local Plan is informed by a landscape capacity assessment.
- 2.4 This landscape capacity work will not be considered in isolation. As a technical piece of work it will be used in conjunction with other evidence collected to inform potential housing site location and settlement expansion.
- 2.5 The aim of this study is to assess the landscape capacity of each of the potential contingency strategic housing sites. The assessment will help identify each site’s suitability for development, what their potential housing capacity may be and a general indication of any landscape enhancement or mitigation that may be required if the sites were taken forward for development.
- 2.6 The Study includes a review (and update as necessary) of the Vale of White Horse Landscape Assessment – Advice on the Landscape Impact of Further Development at Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage carried out in 2008.

2.7 The Council have identified potential contingency sites at the following locations:

Abingdon
 Appleford
 Botley
 Cumnor
 Didcot
 Drayton
 East Challow
 East Hanney
 Faringdon
 Grove
 Harwell Oxford Campus
 Harwell village

Kennington
 Marcham
 Milton Heights
 Radley
 Rowstock
 Shrivenham
 Stanford-in-the-Vale
 Steventon
 Steventon Storage Facility
 Sutton Courtney
 Wantage
 Wootton

2.8 Thirty eight contingency sites are being assessed by the Council within or adjacent to these settlements. Of these, two lie within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty AONB (Sites 17 and 19 Harwell Oxford Campus); five sites lie within the setting of the AONB (Site 9 South Wantage; Site 10 South Valley Park; Site 23 North East Challow; Site 39 Rowstock; and Site 44 Land west of Harwell village); and ten sites (Sites 1, 3, 22, 25, 28, 29 36, 37, 42 and 43 on the edges of Abingdon, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley, and Wootton) lie within the Green Belt.

2.9 The Study does not include a local landscape character assessment of the Vale of White Horse. The landscape character areas and types in the existing landscape character assessments are therefore taken as the starting point. However it was evident that in order to undertake an assessment of the comparative sensitivity and landscape capacity of the thirty eight sites, it is important to undertake a more detailed assessment of the sites, individually and in comparison with each other to ensure a consistency of approach.

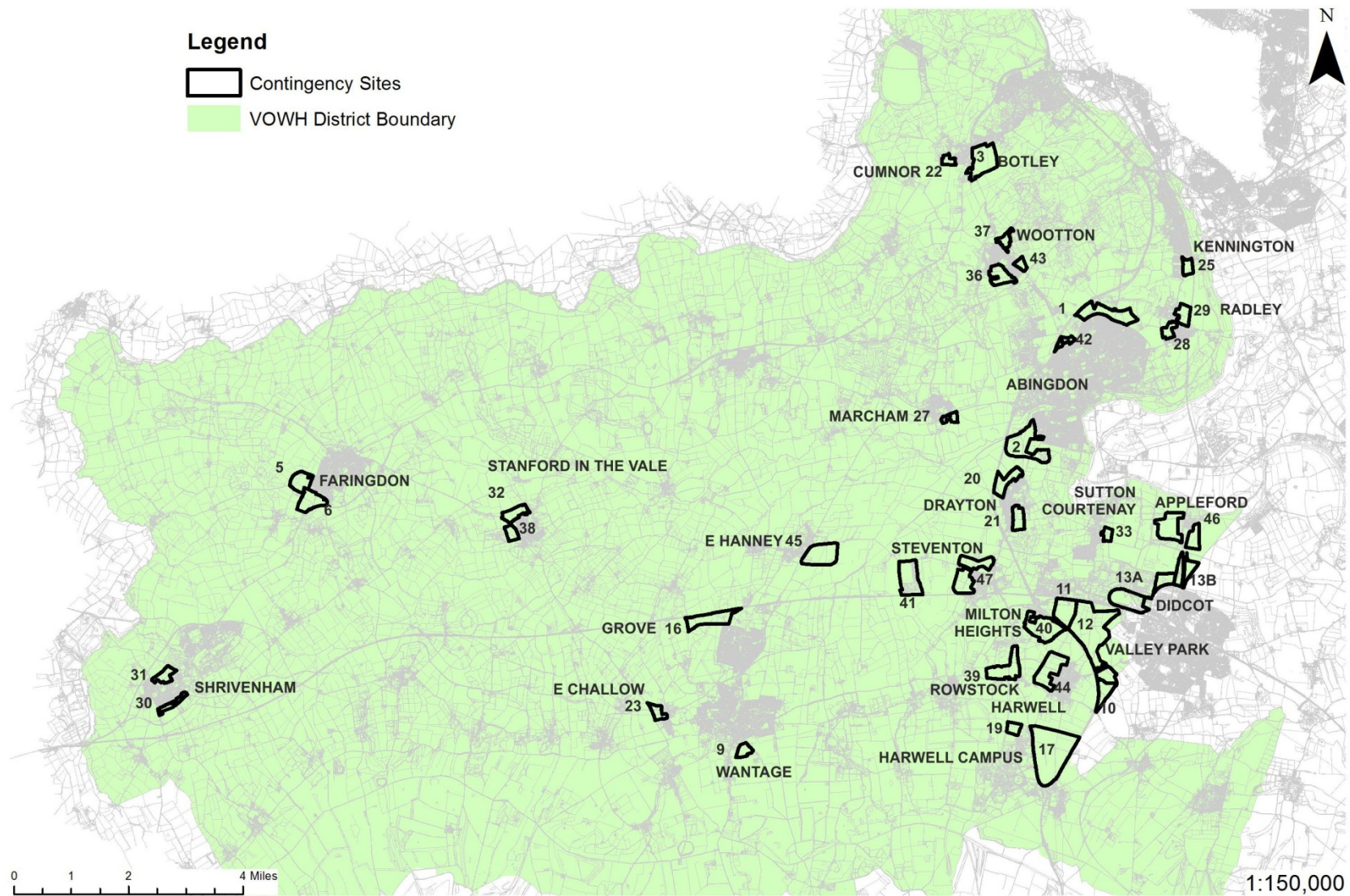
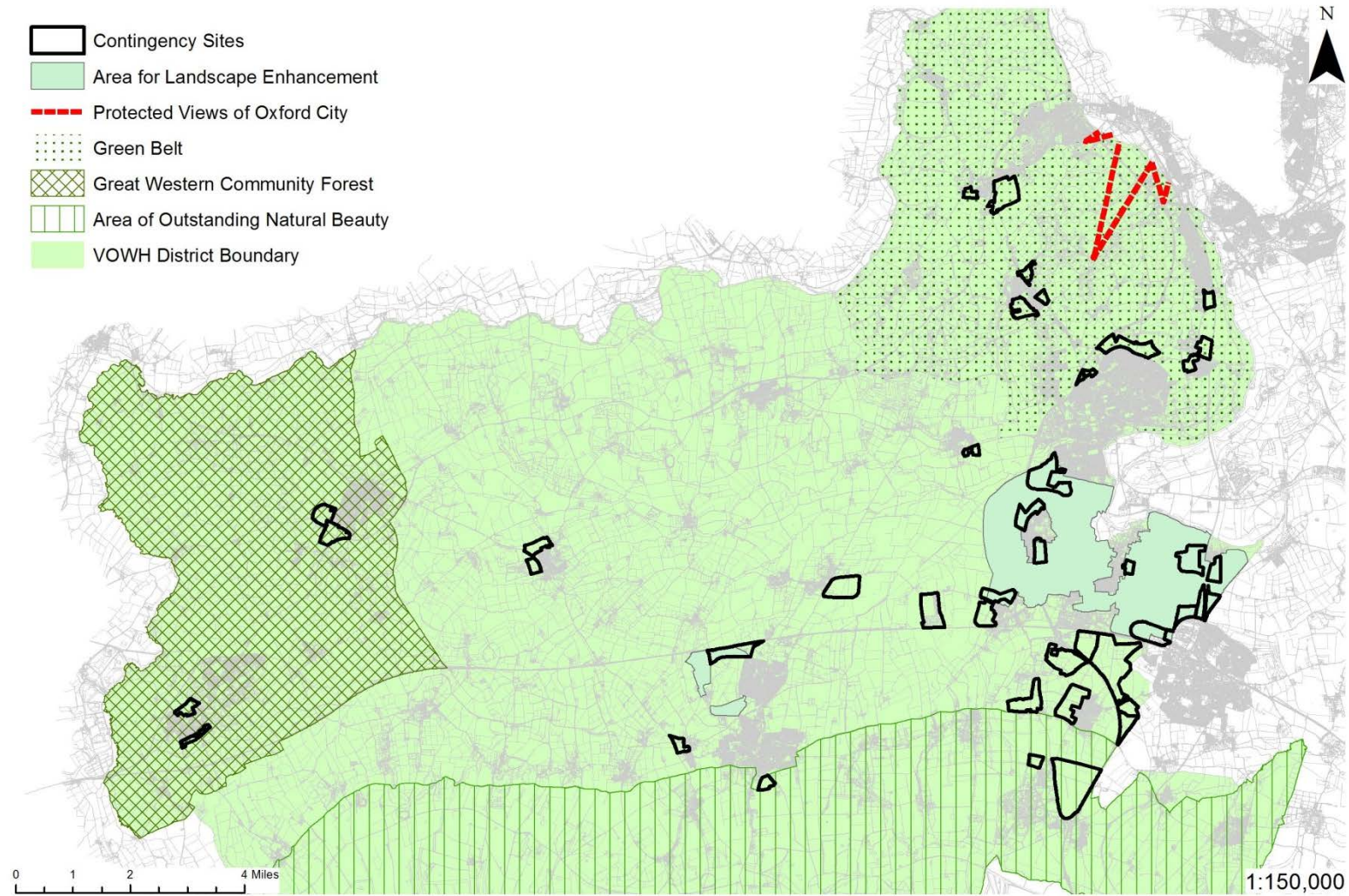


Figure A - Study area and contingency site locations

**Figure B – Policy Areas**

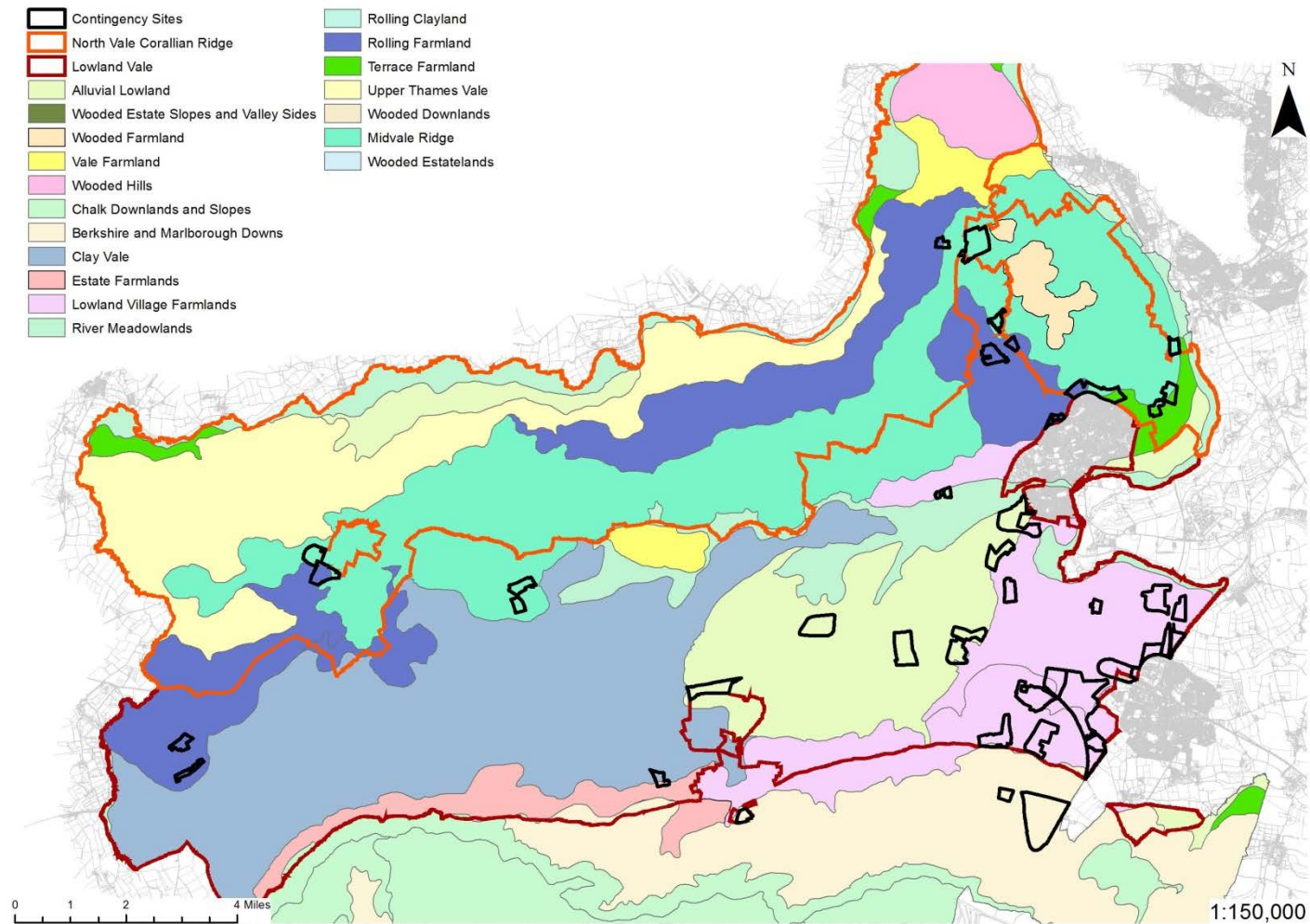


Figure C – Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study 2004