

NORTH ABINGDON

Land to the east of Oxford Road

Landscape and Visual Feasibility Study

by

Hankinson Duckett Associates

for

Vale of White Horse District Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Instructions

1.1.1 Hankinson Duckett Associates has been appointed to undertake a landscape and visual feasibility study of the land to the east of Oxford Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (*Plan HDA 1*). This report assesses the feasibility of the site to accept future housing development, broadly addressing the landscape and visual constraints on the site, opportunities within the site for development and assessing the resultant landscape capacity. The assessment includes part of a wider area (Site 1) already assessed within the Landscape Capacity Study 2014: Site Options (Ref 1), commissioned by Vale of White Horse District Council. The land to the west of Oxford Road has been identified as a potential site for housing and it is understood that this site would be developed prior to the assessment site.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 National landscape guidance uses landscape character as a basis for policy. Natural England, formally the Countryside Agency developed methodology for the character-based approach to landscape assessment (2002 – Ref 2). It describes the application of landscape character assessment at different scales: the national/regional scale, local authority scale and local scale. The third edition of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (Ref 3) sets out landscape assessment methodology, which provides the basis, with adaptation, for use in project-specific landscape impact assessment.

1.2.2 The approach to this landscape and visual assessment is based upon this latest guidance, and upon HDA's extensive practical experience of assessment work.

2 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 National planning policy

2.1.1 In March 2012, the 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF - Ref 4) was enacted, which sets out the national planning policy for England. Relevant sections of this document are discussed below.

2.1.2 Chapter 6 – Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes.

Paragraph 49 states that:

'Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

2.1.3 Chapter 7 – Requiring good design

'Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *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;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.'*

These are the key points relevant to the proposed development.

2.2 Local policy

2.2.1 The saved policies of Vale of White Horse District Local Plan (Ref 5) represent the local planning policy for the district. Relevant policies include heritage policies HE1 and HE4 and landscape policies NE6 and NE9. Policies HE1 and HE4 relate to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, along with their settings. Listed Buildings should be retained and the character of Conservation Areas and the settings of both heritage assets should be conserved.

2.2.2 The council's recent additional housing consultation (February 2014 – Ref 6), reflects the findings of the recently published 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (SHMA – Ref 7). The findings of the SHMA indicate that up to 20,560 new homes will be needed in the district during the period of the Plan 2011-2031 in order to meet the housing need as determined by the SHMA. This report looks at the potential for the study area to become an additional strategic site in order to meet the council's housing needs.

2.3 Green Belt

2.3.1 The study area and its surroundings are located within Green Belt. The aim of Green Belt designation is to '*prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open*' (paragraph 79 of NPPF – Ref 4).

Paragraph 80 lists the five purposes of the Green Belt. These are:

- *'to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land'*

2.3.2 The Vale of White Horse Green Belt Review was issued in February 2014 (Ref 8). The study area falls within land parcel 8 of the report, area 'B. Settlement edge of Abingdon: Radley Park'. The review looked at area B in relation to the Green Belt purposes of the

NPPF (listed above). The review stated that the Green Belt in this location made no contribution towards purposes 1 and 4; checking the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford (purpose 1) and preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford (purpose 4). The area contributes towards purpose 2 by maintaining the separation between Abingdon and Radley. The Green Belt in this area also has functions in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (purpose 3) and assisting urban regeneration (purpose 5). Any proposals for development on the study site would need to take these factors into consideration.

3 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 Location (*Plan HDA 1 - 3*)

3.1.1 The study area is located immediately to the north of Abingdon, bound by Oxford Road (A4183) to the west, Twelve Acre Drive to the south and Peach Croft Farm to the east. The majority of the northern boundary is contained by mature tree belts. The village of Radley is located approximately 800m to the east and Radley College and its grounds are located approximately 300m to the north-east of the nearest study area boundary. The A34 dual carriageway is located approximately 600m to the north-west.

3.2 Geology

3.2.1 The study area lies on the transition between the limestone ridge to the north-east of the study area and clay vales to the south-east. The higher ground to the north-west of the study area forms part of a long limestone ridge, known locally as the North Vale Corallian Ridge. This is formed on Corallian beds, which are a mix of sands and sandy limestones. The Corallian beds are associated with light sandy soils, which support arable production. Gravels overlay the clay to the south-east of the study area, formed by deposits from the River Thames.

3.3 Landform and drainage (*Plan HDA 2*)

3.3.1 The distinct geology of the area is reflected in the local landform. The Corallian Ridge forms a broad ridge of higher ground, with an approximate height of 85m AOD to the north of the site at Lodge Hill. The ground rises further to the north-west beyond the A34, with a high point of 120m AOD on the southern edge of Boars Hill to the north of Sunningwell. The study area is located between 70 and 60m AOD. The highest ground is to the north-west, which forms part of a south-east facing slope. The land within the study area flattens out to the south-east around Peach Croft Farm.

3.3.2 A stream runs through the study area, fed by water from the fish pond at Radley College to the north-east. The stream exits the study area through a culvert under Twelve Acre Drive, the road running along the southern boundary to the study area. Ditches are located within the tree belts at the north-west boundary and within the study area.

3.4 Local land use and vegetation (Plan HDA 3)

3.4.1 The land to the north of Abingdon is dominated by large regular arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and tree belts. A more varied land use surrounds Peach Croft Farm, with fields supporting different crops, interspersed with shelterbelts. Fields in pasture lie to the north and west of Peach Croft Farm, to the south of the stream.

3.4.2 To the north-east is Radley College. The legacy of the original parkland landscape is still apparent, although very little parkland remains and the landscape is not designated. The land to the north of the college now supports the college playing fields and the land to the immediate west of the college is a golf course. A double avenue of trees lines the bridleway to the west of the college and another avenue extends south from the college to White's Lane.

3.4.3 The study area comprises arable fields to the north of the stream and pasture to the south of the stream. The study area is well vegetated with mature tree belts and copses compartmentalising the arable land, and riverine trees and vegetation lining the stream, a line of poplar trees forming the south-eastern edge and a solid line of trees lining Twelve Acre Drive to the south of the study area. This vegetation forms a strong landscape structure to the study area and provides a high level of visual containment where the vegetation is present.

3.5 Designations (Plan HDA 3)

3.5.1 The study area and surrounding landscape lie within Green Belt and is subject to the constraints of relevant national and local plan policy (see section 2.3).

3.5.2 Listed buildings – There are a number of listed buildings in the local area including Peach Croft Barn, to the east of the study area, parts of Radley College and the Church of St James, located beyond the college to the north-east of the study area.

3.6 Landscape character

3.6.1 The study area is located within the Midvale Ridge National character area (Ref 9). Relevant key characteristics include:

- *'Low, irregular wooded limestone ridge giving way to a series of isolated steep-sided tabular hills in the east which rise from the surrounding clay vales.*
- *Contrast between the moderately elevated limestone hills and ridges and the surrounding low-lying clay vales.*
- *Drained mostly by small springs and streams which run into the Thames, Thame and Ock.*

- *Well wooded – a third of the woodland is designated ancient woodland.*
- *Mixed pastoral and arable landscape with large, geometric fields divided by hedges and regularly spaced hedgerow trees punctuated by blocks of woodland.*
- *Locally quarried limestone commonly used as building material for local houses.*
- *Settlement pattern of nucleated villages on the hill tops and along the springline with low density of dispersed settlement.*
- *Recreational opportunities include the Thames Path National Trail.'*

3.6.2 Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (Ref 10) is the local character assessment for Oxfordshire. The study area crosses two local character areas 'L. Cumnor Hill (CR/9)', part of the Wooded Estate lands character type and 'G. Radley (WH/16)', within the Terrace Farmland character type (see Appendix 1 for map). The descriptions for each character area are listed below.

3.6.3 L.Cumnor Hill (CR/9) –

- *'Mix of land uses including medium-sized, semi-improved grass fields and larger arable fields.*
- *Woodland dominates the landscape, particularly towards the east where there are very large blocks of ancient woodland including Kennington and Radley woods.*
- *Minor valleys and small streams, bordered by belts of dense scrub and wet woodland, are distinctive features that add diversity to the landscape.*
- *Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges... Hedgerow trees of oak, ash and dead elm are also more prominent in the vicinity of ancient woodland, but are almost absent towards the west, where arable cropping predominates. Hedges are generally taller and in better condition in the eastern part of the area and are very low, fragmented or replaced by fences in the west.'*

3.6.4 G. Radley (WH/16) –

- *'Medium-sized arable fields and some semi-improved grassland.*
- *The field pattern is practically non-existent but where it does occur it is characterised by fragmented hawthorn hedges, although roadside hedges are generally intact. Oak and ash hedgerow trees are also confined to roadside hedges.*
- *A few woodland belts are located to the west of Peach Croft Farm and there is a small area of parkland at Wick Hall.'*

3.6.5 The study area is characteristic of these local character areas and character types. The western part of the study area comprises two large gently undulating arable fields enclosed by significant tree belts. There are open views of the fields themselves, but field

boundaries and Peach Croft Farm prevent views from extending beyond the study area. The only exception is the views north from the south-west of the study area, which have intervisibility with the field beyond. Generally there is a higher level of enclosure within the western fields than the landscape to the north, which is more elevated. The eastern part of the site is smaller scale and has closer associations with Peach Croft Farm. This land is more visible from the wider landscape to the north and east, which forms the setting to Radley College. The landscape around Radley College shows evidence of the Capability Brown landscape design, while now overlaid with the modern golf course and playing field land uses, still influences the landscape character of the local area. The whole study area has a quiet and rural character. The Landscape Capacity Study (Ref 1) has assessed the study area as having a medium landscape sensitivity.

3.6.6 The Landscape Capacity Study (Ref 1) lists the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for both Character Types (see Appendix 2). Relevant Guidelines include:

- Conserve and maintain semi-natural woodland and parkland landscapes.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species including crack willow and oak.
- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges and promoting good management of existing hedgerows.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree line watercourses.
- Minimise the visual impacts of new development and promote the use of appropriate materials.

4 VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 A visual assessment of the site was carried out from public roads, bridleways and footpaths. The assessment was carried out in summer when vegetation is in full leaf. It is likely that the visibility of the study area will increase in winter months, when the branches of broadleaf trees will be bare. Access to the whole of the study area was not possible at the time of the field survey, so the assessment is made from views obtained from the footpath that passes through the area, adjacent rights of way and roads.

4.1.2 The visual assessment is based on a grading of degrees of visibility. There is, in any visual assessment, a continuity of degrees of visibility from not visible to fully open in the view. To indicate the degree of visibility of the site from selected locations, that continuum has been divided into four categories, as follows:

1. **Open view:** a clear view of a significant proportion of the site within the wider landscape.

2. **Partial view:** a clear view of part of the site: a partial view of the site; or a distant view in which the site forms a relatively small proportion of the wider view.
3. **Glimpse:** a transient view, of a distant view in which the site forms a small proportion of the view in the wider landscape.
4. **No view:** no view or the site is difficult to perceive.

4.2 Existing visibility of the study area

- 4.2.1 The mature tree belts and boundary vegetation that are present within and around the study area, form a high level of visual containment, reducing views of the study area to a small number of key viewpoints within, or immediately surrounding the study area. The only open views of the study area are from the section of footpath 326/5 that runs through the study area.
- 4.2.2 Bridleway 326/4 runs along the ridgeline to the north of the site, following the line of a double avenue, which leads east to Radley College. The trees and hedgerow to the south of the bridleway filter views of the study area, with only occasional glimpses being possible through gaps in the vegetation (see photographs 8-13). The avenues of trees contain views and there are no open panoramic views of the wider countryside. To the east, the bridleway passes through the golf course (photographs 14 and 16) and Radley College (photograph 15). Vegetation screens any views of the site from these locations. In winter months, when the majority of vegetation has lost its foliage, the visibility of the surrounding landscape from this bridleway would increase and there would be views across the study area towards Abingdon.
- 4.2.3 Footpath 326/5 branches off from the bridleway 326/4 and leads south to the roundabout between Oxford Road and Twelve Acre Drive, to the north of Abingdon. From the northern edge of the footpath there are open panoramic views of the countryside (see photograph 7), with partial views of the study area through two gaps in the tree belts that surround and form the northern boundary. The majority of the study area is screened from view. There are glimpses of the rooftops of housing within Abingdon to the south. Further to the south, the footpath passes through the tree belt to the north of the study area and through the study area (photographs 1-3). Views are rural in character and are of large arable fields bound by mature vegetation. Peach Croft Farm is visible to the south-east, although farm outbuildings block views of the listed building to the east of the farm complex. Vegetation screens views of Abingdon, however there are some glimpses of the northern houses from the south-western corner of the study area.
- 4.2.4 Oxford Road A4183) lies to the immediate west of the site and runs from Abingdon, up Lodge Hill to a junction with the A34 (photograph 5). There are glimpses of the study area over and through the western boundary hedgerow. The study area forms part of a rural landscape to the east of the road, with further fields to the west and glimpses of the

northern edge of Abingdon. Further to the north, towards the top of the hill, there are views over the hedgerow adjacent to the road (photograph 4). These views are of the arable field to the north of the study area and the treebelt that defines the northern boundary of the study area.

- 4.2.4 Twelve Acre Drive lies to the immediate south of the study area. Despite its close proximity, the mature tree line to the north of the road filters views of the site to glimpses. These views are likely to increase in winter but no clear views of the study area would be possible. Existing vegetation also screens views from White's Lane, to the east of the site. A hedgerow lines the lane to the west, over which the large arable field to the east of the study area is visible. There are open views across this field from White's Lane and from Footpath 326/8 to the south-east of the site (photograph 18). The farm buildings of Peach Croft Farm are visible through gaps in the tree belts located to the east of the farm, however there are no views of the study area beyond the farm.

5 SITE ANALYSIS

5.1 Constraints and opportunities

5.1.1 Constraints on development within the study area include:

- The designation of the land as Green Belt
- The existing landscape is rural and characteristic of the local area. There are few visual detractors or urban influences.
- There are open views across the study area from the southern section of footpath 326/5, which runs across the study area. In addition there are partial views of the study area through gaps in vegetation to the north and over the western hedgerow.
- The setting of local listed buildings should be considered. There is very limited intervisibility between these listed buildings and the site. Any views would be of the south-eastern section of the site.

5.1.2 Opportunities presented by the site are:

- The study area is well contained from its surroundings by significant tree belts of mature trees. As a consequence the visibility of the study area is restricted to visual receptors within the site or immediately adjacent to it.
- It would be possible to develop parts of the study area without having significant adverse effects on existing landscape features.
- It would be possible to implement measures that conform to the landscape guidelines set out in the local character assessment. This could include: conserving and maintaining the existing woodland blocks, creating new woodland blocks, improving hedgerow management and enhancement of the habitat around the watercourse, which runs through the study area.

- Additional planting would improve the Green Infrastructure provision and would further screen the study area.
- The study area is contiguous with the adjacent built development and an access could be provided from Oxford Road or Twelve Acre Drive.

5.2 Site capacity and conclusions (*Plan HDA 4*)

- 5.2.1 The most sensitive part of the study area is the strip of land, set to pasture, to the south of the stream. This area is low lying, has little visual relationship with the existing settlement of Abingdon and is open to the north-east. Development within this area would affect the setting to Radley College and would impact on the rural character of the landscape to the north-east. The land forming the south-east and east parts of the study area contribute to two functions of the Green Belt Designation. Development within these fields would adversely affect the openness of the existing landscape and compromise the essential separation between Radley and Abingdon.
- 5.2.2 The two arable fields forming the western part of the study area are more contained and would relate better to the existing settlement and housing proposed to the west of Oxford Road. These fields make a limited contribution to the Green Belt as they do not provide the essential separation between Abingdon and Radley. The land to the west of the study area performs one of the five functions of the Green Belt, namely the safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 5.2.3 Appropriate mitigation for the development of the western fields would include infilling the breaks in vegetation to the north of the study area, to extend the existing shelterbelt to the north-west and to enhance the existing vegetation along the stream within the study area and to add a small block of woodland at the eastern corner of the field to the north of the stream. To minimise adverse impacts on the wider landscape it would be necessary to implement these mitigation measures in an early phase of development i.e when the land to the west of Oxford Road was being developed, in order that the planting had an opportunity to establish before any development occurs within the study area. These measures would enhance the existing landscape character and would reinforce the enclosure of the two western fields.
- 5.2.4 In the event that these landscape mitigation measures were implemented the medium/low landscape capacity as assessed for the north-western corner of the study area (Area B, Appendix 2) could be extended across the study area, east to the stream. It would be possible to develop the western fields without significant adverse effects on the character of the wider countryside. The screening benefits of the tree belt features to the north-east of the site, along with the potential strengthening of the stream side

vegetation, would minimise impacts on the setting to the listed buildings within Radley College and their setting.

- 5.2.5 Any potential access into the site would need to be carefully considered in order to minimise the impacts on existing boundary vegetation. The access point should be located and designed to minimise the impacts of visibility splays on the landscape features surrounding the study area.
- 5.2.6 The findings of this study indicate that the fields to the south-east of the stream would not be suitable for built development. These should be retained in an agricultural land use in order to retain the openness and rural character of the area.
- 5.2.7 The study area remains a more sensitive landscape than the land to the west of Oxford Road, as identified within the capacity study (Ref 1) and should not be developed before the land to the west of the Oxford Road. If the area were to be put forward as a strategic site, careful consideration would be needed to provide an amended Green Belt boundary that was robust and defensible.

REFERENCES

- Ref 1 - Vale of White Horse District Council (2014); *'Landscape Capacity Study 2014: Site Options'*
- Ref 2 - Countryside Agency (now Natural England)/SNH (April 2002), *'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland'*
- Ref 3 - The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013), *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'* (third edition).
- Ref 4 - Department for Communities and Local Government (March 2012), *'National Planning Policy Framework'*
- Ref 5 - Vale of White Horse District Council (2006); *'Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011'*
- Ref 6 - Vale of White Horse District Council (2014); *'Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Consultation Draft, Strategic Sites and Policies, Housing delivery update'*
- Ref 7 - GL Hearn (2014); *'Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment'*

- Ref 8 - Vale of White Horse District Council (2014); *'Vale of White Horse Green Belt Review'*
- Ref 9 - Natural England (2013); *'NCA Profile: 109 Midvale Ridge (NE417)'*
- Ref 10 - Oxfordshire County Council (2004); *'Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study'*.

APPENDIX 1

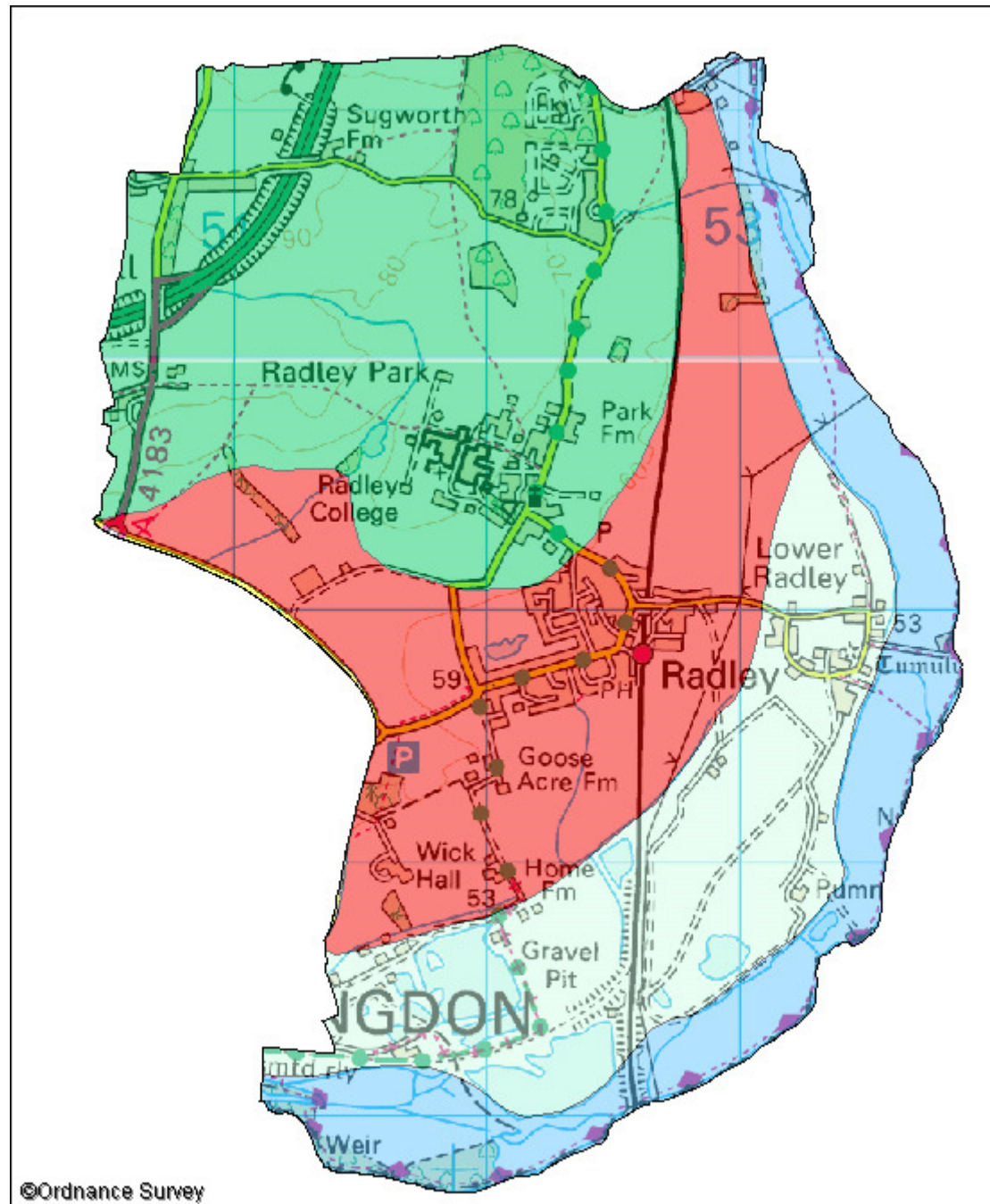
OWLS – Parish Character Areas, Radley

Districts:

Vale of White Horse Parishes

Radley

This map highlights the landscape types within the parish you selected, and its associated local character areas. You can click on any area of the map for a description of its landscape character and biodiversity. Please note that local character areas can cover large areas of the countryside, and may include several parishes, so the description may not be specific to this parish. If there are any wildlife habitats within the parish their descriptions can be found by scrolling to the bottom of this page.



Landscape Types

	Alluvial Lowlands
	River Meadowlands
	Terrace Farmland
	Wooded Estatelands

The following wildlife habitats fall within this parish. They are listed according to their associated landscape type or local character area.

If you want more information about any of the sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) listed below, take a look at English Nature's [Nature on the Map](#) website. It may also be possible to find out a bit more about the unnamed wildlife habitats in the parish by contacting the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (owls@oxfordshire.gov.uk) and quoting the site code next to the habitat description.

The majority of these wildlife habitats are on private land and access to them is not possible without permission of the landowner, unless there is a statutory [right of way](#). However, many wildlife habitats in the county are open to the public. More information on these can be obtained from the [Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum](#).

Wildlife Habitats

River Meadowlands

Site Code: 59J01/2

This site consists of an old river channel and the surrounding wooded banks. Cetti's warbler nests here. This bird breeds rarely in the UK although numbers have been increasing.

Wooded Estatelands

Site code: 50A01

Area: 0.6ha

Sugworth SSSI

This site includes a cutting along the A34 where valuable geological features have been recognised which are important in the understanding of geological history. The interglacial deposits found here are rare inland and include fossils of animals and plant remains from the time they were laid down.

Site Code: 50F04

Area: 3ha

This site is a small ancient woodland which means it has been continuously wooded for at least 400 years. The wood has the typical composition of old woodland with oak trees, including some very old specimens and a rich shrub layer with much hazel coppice*. Such woodland is a national priority for nature conservation.

The wood is rich in woodland wildflowers including carpet of bluebells, wood anemone, primrose and yellow archangel. The wood white butterfly, which is uncommon in Oxfordshire, has been seen here quite recently.

*Coppicing is a traditional form of management where small multi-stemmed trees and shrubs are cut down to the ground at regular intervals producing a harvest of small branches.

Site Code: 50F05

Area: 22ha

This site is ancient woodland which means it has been continuously wooded for at least 400 years although part of the original woodland was lost due to development. The remaining wood has the typical composition of old woodland with oak trees and a rich shrub layer that includes much hazel coppice*. There is also some ash coppice and aspen is abundant in places. Such woodland is a national priority for nature conservation.

The wood is rich in woodland wildflowers including a great abundance of wood anemone as well as bluebells, the uncommon herb Paris, twayblade, which is a green flowered orchid, pignut and primrose. There is an unusually rich variety of mosses and liverworts including one rare species.

*Coppicing is a traditional form of management where small multi-stemmed trees and shrubs are cut down to the ground at regular intervals producing a harvest of small branches.

APPENDIX 2

Capacity study – Site 1 (pages 47 – 62)

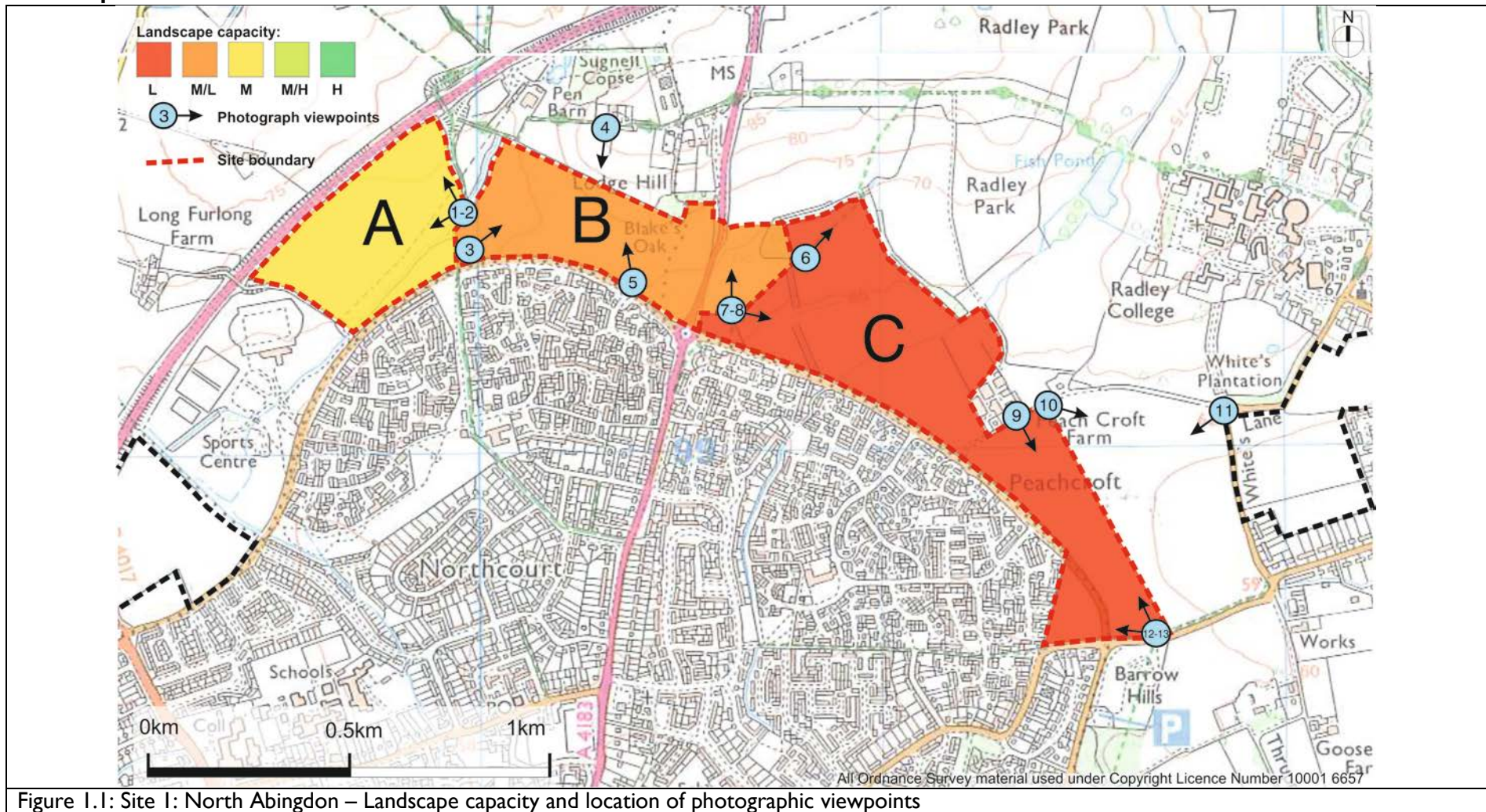
Site I: North Abingdon**Site map:**

Figure I.1: Site I: North Abingdon – Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

The site lies in the **North Vale Corallian Ridge**. OWLS divide the site into three landscape character types IA: Rolling Farmland; IB: Wooded Estates; IC Terrace Farmlands. The boundaries on the Study site plans are slight modifications of the OWLS boundaries in order to follow visible boundaries on the ground as far as possible.

OWLS Landscape Strategy: IA: Rolling Farmland

Conserve and enhance the surviving pattern of woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses. Minimise the impact of built development through appropriate location, choice of building materials, and the use of locally characteristic tree and shrub species.

Guidelines

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Promote the sustainable management of existing ancient semi-natural woodland to safeguard its long-term survival.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak and ash.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses. 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.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development that is appropriate to this landscape type. This includes limestone or limestone and bricks and clay roof tiles in the Midvale Ridge, and red bricks and clay tiles in the Vale of White Horse and North Wessex Downs.

OWLS Landscape Strategy: IB: Wooded Estates

Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates, woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.

Guidelines

- Conserve and maintain semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland. Where appropriate, replace non-native conifer species with native species such as oak and ash. Promote the establishment and management of medium to large-scale deciduous and mixed plantations in areas where the landscape structure is particularly weak.
- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows and, where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle.
- Conserve parklands and their associated landscape features such as stone walls, lakes, mature trees and woods.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly within parklands.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- 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. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type.

OWLS Landscape Strategy: IC: Terrace Farmlands

Strengthen and enhance the pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.

Guidelines

- 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.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and, where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as crack willow, oak and ash.

- Safeguard, maintain and enhance and the characteristic landscape features of existing parklands including mature trees, avenues of trees, lakes, woods and walls.
- 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.
- Local building materials should be used, including brick and clay tiles in the Vale of White Horse, flintstone and brick or red and blue brick and clay tiles in the Chilterns, and stone with clay tiles in the Upper Thames area.

Site description:



Site I North Abingdon is a Greenfield site of 69.4ha. It follows a broad arc north of Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive from the Sports Centre in the west to Radley Road in the east. The southern boundary is mainly formed by a dense belt of trees and shrubs along the road edge. The site abuts the A34 in the west and follows strong tree lines along the mid slopes of Lodge Hill and Radley Park eastwards as far as just north of Peachcroft Farm. The site has been sub-divided into three landscape areas IA: North-east of Sports Centre; IB: Lodge Hill; and IC: Peachcroft. The farm buildings at Peachcroft Farm are excluded from the site but the horticultural fields and poultry paddocks are included. The northern boundary north and east of Peachcroft Farm is poorly defined. The eastern boundary is marked by a line of trees. The site is divided by the A4183 with dense vegetation on each side of the road. A small triangular piece of the site lies south of Twelve Acre Drive.

Key landscape planning factors:

The site is on the southern edge of the Oxford Green Belt. Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive at present form a clearly defined edge to urban Abingdon with only the sports centre and Peachcroft Farm in the adjacent open countryside. Radley Park to the north is a local landmark but, although it has connections with Capability Brown and is clearly a designed landscape, it is not on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. However many elements of the parkland are still in evidence and the site forms the open rural setting to the Park. The A34 affects the western end of the site but this part of the site has good landscape and visual links with the land to the west.

The three landscape areas have been assessed separately below.

IA: North-east of Sports Centre**Photographs:**

	
<p><i>Photo 1: View from edge of site IA with view over A34 to the wider landscape to the north-west</i></p>	<p><i>Photo 2: View from edge of site of substantial tree belt in northern corner of site IA</i></p>

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

- 1. Medium / Low Visual Sensitivity:**
 - Visual links with the wider landscape
 - Visually enclosed otherwise
 - Good potential to mitigate the impact of new built form.
- 2. Medium / Low Landscape Sensitivity:**
 - Good landscape structure
 - Little cultural value
 - Lower level of tranquillity.
- 3. Landscape Character Sensitivity Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

4. **Medium / Low Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
 - Some landscape and visual links with landscape to the west
5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 3 and 4)
6. **Medium / High Landscape Value**
 - Within North Vale Corallian Ridge
7. Landscape Capacity: Medium (combines 5 and 6)

Relationship of site to Abingdon

- Beyond well-defined northern edge and separated by belt of trees
- Within 70m AOD contour

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Close links with the wider landscape

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Need to retain existing tree belts and stream lines

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Little impact

Potential impact on key settlement characteristics

- Site development would project the settlement beyond existing clearly defined line although existing defined edge does not follow the grain of the landscape
- Abingdon already has large estates extending north from the town core
- Contains development below the 70m AOD contour at present
- Extends urban influence up to lodge Hill

Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure

- Tree planting to A34
- Contribute to GI provision around northern edge of Abingdon linking to Radley Park and Sports Centre

Conclusion and recommendations

- Part of site 1A could be considered further as a contingency site subject to the following:
- It is recommended that the access into Site 1A should be from Site 1B, taking advantage of a gap in the vegetation between the two areas.
- Creation of substantive GI linking the Sports Centre Grounds with Lodge Hill along the line of the stream
- Substantive tree belt along A34
- Development on lower slopes

Potential capacity of site 1A

It is recommended that only part of this site is considered further as a contingency site on landscape and visual grounds to order to retain views and landscape links between the eastern boundary and the wider landscape to the west. The site is related well to the Sports Centre, contained by the A34 and lies on the lower slopes of Lodge Hill. The capacity of site 1A is partly determined by the need to retain and create substantive Green Infrastructure leading out from Abingdon along the line of the stream and incorporating tree cover between 1A and 1B; and to link into the northern line of hills at Lodge Hill and Radley Park. This area could be developed in conjunction with Site 1B as shown in the Figure 1.2. Preferred access should be from site 1B, taking advantage of a gap in the vegetation between the two areas. The capacity of the reduced area will be determined by the factors listed in the above recommendations including a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment; whilst respecting the distinctive character Lodge Hill. The density of this reduced area is recommended to be a maximum of 25 per ha. On this basis some 215 dwellings might be accommodated on site 1A (410 dwellings in combination with site 1B).

IB: Lodge Hill**Photographs:**

Photo 3: View from footpath along western edge of site IB north-east to Lodge Hill.



Photo 4: View from footpath south of Lodge Hill over the site to Abingdon in the south.



Photo 5: View over site from edge of Abingdon.



Photo 6: View north-east from footpath east of A4183 north to planting along northern boundary which historically formed part of Radley Park.



Photo 7: View north from footpath east of A4183 .

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

- 1. Medium / Low Visual Sensitivity:**
 - Visually enclosed area
 - Views to Abingdon from upper slopes
 - Good potential to mitigate the impact of new built form.
- 2. Medium Landscape Sensitivity:**
 - Good landscape structure
 - Surviving elements from Radley Park
 - Lower level of tranquillity.
- 3. Landscape Character Sensitivity Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**
- 4. Medium / High Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
 - Enclosed and distinct from the wider landscape
 - Site contributes to the setting of Radley Park

5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)
6. **Medium / High Landscape Value**
 - Within North Vale Corallian Ridge
7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / Low (combines 5 and 6)

Relationship of site to Abingdon

- Beyond well-defined northern edge and separated by belt of trees

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Enclosed and distinct from the wider landscape

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Potential adverse impact on surviving historic landscape features (small wood, park boundary vegetation)
- Need to retain existing tree belts and stream lines
- Would extend development up to 75m AOD contour

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Loss of open views

Potential impact on key settlement characteristics

- Site development would project the settlement beyond existing clearly defined line although existing defined edge does not follow the grain of the landscape
- Abingdon already has large estates extending north from the town core
- Only a small encroachment up the hillside over the 70m AOD contour at present

Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure

- Retain existing tree belts and small copses
- Avoid land above 75m AOD
- Build on landscape structure south of Lodge Hill through woodland planting
- Reinststate parkland boundary east of A4183
- Contribute to GI provision around northern edge of Abindon linking to Radley Park and Sports Centre

Conclusion and recommendations

- Part of site 1B is recommended for further consideration as a contingency site despite the above analysis suggesting considerable constraints on the site. The following should be taken into account:
- Detailed assessment of the impact of any development on the North Vale Corallian Ridge
- Creation of substantive GI linking the green way through to Northcourt to Lodge Hill along the line of the stream
- Development on lower slopes well below 75m AOD
- Enhancement of the GI between the site and Lodge Hill
- Protection of surviving historic landscape elements
- The preferred points of access are off the perimeter road to the south and these should be located to minimise the loss of any vegetation along the southern boundary.

Potential capacity of site 1B

It is recommended that only part of this site is considered further as a contingency site on landscape and visual grounds in order to avoid the visual intrusion of development on higher ground and encroachment on the landscape setting of Lodge Hill by containing the development on the lower slopes of Lodge Hill. The capacity of site 1B is partly determined by the need to retain and create substantive Green Infrastructure leading out from Abingdon and linking into the northern line of hills at Lodge Hill and Radley Park and to protect the surviving historic landscape features connected to Radley Park. This area could be developed in conjunction with Site 1A as shown in the Figure 1.2. The preferred points of access are off the perimeter road to the south and these should be located to minimise the loss of any vegetation along the southern boundary. The capacity of the reduced area will be determined by the factors listed in the above recommendations including a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment; whilst respecting the distinctive character of Lodge Hill and the landscape setting to Radley Park. The density of this reduced area is recommended to be a maximum of 25 per ha. On this basis some 195 dwellings might be accommodated on site 1B (410 dwellings in combination with site 1A).

IC: Peachcroft**Photographs:**

Photo 8: View east from footpath along the boundary with site IB to Peachcroft Farm.



Photo 9: View of shelter belts and horticultural area at site IC.



Photo 10: View from the edge of site IC north of Peachcroft Farm to Radley.



Photo 11: View over site IC to the south-west from the track on White's Lane Radley to the north-east of Peachcroft Farm.



Photo 12: View from Radley Road to the Triangle of land south of Twelve Acre Drive and housing in Abingdon.



Photo 13: View from Radley Road to site 1C north of Twelve Acre Drive.

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. Medium / High Visual Sensitivity:

- Very good visual links with the wider landscape
- Important as a visual gap between Abingdon and Radley
- Limited potential to mitigate the impact of new built form without harm to the local landscape character
- Triangle less sensitive.

2. Medium Landscape Sensitivity:

- Poor landscape structure in the east
- Part of the landscape setting to Radley Park
- Adjacent to surviving historic parkland features
- Lower level of tranquillity
- Triangle less sensitive

3. Landscape Character Sensitivity Medium / High (combines 1 and 2)

4. **Medium / High Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
 - Good landscape and visual links with landscape to the west and north-east
 - Contributes to the open countryside between Abingdon and Radley
 - Area contributes to the setting of Radley Park
 - Triangle of land to south severed by road;
5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High (combines 3 and 4)
6. **Medium / High Landscape Value**
 - Within North Vale Corallian Ridge
 - Low for Triangle
7. Landscape Capacity: Low (combines 5 and 6) (except Triangle)

Relationship of site to Abingdon

- Small triangle in east follows townscape pattern south of Twelve Acre Drive
- Majority of site beyond well-defined northern edge and largely separated by belt of trees

Relationship with adjacent wider countryside

- Close links with the wider landscape
- Important wider landscape setting to Radley and Radley Park
- Small triangle is separated from open countryside by Twelve Acre Drive

Potential impact on key landscape characteristics

- Potential adverse impact on surviving historic landscape features (small wood, stream flowing from fish ponds, park boundary vegetation)
- Need to retain existing tree belts and stream lines

Potential impact on key visual characteristics

- Visual intrusion on Radley
- Loss of open views

Potential impact on key settlement characteristics

- Site development would project the settlement beyond existing clearly defined line although existing defined edge does not follow the grain of the landscape
- Abingdon already has large estates extending north from the town core
- Would result in loss of physical and visual separation between Abingdon and Radley
- Triangle complements settlement pattern

Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure

- Additional tree planting along Twelve Acre Drive

Conclusion and recommendations

- Development on any part of IC north of Twelve Acre Drive is not recommended
- A reduced area at the Triangle south of Twelve Acre Drive could be developed for housing subject to tree planting along the northern boundary
- The preferred access is located to enable tree planting along the northern boundary in order to contain and screen the site from the Green Belt to the north.

Potential capacity of site IC

It is recommended that only the southern triangle south of Twelve Acre Drive in landscape area IC is considered further as a contingency site on landscape and visual grounds. The capacity of Site IC is determined by the need: (1) to retain the distinctive and separate townscape characters of Abingdon and Radley and their landscape settings; (2) to retain a substantive area of open countryside as separation between these two settlements; (3) to protect the landscape setting and surviving landscape features to Radley Park; and (4) to retain the landscape and visual continuity of the countryside east of the A4183. The preferred access to the triangle is located on the southern boundary to enable tree planting along the northern boundary in order to contain and screen the site from the Green Belt to the north. The capacity of the reduced area will finally be determined by the factors listed in the above recommendations in a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment. On this basis of the nominal density of 25dph, some 50 dwellings might be accommodated on area IC.

Total capacity of Site I: North Abingdon: A total of 460 dwellings are recommended at a nominal density of 25dph for this contingency site.

