

### Site I3A Didcot A

The site lies in the **Lowland Vale 2C / OWLS LCT8 Lowland Village Farmlands**. The key landscape, visual and settlement characteristics are set out in the Record Sheet for Site I3A Didcot A.

### OWLS Landscape Strategy

**Conserve and enhance the vernacular character of the villages and strengthen the existing pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.**

#### Guidelines

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as willow 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.
- 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, 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.
- Maintain the vernacular character of settlements and promote the use of local building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. This ranges from limestone and stone tiles at Garsington and Merton through to the red bricks and tiles associated with the clay vales.

#### Site description:

Site I3A: Didcot A is a brownfield site of 46ha. The council is promoting employment uses on 29 ha of the site, with the potential for other uses (including residential and additional employment on the remaining 17ha. Most of the Site I3A is open cinder track with a perimeter road. The north-east section includes three cooling towers, car parking and ancillary structures. To the north lies industrial Didcot B and to the south the transport corridor which includes the railway line and A4130 beyond which lies the Great Western Park housing site. To the south-west lie the open fields of Site I2 Valley Park. To the west and east of the site lie commercial premises.

**Key landscape planning factors:**

Site 13A is not included in the AONB or Green Belt. It lies within the Lowland Vale and is subject to Local Plan 2011 policy NE9. It is also within the Local Plan 2011 Area for Landscape Enhancement policy NE11. Didcot A power station is due to be demolished over the next three years, with the exception of the Open Cycle Gas Turbine building (adjacent to Didcot B) which is to be retained. Didcot B power station itself will also be retained. Site 13A covers part of the Didcot A power station which is currently planned for clearance during 2014.

**Photographs:**

*Photo 1: View of the site from Great Western Park to the cooling towers of Didcot A (within site 13) to the right and the tree cover south of the site in front of Didcot A (outwith the site) to the left*

**Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process****I. Medium / Low Visual Sensitivity:**

- Structures on the site are highly visible
- Dominant cooling towers (to be demolished)
- Mostly less sensitive visual receptors except residents in Great Western Park
- Opportunities for landscape mitigation.

2. **Low Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Large scale industrial site
  - Important mature tree belts
  - Area disturbed by traffic and visual intrusion from Didcot B and adjacent commercial sites.
3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low (combines 1 and 2)
4. **Low Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Site dominated by Didcot power station (Didcot A to be demolished)
  - Highly industrialised site.
5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Low (combines 3 and 4)
6. **Low Landscape Value**
  - In area identified for landscape improvement.
7. Landscape Capacity: High (combines 5 and 6)

**Relationship of site to Didcot**

- Contained by urban Didcot on all sides except in the south-west, where the February 2013 Local Plan Part 1 consultation document proposes a housing allocation at the Valley Park site
- Part of the expansion area of Didcot to the west of the town centre

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- None

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Loss of existing tree cover around the periphery

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- None

**Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- Introduces residential development within the industrial / commercial envelope north of the A4130

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure**

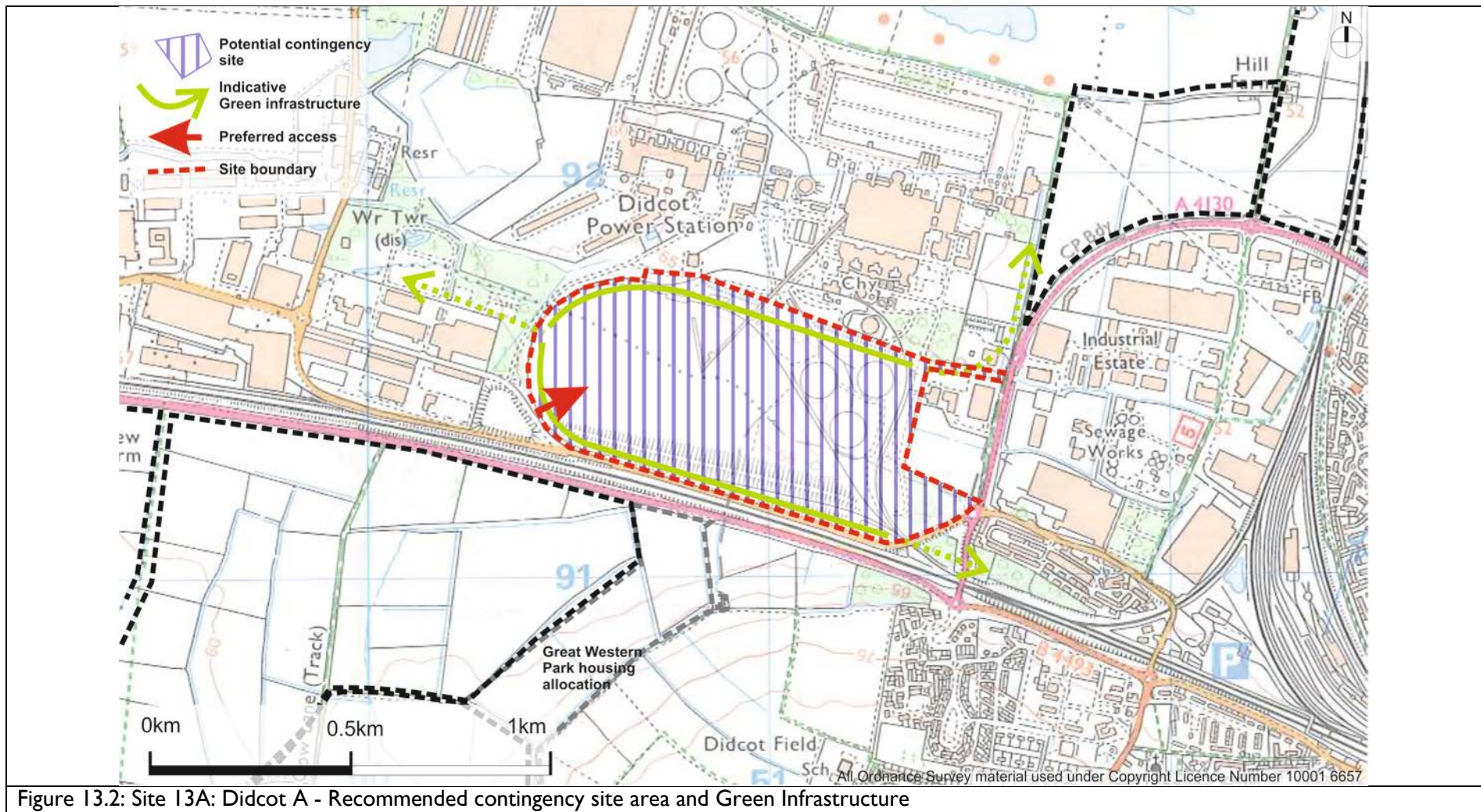
- Retain and enhance existing tree belts
- Extend structural woodland / tree planting through the site
- Enhance vegetation boundaries with adjacent commercial areas
- Provide GI link from Sutton Courtney Environmental Education Centre to the west to link in with green corridors to the east if possible

**Conclusion and recommendations**

- The whole site is suitable for development
- Conserve and enhance significant landscape structural planting and Green Infrastructure through the site
- Link GI into adjacent GI provision in Didcot

**Potential capacity of the site 13A Didcot A**

It is recommended that this entire site is considered further as a contingency site on landscape and visual grounds. The preferred access is from the south-east to avoid damage to the surrounding tree belts and a more attractive approach to the site, avoiding the adjacent commercial areas. The final capacity of the site will be determined by a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment and the need to provide substantial Green Infrastructure. Using a nominal density of 25dph, 425 dwellings might be accommodated on 17 ha of Site 13A with the remaining 29 ha to be used for employment development. A higher density of housing may be acceptable.



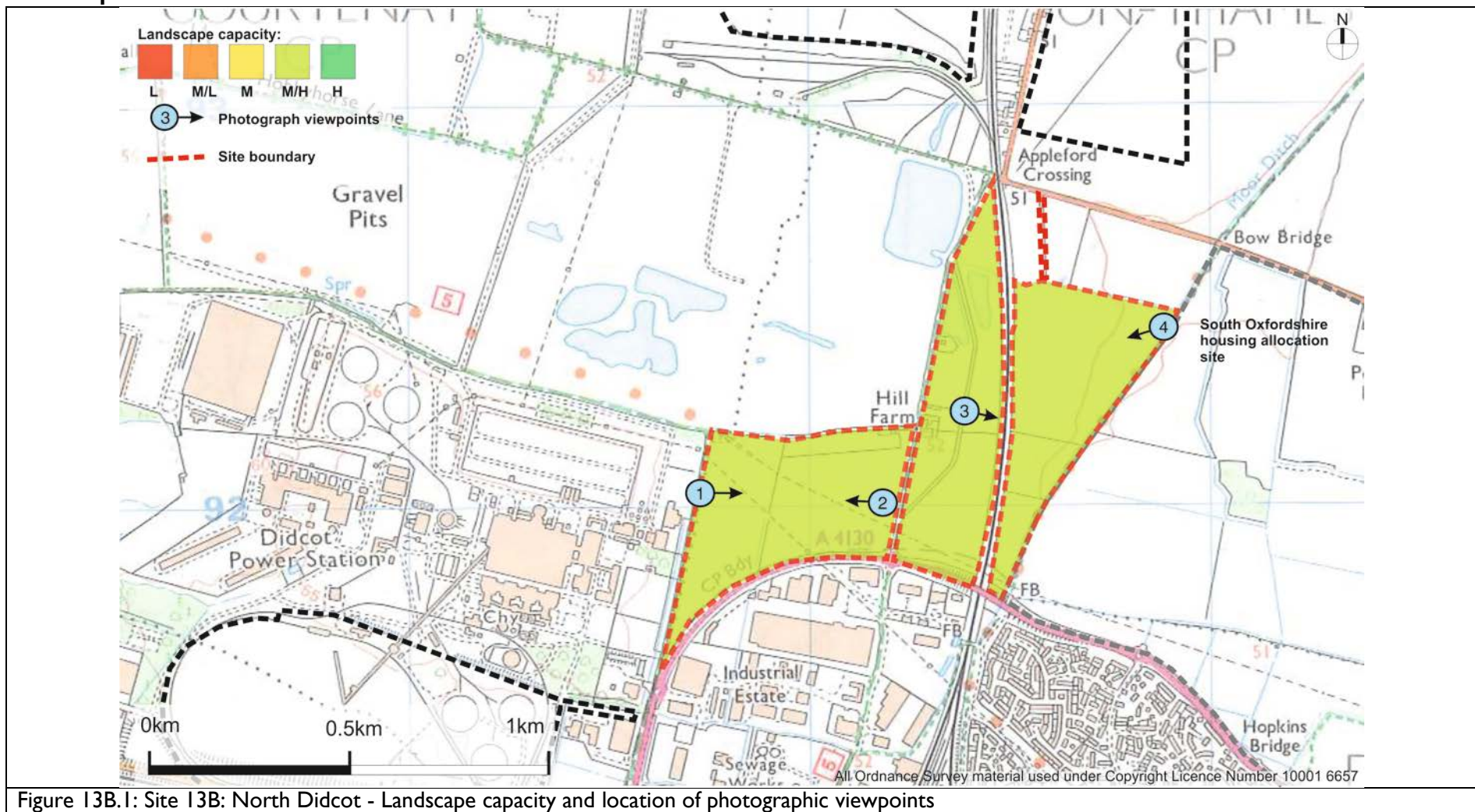
**Site 13B: North Didcot****Site map:**

Figure 13B.1: Site 13B: North Didcot - Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### Site 13B North Didcot

The site lies in the **OWLS LCT8 Lowland Village Farmlands**. The key landscape, visual and settlement characteristics are set out in the Record Sheets for Site 13B.

### OWLS Landscape Strategy

**Conserve and enhance the vernacular character of the villages and strengthen the existing pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.**

#### Guidelines

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as willow 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.
- 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, 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.
- Maintain the vernacular character of settlements and promote the use of local building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. This ranges from limestone and stone tiles at Garsington and Merton through to the red bricks and tiles associated with the clay vales.

#### Site description:

Site 13B is a predominantly greenfield site of 48.5 hectares to the north-west of Didcot. It is bounded by the A4130 to the south and divided into three irregularly shaped parcels of land by the north-south access of Hill Farm which is also a public right of way. The westerly parcel borders Didcot Power Station to the west, gravel working to the north and the access of Hill Farm to the east. A house and gardens are situated in the north-east corner. The central parcel comprises a tapering strip of land bounded to the west by the access to Hill Farm with gravel works and a water-filled gravel pit beyond and to the east by the railway line. This parcel contains the buildings of Hill Farm, a road and two small lakes, evidence of former gravel extraction, now operating as a fishery. The easterly parcel of land, beyond the railway line is bordered to the east by Moor Ditch and to the north by countryside, apart

from a strip of footpath which extends northwards to join the B4016. Adjacent to the eastern boundary is an area allocated for housing. The landfill site to the NW has 25 years to run and will be subsequently restored to agricultural land. The minerals permission to the north also requires access by rail across the site in the medium term. Site 13B is therefore unsuitable for development in this plan period but should be reconsidered following restoration of the landfill and minerals sites.

**Key landscape planning factors:**

Site 13B is not within the Green Belt or the AONB. The site is within the Lowland Vale area identified in Local Plan policy NE9. This policy protects the Vale which is valued for its contribution to distant views from the higher ground to the north (Corallian Ridge) and the North Wessex Downs to the south. The site also forms part of land identified as Important Open Land between Appleford and Didcot, policy NE10. This policy aims to avoid the coalescence of Didcot with the surrounding villages. For the purpose of this study, the site is felt to have some importance in maintaining the separation between Appleford and Didcot as the train and bike path pass through open countryside, although there is still open countryside south of Appleford to the north of site that would give some separation. The road route (B4016) connecting Didcot and Appleford is off site to the east and therefore not affected by this site but could be affected by the South Oxfordshire housing site to the east. The site is also within an area identified in the Local Plan as an Area for Landscape Enhancement (NE11) which could benefit from, for example, 'the removal of eyesores, management of woodland, or the planting of trees to enhance or frame views or to block less attractive views.' The A34 corridor south of Abingdon has been affected by the A34, Didcot Power Station and gravel workings and has a relatively light tree cover. Development which would further erode or damage the landscape character would not be permitted and any development proposals would need to include an appropriate landscape scheme.

**Photographs:**

*Photo 1: View east through gap in vegetation along footpath / National Cycle Network path*



*Photo 2: View west from Hill Farm track / footpath / cycle path. Heavily influenced by Power Station and landfill*



*Photo 3: View east with train in foreground and Wittenham Clumps in distance*



*Photo 4: View from footpath / cycle path in north-east corner of site*

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

1. **Medium / High Visual Sensitivity:**
  - Semi-enclosed site
  - Large numbers of receptors, some sensitive
  - Some long views include Wittenham Clumps
  - View of Appleford Church
  - Views heavily influenced by Power Station (though the partial demolition of the power station is proposed to take place imminently)
2. **Medium / Low Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Good vegetation structure
  - Small woodland
  - Recreational use- footpath, cycle path, fishing lakes
3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)
4. **Medium / Low Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Heavily influenced by harsh edge of Didcot
  - Part of site within floodplain
  - East part of site connects with countryside to north
  - Cycle path links to national network
5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 3 and 4)
6. **Medium Landscape Value**
  - Some value in separating Didcot and Appleford
  - National cycle routes
7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / High (combines 5 and 6)

**Relationship of site to Didcot**

- The site is separated from residential parts of Didcot
- However the site would form a part of Didcot if the allocated land to the north of Didcot is developed with housing

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- East part of site is linked to the countryside to north

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Loss of openness
- Loss of some pasture
- Opportunity to add to existing vegetation structure
- Opportunity to mitigate noise of traffic and trains

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- Opportunity to screen detracting views (though the partial demolition of the power station is proposed to take place imminently)

**Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- Development would be part of a large expansion on the north side of Didcot
- Some impact on the separation of Didcot and Appleford

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure**

- Retain and enhance existing hedgerows and trees
- Build on landscape structure to meet OWLS landscape strategy and aims of NEI I
- New tree planting to screen detracting views and soften northern edge of Didcot, though the partial demolition of the power station is imminent

**Conclusion and recommendations**

- Potential for housing on this site contained within reduced area shown on Figure 13B.2
- Retain and enhance footpaths with new vegetation
- Include new tree and hedgerow planting as shown in Figure 13B.2.
- Preferred access west of the railway would be from the A4130 via the existing access road
- Preferred access east of the railway would be from the A4130
- Access from the rural B4016 would be discouraged

**Potential capacity of site 13B**

It is recommended that only part of this site is considered further as a contingency site. The separation between Didcot and Appleford will be reduced by the development of this site but the impact of this could be minimised by retaining the northern part of the site open (south west of the Appleford level crossing). The density of the area is recommended to be a maximum of 25 per ha. A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site. On this basis some 1060 dwellings might be accommodated on site 13B. However, due to the long-term continuation of minerals extraction and the adjacent landfill, site 13B is unsuitable for development in this plan period but should be reconsidered following restoration of the landfill and minerals sites.

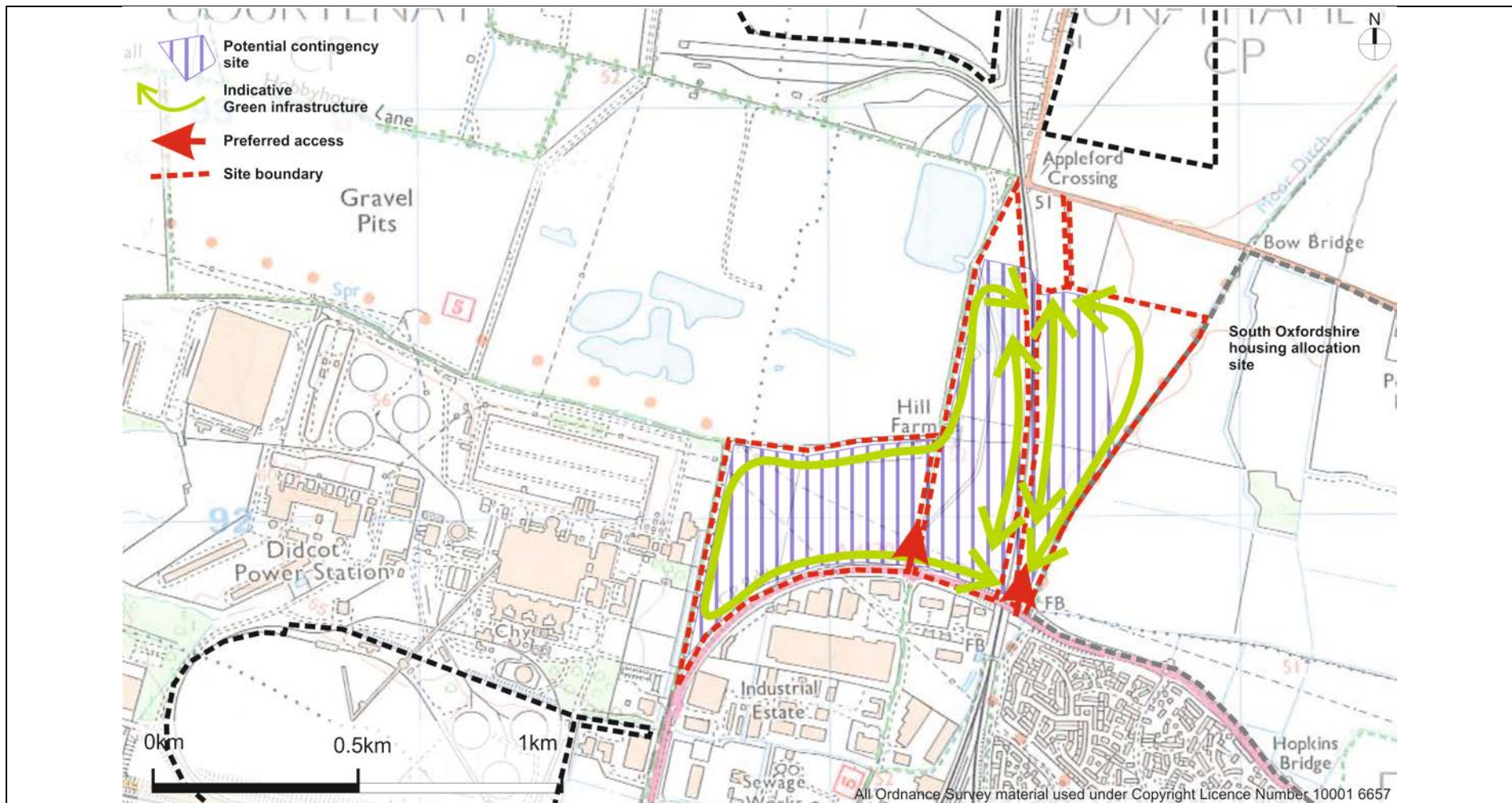


Figure 13B.2: Site 13B: North Didcot - Recommended contingency site area and Green Infrastructure

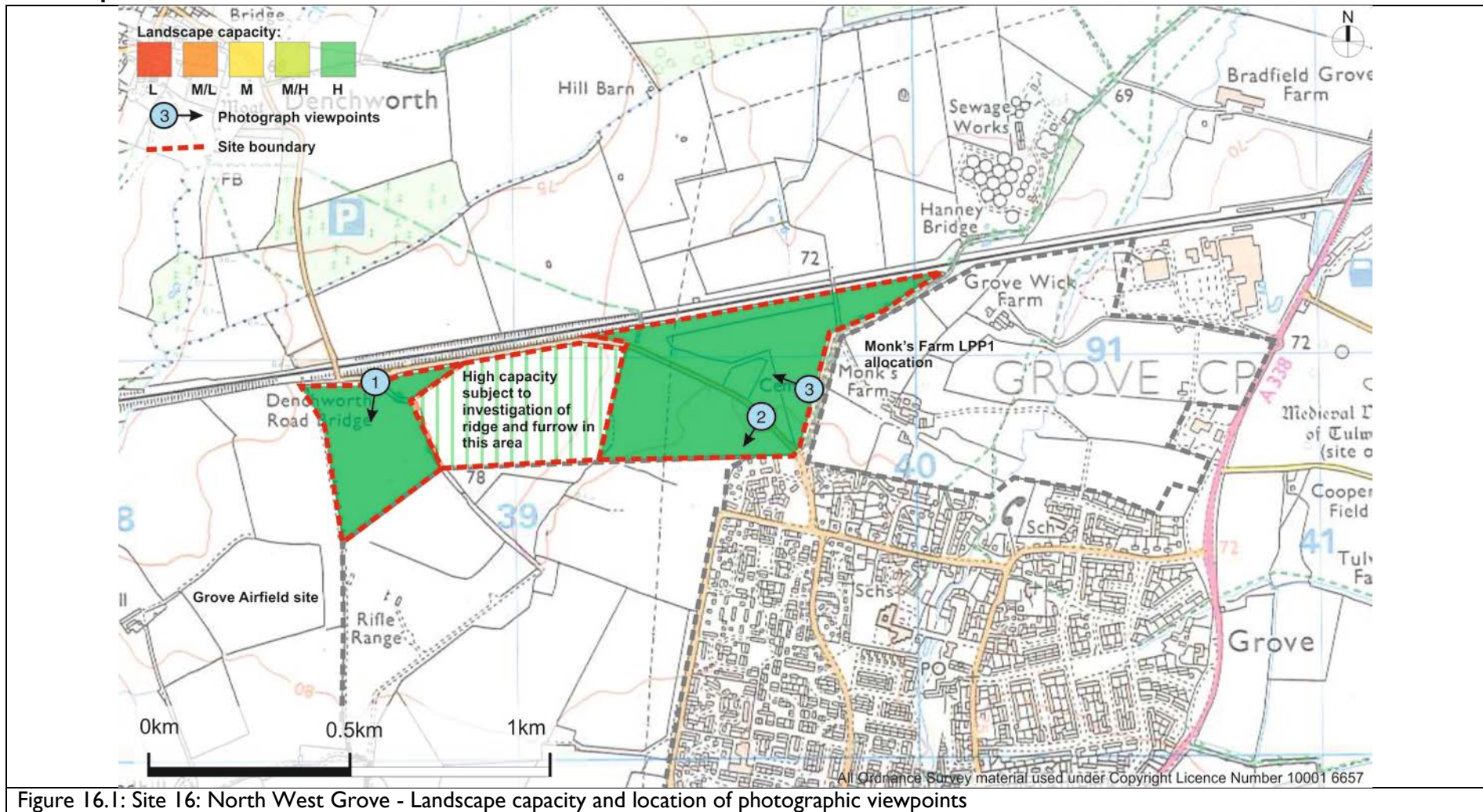
**Site 16: North West Grove****Site map:**

Figure 16.1: Site 16: North West Grove - Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

## Site 16 North West Grove

The site lies in the **OWLS LCTI Alluvial lowlands**. The key landscape, visual and settlement characteristics are set out in the Record Sheets for Site 16.

### OWLS Landscape Strategy

**Maintain the tranquil nature of the landscape and promote the restoration and enhancement of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.**

#### 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.
- 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 at the fringes of towns, villages and farms 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.
- Promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. These range from red brick and clay tiles in the Vale of White Horse to limestone and stone tiles in the Upper Thames valley.
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as gravel extraction with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic to the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.

### Advice on the Landscape Impact of Further Development West of Grove December 2008 (2008 Study)

The Study included Site 16 North Grove in its assessment. The part of site that was assessed was divided into 3 character areas; Denchworth Field in the west of the site, Denchworth Road in the centre and Cemetery Field in the east (see figure 16.2 below). The summary of this assessment is set out below. This assessment has been reviewed in the light of our current work and our conclusions included in the Table below.

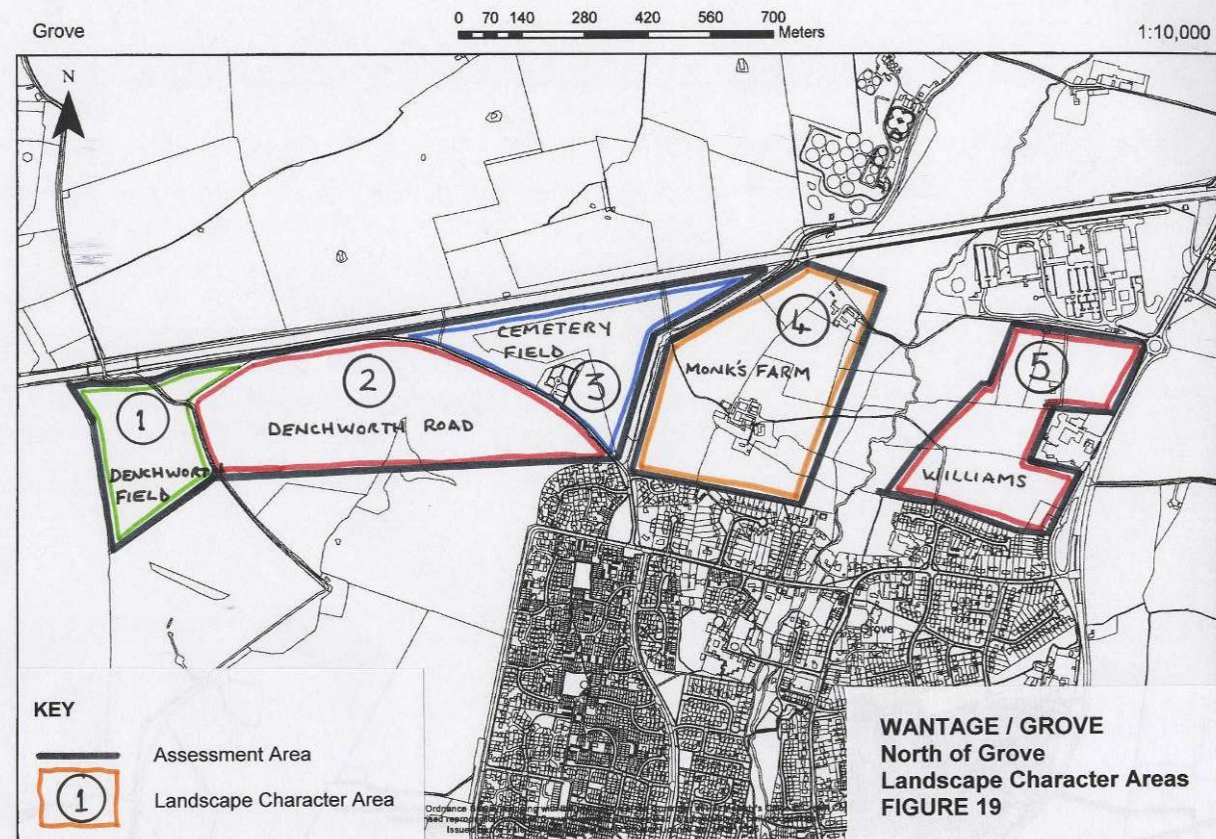


Figure 16.2: 2008 Study Grove LCAs

2008 Study Grove LCA	2008 Study Landscape sensitivity	2008 Study Landscape capacity	2008 Study Landscape robustness	2014 Landscape capacity conclusions	Additional comments and reasons for any difference in judgement
1. Denchworth Field	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Agree with capacity assessment in 2008, subject to assessment of possible ridge and furrow landscape.
2. Denchworth Road	Low	High	High		
3. Cemetery Field	Low	High	High		

### Site description:

Site 16 is a greenfield site of 40 hectares to the north-west of Grove. The site is surrounded by open countryside to the south and west with the railway line and Denchworth Road forming the northern boundary with open countryside beyond. The eastern boundary is formed of a footpath with Monk's Farm beyond. The site is crossed from the south-east to north-west by Denchworth Road and in the south-east corner of the site is Grove Cemetery. This corner of the site borders the outskirts of Grove. The central section of the site has ridge and furrow remnants and parts sit wet. To the south of the site is the former RAF Grove airfield which is allocated as a strategic housing site in the Local Plan 2011. The proposed Monks Farm allocation (identified in the February 2013 LPPI consultation document) is to the east of the site.

### Key landscape planning factors:

Site 16 is not within the Green Belt or the AONB. The site is within the Lowland Vale area identified in Local Plan policy NE9. This policy protects the Vale which is valued for its contribution to distant views from the higher ground to the north (Corallian Ridge) and the North Wessex Downs to the south. The site is also within an area identified in the Local Plan as an Area for Landscape Enhancement (NE11) which could benefit from, for example, 'the removal of eyesores, management of woodland, or the planting of trees to enhance or frame views or to block less attractive views.' The area west of Grove was formerly used as an airfield and the policy states that opportunities should be taken to enhance the landscape. Development which would further erode or damage the landscape character would not be permitted and any development proposals would need to include an appropriate landscape scheme.

**Photographs:**

*Photo 1: View south across western part of site from Denchworth Road*



*Photo 2: View south with edge of Grove visible, and extensive views of North Wessex Downs*



Photo 3: View north-west from footpath along edge of site. Cemetery and railway screened by vegetation

**Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process**

- 1. Medium Visual Sensitivity:**
  - Open site with extensive views of AONB
  - Possible long views from AONB
- 2. Medium / Low Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Good existing hedgerow network
  - Valuable arable land
  - General lack of trees
  - Character affected by presence of railway
  - Parts of central site sit wet
  - Possible ridge and furrow field (NB further investigation needed as this may be found to be of greater significance)
- 3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**
- 4. Medium / Low Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Strong links with landscape to south and west
  - Severed from wider landscape to north by railway line
  - Houses in north-west part of Grove very visible