

## 7.0 Landscape & Visual

### 7.1 Introduction

#### 7.1.1 *The Landscape and Visual Assessment*

This chapter has been prepared by SLR Consulting Ltd, and provides a baseline description of the existing site, together with an assessment of landscape and visual effects of the proposed development.

A list of the supporting analysis plans and appendices, contained in Volumes 2 and 3, is set out below:

<b>Figures</b>	<b>Title</b>
<i>Figure 7.1</i>	Site and Immediate Surroundings
<i>Figure 7.2</i>	Topography
<i>Figure 7.3</i>	Landscape Character and Planning Designations
<i>Figure 7.4</i>	Site Character
<i>Figure 7.5</i>	Historic Landscape and Features
<i>Figure 7.6A</i>	Zone of Theoretical Visibility: On Completion
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<i>Appendix G2</i>	Landscape Character Compartment Sheets
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<i>Appendix G7</i>	Landscape and Green Infrastructure Design and Management Plan
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<i>Appendix G9</i>	Heritage and Landscape Assessment of the Proposed Country Park
<i>Appendix G10</i>	Sequential Views from Public Footpath Crossing Country Park Area
<i>Appendix G11</i>	Arboricultural Assessment, produced by Barrell Tree Consultancy

#### 7.1.2 *The Proposals*

A description of the proposed development is given in *Chapter 4*. The proposed landscape design and green infrastructure strategy is described in *Section 7.5*, and is shown on *Figure 4.3: Combined Strategic Landscape and Green Infrastructure Plan*.

### 7.2 Scoping and Consultation

As described in *Chapter 2*, in respect of earlier planning applications, an EIA Scoping Request was submitted on 16 June 2014, to which West Berkshire Council (WBC) provided a Scoping Opinion in their letter of 15 August 2014.

Between 2014 and 2016, SLR Consulting were involved in a number of meetings with WBC officers to discuss landscape and visual matters, including a meeting on-site to review related ecology, woodland access, and public rights of way matters.

A separate series of meetings was held 2015 and 2016 with the WBC Case Officer and external landscape consultant on more specific landscape and related heritage matters in the new country park and views from Sandleford Priory.

## 7.3 Assessment Methodology

The detailed landscape and visual assessment methodology is given in *Appendix G5*, and is based on the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)<sup>1</sup>.

The assessment considers effects on landscape and views as separate issues. Landscape effects relate both to physical changes to landscape elements, for example, landform, watercourses, footpaths, trees, hedgerows and other types of vegetation, and to the resulting landscape character. Visual effects relate to changes in people's views.

### 7.3.1 Study Area

The spatial scope of the assessment was determined by the theoretical extent to which the proposed development is likely to be visible within the surrounding landscape, which was determined by reference to the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) computer modelling, and site survey and assessment work on-site by Chartered Landscape Architects.

### 7.3.2 Selection of Viewpoints

Viewpoints showing a representative range of views towards the site are shown on *Figure 7.6A and 7.6B*. The selection of viewpoints (visual receptors) reflects the following types of publicly accessible viewpoints, as follows:

- representative viewpoints (for example, representing views of users of a particular footpath);
- specific viewpoints (for example, a key view from a specific location); and
- illustrative viewpoints (chosen to demonstrate a particular effect/specific issue).

Baseline daytime, and night-time, views are described in the Visual Effects Table, Part 1 (in *Appendix G6*).

The change in the view from the public footpath crossing the site (a linear receptor) is included within this LVIA, with supporting sequential views provided in *Appendix G10*, and has been described as part of the Heritage and Landscape Assessment of the Proposed Country Park, which is given in *Appendix G9*.

### 7.3.3 Assessment Process

A three-stage assessment process has been adopted, comprising the separate assessment of the nature of receptors (sensitivity), the nature (magnitude) of likely effects as a result of the proposed development, and lastly the significance of the identified effects on receptors.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013), **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**.

In all cases, the assessment of effects makes comparison with the baseline condition of the site. Visual effects are considered for the following time periods:

- During Construction/On Completion (Occupation): in winter, without the benefit of effective planting mitigation; and
- 15 Years After Completion: in winter.

Landscape effects have been considered collectively for all time periods.

### *Significance of Effects*

The assessment of the significance of both landscape and visual effects has used the scale shown in *Table 7.1*:

Sensitivity of Receptor	Major Effect	Moderate Effect	Slight Effect	Negligible Effect
<b>High</b>	Substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Negligible
<b>Medium</b>	Substantial	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
<b>Low</b>	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible

## **7.4 Baseline Conditions**

### *7.4.1 Site Context*

The site lies at the southern suburban edge of Newbury, to the east of the residential area of Wash Common, as shown on *Figure 7.1* (in Volume 2). To its south-east lies the village of Newtown. The site is bounded:

- to the north, by Monks Lane, which defines the current extent of the suburban housing area of southern Newbury; Newbury Rugby and Football Club lies off the south side of this road, to the north-west of the site; Newbury College is also accessed off the south side this road, to the north-east of the site;
- to the east, the A339 Newtown Road, which separates Newbury College from Newbury Retail Park that lies further east; further south, the site boundary returns around the western edge of Veolia Environmental Services recycling facility and the curtilage of Sandleford Farm before rejoining the A339; the historic parkland area of Sandleford Priory (St. Gabriel's School) lies directly opposite the southern part of the site on the opposite side of the A339;
- to the south, the planted corridor of the River Enborne, beyond which lies a mosaic of farmland with woodland blocks; the curtilage of Sandleford Place abuts the south-east corner of the site; and
- to the west, by Park Home School and Sports College, and agricultural land at Sandleford Park West.

### *7.4.2 Landscape Character*

Landscape character areas are shown on *Figure 7.3*, and are described in the Landscape Effects Table (Part 1), in *Appendix G6*.

Published sources describing landscape character within the study area are:

- Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 129: Thames Basin Heaths<sup>2</sup>;
- North Wessex Downs AONB: Integrated Landscape Character Assessment<sup>3</sup>;
- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report<sup>4</sup>;
- Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Assessment, Main Report<sup>5</sup>, and
- Newbury District Council District-wide Landscape Assessment<sup>6</sup>.

### *National Landscape Character*

The site lies within the western margin of NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths. Key characteristics of NCA 129 are described on page 6 of this publication, and those of relevance to the site and locality include:

- *'Plateaux of Tertiary sands and gravels in the London Basin, with intervening river valleys floored by London Clay. In the far west, Chalk forms the Hampshire Downs escarpment and the river beds of the Kennet and Pang.*
- *High woodland cover, offering an array of colour in the autumn. Conifers and large plantations on former heathland are dominant features in the east, while the west is scattered with small, semi-natural woodlands on ancient sites.*
- *Acid, leached soils mean that farming on the plateaux is limited to rough pasture, and that alternative land uses (such as forestry, golf courses and horse paddocks) have emerged. Heather, gorse, oak and birch all thrive here. Arable land and improved pasture are found in the valleys, on alluvium.*
- *Beyond the large areas of heathland and woodland, there is a patchwork of small to medium-sized fields with woods. The legacy of historic hunting forests includes veteran trees, ancient woods, ancient hedgerows and parklands. Historic meadows remain as fragments along watercourses...*
- *Historic commons offer tranquillity and unenclosed views, while other rights of access are enjoyed across farmland, canals and downland. Ministry of Defence ownership restricts (but does not entirely prevent) public enjoyment...'*

### *Berkshire Landscape Character*

The Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment compliments the earlier study undertaken in 1993 in respect of Newbury District, which is described below.

Figures 10 and 11 of the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies the majority

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<sup>2</sup> Natural England (2014), **Profile NE530, National Character Area 129: Thames Basin Heaths.**

<sup>3</sup> Land Use Consultants (March 2002), **North Wessex Downs AONB: Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Technical Report.**

<sup>4</sup> Land Use Consultants (for Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit) (October 2003), **Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report.**

<sup>5</sup> Landscape Design Associates (in association with Wessex Archaeology) (June 2001), **Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Assessment, Main Report.**

<sup>6</sup> Landscape Design Associates (1993), **Newbury District Council District-wide Landscape Assessment.**

of the site (excluding southern river corridor) as lying within the western part of Landscape Character Type (LCT) H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic, and associated Indicative Landscape Character Area (LCA) H2: Greenham, as shaded in yellow on *Figure 7.3*. LCA H2 extends eastwards across the A339 Newtown Road to also encompass the Registered Historic Parkland of Sandleford Priory, and Greenham Common. The northern edge of LCA H2 adjoins the urban area of Newbury, and the southern edge abuts LCT A: Upper Valley Floor and associated LCA A4: Enborne, which follows the River Enborne.

Landscape characteristics of LCT H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic are described on page 140 of the publication, and include:

- **'Topographically varied** with undulating hills and small valleys rising to mounded ridges.
- **Intimate lowland rural landscape** with small traditional villages and farmsteads.
- Mixed sand, clay and gravel geological substrate creating a **mosaic of landcover** including arable fields, damp pasture, paddocks, **woodland** and **heathland**.
- **Strong wooded context** taking a variety of woodland forms including large swathes of mixed, coniferous and deciduous woodland along the ridges, small farm woodland, wooded 'valleys' and copses.
- Arable land and pastures divided by a varied field pattern of **small irregular fields**.
- Network of hidden streams and ponds.
- **Winding rural lanes**, including **sunken lanes**, passing through open and wooded landscapes.
- Variety of important **wildlife habitats** including ancient woodland, heathland, meadows and pasture, open water and parkland.
- **Landscape parklands** with their origins in medieval parkland.
- Relatively **dense pattern of rural settlement** in some areas and some pressure and influence from adjacent urban areas in some parts.
- Numerous **visible historic features** including barrows, hillforts, a Roman road, earthworks, mottes and the Cold War monuments at Greenham Common.'

Features of key significance for this LCT are summarised on page 148 of the publication, and include:

- *'Varied landcover mosaic.*
- **Deciduous woodland context** with a variety of woodland forms including valley woodlands and wooded ridgelines.
- *Varied field pattern of small irregular and assarted fields.*
- *Presence of streams and ponds.*
- *Winding rural and sunken lanes.*
- *Important heathland, ancient woodland and grassland habitats.*
- *Landscape parklands.*
- *Features of archaeological importance.'*

Paragraph 12.27, on page 146 of the publication, describes LCA H2: Greenham as:

*'...The landscape comprises a flat-topped ridge upon which Greenham Common is located: a large open expanse of heathland and acid grassland, which was controlled by the Ministry of Defence and was a former air base... Surrounding Greenham Common are areas of more typical Woodland and Heathland Mosaic with large, predominantly deciduous woodlands which form a regular pattern... Between these woods there is a mosaic of arable and pastoral land use. Sandleford Priory is an area of eighteenth century parkland. From this area there are important open views*

*southwards towards Penwood and Newtown.'*

Paragraph 12.28 goes on to state:

*'The landscape is connected with small rural roads, although these have been 'urbanised' in some areas. Settlement includes... the suburban outskirts of Newbury. The greatest built influences are the military buildings around and within the Common and the warehouse type buildings at New Greenham Park.'*

Paragraph 12.42 evaluates the character of LCA H2: Greenham, and states that it has:

*'...a moderate character with a strong presence of heathland and woodland, however is affected by the large and non-traditional buildings of the military installations and the new industrial estates. The condition of the landscape could also be improved as this is currently challenged by poor boundary elements and areas of fragmented land. Therefore there is a need to conserve and restore the landscape in order to create a more intimate and intact character whilst acknowledging that some of the non-traditional buildings are of historic importance. Restoration of heathland and wooded boundaries is a priority in this area. The retention and enhancement of positive open views to the south should be considered in all land management.'*

The landscape strategy for LCT H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic is given on page 149 of the publication, and states that it is:

*'...to conserve and, where necessary, restore the distinctive intimate and peaceful wooded landscape with its small-scale mosaic of pasture, arable farmland, woodland and parkland. In particular the heathland characteristics require conservation and there are opportunities for restoration of habitats and reinstatement of features that have been lost.'*

As described below, the vegetation cover of the site largely comprises deciduous woodland blocks, lengths of connecting hedgerow, grassland and arable land, with pockets of wetter wooded and grassland vegetation. Therefore, the most relevant of the management objectives to achieve the aims of the landscape strategy, as set out in paragraph 12.38, on page 150, include:

- *'Seek to conserve and restore areas of pastureland and encourage appropriate management by grazing...*
- *Promote appropriate woodland management including coppicing and pollarding, in particular for ancient and semi-natural woodland areas.*
- *Ensure that new woodland planting follows the existing pattern of wooded ridges and interconnected valleys...*
- *Conserve and strengthen existing boundary elements, including the characteristic wooded boundaries and seek to prevent further loss or decline in the quality of boundary hedgerows...'*

The very southern margin of the site lies within LCT A: Upper Valley Floor, and associated Indicative LCA A4: Enborne. Paragraph 5.25, on page 53 of the publication, describes this area as:

*'...The Enborne defines part of the southern borders of Berkshire... The river channel occupies a narrow corridor and the valley floor is not as clearly differentiated from the valley sides. However, deciduous woodlands, some of which are classified as ancient, fringe the valley enclosing the landscape and creating an intimate, even 'secretive',*

*ambience.'*

### ***Newbury District Character***

The 1993 Newbury District-wide Landscape Assessment identifies the site as lying within the western part of LCT 18A: Degraded Parkland, as outlined in dark pink on *Figure 7.3*. LCT 18A also included the Registered Parkland of Sandleford Priory to the east of the site.

Key landscape characteristics of LCT 18A are described on page 66 of the publication as:

- *'Specimen trees and tree clumps, some over-mature standing in ploughed or arable farmland (pasture destroyed).*
- *Unkempt grounds and silted-up ponds associated with mapped parklands.*
- *Destruction of parkland by mineral extraction and commercial after-use.*
- *Erosion of contextual setting by large-scale commercial development and degraded urban fringe.'*

The accompanying diagram identifies the following features within the site:

- within the northern part around Crook's Copse, land now occupied by Newbury College: arable land - removal of field boundaries and loss of pastures; Monks Lane - open views over farmland;
- High Wood and Slockett's Copse: woodland blocks important as a setting for Newbury - management and new planting required;
- the central valley: important remnant pastures associated with stream and valley;
- public footpath through farmland; and
- River Enborne and wooded valley bottom.

On page 66, Sandleford Park is described as:

*'...a large area of arable farmland, broken by substantial blocks of woodland...'*

The strategy for enhancement of the Degraded Parkland is set out on page 110. However, the strategy for Sandleford Park has now been superseded by that set out in the Sandleford Park SPD, which incorporates the aims set out for protecting the existing woodland blocks and enhancing the local vegetation pattern.

### ***Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Character***

To the south of LCA A4 lies Basingstoke and Deane LCA1: Highclere and Burghclere, as shown on *Figure 7* of the Council's Landscape Assessment. The key characteristics of this area are given in the Landscape Effects Table (Part 1), in *Appendix G6*.

*Figure 6* of the Council's Landscape Assessment shows LCA1 sub-divided into a mosaic of interlocking landscape character types, with the area adjoining the site boundary characterised as LCT V2: Enclosed Valley Floor Farmland, and the area around Newtown comprising a mix of FW3: Mixed Farmland and Woodland: Small Scale, and PW1: Small-scale Pasture and Woodland: Heath Associated.

## ***West Berkshire Local Development Framework: Landscape Sensitivity Study***

Figure 1A of the West Berkshire Local Development Framework: Landscape Sensitivity Study<sup>7</sup> identifies the site, together with the historic parkland of Sandleford Priory, as lying within Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) 18D: Sandleford Park. The boundary of this area is shown on *Figure 7.3*.

Figure 2A of the Landscape Sensitivity Study shows LLCA 18D as being of 'medium' overall sensitivity. The explanatory text on page 15 lists the key elements of sensitivity as follows:

- *'Complex topography, with a flat topped ridge along the northern sector falling southwards towards the valley of the River Enborne, with two north-south minor valleys and internal undulations*
- *Mosaic of arable, pasture and amenity grassland, with blocks of woodland, specimen trees and tree clumps*
- *Group of parkland ponds, former fishponds, in east, associated with Sandleford Priory*
- *Secluded within valleys, but open in places on higher ground*
- *Open views south from higher ground, and views of hard settlement edge and development encroaching into area*
- *Former Sandleford Priory a landmark feature... overall medium to high (sensitivity)'*

Under 'Other landscape sensitivity interests' on page 16, the study states that is:

- *'...Considerable visual intrusion from adjacent development, including the large scale retail park to the north-east, residential, industrial, and waste development, lit roads and floodlighting masts. Overall tranquillity levels are very low to low, but medium in enclosed valleys...'*

Under 'Wider Landscape', the study notes:

- *'LLCA 18D: Sandleford Park has strong visual links with higher ground to the south, although its character is distinct from the surrounding landscape.'*

The landscape character of the site, and the respective sensitivity of different areas within it, is discussed further in *Section 7.4.3*.

### ***7.4.3 Site and Immediate Surroundings***

#### ***Topography***

The landform of the site and surrounding study area is shown on *Figure 7.2*. The site is located on the southern side of a broad ridgeline separating the valleys of the River Kennet and River Enborne, which runs from east to west through the southern part of Newbury, between Wash Common and Greenham Common. The ridge rises to above 130m AOD, and is incised along its southern edge by a number of minor valleys and tributaries that flow into the River Enborne.

To the south of the River Enborne corridor, there lies a second ridge of higher land, which is

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<sup>7</sup> Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd and Wessex Archaeology (May 2009), **West Berkshire Local Development Framework: Landscape Sensitivity Study**.

also incised by a number of minor valley formations. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) straddles the western part of this land.

Land within the site generally slopes south-eastwards towards the River Enborne from a level of 120m AOD to 80m AOD at the river. The central part of the site is incised by a bifurcate valley landform, which runs from its north-west to the join the river corridor. Flatter land lies within the margins of the site, on either side of this valley.

### *Vegetation Pattern*

There are five ancient woodlands, as shown on *Figure 7.5*, namely High Wood, Slockett's Copse and an adjacent small outlier woodland, Crook's Copse, Barn Copse, Dirty Ground Copse and Waterleaze Copse. Gorse Covert also contains ancient woodland indicator species, as described in *Chapter 6: Ecology*. Brickkiln Copse comprises a sixth area of ancient woodland to the west of the site. All of the woodland areas are designated as Wildlife Heritage Sites.

The arboricultural survey undertaken by Barrell Tree Consultancy identified a number of veteran trees or trees with potential for veteran status, the location of which is identified by yellow circles on *Figure 7.5*. A number of the mature Oak trees and woodland groups have been assessed as either Category A (High quality) or Category B (Medium quality). Other Category B trees comprise mature specimens of Ash, Beech, Sycamore and Sweet Chestnut. Several trees have been identified for removal, or health and safety works to bring them back into a good and safe condition if they are to be retained. The corresponding Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is contained in *Appendix G11*.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) No. 786 (made in 2007) covers individual and groups of trees along the western side of the A339 Newtown Road, within the Registered Historic Parkland, adjacent to the site boundary, as shown on *Figure 7.3*.

An assessment of the importance and condition of site hedgerows is given in *Chapter 6: Ecology*. None of the site hedgerows have been identified as being 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations. Many hedgerows are species-poor and discontinuous, and would benefit from sensitive management to improve their condition, structure, and wildlife value; for example:

- the tall roadside hedge along Monks Lane, which comprises a mix of native species and is overgrown;
- the intermittent hedgerow and understorey planting along the southern section of the A339 Newtown Road, which would need to be managed at an appropriate height to preserve views towards and from Sandleford Priory;
- the intermittent hedgerow along the route of the internal footpath, which also would need to be managed at an appropriate height to preserve views towards Sandleford Priory; and
- the narrow and species-poor hedgerow along the southern boundary of the Newbury Rugby Football Club.

Significant site vegetation is described further within the LCC Sheets given in *Appendix G2*.

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## *Historic Landscape and Features*

Historic landscape features associated with the site and surrounding area are shown on *Figure 7.5*, and related landscape-related planning designations are shown on *Figure 7.3* (in Volume 2).

Sandleford Priory (St. Gabriel's School) is listed as Grade I, as highlighted in orange on *Figure 7.5*. The country house was remodelled by James Wyatt in the Gothic style in the 1780s, and has been used as a school since the late 1940s.

A number of other listed buildings lie adjacent to the boundary of the site, and include the Grade II Sandleford Place to the south-east of the site, and Warren Lodge Presbytery to its west. These listed buildings, together with their settings, are described in *Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage*.

Sandleford Priory was identified as Grade II on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in 1987, and is shown in mauve hatch shading on *Figure 7.5*. The parkland comprises a mid to late C18th landscape park, with work carried out to the designs of 1781 by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. The original parkland was sub-divided in the 1930s, with the most intact part surviving around St. Gabriel's School. The area to the north of the school, shaded in yellow, has been developed for housing following gravel extraction in this area of the parkland, and is known as Sandleford Lodge Park.

Similarly, the former walled kitchen garden, which abuts part of the eastern site boundary, has lost its former historic form, and now comprises a private garden and paddocks associated with Sandleford Farm.

The separate Heritage and Landscape Assessment of the Proposed Country Park report, in *Appendix G9*, provides background detail on the history of Sandleford Priory and identifies that the site was once part of the Sandleford Estate, but not part of the parkland improvement scheme designed by Capability Brown. This distinction is reflected in the fact that the site does not form part of the designated registered historic parkland. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the site contributes to the wider setting of Sandleford Priory. Part of the C18th landscape works within the gardens and parkland around the country house were to frame and enhance views, including those across the agricultural parkland of the site towards the surrounding countryside around Penwood and Newtown. This intervisibility between Sandleford Priory and the southern part of the site remains, as illustrated by *Photographic Viewpoint 8a*, in *Appendix G3*. Also, there are a number of elevated viewpoints within the site that look towards the school (as shown by turquoise arrows on *Figure 4.3*), from where the wider historic and landscape context of the Grade I listed building can be appreciated.

*Appendix G1* contains reproductions of historic OS maps that show how the vegetation cover within Sandleford Priory and the site have changed over time. Although the historic tree planting pattern is largely schematic on these maps, it does provide an indication of which present day trees and woodlands survive from late C19th, and has informed the location of proposed planting within the new country park, as shown on *Figure 4.3*.

West Berkshire Council's Historic Landscape Characterisation Sensitivity Map, published on the Council's website, shows the site as having mixed sensitivity, ranging from '*low- medium*' in the northern part adjacent to the existing development edge, and '*medium*' in the southern part, with the ancient woodland areas being of '*high*' sensitivity. The undeveloped part of Sandleford Priory is shown as '*medium*' and '*medium-high*' sensitivity.

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## *Public Rights of Way*

A public footpath crosses the southern part of the site, from east to west, between the A339 Newtown Road and Warren Road, as shown on *Figure 7.3*. The eastern end of the route intersects with a track, which runs to the south from Newbury College parallel to the western side of the A339.

A cycle route runs along the southern side of Monks Lane.

## *Landscape Character and Sensitivity of the Site*

The landscape character of the site has been sub-divided into a number of Landscape Character Compartments (LCCs) by reference to its variation in landform, aspect, woodland and vegetation cover, visual containment or openness, and relationship to the surrounding townscape and countryside. The boundaries of the LCCs are shown on *Figure 7.4*, and each LCC is separately described on the sheets given in *Appendix G2*.

The LCCs fall into three broad categories, namely:

- valley corridor;
- woodland areas; and
- agricultural parkland.

LCC 1a: Central Valley broadly crosses the site from south to north, becoming more enclosed and intimate in character in its northern part where it forms a more pronounced landform feature, which is lined by blocks of woodland and hedgerow planting. This valley represents a key landscape feature within the site, and is of *'high'* value and sensitivity. LCC 1b: Northern Valley runs north-east of the central valley and comprises a smaller, complementary feature.

There are seven woodland areas within the site, which have been identified as LCC 2a to LCC 2f inclusive, and LCC 2h. As described above, these woodlands provide skyline features within many views, and also are designated Wildlife Sites (non-statutory) as they either represent blocks of ancient woodland or contain ancient woodland indicator species. Therefore, these areas have been assessed as being of *'high'* value and sensitivity.

The agricultural parkland comprises arable fields and horse paddocks, and is sub-divided by the valley corridor and woodland blocks into five distinct areas.

LCC 3a: Northern Parkland comprises arable land within a well-defined landscape cell and is heavily influenced by the surrounding urban area, Newbury College and Newbury Rugby Football Club. This area is visually well contained, and has been assessed as having *'low'* sensitivity to residential development.

LCC 3b: Western Parkland comprises a mix of arable and grazing land, which is well contained by the existing woodland blocks lying adjacent to its north-east and southern boundaries. Its north-west margin adjoins Park House School and Sports College. The character of this LCC extends westwards to include part of the adjacent parcel of land. LCC 3b has a slightly more rural character than LCC 3a, and has been assessed as having *'low to medium'* sensitivity to residential development.

LCC 3d: Eastern Parkland extends along the busy A339 Newtown Road frontage of the site, opposite the registered historic parkland of Sandleford Priory, with which there is strong

intervisibility. This rolling agricultural land is also visible in views from the south in the vicinity of Newtown, where it is seen set below the wooded skyline of the central woodland blocks. This area has been assessed as having 'high' sensitivity to built development.

LCC 3e: Southern Parkland comprises rolling agricultural land that is also visible from Sandleford Priory and southern viewpoints. This area has been assessed as having 'high' sensitivity to built development.

The above assessment of the suitability of different parts of the site for development accords with that set out in the Sandleford Park Supplementary Planning Document (adopted September 2013).

### *Visual Receptors*

Thirteen viewpoints (visual receptors) have been selected to represent the range of typical views towards the site and its immediate surroundings, as shown by the yellow arrow symbols on *Figure 7.6*. These views are illustrated by the photographs given in *Appendix G3*, and are described in the Visual Effects Table, Part 1, in *Appendix G6*. In addition to this, a sequential route along the footpath passing from the A339 Newtown Road in the east to Warren Road in the west is assessed. Views along the sequential route are illustrated by the photographs in *Appendix G10*, and are described in the Visual Effects Table, Part 1, in *Appendix G6*.

There is no single viewpoint from where the whole site is visible, owing to its complex topography and vegetation pattern. From the west, north and north-east, the surrounding development edges of Wash Common and Newbury limit views to those from roadways, residential properties and other development overlooking the site, where these are not screened by the site's boundary vegetation. In these views, only the margins of the adjacent part of the site tend to be visible, owing to the screening effect of the woodland blocks lying further within the site.

There is strong intervisibility between the southern, more open part of the site (proposed country park) and the historic parkland around St. Gabriel's School further east, where there is a gap in the roadside vegetation along the A339. The site forms the foreground of views from the historic parkland towards Penwood, to the south-west. High Wood, Dirty Ground Copse and Gorse Covert, together with the undulating landform of the site, define the visible extent of the site from Sandleford Priory and the A339. The interlocking pattern of woodland blocks provides separation between the view corridor from the listed school buildings, and the northern and western parts of the site (proposed development area).

There are no open views into the remnant historic parkland area around Sandleford Farm owing to planting and fencing around its curtilage. Further north along the A339, views into the site are screened by the built form and fencing of the Veolia Environmental Services recycling facility.

To the south, and south-east, there are some longer views (up to 0.6km distance) from elevated viewpoints in the vicinity of Newtown and Newtown Common, as shown by the blue rays on *Figure 7.6*. The southern part of the site (proposed country park) is visible in these views, where it is seen below the wooded skyline formed by High Wood, Dirty Ground Copse and Gorse Covert. This woodland obscures potential views into the northern part of the site (proposed development area). Many southern viewpoints are screened by roadside vegetation lying adjacent to the A339 and B4640 road corridors, as well as the surrounding woodland pattern.

The North Wessex Downs AONB, shown hatched in yellow on *Figure 7.3*, lies some 2km to the south-west of the site, with its north-eastern boundary defined by the A34 road corridor. Potential views from the north-east margin of the North Wessex AONB are screened by the intervening landform (including the A34 embankment) and woodland pattern.

### *Night-time Views*

Both Monks Lane and the A339 Newtown Road are lit (see night-time *Photographs 5 and 8*, in *Appendix G3*), as are many of the surrounding residential roads. There are significant light sources associated with the Newbury Retail Park and Newbury College. Both Park House School and Sports College, and Newbury Rugby and Football Club, have floodlit pitches. All these light sources create a pronounced skyglow above the urban area of Newbury in night-time views from the south (see night-time *Photographs 3b and 9*). The residential area of Wash Common is also lit.

In contrast, the countryside around Newtown and Newtown Common to the south of the site, and the parkland around St. Gabriel's School to its west, contain less light sources and comprise a darker landscape area.

Those few light sources which are visible in night-time views from western section of the public footpath crossing the site comprise the occasional street or house light within the residential area of Wash Common, together with floodlights at both Park House School and Sports College and Newbury Rugby Football Club, when the sports pitches are in use. The A339 street lighting is prominent in views from the eastern section of the footpath, together with the skyglow above the urban area of Newbury.

### *Views from Public Footpath Crossing the Site*

A series of photographs showing the sequential views from the public footpath crossing the site (a linear receptor) are contained in *Appendix G10*. The view alters depending on the direction of travel; for example, from east to west:

- enters LCC 4: Western Parkland, woodland encloses the fields lying to either side of it; this woodland frames views towards countryside lying further south;
- the route passes through a 'pinch-point' between Dirty Ground Copse and Gorse Covert to enter LCC 3: Southern Parkland, from where there are more open views of the surrounding countryside, and also views towards Sandleford Priory where there are gaps within the adjacent hedgerow;
- where the route crosses the watercourse, to the south of Dirty Ground Copse and High Wood, there are framed views north-eastwards along LCC1A: Central Valley; and
- as the route enters LCC 6: Eastern Parkland, there are closer distance views of Sandleford Priory, which is seen lying behind traffic and clumps of vegetation along the A339 Newtown Road.

The assessment of effects makes comparison with the baseline condition for the identified viewpoints, and assesses the type of change for the following time periods:

- During Construction/On Completion (Occupation): in winter, without the benefit of effective planting mitigation; and
- 15 Years After Completion: in winter.

The degree/nature of identified change has been assessed for 15 years after Completion, when the proposed planting within the Country Park, and on the edge of the housing development has matured.

#### 7.4.4 *Legislation and Planning Policy Context*

The Planning Statement sets out the full planning policy context relating to the proposed development. Landscape related policies are listed below:

- National Planning Policy Framework<sup>8</sup> (NPPF) Paragraphs 170-172;
- The West Berkshire Core Strategy, adopted 16 July 2012<sup>9</sup>. Policy CS 3 allocates Sandleford Park as a strategic site for mixed use development. Other relevant policies include:
  - Policy CS 14: Design Principles;
  - Policy CS 18: Green Infrastructure; and
  - Policy CS 19: Historic Environment and Landscape Character.

Pursuant to Policy CS 3 of the Adopted Core Strategy, WBC prepared an initial SPD for Sandleford Park in 2013, the revised version of which was adopted in March 2015<sup>10</sup>. The SPD sets out strategic objectives that the new development should deliver, on pages 7 and 8, of which landscape-related objectives are 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12.

Section F of the SPD sets out a series of eight landscape development principles, on:

*L6. The site will have a series of green links and spaces through the development.*

## 7.5 Mitigation Measures

### 7.5.1 *Inherent Mitigation Measures*

As part of the reiterative design process, inherent landscape mitigation measures have included the following, for example:

- siting of the new housing within the less sensitive and more visually enclosed parts of the site;
- retention of the visually sensitive southern part of the site, which forms part of the wider landscape setting of Sandleford Priory, in green open usage as a new country park; and
- retention of all the blocks of woodland with appropriate (15m width) buffers around their perimeters.

*Figure 4.3* shows how the proposed landscape and green infrastructure design strategy seeks to:

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<sup>8</sup> Communities and Local Government (July 2018), **National Planning Policy Framework**.

<sup>9</sup> West Berkshire Council (Adopted 16 July 2012), **Core Strategy**.

<sup>10</sup> West Berkshire Council ((Adopted March 2015), **Sandleford Park Supplementary Planning Document**.

- integrate the proposals into their surroundings;
- respond to the strategic landscape objectives set out in Policy CS 3, and related Sandleford Park SPD (Section F);
- respond to WBC's landscape conservation and restoration strategy for LCT H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic; and
- provide benefits to the character of the wider landscape, including reinstatement of historic features and enhancement of views across it.

The Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan is *Figure 4.2*. The landscape and green infrastructure design includes the following features and mitigation measures:

- creation of a new country park, comprising the eastern and southern meadow areas, central and northern valleys, and existing woodland areas;
- reinstatement of a rural parkland character within the southern part of the country park to enhance the setting of Sandleford Priory, with new tree planting designed to reflect C18th tree planting groups (reference *Appendix G9*);
- retention and enhancement of views towards, and from, Sandleford Priory, including the view corridor south-westwards across the southern part of the site towards Pensford;
- retention of the ancient and semi-natural woodland areas, and veteran trees, with appropriate buffers and measures to minimise disturbance to wildlife habitat areas; new public access routes through the woodlands will be located, designed and advertised by signage to further reduce disturbance to habitat areas;
- active management of woodland areas, and other retained vegetation, to prolong their useful lifespan, and enhance the biodiversity of the site;
- incorporation of an enhanced public access network, which will include:
  - upgrade of the existing footpath to a shared footpath and cycle link;
  - new circular walks;
  - foraging trails;
  - fitness trails;
  - educational trails;
  - a designated route, the Sandleford Mile, which will weave its way through the development parcels and country park, and connect with the various new recreational routes and activity areas;
  - siting of interpretation boards and wayfaring signage at appropriate locations; and
  - routes designed to be accessible to all members of the community;
- location of seating areas along routes and at identified vantage points, together with picnic areas within the country park;
- siting of designated play areas within the country park margins, namely one Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) within its western part and one Locally Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) to the south of Crook's Copse;
- creation of a hierarchy of grassland areas within the country park, and elsewhere within the site, to contribute to the site's biodiversity;
- protection and enhancement of wildlife areas, including reptile translocation receptor areas within the country park, dormice crossings and bat hop-overs (see *Chapter 6*:

*Ecology* for further details);

- enhancement of existing water features such as the central watercourse crossing the site;
- sensitive siting of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) features, such as balancing basins and connecting swales, which will be designed to respect the local landform of the site, and where practical incorporate biodiversity areas; and
- new strategic planting.

### **7.5.2 Strategic Planting**

The new strategic planting will be designed to:

- further screen the development parcels and integrate them into their surroundings;
- reinforce and extend the margins of the existing woodland blocks;
- reinforce and reinstate degraded planted boundary features;
- reflect the local vegetation pattern and distinctiveness of the area;
- reflect the former historic tree planting pattern within the southern part of the site;
- integrate several small orchard areas along new foraging trails;
- retain and frame views towards and from Sandleford Priory;
- contribute to the demarcation between public realm and private space; and
- create an attractive residential environment with a strong sense of place.

The accompanying schedule of proposed trees and plants for the country park and incidental open space areas is given in *Appendix G8*.

Early strategic planting is shown on *Figure 7.7*.

### **7.5.3 Standard Mitigation Measures**

Standard landscape mitigation measures include the erection of fencing, in accordance with BS 5837:2012, to protect the woodland areas, better quality trees and hedgerows, and other key landscape and ecological features for the duration of the construction period, as described in the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in *Appendix D1*, and *Appendix G7*.

### **7.5.4 Actionable Mitigation Measures**

Actionable landscape mitigation measures will include those that can be controlled by Condition, or Section 106 Agreement, for example: agreement of a long-term management plan for the site. A Landscape and Green Infrastructure Design and Management Framework Plan (LGIDMF) for the site is given in *Appendix G7*, and sets out the overarching design and management objectives for the new country park, and also the green infrastructure areas and features within the development areas. The proposed objectives respond to Development Principles set out in Section F of the Sandleford Park SPD; and also, management objectives identified within WBC's landscape conservation and restoration strategy for LCT H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic.

A separate, detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan will be agreed with the local authority for each Reserved Matters Application, and/or secured by condition.

## 7.6 Assessment of Environmental Impacts

### 7.6.1 Impact Assessment

The potential visual effects arising During Construction, and On Completion (Occupation Phase), are described below in *Section 7.6.3*, with residual visual effects described in *Section 7.6.4*.

Landscape effects have been assessed collectively, for all time periods, and are described in *Section 7.6.4: Residual Impact Assessment*.

### 7.6.2 Zone of Theoretical Visibility

*Figures 7.6A and 7.6B* show the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of the proposed development During Construction/On Completion (Occupation) and 15 years After Planting, respectively, that is the theoretical geographical extent from which the proposed development is likely to be visible from the surrounding landscape. The ZTV represents the worst case scenario, since it only takes account of visual barriers formed by the topography, main settlement areas and significant vegetation blocks, and does not incorporate more localised screening provided by incidental tree groups and taller hedge planting, for example.

Six target points were selected within the proposed development area and have been given Above Ordnance Datum heights to reflect the proposed distribution of different ridge heights. The potential visibility of these target heights is shown by the blue rays on the ZTVs.

The surrounding existing development and woodland largely limits the potential visibility of the new housing to local viewpoints directly overlooking the site boundaries. From the south-east, there are some slightly longer (up to 0.6km) views into the south-eastern part of the site, where the new country park is proposed.

### 7.6.3 Visual Effects: During Construction, and On Completion (Occupation Phase)

The proposed housing development will be built in phases, and it is anticipated that the building programme for the whole of the site will be approximately 12 years.

Visual effects arising During Construction will be similar to those On Completion (Occupation) in terms of views of the new buildings under construction, and the built presence of the completed buildings and infrastructure.

Construction activities will include the erection of scaffolding, construction compounds, and the movement of vehicles delivering construction materials and equipment, including mobile cranes on low loaders. Some works will be carried out in darkness during winter months, using artificial light sources. The main construction access will be off Monks Lane.

On Completion (Occupation Phase), visual effects will arise from the change in views as a result of the proposed built development, and also new country park and areas of new structure planting. The assessment has assumed that this planting will offer only limited

screening of the proposed development areas during the early occupation phase.

A full description of all arising visual effects is set out in Part 2 of the Visual Effects Table. A summary of visual effects of substantial and moderate significance is given below:

- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects on *Viewpoints 7a and 7b* on the Health Walk as a result of views of new housing within the north-east part of the site;
- **moderate adverse** effects on local residential roads directly overlooking new housing within the northern part of the site, namely the framed view from *Viewpoint 4* along Rupert Road, from where the new housing will be seen behind the existing roadside hedge;
- **minor to moderate adverse** effects on views from *Viewpoint 6* within Newbury College in the vicinity of the car park, which will overlook the new housing area;
- **minor to moderate beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 9* on the public footpath off the B4640 at Newtown Common as a result of the presence of the new country park enhancing the mid-distance of this view from further south;
- **negligible** effects on sequential views from *viewpoints 11, 14, 15, 16 and 17*;
- **moderate adverse** effects on sequential *viewpoints 18 (looking north-west) and 19*;
- **moderate beneficial** effects on sequential *viewpoints 18 (looking south-east) and 20 (looking south-east)*;
- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects on sequential *viewpoints 20 (looking north-west), 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25*; and
- **no effect** upon *viewpoints 1 and 2*.

Views towards Sandleford Priory are available from *viewpoints 18 and 20* and are highlighted by orange arrows on photosheets contained within *Appendix G10*. From these locations, the views of the existing listed building (now St. Gabriel's School) and its historic parkland will be retained. The foreground of the views, comprising the new Country Park, will be enhanced through new groups of tree planting set within managed naturalistic grassland meadow. To the west at *Viewpoints 24 and 25* there are no views of the listed building when looking south-east.

#### **7.6.4 Residual Impact Assessment**

Residual effects are those remaining 15 Years After Planting (completion), in accordance with Landscape Institute guidance on assessment methodology, as described in *Appendix G4*, when the new planting will have established to provide further screening of the proposed development, and also created new features within the site. After 15 years, it is assumed that new structural tree planting will be between 9m and 12m in height, and that new matrix planting will have reached an average 7m to 9m in height, depending on the natural growth height of individual species and the initial stock size. Proposed areas of new structure planting are shown on *Figure 4.3*.

#### **Landscape Effects**

The detailed assessment of landscape effects, for all time periods, is set out in Part 2 of the

Landscape Effects Table, in *Appendix G6*.

There will inevitably be changes in the landscape character of the site. However, the new development has been designed to fit in with the existing landscape framework of the site to maintain the legibility and identify of the landscape.

Adverse landscape effects will arise as a result of change in land use within the northern and western parts of the site from greenfield to residential development. Beneficial effects will arise from the laying out and management of the southern part of the site, together with the central and northern valleys and woodland areas, as part of a new country park.

Landscape effects of substantial and moderate significance will comprise:

- direct and neutral effects of **moderate** significance on the western part of West Berkshire Landscape Character Type (LCT) H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic and associated Landscape Character Area (LCA) H2: Greenham, as a result of new development replacing greenfield land within the northern and western parts of the site, balanced by the retention and enhancement of the southern part of the site and central and northern valley areas as a new country park;
- direct and **substantial beneficial** effects on West Berkshire LCT A: Upper Valley Floor and associated LCA A4: Enborne, as a result of the management of ancient woodland within the southern margin of the new country park, where it adjoins the northern edge of the River Enborne;
- indirect and **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on Basingstoke and Deane LCA 1: Highclere and Burghclere, as a result of enhanced views towards the new country park, where there is intervisibility with the southern part of the site; and
- direct and **substantial beneficial** effects on the south-west margin of Newbury District's LCT 18A: Degraded Parkland, as a result of the proposed country park, and a direct and adverse effect of minor to substantial significance on its north-west margin, as a result of the proposed development.

In terms of the character of the site, the proposed development will give rise to landscape effects of substantial and moderate significance to:

- direct and **minor to substantial adverse** effects on the northern and western parts of the site owing to the loss of greenfield land to development; the significance of the effect varying depending upon the relationship of the proposed development to the existing built edge of Newbury; and
- direct and **substantial beneficial** effects on the southern part of the site, together with the central and northern and retained valley areas, and retained woodland blocks, which will form part of an attractive and managed new country park.

### **Visual Effects**

All arising residual visual effects are described in Part 2 of the Visual Effects Table, in *Appendix G6*. A summary of visual effects of substantial and moderate significance is given below:

- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects will remain on *Viewpoint7a* on the Health Walk to south of Newbury College, although the view of the new housing further north-west will be filtered by maturing boundary planting;

- **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 8a* within the western part of Sandleford Priory (St. Gabriel's School), as new planting within the country park will have matured, and together with the wider managed grassland areas, will reinstate the former character of the historic parkland to the west of the listed school; also, there will be a similar beneficial change in the first floor view from St. Gabriel's School (*Viewpoint 8b*);
- **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 11*, at the eastern end of the public footpath by the A339, adjacent to the driveway entrance into St. Gabriel's School, also as a result of the enhanced character of the southern part of the site as a result of the new country park; and
- **minor to moderate beneficial** effects on intermittent views from further south, namely on *Viewpoint 9* on the public footpath off the B4640 at Newtown Common, from where parts of the new country park will be visible.

### *Night-time Visual Effects*

Changes in night-time views are described in Part 2 of the Visual Effects Table, in *Appendix G6*.

The new residential roads will be lit, and also there will be light sources associated with the new housing, together with the primary school and local centre buildings. This lighting will be visible from the existing urban edge of Newbury and Wash Common, which overlooks the northern and western parts of the site and already includes various light sources, including street and car park lighting, and sports field floodlighting.

In views from Sandleford Priory (St. Gabriel's School), and from around Newtown, the new light sources will be largely screened by the intervening woodland blocks within the site, and where visible will be indistinguishable from those within the existing urban area of Newbury and Wash Common.

### *Visual Effects on Users of the Public Footpath Crossing the Site*

The existing public footpath that crosses the southern and western parts of the site will be retained on its original alignment, although upgraded to a shared footpath and cycle link, 3m in width.

All arising residual visual effects are described in Visual Effects Table, in *Appendix G6*. A summary of visual effects of substantial and moderate significance is given below:

- **moderate beneficial** change along the public footpath on *Viewpoint 11*, as the existing vegetation would be retained and managed, with foreground views enhanced by the proposed clumps of parkland trees (reinstatement of historic tree cover pattern) scattered across a naturalistic grassland meadow, and the wooded skyline maintained;
- **moderate to substantial beneficial** change along the public footpath on *Viewpoints 14-19 and 20 (looking south east)* as the proposed clumps of parkland trees reinstating the historic tree cover pattern would be maturing resulting in a parkland landscape;
- **moderate to substantial adverse** change along the footpath on *Viewpoint 20 (looking north-west)* approaching Dirty Ground Copse and Gorse Copse from the east, as the new housing and NEAP open space within the central part of the site will start to become visible from the footpath. The change will be mitigated with some additional woodland planting between Gorse Covert and Dirty Ground Copse, and by maintaining the

woodland blocks in the horizon, in the views. The existing vegetation in the hedgerow along the footpath will be retained and enhanced through management;

- **moderate to substantial adverse** change on *Viewpoint 21-23*, as the footpath will be overlooked by housing on both sides and will pass by the local centre in the vicinity of *Viewpoint 22*, which will suburbanise the character of its setting. The western section of the route will be retained within a greenway with areas of new planting, which help to mitigate some of the adverse effects. Similarly, on *Viewpoints 24 and 25*, looking south-east, the proposed housing development and LEAP will be seen, in the foreground will give rise to a **moderate adverse** change; and
- **no change** on *Viewpoints 1 and 2*.

Assessment of visual effects where the footpath route lies outside the application boundary; namely, *Viewpoints 1, 2 and 11* have been included in the Visual Effects Table in *Appendix G6*.

The change to sequential views from the public footpath as a result of the proposed development has also been described in the Heritage and Landscape Assessment of the Proposed Country Park, which is contained in *Appendix G9*.

Light sources from within the proposed development will be visible from short sections of the existing footpath route; namely from where it approaches and lies within the new housing area.

## 7.7 Cumulative Impact Assessment

### 7.7.1 Sandleford Park West

An Illustrative Masterplan showing the two schemes is shown on *Figure 4.7*. In conjunction with the proposed development, housing at Sandleford Park West (refer to *Chapter 2*) will represent further loss of greenfield land within the western margins of Berkshire Landscape Character Area LCA H2: Greenham, and Newbury District Landscape Character Type 18A: Degraded Parkland, but the significance of this adverse cumulative landscape effect will be no greater than that assessed for the standalone scheme.

Housing within Sandleford Park West will be visible from the eastern built edge of Wash Common; for example, from *Viewpoint 1* on Kendrick Road, which will directly overlook it and experience an adverse cumulative visual effect of **substantial adverse** significance During Construction/On Completion (Occupation Phase). New housing within the Application 3A site will not be visible from the edge of Wash Common.

The proposed Warren Road improvement scheme will remove half (8nr) of the TPO trees and tall roadside hedge and prune the remaining trees and hedge along the Park House School boundary, which adjoins the north side of the road to enable to construction of the proposed footpath. TPO Group 1 forms a significant skyline feature in local views, and the hedge provides a green visual buffer at street level. This loss of vegetation, together with changes to the character of the public footpath route at the eastern end of Warren Road, will give rise to adverse cumulative visual effects on local views from Warren Road (e.g. *Viewpoint 2*), together with those from the adjacent section of Andover Road and adjacent properties, which will be of **substantial adverse** significance.

### 7.7.2 Consented Development South of Newbury College

Cumulative development sites are shown on *Figure 4.8*. As described in *Chapter 2*, there are existing planning consents for a southern extension of Newbury College, and the new Highwood Copse Primary School, together with a new link road into the site off the A339. The footprint of these developments will represent minor land-take from Berkshire Landscape Character Area LCA H2: Greenham, and Newbury District Landscape Character Type 18A: Degraded Parkland, and will not change the overall significance of the adverse cumulative landscape effect assessed for the standalone scheme.

However, the cumulative visual effect of the proposed development in conjunction with these consented schemes will be greater than the standalone scheme During Construction/On Completion (Occupation Phase), as there will be adverse effects of:

- **substantial adverse** significance, rather than moderate to substantial adverse significance, on *Viewpoint 7a* on the Health Walk;
- **substantial adverse** significance, rather than negligible significance, on *Viewpoint 11* on the public footpath where it joins the A339; and
- **moderate adverse** significance, rather than minor adverse significance, on *Viewpoint 13* on the A339 opposite The Castle School.

### 7.7.3 Other Application Sites in Newbury

Four other proposed development sites lie close to the north-east margin of the site, as follows:

- Land north of Newbury College, Monks Lane - Policy HSA1, Housing Site Allocations DPD (site reference NEW012), with provision of approximately 15 dwellings;
- South of Warren Road, included within the developable acreage area of Sandleford Park with potential for 10 dwellings; and
- Land off Greenham Road, south-east Newbury - Policy HSA4, Housing Site Allocations DPD (including site references NEW047B, NEW 047C and NEW 047D, with potential for 235 to 255 dwellings.

Development of the Newbury College site, in conjunction with the proposed development will give rise to an adverse cumulative visual effect on visual receptors in the vicinity of the junction of Monks Lane and the A339 Newtown Road, which comprises areas already heavily influenced by existing built and highway development.

The cumulative effect of the development of allocation NEW042 has been considered as part of the Sandleford Park West site, in *Section 7.7.1* above.

There is no intervisibility between the site and the Greenham Road site, owing to the physical and visual separation provided by the Greenham Common Retail Park development and other development within Newbury. If this site was developed, there will be an adverse cumulative landscape effect on the separate, eastern part of LCA H2: Greenham (see *Figure 7.3: Landscape Character and Planning Designations*).

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## 7.8 Summary

### 7.8.1 Introduction

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', Third Edition, 2013 (GLVIA3).

### 7.8.2 Baseline Conditions

The site lies within the western margin of National Character Area (NCA) 129: Thames Basin Heaths.

The 2003 Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies the majority of the site as lying within the western part of Landscape Character Type (LCT) H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic, and associated Landscape Character Area (LCA) H2: Greenham, which also encompasses the Registered Historic Parkland of Sandleford Priory. The northern edge of LCA H2 adjoins the urban area of Newbury, and the southern edge abuts LCT A: Upper Valley Floor and associated LCA A4: Enborne, which comprises the corridor of the River Enborne.

The earlier 1993 Newbury District Landscape Assessment identifies the site as lying within the western part of Landscape Character Type 18A: Degraded Parkland, with the registered historic parkland of Sandleford Priory lying within its eastern part.

The West Berkshire Local Development Framework: Landscape Sensitivity Study (May 2009) identifies the majority of the site, together with the historic parkland of Sandleford Priory, as lying within Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) 18D: Sandleford Park, which is assessed as being of '*medium*' overall sensitivity. The very western margin of the site lies within LLCA 15B: Wash Common Farmland, which is graded as being of '*medium to high*' overall sensitivity.

For the purposes of this assessment, the landscape character of the site has been subdivided into a number of Landscape Character Compartments (LCCs) by reference to its variation in landform, aspect, woodland and vegetation cover, visual containment or openness, and relationship to the surrounding townscape and countryside. The LCCs fall into three broad categories, namely: valley corridor; woodland areas; and agricultural parkland. Land within the site generally slopes south-eastwards towards the River Enborne from a level of 120m AOD to 80m AOD at the river. The central part of the site is incised by a bifurcate valley landform, which runs from its south-east to join the river corridor. Five woodland blocks within the site are Registered Ancient Woodlands, with a sixth area lying further west. Tree Preservation Order (TPO) number 786 covers individual and groups of trees along the western side of the A339 within the site. A public footpath crosses the southern part of the site between the A339 Newtown Road and Warren Road.

The surviving historic parkland area of Sandleford Priory lies to the east of the site, on the opposite side of the A339, and is listed Grade II on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. This designation also includes a small area of land around Sandleford Farm, which abuts the eastern site boundary. The site once formed part of the wider Sandleford estate, and its southern part contributes to the setting of Sandleford Priory.

There is no single viewpoint from where the whole site is visible, owing to its complex

topography and vegetation pattern. From the west, north and north-east, the surrounding development limits views to those from roadways, and adjacent residential properties and other development overlooking the site, where these are not screened by boundary vegetation. Potential views from the North Wessex AONB are screened by the intervening landform and woodland pattern.

There are some longer views (up to 0.6km distance) from elevated viewpoints in the vicinity of Newtown and Newtown Common to the south, and south-east towards the southern site area.

There is strong intervisibility between the southern, open part of the site and Sandleford Priory, in which the site forms the foreground of views towards Penwood. The interlocking pattern of woodland blocks provide separation between this view corridor and the northern and western parts of the site.

There are significant light sources associated with the existing development and highway infrastructure surrounding the site, which are visible in night-time views.

### 7.8.3 Strategic Landscape and Green Infrastructure

The landscape and green infrastructure strategy includes:

- creation of a new country park, together with reinstatement of a rural parkland character within this part of the southern site area to enhance the setting of Sandleford Priory, and sympathetic incorporation of new features such as recreational pathways and SuDS basins;
- incorporation of connecting green corridors through parts of the development;
- retention and enhancement of views towards, and from, Sandleford Priory (now St. Gabriel's School);
- active management of the existing woodland areas, with retention of appropriate buffers;
- protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat areas; and
- new strategic planting, designed to complement the existing vegetation framework, provide additional screening of the proposed development, and reinstate degraded planted boundary features.

A long-term management plan for the country park and green infrastructure within the proposed development will be agreed with the local authority.

### 7.8.4 Impact Assessment

Visual effects arising During Construction will be similar to those On Completion (Occupational Phase) in terms of views of the presence of new buildings either being constructed or standing completed. The proposed development will give rise to the following visual effects of substantial and moderate significance on *Viewpoints 1 to 13*:

- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects on *Viewpoints 7a and 7b* on the Health Walk from where new housing within the north-east part of the site will be visible;
- **moderate adverse** effects on local residential roads directly overlooking new housing within the northern part of the site (e.g. *Viewpoint 4* on Rupert Road);

- **minor to moderate adverse** effects on views from *Viewpoint 6* within Newbury College car park, which will overlook the new housing area; and
- **minor to moderate beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 9* on the public footpath off the B4640 at Newtown Common as a result of the presence of the new country park.

The proposed development will give rise to the following visual effects of substantial and moderate significance upon footpath users passing east to west through the site area:

- **moderate adverse** effects on *viewpoints 18 (looking north-west) and 19* as the route approached the proposed development area;
- **moderate beneficial** effects on *viewpoints 18 (looking south-east) and viewpoint 20 (looking south-east)* as the route leads towards the newly created parkland; and
- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects on *viewpoints 20 (north-west), 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25* as the route passes through an area of newly constructed residential development instead of fields.

### 7.8.5 Residual Impact Assessment

Residual effects are those remaining 15 Years After Planting (completion), when the new planting will have established to provide further screening of the proposed development, and also created new features within the site

#### Residual Landscape Effects

Adverse landscape effects will arise as a result of change in land use within the northern and western parts of the site from greenfield to residential development. However, the new development has been designed to fit in with the existing landscape framework of the site to maintain the legibility and identify of the landscape. Beneficial effects will arise from the laying out and management of the southern part of the site as a new country park.

Landscape effects of substantial and moderate significance will comprise:

- direct and neutral effect of **moderate** significance on the western part of West Berkshire Landscape Character Type (LCT) H: Woodland and Heathland Mosaic and associated Landscape Character Area (LCA) H2: Greenham;
- direct and **substantial beneficial** effects on West Berkshire LCT A: Upper Valley Floor and associated LCA A4: Enborne;
- indirect and **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on Basingstoke and Deane LCA 1: Highclere and Burghclere; and
- direct and **substantial beneficial** effects on the south-west margin of Newbury District's LCT 18A: Degraded Parkland, and a direct and adverse effect of minor to substantial significance its north-west margin.

In terms of the character of the site, the proposed development will give rise to landscape effects of substantial and moderate significance to:

- direct and **minor to substantial adverse** effects on the northern and western parts of the site depending upon the relationship of the proposed development to the existing built edge of Newbury; and

- direct and **substantial beneficial** effects on the southern part of the site, together with the central and northern and retained valley areas.

The existing public footpath will be retained on its original alignment, although upgraded to a shared footpath and cycle link, 3m in width. The southern part of the route will cross the new country park, within an enhanced setting. The western part of the route will be retained within a greenway that will be overlooked by housing, which will be a change in the character of its setting.

### *Residual Visual Effects*

Visual effects of substantial and moderate significance include the following:

- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects on *Viewpoint 7a* on the Health Walk;
- **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 8a* within the western part of Sandleford Priory, and *Viewpoint 8b* on the first floor view from St. Gabriel's School;
- **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 11*, at the eastern end of the public footpath by the A339; and
- **minor to moderate beneficial** effects on *Viewpoint 9* on the public footpath off the B4640 at Newtown Common.

The new residential roads will be lit, and there will be light sources associated with the new housing, two primary schools and local centre buildings. This lighting will be seen in the context of the existing skyglow above Newbury and light sources generated by adjoining development.

The proposed development will give rise to the following visual effects of substantial and moderate significance upon footpath users passing east to west through the site area:

- **moderate beneficial** effects on *viewpoint 11* as the route approaches the newly created parkland;
- **moderate to substantial beneficial** effects on *viewpoints 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 (looking south east)* as the route passes through the newly created parkland; and
- **moderate to substantial adverse** effects on *viewpoint 20 (looking north-west) and viewpoints 21-25* as the route passes through the area of proposed residential development.

### **7.8.6 Cumulative Impact Assessment**

In terms of the wider allocation, there will be the following cumulative effects:

- the proposed development, in conjunction with housing at Sandleford Park West, will represent further loss of greenfield land within the western margins of Berkshire Landscape Character Area LCA H2: Greenham, and Newbury District Landscape Character Type 18A: Degraded Parkland, but the significance of this adverse cumulative landscape effect will be no greater than that assessed for the standalone scheme;
- cumulative visual effect of **substantial adverse** significance on *Viewpoint 1* on Kendrick Road as a result of new housing within Sandleford Park West, although the proposed

Application 3A development will not be visible from this location; and

- adverse cumulative visual effects of **substantial adverse** significance on *Viewpoint 2* on Warren Road, together with those from the adjacent section of Andover Road and adjacent properties as a result of the proposed Warren Road improvement scheme, which will remove the majority of the TPO trees and tall roadside hedge along the Park House School boundary.

There will be the following cumulative effects arising from the proposed development in conjunction with the consented Highwood Copse Primary School, together with a new link road into the site off the A339:

- slight increase in land-take from Berkshire Landscape Character Area LCA H2: Greenham, and Newbury District Landscape Character Type 18A: Degraded Parkland, and this will not change the overall significance of the adverse cumulative landscape effect assessed for the standalone scheme;
- adverse visual effect of **substantial adverse** significance, rather than moderate to substantial adverse significance, on *Viewpoint 7a* on the Health Walk;
- adverse visual effect of **substantial adverse** significance, rather than negligible significance, on *Viewpoint 11* on the public footpath where it joins the A339; and
- adverse visual effect of **moderate adverse** significance, rather than minor adverse significance, on *Viewpoint 13* on the A339 opposite The Castle School.

Development of Land North of Newbury College (ref. Policy HSA1), in conjunction with the proposed development, would give rise to an adverse visual cumulative effect on visual receptors in the vicinity of the junction of Monks Lane and the A339 Newtown Road.