

**SONNING COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN GROUP**

**LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FOR POTENTIAL SITES**

**AROUND SONNING COMMON**

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

**terrafirma**  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

## Introduction

1. The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Group (SCNPG) is currently working on an update to its adopted plan, part of which will allocate housing sites around the village. This report provides assessment of the potential housing sites which have been put forward since the adoption of the SCNP and considers their capacity, in landscape terms, to be developed without undue harm. This report draws upon and updates earlier work undertaken by the Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd and The terra firma Consultancy Ltd for South Oxfordshire District Council: Landscape Capacity Assessment for Sites on the Edge of the Larger Villages of South Oxfordshire (2015).
2. The following 11 sites are included in this report and shown on the map at Figure 1: SON 1 Old Copse Field, SON 12a north of Blackmore Lane, 12b east of 12a, SON 21a south of Blackmore Lane, SON 21b north of Reddish Manor, SON 22 south of Blounts Court Road, SON 23 Johnson Matthey car park, SON 24 Widmore Pond, SON 26 west of Kennylands Road, SON 27 Alpenrose, SON 29 east of Peppard Road.



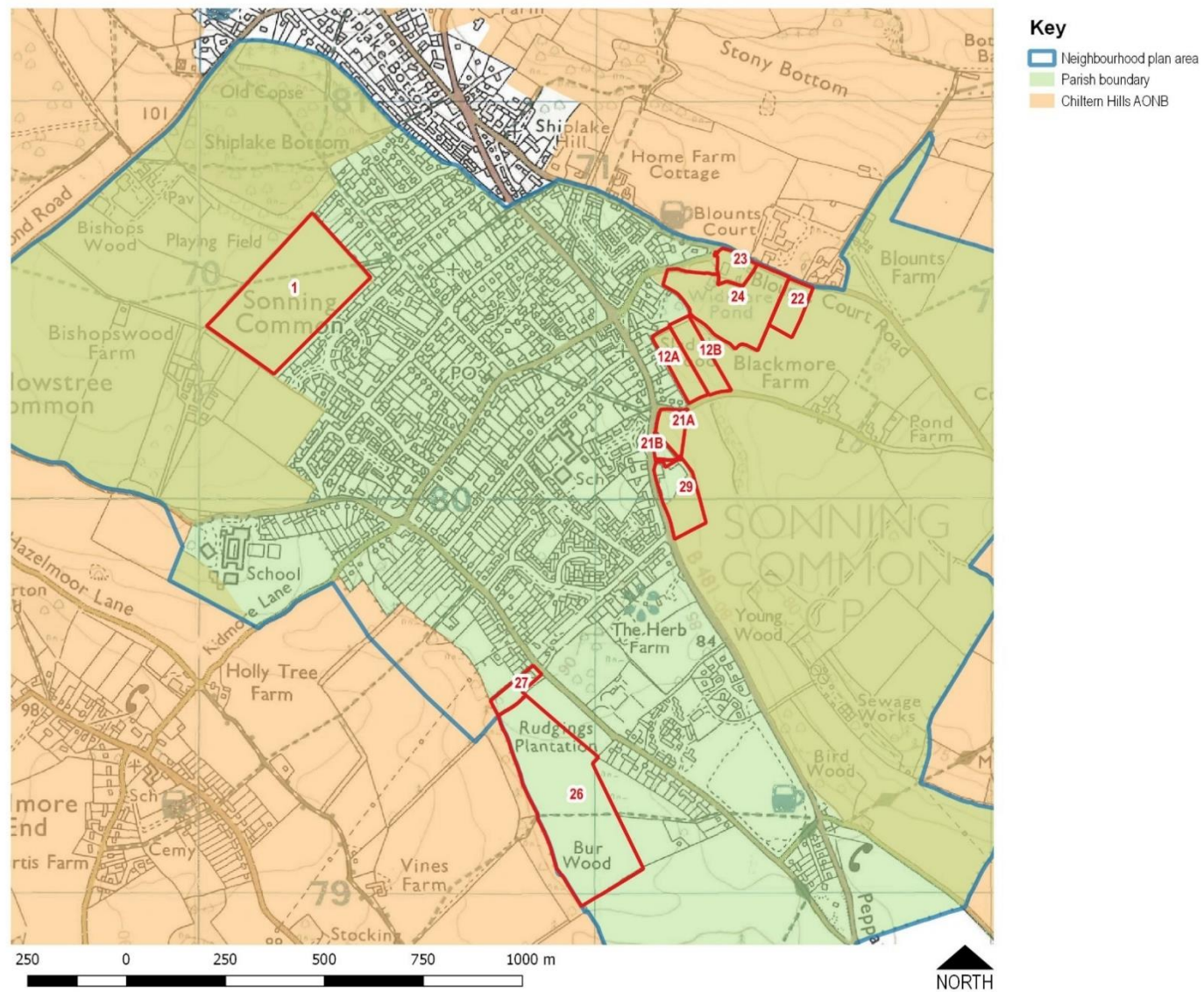


Figure 1: Potential housing sites

3. This report assesses the 11 sites using the same methodology used in the 2015 study. The methodology is summarised below, following an outline of the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan, AONB constraints and landscape character context. Reports for each site follow and are based on the more detailed fieldwork assessment which is set out in record sheets which form Appendix A.

### **Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan and Supporting Documents**

4. The contents of these local documents have informed the findings of previous assessment and this report. Relevant extracts are set out below:

5. Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan Submission version 2012-2027:

Relevant SCNDP objectives:

- To avoid the coalescence of Sonning Common with neighbouring settlements and protect the character of the countryside setting of the village
- To support infill and backland development providing that it does not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area
- To conserve and enhance the Neighbourhood Area's countryside and open spaces, in particular those areas of natural beauty, sensitive ecology and landscape designation
- To maintain and enhance the wooded and rural character of the village by encouraging the integration of soft landscaping in new developments and where appropriate screening from any adjacent AONB
- To conserve and enhance the environment, ecosystem and biodiversity, ensuring that new development protects biodiversity including habitats and provision of appropriate wildlife, biodiversity and movement corridors (map 3.7 shows a network of wildlife corridors around the village).
- To conserve and enhance the historic environment in relation to buildings, landscapes and places of local cultural value

6. Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013 (Consultation Draft):

- The area around Sonning Common is particularly representative of the wider landscape character area [though the northern part of the village is described as having an enclosed, wooded character];
- Local people value the way the wooded character 'seeps' across the village;
- The dry valleys to the east and west of the village define the village edges and frame the village;
- Villagers highly value the network of access routes providing links to the countryside and the Millennium Green;

- The two main roads through the village (Peppard Road and Kennylands Road) are fairly straight and contrast with the narrow, winding and steep sided rural lanes that enter the village from the east and west;
- The countryside around the village is characterised by small scale, contained views which occasionally open up to give some open and more extensive views. The intervisibility between the surrounding footpaths and roads and the village makes a strong connection between the built and natural environment;
- The relationship between the built edge and the landscape setting within or at the edge of the AONB is particularly sensitive;
- At the southern end of the village the transition between the built settlement and the countryside is a gradual one;
- When approaching the village from the south the village is perceived to start some way north of the first dispersed housing in the south (i.e at Westleigh Road when approaching on Peppard Road);
- Some edges of the settlement are 'blunt', formed by back garden fencing and little vegetation. Trees are rare on the north western urban edge, and residents value views out to the surrounding countryside, though the sensitivity of views back in from the AONB are recognised as sensitive. The south western and eastern edges of the village are more vegetated;
- Some detracting factors are noted: electricity poles, telephone and power lines;
- Widmore Pond and its wooded surrounds are of historical significance to the village and were once part of Blount's Court Estate and form a gateway to the eastern part of the village;
- In the early development of the village (plotlands) plots were sold at different times, probably by different landowners in a way that 'seems almost random', so that some gaps appeared early on and were not filled in until later or were not filled in at all, e.g the gap along Kennylands Road opposite Hag Pits;
- The document describes the different built form character areas of plotlands and estates and sets out design guidance to inform development.

### **Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

7. All of the potential sites are either within or adjacent to the Chiltern Hills AONB. It is an over-riding principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that any development within AONBs should conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and in so doing not result in harm to the special qualities of the AONB. Major development should not take place in the AONB, except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Special Qualities of the Chilterns**

8. The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 sets out the defining special features of the AONB:
  - The Chilterns AONB was designated for the natural beauty of its landscape and its natural and cultural heritage. In particular, it was designated to protect its special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich downland, woodlands,

commons, tranquil valleys, particularly on the dipslope, the network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hill forts and chalk figures.

- An extensive network of protected sites within the AONB, including 63 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), three National Nature Reserves and three European-designated Special Areas of Conservation. In 2012 98.7% of the Chilterns' SSSIs were in favourable or recovering condition.
  - One of the most densely wooded parts of the UK with nearly 22% woodland cover of which two thirds is ancient woodland - the highest proportion in the country. The AONB also has a nationally-important concentration of high quality chalk grassland with a total of 700 hectares.
  - Commons are amongst the most characteristic features of the AONB – part of its social and cultural heritage, accessible green places for recreation and public enjoyment and home to a wide diversity of wildlife. Today there are 2016 hectares of registered common land in the AONB – around 2.4% of the total area.
  - Chilterns' most distinctive natural features are its chalk rivers and streams, fed by groundwater from the chalk aquifer. A globally scarce habitat, chalk rivers support a range of specialised wildlife and in the Chilterns provide a home for the threatened water vole. Another significant water feature of the area, the River Thames, forms much of the southern boundary of the AONB.
  - The most heavily-visited landscape in the UK with 55 million leisure visits a year. Visitors come to enjoy over 2000km of public rights of way, the Ridgeway and the Thames Path National Trails, the Chiltern Way and the recently opened Chilterns Cycleway and many more special routes.
  - Ancient man-made features scattered through the countryside and a legacy of grand houses and designed landscapes from the 17th and 18th centuries. There are 113 Scheduled Monuments in the AONB and 19 parks and gardens on English Heritage's register.
9. The Chilterns AONB is a visibly ancient landscape of great diversity and is divided into 11 landscape types which reflect this diversity. The landscape type is subdivided into landscape character areas and smaller landscape types to reflect local distinctiveness and each has its own special landscape qualities.

**The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019 sets out the key qualities and issues as follows:**

10. Development Section - Broad Aims:

- Ensure that development conserves and enhances the special qualities and characteristics of the Chilterns;
- Ensure the distinctive character of the built and natural environment of the Chilterns is improved, especially where it is degraded or subject to any negative impacts of development;
- Ensure that local authority development plans as they affect the AONB, are compatible with the purposes of AONB designation.

11. Key Issues:

- The Chilterns and surrounding areas are under considerable pressure to accommodate significant numbers of new houses as well as other forms of development.
- There is continuing pressure to locate large scale developments in the AONB or its setting.
- The retention of open space and the need to try and restrict the scale of new development are key to conserving the natural beauty of the AONB. Equally, the provision of new green infrastructure (GI) may help alleviate some of the pressures from existing development.
- New development of all types needs to respect vernacular architecture, settlement character and the local landscape. This will require developers to do more than try to use standard designs. The AONB Board has published guidance on design and the use of building materials and encourages the preparation of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments where appropriate.
- There is a need for a better understanding and awareness of what contributes to local distinctiveness, especially amongst those groups who propose, design and approve new development.
- In some places the attractiveness of the landscape is diminished by degraded sites, unattractive buildings and other structures and their use. The challenge is to remove, screen or mitigate the visual intrusion.
- The physical impact of transport infrastructure and its use have major environmental impacts. Any assessment of the environmental damage or benefits needs to be given greater weight. This includes ensuring that the design, use and management of transport infrastructure, including maintenance and small works, do not damage environmental quality. The impacts of new schemes and expansion of existing facilities will need very careful consideration to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB.

## Overview of existing landscape character assessment

12. In the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment for the Local Plan 2033 (SOLCA, Lepus Consulting, 2017) the 11 sites fall within **LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys** landscape character area and all except SON27 are within the **Semi-enclosed dipslope** landscape type within LCA 10. SON27 lies within the **Wooded dipslope** landscape type. The key characteristics and guidelines are set out in the following table.

Table 1: Landscape character of sites (SOLCA)

LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys (all sites)	LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope (SON 1, 12a, 12b, 21a, 21b, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29)	Wooded dipslope (SON27)
Key characteristics and requirements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An undulating landscape ranging from c. 40m AOD to c. 210m AOD.</li> <li>The plateau is dissected by an irregular pattern of shallow, small scale dry valleys.</li> <li>Heavily wooded landscape.</li> <li>Extensive areas of Ancient Woodland, some of which are designated as SSSI.</li> <li>The A407 and A4130 roads cross through the area.</li> <li>Sparsely settled with small villages and hamlets. The village of Sonning Common comprises the largest settlement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>typically level or more gently sloping ground;</li> <li>comparatively open fields contained within a strong structure of woods, hedgerows or trees to form a loose mosaic;</li> <li>dominance of arable cultivation;</li> <li>strong structure of woods and hedgerows generally provides visual containment and results in moderate to low intervisibility;</li> <li>distinctive pattern of winding rural roads, irregular field boundaries and scattered rural settlements, typical of 'ancient countryside';</li> <li>generally rural and unspoilt character but with some 'suburbanising' influences within rural settlements and along main</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distinctive landform of plateaux dissected by a network of shallow, dry valleys;</li> <li>heavily wooded character, including extensive stands of ancient, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, mature beechwoods and more recent plantations;</li> <li>strong structure of woodland and complex landform creates an intimate and enclosed character with a particular feeling of secrecy in some valleys;</li> <li>distinctive pattern of winding rural roads, irregular field boundaries and scattered rural settlements, typical of 'ancient countryside';</li> <li>generally rural and unspoilt character with only localised suburbanising influences within</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture comprises the predominant land use with arable and pasture.</li> <li>• Narrow lanes and tall hedgerows.</li> </ul>	roads (eg. A4074, A4130), and localised intrusion of built development and power lines (eg. around Sonning Common and Caversham)	villages, along road corridors or around the fringes of the main settlements; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low intervisibility</li> </ul>
Key guidelines / mitigation of relevance (all sites)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote, where possible, the conservation of the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.</li> <li>• Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species and planting of new hedgerow trees</li> <li>• Maintain the vernacular character of settlements</li> <li>• Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.</li> <li>• Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements</li> <li>• Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as crack willow, oak and ash</li> </ul>		

13. The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) was published in 2004 and defines regional landscape character areas across Oxfordshire. This study identifies a number of regional landscape character types. The landscape type in which Sonning Common lies is the Wooded Farmland type, which is described as “distinctively ancient, rural character typified by a mosaic of woodland, enclosed pasture, arable fields as well as scattered farms and settlements”.

14. The key characteristics of the landscape type include:

- Large blocks of ancient woodland and a large number of plantations.
- A varied field pattern of arable land and pasture enclosed by woodland and hedges.
- Species-rich hedgerows with many hedgerow trees.

- Dispersed settlement pattern with settlements and scattered farms.
15. The Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Report demonstrates how historic environment contributes to the special character of the Chilterns AONB. The land around Sonning Common is characterised as, Zone 3: Oxfordshire Farmsteads which encompasses a band of isolated farmsteads in the Oxfordshire Chilterns. The area includes other settlement types notably Sonning Common and Kidmore End. The heritage significance of the landscape around the village itself varies from low to high in the south west.

## Methodology

16. The full methodology is set out in the Main Report May 2015. The site reports should be read in conjunction with the full methodology and the Record Sheets which are set out in Appendix A of this Report. For convenience, the definitions of landscape capacity are as follows:
- **Low capacity** – The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional, very small scale development may be possible, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.
  - **Medium / Low capacity** – A low amount of development can be accommodated only in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.
  - **Medium capacity** - The landscape could be able to accommodate areas of new development in some parts, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. There are landscape and visual constraints and therefore the key landscape and visual characteristics must be retained and enhanced.
  - **Medium/ High capacity** – The area is able to accommodate larger amounts of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. Certain landscape and visual features in the area may require protection.
  - **High capacity** – Much of the area is able to accommodate significant areas of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

## Report format and use

17. Each site report contains a plan showing the landscape capacity classification and the location of photograph viewpoints followed by a description of the site and its setting with annotated photographs. The Visual and Landscape Sensitivity of the site is summarised (from the more detailed information found in the record sheets which are in Appendix A) resulting in Landscape Character Sensitivity which is then combined with a Wider Landscape Sensitivity (the site's relationship to the village and the adjacent countryside) to result in an Overall Landscape Sensitivity. This is then combined with Landscape Value to result in the Landscape Capacity. Each site report concludes with our recommendations for the site in the light of the landscape capacity and landscape and visual constraints.
18. In some cases the whole site will be ruled out for development. In others the whole site will be included as a potential site, subject to the provision of Green Infrastructure, with key strategies briefly described, aimed at retaining and enhancing key landscape features and

linking open space into the adjoining Green Infrastructure provision which should be integral to the landscape masterplan for these sites and the delivery of Green Infrastructure to serve the existing and future community. The precise location of development within the site would be determined by more detailed assessment. The Study does not include recommendations for the phasing of development. However, if phased development is proposed, phasing should include proposals for the design and implementation of phased landscape provision including adjoining Green Infrastructure, open space, and landscape treatment. This principle also applies if adjoining sites are developed sequentially or consecutively.

19. The object of the Study is to identify those sites which have the potential to be more suitable for housing from which SCNPG can select those sites it wishes to include to meet demand. The Study has not assessed the cumulative impact of a number of sites at any one settlement as this is most appropriately undertaken at a later stage in the process.

### **Study Constraints**

- The sites have been assessed from publicly accessible viewpoints including the local road network, public rights of way, public open space and other publicly owned land. Views from private houses and from private land are noted where obvious, but were not visited. This has not resulted in any significant constraint on the assessment.
- Site photographs included in this study are representative of key views of the site.
- Views from the surrounding countryside or urban areas have been assessed by noting intervisibility from within or adjacent to the site, but the Study does not include an assessment of the potential zone of visual influence of any development on each site.
- Fieldwork was undertaken in July 2019, with summer vegetation, thus not indicative of worst case visibility.
- Time limitations have meant that no public consultation has taken place during the Study.

## Site reports

## Site: Sonning Common SON 1

Site map:

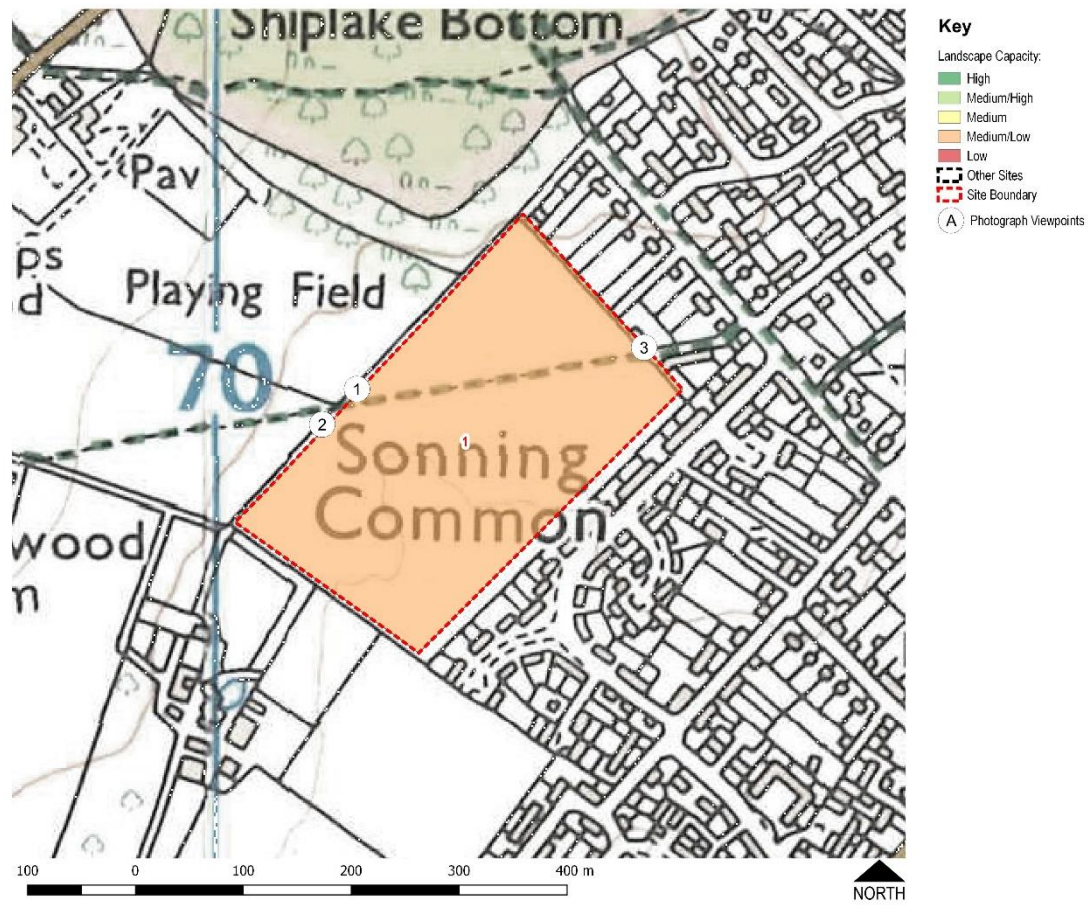


Figure SON 1.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints



**Site description:**

21. SON 1 lies towards the south eastern edge of the Chiltern Hills AONB and is currently designated in the SCNP as a Local Green Space. The site is a green field site on the western edge of Sonning Common in use as arable farmland. The site's eastern edge is defined by the edge of the settlement with rear gardens of houses on Woodlands Road (north east) and Orchard Avenue (south east) facing onto the site. Houses along the north eastern boundary are set back from the site in large, long plots and the boundary itself is well vegetated in parts. Houses along the south eastern edge are more modern, closer to the site and the boundary is not well vegetated. The north western boundary is defined by a tall hedge with some trees, beyond which is a public playing fields and the Old Copse ancient woodland. A tree belt forms the south western boundary, with Bishopswood Farm beyond. A public footpath crosses the site, entering from a single lane gravel track along Woodlands Road and linking to the recreation ground to the north. The route of this footpath along Woodlands Road forms the only vehicular access point to the site. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**

Photo 1: View north-east from public footpath entering site from recreation ground. North-eastern edge is well vegetated and houses are set back in larger plots



Photo 2: Open views of housing on south-eastern edge.



Photo 3: View west from public footpath entering site from Woodlands Road. Wooded north-western boundary screens views to recreation ground beyond. Ancient and semi-natural woodland Old Copse to the right.

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- Not visually prominent from within settlement but some sensitive view receptors including PRow across the site (within AONB)
- Possibly visible from wider AONB to west in winter - view of tree lined edge from the wider countryside
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be in keeping with the local character

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- Tree belts / hedgerows to boundaries
- Adjacent to Old Copse ancient and semi-natural woodland
- No cultural sensitivity
- Contains public right of way which links to wider network of paths
- Quite quiet - tranquillity slightly affected by proximity to village and recreation ground

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High**

- The site is adjacent to the settlement on the north eastern and south eastern boundaries but there is a perception of being beyond the settlement limit even though the settlement edge is open in parts

- The site is strongly rural in character and has strong links with the countryside to the west
- Development on the site would further erode the countryside setting of the village and the separation of Sonning Common from Gallowstree Common
- Site is typical of the wider landscape character

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB
- Identified in the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space
- The value of the footpath links to the wider countryside is mentioned in the Character Assessment and Design Statement

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / Low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

22. This site is not recommended for further consideration

- Development on this site could lead to harm to views from the wider AONB to the west
- It would harm the setting of the PRoW
- It would result in the loss of a valued Local Green Space
- It would harm the landscape and visual setting of the AONB
- The only existing access to the site is along the route of the PRoW through the north east boundary

23. It is not recommended that SON 1 is considered any further as a potential site option for the above landscape and visual reasons.

## Site: Sonning Common SON 12A

### Site map:

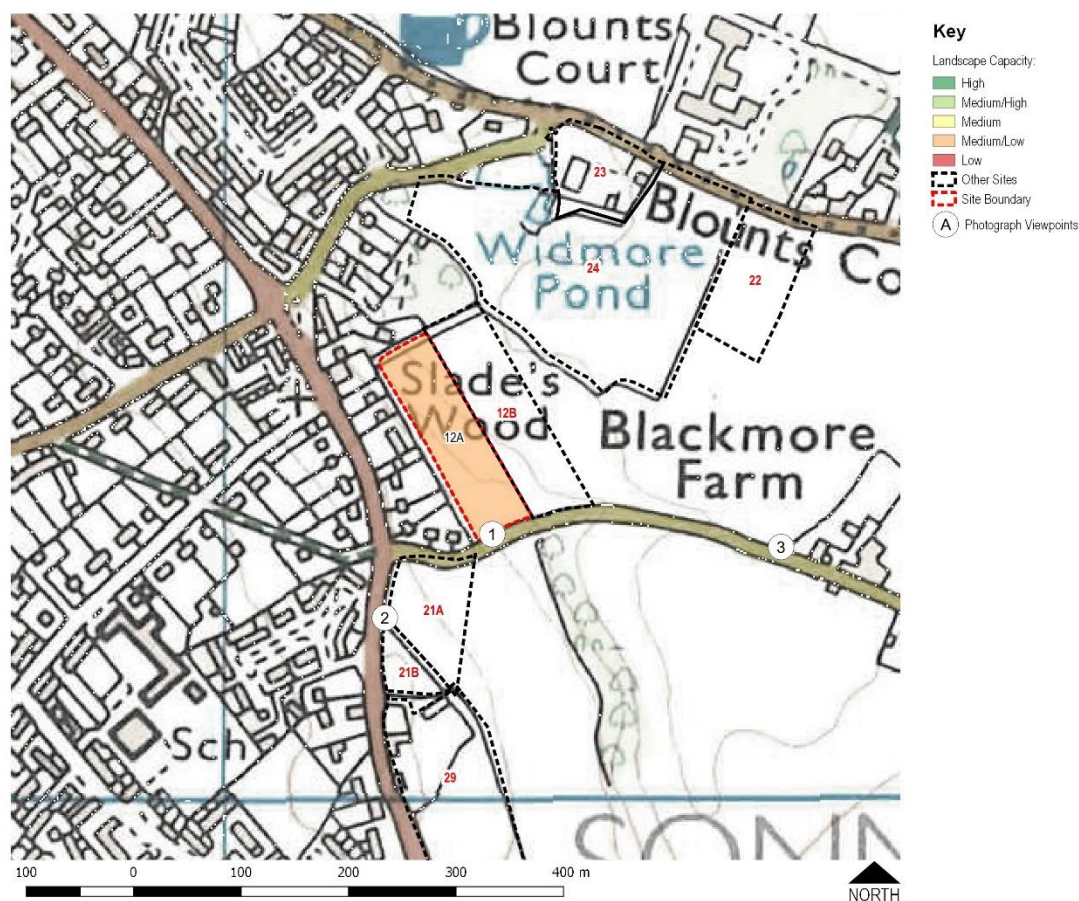


Figure SON 12A.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### Site description:

24. SON 12A is a greenfield site on the south eastern side of Sonning Common currently used for arable farming and within the Chiltern Hills AONB. The site is bound by houses on Peppard Road to the west and the rural Blackmore Lane to the south. The eastern boundary is



not evident on the ground as the site is part of a larger field, and the site slopes abruptly up and away from the village. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: The site is visible when approaching the village along Blackmore Lane. The settlement edge here is partly open, and there is a group of cottages to the left of the photo that front onto Blackmore Lane / Peppard Road. The rising land forms a clear edge between the village and the countryside





Photo 2: Site's higher ground towards north-east is visible from Peppard Road (above roofs of houses left of centre)



Photo 3: Northern part of site visible from rural Blackmore Lane (centre of photo), from where the village is generally screened by woodland

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- Locally visible including views from the AONB
- Site forms skyline in views from lower ground to the south and west
- Additional screen or woodland planting would not be out of character but could result in the loss of openness and the link with the valley landscape

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- The site is on the sloping side of the dry valley which rises abruptly away from the village
- Some vegetation to boundaries
- Blackmore Lane is a narrow, rural and quiet road typical of the AONB and LCA
- Tranquillity slightly affected by proximity to Peppard Road

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / high**

- Despite having some linkage with the settlement, the rising ground forms an abrupt and clear edge to the settlement, constraining the village to a narrow linear form in this area
- The site is part of the valley side and links with the wider landscape
- The site lies on the eastern edge of the village behind houses on the east side of Peppard Road which currently form a narrow, linear pattern constrained by the site, which rises on their eastern side
- In the area north of site SON12A the north-eastern part of the village spreads eastward into and across the head of the valley. The site sits within and on the eastern (countryside) slope of the dry valley

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

25. It is recommended that SON 12A is not considered further as a potential site option due to the following constraints:

- The negative effect on the settlement pattern and the relationship between the linear settlement pattern and the strong countryside edge formed by the sloping nature of the site;
- The site's location within the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The generally rural and tranquil nature of the setting and Blackmore Lane – which is the only possible means of access. In practical terms the road is very narrow and classed as a 'Failed Road'.

## Site: Sonning Common SON 12B

### Site map:

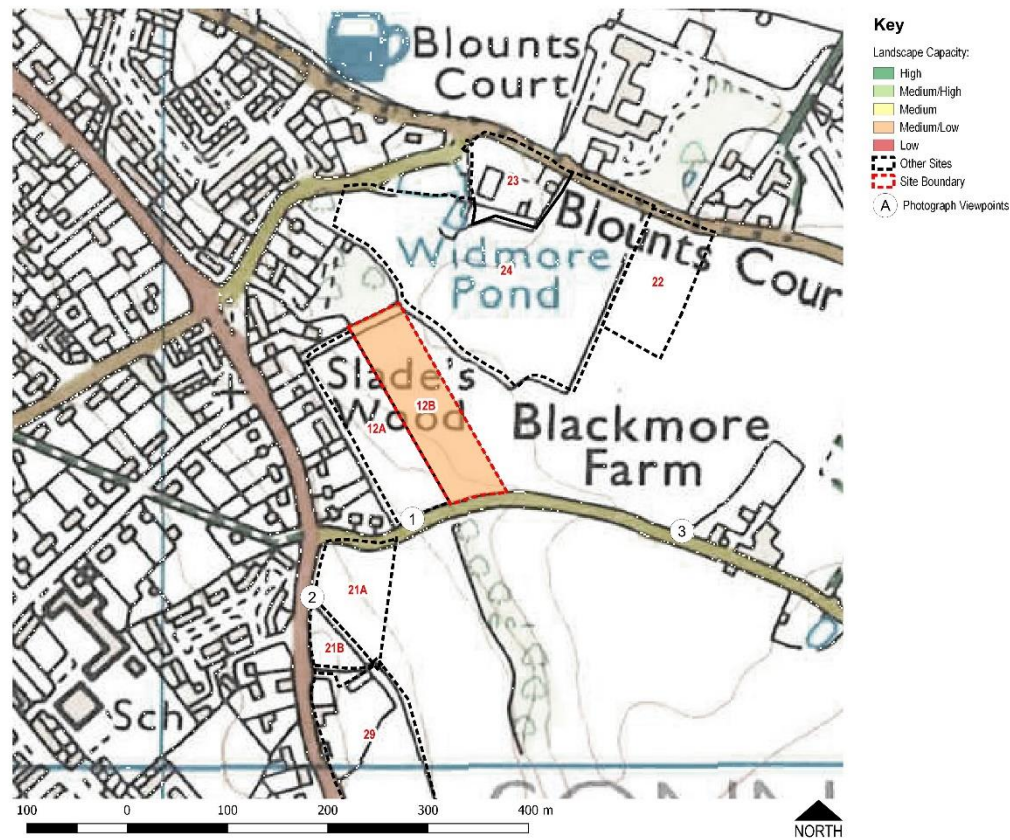


Figure SON 12B.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### Site description:

26. SON 12B is a greenfield site on the south eastern side of Sonning Common currently used for arable farming and within the Chiltern Hills AONB. To the west the site is offset from houses on Peppard Road by an open field (site SON 12A) and the rural Blackmore Lane forms the boundary to the south. The eastern boundary is not evident on the ground as the site is part of a larger field, and the site slopes



abruptly up and away from the village. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: The site is visible when approaching the village along Blackmore Lane. The settlement edge here is partly open, and there is a group of cottages to the left of the photo that front onto Blackmore Lane / Peppard Road. The rising land forms a clear edge between the village and the countryside and site SON 12B sits part way up the slope.



Photo 2: Site is visible from Peppard Road (above roofs of houses left of centre)



Photo 3: Northern part of site visible from rural Blackmore Lane (centre of photo), from where the village is generally screened by woodland

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- Locally visible including views from the AONB
- Site forms skyline in views from lower ground to the south and west
- Additional screen or woodland planting would not be out of character but could result in the loss of openness and the link with the valley landscape

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- The site is on the sloping side of the dry valley which rises abruptly away from the village
- Some vegetation to boundaries
- Blackmore Lane is a narrow, rural and quiet road typical of the AONB and LCA
- Tranquillity slightly affected by proximity to Peppard Road

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**



#### **4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / high**

- The site is offset from the settlement by open ground (SON 12A) and set on rising ground which forms an abrupt and clear edge to the settlement, constraining the village to a narrow linear form in this area
- The site is part of the valley side and crest and links with the wider landscape
- The site lies on the eastern edge of the village offset from houses on the east side of Peppard Road which currently form a narrow, linear pattern constrained by the site, which rises on their eastern side
- In the area north of site SON12B the north-eastern part of the village spreads eastward into and across the head of the valley. The site sits within and on the eastern (countryside) slope of the dry valley

#### **5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)**

#### **6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB

#### **7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / low (combines 5 and 6)**

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

27. It is recommended that SON 12B is not considered further as a potential site option due to the following constraints:

- The negative effect on the settlement pattern and the relationship between the linear settlement pattern and the strong countryside edge formed by the sloping nature of the site;
- The site's location within the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The generally rural and tranquil nature of the setting and Blackmore Lane – which is the only possible means of access. In practical terms the road is very narrow and classed as a 'Failed Road'.

## Site: Sonning Common SON 21A

### Site map:

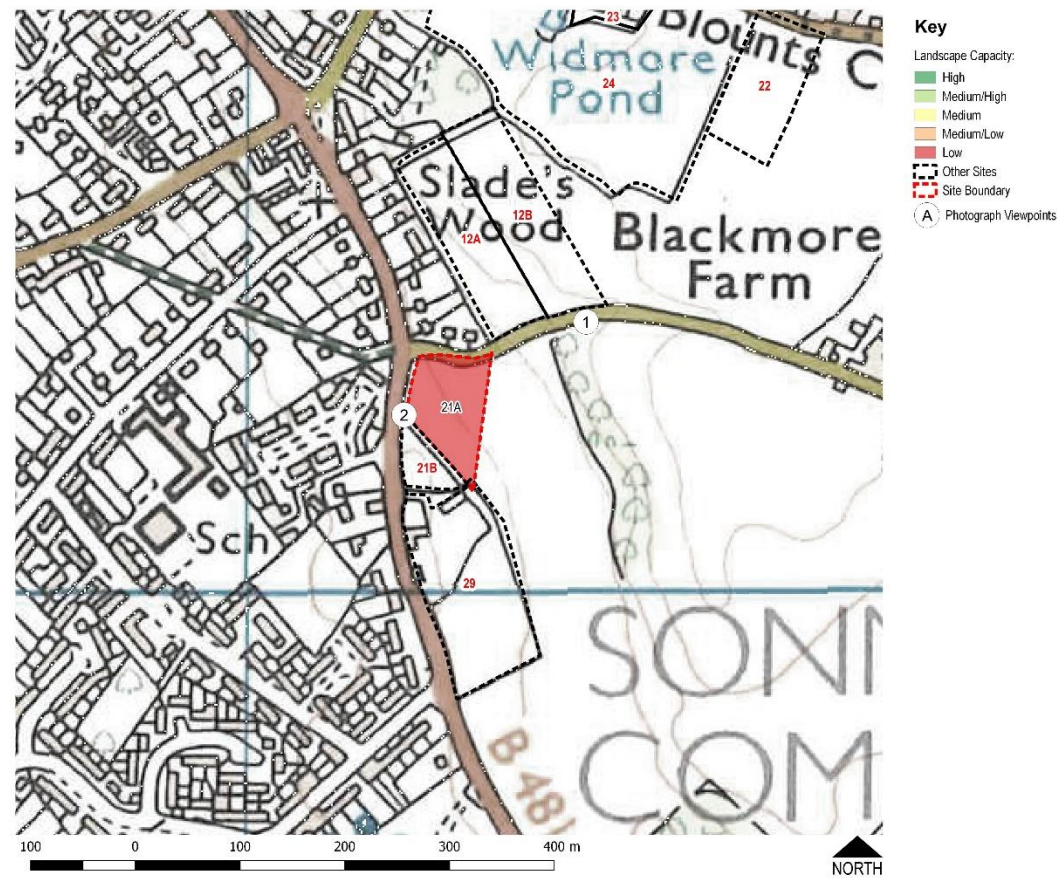


Figure SON 21A.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### Site description:

28. SON 21A is a greenfield site on the south eastern side of Sonning Common currently used for arable farming and within the Chiltern Hills AONB. The site is bound by Peppard Road to the west and the rural Blackmore Lane to the north, with the settlement to the north and

west. The eastern boundary is not evident on the ground as the site is part of a larger field, and the site slopes into a dry valley that defines the eastern edge of the village. The south western boundary is formed by a wooded garden (SON 21B). The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: The site is prominent in views approaching the village along Blackmore Lane.



Photo 2: Site's boundary is visible from Peppard Road (hedge to right of road, centre of photo)

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium / High**

- Locally prominent
- Possible views from the AONB
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be out of character in the valley and result in the loss of openness and the link with the valley landscape

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- The site is on the sloping side of a dry valley
- Some vegetation to boundaries
- Tranquillity affected by proximity to road

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High**

- The site encroaches into the dry valley that marks the eastern edge of the village

- The site has a perception of being just beyond the settlement limit and is beyond Peppard Road which marks the eastern side of the village in the south
- The site lies on the eastern edge of the village on the east side of Peppard Road which forms the edge of settlement in this part of the village
- The site sits on the slope of one of the dry valleys between which the village is located
- The site has strong links with the wider landscape

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

29. It is recommended that SON 21A is not considered further as a potential site option due to the following constraints:

- The negative effect on the settlement pattern and the strong countryside edge formed by Peppard Road;
- The visual prominence of the site;
- The site's location within the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The generally rural and tranquil nature of the setting and Blackmore Lane.



## Site: Sonning Common SON 21B

Site map:

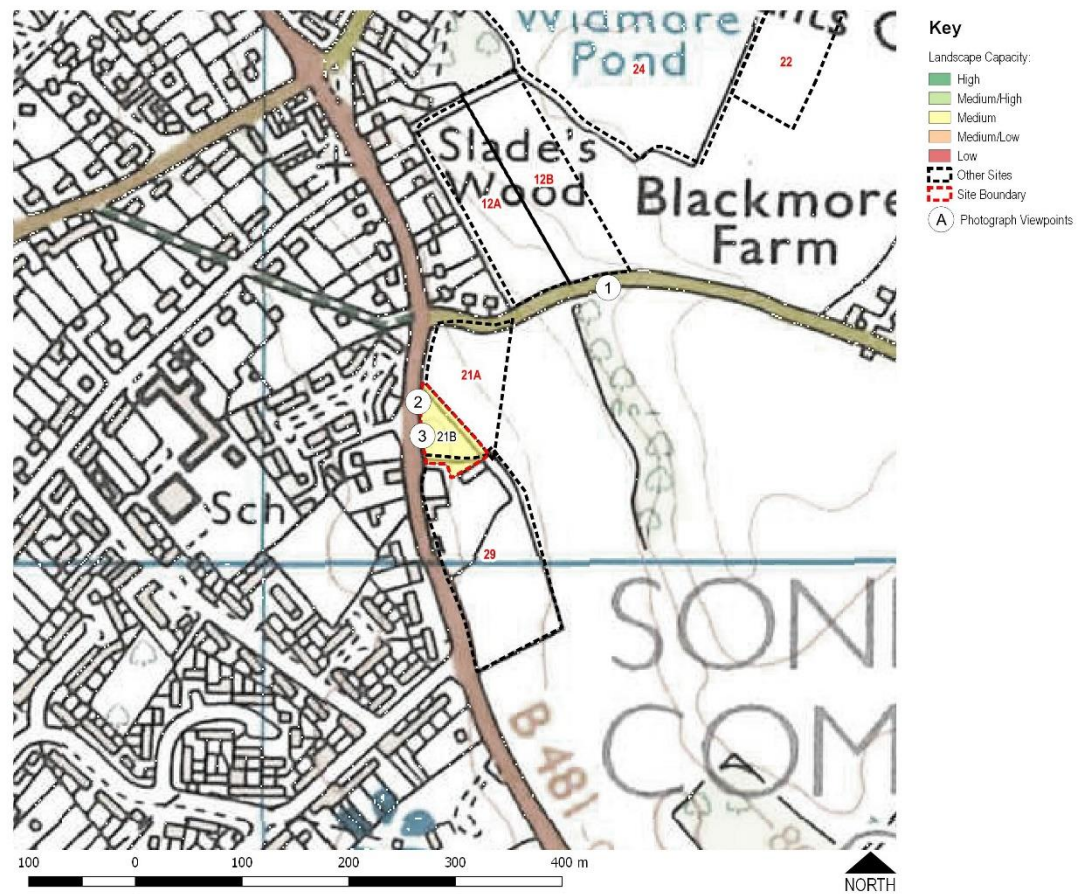


Figure SON 21B.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

**Site description:**

31. SON 21B is located on the south eastern side of Sonning Common and is made up of a private garden with a woodland setting, east of Peppard Road. The boundary of the Chiltern Hills AONB forms the north-eastern boundary of the site. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: The site is prominent in views approaching the village along Blackmore Lane. The site's trees form a strong edge to the village, screening built form.





Photos 2 and 3: Trees along site's boundary are visible from Peppard Road

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- Internal parts of site screened by trees but trees prominent in views from roads
- Possible views from the AONB
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be in keeping with the local character

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- The site is on the sloping side of a dry valley
- Tree belts to boundaries and within
- Tranquillity affected by proximity to road

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High**

- The site has a perception of being beyond the settlement limit, lying east of Peppard Road which forms a clear edge between the village and the countryside in this location, with the main village lying west of the road

- The site encroaches into the dry valley that marks the eastern edge of the village
- The site sits on the slope of one of the dry valleys between which the village is located
- The site has some links with the wider landscape

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- Site is within the setting of the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

32. The capacity of SON 21B is constrained by:

- The negative effect on the settlement pattern through the intensification of housing on the eastern side of Peppard Road resulting in encroachment into the wider landscape and valley with marks the edge of settlement;
- The visual prominence of the site's external trees;
- The site's location adjacent to the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;

33. Despite having a medium capacity, it is recommended that SON 21B should only be considered for very limited development, to reflect the character of the house to the south which is set within a large garden surrounded by trees, and subject to detailed assessment to ensure landscape and visual harm is avoided and that AONB special qualities are conserved and enhanced. Retention of boundary vegetation is important to maintain the soft settlement edge, and vehicular access should be modest and unobtrusive so that the development is not obtrusive in views from Peppard Road.

**Site: Sonning Common SON 22**

**Site map:**

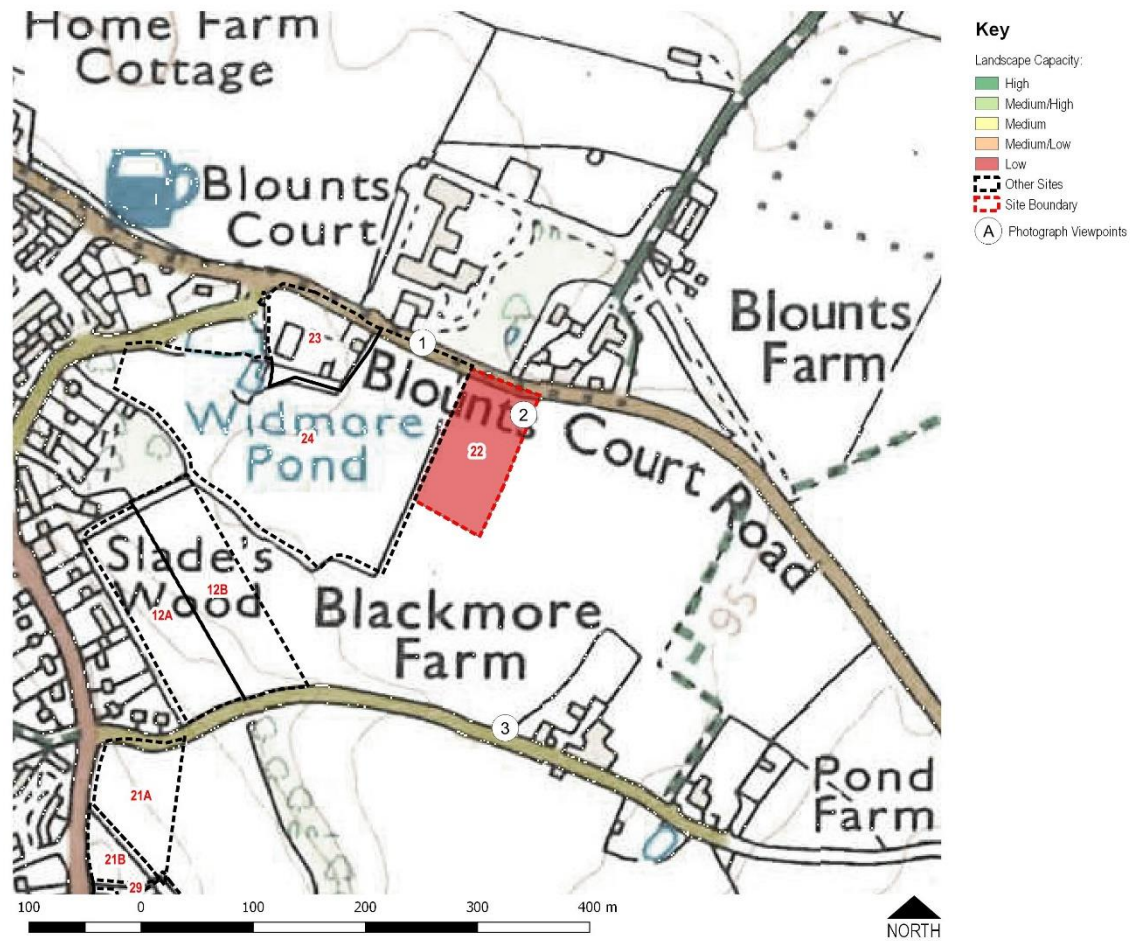


Figure SON 22.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints



**Site description:**

35. SON 22 is a green field site south of Blounts Court some 250m east of Sonning Common. The site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB and is currently under arable crop. The site is bound by Blounts Court Road Lane to the north-east, with Blounts Court (Johnson Matthey Technology Centre) beyond. Arable farmland surrounds the site to the east, west and south. The south-eastern edge is open to a larger field and SON24 lies to the west, beyond a hedgerow. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**

Photo 1: The site is visible from and forms skyline in views from Blounts Court Road



Photo 2: Views of the site from Blounts Court Road



Photo 3: Site is visible across open farmland, with trees within grounds of Blounts Court and Blounts Farm forming backdrop – from Blackmore Lane

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- Locally visible
- Views from the AONB
- Site forms skyline in views from Blounts Court Road and possibly from lower ground to south-west
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be compatible with the character

36.

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- Hedgerows to northern and western boundaries
- No cultural sensitivities
- Rural and tranquil character of the site and Blounts Court Road

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: High**

- Typical of LCA with strong links to landscape to south east
- The site feels remote from the village and sits beyond the valley which forms the edge of settlement
- The site lies towards the north eastern end of the village on the rural approach from Blounts Court Road
- The north-eastern part of the village spreads eastward into and across the head of the valley which generally marks the eastern edge of the village, with some low density built form extending along Blounts Court Road, notably Blounts Court. Blounts Court has an institutional character and does not feel part of the village.
- The site is part of the rural approach to the village The site is strongly a part of the surrounding countryside

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / high (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

37. It is recommended that SON 22 is not considered further as a potential site option due to the following constraints:

- The site's separation from the settlement and importance as part of the rural approach to the village and strong relationship with the wider countryside – development on the site would encroach into the wider landscape;
- The site's location within the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The strongly rural and tranquil nature of the site and of Blounts Court Road.

## Site: Sonning Common SON 23

Site map:

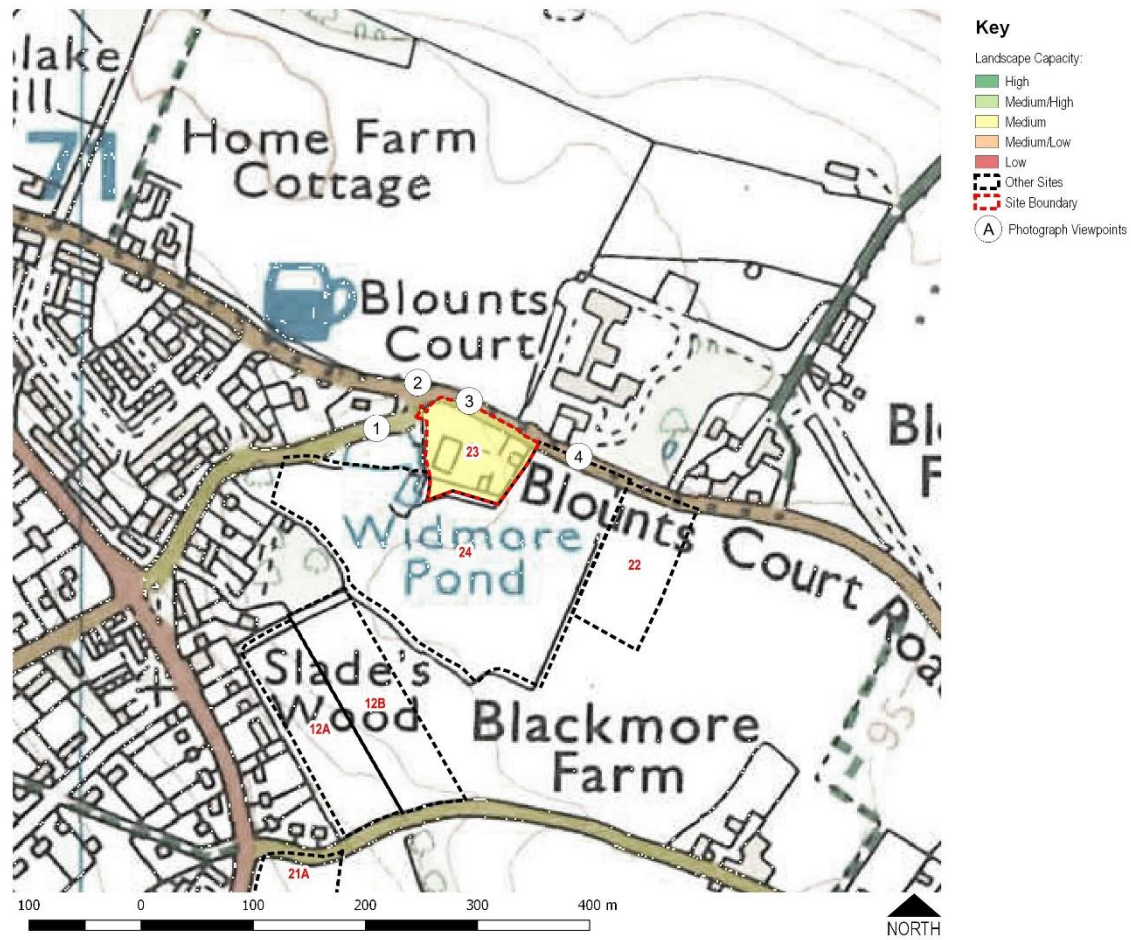


Figure SON 23.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints



**Site description:**

38. SON 23 is a brownfield site on the eastern side of Sonning Common currently used for parking serving Johnson Matthey Technology Centre which lies to the north-east of the site. The site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB. The site lies south-east of the junction between Blounts Court Road and Widmore Lane, with Widmore Pond lying to the west beyond a tree belt. Arable farmland surrounds the site to the south and east. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: The site entrance is visible from Widmore Lane, adjacent to the pond. The trees to the right of the photo lie between the pond and the site.



Photo 2: The wall which forms the northern site boundary is prominent in views from Blounts Court Road.



Photo 3: The site is largely used for parking serving Johnson Matthey.



Photo 4: The house within the site is visible over the east boundary hedge – as seen through field gate on Blount's Court Road.

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- South part of site difficult to view from roads; boundary wall is prominent in views from roads
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be compatible with the character, with opportunities to enhance the character

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

- Busy area with developed and somewhat discordant character
- Tree belt to western boundary
- Hedgerows to eastern boundary

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- Not typical of or linked to the wider countryside, feels closely related to the village
- The site is linked to the north-eastern part of the village which spreads eastward into and across the head of the valley which generally marks the eastern edge of the village

- Not typical of or linked to the wider countryside, feels closely related to the village
- The site is not strongly linked with the low density built form extending along the north side of Blounts Court Road, notably Blounts Court

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / low (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

39. The capacity of SON 23 is constrained by:

- The site's location within the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The visual prominence of the site from adjacent roads;

40. However, with a medium capacity SON 23 could be considered further as a potential site option subject to detailed assessment to ensure landscape and visual harm is avoided and that AONB special qualities are conserved and enhanced.

41. A fully detailed landscape and visual impact assessment would be required to inform the final capacity of the site, but key principles which should be taken into account are:

- Retention of boundary vegetation to screen views of built form and to maintain the wooded edge of the settlement;
- New boundary and internal tree planting may be necessary to avoid visual intrusion from new buildings;
- Vehicular access should be modest and avoid suburbanising the semi-rural character.



## Site: Sonning Common SON 24

Site map:

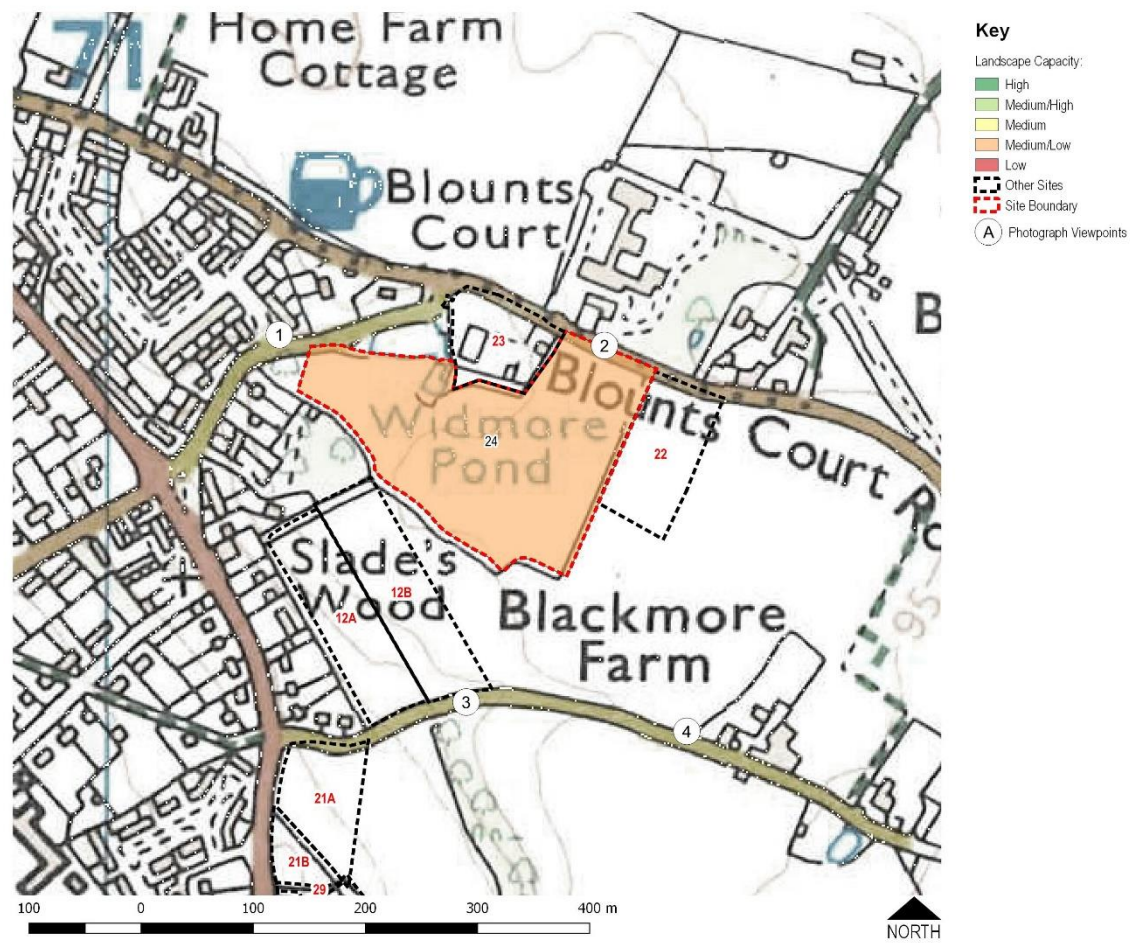


Figure SON 24.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

Site description:



42. SON 24 is a green field site on the eastern side of Sonning Common currently used for grazing / meadow and within the Chiltern Hills AONB. The site has a short boundary created by Blounts Court Road to the north-east, with the technology centre car park (SON 23) and Widmore Pond to the north. Widmore Lane touches the western tip of the site with Slade's Wood to the south-west. The southern and south-eastern edges are bound by hedgerows with a larger field beyond. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: Trees along the site edge (centre of photo) are prominent in views along Widmore Lane (photo from Pond End Road).



Photo 2: Site viewed from Blounts Court Road. The village is barely visible in the distance, set within trees.



Photo 3: Trees along the southern boundary are visible against the skyline – as seen from Blackmore Lane.



Photo 4: The site is visible across fields from Blackmore Lane.

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- Western part is difficult to view from public vantage points, though boundary vegetation is prominent in views on Widmore Lane
- Views from the AONB – to the eastern part of site
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be compatible with the character, particularly in the western part of the site

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- Tree belts to western and north-western edges
- Hedgerows to boundaries
- Woodland and pond adjacent
- Generally tranquil – particularly towards east, some traffic noise affecting western end

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High**

- The site lies towards the north-eastern end of the village with the north-eastern part forming part of the rural village approach from Blounts Court Road, and the western end partly surrounded by built form
- Typical of LCA with strong links to landscape to south east
- The site links to the wider countryside to the south-east (less so the western end)
- The eastern part of the site feels remote from the village and sits beyond the valley which forms the edge of settlement
- The eastern part of the site forms part of the rural approach to the village
- The western part of the site is more closely related to the settlement and is less strongly linked to the wider landscape

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is within the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / Low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

43. The capacity of much of SON 24 is constrained by:

- The site's location within the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The visibility of the eastern parts of site from views within the AONB;

- The importance of mature trees along the western boundaries;
  - The remoteness of the eastern parts of site from the settlement and the role that part of site plays in the rural approach to the village.
44. The western part of site, which is less visible and more closely associated with the settlement, and is therefore less sensitive than the central and eastern parts of the site. However, access to the western part of the site is difficult and would not be appropriate from Blounts Court Road, crossing the open site. A small part of the western boundary is adjacent to Widmore Lane, but access here would result in the loss of important mature boundary trees and should be avoided. For this reason, we recommend that SON 24 is not considered further as a potential housing site.



## Site: Sonning Common SON 26

### Site map:

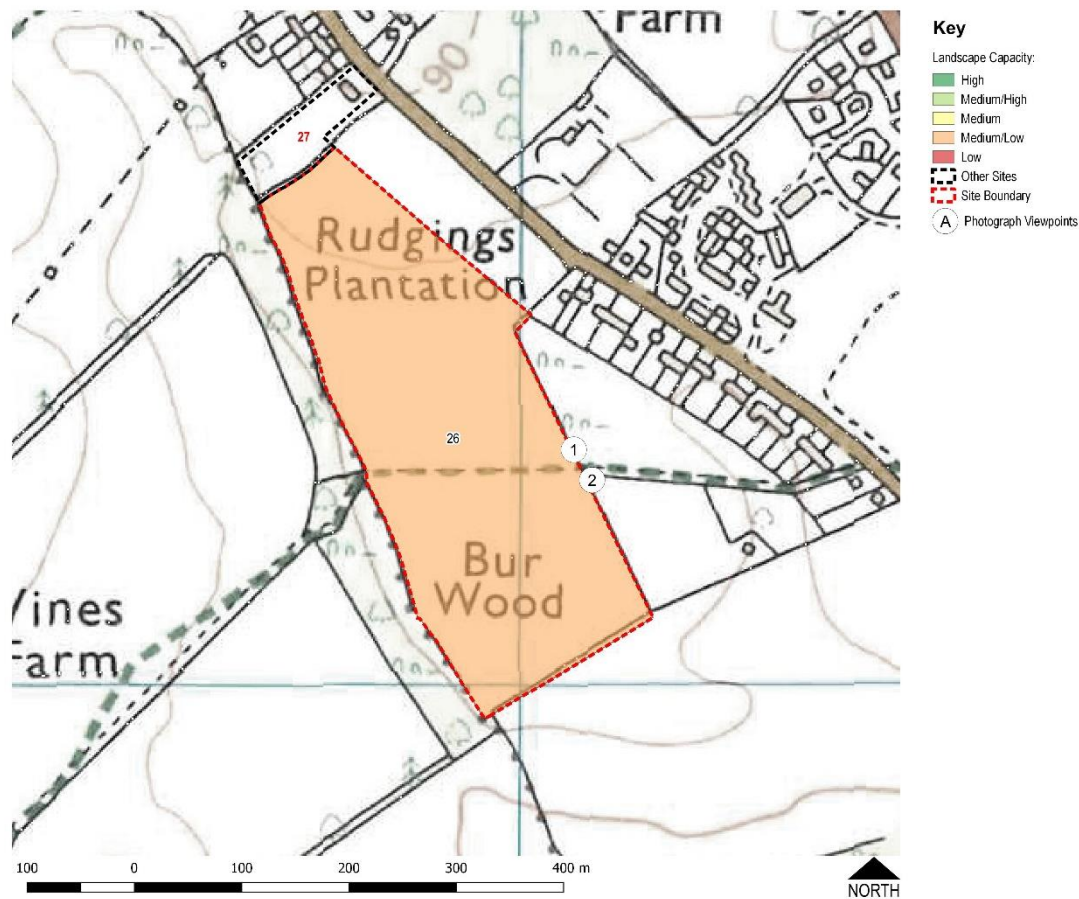


Figure SON 26.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### Site description:

46. SON 26 is a green field site in use for arable farming on the south western edge of Sonning Common. The site has no frontage on Kennylands Road but sits beyond and extends south and west from the linear site SON 6 which is allocated for housing. There is a strong



wooded edge created by the woodland just beyond the south-west boundary and hedges bound the south-eastern and north-western boundaries, with the garden of Alpen Rose (SON 27) beyond. The site is crossed by a public footpath which links the southern part of Sonning Common with Kidmore End. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

### Photographs:



	
<p>Photo 1: Open view of site looking north from footpath which crosses the site. The garden of adjacent property Alpen Rose (SON 27) is visible to the left of the house in view but the rest of the village is screened by vegetation. Proposed development on allocated SON 6 may be visible, depending on new planting to contain it.</p>	<p>Photo 2: Open view of site looking south from footpath which crosses the site. Adjacent woodland contains the site on the western side (right of photo).</p>



Photo 3: View north-west from Chiltern Way approximately 350m south-east of site boundary. Woodland screens the site in summer, glimpses may be possible in winter.

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- Open views from footpath crossing site, within setting of AONB
- Not visually prominent beyond site but possible glimpsed views from sensitive view receptors within AONB
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be in keeping with the local character

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- Hedgerows / trees to boundaries
- Strongly rural character, generally peaceful
- Public footpath crosses site
- No cultural sensitivity

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / high**

- The site lies adjacent to the south-western edge of the village and the southern part extends beyond the narrow linear settlement pattern south of the village, south-west of Kennylands Road
- Typical of LCA with strong links to landscape to south and west
- The site feels set apart from the village, with the southern part feeling remote
- Part of the open separation between Sonning Common and Chalkhouse Green / Kidmore End

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / high (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- Site is within the setting of the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

47. It is recommended that SON 26 is not considered further as a potential site option due to the following constraints:

- Impacts on open views from and the rural setting of the footpath which crosses the site;
- The site's location within the setting of the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- The site's separation from the settlement and importance as part of the rural setting of the village and strong relationship with the wider countryside – development on the site would encroach into the wider landscape, including the separation between Sonning Common and Chalkhouse Green / Kidmore End;
- Development of even a small part of this site would result in the loss of the pattern of narrow, linear settlement south-west of Kennylands Road.
- The strongly rural and tranquil nature of the site.



## Site: Sonning Common SON 27

Site map:

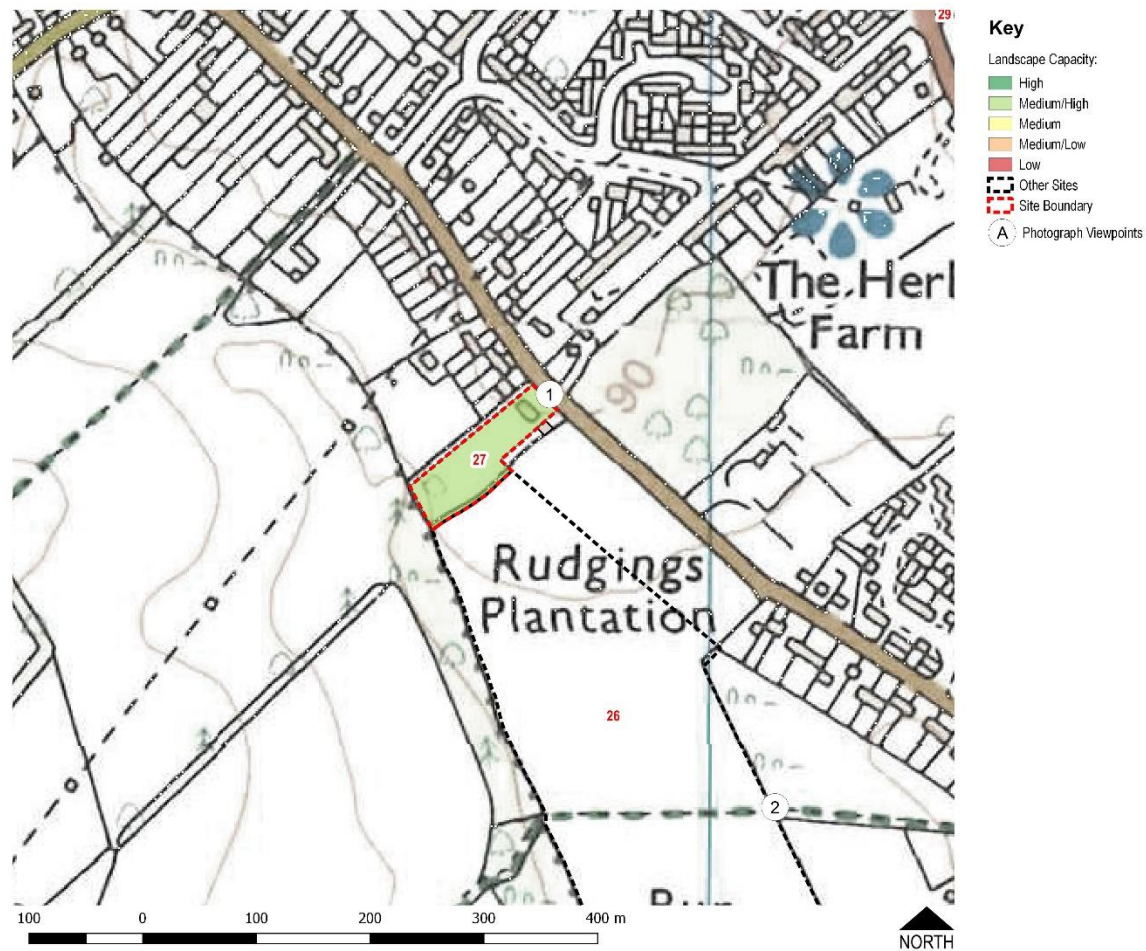


Figure SON 27.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints



**Site description:**

49. SON 27 is a site made up of the house, Alpen Rose, and its gardens on the western edge of Sonning Common. The house is set back from Kennylands Road, with a belt of conifers and a timber fence forming the road frontage. The house is visible through the gate against a backdrop of mature trees, notably a group of mature Scots pine trees in the rear garden, which extends further westwards than the gardens of properties to the north and south along the same side of Kennylands Road. The south western boundary is the edge of the Chiltern Hills AONB. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Wooded dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**



Photo 1: View of house through gateway from Kennylands Road. The western parts of the site are screened by the house.



Photo 2: View north from footpath to south of the site (within SON 26). The garden of Alpen Rose is visible to the left of the house in view, but the rest of the site and the wider village are screened by vegetation. Proposed development on allocated SON 6 may be visible, depending on new planting to contain it.

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- Internal parts of site not visually prominent but trees to edges are visible from sensitive view receptors on PRow to south-east
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be in keeping with the local character

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- Site comprises domestic garden
- Trees to edges and within garden
- No cultural sensitivity
- Quite quiet but tranquillity affected by proximity to road and domestic activity

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- The site lies adjacent to the south western edge of the village
- Not greatly typical of the wider LCA, being small and enclosed by vegetation and comprising a residential garden
- The house on the site forms part of the low density, linear housing pattern along Kennylands Road though the garden extends further out from the road than other properties (proposed development on SON 5, to the north, will extend built form to the edge of the AONB, which is also the western boundary of SON 27). The site is not greatly typical of the wider LCA and is cut off from the landscape to the south west

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- Site is within the setting of the Chiltern Hills AONB

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / High (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

51. The capacity of SON 27 is constrained by:

- The site's location within the setting of the AONB and potential harm to special qualities;
- Potential effects on the linear settlement pattern in this part of the village.

52. However, with a medium / high capacity SON 27 could be considered further as a potential site option subject to detailed assessment to ensure landscape and visual harm is avoided and that AONB special qualities are conserved and enhanced.
53. A fully detailed landscape and visual impact assessment would be required to inform the final capacity of the site, but key principles which should be taken into account are:
- Retention of boundary vegetation to screen views of built form and to maintain the wooded edge of the settlement;
  - Replacement of conifer trees along road frontage and replacement with native species;
  - A low density and low quantum may be necessary to avoid visual intrusion from new buildings;
  - Vehicular access should be modest and avoid suburbanising the leafy, semi-rural character along Kennylands Road.

## Site: Sonning Common SON 29

Site map:

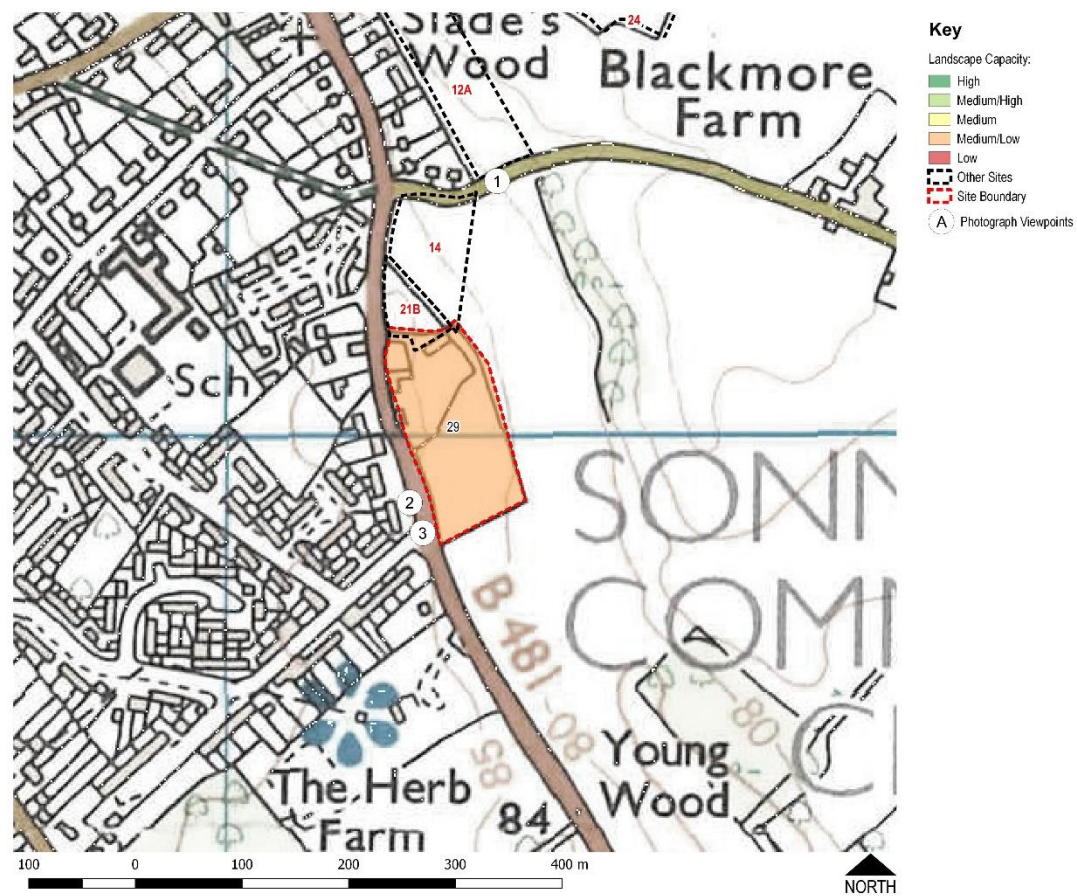


Figure SON 29.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints



**Site description:**

55. SON 29 lies on the south eastern side of Sonning Common and is made up of a private garden with woodland, garden and grassland. The site is accessed from Peppard Road and the house forms the only part of the village east of Peppard Road and south of Blackmore Lane. The boundary of the Chiltern Hills AONB bisects the site. The northern half of the site containing the house and woodland is outside the AONB boundary and the grassland and drive is within the AONB. The site lies within LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys / LCT Semi-enclosed dipslope for which the relevant guidelines are set out in Table 1.

**Photographs:**

Photo 1: Trees on and surrounding the site are visible from Blackmore Lane. The site extends down the slope into the dry valley that defines the eastern side of the village.



Photo 2: The maturely wooded northern part of site is difficult to view from within the settlement, but boundary vegetation is prominent.



Photo 3: 22 The entrance drive is the only gap in the vegetation along Peppard Road.

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- External trees prominent in views from Peppard Road and Blackmore Lane
- Internal parts of site screened
- Possible views from the wider AONB
- Additional screen or woodland planting would be in keeping with the local character

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / Low**

- The site is on the sloping side of a dry valley
- Wooded garden
- Tree belts to boundaries
- Generally quiet but tranquillity somewhat affected by proximity to road

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High**

- The site has a perception of being beyond the settlement limit, lying east of Peppard Road which forms a clear edge between the village and the countryside in this location, with the main village lying west of the road
- The site encroaches into the dry valley that marks the eastern edge of the village
- The site has some links with the wider landscape with the southern end linking to the valley landscape and wider countryside
- Site trees contribute to soft urban edge

**5. Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium (combines 3 and 4)**

**6. Landscape Value: Medium / High**

- Site is partly within the Chiltern Hills AONB and lies within its setting

**7. Landscape Capacity: Medium / Low (combines 5 and 6)**

**Conclusion and recommendations**

56. The capacity of SON 29 is constrained by:

- The negative effect on the settlement pattern through the intensification of housing on the eastern side of Peppard Road resulting in encroachment into the wider landscape and valley with marks the edge of settlement;
- The visual prominence of the site's external trees;
- The site's location within and adjacent to the AONB and potential harm to special qualities.

57. However, given that the site is well contained by its boundary vegetation and already contains a house, a very limited amount of development could be accommodated in the northern part of the site to reflect the character of the existing house set within a large garden surrounded by trees, and subject to detailed assessment to ensure landscape and visual harm is avoided and that AONB special qualities are conserved and enhanced. Retention of boundary vegetation is important to maintain the soft settlement edge, and vehicular access should be modest and unobtrusive so that the development is not obtrusive in views from Peppard Road. The southern part of the site should remain undeveloped to avoid harm to the AONB and sprawl of the settlement pattern.