

6.3 Baydon

Community Area: Marlborough

Settlement: Baydon

Landscape Character Context

North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment

Open Downland

Key Characteristics

- an elevated plateau formed by the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. Soils are predominantly thin light, free draining calcareous and nutrient poor black or brown soils;
- open, smoothly rolling downland, dissected by a network of dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps. Strong sweeping skylines;
- a landscape largely devoid of water due to the porosity of the chalk bedrock;
- dominated by intensively managed arable farmland with a few hedgerows and occasional wooded areas. Woodlands are virtually absent apart from the occasional linear shelterbelt and distinctive beech clumps crowning the summits;
- varied field patterns including 'ladder' fields and large rectangular fields;
- fragmented and isolated blocks of chalk grassland survive along the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides and together these form an important component of the chalk grassland resource of the AONB;
- very sparsely populated - generally restricted to scattered farms and equestrian establishments - contributing to strong sense of isolation;
- varied built character including traditional knapped flint and brick, timber framed weatherboarded aisled barns and large scale modern farm buildings;
- recreational opportunities are characterised by the numerous tracks, byways, green lanes and footpaths plus open access associated with archaeological sites and nature reserves;
- closely associated with the race horse industry, with horse gallops being a distinctive feature;

- strong cultural resonance – visible features from many periods of history, but with particularly strong associations with the prehistoric in the form dramatic visible field monuments;
- remote, isolated settlements characterised by low service levels, resulting in a reliance upon access to the private car with consequent impact on traffic. Population levels increasing slightly;
- overall a very strong sense of remoteness and solitude.

1A Marlborough Downs

Key Characteristics

Landscape

- dominated by the hard rocks of Upper Chalk, with the Middle Chalk in the north west of the forming the escarpment west of Ogbourne St. George. Clay-with-Flint overlies the Upper Chalk on some high summits;
- strongly articulated landform dissected by steep scarps, dry valleys plus valleys of the Og and Aldbourne with the land rising to gently rounded summits. The landform creates a very distinct and dramatic skyline;
- notable for the concentration of sarsen stones plus numerous Bronze Age round barrows, many of which survive as highly visible earthworks. Prominent Iron Age hill forts such as Barbury Castle and Liddington Castle are strategically located along the northern scarp and Ridgeway;
- permanent pasture survives in small fragmented sites mainly concentrated along the scarp slopes to the north and west of the area, with some sections beginning to be covered by regenerating scrub;
- Fyfield Down on the western edge of the Marlborough Downs represent a significant intact area of chalk grassland. It is also an important geomorphological site and displays the best assemblages of sarsen stones in Britain, with classic examples of sarsen trains. The rock exposures also support a nationally important lichen flora;
- extensive network of public rights of way, including the Ridgeway National Trail and the Chiseldon and Marlborough Railway Path;
- horse gallops and other features associated with the race horse industry are a distinctive feature of the area;
- distinctive beech clumps crown the open summits as well as shelterbelt plantations such as that at Mans Head. To the east scattered woodland blocks occur on slopes that dip down towards the River Kennet.

Visual

- an open expansive landscape dominated by arable farmland and absence of field boundaries allowing extensive views - a more enclosed landscape with woodland occurs to the east;

Settlement

- attractive small village settlements concentrated along the valleys of the Og and Aldbourne - elsewhere settlement is very sparse;
- traditional buildings materials include brick, flint and clunch with walls of thatch or clay tile. A particular feature of the built vernacular is the use of the distinctive blue-grey sarsen stone;

Kennet Landscape Character Assessment**2 Marlborough Downs****Landscape**

- An area of high chalk uplands, defined on its western and northern edges by the crest of a prominent, steep chalk scarp, to the south by the valley of the River Kennet.
- The high chalk plateau forms an expansive landscape of open, smoothly rolling downland, mostly under intensive arable farming but with areas of remnant chalk grassland on steeper slopes and on conservation sites such as Fyfield Down.
- It is heavily dissected by a network of dry chalk valleys, or combes, and the valleys of the Rivers Og, and Aldbourne which cut through the area from north to south.
- The eastern areas also reflect characteristics of large farm estates where intensively farmed arable land occurs in a mosaic with woodland managed for sporting purposes.
- 19th and 20th century farming patterns have formed most of the characteristic downland landscape visible today

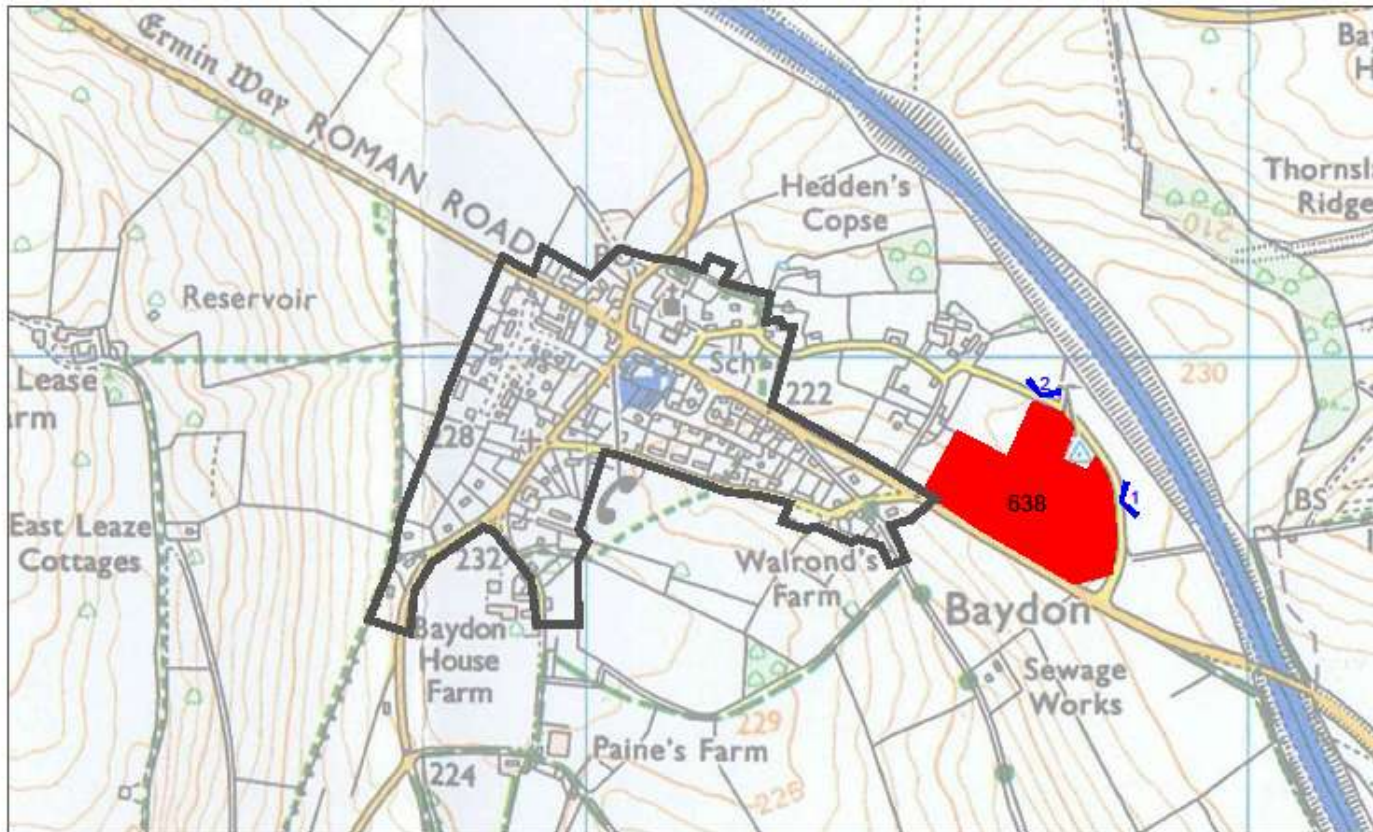
Visual

- It is visually diverse as a result of the vegetation cover over landform so that the open rolling downs of the west and northern areas are contrasted with more enclosed and well wooded areas in the east.

Settlement

- Settlements nestling in intimate valleys within the chalk such as Rockley, the Ogbournes and Aldbourne are important and attractive features of the landscape.
- Aldbourne is the largest settlement in this area, its remoteness leading it to develop the self sufficiency of a small town. It has a secretive setting nestled in a valley in the Downs.
- Building materials are very varied, with brick and flint and brick and sarsen common. In Aldbourne clunch is also used, a characteristic soft creamy stone of the Lower Chalk. Roofs of straw thatch or plain clay tiles create variety, while outside the villages timber framed weather-boarded aisled barns are a feature of the Downs.

Site Assessments



- sites considered appropriate for development
- sites considered to have some potential for development
- sites considered inappropriate for development
- Settlement boundary

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SUBJECT	WORTH WESSEX DOWNS AONB	FIGURE NO.	Figure 2	REVISION	
PROJECT	WILTSHIRE SHLAA - LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT 2012	SCALE	NTS	NORTH	
TITLE	SETTLEMENT W/P - BAYDON	DATE	10.02.2011	DRAWN	AH
		BY	Land Management Services Ltd 22, High Street, Bath, BA1 1PL		
		CONTACT	www.landmanagementservices.co.uk		

SITE: 638

Photographs

BAY1



BAY2



Relationship with adjacent settlement
The land is physically distinct from the settlement, separated by areas of open countryside.
Relationship with wider countryside
The land occupies a prominent location on the crest of the ridge. The land use (horse grazing) and field pattern are typical of the surrounding of the surrounding area with the strong affiliations between Baydon and horse racing. The fields are bordered by well-maintained hedges with hedgerow trees.
Impact on key landscape character
The hedge and field pattern and land use are typical of the surrounding rural landscape. Loss would impact on the overall character and would also result in the loss of the characteristic features, principally the hedge and field pattern. The M4 does impact on the sense of rural tranquillity.
Impact on key visual characteristics
The site lies close to the crest of a ridge. Development would be prominent in local views from the immediate surrounding countryside.
Impact on key settlement characteristics
The break between the existing village and the site mean that this would almost appear as a small, separate development, not directly linked to the village.
Summary of compliance with NPPF Paragraphs 115 and 116
The existing site is an attractive area of open countryside, typical of the local area. Development would not conserve special qualities and natural beauty of the AONB.
Recommendations
Development would be detrimental to the special qualities and natural beauty of the AONB and the site should not be taken forward as part of the SHLAA.

Conclusions and Observations on Cumulative Impacts

There is only one site proposed in Baydon, so there would be no cumulative impacts.