

## 6.1 Aldbourne

**Community Area:** Marlborough

**Settlement:** Aldbourne

### 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**

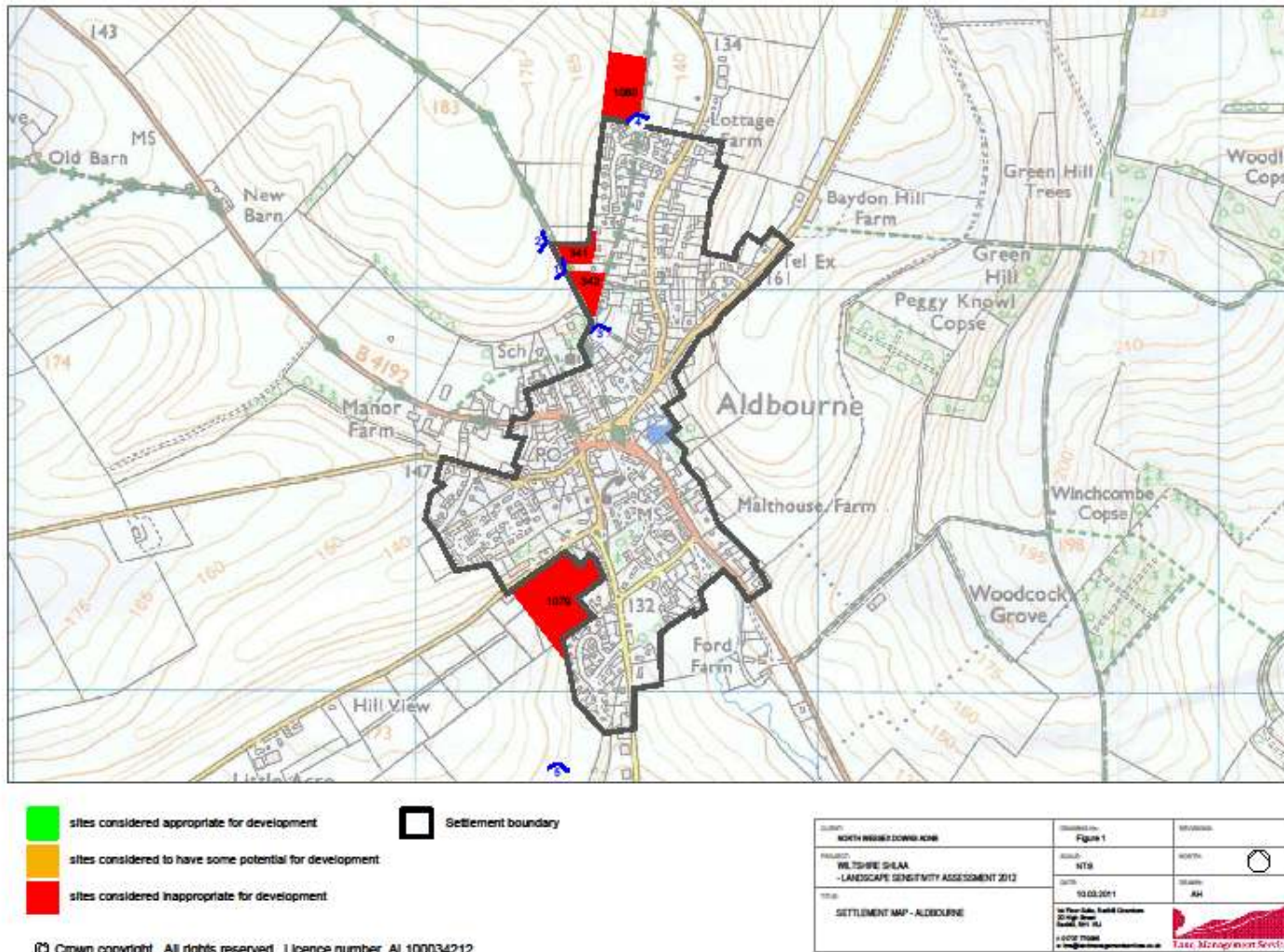
- An area of high chalk uplands, defined on its western and northern edges by the crest of a prominent, steep chalk scarp, to the south by the valley of the River Kennet.
- The high chalk plateau forms an expansive landscape of open, smoothly rolling downland, mostly under intensive arable farming but 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: 341

Photographs

ALD2



<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <p>Although within the settlement boundary the plot does form a small area of open countryside and extends west, beyond the current line of development in this part of Aldbourne.</p>
<p>Relationship with wider countryside</p> <p>The site is fairly typical of the countryside immediately around Aldbourne being a small paddock under grazing (1080 and 1076 are similar in scale and use).</p>
<p>Impact on key landscape character</p> <p>Although at a localised scale, development would extend beyond the line of the existing houses and to the edge of the byway. Assuming the existing boundary hedges are to be retained, development would not impact on these features.</p>
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <p>There are broken views through the hedge over the existing houses to the eastern side of the valley from the byway, which would be lost. Development would also be visible from the eastern side of the valley.</p>
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <p>Development would result in a minor expansion of the existing settlement into open countryside.</p>
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF Paragraphs 115 and 116</p> <p>The existing site is a small area of countryside, typical of the character of other countryside around the village. Development would extend into open countryside, albeit at a very localised scale, so would not conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Although within the settlement boundary, development of the site would impact on the special qualities and natural beauty of the AONB so should not be taken forward as part of the SHLAA.</p>

SITE: 342

Photographs

ALD1



ALD3





Relationship with adjacent settlement
This is a small triangular plot bordered by existing residential development to the north and east and open countryside to the west. The site lies within the settlement boundary.
Relationship with wider countryside
The site is under grassland and is bordered by a mature hedge with trees and a byway to the west. As such, it has more of the character of a small area of open land or green space within the settlement as opposed to open countryside.
Impact on key landscape character
The land is important to the setting of the village, in particular, the older buildings on the adjacent lane. Development would impact on the rural character of the lane and the historic character of this part of the village
Impact on key visual characteristics
Development would prevent views to the older buildings on the approach to the village from the byway and would enclose this short section of the lane.
Impact on key settlement characteristics
Development would to a large extent be infill, but would impact on the historic character of this part of the village.
Summary of compliance with NPPF Paragraphs 115 and 116
Development would impact on the setting of the older buildings and the historic character of this part of the village and so would not conserve the special qualities of the AONB.
Recommendations
Although this site lies within the settlement boundary, development would impact on the historic character of this part of Aldbourne, which is important to the character and special qualities of the AONB. The site should not be taken forward as part of the SHLAA.

SITE: 1079

Photographs

ALD5



Relationship with adjacent settlement
The land lies outside the settlement boundary but is bordered by residential development to the east and part of the southern boundary. There are a number of small warehouse/workshops on the lane to the north. The site is not visible from any point within the village.
Relationship with wider countryside
The land is set on a broad ridge and the land flows into the wider countryside beyond. The land is typical of the surrounding countryside in terms of land use, field pattern, topography and management.
Impact on key landscape character
Development would result in the loss of open countryside and a fairly substantial expansion of the settlement, creating a more solid edge to the settlement. There are few significant landscape features within the site, such as hedges and trees.
Impact on key visual characteristics
The site is prominent in distant views from the downs to the south west. Development would have a detrimental impact on the character and quality of these views with an extension of built development into open countryside on the crest of the ridge. The site is fairly well screened in near views.
Impact on key settlement characteristics
This would be a major incursion of new development into open countryside. Development would create a more solid, unbroken settlement edge.
Summary of compliance with NPPF Paragraphs 115 and 116
Development would impact, in particular, on the natural beauty of the AONB in views from the south west. As such this would not conserve natural beauty or the special qualities of the settlement.
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.

SITE: 1080

Photographs

ALD4



<p>Relationship with adjacent settlement</p> <p>Small rectangular plot of land which lies beyond the northern edge of the settlement. The land is bordered by open countryside to the north, west and east and, as such relates more closely to open countryside than the settlement.</p>
<p>Relationship with wider countryside</p> <p>The small enclosure of horse paddocks is typical of many areas of countryside immediately surrounding the village. The land is bordered by unmanaged hedges.</p>
<p>Impact on key landscape character</p> <p>Development would extend into open countryside and would impact on the rural character of this area of land on the edge of the village, albeit at a relatively localised scale,</p>
<p>Impact on key visual characteristics</p> <p>If developed in full, built development would break the crest of a shallow ridge which would open up views from the wider expanse of the AONB to the north. The land is also visible from the east side of the valley. Development would also impact on views from the byway on the eastern boundary.</p>
<p>Impact on key settlement characteristics</p> <p>Although a small plot, this would extend built development well beyond the current edge of the settlement.</p>
<p>Summary of compliance with NPPF Paragraphs 115 and 116</p> <p>The land is currently open countryside under a land use typical of countryside on the edge of this village, with a strong affiliation with horses. Development would not conserve or enhance the special qualities of the village or the natural beauty of the AONB.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>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.</p>

**Conclusions and Observations on Cumulative Impacts**

All of the sites proposed for Aldbourne would impact on the special character and natural beauty of the AONB. The sites are relatively small and dispersed around the settlement and, as such, the cumulative impact would not be of particular significance, in terms of landscape character and visual impact. Three of the sites would result in the loss of open countryside although it is recognised that only two (1079 and 1080) lie beyond the settlement boundary. Both 1079 and 1080 are set on visually prominent locations which would impact on the appearance of the settlement when viewed from the surrounding countryside. Although 342 lies within the settlement boundary it is felt that development would impact on the special historic character of the village.