

**WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES WITHIN AND  
ADJACENT TO THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY IN  
WEST BERKSHIRE**

**FINAL PHASE 2 REPORT: COMPTON**

## COMPTON

### Assessment of Settlement

<b>Settlement</b>	Compton
<b>North Wessex Downs AONB Character area</b>	LCA ID Blewbury Downs
<b>Date of site survey</b>	17 June 2014
<b>Surveyors</b>	AG



Figure COM.1: Compton potential housing sites

### Key landscape characteristics

#### AONB LCA ID Blewbury Downs (unless source noted otherwise)

- Strong structural landform of elevated downland with round or flat topped hills
- Intersecting dry valleys
- Large open landscape of rectilinear fields with little subdivision
- Dominated by arable farmland with sparse woodland on the tops
- Little enclosure
- Racehorse gallops and equestrian centres
- Numerous rights of way including the Ridgeway
- Sense of remoteness
- Some skyline tree belts and sparse hedgerow trees (NDLCA LCT1)
- Southern boundary of the village is marked by the extensive tree belts and woodlands (NDLCA LCT1)
- Upper winterborne section of the river Pang on the eastern boundary of the village (VDS)
- Important area of meadow at Stocks Farm west of the railway line (VDS)
- Settlement is surrounded by reorganised fields, formerly parliamentary enclosure of open downland or open fields;
- Historically most land to the north of the Pang was downland grazing, with open fields to the south (HECZ Upper Pang Valley)

### Key visual characteristics

#### AONB LCA ID Blewbury Downs (unless source noted otherwise)

- Long views
- Valleys often concealed from view by the landform (NDLCA LCT1)
- Area is noted visually for its broad sweeping lines and the vastness of the wide horizons
- Views out from the village to the Downs (VDS)

### Key settlement characteristics

#### AONB LCA ID Blewbury Downs (unless source noted otherwise)

- More settled than other areas of open downland
- Villages nestle at the heads of dry valleys
- The more major roads and lanes tend to follow the valley bottoms (NDLCA LCT1)
- Nucleated settlement (BLCA E4 Farnborough open downlands)
- Compton has a more modern character with 'business park' like buildings (BLCA E4 Farnborough open downlands)
- East Compton is a cluster of sporadic residential dwellings, originally clustered around the church. This area is visually and physically distanced from the remainder of the village by the railway line (VDS)
- Older housing in small groups lies north of the High Street, much of which is in the Conservation Area (VDS)
- South of High Street the estates are larger post war and modern but do not form a solid mass (VDS)
- The village benefits from private and public open green spaces within the village boundary (VDS)
- Industrial buildings on the eastern boundary are visible on the skyline (VDS)
- Economically diverse village with good community facilities reflected in its buildings and built form (CPP)

### Summary of the key characteristics of the settlement and landscape constraints on the extent and location of development

The whole of Compton and its hinterland lies within the AONB landscape character area LCA ID Blewbury Downs. It is recommended that an overriding objective should be that the village remains small and contained within its dry valley setting and ensure that the wider landscape retains its visual qualities and sense of relative remoteness. The northern side of Compton is noted for its openness and it is very important that no development should be visually intrusive. The existing Pirbright Institute site currently detracts from the character of the village (except where it abuts the High Street) and the special qualities of the AONB, and opportunities should be sought to remedy this. Compton also lies on the transition of open downs to the more wooded hillsides to the south, whereby the existing tree cover in the south of the village is of particular value. Most of the settlement lies on lower flat ground at 100 – 115m AOD, either side of the main route through the village. Any proposed development which would result in the loss of woodland cover, would extend up onto higher ground, or would lead to the loss of views into the open countryside is likely to have a detrimental effect on the special qualities of the AONB and the settlement of Compton.

The village is also noted for its pattern of generous open spaces within the settlement, many of which are linked visually or physically and lead the eye into the surrounding countryside. The village also has a distinctive settlement pattern. The two settlements of Compton and East Compton have distinct characters which should be maintained. The strong rural character of East Compton is a special feature of this area and a valuable contrast to the more modern and economically vibrant main village. The historic core and the pattern of small development plots in Compton require that the scale of any development is important. East Compton would not be able to accommodate any housing in even small estates without significant harm to the AONB. Any proposed development needs to respect these characteristics.

Although Compton has the large Pirbright Institute site on the edge of the settlement which has long been under some form of development, the development of large and homogeneous estates would detract from the special qualities of this area. Great care will also be needed to minimise the impact on the landscape character of the surrounding AONB, through limitations on the scale of development and generous provision of linked open space, and to mitigate the existing harm to the AONB landscape from the current intrusive built form at the Institute.

**Sources:**

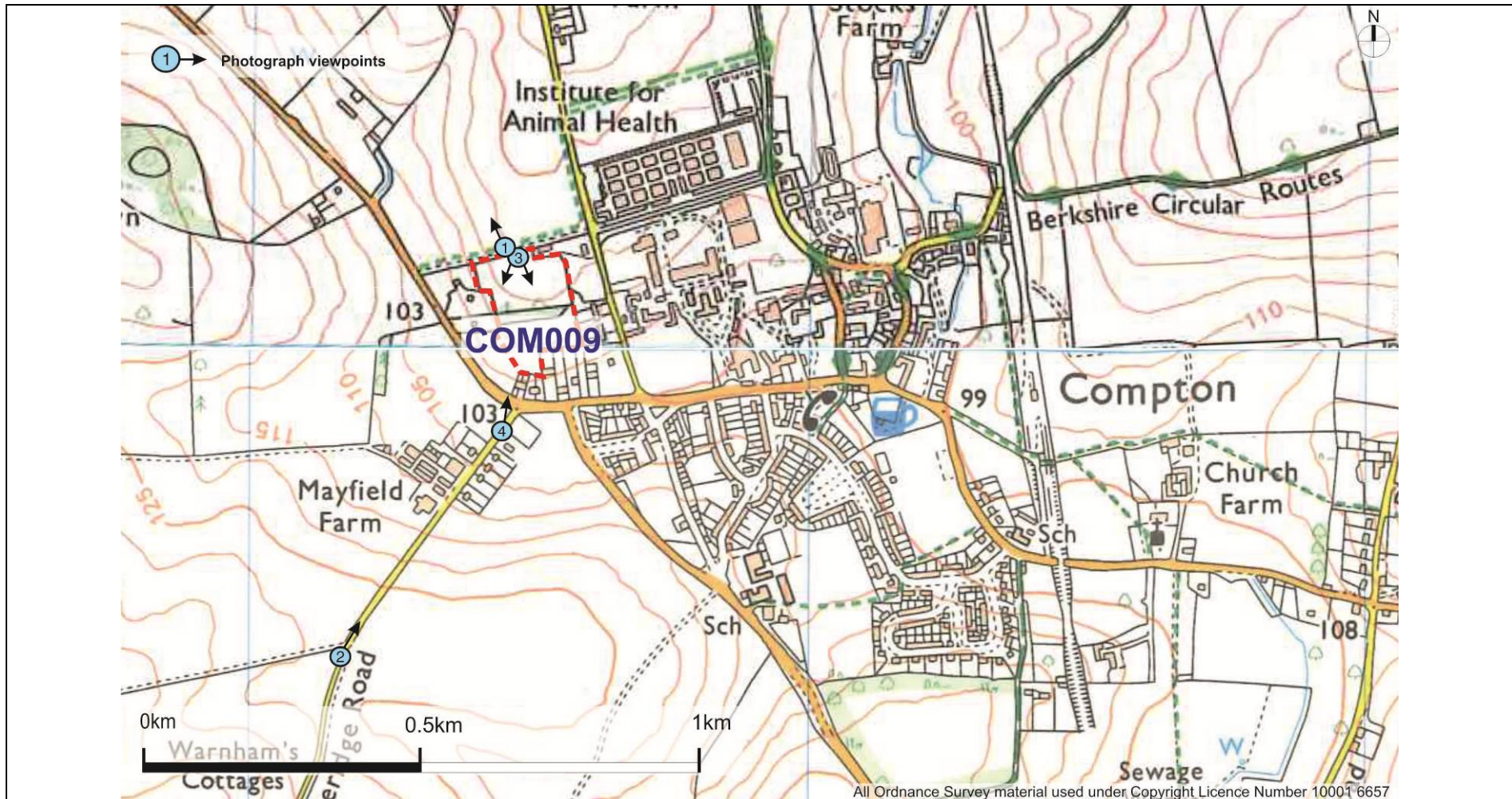
North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002

Additional information from:

- Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Scale and Distribution of Development in the North Wessex Downs AONB (2011) (LSA 2011)
- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
- Historic Environment Character Zoning (HECZ)
- Compton Parish Plan (CPP)
- Compton Village Design Statement (VDS)



Assessment of Potential Housing Site: COM009: Land Between Ilsley Road and Churn Road





**PHOTOGRAPHS**



Viewpoint 1: Long views north from PRoW along northern boundary. Built form on higher ground in northern part of site would be widely visible from the AONB



Viewpoint 2: View from Cheseridge Road on high ground to south west. Much of site would be visible in winter.



Viewpoint 3: The northern part of site visually prominent in views from the PRoW along northern boundary





Viewpoint 4: The southern part of site visually prominent and forming a wooded skyline in views from the valley to the south (from Ilsley Road)

### Site description

Site COM009 is located on the very western edge of Compton on the north side of the main road passing through the village; on land rising northwards between 100m AOD and 120m AOD. The site, which is entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB, comprises one field to the north which is separated by an area of tree / scrub woodland from the southern part of site which is part of a larger field extending to meet the road. The northern field is on the brow of the hillside which rolls over to the north where the land continues to rise to the Compton Downs. The northern boundary is open and has a public right of way just beyond the boundary. Long views northwards are possible from the PRow and the higher ground within the site. A small field lies to the east of the northern field and a large garden containing mature trees lies to the west. The southern field is contained by the settlement on its eastern side and part of its southern side, with its south western side open to the rest of the field. None of the boundaries to COM009 are adjacent to a road and access to the site would require crossing neighbouring land.

<p><b>Relationship with adjacent settlement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site lies on very western edge of Compton</li> <li>• The northern edge of site extends beyond the 115m contour below which much of the settlement lies</li> <li>• South and south east boundaries are adjacent to settlement</li> <li>• Access would require crossing adjacent land as the site does not abut any road</li> <li>• Intervisibility with parts of the village</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relationship with adjacent wider countryside</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lies on the lower to middle slopes leading up to Compton Downs, but beyond the highest elevation of much of the settlement (115m AOD)</li> <li>• Northern part of the site links with the open landscape to the north and forms a transition with the smaller scale landscape in the dry valley, to which the southern site contributes</li> <li>• The site forms part of the open space within the village which has physical and visual links with the surrounding countryside</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact on key landscape characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on tree groups / scrub woodland at the interface between the open upper slopes and the more enclosed valley landscape</li> <li>• Impact on character of PRow adjacent to northern boundary</li> <li>• Topography would require major modification to enable housing development</li> <li>• Loss of visual and aural tranquillity</li> <li>• Loss of locally uncommon pasture</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact on key visual characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on views from PRow adjacent to northern boundary</li> <li>• Visual impact on the wider countryside to the north and south within the AONB, including a number of PRows and roads</li> <li>• Loss of views out to surrounding countryside from the village edge</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact on key settlement characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion beyond upper limits of Compton above 115m AOD</li> <li>• Loss of distinctive views to the countryside from the village</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary of compliance with NPPF</b></p> <p>Development on this site would result in significant harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>This site is not recommended for further consideration as a potential housing site as it is constrained by visual and landscape constraints and it is not in keeping with the settlement pattern. In addition access to the site would need to cross adjacent land which could further impact on visual and landscape aspects.</p>