WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL MINERALS AND WASTE SITES






KIRKHAM LANDSCAPE PLANNING LTD / TERRA FIRMA CONSULTANCY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

ES.1 Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd and Terra Firma were commissioned by West Berkshire Council in October 2015 to undertake a Landscape Assessment of Potential Minerals and Waste Sites. A number of potential sites were submitted to West Berkshire Council in response to consultation on the Issues and Options of the emerging Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The Landscape Assessment of Potential Minerals and Waste Sites forms part of a number of studies to inform the emerging Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

ES.2 West Berkshire Council is currently in the process of developing a new minerals and waste local plan (MWLP) for West Berkshire. As part of the development of the MWLP the Council will be allocating sites on which there will be a presumption in favour of certain types of minerals and waste development throughout the plan period. Information on the plan making to date can be found on the Council website: http://info.westberks.gov.uk/mwdpd.

ES.3 The public consultation for the Issues and Options part of the emerging plan, and associated documents, ran from 17 January 2014 to 28 February 2014. The results of the consultation were reported in the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan April 2015 Issues and Options Commentary Report. A 'Call for [minerals and waste] sites' ran in conjunction with this consultation. This gave rise to a number of separate minerals and waste site submissions which the Council is currently assessing for their suitability. The Council consulted on the submission in July/August 2016. For clarity, some of the sites included within the Landscape Assessment of Potential Minerals and Waste Sites were not include in the public consultation carried out by the Council, as these had already been withdrawn in advance of the consultation taking place.

ES.4 The method of approach to assessment (Section 2) is adopted from similar landscape capacity studies undertaken for West Berkshire Council and other local authorities, adapted to reflect the particular characteristics of minerals and waste sites. Each site is subjected to a sequential assessment as set out within the Site Record Sheets and Site Reports in accordance with a tried and tested methodology. A series of illustrative photographs identify key features of the sites.

ES.5 A total of 23 sites are included in the Landscape and Visual Assessment of Potential Minerals and Waste Sites which identifies the landscape capacity of each site, and where applicable, recommends the area that might be suitable for development in landscape and visual terms. The study recommends those requirements for green infrastructure to ensure that the impact of development is mitigated by avoiding unsuitable parts of each site and by providing suitable landscape buffers to protect both landscape character and visual amenity in the area.

ES.7 Figures 1a to 6b illustrate the key landscape and visual overarching constraints on the sites. Each site assessment report is accompanied by figures identifying the capacity of the site and location of the above photographs (Figures 1.1 to 23.1) and figures identifying an indicative mineral/waste developable area, indicative areas of green infrastructure and preferred access points (Figures 1.2 to 23.2).

ES.8 Some of the sites lie within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The national landscape designation of the North Wessex Downs AONB is considered in determining the Landscape Value of the sites (Section 2 Stage 6) as part of the sequential assessment process. This assessment is then combined with the results of the 'overall landscape sensitivity' (Section 2 Stage 5) to indicate the overall intrinsic landscape capacity of each site. The final landscape capacity of individual sites in the AONB may therefore vary. The tests under NPPF para 155 and 116 should be applied separately, in addition to this landscape capacity assessment, against any specific development proposals.

ES.9 The Table A below summarises the findings of this study:

TABLE A: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Report site no.	Site	Location	Proposed use	Landscape capacity	Explanatory notes on capacity	Draft recommendation: approx. % of site/area	Site number in public consultation on proposed sites (summer 20016)
1	A4 Breakers	Beenham	The recycling of metals and processing thereof: ELV processing and distribution of waste products	Medium	Lower capacity because within the AONB	90% of site	Withdrawn prior to consultation
2	Aldermaston Bridge	Aldermaston	Sand and gravel extraction with infill	Low	Most of site typical of most valued Kennet landscape	20% of site	3
3	Barton Court	Kintbury	Waste recycling and recovery facility	Medium	Higher sensitivity because within the AONB	80% of site	Withdrawn prior to consultation
4	Boot Farm	Brimpton	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	Medium		60% of site	4
5	Chieveley Services	Chieveley	Sand extraction with possible infill	Medium	Within AONB	60% of site	5
6	Energy Gap	Colthrop	Energy recovery through thermal treatment (gasification) and mechanical pre-treatment	High	Within setting of AONB	75% of site	19
7	Grange Lane	Beenham	Facility for the recovery and/or treatment of wastes	Medium	Lower capacity because within the AONB	70% of site	18
8	Grundon plant site	Colthrop	Primary, secondary and recycled aggregate processing	High		85%	6
9	Cowpound Piece	Ufton Nervet	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	Medium/Low	Lower capacity because within the Local Wildlife Site	15% of site plus part of the main wooded area of the site	7
10	Firlands	Burghfield	Sand and gravel extraction	Medium/High	Lower capacity due to important	85% of site	8

		Common	with infill		tree lines around and within site which constrain access to and between fields and rural character of lane		
11	Gravel Pit Farm	Beenham	Sand and gravel extraction with dry screening and crushing and possible infill	Low	Within AONB / development of any part of site would affect the whole	None	9
12	60 Acre Field	Chieveley	Sand extraction with processing and infill	Medium/low	Within AONB / development of any part of site would affect the whole with no justifiable way of dividing	None	2
13	Spring Lane	Aldermaston	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	Medium/low	Visual intrusion within a undisturbed rural landscape	15% of site	10
14	Long Lane	Cold Ash	Sand extraction and infill	Low	Adjacent to AONB /impact on setting of AONB	None	11
15	Lower Farm	Wasing	Sand and gravel extraction with infill	Areas 3a,b and d Medium	Capacity lowered by proximity to sensitive landscape receptors /	90% of area	12
				Area 3c Medium/Low	Most of site typical of most valued Kennet landscape	None	
16	Manor Farm	Brimpton	Sand and gravel extraction with dry screening and infill	Medium	Part of site typical of most valued Kennet landscape / close proximity to Brimpton village	40% of site	13
17	Moores Farm	Theale	Recycling of inert waste and infill	High	Landscape value of existing naturalistic lakes should be preserved	40% of site	17
18	Padworth Park Farm	Padworth	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	Low	Poor access to any less sensitive areas	None	14
19	Reading Quarry & Hyde	Theale	Infill of lakes MRF and potential specialist waste treatment within Reading Quarry and infill Gasification Facility	19.1 Medium	Entire site forms part of Local Wildlife Site/ part of a wider area of naturalistic lakes, substantially regenerated, with a distinctive character	30% of site	20, 21 and 22
				19.2 and 19.3 Medium/High	Entire site forms part of Local Wildlife Site	60% of site	
20	Theale WRTF	Theale	Thermal Treatment Facility for residual/non-hazardous MSW and or C&I waste	Medium/High	Entire site forms part of Local Wildlife Site	70% of site	23
21	Tidney	Ufton Nervet	Sand and gravel extraction with dry screening and crushing and possible infill	Medium	Part of site typical of most valued Kennet landscape / Proximity to AONB	50% of site	15
22	Waterside	Thatcham	Sand and gravel extraction	22.1-22.7	Much of site typical of most valued	15% of site	16

	Farm		with infill	Medium / low	Kennet landscape		
				22.8 and 22.9 Medium/Low	Distinctive characteristics of wider LCA	None	
23	Frouds Lane	Aldermaston	Processing Hub	Medium/Low	Typical of farmed Kennet Valley landscape Visually intrusive	None	23

1. Introduction

1.1 West Berkshire Council is currently in the process of developing a new minerals and waste local plan (MWLP) for West Berkshire. As part of the development of the MWLP the Council will be allocating sites on which there will be a presumption in favour of certain types of minerals and waste development throughout the plan period. Information on the plan making to date can be found on the Council website: http://info.westberks.gov.uk/mwdpd.

1.2 The public consultation for the Issues and Options part of the emerging plan, and associated documents, ran from 17 January 2014 to 28 February 2014. The results of the consultation were reported in the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan April 2015 Issues and Options Commentary Report. A 'Call for [minerals and waste] sites' ran in conjunction with this consultation. This gave rise to a number of separate minerals and waste site submissions which the Council is currently assessing for their suitability. The Council consulted on the submission in July/August 2016. For clarity, some of the sites included within this landscape and visual assessment were not include in the public consultation carried out by the Council, as these had already been withdrawn in advance of the consultation taking place.

1.3 The Landscape and Visual Assessment of Potential Minerals and Waste Sites will form part of the evidence base to assist the Council in identifying their preferred site options. The methodology is adopted from similar landscape capacity studies undertaken for West Berkshire Council and other local authorities, adapted to reflect the particular characteristics of minerals and waste sites.

1.4 For each site the Report recommends the extent to which the site might be developed on the basis of landscape and visual constraints. It goes onto identify the area that lies within the site which would be required to be either left undeveloped; set aside for landscape and/or visual mitigation and in many cases long term green infrastructure; or for screening. These areas are designed to protect the most sensitive parts of the site or mitigate the potential impact on the wider landscape or visual amenity. The Report also identifies potential access points but these are only identified for landscape or visual reasons. In all cases this study does not take into account other environmental requirements, the detailed requirements of the proposed development on each site or highway requirements. The results of this study will inform West Berkshire Council's holistic approach to the selection of the most suitable sites for inclusion in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

1.5 Applications in due course for minerals extraction and infilling or waste uses on sites should be accompanied by a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition The Landscape Institute (GLVIA3).

1.6 In all cases the following design conditions apply to minerals sites:

- The areas shown as potential developable areas are those that are least harmful to the landscape;
- Stockpiles and buildings should be sited and designed to minimize the landscape and visual harm. This would be assessed in detail through a LVIA. In some cases this Report makes specific recommendations for particular sites;
- Screen bunding, tree planting and phasing will be required to minimize the harm the landscape and visual amenity. In some cases this Report makes specific recommendations for particular sites;

- Restoration should be compatible with the character and value of the receiving landscape and wherever possible add value as a landscape benefit over and above reinstatement of the status quo;
- Tree planting should meet long term objectives for the site. Rarely will planting mature sufficiently in the time that a site is being extracted but in larger sites temporary shrub planting may be need to soften views;
- The access points are located to minimize the harm to physical features in the landscape, the landscape character and the visual impact. As temporary features these should be restored as soon as part of the restoration of the site.

2. Sensitivity and capacity methodology

Reporting units

2.1 In the first instance the local landscape character types and areas within which the site options lie (from the list of landscape character assessments in Section 5) were identified, followed by site surveys to ensure that these generally reflected physical and visual changes of character within the site landscape and its setting. Many of the site options lie wholly within one local landscape character type and in these cases one Report has been produced for the whole of the site. However, elsewhere the site option is subdivided into the one or more local landscape areas in which case the site area has been divided up into sub-areas (for example site 15: Lower Farm). Site surveys recorded the key landscape and visual characteristics of each site option and its setting including the information within Record Sheets and on site maps.

Basis of sensitivity and capacity assessment methodology

2.2 The key texts on which the methodology is based are the Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency's *Landscape Character Assessment* (2002) and subsequent *Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* (2006*)* as well as the Landscape Institute / IEMA *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (2013) (GLVIA3).

2.3 As in current best practice, sensitivity should be assessed against a specific change, and for this study the development scenario as set out in the site submissions has been assumed as a guide. Recommendations and comments have been added regarding the appropriate development of particular sites and to ensure raised awareness of potential unacceptable adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

2.4 Proposals for any development would need to include appropriate, detailed and specialist input into siting, layout and design, and a full landscape and visual impact assessment should accompany a specific planning application relating to any site. Other studies including ecology, archaeology, arboriculture, traffic, soils may also be required to accompany specific proposals.

2.5 Details of the landscape and visual attributes for each site and an assessment of landscape and visual sensitivity (based on desk top studies and field surveys) are to be found on the Record Sheets. A summary of the landscape sensitivity, value and capacity for each site, or sub-areas of each site, follows in individual Reports in Section 9.

Assessment process

2.6 The assessment methodology is a staged process. Landscape attributes, and visual attributes, are considered separately in accordance with the guidance in GLVIA. These attributes are used to identify the **intrinsic landscape and visual sensitivity** (Stages 1 and 2) of the site option, or its sub-areas, on a scale of 5 levels from low to high as set out under the Matrix 1 and 2 below. The landscape and visual sensitivity of the site option, or its sub-area, are then merged to identify the **landscape character sensitivity** (Stage 3) as set out under Matrix 3 below. The LCSCS then goes on to classify the **sensitivity of the site in its wider context** (Stage 4) into five categories. In Stage 5 the landscape character sensitivity is combined with the wider sensitivity as set out in Matrix 4 to identify the **overall landscape sensitivity** (Stage 5). The **landscape value** (Stage 6) of each site, or sub-area, is assessed separately on a scale of 5 levels as set out under Table 1 below. Finally the overall landscape character sensitivity is merged with the landscape value on a scale of 5 levels to give an assessment of **landscape capacity** (Stage 7) on a scale of 5 levels as set out under Matrix 5 below. This 'bottom up' process is tested against the five criteria for landscape capacity (Stage 7) based on professional judgement and an overall full understanding of the site options.

Assessment abbreviations and colour code:

L	– Low capacity	**M/L**	– Medium / Low Capacity	**M**	– Medium Capacity
M/H	– Medium / High capacity	**H**	– High Capacity		

Stage 1: Determination of Visual Sensitivity

2.7 This assessment is set out in the Record Sheets and Reports for each site option, or sub-division.

2.8 The assessment considers the types of **views**, the nature of the **viewers** and the **potential to mitigate** visual impact on the identified viewpoints. The more viewpoints, the more exposed the site, the greater the sensitivity of the viewers (based on GLVIA) and the greater difficulties in screen planting to mitigate the impact without harm to the landscape and visual attributes of the site, the higher the sensitivity. As a final test all 27 sites were revisited to assess the relative visual sensitivity of the sites and ensure that professional judgements have been consistent along the way. At this stage each level has been given a score from low = 1 to high = 5 and the scores are added up. Total scores for the site option, or sub areas, are grouped as shown.

Matrix 1: Visual sensitivity

General visibility	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Population	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Mitigation	L (1)	M/L (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
OVERALL VISUAL SENSITIVITY	**3-4 = low; 5- 7 = Med/low; 8-10 = Med; 11-13 = Med/high; 14-15 = High**				

Table 1: Notes on Visual Sensitivity Assessment

Factor	Higher sensitivity	Lower sensitivity
General Visibility	Sequenced and exposed views toward site	Fleeting and limited views
	Most of site area visible	Little of site area visible
	Site is a key focus in available wider views	Site is an incidental part of wider views
	Site includes prominent and key landmarks	None present
	Important vistas or panoramas in/out of area	Unimportant or no vistas
	Prominent skyline	Not part of skyline
Population	Large extent or range of key sensitive receptors	Lack of sensitive receptors
	Large number of people see site	Few can see site
	Key view from a sensitive receptor	Views of site are unimportant
	Site is part of valued view	Site does not form a part of a valued view
	Site in key views	Not part of setting of settlement view
Mitigation	Mitigation not very feasible	Mitigation possible
	Mitigation would interrupt key views	Would not obscure key views
	Mitigation would damage local character	Mitigation would not harm local character

Stage 2: Determination of Landscape Sensitivity

2.9 This assessment is set out in the Record Sheets and Reports for each site option or sub-division.

2.10 The assessment considers the **natural** physical factors which make up the landscape character of the site, the **cultural** and built form aspects and the **perceptual** features. The greater the incidence of landscape interest and diversity, historically important features and cultural associations, and the greater the levels of access and perceptions of tranquillity and strong landscape pattern, the greater the sensitivity. As a final test all 27sites were revisited to assess the relative landscape sensitivity of the sites and ensure that professional judgements have been consistent along the way. At this stage each level has been given a score from low = 1 to high = 5 and the scores are added up. Total scores for the site option, or sub areas, are grouped as shown.

Matrix 2: Landscape sensitivity

Natural factors	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Cultural factors	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Perceptual features	L (1)	M/L (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY	**3-4 = low; 5- 7 = Med/low; 8-10 = Med; 11-13 = Med/high; 14-15 = High**				

Table 2: Notes on Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Factor	Higher sensitivity	Lower sensitivity
Natural	Native woodland	Plantation
	Significant tree/groups	Insignificant/young trees
	Strong hedgerow structure with hedgerow trees	Weak structure and no trees
	Species rich grassland	Arable field
	Significant water feature(s)	No water feature(s)
	Varied landform and distinctive feature of the area	Uniform landform and lack of topographical features
	Pronounced Geology	Lack of geological features
	Soils significantly contribute to landscape features	Soils are not an important feature
	Complex and vulnerable landcover	Simple robust landcover
	Presence of other significant vegetation cover	Absence of other significant vegetation
	Presence of valued wildlife habitats	Absence of valued wildlife habitats
	Significant wetland habitats and meadows	Poor water logged areas
	Presence of common land	No common land
	Presence of good heathland	Lost heathland
Cultural	Distinctive good quality boundary features	Generic or poor boundary features
	Evidence of surviving part of an historic landscape	No evidence
	Complex historic landscape pattern with good time depth	Simple modern landscape
	Evidence of historic park	No evidence
	Important to setting or in a Conservation Area	No relationship
	Includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument or Important to setting	No relationship
	Locally distinctive built form and pattern	Generic built form
	Important to setting of a Listed building	No relationship
	Distinctive strong settlement pattern	Generic or eroded pattern
	Locally significant private gardens	Poorly maintained gardens erode the character
	Evidence of visible social cultural associations	Lack of social cultural associations
Perceptual	Quiet area	Noisy area
	Absence of intrusive elements	Intrusive elements present
	Dark skies	High levels of light pollution
	Open exposed landscape	Enclosed visually contained landscape
	Unified landscape with strong landscape pattern	Fragmented/'bitty' or featureless landscape
	Well used area or appreciated by the public	Inaccessible by public
	Important rights of way	None present
	Well used and valued open air recreational facilities	None present
	Open access land	None present

Stage 3: Determination of Landscape Character Sensitivity

2.11 The landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity are combined, as shown in Matrix 3, to give the **landscape character sensitivity**. The results of the assessment are set out in the Reports for each site option or sub-division.

Matrix 3: Landscape character sensitivity

VISUAL SENSITIVITY						
	High	M	M/H	M/H	H	H
	Med/High	M/L	M	M/H	M/H	H
	Medium	M/L	M/L	M	M/H	M/H
	Med/Low	L	M/L	M/L	M	M/H
	Low	L	L	M/L	M/L	M
		Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High
		LANDSCAPE SENSITVITY				

Stage 4: Determination of Wider Sensitivity – The Contribution of the Site to the Wider Landscape and influence of existing commercial, mineral or waste uses

2.12 Stages 1 to 3 have led to a comprehensive assessment of the intrinsic landscape sensitivity of the individual site options. However the sensitivity of each site to development is also affected by its importance, and contribution, to the adjacent wider rural landscape and the influence of commercial, mineral or waste uses in the area. The relative wider sensitivity of each site option is assessed as follows:

Low wider sensitivity – The site is heavily influenced by commercial, mineral or waste uses and not an important part of the adjacent wider landscape

Medium/Low wider sensitivity – The site is heavily influenced by commercial, mineral or waste uses and has views of the some parts of the commercial, mineral or waste uses but shares some of the characteristics of the adjacent wider landscape

Medium wider sensitivity – The site is partly influenced by commercial, mineral or waste uses but shares many of the characteristics of the wider landscape, with good physical and visual links to the wider landscape

Medium/High wider sensitivity – The site has strong physical and visual links to the wider landscape and these outweigh any minor impacts from the adjacent commercial, mineral or waste uses

High wider sensitivity – The site is an important part of the wider landscape with which it has strong visual and landscape links. The nearby commercial, mineral or waste uses have little impact on the site.

2.13 The results of the assessment are set out in the Reports for each site option or sub-division.

Stage 5: Determination of Overall Landscape Sensitivity

2.14 The **overall landscape sensitivity** is determined by combining the landscape character sensitivity with the wider sensitivity as shown in Matrix 4. The results of the assessment are set out in the Report Sheets for each site option or sub-division.

Matrix 4: Overall landscape sensitivity

LANDSCAPE CAHARACTER SENSITIVITY						
	High	H	H	M/H	M/H	M
	Med/High	H	M/H	M/H	M	M/L
	Medium	M/H	M/H	M	M/L	M/L
	Med/Low	M/H	M	M	M/L	M/L
	Low	M	M	M/L	M/L	L
		High	Med/High	Medium	Med/Low	Low
		WIDER SENSITIVITY				

Stage 6: Determination of Landscape Value

2.15 The model for this work follows GLVIA 2013.

Table 1 - LANDSCAPE VALUE CRITERIA

Value	Typical criteria	Typical scale	Typical examples
High	Very High importance (or quality) and rarity. No or limited potential for substitution	International	World Heritage Site SAC
Medium/high	High importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	National	National Park/ AONB SSSI EH Register of Parks and Gardens Grade I and II* listed buildings and their settings National recreational route or area e.g. Thames Path
Medium	Medium importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	Regional	Setting of AONB / National Park/Grade II listed building Local landscape designation Landscape value identified in the Local Plan SINC/Conservation Areas and their setting Setting of SSSI Grade II listed buildings and their setting Local Wildlife sites Regional recreational route/area e.g. Berkshire Circular Route
Medium/low	Local importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	Local	Undesignated but value expressed through publications, VDS Local buildings of historic interest and their settings Local recreational facilities of landscape value
Low	Low importance (or quality) or rarity		Area of little value and identified for improvement

Designations: The location of the site within a designated area, or the presence of a designated area within the site, is an important measure of the value society gives to the landscape of the site. These include landscape, historic and ecological designations and recreational routes at a national/international level, regional or district level, or at the local level. These reflect, and contribute to, the overall landscape value of an area.

Local Associations: These are included as far as possible using available data. In addition to the more formal designations above, sites may sometimes have special scenic value, associations or meanings to the local community and therefore make a contribution to the value of the local landscape. This has been assessed through a review of readily available evidence of community value. Further research may be required as part of any detailed landscape and visual impact assessment.

Stage 7: Determination of landscape capacity

2.16 Landscape susceptibility to change is the ability, or otherwise, of the area to accommodate development. The landscape capacity is determined by combining the overall landscape sensitivity with the landscape value as shown in Matrix 5. The results of the assessment are set out in the Report Sheets for each site option or sub-division.

Matrix 5 LANDSCAPE CAPACITY

OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY						
	High	M	M/L	L	VL	VL
	Med/High	M/H	M	M/L	L	VL
	Medium	H	M/H	M	M/L	L
	Med/Low	H	H	M/H	M	M/L
	Low	H	H	H	M/H	M
		Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High
		LANDSCAPE VALUE				

3. Main Policy and Landscape Constraints

3.1 The new Minerals and Waste Local Plan will replace the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire (RMLP) and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (WLPB). In 2007 the Secretary of State directed that a number of policies in the RMLP and WLPB for Berkshire should be saved indefinitely until replaced by national, regional or local Minerals and Waste policies. For the purposes of this landscape study, it has been assumed that in due course the local objectives and policies for West Berkshire will change as the new MWLP emerges but that the following national landscape related policy and guidance is relevant in the context of this study.

NPPF

3.2 The following sections of the NPPF are particularly applicable to the consideration of the landscape and visual aspects of minerals and waste development potential:

- The contribution of the environmental role to achieving sustainable development: paras 7 to 10;
- Core planning principles: bullets 5 and 7;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment: paras 109 to 116, 123;
- Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals: paras 143 bullet 6 and 8; para 144 bullets 2, 3 and 6

National Planning Policy for Waste 2014

3.3 The following sections of the NPPW are particularly applicable to the consideration of the landscape and visual sensitivity of the site submissions:

- Para 4 bullet point 5 concerning appropriate locations for new or enhanced waste management facilities;
- Para 5 bullet point 4 concerning the cumulative impact of existing and proposed waste disposal facilities;
- Appendix B relating to the locational criteria for testing the suitability of sites for waste development.

4. Mineral extraction

4.1 West Berkshire's main construction aggregates deposit is sharp sand and gravel. It is suitable for most types of concreting purposes, and is therefore an important material for the construction industry. There are also large deposits of soft sand, suitable either as a fill material, or in limited circumstances as building sand for use in making mortar. By their nature minerals can only be extracted from where they are found. In West Berkshire therefore, quarrying has historically been focused on the sharp sand and gravel deposits along the Kennet valley, most notably between Reading and Newbury. Sharp sand and gravel is also found in the river terrace deposits, higher up the valley, which are the remnants of earlier abandoned floodplains raised by geological forces above the present course of the rivers. Soft sand in West Berkshire principally occurs in the Reading Formation, and in outcrops on the higher ground above the Kennet valley. Historically the majority of soft sand extraction has been undertaken in the north of West Berkshire, the majority of which is designated as the North Wessex Downs AONB.

4.2 Mineral sites can appear dominant in the landscape, but not always so, and would typically be worked and restored in a phased manner. Extraction would generally be spread over a number of years, potentially impacting on the local community for the lifetime of the site, although these impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated through adequate controls being in place.

4.3 The operation of a quarry can appear unsightly and this can be exacerbated in some cases by the inclusion of processing plant and stockpiles of materials on the site. The visual impact of extraction would generally be mitigated by temporary screen bunding, advanced planting and phased restoration; and in more urban locations by screen fencing.

4.4 Restoration schemes will usually take a comprehensive approach and incorporate landscape, ecology, recreational, hydrological and agricultural requirements. The extent and design of wet restoration versus dry restoration schemes will depend on these objectives as well as the availability of inert infill material.

5. Waste development

5.1 There are a wide range of waste development types and the resultant landscape and visual impacts can therefore vary considerably. For this study we have used the types of waste development identified by the site promoters for each potential site allocation that has been put forward. These include End of Life Vehicle processing, metal recycling, skip hire, mechanical recovery, transfer, energy recovery, materials processing and sorting, and inert landfilling.

5.2 Waste management facilities have the potential to result in negative landscape and visual impacts due to the need to temporarily store the waste itself, and because of the potentially large buildings and infrastructure associated with developments. Generally the waste developments coming forward now are more likely to be small and medium sized, the waste industry appearing to have moved away from the very large scale facilities that were previously favoured by some operators. In many cases now the operations associated with waste developments would be undertaken inside buildings as opposed to out in the open. Traditionally mineral extraction preceded landfill in order to fill the void, however today this is only likely to be acceptable where it is necessary to infill with inert material in order to reclaim the land.

5.3 Based on the capacity of each site, an independent assessment of the potential scale and mass of development of each type that might be acceptable in landscape and visual terms has been considered with such constraints set out under each report.

6. List of sites assessed

Report Site no.	Site	Location	Proposed use	Site number in public consultation on proposed sites (summer 20016)
1	A4 Breakers	Beenham	The recycling of metals and processing thereof: ELV processing and distribution of waste products	Withdrawn prior to consultation
2	Aldermaston Bridge	Aldermaston	Sand and gravel extraction with infill	3
3	Barton Court	Kintbury	Waste recycling and recovery facility	Withdrawn prior to consultation
4	Boot Farm	Brimpton	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	4
5	Chieveley Services	Chieveley	Sand extraction with possible infill	5
6	Energy Gap	Colthrop	Energy recovery through thermal treatment (gasification) and mechanical pre-treatment	19
7	Grange Lane	Beenham	Facility for the recovery and/or treatment of wastes	18
8	Grundon plant site	Colthrop	Primary, secondary and recycled aggregate processing	6
9	Cowpound Piece	Ufton Nervet	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	7
10	Firlands	Burghfield Common	Sand and gravel extraction with infill	8
11	Gravel Pit Farm	Beenham	Sand and gravel extraction with dry screening and crushing and possible infill	9
12	60 Acre Field	Chieveley	Sand extraction with processing and infill	2
13	Spring Lane	Aldermaston	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	10
14	Long Lane	Cold Ash	Sand extraction and infill	11
15	Lower Farm	Wasing	Sand and gravel extraction with infill	12
16	Manor Farm	Brimpton	Sand and gravel extraction with dry screening and infill	13
17	Moores Farm	Theale	Recycling of inert waste and infill	17
18	Padworth Park Farm	Padworth	Sand and gravel extraction with possible infill	14
19	Reading Quarry & Hyde Crete Pit	Theale	Infill of lakes MRF and potential specialist waste treatment within Reading Quarry and infill Gasification Facility	20,21 and 22
20	Theale WRTF	Theale	Thermal Treatment Facility for residual/non-hazardous MSW and or C&I waste	23
21	Tidney	Ufton Nervet	Sand and gravel extraction with dry screening and crushing and possible infill	15
22	Waterside Farm	Thatcham	Sand and gravel extraction with infill	16
23	Frouds Lane	Aldermaston	Processing hub	?

7. Sources:

- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA)
- North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 (NWDLCA)
- Newbury District Landscape Character Assessment 1993 (NDLCA)
- An Integrated Landscape Sensitivity Approach to Settlement Expansion within West Berkshire (LSS) 2009
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

7.1 Source is indicated under the landscape and visual characteristics of each site. Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (BLCA) has been used as the primary source supplemented by other information from the other LCAs. An exception to this is where the site option lies within the AONB and in this case the North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002 (NWDLCA) has been used as the primary source.

7.2 Figures 1A to 6B show the landscape, ecological, heritage and recreational designations on the sites or within their setting.

8. General considerations

8.1 In general each site has been considered as a whole. However in some cases there are some strong differences in character between one part of the site and another (usually reflected by the fact that each part lies within a different landscape character area). In this case (sites 15, 19 and 22) the site is sub-divided and the sub-division assessed separately.

8.2 The extent of the area with a potential for either minerals extraction or waste uses and the area is only indicative and would be tested through a landscape and visual impact assessment and other relevant considerations. The area of Green Infrastructure includes both those areas which should remain undeveloped in their current use and form and those areas required to mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the development. In the latter information is contained within the reports on the general location and type of landscape mitigation.

8.2 The Study is designed to identify the overarching landscape and visual constraints on development. Details of specific landscape features within the areas recommended for development have not been identified but in general it is recommended that the development retains or minimises the impact on internal site features such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees, tree belts, minor streams or ditches. Larger or more significant landscape features are usually shown with buffer zones to protect these features. The final width of these buffers will depend on more detailed site assessment in conjunction with other assessments (including ecological, hydrological, historical and recreational). Sites may also be constrained by existing or future TPOs, although these have not been considered at this stage within this Report.

8.3 The national landscape designation of the North Wessex Downs AONB is considered in determining the Landscape Value (Stage 6) of the sites. This assessment is then combined in Stage 7 with the results of the 'overall landscape sensitivity'. The 'overall landscape sensitivity' assessment in Stages 1 to 5, is determined by the intrinsic landscape and visual qualities of the site, and the extent to which the site contributes to, and/or is typical of, the landscape character of the wider landscape. The final assessment of 'overall landscape sensitivity' (Stage 5) will therefore vary from site to site, and between sites within the AONB. Once 'overall landscape sensitivity' and 'landscape value' are combined in Stage 7, this may therefore give rise to differing levels of landscape capacity on sites within the AONB. The tests under NPPF para 155 and 116 should be applied separately, in addition to this landscape capacity assessment, against any specific development proposals.

8.4 Similarly details of the height, location of bunds and stockpiles have not been included as these too will depend on more detailed studies, except where development may only be acceptable in principle with some guidance. By the same token details of planting types, mixes, extent are not included except in general terms. All of these details would be needed to accompany any applications for development.

8.5 General guidance is given on built form where development may only be acceptable in principle with some guidance. As the type of built form is not known at this stage, the constraints of the scale and height of the built form are identified in these cases.

8.6 Advanced planting is recommended in every case wherever possible.

8.7 In accordance with current best practice, it is assumed and recommended that the minerals sites will be extracted and filled (where recommended) and restored sequentially in phases. As this is a technical matter depending on working practices, the Study does not give guidance on phasing but in all cases the design of the phasing should minimise the landscape and visual impacts on the site or area.

8.8 For minerals sites, recommendations are given for restoration levels and final restoration treatment.

8.9 The preferred access points are solely recommended on landscape and visual grounds and it is recognised that there are other major considerations in access design and location. They are selected to take advantage of highways with less sensitivity to landscape or visual damage and gaps in boundary vegetation cover but are only indicative. In some cases access is severely constrained where the only access would result in harm to a valued landscape feature resulting in exclusion of the site, or part thereof.

SECTION 9: STUDY AREA FIGURES

Figure 1a Landscape character – west

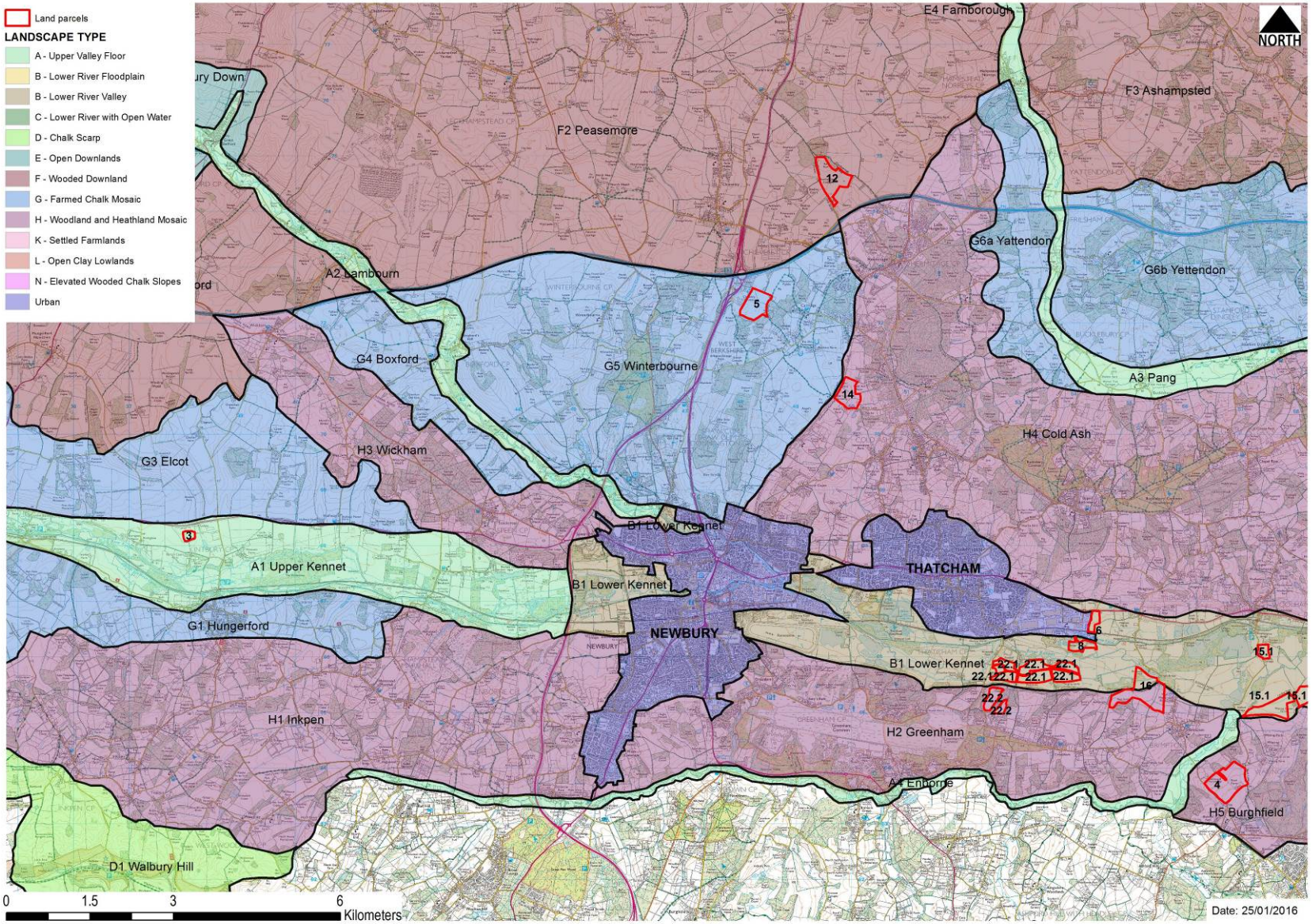

Figure 1b Landscape character – east

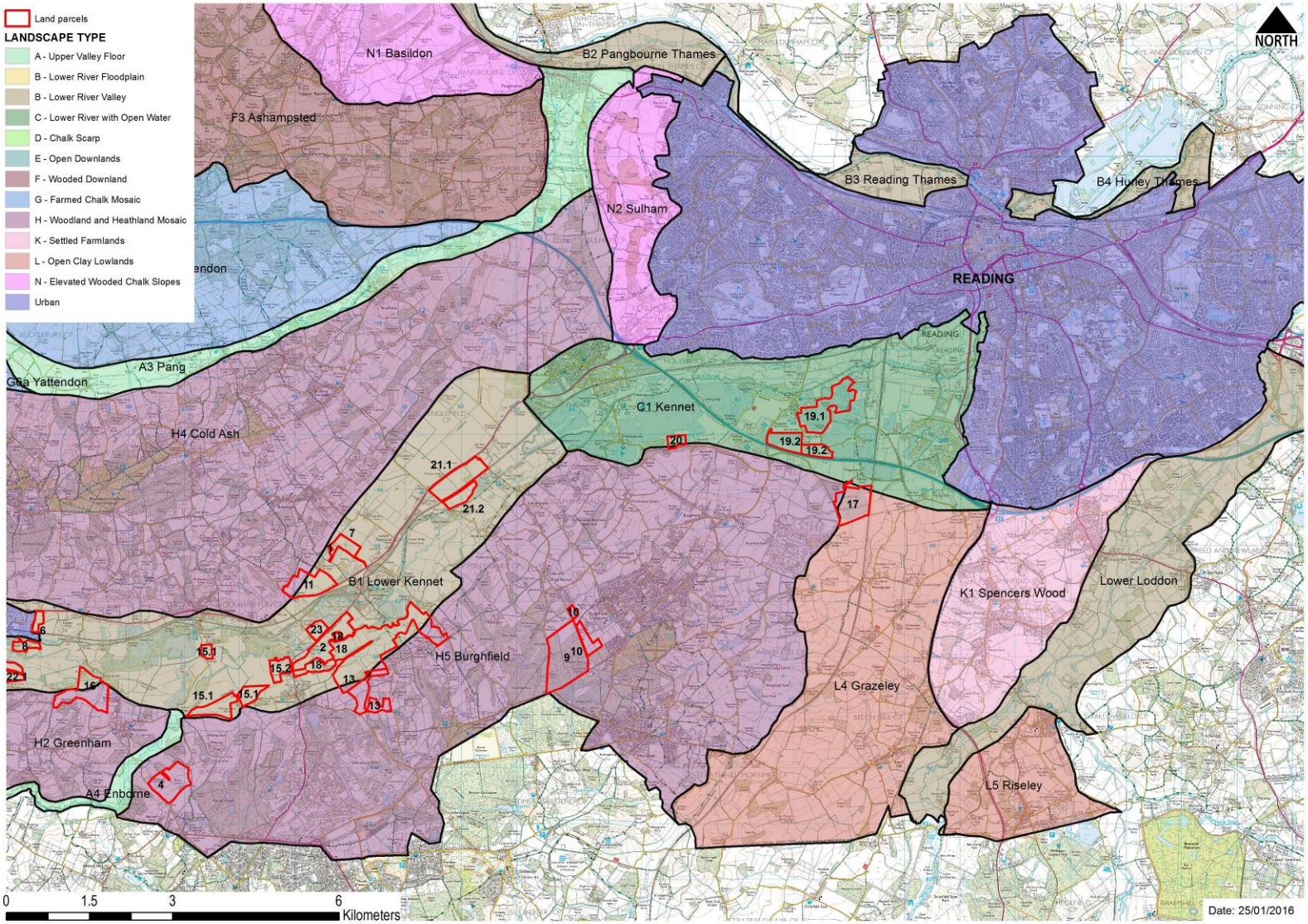

Figure 2a topography – west

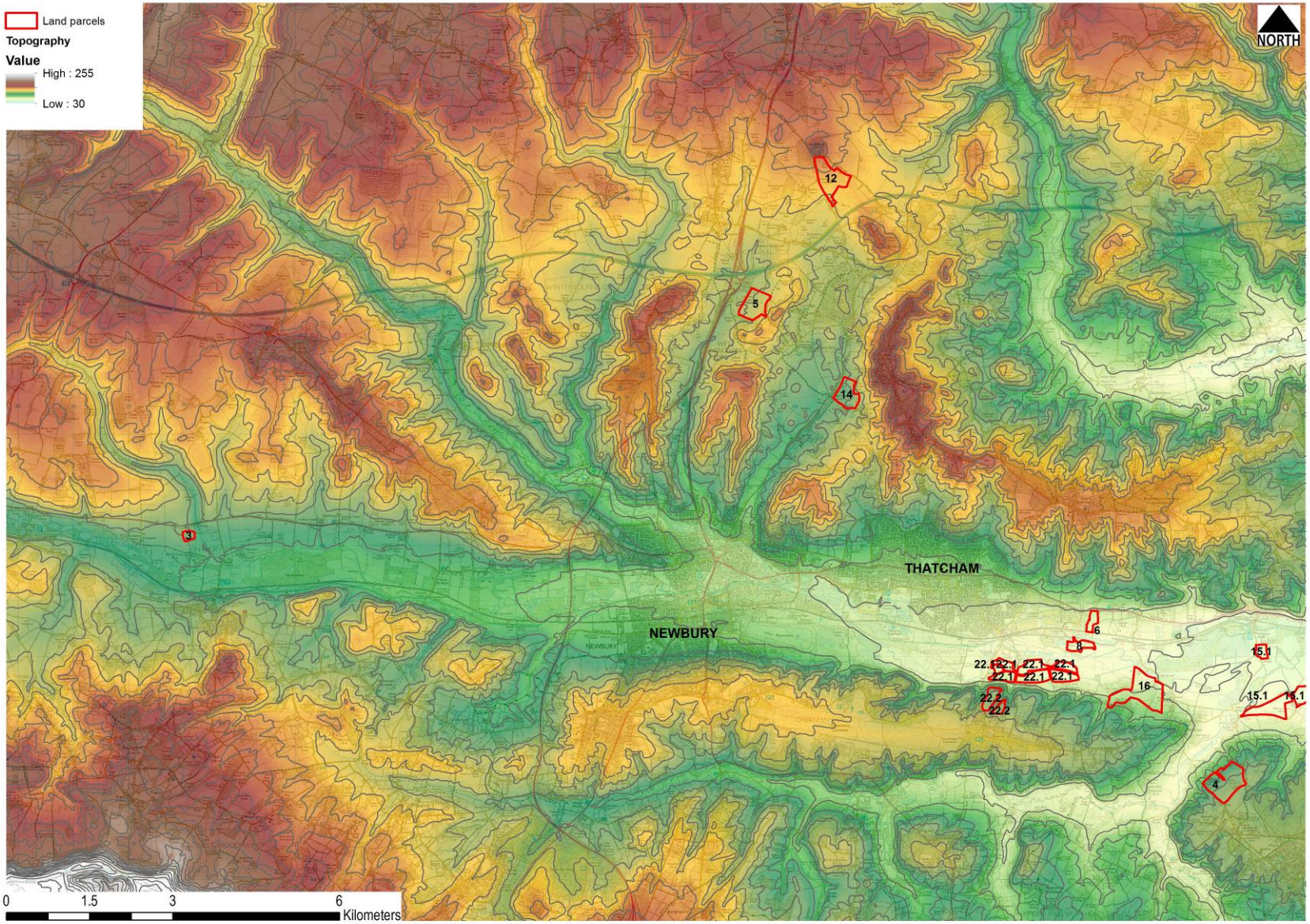

Figure 2b topography – east

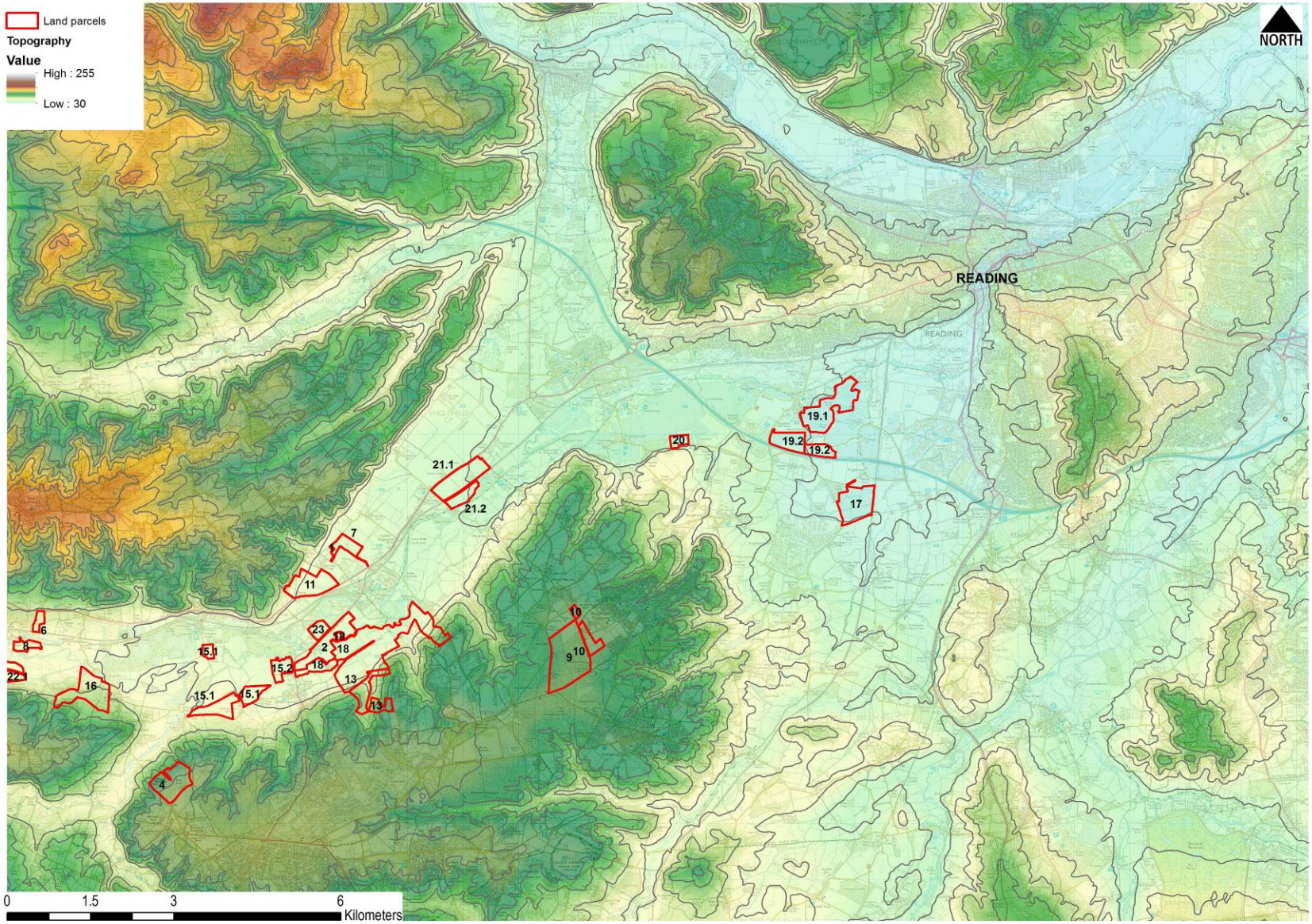

Figure 3a AONB – west

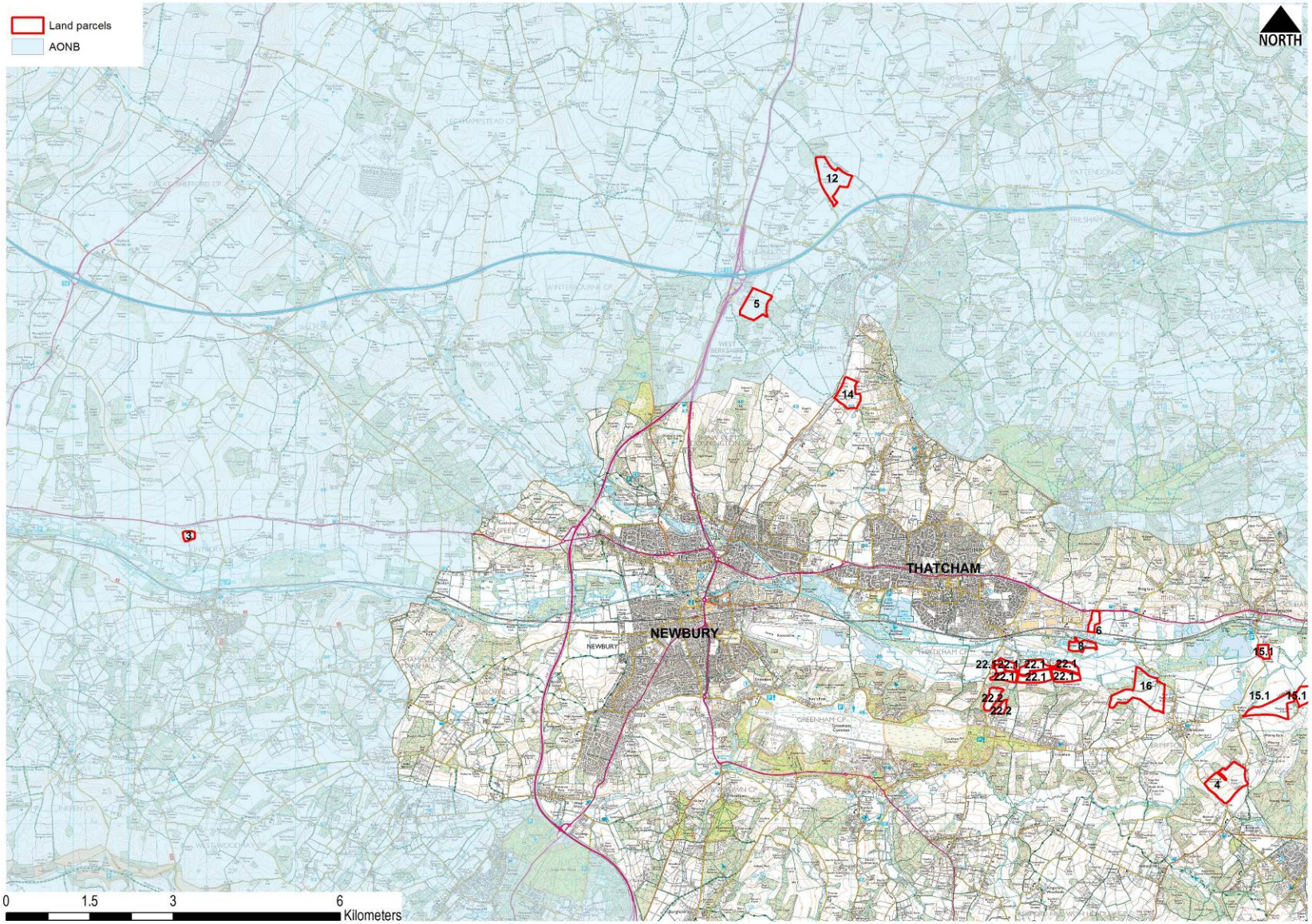

Figure 3b AONB – east

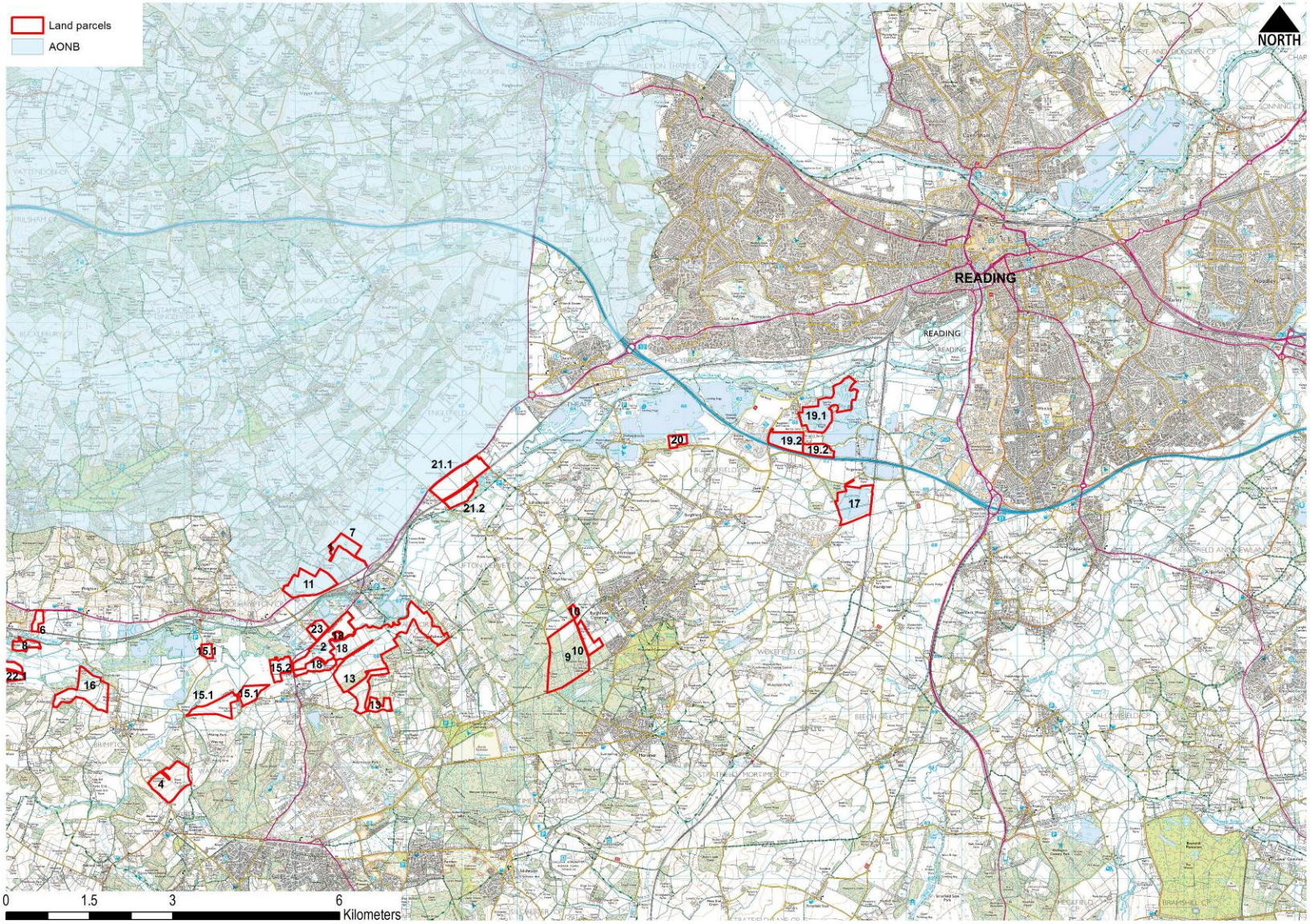

Figure 4a Biodiversity – west

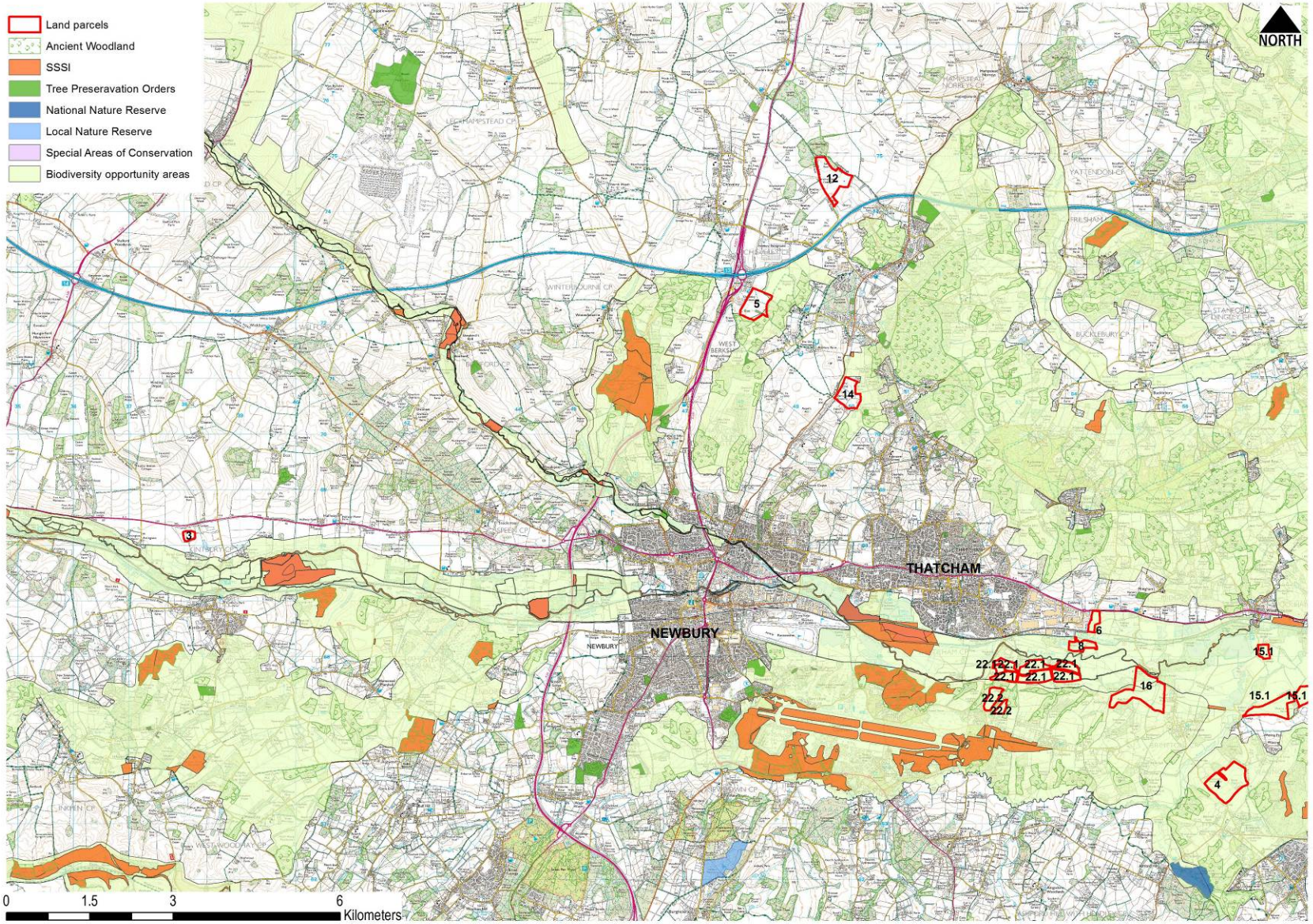

Figure 4b Biodiversity – east

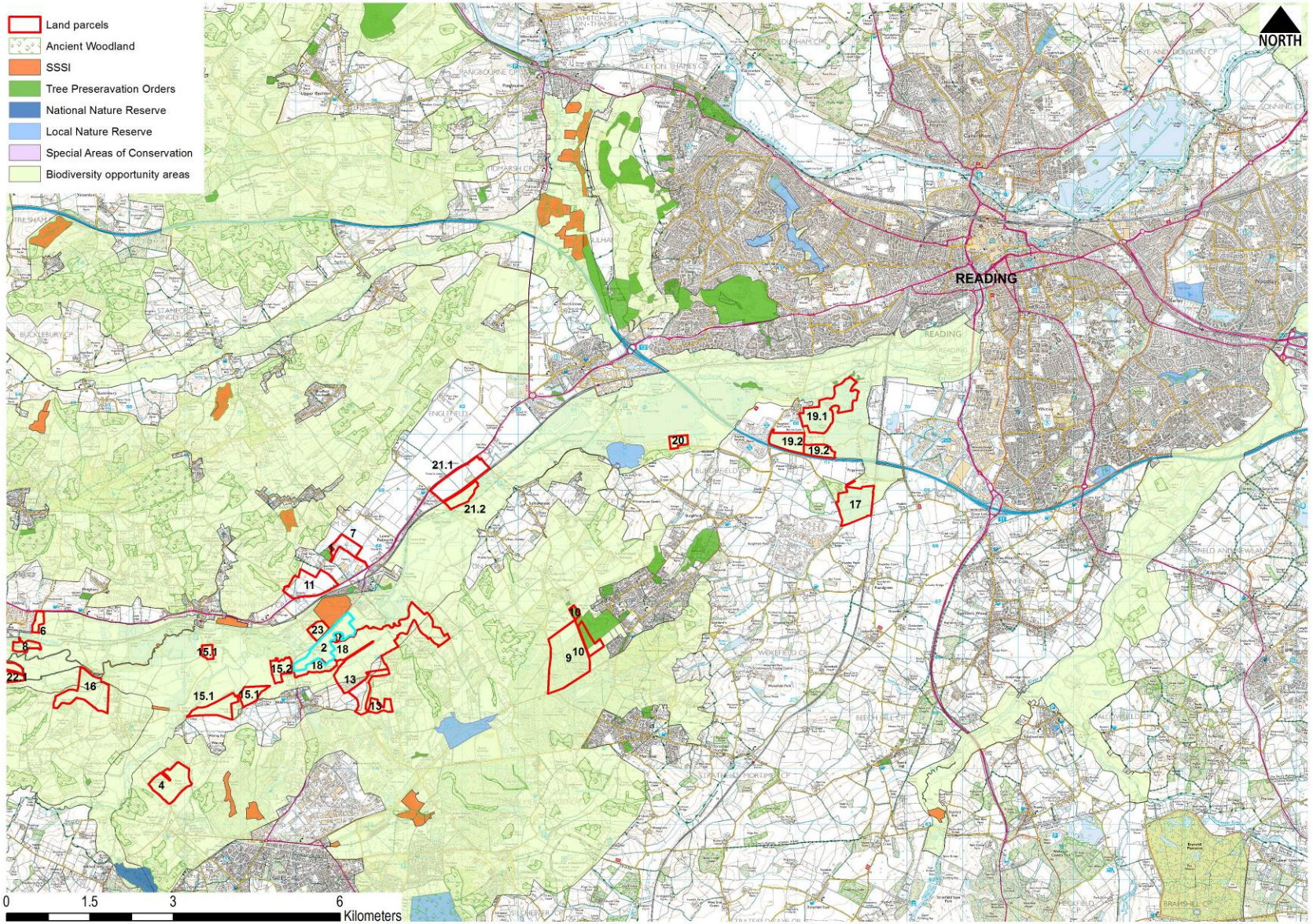

Figure 5a Heritage – west

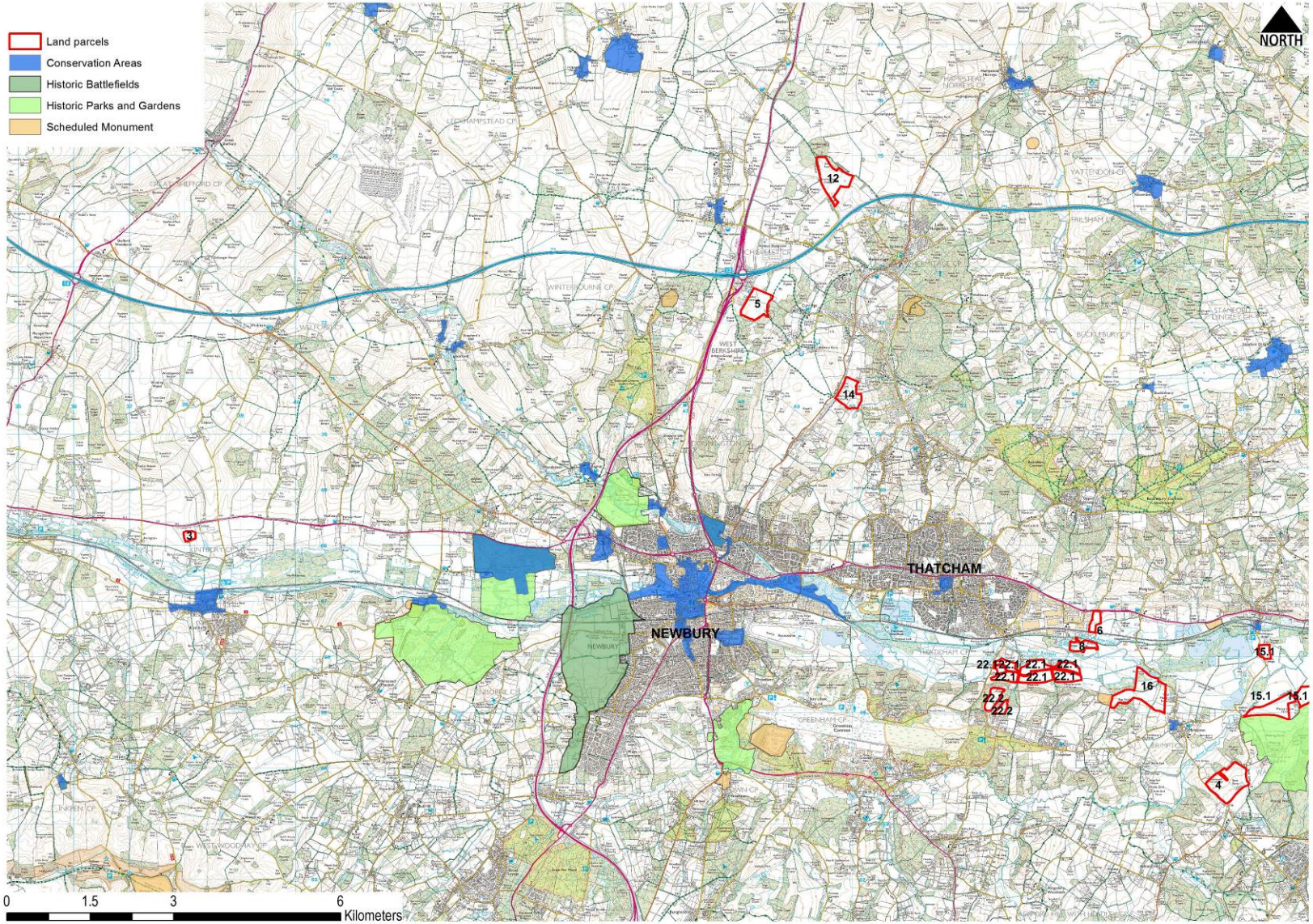

Figure 5b Heritage – east

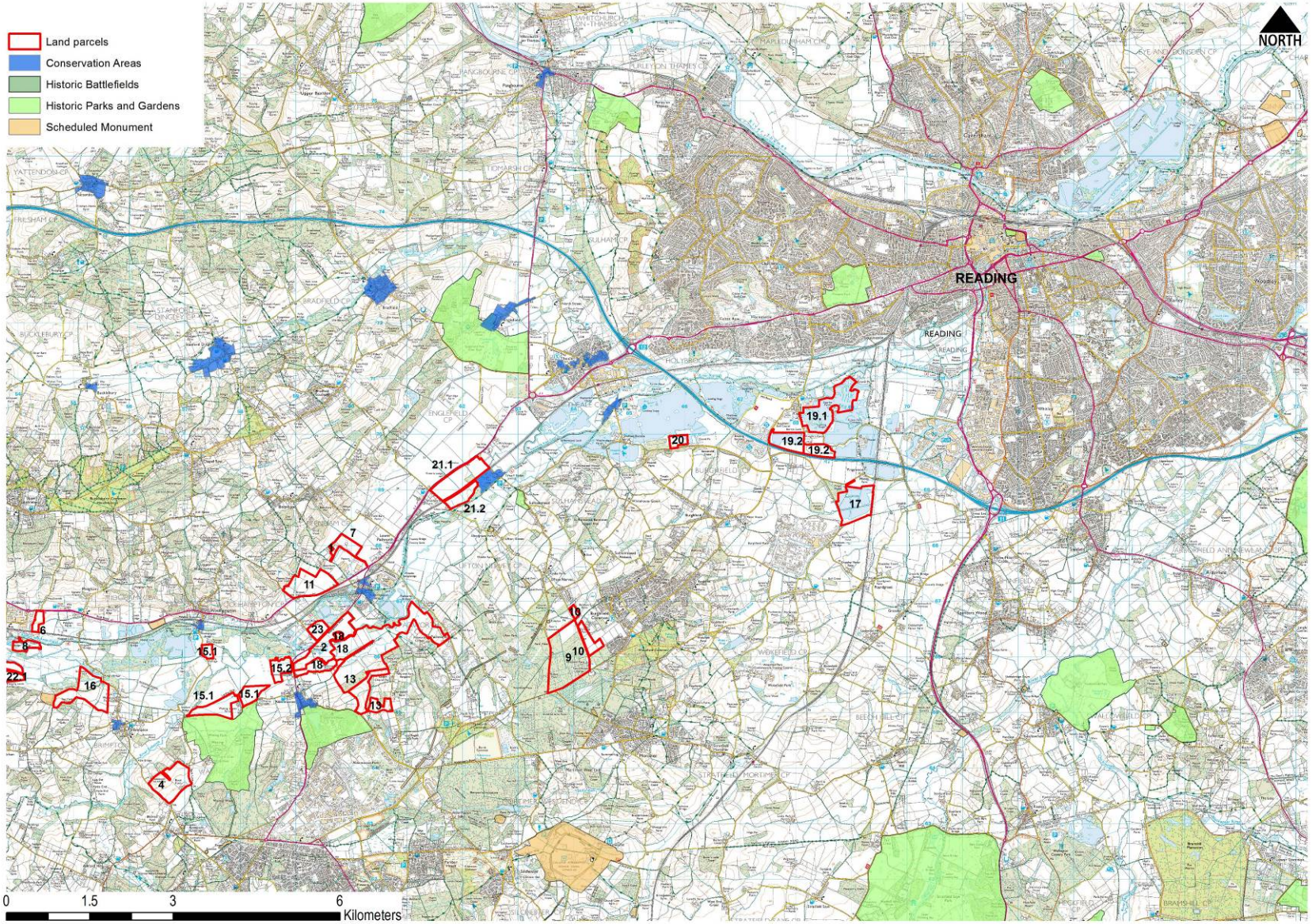

Figure 6a Recreation – west

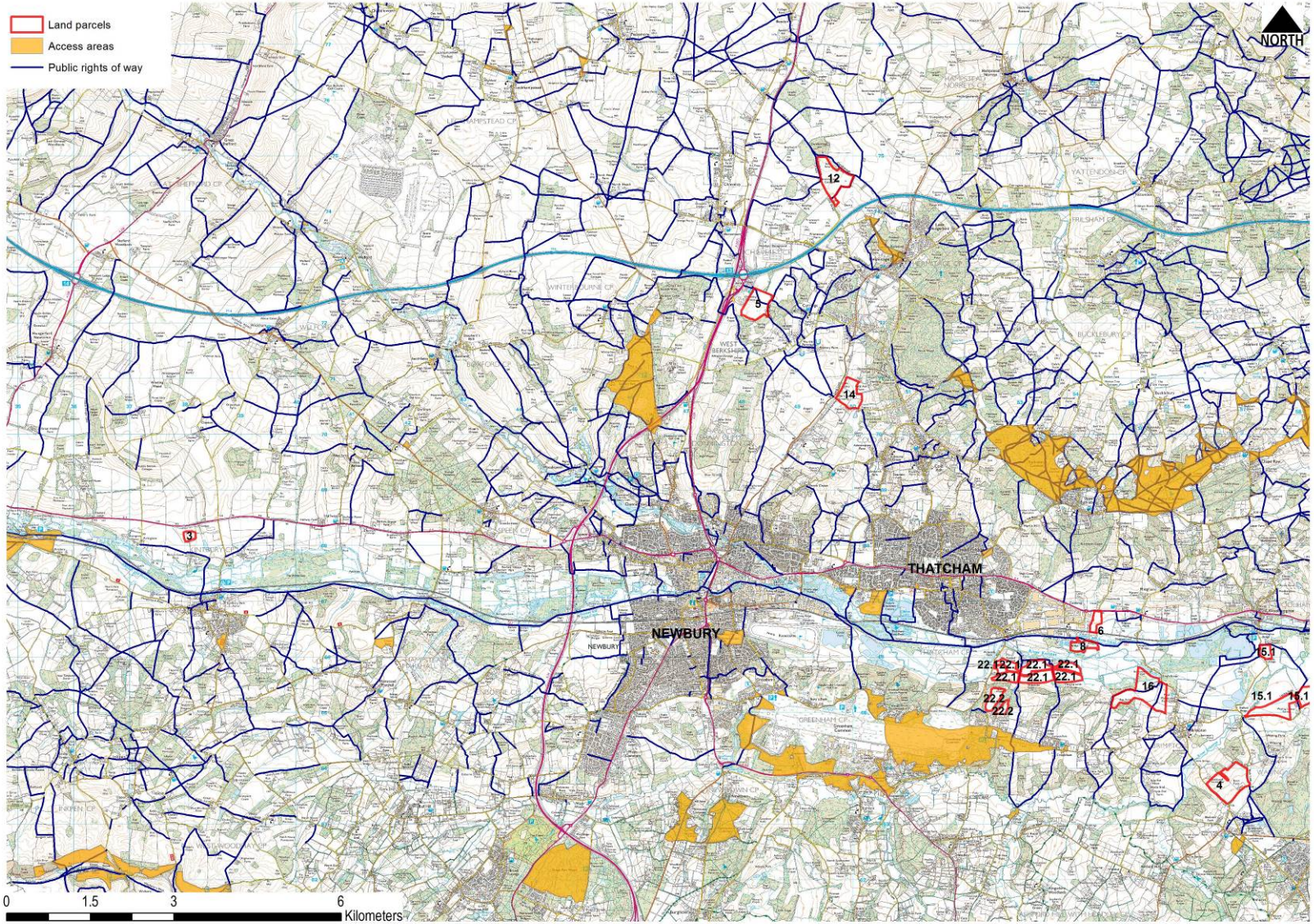

Figure 6b Recreation – east