



South East Strategic Reservoir Option
Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Appendix 9.2 - Preliminary assessment of effects on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Date: October 2025

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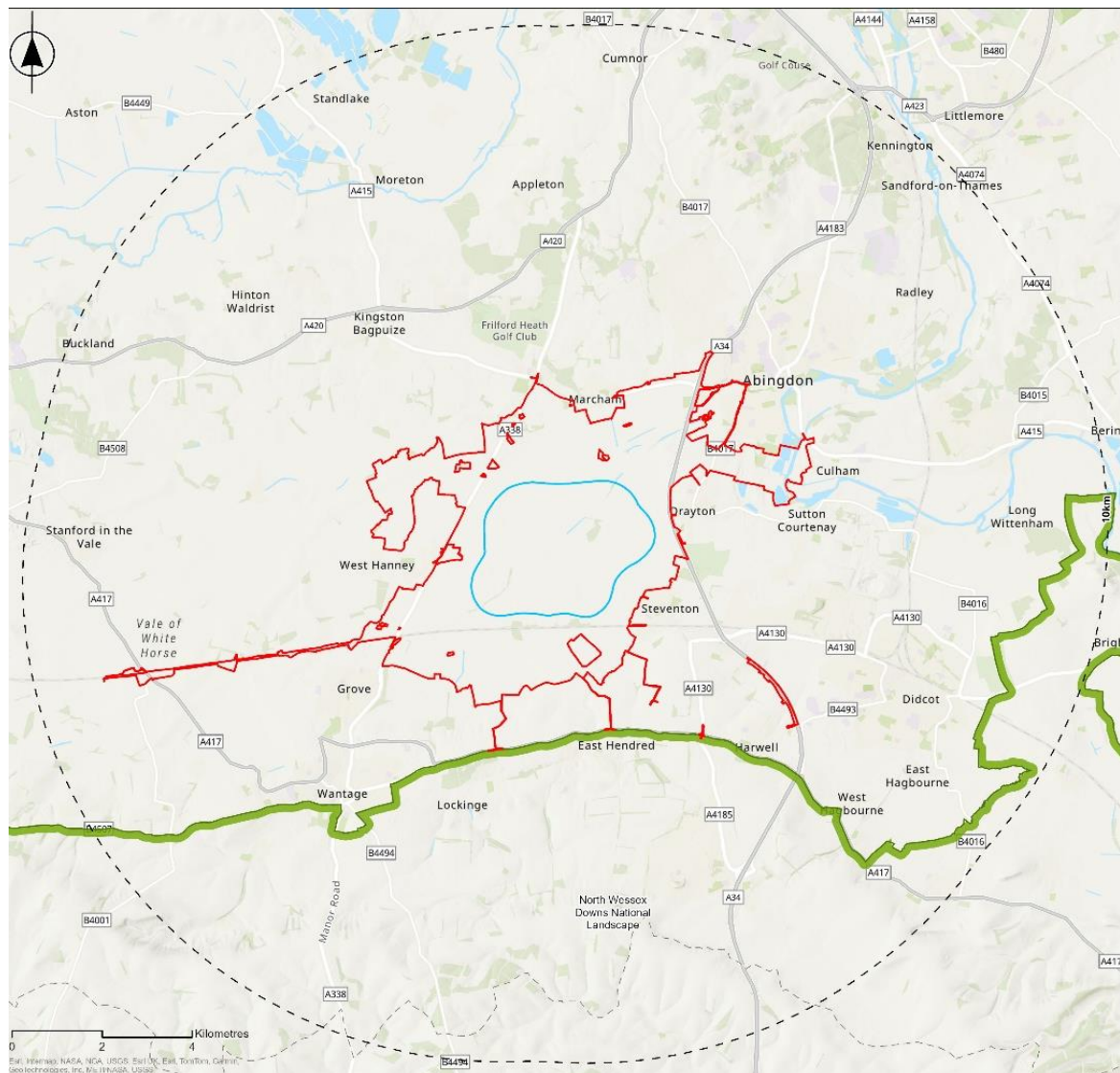
1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix to Chapter 9: Landscape and visual of the Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report, sets out a preliminary assessment of effects on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (hereafter referred to as the 'National Landscape') including its special qualities and, where relevant, sets out how these effects will be mitigated, having regard to the statutory purpose of the designation. It provides further detail on the assessment of effects on landscape and views in relation to the National Landscape and its setting, set out in Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual and Appendix 9.5: Preliminary assessment of effects for Landscape and Visual.
- 1.1.2 This appendix builds on the broad approach set out in the document, Supporting Document C4 - Outline Strategy for Addressing Potential Effects on the North Wessex Downs (Thames Water, 2025), i.e. a technical supporting document for the SESRO SRO Gate 3 submission to the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID).
- 1.1.3 Section 6 of this appendix sets out the approach to be taken by the Project to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape in accordance with the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act, 2023 (LURA). The LURA 2023 places a duty on relevant authorities to 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area'. Any relevant authority must take all reasonable steps to explore how the statutory purposes of protected landscapes can be furthered. Relevant authorities for the Project include Natural England (NE), North Wessex Downs National Landscape and Thames Water.
- 1.1.4 Due to the recent nature of the LURA 2023 requirements, there are limited precedents at the time of writing that demonstrate how a development should seek to further the purpose of a designated landscape. Two projects which affect National Landscapes and were required to meet this new requirement have been granted DCOs in 2025 - these are the Lower Thames Crossing, and the expansion of Luton Airport.
- 1.1.5 Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes (Defra, 2024) was published 16 December 2024. This requires relevant authorities to 'take appropriate, reasonable, and proportionate steps to explore measures which further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes'... 'where reasonably practical and operationally feasible'.
- 1.1.6 For SESRO, the assessment and the approach to seeking to further the purposes of the National Landscape, and to assessing effects upon it, will be developed further for the Environmental Statement (ES), building from the content of this appendix, whilst responding to any further emerging guidance, practice and precedents, and continuing to engage with stakeholders through the Project's Landscape and visual Technical Liaison Group (TLG).
- 1.1.7 Plate 1.1 shows the relationship between the National Landscape and the study area, including the proposed reservoir location and the draft Order limits.
- 1.1.8 The Project lies almost entirely outside of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. There are three locations - at Ardington, East Hendred and Rowstock, where potential offsite minor or temporary highways works and access rights for construction bring the

draft Order limits close to (and in Rowstock slightly into) the boundary of the National Landscape. At Rowstock the temporary works for construction vehicle access would be within the highway boundary and the other locations are for temporary access rights on roads during construction.

- 1.1.9 With the exceptions of these highways works and access rights the draft Order limits are, at their nearest, approximately 1 kilometre (km) from the National Landscape. The area within the draft Order limits south of the railway would be for proposed species relocation works. The components of the Project which may affect the National Landscape are described within Chapter 2: Project description, and Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual, of the PEI Report. The main aspects of the Project most likely to cause effects on the National Landscape are the size and scale of the proposed reservoir, its raised embankments and associated major infrastructure. The proposed reservoir embankment toe would be approximately 2.5km from the National Landscape at its nearest point.
- 1.1.10 The Project has followed a landscape-led approach and has been designed to avoid effects on the National Landscape and its setting as far as practicable.
- 1.1.11 This appendix should be read in conjunction with:
- Chapter 9: Landscape and visual
 - Appendix 9.1: Project-level landscape character assessment
 - Appendix 9.3: Visual baseline
 - Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations
 - Appendix 9.5: Preliminary assessment of effects for Landscape and Visual
 - Figure 9.1: Landscape and visual study area
 - Figure 9.2: Landscape designations and key constraints
 - Figure 9.3: Landscape character areas
 - Figure 9.4: Reservoir ZTV (bare earth / DTM)
 - Figure 9.5: Reservoir ZTV (screening / DSM)
 - Figure 9.6: Reservoir ZTV heatmap (screening / DSM)
 - Figure 9.11: Viewpoint and photomontage locations (with ZTV)
 - Figure 9.12: Dark skies and light Pollution
 - Figure 9.13: CPRE tranquillity mapping

Plate 1.1 North Wessex Downs National Landscape



Guidance

1.1.12 The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out in Chapter 9: Landscape and visual. In the absence of formal guidance for assessing the effects of a development on the special qualities of a National Landscape in England, the following guidance has been consulted to inform the assessment:

- Special Landscape Qualities – Guidance on assessing effects (NatureScot, January 2025)
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), 2013) (GLVIA3)
- Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) LITGN-2024-01¹

¹ Specifically clarifications 5(12) and 5(13)

2 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape

- 2.1.1 The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (North Wessex Downs AONB, 2019) describes the North Wessex Downs as, “...a visibly ancient landscape of great beauty, diversity and size. It embraces the high, open arable sweeps of the chalk downs and dramatic scarp slopes with their prehistoric monuments and beech knolls, the moulded dip slopes, sheltered chalk river valleys, intimate and secluded wooded areas and low-lying heaths with a rich mosaic of woodland, pasture, heath and commons. The North Wessex Downs AONB forms a surprisingly remote, expansive and tranquil landscape in the heart of Southern England.”

2.2 Statutory purpose

- 2.2.1 The North Wessex Downs is designated as a National Landscape under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Its primary purpose is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, which encompasses wildlife, geology, landforms, and cultural heritage, shaped by the evolving relationship between people and place. The North Wessex Downs Management Plan describes that the primary purpose of the designation, as set out in paragraph 1.10 of the CROW Act 2000 is:

“conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area”. The Act elaborates on this primary purpose, stating that any reference “to the conservation of natural beauty of an area includes a reference to the conservation of its flora, fauna and geological and physiographic features”.

- 2.2.2 The Management Plan continues:

‘Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs is a function of the relationship between people and place over time. It encompasses everything that makes the area distinctive: the area’s geology and landform; its climate, soils and rivers; its wildlife and ecology; its rich history of human settlement and land use over millennia; its archaeology and buildings, and cultural associations; and the people who have occupied the area in the past and those who live and work here now.’

2.3 Special qualities of the North Wessex Downs

- 2.3.1 To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs, it is necessary to understand the area’s ‘special qualities’, i.e. the term used in national policy to describe the key characteristics and features that make a National Landscape distinctive and valued. These qualities are identified through landscape character assessments, stakeholder engagement, and planning policy, and they form the foundation for management priorities and decisions

2.3.2 The special qualities of the North Wessex Downs are described in the North Wessex Downs Management Plan. The special qualities are set out under eight overarching themes:

- a) Landscape
- b) Rural land management
- c) Biodiversity
- d) Historic environment
- e) Natural resources
- f) Developments
- g) Communities
- h) Tourism, leisure and access

2.3.3 Table 2.1 below provides an indication of how the overarching themes relate to the special qualities, using examples of (paraphrased) typical special qualities associated with each theme.

Table 2.1 List of overarching themes and typical associated special qualities

Theme	Examples of associated typical special qualities
a) Landscape	Rolling chalk downland with long, uninterrupted views; prominent escarpments; dry valleys and coombes; areas of remote and tranquil character; distinctive ridgelines.
b) Rural Land Management	Traditional mixed farming systems; well-preserved ancient field patterns; hedgerows, orchards, and small woodlands; diverse land management practices sustaining biodiversity.
c) Biodiversity	Species-rich chalk grasslands; ancient woodlands; rare and protected species including orchids, farmland birds, and insects; chalk stream ecosystems and wetlands.
d) Historic Environment	Archaeological features including hillforts, barrows, Roman roads, and ancient trackways; historic villages and farmsteads; the cultural and historical landscape shaped by millennia of settlement and land use.
e) Natural Resources	Chalk aquifers; fertile soils supporting agriculture; sarsen stones and flint; clean water resources; natural features like springs and rivers contributing to the landscape's ecological richness.
f) Developments	Settlement patterns reflecting historical development; integration of built environment with landscape; traditional building materials such as flint, brick, and thatch; visual and environmental sensitivity to new developments.
g) Communities	Strong local heritage and identity; community-driven land stewardship; farming traditions and cultural activities; local knowledge of the landscape; close-knit rural communities.
h) Tourism, Leisure & Access	National Trails (e.g. The Ridgeway); extensive network of public rights of way; recreational opportunities including walking, cycling, and nature watching; rich cultural and literary heritage attracting visitors.

- 2.3.4 The special qualities considered in detail here have been reviewed and refined to those special qualities considered most relevant to the study area and the potential effects of the Project. The relevant special qualities have been discussed with key stakeholders through the Landscape and visual Technical Liaison Group (TLG). The relevant special qualities which have been scoped into the assessment are set out in Table 2.2 below. The rationale for the scoping out of the other special qualities, which were considered not relevant to the study area and/or the potential effects of the Project, has been summarised in Annex A: Special Qualities Scoped Out of the Assessment.

Table 2.2 Relevant special qualities identified in relation to the Project

Number (for the purposes of this report)	Relevant special qualities	Theme
1	<i>The distinctive northern Downs Plain and Scarp plunges down from the chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognizable horizon</i>	Landscape
2	<i>The sense of remoteness and tranquillity that comes from an undeveloped and rural quality with only limited human intervention, containing typically modest villages with distinctive and ancient settlement patterns:</i> • <i>...In the Downs Plain and Scarp character area, attractive springline villages cluster along the base of the northern ridge or along the valley of Avebury Plain. 20th-century military installations, including Wroughton Airfield and a First World War camp near Draycot Foliat, are dominant and defining features of the area</i>	Development
3	<i>An extensive rights of way network offering many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside away from crowds, by ramblers, cyclists, and horse-riders, including the Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails, access land, commons, and accessible woodland</i>	Tourism, Leisure & Access

2.4 Context for the assessment

Relevant information which underpins the special qualities

- 2.4.1 The following documents and studies have been referred to in understanding and interpreting the special qualities:
- North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024
 - North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2002)
 - Landscape Character Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (LUC, 2024)
 - Tranquillity Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (LUC, 2024)
 - Lighting Design Guidance for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, 2024)
 - Dark Skies/ Light Impact Assessment Methodology Report for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (LUC, 2024)

- North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement: Dark Skies & Artificial Light (2021)
- Project-level landscape character assessment (Appendix 9.1: Project-level landscape character assessment)
- Views and visual amenity baseline (Chapter 9: Landscape and visual, and Appendix 9.3: Visual baseline)

2.4.2 The written information and reports have been supported by site visits, map data and consultation with the Landscape and visual TLG.

2.4.3 Understanding of the special qualities and potential effects resulting from the Project has also been informed by reference to the LVIA viewpoints (VPs) listed in Table 2.3. These VPs are mapped in Figure 9.11: Viewpoint and photomontage locations (with ZTV). Baseline photographs with the extents of the proposed reservoir embankments overlaid are provided from each of the viewpoints in Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations.

Table 2.3 Viewpoints relevant to the National Landscape

Viewpoints within the National Landscape	
Viewpoint (VP) number	Location
1	Ridgeway National Trail (east) - West Ilsley car park
2	Ridgeway National Trail (south) - East Ginge Down
3	Ridgeway National Trail (south) - Lord Wantage Monument
4	Furzewick Down
5	Segsbury Camp
6	Ridgeway National Trail (west) - Gramp's Hill
7	Devil's Punchbowl
8	Public right of way south of Ardington
9	Public right of way south of East and West Hendred
10	Vale Way at West Hendred
11	Public right of way on Ardington Lane
22	Wittenham Clumps
54	National Cycle Network route 544 east of Wantage
Viewpoints looking towards the National Landscape	
29	Public right of ways west of Drayton
30	Public right of ways north-west of Drayton
33	Public right of way near Marcham Mill
34	Marcham Road, on the eastern edge of Marcham
35	Southern edge of Shippon
36	Oxford Green Belt Way at Boars Hill

37	Public right of ways south-west of Marcham
39	Public right of way south-east of Garford
41	South Oxfordshire Crematorium
55	Public right of way south of Fyfield
56	Public right of way at Gozzard's Ford
57	Public right of way within the reservoir site
59	Proposed crest walk

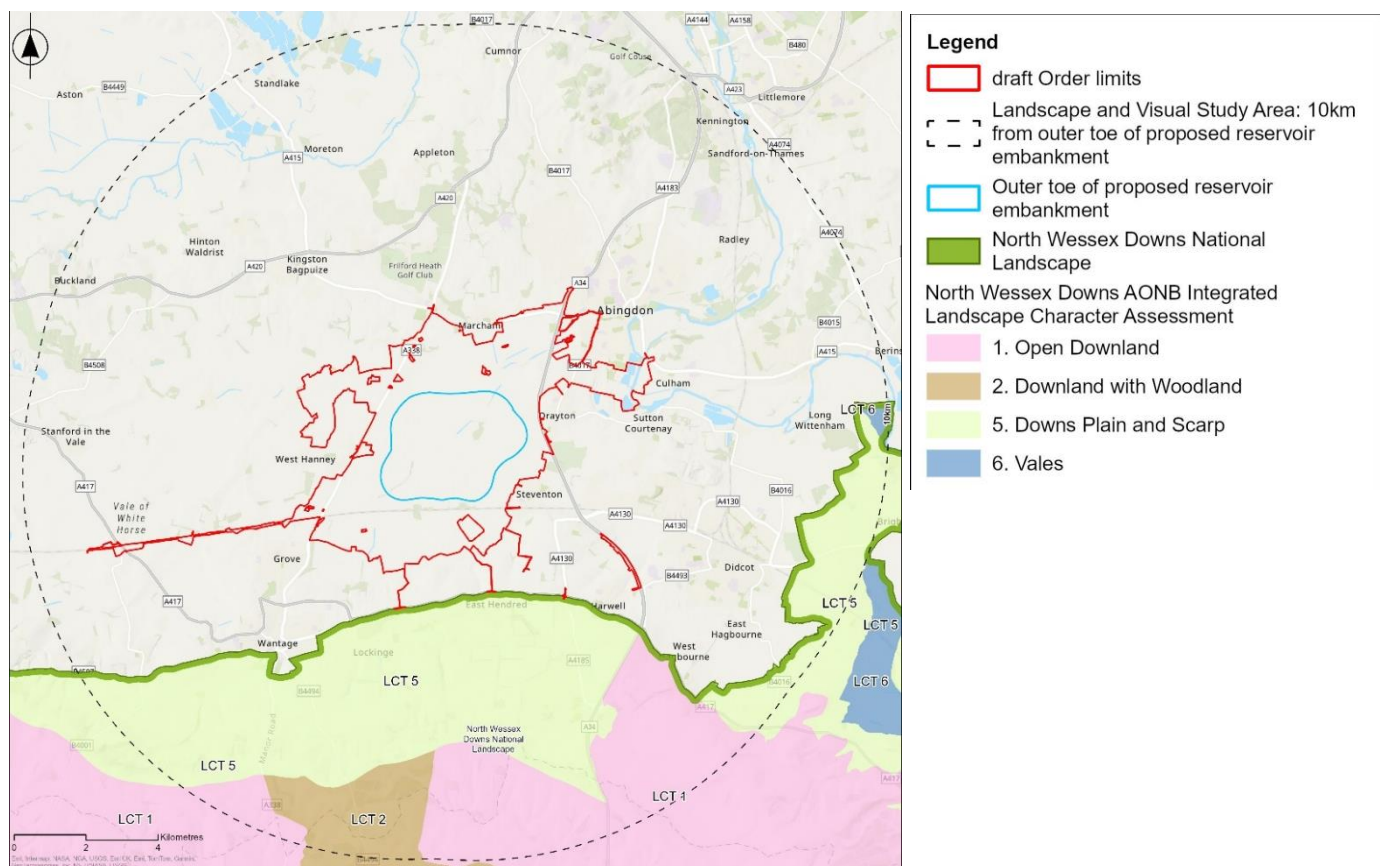
The study area

- 2.4.4 The study area is the same as for Chapter 9: Landscape and visual (i.e. a 10km radius from the outer toe of the proposed reservoir embankment) and shown on Figure 9.1: Landscape and visual study area. The study area for consideration of effects on the National Landscape includes the area within the designated landscape as well as its setting.

Character of the North Wessex Downs within the study area

- 2.4.5 A key feature of the North Wessex Downs within the study area is the chalk Downs Plain and Scarp in the south of the study area, which forms a distinctive backdrop to views from the north, beyond the boundary of the National Landscape (within the Vale of White Horse). There are four landscape character types (LCTs) described in the North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment which fall within the study area. These are summarised below in relation to the Project and illustrated on Plate 2.1.

Plate 2.1 North Wessex Downs character types within the study area



Open Downland (LCT 1)

- 2.4.6 The Open Downland is an elevated plateau of hard middle and upper chalks. It is a remote, tranquil landscape of panoramic views across the downland. Within the study area there are only very small parts of this character type in the south of the study area, and extremely little intervisibility with the Project indicated by the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV). (Note, Chapter 9: Landscape and visual lists and includes a series of ZTV figures, of which Figure 9.5: Reservoir ZTV (screening / DSM) is of greatest relevance to this assessment of effects on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape). The character and its influence on the special qualities is therefore not likely to be materially affected by the Project and it is not considered further in the assessment.

Downland with Woodland (LCT 2)

- 2.4.7 Downland with Woodland occurs in a small stretch between the two areas of Open Downland in the south of the study area, characterised by a greater degree of woodland cover. Extremely little intervisibility with the Project is indicated by the ZTV. The character and its influence on the special qualities is therefore not likely to be materially affected by the Project and it is not considered further in the assessment.

Downs Plain and Scarp (LCT 5)

- 2.4.8 The Downs Plain and Scarp is the character area most likely to be affected by the Project. It forms the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs, and at its nearest point (the

Hendred Plain) lies approximately 2.5km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe. The Downs Plain and Scarp is formed by the eroded surface of lower chalk, extending as a wide ledge at the foot of the scarp and Open Downland. The distinctive Scarp plunges down to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognisable horizon when viewed from the north. The Ridgeway National Trail runs along the top of the Scarp. The Scarp is a narrow steep landform with some areas of woodland but very little settlement; whereas the Plain is characterised by distinctive spring line villages and Harwell Science Campus, watercourses draining south into the River Ock, and a more enclosed character – refer to Figure 9.1: Landscape and visual study area which shows the general features within the study area.

2.4.9 The relevant project-level character areas related to LCT 5 are:

- LCA 1A Wessex Downs Open Chalk Escarpment and Upper Slopes
- LCA 6A Wessex Downs Chalk Escarpment Foothills
- LCA 10A Sinodun Lower Vale Hills.

2.4.10 In the far eastern part of the study area, the Moreton Plain forms a northern extension to the National Landscape, extending out to the River Thames. It includes chalk outliers such as the distinctive Wittenham Clumps (also known as the Sinodun Hills), although their scale is reduced compared to the more dramatic scarp and downs landscapes to the south. Despite their distance from the Site, due to their elevation the more elevated landscapes around the Wittenham Clumps may be affected by the Project and are therefore included in the assessment. However, the lower lying landscape east of Didcot would have very limited intervisibility with the Project as indicated by the ZTV. The character and its influence on the special qualities is therefore not likely to be materially affected by the Project and it is not considered further in the assessment.

Vales (LCT 6)

2.4.11 Only very small parts of the North Wessex Downs Vales landscape lie within the study area, which includes parts of the Thames Floodplain in the far eastern part of the study area. There is extremely little intervisibility with the Project as indicated by the ZTV. This character type and its influence on the special qualities is therefore not likely to be materially affected by the Project and it is not considered further in the assessment.

Setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape within the study area

2.4.12 The North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Setting (North Wessex Downs AONB, 2019) gives an overview of the considerations needed when planning and designing developments within the setting of the National Landscape. There is no defined boundary for the setting, but it is described as:

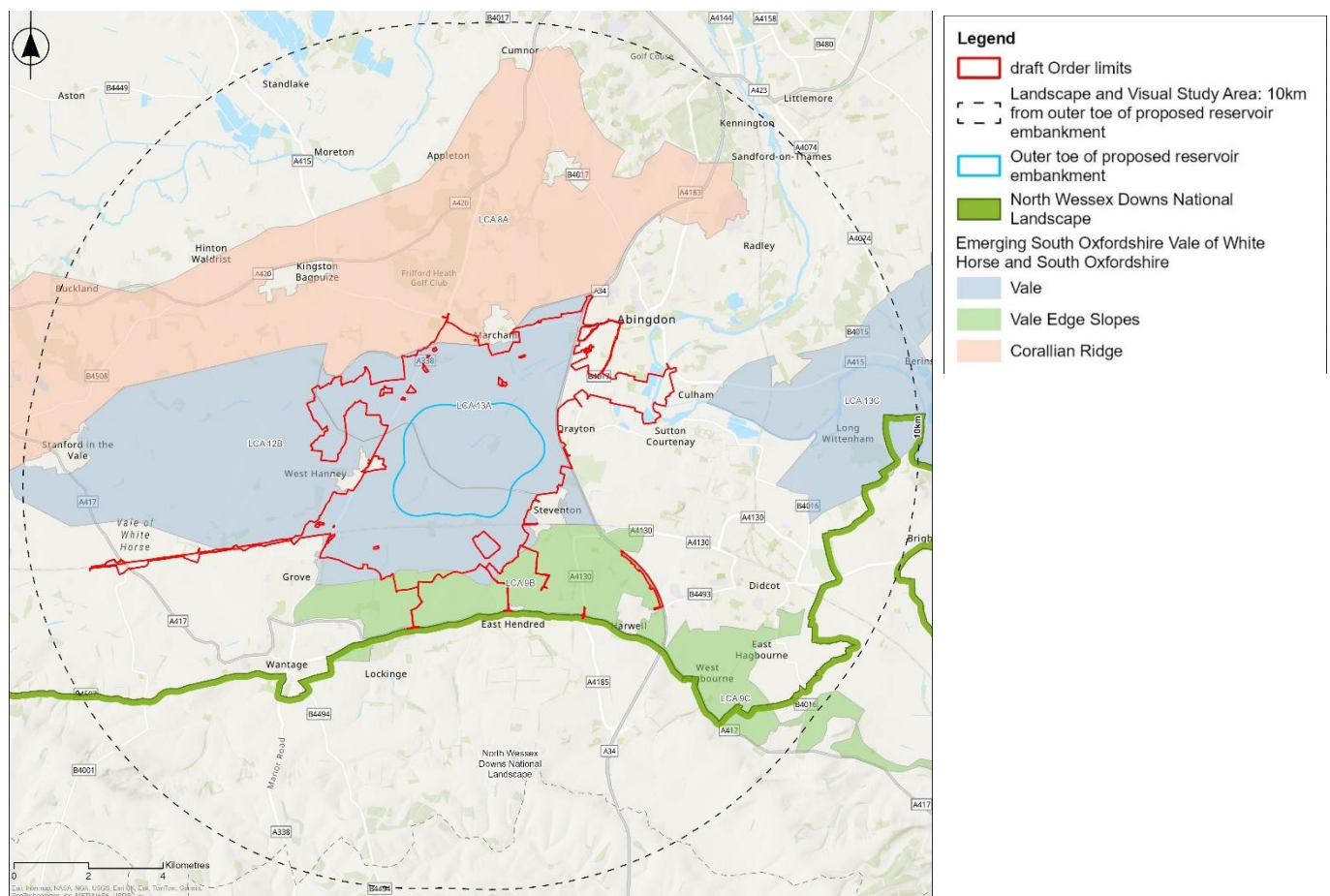
‘[3] the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design can be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

[4] The surroundings of the North Wessex Downs AONB and the protected landscape of the AONB add value to each other as the landscape and landforms link visually and functionally, joining the surroundings to the AONB. Proposals for change in the setting

should, therefore, have regard to the inter-relationship with the AONB and the landscape character and special qualities.'

- 2.4.13 The setting of a protected landscape is not a designation (or a receptor) in its own right. However, changes within the setting may affect the designated landscape in terms of effects on its special qualities. Therefore, the landscape outside the boundary of the National Landscape has also been considered in the assessment of effects on the National Landscape, with reference to the project-level character areas considered to fall within its setting.
- 2.4.14 The project-level character areas within the setting are included as landscape receptors and effects upon them are assessed within Chapter 9: Landscape and visual. The broad landscape character types within which the character areas sit, are illustrated in Plate 2.2 and summarised below. These types align with the landscape character types set out in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2024). Further detail is provided in Appendix 9.1: Project-level landscape character assessment.
- 2.4.15 The assessment of special qualities in Section 3 includes references to the key characteristics of the landscapes within the setting of the North Wessex Downs, and whether changes would affect the special qualities.

Plate 2.2 Project-level landscape character: overview of broad character types



The vale

2.4.16 The flat vale landscape forms a significant part of the wider setting to the north of the North Wessex Downs. There is intervisibility between the vale and the North Wessex Downs, with the scarp and footslopes providing a dramatic and recognisable backdrop to the vale. The relevant project-level character areas are:

- LCA 12B Western Middle Vale
- LCA 13A Ock Lower Vale
- LCA 13C East Thames Lower Vale.

Vale edge slopes

2.4.17 The gently sloping Vale edge slopes provide part of the immediate northern setting to the North Wessex Downs, and a transition between the high downs and the clay vale lowlands. The open farmland character and pattern of distinct spring line settlements within this landscape contributes positively to the setting of the North Wessex Downs. The slopes are visible in some near views as well as longer views from the downs. The relevant project-level character areas are:

- LCA 9B Wantage to Didcot Vale Edge Slopes
- LCA 9C Milton Hill to Didcot Vale Edge Slopes.

Corallian Limestone Ridge

- 2.4.18 The Corallian Limestone Ridge (also known as the Midvale Ridge) is a distinctive landform in the north of the study area, which forms part of the wider setting to the North Wessex Downs. Particular characteristics relevant to the National Landscape are its existing undeveloped character which forms a backdrop to views and the prominence of the landform in long distance views from the scarp slopes of the North Wessex Downs. The relevant project-level character areas are:
- LCA 8A Faringdon to Frilford Ridge Slope
 - LCA 8B Frilford to Sandford Ridge Slope
 - LCA 8C Cumnor to Abingdon Ridge Slope.

Views relating to the North Wessex Downs in the context of the Project

- 2.4.19 The key aspects relating to views in and around the National Landscape in the study area relate to:
- a) the views from within the Vale of White Horse (towards the south), of the scarp of the North Wessex Downs, as well as views towards the scarp from some parts of the Corallian Limestone Ridge
 - b) the panoramic views north from the top of the scarp of the North Wessex Downs towards the vale and Corallian Limestone Ridge.
- 2.4.20 The visual environment is described in more detail and effects on visual receptors are assessed in Chapter 9: Landscape and visual and Appendix 9.3: Visual baseline. Baseline photographs are provided in Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations. A summary relating to the different types of views in the context of the National Landscape and the Project, is provided below.

Views towards the North Wessex Downs

- 2.4.21 The special qualities note that the scarp of the northern edge of the North Wessex Downs forms a dramatic and recognisable horizon which is frequently visible from the vale, including in the vicinity of the Site (see Plate 2.3). Occasionally, trees and vegetation block or screen views from within the vale, but the backdrop of the North Wessex Downs provides a recognisable sense of place for local people living in the surrounding villages and towns including East and West Hanney, Steventon, Didcot, Marcham and Abingdon, and using the various public rights of way in the area including the Vale Way. The rolling Plain (or footslopes) of the scarp are also a prominent feature below the scarp in these views (refer to VPs 29, 30, 33, 34, 37, 39, 41, 57 in Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations which show views towards the National Landscape from within the vale).

Plate 2.3 Site photography from visualisation viewpoint (VP 33) near Marcham Mill



2.4.22 From the Corallian Limestone Ridge the scarp of the North Wessex Downs forms a much more distant backdrop. Whilst still a noticeable feature in views, intervening vegetation often partially filters and screens views towards the National Landscape (refer to VPs 35, 36, 55, 56 in Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations which show views towards the National Landscape from the Corallian Limestone Ridge).

Views from the North Wessex Downs

2.4.23 Views from the top of the scarp of the North Wessex Downs are an important characteristic of the landscape. The Ridgeway National Trail is a popular recreation route which allows panoramic views from vantage points to the north across the vale and to the Corallian Limestone Ridge (see Plate 2.4), and refer to VPs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 in Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations which show views from the top of the scarp .

Plate 2.4 View from the Ridgeway towards the vale (VP 2)



2.4.24 Views from the Plain (or footslopes) within the study area are generally more enclosed and inward-looking, with views north often interrupted by buildings, topography or blocks of vegetation. Occasionally there are panoramic, long-distance views across the footslopes and the vale to the north (such as around VP 9 at Park Hill); also refer to VPs 8, 54, 10 and 11 in Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations for views from the footslopes within and close to the National Landscape.

3 Assessment of effects on the special qualities of the National Landscape

- 3.1.1 This section presents the assessment of effects on the relevant special qualities. The assessment considers landscape character, tranquillity, dark skies, views and visual amenity within the context of the special qualities and how they are experienced.
- 3.1.2 The National Landscape is located approximately 2.5km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe at its nearest point. With the exception of minor highways works and access rights, the draft Order limits are, at their nearest, approximately 1km from the National Landscape. The area within the draft Order limits south of the railway (and south of the embankment toe) would be for proposed species relocation works and consequently there would be minimal change to the landscape and views associated with these works, which would constitute a barely perceptible change to the character, setting and special qualities of the National Landscape.

References

- 3.1.3 Appendix 9.3: Visual baseline provides more detail on the existing views described below, and Appendix 9.1: Project-level landscape character assessment provides more detail on the existing landscape character. The assessment has been undertaken based on professional judgement and supported by assessments of landscape and views within Chapter 9: Landscape and visual and Appendix 9.5: Preliminary assessment of effects for landscape and visual. Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 provide references to the relevant viewpoints, visual and landscape receptors respectively, which are described in Chapter 9 and the appendices mentioned above.
- 3.1.4 Refer to Figures 9.4: Reservoir ZTV (bare earth / DTM) and 9.5: Reservoir ZTV (screening / DSM) for the reservoir ZTVs, and Figure 9.11: Viewpoint and photomontage locations (with ZTV) for viewpoint and photomontage locations. Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint Photography and Visualisations may be referred to where specific viewpoints are referenced within the assessment text. Appendix 9.4: Viewpoint photography and visualisations contains baseline photographs from each of the viewpoints in addition to a wireline illustrating the extents of the proposed reservoir embankment and other associated key infrastructure components of the Project.

Table 3.1 Viewpoints and visual receptors relevant to the assessment of special qualities

Viewpoint (VP)	Viewpoint description	Receptor groups	Relationship with North Wessex Downs
1	Ridgeway National Trail (east) - West Ilsley car park	People using The Ridgeway, between the A34 and A338	Views from the North Wessex Downs
2	Ridgeway National Trail (south) - East Ginge Down	People using The Ridgeway, between the A34 and A338	Views from the North Wessex Downs

Viewpoint (VP)	Viewpoint description	Receptor groups	Relationship with North Wessex Downs
3	Ridgeway National Trail (south) - Lord Wantage Monument	- People using The Ridgeway, between the A34 and A338 - People visiting the Lord Wantage Monument on The Ridgeway	Views from the North Wessex Downs
4	Furzewick Down	People using public rights of way - close to The Ridgeway within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from the North Wessex Downs
5	Segsbury Camp	People using public rights of way - close to The Ridgeway within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from the North Wessex Downs
6	Ridgeway National Trail (west) - Gramp's Hill	- People using The Ridgeway between the A338 and the western edge of the study area - People using public rights of way - close to The Ridgeway within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from the North Wessex Downs
7	Devil's Punchbowl	People visiting the Devil's Punchbowl Open Access Land within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from the North Wessex Downs
8	Public right of way south of Ardington	- People using Public rights of way within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and up to its boundary - People living and working within Ardington, East and West Lockinge	Views from the North Wessex Downs
9	Public right of way south of East and West Hendred	- People using public rights of way within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and up to its boundary - Specific viewpoint from a memorial bench along public right of way 403/23/10 within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from the North Wessex Downs
10	Vale Way at West Hendred	- People using the Vale Way, between Steventon and West Hendred - People using public rights of way between the railway line and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from just outside the boundary of the North Wessex Downs

Viewpoint (VP)	Viewpoint description	Receptor groups	Relationship with North Wessex Downs
		People living and working within East and West Hendred	
11	Public right of way on Ardington Lane	People using public rights of way between the railway line and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from just outside the boundary of the North Wessex Downs
22	Wittenham Clumps	People using public rights of way around Little Wittenham within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape	Views from the North Wessex Downs
29	Public right of ways west of Drayton	- People using public rights of way bridleways in / around Drayton - People living and working within Drayton - People travelling by road on the A34	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
30	Public right of ways north-west of Drayton	- People using public rights of way/ bridleways in / around Drayton - People living and working within Drayton	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
33	Public right of way near Marcham Mill	People using public rights of way to the south of Marcham Residents at Marcham Mill	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
34	Marcham Road, on the eastern edge of Marcham	- People living and working within Marcham - People travelling along the A415 (Frilford Road / Marcham)	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
35	Southern edge of Shippon	People living and working within Shippon and Dalton Barracks (Military base / likely future Garden Village)	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
36	Oxford Green Belt Way at Boars Hill	- People using the Oxford Green Belt Way between Cumnor and Radley - People using the network of public rights of way in Wooton / Boars Hill area, on the Corallian Limestone Ridge	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
37	Public right of ways south-west of Marcham	People using public rights of way to the south of Marcham	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs

Viewpoint (VP)	Viewpoint description	Receptor groups	Relationship with North Wessex Downs
39	Public right of way south-east of Garford	People using public rights of way in and around Garford, and within 1km of potential solar farm re-provision	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
41	South Oxfordshire Crematorium	Users of, and people working at, the South Oxfordshire Crematorium and Memorial Park	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
54	NCN 544 east of Wantage	- People using the Vale Way, between West Hendred and Wantage - People living and working within Ardington, East and West Lockinge - People using NCN Route 544 - Wantage to Didcot	Views from the North Wessex Downs
55	Public right of way south of Fyfield	- People using public rights of way in the Kingston Bagpuize area, on the Corallian Limestone Ridge - People living and working within Kingston Bagpuize, Fyfield & nearby villages on the Corallian Limestone Ridge	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
56	Public right of way at Gozzard's Ford	n/a	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
57	Public right of way within the reservoir site	People using public rights of way within the area of the proposed reservoir	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs
59	Proposed crest walk	n/a	Views looking towards the North Wessex Downs

Table 3.2 Landscape character areas relevant to the assessment of special qualities

Landscape character area	Relationship with North Wessex Downs
10A Sinodun Lower Vale Hills	Within
1A Wessex Downs Open Chalk Escarpment and Upper Slopes	Within
6A Wessex Downs Chalk Escarpment Footslopes	Within
12B Western Middle Vale	Within setting
13A Ock Lower Vale	Within setting
13C East Thames Lower Vale	Within setting
8A Faringdon to Frilford Ridge Slope	Within setting

Landscape character area	Relationship with North Wessex Downs
8B Frilford to Sandford Ridge Slope	Within setting
8C Cumnor to Abingdon Ridge Slope	Within setting
9B Wantage to Didcot Vale Edge Slopes	Within setting
9C Milton Hill to Didcot Vale Edge Slopes	Within setting

3.2 Special quality 1:

'The distinctive northern Downs Plain and Scarp plunges down from the chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognisable horizon'

Baseline - how the special quality is reflected in the study area and in relation to the Project, including its setting

- 3.2.1 Refer to Plate 2.1 and Plate 2.2 for the locations of the scarp, vale and Corallian Limestone Ridge.
- 3.2.2 The distinctive chalk escarpment in the south of the study area, descends abruptly to the adjacent vale, creating a dramatic and recognisable horizon from within the lower lying clay vale landscape to the north. The scarp slope forms a backdrop to views from the vale. The scarp is generally perceived through gaps in vegetation or from more open areas of the vale; hedgerows, tree belts and smaller blocks of woodland limit the distance of views within the vale in some areas. There are also distant views of the Downs Plain and Scarp from some areas of the Corallian Limestone Ridge, although more extensive tree cover limits views in other areas of the ridge.
- 3.2.3 A key characteristic of the Downs Plain and Scarp relevant to the Project, although not specifically mentioned in the special qualities, is the panoramic views from the top of the scarp. Panoramic views are available from vantage points on the top of the ridge, especially from the Ridgeway National Trail, across the footslopes and lower lying vale to the north and towards the Corallian Limestone Ridge. There are also views from the lower slopes (the Plain) towards the vale to the north, although these views are often curtailed by topography, settlements or woodland.
- Perception of, and views towards, the Downs Plain and Scarp from the wider landscape**
- 3.2.4 A number of viewpoints have been identified to understand how the Downs Plain and Scarp is perceived from the wider landscape, the nature of existing views towards the National Landscape and those people likely to be experiencing the views. Refer to paragraphs 3.1.3 to 3.1.4 for a list of appendices and figures illustrating these viewpoints.
- 3.2.5 Viewpoints include:
- Viewpoints within the vale to the north of the Site looking south, within approximately 500m of the proposed reservoir embankment toe and approximately 6km from the National Landscape: Viewpoint (VP) 33 near Marcham Mill and VP 41 at the South Oxfordshire Crematorium. Within these views the scarp is currently visible as a

backdrop behind and over the tops of trees and vegetation, although in summer, views to the North Wessex Downs are heavily filtered or screened by intervening vegetation.

- Viewpoints within the vale to the north of the Site looking south, between approximately 1-2.5km of the proposed reservoir embankment toe and approximately 7.5km from the National Landscape: VP 39 near Garford, VPs 34 and 37 near Marcham and VP35 south of Shippon. Within these views the scarp is currently just visible as a distant backdrop behind and over the tops of trees and vegetation, although in summer, views to the North Wessex Downs are heavily filtered or screened by intervening vegetation.
- Viewpoints within the vale to the east of the Site, looking west but with oblique views to the south, within approximately 1km of the proposed reservoir embankment toe and approximately 5 – 5.5km from the National Landscape: VPs 29 and 30 on the edges of Drayton. From these locations the North Wessex Downs is a backdrop in parts of views, glimpsed or within filtered views.
- Viewpoints on the Corallian Limestone Ridge to the north of the Site looking south, approximately 4km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe and approximately 9.5km from the National Landscape: VP 55 near Fyfield and VP 56 at Gozzard's Ford. From these more elevated locations, there are occasional long views with the North Wessex Downs a visible backdrop. The more distant location at Boar's Hill (VP 36), whilst approximately 12km from the National Landscape has panoramic views, with the North Wessex Downs as a distant backdrop.
- Viewpoints within the reservoir Site looking south towards the National Landscape, between 3km and 5km from the National Landscape: VP 57 on an existing public right of way and VP 59 from the proposed crest walk. Views from existing public rights of way, where open, contain clear views towards the rising land and ridgeline of the North Wessex Downs.
- Views towards the Wittenham Clumps are not a characteristic feature of the study area due to distance (they are located approximately 10km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe).

Views from the Downs Plain and Scarp

3.2.6

Viewpoints illustrating the nature of existing views from the National Landscape towards the vale and those people likely to be experiencing the views are described below. Refer to paragraphs 3.1.3 to 3.1.4 for a list of appendices and figures illustrating these viewpoints.

- Viewpoints from the top of the scarp, including from the Ridgeway National Trail and other open access land: VPs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, between approximately 6.8 and 10km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe. There are panoramic views available from some locations on the elevated scarp, with the Corallian Limestone Ridge forming a noticeable horizon in the far distance. Views of the Project site vary depending on the presence of intervening vegetation and settlements, as well as distance and weather conditions, becoming less expansive further west along the Ridgeway due to the presence of hedgerows and woodland belts.
- Viewpoints from the Downs Plain (footslopes): VP 8 south of Ardington, VP 9 south of East and West Hendred and VP 54 east of Wantage, approximately 4km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe. These views are characterized by the undulating topography of the lower slopes and the settlements, trees and woodland within it, with some open, longer views encompassing the vale to the north. The vale appears

foreshortened, with layers of vegetation and built features generally indistinguishable, in front of a very distant and just discernable backdrop of the Corallian Limestone Ridge.

- Viewpoints from near the Downs Plain (footslopes), just outside the National Landscape and near villages within the National Landscape, approximately 2.5 – 2.8km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe: VP 10 on the Vale Way near West Hendred and VP 11 on Ardington Lane, north of Ardington.
- A viewpoint from the Wittenham Clumps: VP 22, is a panoramic view from this elevated location approximately 10km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe. The view west towards the Site includes layers of fields, hedgerows and tree belts, as well as roads. Built infrastructure at Didcot, including the power station is just about visible but features are barely discernible due to distance.

Assessment of effects on the special quality

- 3.2.7 The Downs Plain and Scarp is located approximately 2.5km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe at its nearest point (see Plate 2.1).

Construction effects

- 3.2.8 The presence of construction activities, including earthworks, compounds and traffic associated with construction of the proposed reservoir, associated infrastructure and proposed landscape and ecological works may be perceptible from the Downs Plain and Scarp, including from the Ridgeway National Trail and other open access land at the top of the scarp. From certain vantage points, effects relating to construction may be perceptible, but from a distance of at least 6.8km (as described in the baseline), and when seen in the context of the other activity within the vale, there would be no perceptible change to the landscape character or composition of views from the National Landscape, and no perceptible change to the special quality.
- 3.2.9 From some locations within the Downs Plain (footslopes) there are some more open areas with longer views towards the vale (e.g. VPs 9, 10 and 11 near the villages of East Hendred, West Hendred and Ardington), from where construction activities, including earthworks, may be perceptible, although screened and filtered by foreground trees across some of the extent of the views. Whilst potentially resulting in a small change to specific views, these changes would be unlikely to result in a perceptible change to key characteristics of the landscape, or the character of the villages, the National Landscape or its special qualities.
- 3.2.10 Construction, including earthworks and construction lighting, would also be a feature of views from within the vale, in the foreground and middle ground from some locations where the Downs Plain and Scarp forms a backdrop to those views. The geographical extent of views which would be affected would be relatively small, owing to the presence of intervening vegetation and built development which currently limit the existing distant views to the scarp in these areas. Whilst some views of the scarp would be affected, overall, the effects of construction would constitute only a minimal degree of change to the special quality. Construction effects would potentially be of long-term duration (over 15 years).

Operational effects

- 3.2.11 The proposed reservoir embankments would create a new feature within the setting of the National Landscape, within the vale. Due to the distance (of at least 2.5km) and visual/perceptual separation of the Downs Plain and Scarp from the vale, the proposed

embankments would not alter the relationship between the Plain and Scarp plunging toward the vale. Whilst the proposed size and scale of the Project is large, from this distance, and its location in a perceptually very different landscape, the presence of the Project would create a minimal change to the character and perception of the Downs Plain and Scarp. Over time, the proposed embankments would increasingly be integrated into the surrounding landscape with planting and would blend into foreshortened views across the vale from the Downs Plain and Scarp.

- 3.2.12 In the area to the north of the Site between Garford and Drayton, there would be some locations where the backdrop of the North Wessex Downs Plain and Scarp would be obscured by the proposed reservoir embankments. The nature of the changes would vary with distance from the proposed reservoir, distance from the North Wessex Downs and the presence of existing and proposed intervening trees and woodland. For example, from VP 33 near Marcham Mill the proposed embankments would obscure views of the scarp, (this effect would be most pronounced in winter views and less in summer). Views of the North Wessex Downs would be replaced by views of the planted embankment slopes, extending slightly higher than the existing top of the scarp, as well as views of proposed woodland and vegetation planting in the foreground.
- 3.2.13 From more distant locations such as VP 30 on the northern outskirts of Drayton, the scarp currently forms a more distant backdrop/ silhouette to views. Views of the scarp would be obscured by the proposed embankments, although they would be at a similar height, and when planting on the slopes has matured, would be likely to be perceived as a similar backdrop feature to this part of the vale.
- 3.2.14 From the Corallian Limestone Ridge, the proposed reservoir embankment may be perceptible from some locations (e.g. VP 31), at approximately 4km away. The planted embankments would be visually integrated with the surrounding landscape (increasingly so as planting matures over time) and would not detract from the slopes of the National Landscape, appearing below the horizon in some views, or appearing at a similar height to the existing scarp in other views.
- 3.2.15 From within the Site itself there would be locations where the backdrop of the North Wessex Downs would be obscured by foreground features including the reservoir, planting and buildings. However, there would also be locations where new views towards the Downs Plain and Scarp would be created, including from the proposed crest walk around the top of the reservoir embankments.
- 3.2.16 Views from the top of the scarp (e.g. from the Ridgeway National Trail) would be approximately 7-9km away from the proposed reservoir embankment toe. From this distance, and considering the landscape integration of the embankments, there would likely be a barely perceptible change to the composition of views or the key characteristics of the landscape. Views of the proposed embankment from the Downs Plain (footslopes) within 4km of the proposed reservoir embankment toe, would likely result in a barely perceptible change to views, landscape character or the perception of the National Landscape and its special qualities.

3.3 Special quality 2:

'The sense of remoteness and tranquillity that comes from an undeveloped and rural quality with only limited human intervention, containing typically modest villages with

distinctive and ancient settlement patterns... In the Downs Plain and Scarp character area, attractive springline villages cluster along the base of the northern ridge or along the valley of Avebury Plain. 20th century military installations, including Wroughton Airfield and a First World War camp near Draycot Foliat, are dominant and defining features of the area.'

Baseline - how the special quality is reflected in the study area and in relation to the Project, including its setting

- 3.3.1 The scarp is a highly rural and tranquil landscape which is often open and exposed. A sense of remoteness is locally tempered by views of settlements and commercial development on the footslopes and in the vale to the north, in particular the Harwell Campus and Wantage, as well as traffic on main roads or aircraft passing overhead. The Tranquillity Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse categorises most of the study area lying within the National Landscape as Zone 1 (area of high tranquillity) or Zone 2 (area of some tranquillity), with the exception of the area around Harwell Campus which falls into Zone 4 (Area of low tranquillity).
- 3.3.2 Figure 9.13: CPRE tranquillity mapping is provided; this is not based on the more recent Tranquillity Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse described above as this could not be made available, but as an alternative uses data from 2007 from the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE); which shows broadly the same pattern as the more recent study.
- 3.3.3 The scarp is generally undeveloped, and the Ridgeway National Trail provides an opportunity for people to experience the sense of tranquillity, with few roads or other intrusions. Views from the top of the scarp encompass a range of development within the footslopes (including the settlement of Wantage and Harwell Campus) and within the vale, including Didcot Power Station and the settlements of Didcot and Abingdon.
- 3.3.4 Dark night skies contribute to the sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The Ridgeway National Trail is noted in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment as offering a good experience of dark night skies. The Lighting Design Guidance for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse shows that with the exception of the area around Harwell Campus, the National landscape and its immediate setting within the south of the study area falls within the darkest ranking of skies (<0.25 Nano Watts/cm²/sr). Within the vale, the settlements of Wantage, Didcot and Abingdon and the commercial/industrial area around Milton show up as having some of the highest levels of night lights (8-32 Nano Watts/cm²/sr), with the settlement edges and other smaller settlements/ areas of development having a medium level of night lights (1-8 Nano Watts/cm²/sr) including Steventon, Drayton, Grove and industrial uses within the existing Site.
- 3.3.5 Figure 9.12: Dark skies and light pollution is provided; this is not based on the more recent South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse study described above as this could not be made available, but as an alternative uses data from 2016 from the CPRE; which shows broadly the same pattern as the more recent study.
- 3.3.6 Within the Plain (footslopes), tree cover combined with undulating topography provides some areas of enclosure and a sense of tranquillity. Away from Harwell Campus there is a good experience of dark night skies. Pylons crossing through the east of the area near East Hendred, major roads such as the A4185 and A417 and modern buildings at Harwell Campus undermine the sense of remoteness.

- 3.3.7 Attractive springline villages including Ardington, East and West Lockinge and East and West Hendred are well integrated into the landscape. They are often historic and designated as conservation areas, with clusters of listed buildings. Occasionally, the springs have been used as a focus for the creation of designed parkland landscapes such as at Letcombe, Ginge House and Ardington House, with a deer park at East Hendred. These areas are frequently associated with extensive woodland and parkland planting.
- 3.3.8 There are no known 20th century military installations within the study area.

Assessment of effects on the special quality

Construction

- 3.3.9 During construction, there would be distant perception of, and views of construction activities, machinery and earthworks from within the National Landscape. However, from a distance of between approximately 2.5km – 10km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe, and in the context of other existing human features and activity within the vale, changes in views would be minimal. Whilst construction activity would affect the perceptual landscape to a very small degree, it would not affect the sense of remoteness and tranquillity of the National Landscape. The assessment of Noise (see Chapter 14: Noise and vibration) found that effects on Ardington, East Hendred and Rowstock would not be significant.
- 3.3.10 Construction activities related to the draft Order limits in closer proximity to the National Landscape would involve habitat works and whilst likely to be perceptible from some of the more open locations in the northern extent of the National Landscape, would be similar to agricultural activities already present within the landscape. Likewise, activities related to construction access and minor road improvements in closer proximity to the National Landscape may be perceptible but would not be likely to affect the sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the National Landscape. Whilst noise, views and perception of construction activity would affect tranquillity for areas in closer proximity to the Project which are within the setting of the National Landscape, effects would dissipate with distance, and within the National Landscape itself effects would be minimal in scale.
- 3.3.11 Effects on the sense of remoteness and tranquillity would be minimal, and the special quality would not be affected.

Operation

- 3.3.12 During operation, it is unlikely that activities within the Site including water sports would be perceptible from within the National Landscape. The proposed East Hanney to Steventon Road diversion may just be perceptible, however, it is unlikely to be a perceptible change from the existing road or the adjacent railway and would not affect sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the National Landscape. The presence of proposed planting, trees and woodland, and the sensitive siting and design of Project components would help to integrate the Project into its surrounding context and the sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the National Landscape would not be affected. In line with the emerging lighting strategy, proposed lighting within the Site would be minimised and would be unlikely to result in a perceptible change to the sense of remoteness and dark night skies. Effects on the sense of remoteness and tranquillity would be minimal, and the special quality would not be affected.

3.4 Special quality 3:

'An extensive rights of way network offering many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside away from crowds, by ramblers, cyclists and horse-riders, including the Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails, access land, commons and accessible woodland.'

Baseline - how the special quality is reflected in the study area and in relation to the Project, including its setting

- 3.4.1 The Ridgeway National Trail running along the scarp top is an emblematic feature of the North Wessex Downs and is enjoyed by walkers and cyclists. An extensive network of footpaths and bridleways traverse the Downs Plain and Scarp and connect with the Ridgeway National Trail. There are also areas of open access land including at Devil's Punchbowl in the west. Within the footslopes, public rights of way connect the small settlements and provide recreational access to the countryside, including part of the Vale Way and National Cycle Route 544 which runs from Wantage towards Didcot.

Assessment of effects on the special quality

Construction

- 3.4.2 No public rights of way, open access land or accessible woodland within or in the vicinity of the National Landscape would require closures or diversions as a result of the Project. The enjoyment of the rights of way is generally a transient experience, and the views of, and perception of the vale is generally a smaller part of a wider experience of views in all directions. Effects of construction lighting on people using public rights of way would be limited in extent, as few people are likely to use these routes during hours of darkness.
- 3.4.3 From the top of the scarp, at a distance of at least 5.5km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe (for example, at the Ridgeway National Trail and other open access land including VPs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), earthworks and construction activity would be barely perceptible and would not alter the experience of the landscape or the composition of views and visual amenity. At occasional vantage points such as at VP3 at the Lord Wantage Monument, there may be slightly increased perception of earthworks and construction, however, these would be part of a much wider view, interrupted by existing woodland blocks and seen in the context of other human features and activity within the vale.
- 3.4.4 From public rights of way on the footslopes of the National Landscape (for example VPs 8, 9, 54, and VPs 10 and 11 which are just outside the boundary of the National Landscape) there may be a small change to some views (such as from VPs 9, 10 and 11 near East and West Hendred), where earthworks and construction activity may be visible from approximately 2.5– 3.5km away. However, from many other public rights of way (such as at VPs 8, 11 and 54), earthworks would be seen from more enclosed locations, behind intervening blocks of woodland, or, at VP54, would be entirely screened behind development and woodland.
- 3.4.5 Effects on the experiences of people using the public rights of way network would be minimal and limited in extent, and the special quality would not be affected.

Operation

- 3.4.6 The Project would be likely to be perceptible from some public rights of way within the National Landscape. There may be some views of the Project from the top of the scarp at a distance of at least 5.5km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe (for example, at the Ridgeway National Trail and other open access land including VPs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). However, from this distance, and considering the proposed landscape and planting on the embankments, which would become increasingly integrated over time, there would likely be a barely perceptible change to the composition of views and therefore the experience of people using the public rights of way.
- 3.4.7 Views of the Project from the footslopes of the National Landscape between approximately 2.5– 4km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe (for example VPs 8, 9, 54 as well as VPs 10 and 11 which lie just outside the boundary of the National Landscape), may result in a small change to specific views, though overall these changes would be unlikely to result in a perceptible change to the experiences of people using public rights of way. From many other public rights of way (such as at VPs 8, 11 and 54), the Project would be seen from more enclosed locations, behind intervening blocks of woodland, or, at VP54, would be entirely screened behind development and woodland.
- 3.4.8 Effects on the experiences of people using the public rights of way network would be minimal and limited in extent, and the special quality would not be affected.

4 Design considerations in response to the special qualities

- 4.1.1 The North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Setting provides guidance on development within the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The Position Statement states that many issues in relation to new development within the setting can be resolved through careful design, appropriate materials, location and layout and mitigation measures from landscaping to lighting. Paragraph 17 of the Position Statement provides the following expectations for proposals within the setting of the National Landscape:
- *“measures to consider impact on the setting of the AONB, including where required through Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments;*
 - *care over orientation, site layout, height and scale of structures and buildings;*
 - *consideration not just of the site but also the landscape and land uses around and beyond it;*
 - *careful use of colours, materials and non-reflective surfaces;*
 - *restraint and care over the installation and use of street lighting, floodlighting and other external lighting to prevent harm to the dark night skies of the AONB;*
 - *the grouping of new structures and buildings close to existing structures and buildings to avoid new expanses of development that are visible and out of context (though detrimental impact on historic buildings/groupings will need special consideration to avoid insensitive development); and*
 - *detailed mitigation measures, for example including native landscaping (where possible contributing to BAP [Biodiversity Action Plan] targets), and noise reduction (though again landscaping in certain contexts can be damaging to historic features/deposits/landscape/character so again will require careful consideration).”*
- 4.1.2 The special qualities of the National Landscape have been considered in the context of the Project, and a number of considerations have fed into the Project’s design, in particular with the aim of integrating and sensitively designing the Project to respond to its location within the setting of the National Landscape. These design considerations have been factored into the on-going evolution of the Project’s design principles. They have informed decisions during the iterative design process and will continue to feed into the developing Project design. An overview of the design considerations in relation to the special qualities is provided in Table 4.1.
- 4.1.3 Further information on the embedded design mitigation and standard good practice for the Project at this stage is provided in Chapter 2: Project description and Appendix 2.2: Draft commitments register.

Table 4.1 Design considerations related to the special qualities

Design considerations	Relevant special qualities
Ensure views towards the scarp are retained in places by strategic design of planting to create framed views, and selection of species.	1
Sensitive design and positioning of buildings and infrastructure, giving consideration to how their height and appearance will affect the panoramic and open views from the Downs Plain and Scarp.	1, 2, 3
Careful use of materials (including reflective materials) and colours which are visually recessive and do not draw the eye (referring to the National Landscape guidance).	1, 2, 3
Sensitive consideration of heights and massing of structures and buildings, such as avoiding placing too many buildings on the embankments. Using opportunities to use landform to integrate functional buildings with their surroundings.	1, 2, 3
Integration and sensitive design of the reservoir embankments into the landscape by: • incorporating planting such as small woodland copses • introducing gentle undulations and dips on the embankments • varying the heights (and perceived heights) of the embankment crest • naturalise the appearance and profiles of the embankment slopes	1, 2, 3
Design new views and new vantage points looking from the Site towards the scarp. Consider interpretation material to educate visitors to the site about the National Landscape, particularly at new viewpoints from the crest path towards the scarp.	1
Minimise and carefully consider lighting, noise and traffic movement to limit the impact on the tranquillity and dark night skies in the setting of the North Wessex Downs.	2
Respect the rural character of the setting of the North Wessex Downs through sensitive design of all Project elements and integration of earthworks, buildings, structures and infrastructure as above.	2, 3

4.2 Additional mitigation and design amendment

- 4.2.1 Overall, the Project is considered unlikely to have a significant effect on the National Landscape, its special qualities or its statutory purpose, therefore additional mitigation is not anticipated to be required at this stage. Further consideration will be given to potential additional mitigation as and when required as the Project design develops and at the ES stage.

5 Summary of preliminary effects on the National Landscape

- 5.1.1 Overall, the Project is considered unlikely to result in significant effects on the National Landscape, its special qualities or its statutory purpose. There are expected to be significant effects within the National Landscape's setting, however it's setting is not a receptor in its own right, and these effects are not considered likely to amount to a significant effect on the National Landscape itself.
- 5.1.2 The primary purpose of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, which encompasses wildlife, geology, landforms, and cultural heritage, shaped by the evolving relationship between people and place.
- 5.1.3 The Project has followed a landscape-led approach and has been designed to avoid effects on the National Landscape and it's setting as far as practicable.
- 5.1.4 The Downs Plain and Scarp is the character area within the North Wessex Downs which is most likely to be affected by the Project. It forms the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs, and at its nearest point (the Hendred Plain) lies approximately 2.5km from the proposed reservoir embankment toe. The key aspects relating to views in and around the National Landscape in the study area relate to the views from within the Vale of White Horse towards the south, of the scarp of the North Wessex Downs, as well as views towards the scarp from some parts of the Corallian Limestone Ridge; and the panoramic views north from the top of the scarp of the North Wessex Downs towards the vale and Corallian Limestone Ridge.
- 5.1.5 The setting of the National Landscape is not a designation (or a receptor) in its own right. However, the Project lies within the setting of the National Landscape, with the proposed reservoir embankment toe approximately 2.5km from the National Landscape at its nearest point. Landscape and visual impacts within the setting are not considered to significantly affect the character, special qualities or statutory purpose of the National Landscape.
- 5.1.6 There would be some effects on the National Landscape resulting from the presence of earthworks and construction activities, but effects would constitute only a minimal degree of change to the special qualities. The main effects would be for receptors within the vale, in the setting of the National Landscape, on landscape character, views and visual amenity from some locations where the National Landscape forms a backdrop to those views. In these cases views of the scarp may be obscured by earthworks and construction activities within the foreground and middle ground. Owing to distance and the relatively intermittent nature of the existing views of the scarp, effects on the special qualities would be minimal. There would also be views and perception of construction activity and earthworks from the top of the scarp (including the Ridgeway National Trail and other open access land). However, from a distance of at least 5.5km, and when seen in the context of other activity within the vale, there would be no perceptible change to the character or composition of views from the National Landscape, the sense of tranquillity and remoteness or the experiences of people using public rights of way. From the footslopes of the National Landscape, including public rights of way near the villages of East and West Hendred and Ardington, there may be a small change to some views where earthworks and construction activity may be visible from approximately 2.5– 3.5km away. However, from many other parts of the landscape, the undulating topography and intervening built form and woodland would filter or screen the majority of views of earthworks and construction activity.

- 5.1.7 The permanent long-term effects on the landscape are not likely to result in effects on the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Due to the distance (of at least 2.5km) and visual/ perceptual separation of the National Landscape from the vale, the presence of the Project would create a minimal change to the character and special qualities. Whilst there would be some locations where the backdrop of the North Wessex Downs would be obscured by the proposed reservoir embankments which would extend above the horizon from some locations, as well as proposed planting in the foreground and middle ground of the views, the nature of the changes would vary with distance and the presence of existing and proposed intervening trees and woodland. As the proposed planting establishes it would increasingly integrate the proposed embankments and other components into the surroundings, as well as providing new green infrastructure and features of interest in views. There would also be locations where new views towards the National Landscape would be created, including from the proposed crest walk around the top of the reservoir embankments. From within the National Landscape, whilst potentially resulting in a small change to specific views within the footslopes, these changes would be unlikely to result in a perceptible change to key characteristics of the landscape, or the character of the villages, the National Landscape or its special qualities. Overall, there would likely be a barely perceptible change to the composition of views, sense of tranquillity, or key characteristics of the landscape. Proposed planting on the embankments and within the surrounding landscape would increasingly break up views of the water as it matures, and would blend into foreshortened views across the vale. The Project overall would provide green infrastructure benefits to the vale landscape within the setting of the National Landscape.
- 5.1.8 The landscape-led approach to the Project design will continue between the PEI Report and ES stages, informing the development of planting proposals, regardless of whether they are primarily driven by landscape or ecological mitigation requirements, so that they respond positively to the local character and integrates the Project effectively into its landscape setting, thus minimising any effects on the National Landscape.

6 Approach to the duty to seek to further the purposes of protected landscapes

- 6.1.1 This section sets out the proposed approach to the Project's responsibilities associated with the duty to 'seek to further' the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape as required by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA). It further develops the approach set out in the Outline Strategy for addressing potential effects on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (J696-AJ-A02X-ZZZZ-RP-EN-100039).
- 6.1.2 Due to the recent nature of the legislation, there are no firm precedents at the time of writing that demonstrate how a development has furthered the purpose of a designated landscape or guidance to follow on how to achieve this.
- 6.1.3 The approach to the duty will continue be developed following submission of the PEI Report and in consultation with stakeholders through the Landscape TLG. Further detail will be provided within the ES.

Relevant guidance

- 6.1.4 Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes (DEFRA December 2024) sets out how the Protected Landscapes duty is intended to operate and provides broad principles to guide relevant authorities in complying with it.
- 6.1.5 The guidance notes the following:
- A relevant authority should take appropriate, reasonable and proportionate steps to explore measures which further the statutory purposes.
 - As far as is reasonably practicable, relevant authorities should seek to avoid harm and contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, special qualities and key characteristics.
 - A relevant authority should be able to demonstrate, with proportionate, reasoned and documented evidence, the measures to which consideration has been given when seeking to further (e.g. policies, strategies, operational procedures, estate management plans, investment plans, contracts, works instructions, assessments and reports).
 - For ongoing functions, it may be appropriate to instigate a monitoring and reporting system.
 - Consider whether measures can be embedded into the design of plans and proposals.
 - Consider whether measures which would further the purposes align with and help to deliver the targets and objectives in the management plan.
 - Consider whether measures are appropriate and proportionate to the type and scale of the function and its implications for the area.
 - Consider whether measures could contribute to the conservation and enhancement of wildlife, ecological value and quality, geological and physiographical features, water environment, cultural heritage, dark skies, tranquillity, opportunities for access to nature and landscape character.
 - In relation to the measures, consider:

- Ongoing management needs
- Funding and securing of measures
- Consulting with the relevant National Landscape team
- Periodic review or monitoring of the operation of the duty

6.2 Relevant published documents to inform the approach

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

- 6.2.1 The management plan sets out key issues, strategic objectives and policies under each of its themes. The strategic objectives and policies which are relevant to the Project have been reviewed to understand where Project objectives may align with, or could be extended to align with, the National Landscape strategic objectives and policies.

North Wessex Downs AONB Nature Recovery Plan

- 6.2.2 The North Wessex Downs AONB Nature Recovery Plan (produced on behalf of the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners, 2023) seeks to direct the National Landscape's priorities for nature, working with partners, stakeholders and community groups. The plan sets out habitat vulnerability to climate change and suggests measures that will help key habitats to be more resilient. It identifies actions, targets and practical opportunities.

6.3 The Project's proposed approach to the Duty

- 6.3.1 In determining *appropriate, reasonable and proportionate* steps to explore measures which further the statutory purposes, the degree and nature of likely effects on the designated landscape resulting from the Project are a key consideration. The earlier sections of this appendix provide a preliminary assessment of effects on the National Landscape, which concludes that significant effects on the National Landscape would be unlikely.

- 6.3.2 The Project's approach to the Duty has therefore followed three key steps:

- 1) Understand where negative effects on the National Landscape as a result of the Project may arise, informed by visualisations, field work and preliminary assessments.
- 2) Seek to ensure the character, views and special qualities of the National Landscape are conserved despite changes in its setting due to the Project. This includes the sensitive design and integration of all elements of the Project.
- 3) Explore opportunities to deliver enhancements to the National Landscape within the context of the Project, including reviewing the design considerations identified in relation to the special qualities and the Management Plan objectives and policies.

Approach to sensitive Project design and exploring measures to conserve and enhance the natural beauty

- 6.3.3 Design development has followed a landscape-led and iterative design process, where environmental effects have continuously fed into the design in order to avoid and reduce adverse effects on the National Landscape including its setting, character, views and

special qualities. The National Landscape has been considered in all decisions which may affect it, to avoid any negative effects on the National Landscape and its special qualities as far as possible.

- The Project has been designed to integrate the proposals into the surrounding landscape as effectively as possible. This includes sensitive design, siting and integration of all components of the Project, including permanent buildings, structures and infrastructure, integration of reservoir embankments (with planting and gentle undulations and dips in the earthworks).
- Consideration of ways in which to enhance the setting of the National Landscape have also been incorporated into the current Project design and have been considered as embedded mitigation. This includes:
 - Relocation of existing detractors in the landscape, such as moving solar farms further from the National Landscape.
 - The introduction of new views and vistas from proposed public rights of way or permissive paths within the site towards the scarp of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. This includes views from the proposed crest path.
 - Enhancing existing vegetation along retained watercourses and gapping up with native trees and scrub.
 - a range of wetland habitats, which will be developed in association with the eastern and western watercourse diversions.
 - Enhancement of existing retained hedgerows and tree belts.
- Alignment with the North Wessex Downs Nature Recovery Plan - the Project has developed its proposals for nature and biodiversity in line with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and will continue to ensure its alignment with the North Wessex Downs LNRS.
- Potential opportunities to align with the AONB Management Plan strategic objectives and policies that could be considered as the design develops. This includes:
 - Education and skills – for example incorporating objectives around how to care for the landscape and its special qualities, training in traditional land management and business diversification with the Project's Education programme.
 - The local historic environment – for example incorporating objectives around celebrating local culture, funding research opportunities associated with the Project, local heritage interpretation such as trails, interpretation boards and design features.
 - Opportunities to enhance the Letcombe Brook (within the draft Order limits) – for example providing shading to manage temperatures for the downstream section of the watercourse.

6.4 Next steps

- 6.4.1 The approach set out in this appendix has been informed by a preliminary assessment which is high level at this early stage of design. Further, more detailed assessment will be undertaken, considering, reflecting, and influencing on-going design development. This will allow more detailed consideration of aspects such as lighting design, planting design and

phasing, effects from the built structures and materials within the Project, construction sequencing and programme; this will also be supported with more detailed visual analysis tools including expanded provision of photomontages and visualisations to analyse and understand effects on the National Landscape in greater detail. This iterative process of assessment and design, with a clear focus on the National Landscape, will support the proportionate approach to meeting the requirements of the LURA duty. Further detail documenting this process will be provided within the ES.

- 6.4.2 Engagement with relevant stakeholders through the Landscape and Visual TLG will continue to inform the approach to and assessment of effects on the National Landscape throughout the process, up to the completion of the ES.

Annex A: Special Qualities Scoped Out of the Assessment

All of the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape were considered as part of this assessment process. Those special qualities which were considered not relevant to the study area and/or the potential effects of the Project and therefore scoped out of a more detailed assessment, are identified in the table below, along with a summary of the rationale for scoping them out.

Table A.1 Special qualities scoped out and the rationale for this

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
Theme: Landscape	
<i>Open Downland extending from Roundway Down near Devizes to Lardon Chase overlooking the Thames at Streatley is dissected by dry valleys and long steep scarps, with limited tree cover and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.</i>	This special quality relates to the Open Downland character type, extending from Roundway Down near Devizes to Lardon Chase at Streatley, which is defined by expansive open chalk uplands, dry valleys, steep scarps and a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The nearest areas of open downland lie approximately 5km south of the draft Order limits, with only very small parts of this character type occurring at the southern edge of the study area. Due to topography and vegetation cover intervisibility with the Project is extremely limited, as confirmed by the ZTV and site verification. Consequently, the Project would not alter the qualities of openness, remoteness or tranquillity that underpin this landscape type, and there is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Downland with Woodland on the dip slope descending to Kennet Valley and south across the Hampshire Downs, offering softer contours, woodland cover and a mix of field patterns.</i>	This special quality relates to the Downland with Woodland character type, found on the dip slope descending to the Kennet Valley and extending south across the Hampshire Downs. It is defined by softer contours, substantial woodland cover and a variety of field patterns. The nearest areas of this character type lie approximately 6km south of the draft Order limits, with only very small fragments occurring at the southern edge of the study area. Intervisibility with the Project is extremely limited due to topography and intervening woodland blocks, as confirmed by the ZTV and site verification. The Project would not alter the wooded dip-slope character, or the landscape qualities associated with it, and there is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Centred on Savernake Forest and West Woods, the Wooded Plateau consists of extensive tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland, wood pasture with majestic veteran trees, and 18th and 19th century Beech plantations, as well as more recent coniferous plantations.</i>	This special quality is centred on Savernake Forest and West Woods. At the nearest point, these areas of wooded plateau are in excess of 20km southwest of the draft Order limits; the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to its physical disconnection, and large distance, from the Project.

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>At the northernmost tip of Salisbury Plain, the open rolling landform of the High Chalk Plain creates a bleak, spacious landscape under arable production and devoid of settlement, with long views and a strong sense of remoteness and isolation.</i>	This special quality is associated with the High Chalk Plain at the northern tip of Salisbury Plain, approximately 40km to the southwest of the draft Order limits. This distinctive open and remote landscape lies well beyond the study area. The Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to its physical disconnection, and large distance, from the Project.
<i>The Vales of Pewsey and sections of the Thames Valley floor adjoining the Chilterns AONB offer productive loamy and alluvial soils where springs issue from the chalk and compact settlements contrast with scattered farmsteads.</i>	This special quality relates to the Vales of Pewsey (southwest of the draft Order limits) and sections of the Thames Valley floor adjoining the Chilterns National Landscape (southeast of the draft Order limits), featuring productive loamy and alluvial soils, springs issuing from the chalk and settlement patterns of compact villages contrasting with scattered farmsteads. The nearest areas of this landscape type are at least 8km from the draft Order limits (southeast), with only very small parts of the North Wessex Downs Vales present within the eastern part of the study area, where they form part of the River Thames floodplain. Intervisibility with the Project is extremely limited due to landform and vegetation cover, as confirmed by the ZTV and site verification. The Project would not alter the soil productivity, settlement patterns or other qualities that characterise the Vales, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>The River Valleys of the Kennet, Lambourn, Pang and Bourne form very distinct linear landscapes, characterised by a rich mix of grazed pastures, water meadows, wetland and woodland. Steeply rising slopes create an intimate and enclosed character.</i>	This special quality relates to the river valleys of the Kennet, Lambourn, Pang and Bourne, the nearest of which lie around 13 km south of the draft Order limits. These areas are not within the study area, and the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and large distance, from the Project.
<i>The Lowland Mosaic, curving around Newbury and the lower Kennet Valley has a varied geology of clays, silts and sands giving rise to a diverse mix of soils and, in turn, a mosaic of ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland areas where sunken lanes heighten the sense of seclusion.</i>	This special quality is characteristic of the Lowland Mosaic landscapes around Newbury, located approximately 15km south of the draft Order limits. These areas are not within the study area, and the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the area's physical disconnection, and large distance, from the Project.
Theme: rural land management	
<i>A landscape under the influence of agricultural management with typically large farmed estates, a high proportion of which are engaged in agri-environment agreements.</i>	This special quality is associated with extensive farmed estates within parts of the North Wessex Downs. Such estates are not within the study area, and the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
	estates' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
<i>Varied field patterns; the open downlands are characterised by large regular fields, largely the product of 18th century Parliamentary enclosure, with more recent boundary removals creating vast fields, as on the Marlborough Downs. By contrast, the Vale of Pewsey in the south west of the AONB is the product of medieval clearance which created numerous, small, irregularly-shaped fields or assarts.</i>	This special quality is associated with the Parliamentary enclosure fields of the Marlborough Downs (approximately 18km southwest of the draft Order limits) and the medieval assarts of the Vale of Pewsey (approximately 30 km southwest). These areas lie well outside the study area, and the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
<i>Stock fencing and extant hedgerows in the vales and river valleys containing some mature trees.</i>	Whilst hedgerows and mature trees within the study area would be lost to the Project, this special quality is specific to the distinctive hedgerow patterns and hedgerow trees associated with the vales and river valleys of the North Wessex Downs, such as the Kennet Valley, which lies more than 20km south of the draft Order limits. These characteristic patterns are not present locally, and physically disconnected from the Project, therefore there is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>A growing forestry sector and different types of woodland, many with public access. Although oak and ash are the main forest canopy species there is a wide range of stand types including hornbeam coppice, oak/ash stands, hazel oak stands, and birch and ash/wych elm coppice.</i>	This special quality relates to the diversity of woodland types and managed forestry across parts of the North Wessex Downs, many with public access. These woodlands are not within the draft Order limits, and although some are located adjacent to the outer edges of the draft Order limits, these will not be affected by the Project. The Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the features' physical disconnection and distance from proposed works.
<i>Equestrian activity, including the 'Valley of the Racehorse' in the Lambourn area that attracts visitors and businesses.</i>	This special quality is specific to the Lambourn area, known as the 'Valley of the Racehorse', approximately 15km southwest of the draft Order limits. This area lies outside the study area, and the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
<i>Significant land management for field sports, including highly valued game fishing which supports the native brown trout.</i>	This special quality is associated with land management for field sports and chalk stream fishing, particularly in the Kennet and Lambourn valleys (located between 15km and 25km south of the draft Order limits respectively). These areas lie outside the study area, and the Project has no pathway to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
Theme: Biodiversity	

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>'Designated wildlife sites that are home to rare habitats and species, including:</i>	
A nationally significant area of chalk grassland including rare flora such as field fleawort, bastard toadflax, musk orchid and burnt orchid, early gentian, chalk eyebright, Chiltern gentian, dwarf mouse-ear, tuberous thistle and round-headed rampion; invertebrates such as the wart-biter cricket and important butterfly populations including Adonis blue, silver-studded blue, marsh fritillary, chalkhill blue, small blue, silver-spotted skipper and Duke of Burgundy fritillary.	This special quality is underpinned by extensive areas of nationally significant chalk grassland and associated rare species, concentrated on the scarps and ridges of the North Wessex Downs. The Site is located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape) and is not part of these core chalk grassland landscapes. The nearest area of chalk grassland identified within the North Wessex Downs is more than 6km from the draft Order limits. There is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
Substantial areas of broadleaved woodland and wood pasture, including a significant concentration of ancient woodlands, which provide roosting and/or feeding sites for bat species including Bechstein's, barbastelle, greater horseshoe and noctule; long rotation hazel coppice that provides important habitat for mammals such as dormice; concentrations of calcareous bluebell woods; and a number of nationally scarce moss species.	This special quality is associated with substantial tracts of ancient and semi-natural woodland across parts of the North Wessex Downs, particularly on the wooded plateaux and scarps. The Project, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), does not affect these extensive woodland landscapes that underpin the special quality, and sits approximately 10km away from areas of woodland on the scarps and plateau. Accordingly, there is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
Rare chalk streams and rivers with a high diversity of aquatic plants and invertebrate species including those that are nationally scarce, such as the white-clawed crayfish, supporting nationally and locally scarce bird species, mammals including otters and nationally declining water voles, and healthy fish populations including brown trout, salmon, grayling, perch, chub and dace.	This special quality is underpinned by the internationally important chalk streams of the North Wessex Downs, including the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang, which occur in valleys around 15–25 km to the south of the draft Order limits. The Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), is not part of these chalk river landscapes. There is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.
A rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats creating distinctive valley landscapes including fens, floodplains, water meadows, carr and wet woodland. As an example, the Red Data Book plant summer snowflake survives in seasonally flooded woodlands along the Kennet Valley.	This special quality is associated with the river valleys of the North Wessex Downs, particularly the Kennet Valley, around 25 km to the south of the draft Order limits, where extensive wetland habitats such as floodplain meadows and wet woodlands occur. The Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), is not part of these distinctive wetland valley landscapes. There is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality due to the areas' physical disconnection, and distance, from the Project.

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>Opportunities for landscape-scale conservation projects, working across a significant area and administrative boundaries.</i>	The large scale of the Project provides potential to contribute positively to landscape-scale conservation initiatives, for example through habitat creation and cross-boundary linkages. However, the Project does not constrain or diminish opportunities for wider conservation initiatives across the North Wessex Downs. On this basis, the special quality relating to opportunities for landscape-scale conservation projects would not be adversely affected.
Theme: Historic environment	
<i>Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments</i> including Knap Hill and Windmill Hill causewayed enclosures; West Kennet and Wayland's Smithy chambered tombs; Silbury Hill; Avebury stone circle and its surrounding ceremonial landscape; Bronze Age round barrows including Seven Sisters and Seven Barrows groups.	This special quality is associated with the internationally renowned concentration of Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments within the North Wessex Downs, particularly around Avebury, Silbury Hill, West Kennet and Wayland's Smithy, and with barrow groups such as the Seven Sisters and Seven Barrows. These lie well outside the study area, around 25–35 km to the west. Within the study area, one Scheduled Monument of this type, the East Hendred Down bowl barrow, is located approximately 5km from the proposed reservoir draft Order limits. The ZTV indicates potential visibility from the barrow, although distance and the monument's character mean that its setting is unlikely to be materially affected. This aligns with Chapter 8: Historic environment, which determines that heritage assets more than 2km from the draft Order limits have been scoped out of further assessment because there would be no significant effects beyond these distances. The Project would therefore not influence the nationally important concentrations of monuments that underpin this special quality.
<i>Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman defences and settlements</i>, including Oldbury, Barbury Castle and Uffington Castle; Cunetio (Mildenhall) Roman town, Littlecote villa and the Roman road through Savernake Forest; Fyfield and Overton Down field systems; Wansdyke, Grim's Ditch and Devil's Ditch linear earthworks.	This special quality reflects the prominence of Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman defences and settlements across the North Wessex Downs, particularly the major hillforts and linear earthworks such as Oldbury, Barbury Castle and Uffington Castle; Cunetio Roman town and Littlecote villa; and extensive features including the Wansdyke, Grim's Ditch and Devil's Ditch. These lie 6-40km from the draft Order limits. Within the study area, three Scheduled Monuments of this type are present: Segsbury Camp or Letcombe Castle hillfort, approximately 7 km from the proposed draft Order limits, from which views of the Site are illustrated in Viewpoint 5; Grim's Ditch, approximately 5 km from the draft Order limits, with intervisibility indicated by the ZTV; and Scutchamore Knob, also approximately 5 km from the draft Order limits, where the ZTV shows no visibility due to landform and vegetation. While these are important heritage assets, their settings are unlikely to be

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
	significantly affected by the Project given the distance, scale and nature of the assets. This aligns with Chapter 8: Historic environment, which determines that heritage assets more than 2km from the draft Order limits have been scoped out of further assessment because there would be no significant effects beyond these distances. The Project would therefore not influence the nationally significant concentrations of monuments that underpin this special quality.
<i>Medieval and post-medieval settlements and buildings, including castle earthworks, tithe barns, parish churches, and the layouts and historic buildings of Marlborough, Hungerford, Ramsbury and many smaller villages</i>	This special quality is associated with the concentration of Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman monuments across the North Wessex Downs, including hillforts such as Barbury Castle and Uffington Castle, Roman sites such as Cunetio and Littlecote villa, and extensive linear earthworks including the Wansdyke and Devil's Ditch. These lie 6-40km from the draft Order limits and well outside of the study area. Within the study area, three Scheduled Monuments of this type are present: Segsbury Camp or Letcombe Castle hillfort, approximately 7 km from the draft Order limits (views from this location are illustrated by Viewpoint 5); Grim's Ditch, approximately 5 km from the draft Order limits, with intervisibility indicated by the ZTV; and Scutchamore Knob, also approximately 5 km from the draft Order limits, where the ZTV indicates no visibility due to landform and vegetation. The settings of these individual assets are unlikely to be significantly affected by the Project due to distance and the nature of the monuments. This aligns with Chapter 8: Historic environment, which determines that heritage assets more than 2km from the draft Order limits have been scoped out of further assessment because there would be no significant effects beyond these distances.
<i>Country houses and landscaped parks and gardens such as at Basildon Park, Highclere Castle, Tottenham House and Ramsbury Manor and Savernake Forest, many originating as medieval deer parks.</i>	This special quality is defined by the concentration of country houses and landscaped parks and gardens across the North Wessex Downs, including notable examples at Basildon Park, Highclere Castle, Tottenham House, Ramsbury Manor and Savernake Forest, many with medieval deer park origins. These lie over 20 km south of the draft Order limits. Within the footslopes of the scarp in the study area there are some scattered remnant estate parklands associated with smaller manor houses, the nearest around 3 km from the draft Order limits. While the ZTV indicates some potential visibility from the footslopes, the character and settings of these individual assets are unlikely to be materially affected given their distance and nature. This aligns with Chapter 8: Historic environment, which determines that heritage assets more than 2km from the

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
	draft Order limits have been scoped out of further assessment because there would be no significant effects beyond these distances.
<i>Post-medieval buildings and infrastructure including the Kennet and Avon Canal; extant and former railway lines and tunnels; watermills, windmills and pumping stations; water meadows; 18th/19th-century planned farmsteads; First and Second World War airfields, pillboxes, ammunition dumps and practice trenches.</i>	This special quality relates to the rich legacy of post-medieval buildings and infrastructure across the North Wessex Downs, including the Kennet and Avon Canal, historic railway lines and tunnels, watermills and pumping stations, water meadows, planned farmsteads, and 20th-century military heritage such as airfields and pillboxes. These defining examples are located outside the study area, generally more than 10 km from the draft Order limits. No key assets of this type are known within the study area, as confirmed through the heritage assessment. Any dispersed examples in the wider landscape would not form part of the nationally important concentrations that underpin this special quality, and their settings are unlikely to be materially affected given their distance from the draft Order limits (at least 2.8 km) and their nature. This aligns with Chapter 8: Historic environment, which determines that heritage assets more than 2km from the draft Order limits have been scoped out of further assessment because there would be no significant effects beyond these distances.
Theme: Natural resources	
<i>Cretaceous, Tertiary and Quaternary geological history, with features such as Sarsen Stones.</i>	This special quality is expressed through distinctive geological formations and surface features, including the concentrations of Sarsen Stones found on the chalk downs and plateaux of the North Wessex Downs. The Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), is not part of these geological landscapes or features, and is approximately 10km from the plateau of the North Wessex Downs. There is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>This geology in turn influences the main soil types of the North Wessex Downs:</i>	
• <i>Thin chalk soils of the open downland, now primarily under arable production.</i>	This special quality is characteristic of the open downland landscapes on the chalk scarps and ridges of the North Wessex Downs. The Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), does not include or influence these thin chalk soils or the arable landscapes they support, and is upwards of 5km from the nearest area of open downland within the North Wessex Downs. There is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>The capping of Quaternary Clay with Flints over the chalk found as pockets of reddish brown clay containing flint pebbles. These areas are particularly characteristic of the Downland with Woodland and Wooded Plateau Landscape Character Types.</i>	This special quality is associated with the Clay-with-Flints deposits that overlie chalk in parts of the Downland with Woodland and Wooded Plateau landscape character types, particularly on the higher ground of the North Wessex Downs. The Site, located within a clay vale below the downs (outside of the National Landscape), is not part of these geological formations, and is upwards of 5km from the nearest area of downland with woodland within the North Wessex Downs. There is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Quaternary Coombe deposits found where accumulated frost-weathered debris was carried down slope by melt waters at the end of the last glaciation. These have created till deposits in the dry valleys of the downs providing richer pockets of soil, often under arable production.</i>	This special quality is associated with Coombe deposits found in the dry valleys of the chalk downs, where they contribute to distinctive soil patterns and land use. These dry valleys are interspersed throughout the National Landscape, and the Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), does not contain these landforms or soils, and no works would affect these features, therefore there is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Deep well-drained loamy soils over Greensand and river alluviums in the Vale of Pewsey, traditionally under pasture with large areas forming winter flood meadows.</i>	This special quality is specific to the Vale of Pewsey in the south-west of the North Wessex Downs, more than 30 km from the draft Order limits. These distinctive soil types and associated floodplain pastures are not present in the study area and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>A mixed soil mosaic to the east of Newbury with nutrient-poor acidic soils over plateau gravels intermixed with fertile loamy soils overlying the London Clay, characterised by the Medieval landscape of the Lowland Mosaic Landscape Character Type.</i>	This special quality is specific to the Lowland Mosaic landscapes east of Newbury, more than 15km south of the draft Order limits. These mixed soils and associated Medieval landscape patterns are not present within the study area and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Carbon storage in the characteristic habitats of the North Wessex Downs such as chalk grassland and broadleaved woodland.</i>	This special quality is linked to the carbon storage function of characteristic habitats such as extensive chalk grassland and broadleaved woodland within the North Wessex Downs. The nearest woodland habitats sit directly outside of the draft Order limits, whilst the nearest chalk grassland habitat identified within the North Wessex Downs is more than 6km from the draft Order limits. These habitats are not present at a scale within the study area that contributes to this special quality; there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Rivers with shallow sloping banks, clean shallow 'washed' river gravel beds (riffles) contrasting with deeper shaded pools.</i>	This special quality is characteristic of chalk rivers within the North Wessex Downs, such as the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang, which are located around 15–25 km south of the draft Order limits. The Site, in the clay vale below the Downs, is not part of these river landscapes and there is

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
	therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Often a complex pattern of river channels (as on the Kennet downstream of Marlborough) reflecting the past use of the river to supply water to an extensive network of water meadows and mills, most of which are now disused. Upper winterbourne sections and winterbourne tributaries, flowing only during winter and spring when groundwater levels are at their highest.</i>	This special quality is characteristic of the chalk river systems of the North Wessex Downs, notably the Kennet downstream of Marlborough and its winterbourne tributaries, which lie over 20 km to the south-west of the draft Order limits. The Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), is not part of these river landscapes and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Clear natural water fed from the chalk aquifer by springs which issue in the valleys of the chalk dip slope at the point where the water table comes to the surface. Limited fluctuations in water temperature throughout the year, resulting from the filtration of groundwater as it percolates through the chalk</i>	This special quality is characteristic of the chalk dip slope valleys of the North Wessex Downs, where springs emerge from the chalk aquifer to feed chalk streams with clear, temperature-stable water. These chalk valleys are interspersed throughout the North Wessex Downs and the Site, located within a clay vale below the Downs (outside of the National Landscape), is not part of these landscapes, no works would affect these features, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
Theme: Development	
<i>Landscape character types:</i>	
<i>The Open Downland, Downland with Woodland and High Chalk Plain areas are generally very sparsely populated, containing scattered isolated farms, equestrian establishments or small hamlets sheltering in the dry valleys and folds of the chalk upland.</i>	This special quality relates to the pattern of sparse settlement within the chalk upland landscapes of the North Wessex Downs. Small parts of the Open Downland and Downland with Woodland occur within the southern edge of the study area along the Ridgeway, but settlement is extremely limited and defined by long-established historical patterns, and both are upwards of 4km from the draft Order limits. Although the Project may be perceptible in some distant views, it would not alter the settlement pattern of the uplands, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Wooded Plateau contains a distinct pattern of settlement comprising a remote 'uninhabited' western plateau, smaller settlements such as Froxfield and a concentration of villages in the east of the area, in the valley of the River Dun.</i>	This special quality relates to distinctive settlement patterns within the Wooded Plateau Landscape Character Type, particularly around the River Dun valley and the uninhabited western plateau. These areas lie well to the south of the study area, over 20 km from the draft Order limits, and have no intervisibility with the Project. The Project would not alter or influence the settlement patterns of the Wooded Plateau, and there is therefore no pathway for it to influence this special quality.
<i>The Vales are settled landscapes with a concentration of compact small towns, clustered villages, hamlets and</i>	This special quality relates to the dense and varied settlement patterns of the Vales and River Valleys within the North Wessex Downs, including compact towns and

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>many dispersed residential and farm buildings, while the River Valleys display a concentration of nucleated and linear settlement including tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and market towns.</i>	nucleated villages. Only a very small part of the Thames Valley vale landscape lies at the eastern edge of the study area, approximately 5 km from the draft Order limits, and the characteristic settlements are concentrated further east and south. The Project would not alter or influence these settlement patterns, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
The Lowland Mosaic remains one of the most densely settled Landscape Character Types, with a diverse range of settlements ranging from large manor houses, villages, numerous hamlets and lines of houses along the roads and lanes.	This special quality highlights the concentration of varied settlement patterns within the Lowland Mosaic Landscape Character Type, particularly in areas east of Newbury and the lower Kennet Valley, around 25 km south of the draft Order limits. While villages, hamlets, manor houses and linear settlement along roads also occur in the study area, they are not the specific ones which support this special quality, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Distinctive architectural styles that vary throughout the AONB but within specific areas create a sense of place and vernacular local character due to the availability of local building materials and traditional building styles. This includes traditional knapped flint and brick, timber-framed farm buildings, thatch and tiled roofs, use of Sarsen Stone, blue flint and tile, and clunch and cobb walls.</i>	This special quality refers to the distinctive vernacular architecture created by locally available building materials across different parts of the North Wessex Downs. While there are villages within the study area which fall within the North Wessex Downs and contain some of these traditional building styles (e.g. East Ginge, West Ginge, East Lockinge), they have limited intervisibility with the Project and are 2km from the draft Order limits at the nearest, at which distance there is no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>A sparse road network, but with good access from a number of economically significant towns such as Swindon, Andover, Whitchurch, Basingstoke, Reading, Devizes, Newbury and Didcot, resulting in an economy that is largely 'outward looking' towards these 'boundary towns' and beyond.</i>	This special quality relates to the pattern of a sparse internal road network within the North Wessex Downs, combined with reliance on surrounding boundary towns such as Newbury, Didcot and Reading. The Site, located in the clay vale, would not alter the overall settlement geography or transport connectivity that underpins this outward-looking economic pattern, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Within the North Wessex Downs, the traditional land based and rural economy contrasts with a growing high tech and creative sector.</i>	This special quality reflects the contrasting economic base of the North Wessex Downs, where traditional land-based activity sits alongside a developing high-tech and creative sector. The Project would not alter the balance or character of these economic sectors within the National Landscape, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
Theme: Communities	
<i>Containing a dispersed and small population spread over a large area; the majority live in the small villages and the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford, with the high downs including</i>	This special quality relates to the dispersed population pattern of the North Wessex Downs and the demographic changes observed in villages and in the market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford, which lie 20km - 30km to the southwest of the draft Order limits. The Project would

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>large expanses without any significant habitation. The number of young people within villages is declining as they relocate to areas with better service provision and cheaper housing, resulting in a higher proportion of middle-aged and elderly people.</i>	not influence settlement distribution or demographic trends within the North Wessex Downs, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Unemployment is low and economic activity rates are high, with many jobs in high value-added industries within a short journey from villages in the AONB. Swindon, Newbury and Basingstoke in particular have developed international reputations within the ICT industry with some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. The economic influence of London, the Thames Valley and north Hampshire is most keenly felt to the south-east and east of the AONB and in particular those villages with good access to mainline stations.</i>	This special quality reflects the wider economic context of the North Wessex Downs, characterised by low unemployment, high activity rates and the influence of high value-added industries in centres such as Swindon, Newbury and Basingstoke, and the Thames Valley and London commuter belt. While the Project may generate local employment opportunities, it would not alter these underlying economic patterns, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>The Armed Forces still play a significant role in the local economy, especially in places such as Tidworth and Ludgershall to the south of the AONB on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border.</i>	This special quality is associated with the concentration of military activity and related employment around Tidworth and Ludgershall, located over 40km to the south of the draft Order limits. The Project would not affect the role of the Armed Forces in the local economy, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Good access to the wider area and road network means that much of the AONB is highly accessible to commuters working in the adjacent towns. The east of the AONB – West Berkshire, Basingstoke and Deane, and South Oxfordshire – has greater pressure on housing stock and recruitment than the west of the region.</i>	This special quality relates to commuting patterns and housing pressures in the eastern parts of the North Wessex Downs, particularly West Berkshire, Basingstoke and Deane, and South Oxfordshire. Despite falling partially within the South Oxfordshire constituency to the east, the Project would not alter commuter accessibility, housing stock or recruitment pressures in these areas, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>There is a well-structured and resourced farming industry, with substantial assets of land, machinery, knowledge and entrepreneurial ability. Many examples of diversification into food processing, tourism and provision of space for economic activity can be seen across the North Wessex Downs.</i>	This special quality reflects the overall strength and diversification of the farming sector across the North Wessex Downs. While farmland within the Site will be lost to the Project, and there may be business linkages with farming enterprises in the wider National Landscape, these do not affect the capacity of the farming sector as a whole, and the Project would not influence the resilience or diversification that underpin this special quality.
<i>Villages and small towns enjoy a strong sense of identity and wellbeing linked to</i>	This special quality reflects the way in which villages and market towns within the North Wessex Downs derive their character and identity from their historic landscape

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>the historic landscape, with active and resourceful community groups.</i>	context, including conservation areas, listed buildings, and their relationship with surrounding farmland and downland. Within the study area, a number of villages lying within the National Landscape, including Letcombe Basset, Letcombe Regis, East and West Lockinge, Ardington, East and West Hendred, East and West Ginge, and Chilton, contribute to this special quality. The closest of these villages, East Hendred, sits immediately outside of the Site to the south, and several of these villages also fall within the ZTV. However, these settlements are typically characterised by enclosed forms, narrow streets, and views that are short-range and internally focused on gardens, open spaces and historic landmarks. As a result, there is little or no visibility of the Site, and where views might occur, the Site would not form a notable part of their setting or affect the historic landscape context that underpins their sense of identity and wellbeing. The Project would therefore not materially influence the contribution these villages make to this special quality, and there is no pathway for the Project to influence it.
<i>There is a strong local resonance and affinity with the landscape of the North Wessex Downs, particularly the individual downs and river valleys, and other outstanding features.</i>	This special quality reflects the strong sense of local resonance and identity associated with the distinctive chalk downs, river valleys and landmark features of the North Wessex Downs. Communities' affinity with the landscape arises from their everyday experience of its character, including the use of public rights of way and views across the Downs, but is rooted more broadly in an awareness of belonging to the National Landscape as a whole. Within the study area, the Project is located in the vale landscape at the foot of the Downs, which is of a different character to the elevated and distinctive landscapes that underpin this special quality. Whilst there will be intervisibility between the Downs and the Site, the Project would not alter the defining features of the National Landscape that sustain this affinity. The sense of resonance and identity that communities hold with the landscape of the North Wessex Downs would therefore remain unaffected.
Theme: Tourism, Leisure and access	
<i>Some of the finest cultural landscape in England including chalk downland, river valleys, ancient woodland, historic sites. There is recognition of the landscape in literature and the arts, with locations such as Watership Down, Uffington White Horse</i>	This special quality recognises the cultural resonance of the North Wessex Downs in literature and the arts, with landmarks such as the Ridgeway, Wittenham Clumps, Watership Down and the Uffington White Horse providing enduring inspiration. Two of these celebrated locations fall within the study area, and both are approximately 6km from the draft

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
<i>and the Wittenham Clumps inspiring well known works.</i>	Order limits. The Ridgeway National Trail runs along the scarp immediately south of the Site and has been referenced in numerous works for its sense of history, remoteness and expansive views. Outward views are part of the experience of travelling along the route, and the Project may be theoretically visible in some long views' northwards. However, it would appear as a very distant and barely visible element in wider panoramas and would not alter the qualities that underpin the Ridgeway's cultural recognition. The Ridgeway is also considered further in the assessment under the separate special quality relating to the rights of way network. The Wittenham Clumps are a distinctive and much-celebrated landmark with a strong presence in art and literature. Their cultural value stems from both their prominent wooded form and the sweeping views they afford over the Thames Valley. While the Project may be perceptible in some distant views, it would appear as a minor element and would not alter the landmark's physical character, setting or cultural associations. Other exemplars cited under this special quality, such as Watership Down and the Uffington White Horse, lie outside the study area and have no pathway for influence. Overall, the Project would not materially affect the cultural associations of the North Wessex Downs landscape that underpin this special quality.
<i>Historic attractions</i> reflecting the industrial and socioeconomic history of the area including the Kennet and Avon Canal, Didcot and Swindon Railway Museums, Crofton Beam Engines and the Wilton Windmill.	This special quality is expressed through historic visitor attractions such as the Kennet and Avon Canal, Crofton Beam Engines and Wilton Windmill, all of which lie outside the study area and are upwards of 20km from the draft Order limits. The Project would not affect these attractions or the visitor experience they provide. There is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Picturesque market towns and small villages</i> with independent shops, superb pubs, restaurants and plenty of B&Bs and hotels. A growing reputation for local food and produce.	This special quality is expressed through the market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford, both of which are upwards of 20km from the draft Order limits, and through villages across the North Wessex Downs which offer traditional pubs, accommodation and local produce. Within the study area, some villages in the National Landscape contribute to this quality, but their role as visitor destinations would not be affected by the Project. The Project also has no pathway to influence the more prominent market towns that underpin this special quality.
<i>Rich archaeological history</i> and evidence of our ancestors that can be found in greater concentrations than in much of the rest of the country.	This special quality reflects the exceptionally high density of archaeological remains across the North Wessex Downs, including nationally important prehistoric landscapes such as Avebury, Silbury Hill and associated

Special Quality	Rationale for scoping out
	monuments. These lie well outside the study area, approximately 40 km from the draft Order limits, and while archaeological assets exist locally, the Project would not affect the concentrations of heritage features that underpin this special quality, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>Great country houses at Highclere, Basildon Park, Littlecote and Ashdown and the medieval, Norman and Saxon churches.</i>	This special quality relates to the concentration of notable historic houses and churches within the North Wessex Downs, including Highclere Castle (c. 30 km south of the draft Order limits), Basildon Park (c. 20 km east), Littlecote House (c. 20 km west) and Ashdown House (c. 15 km northeast). None of these sites lie within the study area, and the Project would not affect their setting or visitor experience. While medieval and later churches are present in villages within the study area, their contribution to this special quality would not be altered by the Project, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.
<i>A 'hot spot' for antiques between the towns of Hungerford, Marlborough and the village of Pewsey.</i>	This special quality is specific to the antiques trade centred on Hungerford, Marlborough and Pewsey, located between 20–40 km to the southwest of the draft Order limits. The Project would not affect the antiques businesses or visitor appeal of this area, and there is therefore no pathway for the Project to influence this special quality.

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It should be noted that the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) has recently rebranded as the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP). Guidance that was historically published by IEMA is still referenced under that institute name.

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