

Lambourn Neighbourhood Development Plan

Advice from West Berkshire Council Archaeology

Assessment of Archaeological Potential

Lambourn parish can be said to have some of the highest archaeological potential in West Berkshire, partly due to its occupation and exploitation by humans for thousands of years (see Statement of Significance below) but also because of its largely rural nature with limited modern development. In terms of nationally designated heritage, it has 137 [Listed Buildings](#), the second largest number after Newbury, which has a much larger built up area. For [Scheduled Monuments](#), it leads West Berkshire parishes with 21 scheduled areas (the number of individual monuments such as barrows within these areas is much higher, but in the case of Membury Hillfort there is double counting with a Wiltshire reference). There are no [Registered Parks and Gardens](#) apart from a sliver of the landscape around Ashdown House in Oxfordshire, and no [Registered Battlefields](#), but the number of non-designated heritage assets in the parish could be considered to be very high. This includes nationally important archaeology that isn't scheduled, this designation being discretionary, as well as unrecognised important buildings, structures and areas. No heritage assets of local interest have yet been added to West Berkshire's [Local List](#). Even within the plough-soil that lies over cropmarked features there is a high potential of recovering artefacts of national or local importance, which emphasises why anyone finding such objects should report them to the [Portable Antiquities Scheme](#). Though Lambourn has attracted archaeological attention, much of the parish has never been subject to intrusive excavation.

Statement of Significance

Statement of significance of the NDP area (described here as 'Lambourn') in each period from the Mesolithic to the Modern – archaeological remains from earlier than the Mesolithic period are occasionally discovered but will not be in situ, ie will be redeposited artefacts. The date ranges of the periods below are approximate, with overlap clearly occurring.

Mesolithic (10,000 BC – 4,001 BC)

A few flint tools assigned to this period have been recovered but not in great concentrations. It seems unlikely there is much potential in most of the parish, but the recent chance discovery of Britain's oldest piece of carved wood in Boxford suggests that the lower parts of the Lambourn river valley could possibly hold organic remains.

Neolithic (4,000 – 2,351 BC)

Lambourn has the important but sadly diminished long barrow at the head of a now dry valley, the first large monument near which other funerary monuments were later constructed (the widespread 'Seven Barrows' cemetery). There is other evidence of Neolithic burials, and several findspots of Neolithic flint tools, but settlements are elusive. A cropmark on Eastbury Fields may represent a second long barrow, and some round barrows may have originated in the Late Neolithic period. There is moderate potential for more discoveries.

Bronze Age (2,350 – 801 BC)

Lambourn is extremely significant for this prehistoric period, with large numbers of funerary monuments known from upstanding barrows and

cropmarked ring ditches, the vast majority of which have not been excavated. The archaeological potential is high. The rich hoard of gold armlets and bracelets found at Crow Down is of Middle Bronze Age date, and a likely Late Bronze Age settlement was discovered at Weathercock Hill. There are several linear earthworks which may have defined 'ranch' boundaries, and which could be of Late Bronze Age origin.

Iron Age (800 BC – 42 AD)

The linear bank and ditches may have continued to form boundaries in the landscape in the Iron Age; another large-scale construction was the hillfort at Membury, part of which is now within Lambourn parish. By the later Iron Age there was widespread arable cultivation, seen in the so called 'Celtic fields' that until the mid-20th century were often visible as earthwork lynchets on the Downs but have since been reduced to cropmarks or soilmarks through modern agriculture. The significance and potential for this later prehistoric period, overlapping with the Bronze Age, is high.

Romano-British (43 – 409 AD)

This is also an important archaeological period for Lambourn, with the Roman road of Ermin Street (closely aligned with the B4000) running northwest towards Cirencester, a complex of Roman buildings at Maddle Farm and other likely settlements at Baydon Road and Stancombe Down. There have been finds of Roman structures and artefacts in Lambourn town and burials in Upper Lambourn and at Kingsdown. Roman material is widespread across the parish, and there is likely to have been some continuous use of the fields from the Late Iron Age to the Romano-British periods.

Early Medieval/ Anglo-Saxon (401 – 1065 AD)

Lambourn's large parish size (the largest in the pre-1974 Berkshire county) has been suggested to originate in Roman or even earlier land divisions, but its development as a Hundred (incorporating East Garston) and as an ecclesiastical parish perhaps with a minster is linked to its high significance in the early medieval period. The Saxons are known to have utilised the Lambourn valley at an early date, with a 5th to 6th century pagan cemetery discovered at East Shefford (there is also some evidence for secondary burials at Sevenbarrows). The rare sunken featured buildings found during the development of Oaksey House in Lambourn may be as early as the 5th century, though could also be two or three centuries later – dating was problematic. But Lambourn's mention in King Alfred's will in 888 AD also indicates its status, perhaps as a site of royal residence. The oval enclosure within Lambourn's plan form is noteworthy and still retains archaeological potential, despite the 20th century infilling of the grounds of the demolished Lambourn Place within it. The Domesday Survey mentions the church and two mills in Lambourn; one mill was probably in Newbury Street but the other was upstream at an unknown exact location. The manor of Bockhampton was also in existence in Saxon times.

Medieval (1066 – 1539 AD)

Much of the structure and layout of surviving historic settlement in the parish of Lambourn was laid down in the medieval period and the late 11th century is when the first documentary evidence appears for the two other important villages of Upper Lambourn and Eastbury, though these may have developed earlier. Also of medieval origin or later Saxon origin were the surrounding open fields that would have been divided into strips and worked communally. The parish's Grade I listed building, St Michael and All Angels Church, is

described as one of the most impressive churches in Berkshire, and there are Grade II* listed medieval crosses in the centre of Lambourn and Eastbury. Lambourn town was important enough to have a fair and market. There were several medieval manors, with Manor Farmhouse at Eastbury being a particular important survival. Timber framed buildings may be as early as the 16th century, particularly those with cruck frames such as at Upper Lambourn.

Post-medieval (1540 – 1900 AD)

Much more heritage is upstanding and visible from this period, greatly adding to the character of Lambourn particularly in the form of vernacular buildings. This includes many 18th and 19th century farmsteads and outfarms (although few are in agricultural use), but also almshouses, chapels, schools and inns. This period also saw the beginning of the racehorse industry and the creation of gallops but there have already been losses in historic buildings associated with stables and their owners. Industrial sites would have been small scale and remains are few. The significance of this period is primarily local.

Modern (1901 – Present)

Lambourn parish's only area of parkland is at Inholmes, surrounding a listed Edwardian house, on the site of an older building. The creation of a Second World War airfield at Membury has left some buildings and structures from the dispersed sites, although these are increasingly being demolished for development. Much of the modern development within the parish is not of high significance, though there are some architecturally interesting buildings on the Downs such as at Sheepdrove.

Summary of historic character and research questions

Report summarising the surviving historic character of the area. Suggested further research to better inform future development

It is difficult to condense the historic character of such a large parish into a few sentences, and more detail is available in the Historic Environment Character Zoning Project documents (Historic Environment Character Areas or HECAs with nested Zones or HECZs). At a broad level there is a distinct difference in character between the Lambourn Valley HECA with nucleated settlements concentrated in the valley floor, and a very open feel with few woods, and the Wooded Downs Plateau HECA to the south, with a dispersed settlement pattern including many farms, small scale enclosures and a greater coverage of trees. This differing pattern may date back millennia.

The HECZ documents list research questions and these are used by any archaeological contractor undertaking investigations, including for development and land-use changes. Some of the most significant questions to be answered include understanding the chronology from Romano-British to Saxon activity in the parish, and whether there was any continuity or a clear divide. Finding any evidence of an early medieval royal establishment would be another aim, particularly in and around the oval enclosure in Lambourn itself. Recent work in Upper Lambourn suggests a Roman settlement was nearby, and there should be many other contemporary farms in line with the extensive field systems on the Downs. There may be others related to the Roman road Ermin Street crossing the southern part of the parish.

There is other information gathering and research that could be undertaken in line with the production of the Neighbourhood plan, and much advice on this is given in

Historic England's publication and webpages - <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/improve-your-neighbourhood>. The three Conservation Areas are in need of appraisals and management plans, and whilst this may be outside the scope of the NDP, it should be an aspiration to get these undertaken. Preliminary research can give a better evidence base – I note that much historical material is now being collated on the village website <https://lambourn.org/history/>. Undertaking a survey of designated buildings and structures and their condition would be one useful piece of research; another would be identifying non-designated heritage assets which could be candidates for the Local List – there must be hundreds in a parish as large and historic as Lambourn. The NDP would be an excellent place to note these buildings, features and places that are valued by the community, particularly ones located outside Conservation Areas.

Opportunities to enhance the historic environment

Suggestions of where opportunities may exist to enhance or restore the historic environment through development

The Historic Environment Character Zone (HECZ) documents give pointers as to their Conservation Issues and common threads are:

- Modern development is eroding character
- More detail is needed on the historic building stock to ensure appropriate policies are put in place to conserve this resource – this is not confined to Lambourn, Upper Lambourn and Eastbury and would also apply to the areas of scattered settlement and old farms.
- There is a need to ensure that any new tree planting avoids the visually and archaeologically erosive impacts of recent plantations.
- Ancient woodland has not been well managed in recent years and this poses a threat to its survival.
- Intensive modern agriculture threatens the resource on buried archaeological sites

One of the most striking conclusions from the HLC project relates to the perception of downland within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Despite its name being the North Wessex Downs, with the particular belt of chalkland here also being referred to as the Lambourn Downs, there is very little true downland left, ie what was classified as *Open areas of close-cropped chalk grassland, used as grazing for animals, mostly sheep*. This land use would have been part of the common grazing regime that operated in many Downs parishes, particularly Lambourn, in the medieval period but was subject to Parliamentary Enclosure and then reorganisation in the 20th century with a change to more intensive arable cultivation. There was a strong correlation between the survival of prehistoric and Roman archaeology and the downland land use. Reversion from arable to pasture would be beneficial for any remaining below ground archaeological features, and re-creation of species rich grassland would have multiple benefits for biodiversity and probably carbon capture as well.

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