



**Upper
Stanbridge
Farm, Sherston,
Wiltshire**

**Landscape and
Visual Baseline
Appraisal**

Prepared by:
**The Environmental
Dimension
Partnership Ltd**

On behalf of:
**STANBRIDGE
PARK (SHERSTON)
LIMITED, a
subsidiary of the
Acorn Property
Group**

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Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology

Introduction

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by STANBRIDGE PARK (SHERSTON) LIMITED, a subsidiary of the Acorn Property Group ('the applicant'), to undertake a Landscape and Visual Baseline Appraisal (LVBA) of the proposals at Upper Stanbridge Farm, Sherston, Wiltshire ('the site'), to inform planning proposals and accompany a detailed planning application for the site.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cardiff, Shrewsbury and Cirencester. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website www.edp-uk.co.uk.
- 1.3 This LVBA baseline report has been undertaken to inform the consideration of the site at Upper Stanbridge Farm, Sherston, Wiltshire ('the site') for residential development and to support its promotion through the Neighbourhood Plan process. **Plan EDP L1** illustrates the location of the site and its boundaries. The site is located on the western edge of the village, to the north side Green Lane, and is within the Wiltshire Local Planning Authority (LPA) area. The site comprises a large agricultural field, lying to the immediate north and west of the village school and to the west of modern development at Butlers Close.

Purpose

- 1.4 The purpose of this baseline report is to identify the existing conditions of the site and its surrounding area, to inform the design layout and appearance of emerging proposals. This work will also identify any mitigation measures which should be incorporated into the scheme to ensure its landscape and visual effects are minimised.

Methodology Adopted for the Assessment

- 1.5 Landscape and visual assessment is comprised of a study of two separate but inter-linked issues:
 - Landscape character is the physical make up and condition of the landscape itself, and arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects; and
 - Visual amenity is the way in which the site is seen; views to and from the site, their direction, character and sensitivity to change.

- 1.6 **Section 2** addresses baseline landscape character issues, whilst visual amenity issues are addressed in **Section 3**. The potential landscape and visual effects arising from development of the site are considered in **Section 4**, along with recommendations to inform any future design process.
- 1.7 This proposal is not subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The LVBA has therefore been undertaken in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)' (GLVIA3), insofar as it is relevant to non EIA schemes and is considered proportional to the potential development being considered. The criteria referred to, but not defined within the guidelines, have been defined by EDP as set out in **Appendix EDP 2**.

Study Area

- 1.8 To establish the baseline and potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales.
- 1.9 A broad study area was adopted, as shown on **Plan EDP L1**, enabling the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined and provided the wider geographical context of the study. The search focussed on the local planning policy context, on identifying national and local landscape and other associated designations (e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), historic parks and gardens), and providing a general geographical understanding of the site and its broader context (for example, in relation to landform, transport routes and the distribution and nature of settlement). Such contextual details are identified on **Plan EDP L2**.

Section 2

Baseline Conditions: Landscape Resource

- 2.1 EDP has undertaken a review of local landscape character, which included a site visit by an experienced, chartered landscape architect in March 2018. This section of the report provides a summary of the findings of that visit, plus the results of a desk based review of relevant policy and publications. Where necessary, the relevance of the published character assessments to the local landscape is commented on below. Extracts of key characteristics, to assist with understanding the baseline position, are contained in **Appendix EDP 3**.

Site Description

- 2.2 The site is located to the western edge of Sherston, to the north side of Green Lane. The site would be accessed from Green Lane, via the existing field entrance. An aerial photograph of the site is provided as **Plan EDP L1**.
- 2.3 The site is presently in arable use, with the entire field ploughed at the time of the site visit in March. The boundaries of the site are formed via a combination of hedges and fences – the latter generally of timber or post and wire construction to the rear of Butlers Close, Saxon Close and Knockdown Road to the east and post and rail to the sports fields which lie to the north.



Photo EDP 2.1: View across the site from the north-west corner towards existing housing on Butlers Close.

- 2.4 According to the ecological report, prepared by Focus Ecology Ltd, the hedgerows to the south of the site are species rich while those to the north are species poor. The northern half of the western boundary is completely open.
- 2.5 The western and southern boundary hedges incorporate a number of mature trees, predominantly Poplar in the western boundary and Cherry in the southern. A separate tree survey to BS5837 should be undertaken to consider what constraint these may pose to development in the context of any future application.
- 2.6 In broad terms, the site has a gentle slope from its north west to the south east. The upper north-western corner lies at circa 126m above Ordnance Datum (Aod), while the south lies at circa 117 aOD. There is however a slightly more pronounced slope over the southern half of the site, with flatter land to the north.
- 2.7 There is a Public Right of Way (PRoW) crossing the site from a stone stile at the south-west corner, running along the western boundary and exiting at the base of the water tower to the north-west corner. This footpath affords open views across the whole of the site area and over expansive areas of the open countryside to the west and south. Views within the site are dominated by the rear elevations of existing housing and the school to the east. The footpath, and effects on the amenity of its users, will need careful consideration in the design of development.



Photo EDP 2.2: View northwards along the PRoW towards the water tower. The footpath identifies the open boundary with the unploughed field to the west.

- 2.8 The site is overlooked, from their rear elevations, by approximately nineteen residential properties on Butlers Close, Saxon Close and Knockdown Road to the east. Properties on Butlers Close and Saxon Close are modern 21st century houses built in a Cotswold style

using reconstituted stone. The houses to Knockdown Road are older, appearing to date from the late 20th century and have rendered facades.



Photo EDP 2.3: Properties on Saxon Close.



Photo EDP 2.4: Housing on Knockdown Road.

2.9 To the south of Saxon Close lies the village school – a relatively new single storey construction again using reconstituted Cotswold Stone. The school has a playground and

playing field to the north, separated from the site by a low hedge and post and rail fencing (combined).



Photo EDP 2.5: The view of the school (right) from the PRoW within the site, with the village centre in the background identified by the Church tower.

- 2.10 At the north-western corner of the site (just beyond its boundary) stands a water tower. This is of concrete construction, circa 15m tall, standing on multiple legs and supports many aerials/antennae. It is a detractive feature within the landscape but does assist in identifying the location of the site and indeed the location of Sherston itself, in views from the wider landscape (explored in the Visual section).

National Character Assessment

- 2.11 At the national level, the site lies in the Cotswolds National Character Area (NCA 107). While the description is broadly representative of the wider landscape, it is too generic to provide specific characterisation of the site. This is unsurprising as the national characterisation provides a broad framework for more detailed landscape character assessments.
- 2.12 For the scale of the development proposed, it is considered that the description of landscape character undertaken at the sub-regional level is more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline. Accordingly, while NCA 107 has been used to inform this LVBA it will not be carried forward to detailed assessment of effects, with the focus being on local landscape character areas.

Local Landscape Character Assessments

Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005)

- 2.13 A review of the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005), identifies that the site is located within the 16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands landscape type, the location of which is illustrated on the image below.

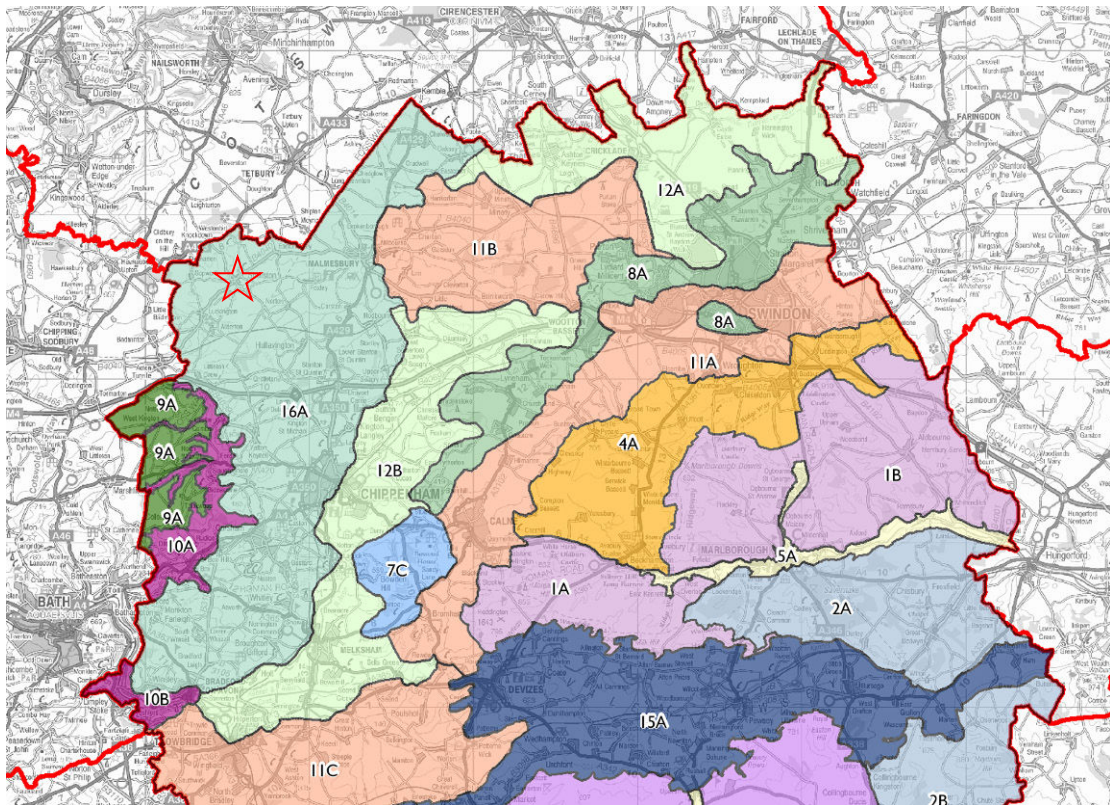


Figure EDP 2.1: Extract of Figure 19 of the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005). The location of the site is identified within Landscape Type 16a by the red star.

- 2.14 Having reviewed the findings of the assessment, the following key characteristics described were found to be consistent with the area around the site:
- *“Gently undulating lowland farmland over underlying geology of predominantly mudstone and limestone with some pockets of clay.*
 - *A peaceful and rural landscape with subtle variations in character relating to the varied geology, topography and water courses.*
 - *Mix of permanent pasture and arable farmland.*
 - *Strong network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees.*
 - *Dry stone walls field boundaries in some areas and around settlements.*
 - *Field pattern predominantly large geometric field typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure with small scale irregular fields of medieval pattern close to settlement.*

- *More open areas of higher ground to the west offer panoramic views over the type, elsewhere occasional woodland blocks, copses and frequent hedgerow trees give a greater sense of enclosure, with intermittent views.*
- *Numerous rivers forming shallow valleys, with the watercourses sometimes lined with willows.*
- *Settlements in the form of historic market towns, villages and scattered farmsteads distributed throughout the type linked by network of rural roads.*
- *Traditional buildings of local limestone buildings an outstanding feature.*
- *Presence of historic parkland and estates marked by stone estate walls, grand entrances and parkland trees and avenues.”*

2.15 These key characteristics are broadly applicable to the site. This is certainly, in the wider sense, a peaceful and rural landscape, though in the immediate vicinity of the site it is of course strongly influenced by the proximity of the existing settlement, though this does have a rural character itself. The one characteristic which appears less relevant to the site is the final one, with the site having no obvious relationship with ‘historic parkland’ or the other features mentioned.

North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2004)

- 2.16 Although the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment is more focussed (on the north of the county) and was prepared by White Consultants on behalf of the planning authority (and as such gives further indication of the baseline position), the report is older than the Wiltshire assessment, dating to 2004.
- 2.17 A review of the document identifies that it defines a series of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) across the north of the county and then a series of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The site lies within the Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT and the Sherston Dipslope LCA. At 4.135 of the character assessment, the description of the LCA acknowledges that *‘The remoteness and openness of much of this area means that only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts’*.

Planning Policy and Designations

National Designations

- 2.18 The site lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONB is a statutory national designation and subject to the highest level of protection from inappropriate development and other impacts.
- 2.19 The National Planning Policy Framework provides protection for AONB’s at paragraph 115 and 116 as follows:

'115. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

116. Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'*

2.20 The Cotswold Conservation Board advises local authorities on any applications within (or in proximity to) the AONB and has a statutory obligation to publish the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan which defines its approach to protecting, conserving and enhancing the AONB, and sets out a series of policies to enable this.

2.21 Of these, those relating specifically to the protection of landscape are LP1 and LP2 as follows:

- LP1: The key characteristics, principal elements, and special qualities (including tranquillity), which form the natural beauty of the Cotswolds landscape are conserved and where possible enhanced.*
- LP2: Development proposals and changes in land use and management, both within and outside the AONB, take account of guidance and advice published by the Board.*

2.22 The site's location within the AONB implies a greater degree of sensitivity. Which will need to be considered in the assessment on the effects of any development on landscape character. The design of any scheme needs to reflect the baseline condition of the existing rural settlement of which it will become a part and ensure the key characteristics which define the site, the village and its environs are not harmed by the proposals.

Local Policy

2.23 A review of local planning policy has identified that the site is not subject to any additional local landscape designations.

2.24 The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) provides for general protection of landscape character via Core Policy 51. This states, in summary, that *'Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful*

impact upon landscape character’ and ‘negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures’.

- 2.25 The policy goes on to suggest a range of ‘aspects of landscape character’ which should be conserved and enhance (where possible), as follows:
- i. *“The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies.*
 - ii. *The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings.*
 - iii. *The separate identity of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe.*
 - iv. *Visually sensitive skylines, soils, geological and topographical features.*
 - v. *Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value.*
 - vi. *Important views and visual amenity.*
 - vii. *Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.*
 - viii. *Landscape functions including places to live, work, relax and recreate.*
 - ix. *Special qualities of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the New Forest National Park” (these are not considered relevant here).*

- 2.26 The core strategy also seeks the protection of the Green Infrastructure of the county via Policy 52: Green infrastructure which states, in summary, that ‘Development shall make provision for the retention and enhancement of Wiltshire’s green infrastructure network, and shall ensure that suitable links to the network are provided and maintained’. This, in many ways, overlaps with the requirements of Core Policy 51 to protect the various aspects of landscape character.

Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.27 The first draft of the Sherston Neighbourhood Plan 2006 to 2026 (SNP) was published for consultation in February 2018. The Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges (at paragraph 3.7) that as a ‘Large Village’ (as identified in the Core Strategy) ‘it is likely to come under more development pressure than the surrounding villages and hamlets’ and that, therefore, ‘a plan is needed specifically to address the issues that are likely to come from this functional role and take forward necessary growth in a manner that is sustainable and acceptable to the community’.

- 2.28 The SNP sets out a series of key objectives which were developed following extensive community engagement. Objective 2 is pertinent to landscape and visual matters and states:

‘The Plan will ensure that all future development in the village:

- *Respects the high quality of the local environment by employing the use of building materials in sympathy with the Cotswold AONB;*
- *Is of the highest quality of design – utilising wherever possible traditional styles and proportions;*

- *Safeguarding those parts of the settlement that have been identified as being worthy of protection from development by reason of their landscape quality, ecological importance, historic interest or local significance.'*

2.29 The SNP identifies area of open space (indicated on Proposals Map 6), the 'distinctive character or integrity' of which is protected via Policy 2. None of these areas comprises part of the site, though the Avon valley and Scheduled Earthworks to the south are identified in this manner.

2.30 Proposals Map 7 identifies the boundaries of the site and Policy 4 allocates it for mixed use development. Policy 4 requires that the scheme provides for:

'a mixed use development to include the following:

- *Sufficient land for the erection of a new enhanced GP surgery with associated parking and space for related mobile services;*
- *Sufficient land to allow for the future expansion of the existing Sherston C of E Primary School and staff parking together with a site suitable for the erection of a new pre-school facility with associated parking;*
- *Up to 45 dwellings to serve diverse residential needs of which 40% would be affordable housing (as required by Core Strategy Policy 43); and*
- *Strategic landscaping and open space to retain and reinforce existing hedgerows, and to establish new areas of substantial planting and landscaping so as to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the AONB.'*

2.31 The policy goes on:

'Development will be subject to the following requirements:

1. *Surface water management that can achieve less than current greenfield rates of run-off and decreases flood risks;*
2. *The provision of footpath links to both the proposed new surgery site and the western edge of the existing primary school as well as to the existing Parish playing fields to the north; and*
3. *A design and layout that protects and preserves the character of the settlement and is consistent with the surrounding AONB. All aspects of development will take place in accordance with a Masterplan for the site which is to be approved by the Council prior to the submission of a detailed planning application.'*

2.32 Given that the SNP has already been subject to considerable consultation, there is a clear indication that, in the context of the need to provide more houses within the settlement, the community feel this is a potentially viable option. The SNP acknowledges the potential landscape and visual effects of a scheme here and demands design and mitigation which acknowledges and responds to this appropriately.

The Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource

- 2.33 GLVIA3 sets out the requirements for considering sensitivity of landscape resources at paragraphs 5.39 to 5.47, and states here that *'Landscape receptors need to be assessed firstly in terms of their sensitivity, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape'*. The 'susceptibility' and 'value' of those receptors identified above are therefore considered in the following text.

Susceptibility of the Landscape

- 2.34 The susceptibility of the landscape resource is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects), to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.
- 2.35 Given the current condition and character of the site, as described above, it is considered that the site has a **low susceptibility** to residential development. The site has a strong visual and physical relationship with the existing settlement, including the school to the east and the playing field to the north. Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan Group's own evidence base acknowledges that the effects of such development would be limited; a study of the potential development sites around the village, undertaken by Foxley Tagg to inform the SNP states that the *'Overall Suitability'* of the site is *'Good. Would represent an appropriate extension of the village envelope with minimal visual impact'*.
- 2.36 In respect of the wider landscape context of the site, this is considered to have **high susceptibility**, given that this is a predominantly rural landscape with relatively sparse settlement pattern and very limited intervisibility between settlements. The scheme proposals need to be cautious about the effects on the character of this wider landscape and mitigate the potential visual influence of new development on the site (see recommendations in **Section 4**).

Value of the Landscape: Site and Local Context

- 2.37 When considering landscape value, GLVIA advocates that the starting point should be a review of existing landscape designations, including those at a local and national level, to identify if it is valued sufficiently to warrant a greater level of protection. In this instance the site is within the AONB – the highest level of landscape protection which can be afforded. It is however, also relevant to understand the extent to which the site has value based on its characteristics as described above. In this sense, its proximity to and association with the existing built form of the village partially de-sensitises it to development (as compared to, say, an undeveloped area of open countryside with the AONB).
- 2.38 Beyond the potentially very high value which the AONB designation ascribes to the site, the process and criteria for understanding landscape value and the extent, is described within the assessment methodology at **Appendix EDP 1**. With reference to the criteria

which indicate value as defined within Box 5.1 of GLVIA3, examination of the site's characteristics (with reference to the local context), suggests that it warrants a **high** value on the basis that:

- *Landscape Quality* - the site has limited landscape features of note, with the species rich hedges perhaps its best features. The wider landscape does contain features of significant value however, including the topography of the nearby Avon Valley, the Scheduled Earthworks to the south and the historic village core (with numerous Listed Buildings generally of the Cotswold vernacular) to the south east;
- *Scenic quality* - the site lies in an attractive landscape context, though in itself is lacking in features of particular note and is heavily influenced by the existing settlement edge and the overshadowing water tower;
- *Rarity* - the site offers little by way of 'rare' features;
- *Representativeness* - the site is not especially representative of the wider landscape character, nor does it particularly conflict with it;
- *Conservation Interested* - the site offers no particular ecological or heritage interest but the site context contains heritage features of note, including Scheduled Earthworks to the south;
- *Recreational Value* - the site contains a PRow forming part of the local network around the village and is clearly used for recreational purposes, though this is limited to the alignment of the path itself, with the remainder of the site regularly cropped. The proximity to the playing fields to the north and the school to the south east provides further potential for the site to support recreational activity (even if just as a connection between these two features);
- *Perceptual Aspects* - the perception of the site is impacted by its proximity to the village edge and, in visual terms, by the adjacent water tower which is in incongruous and imposing feature. The village as a whole however does have the appearance of a peaceful, attractive rural settlement and any development in the site will need to reflect this; and
- *Associations* - EDP is not aware of any cultural or historic associations relating to the site.

2.39 Based on the above, the wider landscape around the site is considered to be of **very high** value, being within the AONB and with few detractors. The site however, given its relatively limited landscape features and the influence of the existing village and the water tower, is considered to be worthy of down grading to no more than the **high value** stated above.

2.40 Given the susceptibilities identified earlier in this section, the sensitivity of the landscape to potential residential development is considered to be **medium** for the site itself and **very high** for the wider landscape of the AONB.

Value of the Landscape: Fabric

- 2.41 Earlier in this section, the site was reviewed for conformity against the key characteristics of the published landscape character assessments and in the context of the physical features it contains. This review shows that those key landscape features with the potential to be impacted by the proposals are really limited to the hedgerows of the site and its views over the wider landscape available from the PRow in the north.
- 2.42 These landscape elements are considered to have a **low susceptibility** to residential development and a **medium value** based upon their quality, condition and contribution to the wider value of the site as defined within the discussion above. Overall, the landscape fabric of the site is considered to have a **low** sensitivity to future residential development, with boundary hedges readily capable of being assimilated into a scheme (and to be better managed as a result).

Section 3

Baseline Conditions: Visual Amenity

Introduction

- 3.1 This section identifies those visual receptors that may be able to obtain views to the application site, their distribution, character and sensitivity to change.
- 3.2 Using landform data within a Geographical Information System (GIS), EDP prepared a broad Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The ZTV is generated using landform height data only and therefore it does not account for the screening effects of intervening buildings, structures or vegetation. The ZTV was then visited by walking and driving (as appropriate) local roads, rights of way and other publicly accessible viewpoints. Through this exercise, the main visual receptors predicted to have actual visibility to the site were identified and the Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) was established.

Zone of Primary Visibility

- 3.3 The Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) is where the proposed development would be visible to the casual observer on foot, cycling, driving or travelling by train, where the views would normally be close-ranging and open; the proposal would be an obvious element of the view. Beyond this area, there is a zone of visibility which is less open, being either partly-screened or filtered. Views from within this zone would include the proposal - it may not be immediately noticeable, but once recognised would be a perceptible addition to the view. The extent of the proposal within such views would vary and, in some cases, it would be almost indistinguishable as a consequence of both increasing distance and intervening visual screening.
- 3.4 The visual appraisal **Plan EDP L2**, illustrates the main determinants of visibility to the site:
- **North:** The site is bounded by a robust hedgerow here with additional hedges in the landscape to the immediate north. This effectively limits views in this direction which are heavily filtered, if not entirely screened;
 - **East:** The site here is bounded by a combination of post and wire fence, timber fence and hedgerows. Beyond this lie existing dwellings on the northern half of the site, while the school abuts the southern half. The school and existing houses effectively block most other views from the east, though there is a framed view to the site from the entrance to the school grounds, adjacent to the allotments on Knockdown Road;
 - **South:** The southern boundary comprises mature hedgerows and an agricultural field gate providing access to the field from Green Lane/Sopworth Road. The field gate

allows for glimpsed views from passing traffic, but could offer a resting place for walkers to look over the site (though the more interesting views lie to the south); and

- **West:** The western boundary of the site is open along its northern half, allowing expansive views over the rolling Cotswold Landscape beyond, particularly towards Sopworth to the west and Knockdown to the north. However, the southern half of this boundary comprises a robust hedgerow between the site and Hillberry Lodge, the adjacent bungalow to the west. The vegetation here, and the bungalow itself (which rises above natural ground levels at its southern end), screen much of the southern half of the site in views from Green Lane/Sopworth Road when approaching from the west.

Representative Viewpoints

- 3.5 The main receptor groups have been identified and described below and are represented by the photoviewpoints (PVP) presented in **Table EDP 3.1** below.
- 3.6 Based on fieldwork observations and the findings of the data trawl, these photoviewpoints have been selected to represent the variety of views available from public vantage points towards the site. The locations of the photoviewpoints are shown on **Plan EDP L2**, while the views themselves are shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP 1** to **EDP 11**.

Table EDP 3.1: Summary of Representative Photoviewpoints

PVP. No.	Location	Distance and Direction of View	Reason(s) for selection & Sensitivity of Receptor
1	PRoW north of the site	80m north of site	Well used recreational route connecting to site PRoW network. Walkers considered to be of Very High sensitivity given location with AONB and potential for recreational activity to include enjoyment of local landscape and views.
2	South of Pyke Boarding Kennels on PRoW	225m north of site	Well used recreational route connecting site to PRoW network around the village. Walkers considered to be of Very High sensitivity given location with AONB and potential for recreational activity to include enjoyment of local landscape and views.
3	On PRoW south of the site, adjacent to Scheduled Earthworks	50m south of site	Well used recreational route in close proximity to the site and adjacent to heritage asset. Walkers considered to be of Very High sensitivity given location with AONB and potential for recreational activity to include enjoyment of local landscape and views.

PVP. No.	Location	Distance and Direction of View	Reason(s) for selection & Sensitivity of Receptor
4	Court Street	175m south east of site	On the public highway exiting the village centre in the direction of the site. Vehicle based receptors considered to be of low sensitivity and pedestrian receptors of medium sensitivity, located as they are, well within the existing built form of the village.
5	Adjacent to allotments on Knockdown Road	100m east of site	On the public highway adjacent to school entrance and allotments. Vehicle based receptors considered to be of low sensitivity and pedestrian receptors of medium sensitivity, located as they are, well within the existing built form of the village.
6	Northern edge of playing fields	145m north of site	Within publicly accessible open space used for recreational purposes. Receptors here are less likely to be here specifically to enjoy the view and, as such, are considered to be of high sensitivity despite being within the AONB.
7	Entrance to Field Barn, north of Sopworth	2,100m west of site	Potential view for vehicle based receptors or walkers on the road network. Vehicle based receptors considered to be of low sensitivity and pedestrian receptors of medium sensitivity, located as they are, on the road network rather than on well used walking routes.
8	On PRoW East of Sopworth	1,900m west of site	PRoW to the east of the church and forming part of the wider recreational network. Walkers considered to be of Very High sensitivity given location with AONB and potential for recreational activity to include enjoyment of local landscape and views.
9	On Knockdown Road, south of Knockdown Farm	2,050m north west of site	On the public highway south of Knockdown with potential for vehicle based receptors or walkers on the road network. Vehicle based receptors considered to be of low sensitivity and pedestrian receptors of medium sensitivity, located as they are, on the road network rather than on well used walking routes.

PVP. No.	Location	Distance and Direction of View	Reason(s) for selection & Sensitivity of Receptor
10	Knockdown Road intersection with Macmillan Way (national route PRoW)	930m north of site	On the public highway and a PRoW forming part of a national route. Vehicle based receptors considered to be of low sensitivity but pedestrian receptors of very high sensitivity.
11	Elevated land to south of site on PRoW	315m south of site	On a PRoW forming part of the local network around the village. Walkers considered to be of Very High sensitivity given location with AONB and likelihood that recreational activity will include enjoyment of local landscape and views.

Visual Receptors

3.7 The main receptors identified as likely to experience a material effect as a result of the proposals are listed below.

PRoW

3.8 Users of PRoW close to the site are likely to be affected, to some degree, by the development of the site:

- Users on network to the north and south of the site (represented by **Photoviewpoints 1, 2, 3, 10 and 11**); and
- Users of the footpath network to the east of Sopworth (represented by **Photoviewpoint 8**).

3.9 It should be noted that, in all the PRoW locations considered to have the potential to be affected by the development, either existing housing associated with the village is already visible or else the water tower and church tower clearly demarcate the presence of the village within the landscape.

3.10 It is considered highly unlikely that other PRoW locations have open views of the site where significant screening isn't provided by topography, development and vegetation.

3.11 Given the location of the PRoW receptors within the AONB they are generally considered to have **very high** sensitivity.

Minor Roads

3.12 Users of Green Lane/Sopworth Road to the west of the site have limited opportunity to view the site due to the screening effect of existing built form, topography and vegetation. There is limited visibility from Court Street when exiting the village centre towards the site

(represented by **Photoviewpoint 4**) and from Knockdown Road in the vicinity of the allotments and school entrance (**Photoviewpoint 5**). Further north on Knockdown Road, views are heavily filtered by intervening vegetation (**Photoviewpoints 9 and 10**)

- 3.13 Generally, road based receptors in the wider landscape are considered to have **medium** sensitivity, with those on roads within built up areas considered to be of **low** sensitivity.

Recreational Spaces

- 3.14 Users of the playing fields north of the site and within the allotments to the east have potential to have glimpsed views of the site, though the fact that they are in those locations for reasons other than specifically to enjoy the view suggests they should be considered to be of only **medium** sensitivity, despite the overarching AONB designation.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

- 3.15 This appraisal has focused on the assessment of views from publicly accessible locations. Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of **high to very high** sensitivity to changes in the view, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. Should the site come forward for development, good site masterplanning should consider the visual amenity of domestic dwellings in proximity to the proposals, along with their residential amenity in respect of privacy, noise etc.
- 3.16 Houses to the eastern edge of the site on Saxon Close, Butlers Close and Knockdown Road will have close at hand views of the new development from the rear of their properties, in particular from upper floor windows. Hillberry Lodge, the bungalow to the immediate south west, will have a similarly close proximity view.
- 3.17 Some houses on Court Street may have oblique views to the site though such views will already be dominated by views of existing development including the school. The water tower also provides a current focal point to the view.

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Section 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Development Proposals

- 4.1 The potential development of the site for residential/mixed use purposes should consider the landscape and visual sensitivities identified within this report, and seek to mitigate potential effects insofar as is possible so as to reduce these to an acceptable level.
- 4.2 With this in mind, the following recommendations are made for the design of any such scheme:
- Overall, site boundaries would benefit from enhancement on nearly all sides – there are species poor hedges to several boundaries and some are completely open. ‘Gapping up’ and new hedgerow planting should be undertaken;
 - Pedestrian movement should be considered not just with respect to the existing PRoW, but with access to the sports pitches to the north which could be facilitated from within the site, providing immediate links for its future residents and potentially connecting through the site to the primary school to the south east;
 - The linear form of the PRoW should be retained within a robust ribbon of open space along the western boundary of the site, allowing for further mitigation planting to soften the settlement edge here while also allowing the creation of a public space in which people can enjoy the visual connection with the wider countryside;
 - Built form should be carefully considered on the highest contours of the site and additional tree planting incorporated where possible to break up the mass/form of the development;
 - The lowest parts of the site are best suited to Suitable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) with some standing water (fenced off by temporary measures) seen at the time of site visit;
 - Overhead powerlines are seen on 3 sides of the site and one powerline crosses the site in the north-eastern corner – this may be a development constraint which needs re-routing or undergrounding as part of any scheme and the removal of these features from the landscape could be a positive benefit of the scheme;
 - The character and quality of any new built form should be typically Cotswold in fashion - have strong architectural merit, using local materials and building techniques (dry stone walls). This doesn’t necessarily mean it should be ‘pastiche’ – contemporary versions of the vernacular may be possible and desirable but the architectural approach should be strongly informed by a detailed understanding of

the village vernacular and high quality local materials should be used wherever possible.

Overall Preliminary Conclusions in Respect of Landscape and Visual Amenity

- 4.3 The site lies within the Cotswolds AONB which bestows a high degree of sensitivity on both its character and visual amenity of receptors in the landscape around it. The site does, however, have a strong relationship with the existing settlement and, in the context of the need to provide further housing in the village, appears to have a degree of support as a housing allocation within the draft Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.4 Perhaps of the greatest noteworthiness is the potential for the western edge of any development of the site to become visible on the skyline in views from the wider landscape to the west, particularly around Sopworth. At present, receptors here are aware of the location of Sherston in the landscape due to the visibility of the church tower and water tower. However, currently, the main body of housing of the village is not visible in these views. As such, in designing the scheme, care needs to be taken to the design of development in the north western quadrant of the site in particular and mitigation along the western edge should be significant and trees incorporated into the development parcels here to break down massing.
- 4.5 On this basis, and if most of the recommendations set out above can be integrated into the scheme, it should be possible to develop a scheme which provides new housing and other village facilities while respecting the sensitivity of the site and thereby minimising adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. Any future planning application for the site should be informed by this baseline report and proposals should be assessed against this in the form of a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Such a sensitive approach to the scheme should then be capable of satisfying the third bullet point of paragraph 116 of the NPPF (as referenced at **Section 2** of this report) and, subject to the other paragraph 116 'tests' being met, the scheme should be acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

Appendix EDP 1 Methodology

- A1.1 It should be noted that this is a baseline report only at this stage, the methodology below relates to the complete Landscape and Visual Appraisal process which will follow later (to inform any future planning application).

Recording the Baseline

Landscape Resource

- A1.2 A description of the baseline character and condition of the different landscape receptors (topography and hydrology; landscape fabric and habitats; cultural and historic landscape; perceptual and sensory), with comparison against adopted character assessment, other published characterisations or, in the absence of these, EDP's own landscape characterisation. Considerations on the value of the landscape are drawn from GLVIA3 Box 5.1.
- A1.3 When considering landscape value, GLVIA advocates that the starting point should be a review of existing landscape designations, including those at a local and national level.
- A1.4 Not being located within a designated landscape does not mean the site has no value in a landscape sense, and the GLVIA makes this clear at paragraph 3.26 where it states *"The fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value"*.
- A1.5 Presence of such associations however do not automatically mean the landscape is valued, with site specific consideration and objective assessment required in every case to determine this.
- A1.6 In the absence of national or local designation, GLVIA suggests how value might be assessed, setting out at paragraph 5.27:

"Where local designations are not in use a fresh approach may be needed. As a starting point reference to existing Landscape Character Assessments and associated planning policies and/or landscape strategies and guidelines may give an indication of which landscape types or areas, or individual elements or aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are particularly valued".
- A1.7 The GLVIA assists further in regard of assigning value. Box 5.1 on page 84 of GLVIA3 identifies eight criteria relevant to the judgements about local value and which form the basis for objective landscape assessment. These criteria are reproduced in **Table EDP A1.1**.

Table EDP A1.1: Consideration of the Site against GLVIA Value Criteria

Value Driver
<p>Landscape Quality (condition)</p> <p>A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.</p>
<p>Scenic Quality</p> <p>The term used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly to the visual senses).</p>
<p>Rarity</p> <p>The presence of rare features and elements in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type.</p>
<p>Representativeness</p> <p>Whether the landscape contains a particular character, and/or features and elements, which are considered particularly important examples.</p>
<p>Conservation Interests</p> <p>The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right.</p>
<p>Recreation Value</p> <p>Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.</p>
<p>Perceptual Aspects</p> <p>A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities and/or tranquillity.</p>
<p>Associations</p> <p>Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or event in history that contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area.</p>

Visual Amenity

- A1.8 Visual receptors are identified through theoretical visibility testing, followed by site-based recording of actual views and visual amenity. Visual amenity is described from specific locations which may also be represented by photoviewpoints. Visual amenity may also be described for part or all of a route with reference made to viewpoints that do not have views.

The Proposed Development

- A1.9 Description of the proposed development including – but not limited to - its scale, siting, layout and characteristics. This description also includes landscape mitigation measures, derived from published landscape character guidelines and if available as an illustrated plan.

Mitigation

A1.10 Mitigation measures will be described, where relevant, to demonstrate how adverse effects can be prevented/avoided, offset or remedied. These may be primary i.e. embedded into the design; part of construction and/or long term operational management practices, and/or secondary measures.

EDP Assessment of Effects

Landscape

A1.11 Description of the interactions likely to be experienced by the individual dimensions of landscape character and how this affects overall landscape character.

Visual

A1.12 Description of the interactions likely to be experienced by visual receptors at a specific point and/or in the broader context or along a route.

Assessment Criteria

A1.13 The set of tables below set out the criteria for considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptor, the magnitude of change to that receptor, and considers this with respect to landscape and visual receptors separately. These criteria are reproduced in **Tables EDP A1.2 to A1.4**.

Table EDP A1.2: Consideration of the Overall Sensitivity of Landscape Baseline

EDP Assessment Terminology and Definitions	
Landscape Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
Very High	Value: Nationally/Internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.
High	Value: Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.

EDP Assessment Terminology and Definitions	
Landscape Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
Medium	Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.
Low	Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.
Very Low	Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled / degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.

Table EDP A1.3: Consideration of the Overall Sensitivity of Visual Baseline

Visual Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
Very High	Value/Susceptibility: view is designed/has intentional association with surroundings; is recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; national/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.
	Examples: may include views from residential properties, National Trails; promoted holiday road routes; designated countryside/landscape features with public access; visitors to heritage assets of national importance; Open Access Land.
High	Value/Susceptibility: view of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PRow
	Examples: may include from recreational locations where there is some appreciation of the visual context/landscape e.g. golf, fishing; themed rights of way with a local association; National Trust land; panoramic viewpoints marked on OS maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides and/or for their scenic value.
Medium	Value/Susceptibility: view is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.
	Examples: may include people engaged in outdoor sport not especially influenced by an appreciation of the wider landscape e.g. pitch sports; views from minor road routes passing through rural or scenic areas.
Low	Value/Susceptibility: view of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.
	Examples: may include major road routes; rail routes; receptor is at a place of work but visual surroundings have limited relevance.

Very Low	Value/Susceptibility: View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.
	Examples: may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.

Table EDP A1.4: Consideration of the Magnitude of Change

Magnitude of Change	
(Considers Scale of Proposal/Geographical Extent/Duration and Reversibility/Proportion)	
Very High	Landscape: total loss/major alteration to key receptors/characteristics of the baseline; addition of elements that strongly conflict or integrate with the baseline.
	Visual: substantial change to the baseline, forming a new, defining focus and having a defining influence on the view.
High	Landscape: notable loss/alteration/addition to one or more key receptors/characteristics of the baseline; or, addition of prominent conflicting elements.
	Visual: additions are clearly noticeable and part of the view would be fundamentally altered.
Medium	Landscape: partial loss/alteration to one or more key receptors/characteristics; Addition of elements that are evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.
	Visual: the proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
Low	Landscape: minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape receptors/characteristics; Additional elements may not be uncharacteristic within existing landscape.
	Visual: proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
Very Low	Landscape: barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.
	Visual: proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline.
Imperceptible	<i>In some circumstances, changes at representative viewpoints or receptors will be lower than 'Very Low' and changes will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to negligible effects.</i>

Effects Matrix

A1.14 Based on the judgements above and the description of mitigation, the level of effect is assessed in the first year after completion of the development (year 1). This is 'the worst case' and, if necessary at 15+ years when landscape proposals function more effectively. Effects of moderate or higher may be a material consideration. The tables below set out the matrix for defining effects and also a brief description of the effect level.

Table EDP A1.5: Typical Level of Effects

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change					
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	Nil
Very High	Substantial	Major	Moderate	Minor	Minor	None
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor	Minor	None
Medium	Major	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	None
Low	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible	None
Very Low	Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	None

A1.15 The level of effect may be varied from the typical level identified above, through professional judgement informed by a consideration of specific circumstances. Such consideration will be provided within the body of text of the report.

Table EDP A1.6: Definition of Effects

Definition of Effects	
Substantial:	Changes resulting in a complete variance with the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Major:	Changes resulting in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Moderate:	A material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Minor:	A slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Negligible:	A detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource of visual amenity.
None:	No detectable change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Consequence:	Effects can be positive, adverse or neutral i.e. if no change arises
Duration:	Long term (20+ years); Medium-long term (10-20 years); Medium term (5-10 years); Short term (1 - 5 years); Temporary (>12 months); Construction.

Appendix EDP 2

Relevant Extracts from Landscape Character Assessments

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10. THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF WILTSHIRE

Introduction

The physical and cultural influences described in the previous chapters have combined to create the unique and distinctive character of Wiltshire. The area is characterised by a diversity of landscapes and these variations and differences are represented by sixteen **landscape types**.

Type 1: Open Downland	Type 9: Limestone Wold
Type 2: Wooded Downland	Type 10: Limestone Valleys
Type 3: High Chalk Plain	Type 11: Rolling Clay Lowland
Type 4: Low Chalk Plain	Type 12: Open Clay Vale
Type 5: Chalk River Valley	Type 13: Wooded Clay Vale
Type 6: Greensand Terrace	Type 14: Forest-Heathland Mosaic
Type 7: Wooded Greensand Hills	Type 15: Greensand Vale
Type 8: Limestone Ridge	Type 16: Limestone Lowlands

Each of the generic landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, biodiversity and historical evolution. The landscape types can be further sub-divided into component **landscape character areas**.

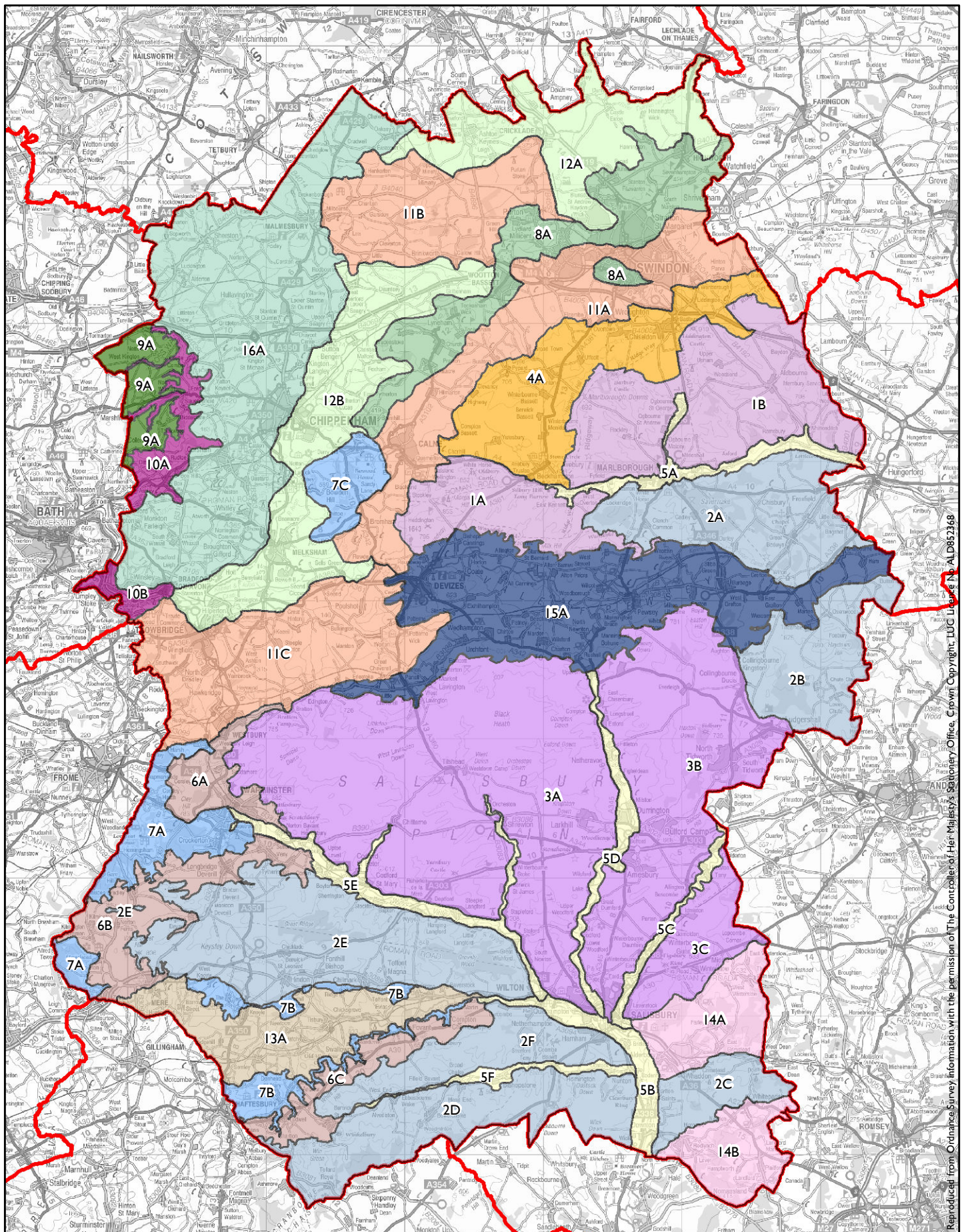
These are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. Each character area has a distinct and recognisable local identity.

The landscape classification for the District is set out in the table below and illustrated on **Figure 19**. **Figure 19** has been prepared on a Geographic Information System (GIS), with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:50,000. It should however be noted that there are subtle differences between and within the individual landscape types and character areas. The boundaries illustrated therefore usually indicate transitions rather than marked changes on the ground.

Landscape classification

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Areas
Type 1: Open Downland	
	1A: Horton Downs
	1B: Marlborough Downs
Type 2: Wooded Downland	
	2A: Savernake Plateau
	2B: Chute Forest
	2C: Witherington Wooded Downland
	2D: Cranborne Chase Wooded Downland

	2E: West Wiltshire Downs Wooded Downland
	2F: Fovant Down Wooded Downland
Type 3: High Chalk Plain	
	3A: Salisbury Plain West
	3B: Salisbury Plain East
	3C: Porton Down
Type 4: Low Chalk Plain and Scarp	
	4A: Avebury Plain
Type 5: Chalk River Valley	
	5A: Kennet Chalk River Valley
	5B: Lower Avon Chalk River Valley
	5C: Bourne Chalk River Valley
	5D: Upper Avon Chalk River Valley
	5E: Wylde Chalk River Valley
	5F: Ebbel Avon Chalk River Valley
Type 6: Greensand Terrace	
	6A: Warminster Terrace
	6B: Kilmington Terrace
	6C: Fovant Terrace
Type 7: Wooded Greensand Hills	
	7A: Longleat-Stourhead Greensand Hills
	7B: Donhead-Fovant Greensand Hills
	7C: Bowood Greensand Hills
Type 8: Limestone Ridge	
	8A: Swindon-Lyneham Limestone Ridge
Type 9: Limestone Wold	
	9A: Cotswolds Dip Slope
Type 10: Limestone Valleys	
	10A: By Brook Limestone Valley
	10B: Avon Limestone Valley
Type 11: Rolling Clay Lowland	
	11A: Calne Rolling Clay Lowland
	11B: Minety Rolling Clay Lowland
	11C: Trowbridge Rolling Clay Lowland
Type 12: Open Clay Vale	
	12A: Thames Open Clay Vale
	12B: Avon Open Clay Vale
Type 13: Wooded Clay Vale	
	13A: The Vale of Wardour
Type 14: Forest Heathland Mosaic	
	14A: Farley Forest
	14B: Landford Forest
Type 15: Greensand Vale	
	15A: The Vale of Pewsey
Type 16: Limestone Lowland	
	16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands



WILTSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Figure 19:

Landscape Character Areas

Key County Boundaries

Landscape Character Types

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Open Downland | 5 Chalk River Valley | 9 Limestone Wold | 13 Wooded Clay Vale |
| 2 Wooded Downland | 6 Greensand Terrace | 10 Limestone Valleys | 14 Forest-Heathland Mosaic |
| 3 High Chalk Plain | 7 Wooded Greensand Hills | 11 Rolling Clay Lowland | 15 Greensand Vale |
| 4 Low Chalk Plain & Scrap | 8 Limestone Ridge | 12 Open Clay Vale | 16 Limestone Lowland |

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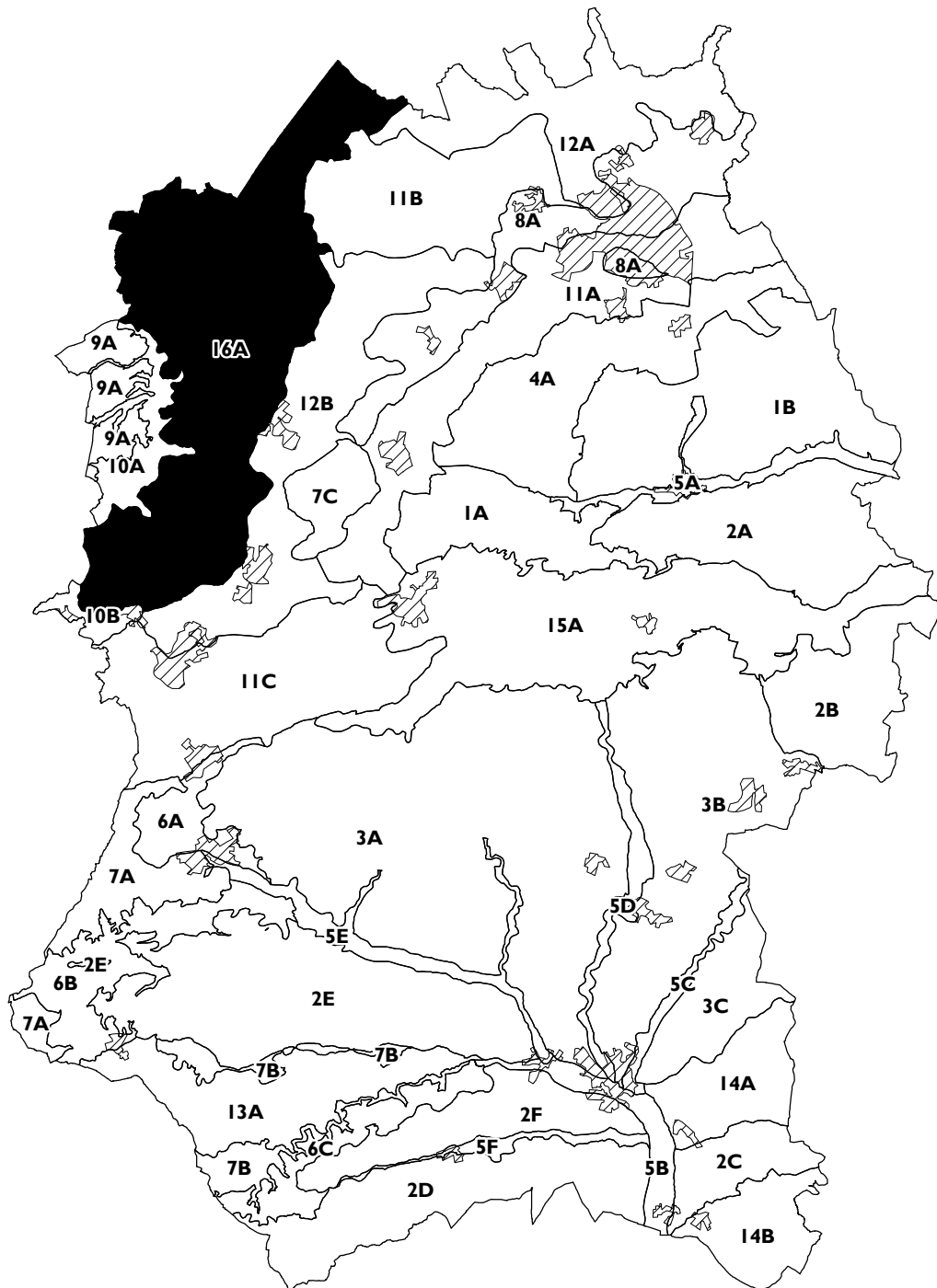


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LANDSCAPE TYPE 16: LIMESTONE LOWLAND



16: LIMESTONE LOWLAND



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

16A Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowland

 **Urban Area**

TYPE 16: LIMESTONE LOWLAND

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries

The *Limestone Lowland* Landscape Type covers a large swathe of northwest Wiltshire. The area extends from Bradford-on-Avon in the south to the Kemble Airfield in the far north. The county border constrains the area to the north and west. The boundary to the east is a less distinct transition, occurring with the change in underlying geology from limestone to clay. There is only one character area within the *Limestone Lowland* Landscape Type, 16A: *Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands*.

The western edge of the *Limestone Lowlands* Landscape Type forms part of the Cotswolds AONB.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating lowland farmland over underlying geology of predominantly mudstone and limestone with some pockets of clay.
- A peaceful and rural landscape with subtle variations in character relating to the varied geology, topography and water courses.
- Mix of permanent pasture and arable farmland.
- Strong network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Dry stone walls field boundaries in some areas and around settlements.
- Field pattern predominantly large geometric field typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure with small scale irregular fields of medieval pattern close to close to settlement.
- More open areas of higher ground to the west offer panoramic views over the type, elsewhere occasional woodland blocks, copses and frequent hedgerow trees give a greater sense of enclosure, with intermittent views.
- Numerous rivers forming shallow valleys, with the watercourses sometimes lined with willows.
- Settlements in the form of historic market towns, villages and scattered farmsteads distributed throughout the type linked by network of rural roads.
- Traditional buildings of local limestone buildings an outstanding feature.
- Presence of historic parkland and estates marked by stone estate walls, grand entrances and parkland trees and avenues.

Physical Influences

The underlying geology of the *Limestone Lowland Landscape Type* is from the Great Oolite Groups, formed in the Mid Jurassic Period. A parallel band of Forest Marble mudstone and Cornbrash limestone underlie most of the area. The boundary between these formations is irregular and intermittent occurrences of Forest Marble limestone and Kellaways clay are also apparent, to the west and east respectively. This fragmentation in underlying geology gives rise to the subtle variations in land cover and character over the type in a gradual transition from the west which is dominated by limestone to the eastern borders of Kellaways clay.

There are two SSSIs designated for their geological interest. Corsham Railway Cutting exposes an area of Forest Marble Mudstone revealing important coral 'reef knolls' of palaeontological interest and inter-reef oolitic sediment. Stanton St Quintin Quarry SSSI provides one of the country's few complete exposures of cornbrash, yielded ammonites of biostratigraphic importance.

The landform undulates, rising from around 60m to 130m AOD with an overall slope from higher ground in the west to the lower clay land to the east. Some flatter areas occur on higher ground and localised valleys associated with the numerous rivers are also evident throughout.

Biodiversity

The landscape as a whole is a valuable habitat for bats, in particular Box Hill Mine (SSSI and part of the Bradford on Avon SAC). There are several areas of ecological interest in the *Limestone Lowland Landscape Type* including three nationally important SSSIs (one of which is also a SAC) and numerous Country Wildlife Sites, often where ancient woodland or pockets of chalk grassland are present. There is also a strong network of hedgerows and frequent hedgerow and standard trees including veteran oaks, ash and willow along water courses.

Inwood SSSI is an area calcareous ash-wych elm and dry maple woodland with an extremely rich ground flora including species of plant that are nationally rare. The area also includes an area of unimproved neutral hay meadow. Harries Ground SSSI at Rodbourne is also an area of species rich neutral lowland hay meadow on an area of clay in the Avon vale.

Box Hill Mine is designated as a SSSI and as a SAC. It comprises a network of man-made tunnels which is used by bats for hibernation, mating and as a staging post prior to dispersal. Box mine seasonally supports up to 10% of the total British population of greater horseshoe bats.

County Wildlife Sites include: Stanton Park, an ancient woodland on the site of a Roman villa with a very rich ground flora including wood millet, wood spurge and woodruff in the semi-natural areas; Hazelton Wood, a small ancient semi-natural woodland site which, although is now mixed plantation, retains much of the understorey and ground flora of interest including bath asparagus; and Hebden Leaze House Meadows, species-rich meadows of limestone grassland adjacent to Luckington Brook - upright brome is abundant and also present are burnet saxifrage, cowslip and dwarf thistle.

Historic environment

Prehistoric sites include two chambered long mounds near Luckington plus a Neolithic chambered long barrow at Lanhill and a Bronze Age bowl barrow at Barrow Farm. The area became more heavily settled in the Roman period with Easton Grey, to the north of the area, dating from the first century A.D. There are also a number of Roman roads in the area.

The Domesday Book shows that a large part of the *Limestone Lowlands* Landscape Type was at one time owned by the Bishop of Glastonbury. The boundaries of royal forests lying to the west of Chippenham were declared in 1228, although these were largely felled and enclosed in the 17th century. Evidence of small and irregular medieval field patterns are still apparent, particularly close to settlement, although most of the fields are larger and more regular indicating more recent enclosure.

There are a number of imposing houses set in historic parkland, such as Luckington Court, notable for its tree collection, and Corsham Court where Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton worked on the grounds.

Settlement and built character

Settlement in the *Limestone Lowland* Landscape Type is in the form of scattered villages and farmsteads, connected by a network of rural roads, and constructed almost universally of limestone to the west of the area with occasional use of brick on the eastern edges of the type. Villages are peaceful and rural, often centred around a village green, pond or area of common land. Buildings are traditional in style, with many dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. Large stately homes and manor houses also occur throughout the landscape, often with large parkland estates. Dry stone walls occur more frequently around and close to villages in western areas but are less common as field boundaries elsewhere. This distinctive pattern and style of settlement within the *Limestone Lowland* Landscape Type is a key element of its character.

Larger stone settlements are Corsham and the ancient market town of Malmesbury. Chippenham however, is the largest settlement in the area, expanding considerably since the 1950s. More recent housing development is visible from the A350, which defines the western edge of the town and acts as a main north/south route through the area.

Other developments that have an impact on the landscape include two air fields, on areas of higher and flatter ground Kemble and Hullavington. Most of the roads in the type are modest rural roads however the M4 motorway passes through from east to west with an increased sense of movement and localised noise.

CHARACTER AREAS

16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands

Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands is the only area within of the *Limestone Lowlands* Landscape Type. It covers a large area of northwest Wiltshire occurring between areas of limestone valleys and higher limestone wold to the west (outside the county) and clay to the east.

The area is predominantly rolling mixed pastoral and arable farmland, in a pattern of large fields bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. The hedgerows vary in condition with some gappy and low flailed hedges in evidence for example around Grittleton.

Changes in the underlying geology and land use cause subtle localised variations throughout the area within an overall graduation from higher ground founded on limestone to the west to lower ground on clay to the east. On the higher and steeper ground of the Forest Marble Limestone to the west, and particularly to the south of Corsham, hedgerows are less prominent with dry stone walls dividing the fields. With less visual obstruction, there are panoramic and distant views the farmland as it falls away gently to the east. There are also some more open areas around Biddestone and to the north of the area. Here a comparative scarcity of tree cover creates a greater sense of exposure. Shallow valleys along the numerous springs and brooks in the area have a more intimate and enclosed feeling. The most prominent of these is along the River Avon where the locally steep valley sides give a sense of containment, and the rich vegetation including willows line the river bank. There are also areas of estate and historic parkland, often associated with large houses. Areas of open pastoral land with numerous standard trees can be found throughout the area, some contain more designed element such as the large avenue near Monkton Farleigh.

A key element in the area is the distinctive limestone villages and towns, connected by a network of winding rural lanes and straight Roman roads. Some brick built dwellings and farmhouses appear to the east of the area reflecting the changing geology. Traditional buildings are frequently centred around village greens and ponds or form a more linear settlement forming a main street along one of the rural roads.

EVALUATION

Positive landscape features of significance

- Peaceful rural landscape.
- Panoramic views from higher ground.
- Strong network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and occasional woodland copses.
- Dry stone walls.
- Remaining areas with medieval field pattern.
- Historic parklands.
- Remaining areas of ancient woodland, chalk grassland and other areas of ecological diversity.
- Distinctive traditional limestone villages.
- Network of rural road.

Forces for change

- Continued amalgamation and enlargement of fields.
- Some hedgerow field boundaries have been intensively flailed.
- Some dry stone wall field boundaries are becoming overgrown.
- Increasing traffic on narrow rural lane network leading to urbanisation through kerbing, additional lighting and signage.
- Pressure for new development along rural lanes and around existing settlements.

Condition

The condition of the *Limestone Lowland* Landscape type is generally **good** with intact hedgerows, traditional villages of vernacular stone dwellings, village greens and stone walls. In some sections of the areas there are elements in poorer condition such as gappy and flailed hedgerows, overgrown stone walls and encroaching horse pasture close to some of the larger settlement.

Strength of character

The *Limestone Lowland* Landscape Type is united by the strong character of its traditional stone built settlements however, other elements such as land use, topography and field boundaries vary subtly across the type making it less distinctive and cohesive and therefore the strength of character overall is judged as **moderate**.

Inherent landscape sensitivities

- The peaceful rural nature of the area.
- Areas of ecological importance including ancient woodland and chalk grassland.
- The setting, containment and scale of the limestone villages.
- The remaining medieval field patterns and dry stone walls around and close to settlement.
- Historic parkland.

Strategy

The strategy for the *Limestone Lowland* Landscape Type is to **conserve** those elements intrinsic to the type's character or important in their own right, such as the distinctive stone villages, the areas of ecological importance and the historic parkland and to **strengthen** locally degraded elements such as the flailed hedgerows and overgrown stone walls.

Broad Management Objectives

- Conserve the network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland copses and take opportunities for new planting where this will strengthen local character (for instance

avoiding planting that will affect the open views in the high ground at the west of the area).

- Encourage conservation and rebuilding of dry stone wall field boundaries, particularly close to settlement.
- Conserve the remaining areas of ecological interest such as those with statutory designations, areas of ancient woodland, veteran hedgerow trees and chalk grassland.
- Maintain the subtle variations that occur throughout the landscape, encouraging local distinctiveness for instance in the variation in field boundaries from hedgerows to stone walls.
- Encourage management and restoration of the historic parkland landscapes that are characteristic of the area.
- Retain the distinctive character of the villages; ensuring any change respects the traditional stone built character and vernacular form.
- Resist urbanisation of the country lanes through addition of road markings and concrete kerbs or lamp posts or excessive signage that detracts from the rural character of the area.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

The character of the Wiltshire landscape has already been investigated in a number of studies as detailed above in Appendices 1 and 2.

The *Limestone Lowland* landscape type is largely within the area covered by the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2004). The type broadly covers the same area as the Limestone Lowland Farmland Landscape Type from the North Wiltshire study, and includes areas of the following North Wiltshire character areas: Sherston Dipslope Lowland, Minety and Malmesbury Rolling Lowland, Hullavington Rolling Lowland, Corsham Rolling Lowland and Upper Avon Valley.

The western part of the type is also covered in the Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines for Cotswolds AONB (2004). Areas of the Dip Slope Lowland and Cornbrash Lowlands Landscape Types are encompassed in the *Limestone Lowland*.

Character Area 7

Sherston Dipslope Lowlands

General description

4.115 This area lies on gently undulating land underlain by the Forest Marble limestone. The land rises from an average of around 90m to 125m AOD towards the Cotswolds in the west, with some localised higher ground. There are a number of shallow river valleys and associated alluvial soils, and some dry valleys especially towards the south. Some of the river valleys have locally steeper and more enclosed valley forms. Towards the south of the area the area becomes segmented, divided by steep valleys.



4.116 The area has a number of prehistoric remains, including two long mounds with possible chambered tombs lying a few hundred metres apart near Luckington. Roman occupation is also evident, with the Fosse Way running through the area towards Cirencester.

4.117 It is in most places a fairly open landscape of large fields with low hedges or dry stone walls. There are broad panoramas and distant views to the hills and large woodlands to the west, although in places the landscape is more intimate and views are contained by hedgerows and mature trees. Some field boundaries west of Sherston include great numbers of stately veteran oak trees, some of which are ancient pollards. Close to the rivers, groups of mature willows are also a feature.

4.118 Agriculture is a mix of permanent pasture and arable, with a field pattern that varies from an irregular medieval layout, especially close to villages, to the more regular shaped and more recently enclosed larger fields.

4.119 Woodland cover varies, with many areas quite bare except for shelterbelts, although there are a number of small woodlands in the north of the area, and large parkland woods to the immediate west of the District boundary, including the Westonbirt Arboretum.

4.120 The area includes unimproved limestone grassland characterised by upright brome and tor grass, which in the wider area of the Cotswolds is a nationally significant resource. The limestone grasslands are rich in plants and invertebrates, particularly butterflies. Many of these grassland areas are fragmented and no larger than 1 ha in extent, and as a result, are ecologically isolated.

4.121 Settlement on the area is confined to dispersed small villages, hamlets and farmsteads. The villages are mainly located adjacent to the Avon and its tributaries, and include some fine stone buildings in the local stone. The Oolitic limestone is most notably used for the finely crafted stone slates for roofing. Luckington Court is one such stately home, Queen Anne for the most part, which was famed as the Bennet's home in *Pride and Prejudice*. It has a three-acre garden, whose mature ornamental trees can be seen from several locations near the village.

4.122 A number of important footpaths cross the area, including the Macmillan Way. This is a network of routes linking the south coast, Bristol Channel and North Sea coast of England, taking in the Cotswolds. It also forms part of the Cross-Cotswold Pathway, an 86-mile walk linking public transport interchanges at Banbury and Bath.

4.123 Kemble Airfield lies at the extreme north of the area, with associated hangars and related buildings; and in the extreme south the presence of Colerne and its neighbouring airfield have a significant detracting visual impact on the character of the area. The M4 motorway also crosses the area and with nearby Castle Combe racing circuit, forms a contrast to the tranquil rural character of the rest of the area.

Main characteristics

- 4.124 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:
- Gently undulating, broad low hills and shallow river valleys.
 - Locally steeper and more enclosed valley forms.
 - Rich heritage of human settlement and archaeological sites.
 - Broad panoramas and distant views.
 - Continuity of hedgerows and veteran oak trees.
 - Dry stone walls as field boundaries and in relation to larger properties and village houses.
 - Variation in field sizes and shapes, from small irregular medieval, to larger fields enclosed or amalgamated in the modern period.
 - Variation in woodland cover, with many areas devoid of woodland cover, and other areas with small woods or copses.
 - Small areas of unimproved calcareous grassland.
 - Dispersed settlement and few villages.

- Fine stone buildings, and use of undressed limestone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates.
- Long distance footpaths.
- Localised developments such as Castle Combe circuit and Colerne airfield.



Management guidelines

4.125 The overall objectives for the area are to enhance the character of the area through strengthening the landscape elements which contribute to its distinctiveness, and conserve the ecological heritage and unspoilt character. The diversity of the area's landscape features, relating to the topography, broad views, mature trees, dry stone walls and fine stone buildings, will require care and good stewardship.

4.126 The veteran hedgerow trees are features of high local significance, and a programme of long term replanting should be established.

4.127 Good practice in the management of both agricultural systems and built form will be a priority in this area.

4.128 Particular care will be needed in areas of historical or archaeological significance.

Management strategy: actions

4.129 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners.
- Enhance biodiversity through good practice in woodland management and by encouraging farming practice which supports good environmental management .
- Encourage wetland habitat creation and planting of willow and alder by waterside areas in enclosed river valleys.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials including limestone are important in this area.

- Discourage development in the rural hinterland.

Key views management strategy

4.130 Much of the area is remote and is crossed by few main roads. However, the openness of the views where there is little woodland cover, and the broad shallow hills, offer wide views from many locations. The M4 crosses the area and is afforded broad views as is the A429 north of Malmesbury.

4.131 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of hedgerows and mature oak trees.
- Loss of or deterioration of dry stone walls.
- Use of traditional stone materials and detailing in new built form.

Landscape sensitivity

4.132 The area is within the Cotswold AONB which is an indication of its value. It has a distinctive character at the edge of the Cotswolds, with its gently rolling hills and remoteness, matched by mature landscape features such as veteran trees and old dry stone walls. Although settlement is dispersed, there are some fine stone villages and intimate valley landscapes associated with the upper reaches of tributaries of the Avon.

4.133 The area is generally tranquil and has little through traffic. In this sense there may be relatively few members of the public regularly viewing the area, but these may include visitors and local people for whom the unspoilt nature of the landscape is an important resource and of national significance as part of the AONB.

4.134 The sensitivity of the landscape to change is predominantly an issue of agricultural management. The use of the area for sheep grazing in particular may be uncertain. This affects the pasture and on-going management of hedgerows and dry stone walls for stock control.

4.135 The remoteness and openness of much of this area means that only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

Plans

Plan EDP L1 Site Character & Context
(edp4812_d001a 18 May 2018 PD/DL)

Plan EDP L2 Visual Appraisal
(edp4812_d002a 18 May 2018 PD/DL)

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- Site Boundary
- Scheduled Earthworks
- Settlement Edge
- Hedge and Trees
- Public Right of Way
- River
- Slope
- Views

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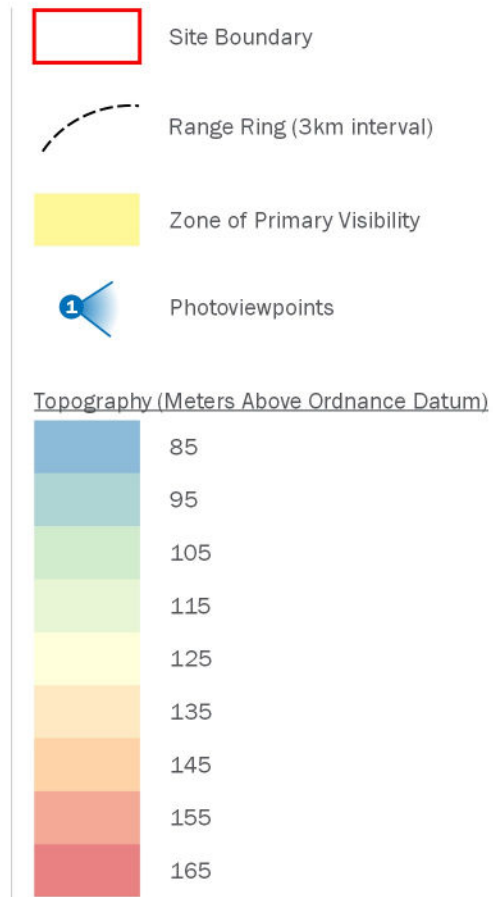
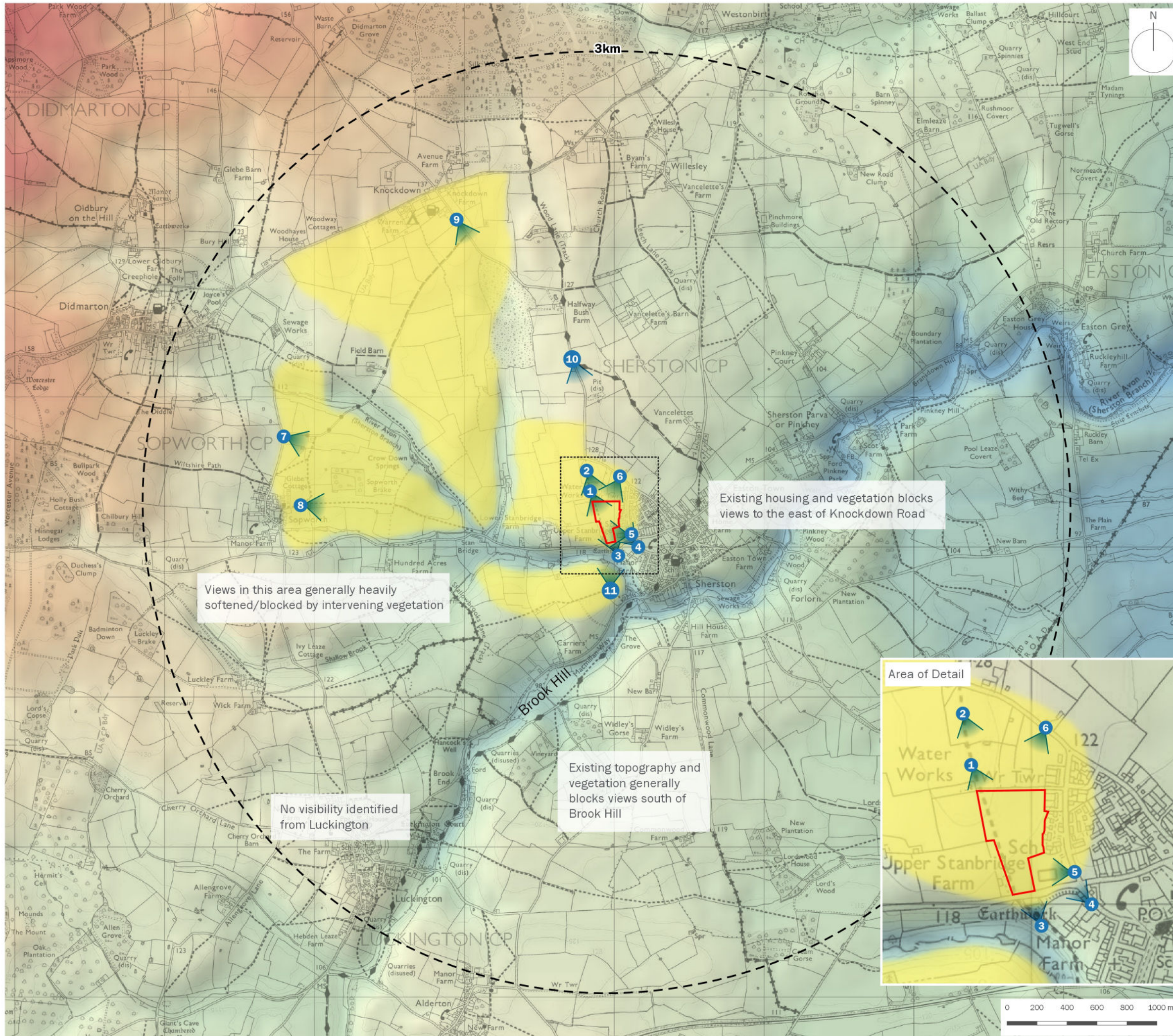
project title
Upper Stanbridge Farm, Sherston, Wiltshire

drawing title
Plan EDP L1: Site Character and Context

date	11 MAY 2018	drawn by	PD
drawing number	edp4812_d001a	checked	DL
scale	Refer to scale bar	QA	GY

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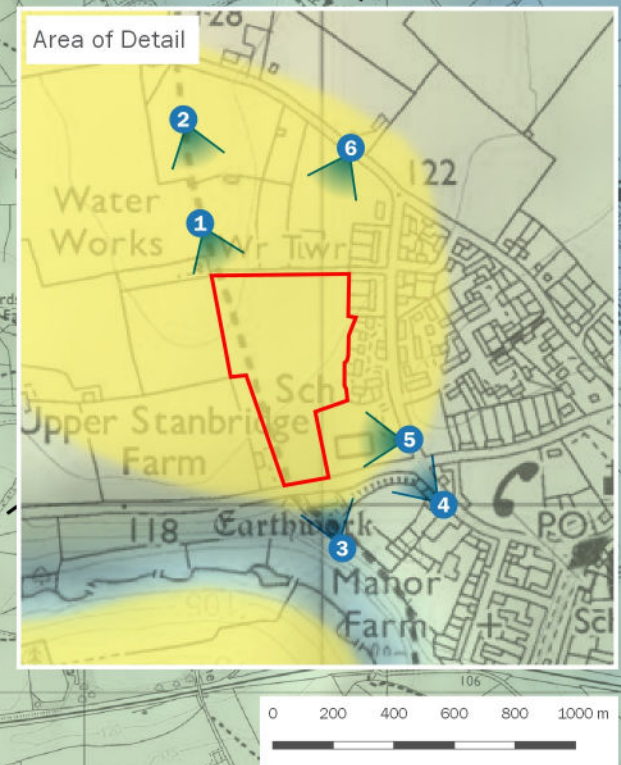


Views in this area generally heavily softened/blocked by intervening vegetation

Existing housing and vegetation blocks views to the east of Knockdown Road

Existing topography and vegetation generally blocks views south of Brook Hill

No visibility identified from Luckington



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project title
Upper Stanbridge Farm, Sherston, Wiltshire

drawing title
Plan EDP L2: Visual Appraisal

date	11 MAY 2018	drawn by	PD
drawing number	edp4812_d002a	checked	DL
scale	1:25,000 @ A3	QA	GY



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Photoviewpoints (edp4812/d003a 18 May 2018 PD/DL)

Photoviewpoint EDP 1	PRoW north of the site
Photoviewpoint EDP 2	South of Pyke Boarding Kennels on PRoW
Photoviewpoint EDP 3	On PRoW south of the site, adjacent to Scheduled Earthworks
Photoviewpoint EDP 4	Court Street
Photoviewpoint EDP 5	Adjacent to allotments on Knockdown Road
Photoviewpoint EDP 6	Northern edge of playing fields
Photoviewpoint EDP 7	Entrance to Field Barn, north of Sopworth
Photoviewpoint EDP 8	On PRoW East of Sopworth
Photoviewpoint EDP 9	On Knockdown Road, south of Knockdown Farm
Photoviewpoint EDP 10	Knockdown Road intersection with Macmillan Way (national route PRoW)
Photoviewpoint EDP 11	Elevated land to south of site on PRoW

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Photoviewpoint EDP 1: PRoW north of the site



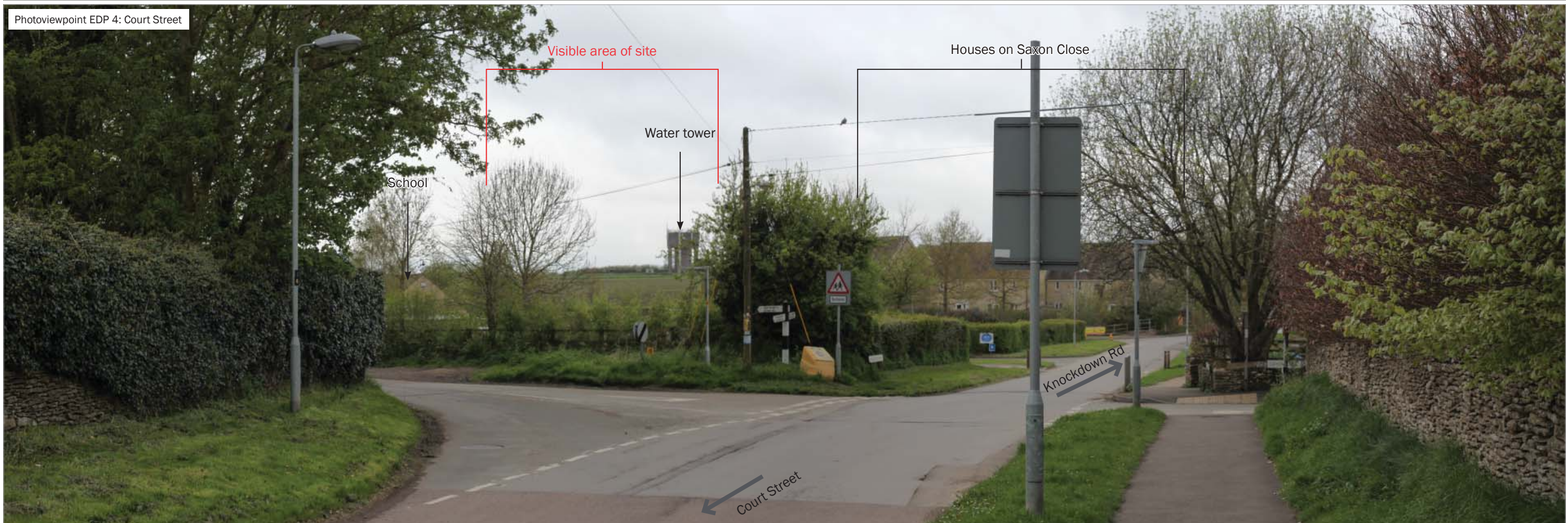
Photoviewpoint EDP 2: South of Pyke Boarding Kennels on PRoW



Photoviewpoint EDP 3: On PRoW south of the site, adjacent to Scheduled Earthworks



Photoviewpoint EDP 4: Court Street



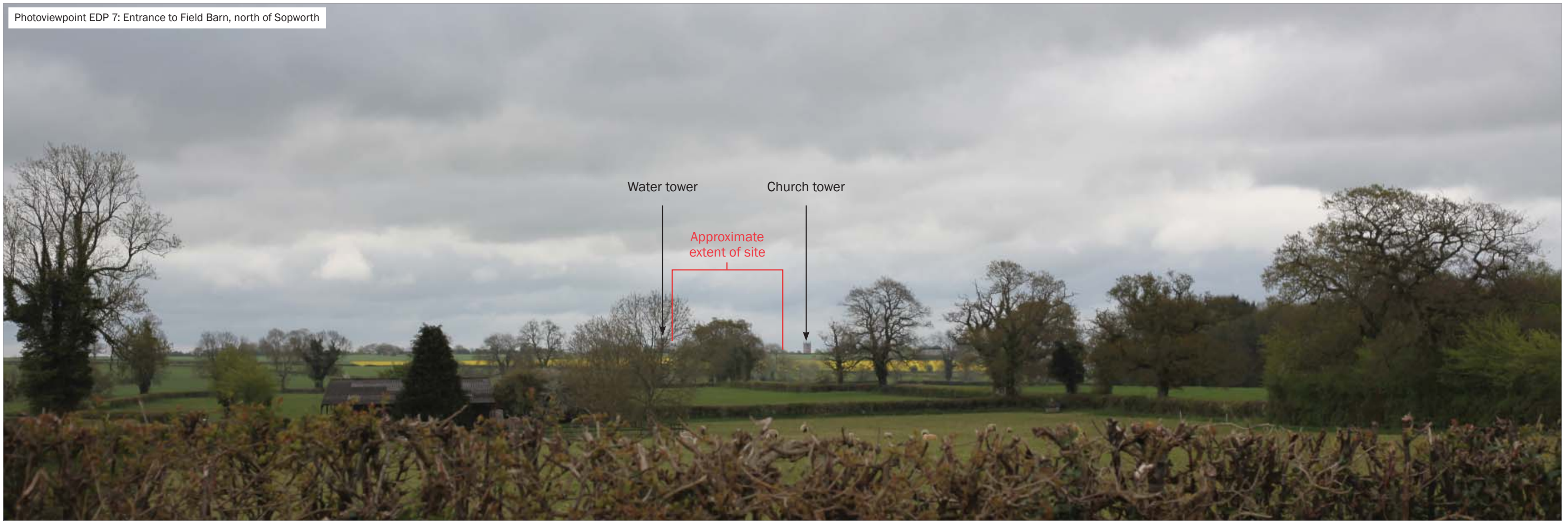
Photoviewpoint EDP 5: Adjacent to allotments on Knockdown Road



Photoviewpoint EDP 6: Northern edge of playing fields



Photoviewpoint EDP 7: Entrance to Field Barn, north of Sopworth



Photoviewpoint EDP 8: On PRoW east of Sopworth



Photoviewpoint EDP 9: On Knockdown Road, south of Knockdown Farm



Water tower (site obscured by vegetation/topography)



Photoviewpoint EDP 10: Knockdown Road intersection with Macmillan Way (national route PRoW)



Water tower (site obscured by vegetation/topography)



Church tower



Pyke Farm





Hillberry Lodge obscured

Water tower

Approximate extent of site

Primary school

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