

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN PART 2

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY APPRAISAL

COLDEN COMMON

This appraisal has been prepared with reference to Hampshire County Council's guidance document '*Assessing Landscape Sensitivity at a Strategic Level*' (2006) which recognises the use of Landscape Character Assessments to inform land use and land management policy and, in addition, the need to assess the main attributes of landscape as a basis for gauging sensitivity. The approach in this guidance document does not try to place a value on different landscapes, nor does it seek to establish the capacity of landscape to accommodate development.

In addition, this appraisal is based on published Winchester City and Hampshire County Council documents on landscape character and type; physical constraints identified through a desk top exercise; and professional judgement from site visits. A more detailed landscape assessment may be required prior to the final identification and allocation of sites for development.

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1.0 LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AND TYPES

Reference:

County level¹

Landscape Character Area which identifies key characteristics, qualities and forces for change: **Itchen Valley 3c**.

District level²

Three character areas create a diverse landscape setting for the settlement of Colden Common. They identify key characteristics, issues and designations with landscape and built form strategies specific to each area.

- Main landscape and townscape character area (south and south-east of Colden Common): **Durley Claylands**
- Other character areas -
 - **South Winchester Downs** (east and north-east of Colden Common)
 - **Lower Itchen Valley** (west and north-west of Colden Common).

1.1 Landscape Character

1.1.1 Durley Claylands Landscape Character Area

- A relatively low-lying gently undulating landscape with geology of London Clay which drains into the River Itchen
- Mainly regular field boundaries associated the 18th and 19th century Enclosure Acts; arable farmland and pasture with a strong hedgerow and woodland network
- Numerous ponds (including Fisher's Pond), streams and springs: one stream runs east-west north of Church Lane and another south of the village connects with the ponds at Stoke Common
- Routes through area are limited to the two main roads of the B3354 and B3335 which border the village to the east and west.

1.1.2 South Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area

- A large area of tranquil, undulating chalk downs extending from Winchester to the Meon Valley, abutting the village's eastern boundary
- Rural landscape of predominantly arable farmland with some mixed farming; medium- to large-sized fields with generally strong hedgerows, often with mature trees
- Significant areas of woodlands ranging from small copses, game spinneys and chalk dells to large woods, a number of which comprise ancient semi-natural and replanted woodland including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

¹ [Hampshire County Council Integrated Character Assessment 2010](#) (HICA)

² [Winchester Landscape Character Assessment 2004](#) (WLCA)

1.1.3 Lower Itchen Valley Landscape Character Area

- A wide flat, low lying floodplain with gently rising valley sides abutting the western edge of Colden Common
- Colden Common lies on the higher valley sides overlooking the Itchen valley floor to the west
- The valley floor contains the River Itchen and Itchen Navigation which have many meanders and braided sections
- Historic features associated with the River Itchen and Itchen Navigation give a well treed character, particularly in association with the historic parkland of Brambridge Park and Twyford Moors and Twyford Lodge.
- The River Itchen and Itchen Navigation watercourse and banks are of national ecological importance, which includes the River Itchen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and many SINCs
- A fairly irregular field pattern largely made up of paddocks and pasture resulting from the enclosure of historic water meadows.

1.2 **Townscape Character (Colden Common settlement)**

- The village is well contained inside the triangle formed by the B3335 (Highbridge Road), B3354 (Main Road) and Church Lane, which corresponds approximately with the defined settlement boundary³
- The settlement originated around 1844 encompassing several of the surrounding hamlets, with significant housing developments in the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s
- Community facilities are dispersed around the village; small food shops in St Vigor Way and in Church Lane; primary school at the western edge along Moors Road; and two recreation grounds with club facilities at the northern and north-eastern ends of the parish
- The village is well served with sports pitches, but has a notional deficit of other categories of open space against planning policy standards; a network of footpaths enables residents to walk through the village avoiding roads and traffic
- Church Pond and North Pond are working balancing ponds that provide protection against flooding as the southern part of the village has a high water table
- Colden Common benefits from many small areas of green space which contribute to the well-treed character of the village, both within and outside the defined settlement boundary
- There are four mobile home parks in and adjoining the village offering sites with gardens and parking: Glen Park, east of Main Road; Avondale Park, west of Main Road; Sunningdale Park, north-west of Spring Lane; and Ideal Park, east of Bishopstoke Lane
- One of two main settlements in the character area, along with Bishop's Waltham.

³ Policy H3, Winchester District Local Plan Review (2006)

1.3 Landscape Types for Colden Common and surrounding area

1.3.1 As well as identifying landscape character areas, the HICA and WLCA detail the characteristics of each landscape type. This includes the distribution of areas, typical soils and geology, topography, archaeological and historic features and field patterns, vegetation, land use, settlement pattern, building materials, routes and degree of tranquillity. The WLCA also outlines key issues affecting landscape features typical of the area.

1.3.2 The four landscape types (WLCA classification) here are -

- a. Mixed Farmland and Woodland (open and enclosed)
- b. Chalk and Clay Farmland
- c. Historic Parkland
- d. River Valley Side.

1.4 Summary

The descriptions of landscape character areas and landscape types outlined above have been used to inform the degree of landscape sensitivity for areas around Colden Common as set out in the following sections.

2.0 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Hampshire County Council's 'Assessing Landscape Sensitivity at a Strategic Level' (p6) states, "*Landscape sensitivity relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. A landscape with a character of high sensitivity is one that once lost would be difficult to restore and must be afforded particular care and consideration in order for it to survive*". Five main attributes which contributed to this assessment have been used in this appraisal: physical landscape; experiential/perceptual; historic environment; biodiversity and visibility.

2.1 Physical Landscape

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

2.1.1 Landform

- The Itchen is a chalk river with an associated wide valley floor and sides, creating a main feature in the landscape to the west
- The gently undulating landscape east of Colden Common has a high point at Cockscomb Hill (approximately 100m AOD), with predominantly west facing slopes; the land falls gently towards the eastern boundary the village at around 35m AOD; village itself is relatively flat at approximately 35m AOD
- The topography drops from the western edge of the village at approximately 35m AOD along the sides of the Itchen valley to the wide floodplain running north - south, with many meanders and braided sections
- The flood plain wraps around the southern edge of the village sloping gently from 32m to 23m AOD at the Bow Lake water course.

2.1.2 Land cover

- Undulating open chalk downland east of the village; mixed land use with high proportion of pasture and arable farmland with mature boundary hedgerows and trees
- Soils are low quality (agricultural land classification grade 4) to the west, and grade 3 to the east
- Diverse range of semi-natural habitats including balancing ponds, ponds, woodland and the Itchen floodplain
- Tree cover is extensive east of the village with significant areas of ancient woodlands and copses
- Several large areas surrounding Colden Common and a large area in the south-east of the village are protected by Tree Preservation Orders
- Parkland landscape of Brambridge Park and Twyford Moors House
- Approach roads and field boundaries are generally well contained by hedgerows and tree cover.

2.2 Experiential / Perceptual

Ref: GIS constraints map and site assessment; CPRE Tranquillity Map⁴; Dark skies (CPRE / SDNP)⁵

- Contrasting rural landscape character with long views from elevated positions across farmland, together with shorter views enclosed by woodland; strong hedgerow boundaries create an intimate sense of place
- Views from the western side of the village across to the historic parkland of Brambridge Park with veteran parkland trees of significance
- Valley floor and sides typified by braided river course and well-treed character; field pattern of paddocks and pasture
- Pedestrian connectivity to countryside: good footpath network surrounding the village with public rights of ways (PRoWs) linking with Monarch's Way and Itchen Way national trails
- Pedestrian connectivity in the village: good local network of residential greenways connecting different parts of the parish
- Tranquil within those residential areas away from main approach roads (B3354 and B3335)
- The South Downs National Park Authority is seeking dark sky status to protect quality of countryside where dark skies are most significant and to promote improvement of remaining areas. This may provide opportunities to increase enjoyment of landscape and night skies within the Park.

2.3 Historic Environment

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

- No Conservation Areas
- Small proportion of listed buildings (18 no.) for the size of the settlement
- Parkland landscape and original deer park of Brambridge Park and Twyford Lodge
- Water meadow systems in the broad valley floor of the Itchen river
- Significant areas of ancient woodland, e.g. Colden Common Wood, Blacknell's Copse, Taylor's Copse and Park Copse.

2.4 Biodiversity

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

- The River Itchen is an SSSI and parts are a SINC; the valley has a high ecological value due to the clear alkaline river, unimproved neutral grassland, calcareous grassland, standing open water and ancient semi-natural woodlands

⁴ www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1839

⁵ www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/dark-skies
www.southdowns.gov.uk/looking-after/dark-skies

- Abundance of SINC's covering a diversity of habitats associated with ancient woodland and unimproved grassland
- Field pattern of arable and pasture fields with a network of hedgerows providing good wildlife corridors, especially when linked to the ancient woodlands.

2.5 Visibility

A visibility constraints map for the Colden Common area is included at Appendix 1.

3.0 SENSITIVITY APPRAISALS

A number of individual sites and areas of land in and around Colden Common have been promoted for development through the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)⁶. Those of similar landscape character have been grouped together for the purposes of assessing their sensitivity in the local landscape (Appendix 2). Four categories of sensitivity are used –

- Most sensitive**
- Highly sensitive**
- Moderately sensitive**
- Least sensitive**

3.1 Area east of Highbridge Road (SHLAA site 1874)

- Context: farmland on the edge of the settlement; topography slopes steeply facing west affording views over Brambridge Park; PRoW runs along the southern boundary; mature hedgerow with trees along Highbridge Road, Spring Lane and Moors Road giving only glimpsed views of the area from the surrounding roads
- Character: sloping fields on the edge of the settlement; popular with local residents as informal open space with desire lines crossing the site and views west towards Brambridge Park
- Important or panoramic views: toward Brambridge Park
- Skyline features: wooded landscape on the horizon
- Landmarks to connect with place: Brambridge Park.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **highly sensitive** location in terms of adverse visual impact on the historic setting of Brambridge Park, Itchen Valley and SDNP due to overlooking of SDNP/Itchen Valley. Development would be visible from Brambridge Park, Itchen Valley and SDNP on the high ground along the settlement edge.

3.2 Area north of Hensting Lane (SHLAA site 2500)

- Context: includes part of a SINC woodland and farmland around Waterview Farm; countryside with sparse development pattern on southern side of Hensting Lane; poorly connected to the main settlement
- Character: wooded countryside and farmland along a rural lane; woodland is a valued landscape with SINC and ancient woodland designations
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: woodland
- Landmarks to connect with place: Fisher's Pond.

⁶ www.winchester.gov.uk/planning-policy/evidence-base/housing/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment/

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **most sensitive** location in terms of adverse impacts on a designated landscape and open countryside.

3.3 Area east of Main Road (SHLAA sites 275, 2389, 2495)

- Context: areas of fields and caravan storage on the fringe of the village; edged with woodland and hedgerow, separated by a mobile home park and adjacent or close to Main Road
- Character: flat, enclosed areas surrounded by development and ancient woodland; southern area (2389) is a SINC with high biodiversity value
- Mainly contained short views due to surrounding woodland and mature hedgerows
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: woodland
- Landmarks to connect with place: none.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

Parts of this area are **moderately sensitive** as an existing caravan storage area, existing development and land with planning permission. The location on Main Road allows good access to the settlement centre, but with restricted views due to the surrounding woodland and hedgerows. The southern part is **highly sensitive** in terms of biodiversity and retention of landscape character due to the SINC designation.

3.4 Area west of Main Road, along Boyes Lane and rear of housing east of Main Road (SHLAA sites 888, 889, 2052, 2494, 2497, 2498, 2499)

- Context: mostly within the existing urban environment or on the urban fringe, with good connectivity to the centre of the village
- Character: enclosed areas surrounded by both urban development or in some cases countryside, with good accessibility, except the field adjacent to Ashbrook Stables which is a greenfield site without good accessibility
- Mainly contained short views due to the surrounding urban environment, or, for the area east of Main Road, enclosed views due to Taylor's Copse
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: woodland
- Landmarks to connect with place: housing within the village.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

Most of these sites are already developed and are **least sensitive** locations in terms of visual impact and biodiversity. The site adjacent to Ashbrook Stables (2498) is **highly sensitive** for its visual impact and greenfield nature.

3.5 Area south of Church Lane (SHLAA sites 1871, 2561)

- Context: an area of farmland forming part of the landscape gap between Colden Common, Fair Oak and Bishopstoke; open countryside with a small proportion adjacent to the settlement edge; large proportion of the area has poor connectivity to the village
- Character: gently undulating farmland sloping down to the watercourse, and with strong hedgerow boundaries
- Long views across undulating valley landscape towards the higher ground around Stoke Park Farm
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: woodland and rural countryside
- Landmarks to connect with place: settlement edge.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The small proportion of the area adjacent to Church Lane (site 1871) is a **highly sensitive** location, whilst the larger proportion (site 2561) is **most sensitive** in terms of adverse impacts on the rural landscape and potential impacts on the effectiveness of the landscape gap between Colden Common, Fair Oak and Bishopstoke. Also potential impacts on water quality and on visual amenity from the footpaths running through the area.

3.6 Area between Lower Moors Road and Main Road (SHLAA site 1870)

- Context: undulating farmland on the urban fringe close to the village centre and recreational facilities
- Character: gently sloping fields on the edge of settlement with some suburban fringe activities, mainly horse paddocks; traffic noise from Main Road; part of the landscape/green gap between Colden Common and Twyford, preventing coalescence of the settlements
- Long views from the edge of settlement north towards Twyford
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: rising landscape of the chalk downs to the east
- Landmarks to connect with place: local residential development.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **moderately sensitive** location with potential impacts on the effectiveness of the landscape/green gap between Colden Common and Twyford.

4.0 SUMMARY: KEY LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE ISSUES FOR COLDEN COMMON

Durley Claylands Landscape Character Area

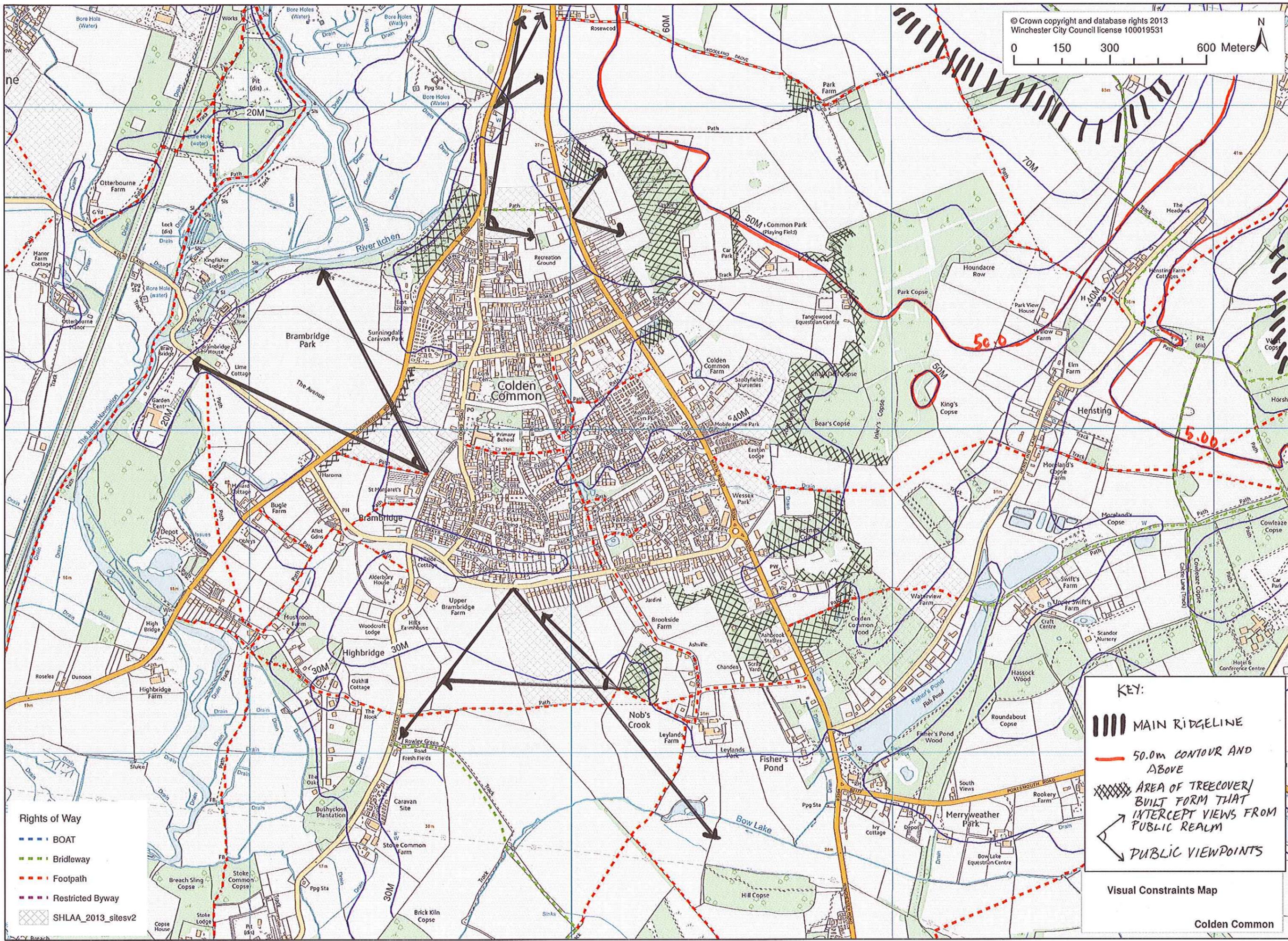
- Urban creep and pressure for additional sites to be released which may impact within the landscape gap between Twyford and Colden Common preventing coalescence
- Development spill outside the triangle formed by the B3335 (Highbridge Road), B3354 (Main Road) and Church Lane which visually contains the village
- Suburban fringe encroachment, e.g. horse paddocks with fencing, outbuildings, etc. within the countryside setting of Colden Common and the South Downs National Park (SDNP)
- Further loss of farmland, particularly boundary hedges and woodland to equestrian use and development to accommodate planned growth
- Avoid development that would impact land that forms part of the drainage system that feeds into the River Itchen. Any reduction in this flow could adversely impact the wetland flora and fauna river floodplain.

South Winchester Downs Landscape Character Area

- Proximity of SDNP to eastern boundary of Colden Common and the landscape setting of the national park
- Development within or adjacent to woodlands on the eastern edge of Colden Common.

Lower Itchen Valley Landscape Character Area

- Proximity to protected areas, most notably the River Itchen Site of Special Scientific Interest and the SDNP
- Development creeping up the Itchen valley sides on the skyline overlooking the designated historic parks of Brambridge Park and Twyford Moors
- Visual impact of development on high ground and ridgelines
- Impact on the landscape setting of Brambridge Park.



- Rights of Way
- — — BOAT
 - — — Bridleway
 - - - - Footpath
 - - - - Restricted Byway
 - SHLAA_2013_sitesv2

KEY:

- MAIN RIDGELINE
- 50.0m CONTOUR AND ABOVE
- AREA OF TREECOVER/ BUILT FORM THAT INTERCEPT VIEWS FROM PUBLIC REALM
- ↖ PUBLIC VIEWPOINTS

Visual Constraints Map
 Golden Common