

DENMEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY APPRAISAL

This appraisal has been prepared by Winchester City Council on behalf of Denmead Parish Council as part of the evidence base supporting the preparation of the Denmead Neighbourhood Plan. It has 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 development sites in the Denmead Neighbourhood Plan.

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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: **Forest of Bere East 2f.***

District level²

Character areas identify key characteristics, issues and designations with landscape and built form strategies specific to each area.

*Character area: **Forest of Bere Lowlands.***

1.0.1 This appraisal also takes account of the following Winchester City Council and Parish document:

- *Denmead Village Design Statement* (2007).

1.1 Landscape Character (Forest of Bere Lowlands Character Area)

- Low-lying, undulating landscape at foot of chalk downs which drops steeply to coastal plain at Portsdown Hill to the south
- Varied geology, mainly London Clay with areas of Bagshot sand / valley alluvium
- Denmead is on edge of area strongly associated with Royal Forest of Bere and in catchment area for the River Wallington
- Mainly small farm holdings and well enclosed small fields with a network of winding rural lanes connecting hamlets and settlements
- Land cover is mainly arable farmland with pasture on lower ground and assorted woodland; significant areas of tree cover including plantations
- Hedgerow oaks and hedge banks are common features
- One of the most biodiverse areas in Winchester district with a high level of semi-natural habitats and many locally designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)
- Routes through the area vary from long, straight roads linking heathland settlements and winding narrow lanes through woods and farmland.

1.2 Townscape (Denmead village)

- Denmead is the main settlement in the character area
- Defined settlement gap³ between Denmead and Waterlooville retains the generally open and undeveloped nature of the area; avoiding coalescence of settlements retains individual identity within their wider contextual setting
- Main settlement is generally contained by topography with lower lying ground to the east in the settlement gap

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

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

³ Policies CP18 and SH4, Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (March 2013)

- Nucleated settlement that originated along the spring line between chalk uplands and clay lowlands
- High water table with water-related features
- Vibrant village centre in the vicinity of the church (1880) with community facilities including health centre, shops and parking
- Residential area around Anthill Common on higher ground north-west of Denmead linked to the rest of the village by ribbon development along Hambledon Road.

1.3 Landscape Types for Denmead 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 two landscape types (WLCA classification) here are -

- a. Mixed Farmland and Woodland (open and enclosed)
- b. Pasture and Woodland - Heath Associated.

1.4 Summary

Detailed descriptions of relevant landscape character areas and landscape types as outlined above have been used to inform the degree of landscape sensitivity for areas around Denmead 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

Topography: gently undulating landscape with predominantly south facing slopes; Denmead evolved on lower ground (40 – 50m AOD) around spring lines at the base of chalk downland contained by higher undulating ground to north, west and south (c. 50m); housing around Anthill Common is on higher ground (c. 60m); lower lying land to the east in the settlement gap is a main area for the headwaters of the River Wallington; distinctive east-west main ridgelines provide shelter and enclosure for Denmead as a settlement, containing many of the longer views from existing built development.

2.1.2 Land cover

- Low quality soils (grade 4) except the area north-east of the village (grade 3)
- Diverse semi-natural habitats including heathland, wetland and woodland
- Mixed land use with high proportion of pasture and rough grassland; boundary hedgerows (clipped and unmaintained) predominate with mature spreading oaks and copses, including ancient woodland; Creech Woods (a remnant of the Forest of Bere) is a large expanse of woodland and plantation and a significant skyline feature in the village setting; distinctive assorted landscapes
- Several large areas south and west of Denmead adjoining Southwick Road, Forest Road and Hambledon Road are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
- Golf course with lakes and ponds at Furzeley Corner to the south.

2.2 Experiential / Perceptual

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

- Contrasting rural landscape character with diverse semi-natural habitats; small fields well enclosed by vegetation with winding rural lanes and contained views create an intimate sense of place

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

- Pedestrian connectivity in countryside: good footpath network north of the village with public rights of way linking with rural lanes and national trail (Wayfarers Walk); poorer footpath links around Creech Woods to the south and in the settlement gap
- Pedestrian connectivity in the village: good local network of residential greenways in Forest Road development that link with local amenity spaces and schools; poorer links elsewhere with safety issues when crossing busy roads
- Opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycle route connections, especially between Denmead and Waterlooville and to the rural lane network in the wider countryside
- Abundance of tree cover among rooftops and views of countryside create a distinctive, semi-rural character
- Tranquil within residential areas away from main approach roads; birdsong predominant along rural lanes and footpaths.

2.3 Historic Environment

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

- No Conservation Areas
- 20 listed buildings in the Neighbourhood Plan area, including 4 within the settlement boundary
- Older clusters of houses tend to be on higher ground to avoid flooding, e.g. Anthill Common area
- Historic water-related features in former water meadows, e.g. sluices at World's End, Anmore area
- Significant areas of ancient woodland, e.g. Piper's Hill Wood, Hart's Copse, High Wood, Creech Wood.

2.4 Biodiversity

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

- Southwick Road is a watershed for two streams: one flows west, the other east through residential development; wetlands associated with these streams have areas of high biodiversity value
- Abundance of SINC's covering diversity of habitats associated with wetland areas, ancient woodland and unimproved grassland.

2.5 Visibility

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

3.0 SENSITIVITY APPRAISALS

A number of individual sites and areas of land in and around Denmead have been promoted for development through the City 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 around Kidmore Lane, Tanners Lane and Anmore Road (SHLAA sites 313, 367, 1783)

- Context: area of farmland within urban fringe close to village centre, recreational facilities and car park
- Character: relatively low-lying, gently sloping fields on edge of settlement bordered by narrow rural lanes well contained by grassed verges, hedgerows and large spreading oaks; lanes used by local traffic, pedestrians, cyclists and horses (no footpaths)
- Agricultural land quality: grade 4 (poor)
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Landmarks to connect with place: church.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A ***least sensitive*** location in terms of adverse visual impact and biodiversity based on known constraints and the character of Denmead as a settlement in the wider context. Retaining the character of the rural lane may be an issue.

3.2 Area east of Soake Road and Anmore Lane (SHLAA sites 301, 312)

- Context: east of Anmore within the settlement gap and adjoining the edge of Waterlooville; SINCs around Anmore and Anmore Dell Farm
- Character: suburban fringe activities, mainly horse paddocks, on south facing slopes; semi-rural; tranquil away from busy Anmore Lane; evidence of high water table in fields; water in Anmore Dell, deep ditches; access via bridleway
- Agricultural land quality: grade 4 (poor)
- Important views: far reaching views south to Portsdown Hill
- Local landmarks to connect with place: filtered views of houses in Waterlooville.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A ***most sensitive*** location with potential landscape and visual impacts on the effectiveness of the local gap and biodiversity, visual amenity and water quality.

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

3.3 Area west of Soake Road (SHLAA sites 1841, 2004)

- Context: west and south of Anmore within the Denmead-Waterlooville settlement gap; adjoins edge of settlement (Denmead); part of site 1841 is a SINC
- Character: suburban fringe activities, mainly horse paddocks, on lower lying, south facing slopes; traffic noise from very busy Hambledon Road and local 'rat runs' (Soake Road, Anmore Lane)
- Agricultural land quality: grade 4 (poor)
- Important views: none
- Local landmarks to connect with place: housing in Denmead.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **most sensitive** location with potential landscape and visual impacts on the effectiveness of the settlement gap and amenity value, biodiversity and water quality.

3.4 Area north of Furzeley Corner (SHLAA site 378)

- Context: south-east of village within the settlement gap; physically separated by the very busy Forest Road with footway only on one side
- Character of site: suburban fringe activities, mainly horse paddocks, on lower lying slopes; evidence of high water table with streams, ponds, wetland; adjoins special area in terms of biodiversity and amenity value that is publicly accessible (Goodman's Fields); large spreading oaks (TPO) to boundaries; Wayfarer's Walk along western edge
- Agricultural land quality: grade 4 (poor)
- Important views: none
- Local landmarks to connect with place: housing opposite in Denmead.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **most sensitive** location with potential landscape and visual impacts on the effectiveness of the settlement gap and amenity value, biodiversity and water quality.

3.5 Area between Creech Woods and Forest Road (SHLAA sites 310, 311, 362, 2003, 2425)

- Context: forms a significant 'landscape buffer' between the southern built edge defined by Forest Road and the large expanse of Creech Woods (SINC); integral part of the contextual setting of Denmead; physically separated from the village by the very busy Forest Road with footway only on one side
- Character: small fields on north-facing slopes forming part of a gentle east-west ridgeline; some suburban fringe activities, e.g. publicly accessible grassed area for dog walkers etc; adjacent to Parklands Business Park, the only area of development south of Forest Road which extends to the edge of Creech Woods and is therefore considered out of character here; large mature oak trees (TPO); adjacent forest by Bunkers Hill
- Agricultural land quality: mainly grade 4 (poor)

- Opportunities for improving pedestrian and cycle links including access to bus stops along the southern edge of Forest Road
- Short views from Forest Road looking south with edge of forest visible along upper slopes
- Distant views east from higher ground adjacent business park and distant views west from Bunkers Hill
- Local landmarks to connect with place: Creech Woods; Forest Road development; treed ridgeline.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

This area forms part of the contextual setting of Denmead with significant oak trees. It also provides an effective buffer between the settlement and the nearby forest with its well-defined treed skyline. The area is considered ***moderately sensitive*** in terms of impacts on landscape character.

3.6 Area to east and west of Inhams Lane (SHLAA sites 1776, 1878, 2493, 2512, 2565)

- Context: western edge of settlement between Denmead and Anthill Common.
- Character: semi-rural; well contained fields with some suburban fringe activities including horse paddocks and an (unlicensed) camping site; bordered north and south by ribbon development along approach roads; evidence of high water table with stream and wetland as key features; area includes a SINC.
- Agricultural land quality: grade 4 west of Inhams Lane; mainly 3a east of Inhams Lane.
- Far reaching views west from higher ground along Inhams Lane; mainly contained short views.
- Skyline features: boundary vegetation along School Road by Anthill Common; forest edge to the south
- Local landmarks to connect with place: houses along western edge of settlement.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The higher ground in the northern part of the area is ***least sensitive***. Any development here would increase the perception of the Anthill Common area merging with the rest of Denmead. The east-west course of stream and adjacent wet areas in the southern half of the area are ***highly sensitive*** in terms of biodiversity and existing landscape character.

3.7 Area in and around Anthill Common (SHLAA sites 302, 2455, 2496, 2526)

- Context: part of semi-rural setting seen from main approach road; houses alongside road with lower lying, undulating landscape beyond
- Character: steeply rising ground from community centre; undulating topography; high biodiversity value with significant number of SINCS, including a wetland area around old fishponds, grassland and ancient woodland; boundary hedgerows and mature tree cover, including large oaks.
- Agricultural land quality: grade 4 (poor)
- Detracting views: large pylons through the area ('old fish ponds' on OS map)

- Distant views to south-west across countryside
- Local landmarks to connect with place: Creech Woods to the south.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **highly sensitive** area in terms of its biodiversity value as well as impact on landscape character as part of the wider contextual setting of Anthill Common and Denmead village.

4.0 SUMMARY OF KEY LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE ISSUES FOR DENMEAD

Forest of Bere Lowlands Character Area

- This area of Winchester District is attractive to the development industry given its location within wider south Hampshire and its attractive rural setting. This generates pressure for additional sites to be released for development which may impact on specific sites in the local settlement gap between Denmead and Waterlooville
- Suburban fringe encroachment, e.g. horse paddocks with fencing, outbuildings etc, within countryside setting of Denmead including local settlement gap
- Undesignated areas with special qualities that contribute significantly to the setting of Denmead are vulnerable to change
- Area is prone to flooding due to the River Wallington catchment area; high water table; extent of new development in the area
- Over-formalisation and loss of semi-natural habitats for sport/recreational use
- Proximity of the West of Waterlooville Major Development Area with resultant pressures on road infrastructure in and around Denmead
- Potential for rural lanes to become commuter 'rat runs'
- Loss of rural lane character with increased traffic use
- Further loss of farmland, particularly boundary hedges and oak trees, to equestrian use and development to accommodate planned growth
- Development within or adjoining remaining open forest landscapes.

Anthill Common

Denmead

KEY

- MAIN RIDGELINES
- 50.0M CONTOUR AND ABOVE
- AREA OF TREECOVER/ BUILT DEVELOPMENT INTERCEPTING VIEWS FROM PUBLIC REALM
- PUBLIC VIEWPOINTS

Visual Constraints Map

Denmead

Rights of Way

- BOAT
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Restricted Byway
- SHLAA_2013_sitesv2

Denmead site sensitivity - September 2013

