

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN PART 2

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY APPRAISAL

SWANMORE

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 and Townscape Character Areas which identify key characteristics, qualities and forces for change:

- Main Character Area: **Forest of Bere West 2e**
- Secondary character area covers the eastern side of Swanmore: **Owslebury and Corhampton Downs 7g.**

District level²

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

- Main landscape and townscape character area (for Swanmore and areas to the west and south-west): **Shedfield Heathlands**
- Other character areas -
 - **South Winchester Downs** (west of Swanmore)
 - **Durley Claylands** (north of Swanmore)

1.0.1 The appraisal also takes account of the Village Design Statement (2001).

1.1 Landscape Character

1.1.1 Shedfield Heathlands Character Area

- A low-lying, gently undulating area of poor drainage with minor streams on the underlying clay.
- Some areas of small-scale paddocks with associated smallholdings.
- The landscape between Swanmore and Waltham Chase features the straight boundaries, hedges and roads formed by formal enclosure in Victorian times. Predominantly pasture and arable with paddocks.
- A relatively high proportion of the area is settled with Waltham Chase, Bishop's Waltham and Shedfield close by.
- Generally little woodland except assorted semi-natural ancient woodland of Dirty Copse and Bishop's Enclosure, with a good hedgerow network.

1.1.2 South Winchester Downs Character Area

- Tranquil, undulating chalk downs within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) which runs along the eastern edge of the village which has a strong rural character.

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

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

- A network of winding lanes connecting farmsteads and nucleated villages.
- A well-drained area of upper chalk with occasional areas of clay and flints, comprising predominantly arable and pasture, with some mixed farmland including vineyards and orchards.

1.1.3 Durley Claylands Character Area

- Low-lying, gently undulating landscape of arable and pasture agriculture.
- Strong hedgerow network with scattered woodland.
- The high water table between Waltham Chase and Bishop's Waltham is part of the drainage system for The Moors wetland (source of the Hamble).

1.2 **Townscape (Swanmore village)**

- Ribbon development pattern along the two main routes through to the centre of Swanmore that meet at the T-junction by the parish church.
- Settlement contained by sloping topography to the east within the SDNP.
- The defined settlement gap³ retains the generally open and undeveloped nature of the area between Swanmore and Waltham Chase / Bishop's Waltham. Avoiding coalescence of settlements retains individual identity within their wider contextual setting.
- The central part of the village includes original Victorian and Edwardian cottages, with gradual post-War development. Housing development in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, typically cul-de-sacs or small developments.
- Well established footpath network connecting town and country and valuable short cuts within the village.
- Generally well defined settlement edge along the eastern boundary. Some ribbon development between Swanmore and Waltham Chase.

1.3 **Landscape Types for Swanmore and surrounding area**

1.3.1 As well as identifying landscape character areas, the HICA and WLCA detail the characteristics of each landscape type. These include 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. The three landscape types (WLCA classification) here are -

- a. Pasture and Woodland: Heath Associated (west of Swanmore)
- b. Mixed Farmland and Woodland (north of Swanmore)
- c. Chalk and Clay Farmland (east of Swanmore)

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

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

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: Undulating landscape north and east of Swanmore rises to the highest point in the surrounding landscape of 100m AOD at Upper Swanmore, from approximately 50m AOD at the centre of the village. The topography west of Swanmore (in the local gap) is low lying, flat or gently undulating land of poor drainage with minor streams, at approximately 35m - 45m AOD.

2.1.2 Land cover

- Soils south and west of Swanmore are low quality (agricultural classification grade 4), but are higher in the area to the east (grade 2).
- Mixed land use with a high proportion of arable and pasture fields, along with orchards and vineyards on the land east of Swanmore.
- A network of mature boundary hedges often with mature trees with small copses and spinneys on the land east of the village.
- An area of pasture farmland between Swanmore and Waltham Chase often subdivided to provide pony paddocks and smallholdings, which gives a suburban 'fringe' character.
- Areas of assorted semi-natural ancient woodland south of Swanmore such as Dirty Copse and Bishop's Enclosure.
- The largest Tree Preservation Orders within the village are at the junction of Hampton Hill and Swanmore Road, and Green's Wood, Broad Lane.
- The stream running alongside The Lakes called Hamble Brook acts as a tributary to the Hamble. This stream, together with the springs near Hoe Road Pumping station and the Moors, feeds into the River Hamble.
- Approach roads, lanes and field boundaries are generally well contained by hedgerows.

2.2 Experiential/Perceptual

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

- The landscape is visually varied and derived from the contrasting landscapes east and west of Swanmore. The landscape to the east within the SDNP is rural and has a strongly tranquil character with winding lanes and intimate views with occasional copses or spinney.
- The landscape between Swanmore and Waltham Chase is flat and open with straight boundaries with smallholdings and paddocks that has given rise to a suburbanised 'fringe' character.
- Pedestrian connectivity in countryside: good footpath network to the east and north-east of the village with PRow's linking with existing rural lanes, a national trail (Kings Way) and Upper Swanmore.
- Tranquil residential areas punctuated with trees away from the main arterial roads through Swanmore.

2.3 Historic Environment *Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA*

- No Conservation Areas.
- Very few listed buildings.
- Historic Parks and Gardens: Hill Place, north east of Swanmore.
- The remnants of the wooded medieval hunting ground, a designated ancient woodland called Bishop's Enclosure, is south of Swanmore. The ancient woodland of Dirty Copse to the south-east lies within the SDNP.
- The main village developed in the 19th century after the 1855 Enclosure Act and a thriving brick industry using local valley clay deposits.

2.4 Biodiversity *Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA*

- Abundance of locally designated SINC's surround Swanmore including Dirty Copse and Bishop's Enclosure woodland; areas around The Moors; smaller SINC's directly abutting the village along The Lakes; adjacent to the Swanmore College of Technology; and around Ivydale. These provide a diversity of habitats from ancient woodland, wetland areas and unimproved grassland.
- SSSI includes The Moors wetland habitat north-west of Swanmore on the outskirts of Bishop's Waltham.

2.5 Visibility

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

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

3.0 SENSITIVITY APPRAISAL OF AREAS

A number of individual sites and areas of land in and around Swanmore 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 north of The Lakes track and footpath (SHLAA sites 340, 2464, 2505)

- Context: area of farmland and pasture within important local gap between Swanmore and Waltham Chase. Site adjacent to the settlement edge with a designated SINC within the SHLAA site. A small stream running along The Lakes forms part of the River Hamble drainage system.
- Character: gently sloping fields rising from The Lake track to the edge of settlement bordering a narrow track (PRoW). Views from main roads of sloping field to the settlement edge.
- Area along The Lakes has a high water table (Flood Zone 2 and 3).
- Important or panoramic views: none.
- Skyline features: none.
- Landmarks to connect with place: views of housing at edge of village.
- Agricultural land classification: grade 4.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A ***highly sensitive*** location with potential impacts on the effectiveness of the settlement gap, biodiversity and visual amenity from the PRoW running along The Lakes, except for the SINC which is a ***most sensitive*** location. Potential impact on the small stream running along The Lakes which forms part of the drainage system that feeds the River Hamble. Any reduction in this flow could adversely impact the wetland flora and fauna of The Moors and the Hamble.

3.2 Area between Lower Chase Road and New Road north of Swanmore College of Technology (SHLAA sites 429, 1836)

- Context: flat, low-lying predominantly pasture adjacent the village edge. Sports field in the local gap between Swanmore and Waltham Chase. Views from Lower Chase Road are glimpsed through boundary trees.

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

- Character: tranquil site along Lower Chase Road with flat topography, adjacent to southern edge of Swanmore. The sports field benefits from mature boundary hedge with trees. Surrounded by existing development.
- Important or panoramic views: none.
- Skyline features: pylons.
- Landmarks to connect with place: Swanmore College of Technology.
- Agricultural land classification: grade 4.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The part of the area outside the settlement boundary is considered a **least sensitive** location in terms of adverse visual impacts and biodiversity. The part of the area adjacent to Lower Chase Road is a **moderately sensitive** location in terms of adverse impacts on biodiversity. A location with potential impacts on the effectiveness of the local gap. The areas are surrounded by existing development close to the centre of Swanmore. Retaining the character of Lower Chase Road as a rural lane may be an issue.

3.3 Area between Lower Chase Road and Swanmore Road and small area along Lower Chase Road south of PRow (SHLAA sites 2443, 2449, 2515)

- Context: unspoilt farmland within important local gap between Swanmore and Bishop's Waltham. Adjacent to a PRow connecting Swanmore and Bishop's Waltham with a pedestrian route.
- Character: tranquil unspoilt farmland sloping up towards housing along Swanmore Road, with mature hedgerow boundaries with trees that forms a wildlife corridor connecting Alexanders Moors and The Moors SSSI beyond. Evidence of high water table in fields with ditches within adjacent fields. Access via PRow.
- Important or panoramic views: none.
- Skyline features: large pylons.
- Landmarks to connect with place: none.
- Agricultural land classification: mostly grade 3b with a small amount of grade 4.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The larger area is a **most sensitive** location with potential impacts on the effectiveness of the local gap, biodiversity and water quality, with some of the garden sites to existing housing considered as **moderately sensitive** locations. Potential impact on the drainage system that feeds The Moors wetland and the River Hamble. The small area south of the PRow opposite Green Oak and Farley is a **moderately sensitive** location as it has existing development either side and opposite it on the Lower Chase Road.

3.4 Areas along Dodds Lane and Church Lane and Hampton Hill (SHLAA sites 1876, 2453, 2458, 2513)

- Context: unspoilt tranquil farmland accessed from winding rural lanes within the SDNP adjacent to existing housing.
- Character: undulating farmland ensuring views from surrounding rural lanes along Dodds Lane and Church Lane. Visual impact of development due to the undulating topography of the SDNP. Area along Hampton Hill well screened from Hampton Hill (road) with mature hedgerow with trees.
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: glimpsed views of existing housing rooflines.
- Landmarks to connect with place: none.
- Agricultural land classification: grade 2.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **highly sensitive** location with potential visual impacts on the SDNP. Retaining the character of Droxford Road and Church Lane as rural lanes may be an issue.

3.5 Areas of existing development on the urban fringe including garden areas (SHLAA sites 466, 1751, 2001 and 2447)

- Context: existing housing development.
- Character: houses within gardens.
- Important or panoramic views: none.
- Skyline features: views of existing housing.
- Landmarks to connect with place: none.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

Based on known constraints, a **least sensitive** location with very limited visual and biodiversity impacts on the surrounding countryside.

3.6 Area off Mislingford Road (SHLAA site 2412)

- Context: flat area of farmland with mature hedgerow boundary with trees accessed from Mislingford Road. Within important local gap between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath. Poor connectivity to the facilities in central Swanmore.
- Character: Visible from Mislingford Road due to the flat topography, surrounded by fields and within the countryside between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath.
- Important or panoramic views: none.
- Skyline features: large pylons.
- Landmarks to connect with place: none.
- Agricultural land classification: grade 4.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

A **most sensitive** location with potential impacts on effectiveness of the local gap and the surrounding countryside landscape character. Poor connectivity to central Swanmore and its facilities.

4.0 SUMMARY OF KEY LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE ISSUES FOR SWANMORE

Shedfield Heathlands Character Area

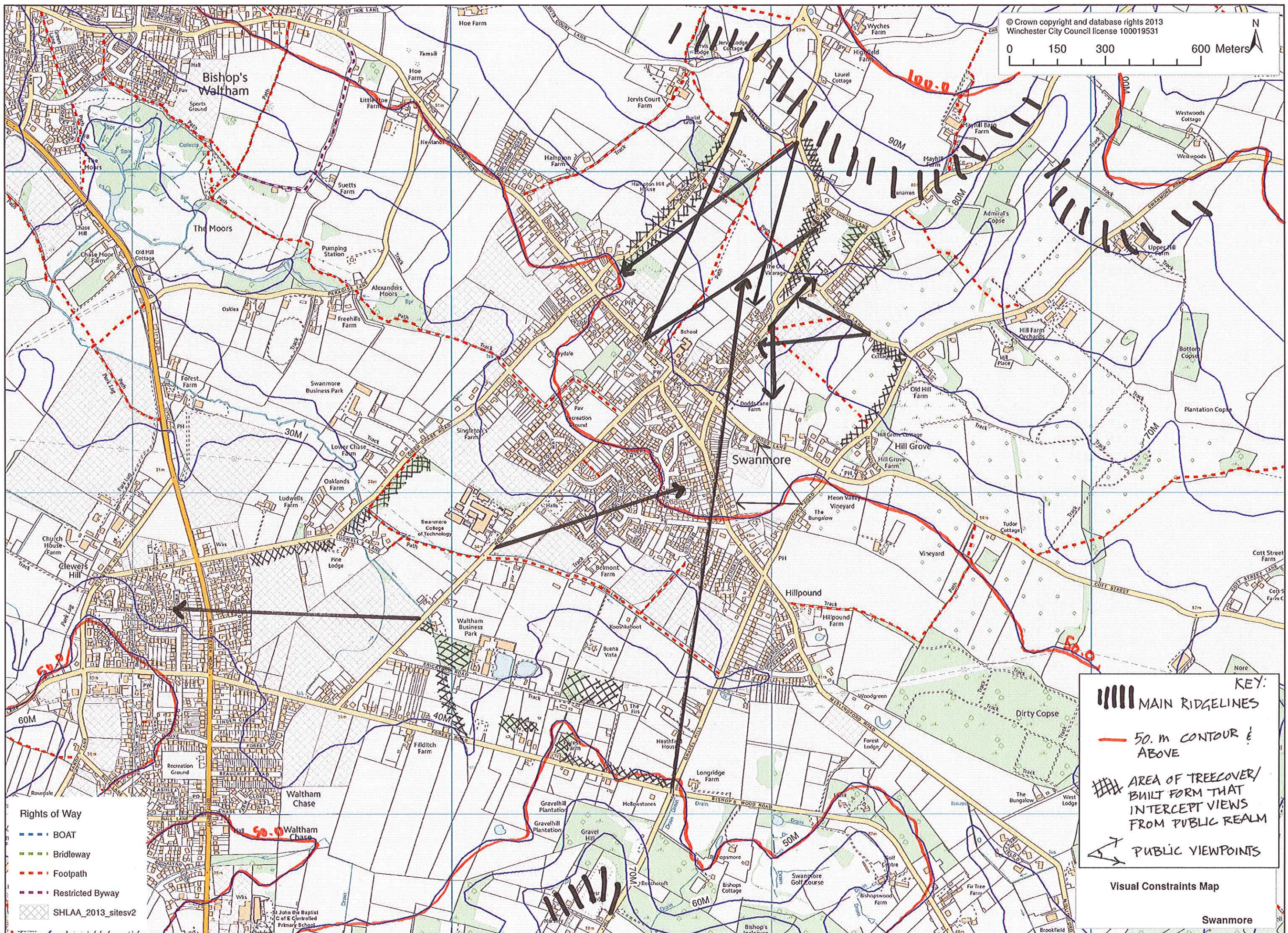
- An area favoured by the development industry given its location within Hampshire and its attractive rural setting. This generates pressure for additional sites to be released for development which may impact on the local settlement gaps between Swanmore, Waltham Chase and Bishop's Waltham.
- Suburban fringe encroachment, e.g. horse paddocks with fencing, outbuildings etc within countryside setting of west of Swanmore including local settlement gap.
- Avoid development on land that forms part of the drainage system that feeds into the River Hamble. Any reduction in this flow could adversely impact the wetland flora and fauna of The Moors and the River Hamble.
- Further loss of farmland, boundary hedges and trees to equestrian use and development to accommodate planned growth.
- Coalescence of settlements (Swanmore, Bishop's Waltham, Waltham Chase).

South Winchester Downs Character Area

- Part of South Downs National Park whose special qualities contribute significantly to setting of Swanmore, but which are vulnerable to change.
- Potential pressure to urbanise rural lanes with additional kerbing, signage, passing bays to accommodate increase in traffic volume.
- Impact of intrusive structure and development on high ground and skylines.
- Coalescence of settlements (Swanmore, Bishop's Waltham, Waltham Chase).

Durley Claylands Character Area

- Avoid development that would impact land that forms part of the drainage system that feeds into the River Hamble. Any reduction in this flow could adversely impact the wetland flora and fauna of The Moors and the River Hamble.
- Coalescence of settlements (Swanmore, Bishop's Waltham, Waltham Chase).
- Loss of hedgerows and woodlands.



Rights of Way

- BOAT
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Restricted Byway

SHLAA_2013_sitesv2

KEY:

- MAIN RIDGELINES
- 50. m CONTOUR & ABOVE
- AREA OF TREECOVER/ BUILT FORM THAT INTERCEPT VIEWS FROM PUBLIC REALM
- PUBLIC VIEWPOINTS

Visual Constraints Map

Swanmore

Swanmore Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal Map - September 2013

