

North-North East of Hedge End Strategic Development Area

SUMMARY LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

Introduction

The South East Plan (published July 2009) refers to the allocation of a Strategic Development Area (SDA) in close proximity to Southampton 'within the broad location to the North North/East of Hedge End' (Policy SH2). The policy requires that areas of open land between the SDA and neighbouring settlements will be identified and maintained in order to prevent coalescence between the SDA and existing settlements and, additionally, to protect the separate identities of individual settlements.

As part of the LDF work for Winchester District, it is expected that specific boundaries indicating these areas of 'open land' would be defined in DPDs (Development Plan Documents) and will include land which has a predominantly open and/or rural appearance. This landscape appraisal forms part of the wider evidence base that will be used to assess constraints and opportunities and influence the location of these boundaries. The SDA study area is broadly defined as the land between Botley, Hedge End, Horton Heath, Durley and Curdridge. The SDA crosses the district boundary between Eastleigh Borough Council and Winchester City Council.

Since this landscape appraisal was started the South East Plan has been revoked by Government. The future of the SDA proposal is therefore uncertain, but the landscape appraisal has been concluded and published in order to be able to inform any future decisions about the location of an SDA or other major development in the area.

Methodology

The appraisal is a combination of field work/professional judgement resulting from a visual site assessment carried out in 2009/2010 and a desk top study based on GIS constraint maps and recognised documents, some with recommendations as listed below.

For clarification, the term 'landscape' is recognised as a collective term for all components that make up countryside and settlements, 'landscape' being interchangeable with the term 'environment' (ref document below *Assessing Landscape Sensitivity at a Strategic Level (HCC 2006) p6*). Components of landscape when considered in this way are the physical landscape (soils, landform and land cover) including landscape character; experiential landscape (to include tranquillity and countryside access); biodiversity; historic environment and visibility. The term '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.'*(Chris Bray, Worcestershire County Council,*

from Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 'Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity').

The appraisal refers to the following main documents and maps:

Winchester City and its Setting document (1999)

Landscape Character Assessment for Winchester District (March 2004)

Draft Strategic Development Area Landscape Study (WCC/EBC June 2006 unpublished)

Assessing Landscape Sensitivity at a Strategic Level: a description of the methodology (Hampshire County Council 2006)

Landscape Sensitivity Analysis for the Fareham Strategic Development Area (Hampshire County Council October 2006)

Landscape Sensitivity Study for Hedge End SDA commissioned by PUSH (Land Use Consultants June 2010).

Draft Integrated Character Assessment (HCC April 2010)

GIS Constraint maps:

1. WCC/EBC 2006 general constraint maps covering landscape character areas; ridgelines and topography; agricultural land classifications; composite constraints map; environment agency flood maps; nature conservation designations; aerial photograph.
2. WCC 2006 landscape sensitivity map.
3. WCC 2009 landscape sensitivity constraint maps covering physical landscape; experiential; biodiversity; historic environment; visibility; contamination; civil aviation restrictions.

Landscape Character within the SDA

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) work identifying landscape character and relevant to the SDA was initially carried out at county level by Hampshire County Council (2000) . Two main landscape character areas were identified at the county level, South Hampshire Lowlands/Heath and South Hampshire Coastal.

At the local level, LCA documents produced by Eastleigh Borough Council (1997) and Winchester City Council (2004) identify the following character areas within the SDA study area:

- Eastleigh LCA 9: Horton Heath Undulating Farmland (main character area)
- Winchester LCA 23. Durley Clayland Landscape Character area (main character area)
- Winchester LCA 22. Shedfield Heathlands Landscape Character Area

A draft *Integrated Character Assessment* (April 2010) is currently being finalised by Hampshire County Council which when completed will replace the existing county Landscape Character Assessment (2000). Responding to current issues, legislation and guidance, it covers both townscape and landscape bringing it in line with the European Landscape Convention, the latter making it clear that landscapes should not stop at urban boundaries. It also places greater emphasis on a spatial reporting framework for regional and sub-regional green infrastructure planning work, provides compatibility with the emerging LDF spatial planning approach and, with the addition of settlement characterisation, a spatial context for urban place shaping. This appraisal therefore seeks to include data from the integrated assessment to supplement Winchester City Council's more detailed but dated 2004 assessment.

The County Council's assessment gives a contextual overview of the landscape with cross boundary characterisation. It identifies only two character areas within the SDA study area; the Forest of Bere West (2E) and the Hamble Valley (3D). In terms of landscape types, the main part of the study area consists of lowland mosaic open and lowland mosaic small scale with a much smaller area around Curdrige identified as lowland mosaic heath associated, which corresponds with the Winchester City Council assessment. The marked contrasts between the characteristics of the larger main area (2E) and the river valley landscape (3D) that straddles the district boundary in the middle and southern half of the study area are set out in more detail later on.

Landscape Character in Winchester District

Ref: *Landscape Character Assessment for Winchester District* (March 2004)

At the local level, the Winchester City Council assessment shows that the majority of the study area lies within the Durley Claylands Landscape Character Area; a smaller section in the south eastern corner around Curdrige lies within the Shedfield Heathlands Landscape Character Area.

Durley Claylands Landscape Character Area:

This is the main landscape character area in the part of the study area within Winchester district. It comprises a varied rural landscape of mixed arable and pasture land bounded by strong well established hedgerows, mature specimen trees and scattered areas of woodland, some ancient. The gently undulating nature of the topography with its narrow sunken lanes contained by mature trees/hedgerows contribute to its remote, historic feel within a tranquil countryside setting. The upper reaches of the River Hamble including the narrow secluded valley associated with the disused Bishop's Waltham to Botley railway line and historic Durley Mill, add to the areas distinctive local character. This is further reinforced by the relatively large number of isolated dwellings and individual farm settlements randomly distributed throughout the more rural areas, most notably between Durley and the district boundary to the south where many of the farm settlements remain in active use within their agricultural landscape.

Key Characteristics of the Durley Claylands LCA in the study area (from Winchester District Landscape Assessment 2004) are:

- Relatively low lying, gently undulating landscape made up of sands and loams of Bracklesham Beds with Lower Bagshot sands to the NE of the study area.
- The numerous water courses in the S half of the character area with their associated river and wetland habitats within the catchment area of the River Hamble, which originates in Bishops Waltham.
- Varied landscape of arable, pasture fields, copses (some ancient) and scattered settlements, historically resulting from clearance of Forest of Bere woodland.
- Small irregular field pattern associated with informal and piecemeal pre-parliamentary enclosure cover much of the area.
- Strong hedgerow and woodland network dominated by oak, ash, hawthorn, hazel and field maple. Woodland generally assarted.
- Long views from elevated positions across farmland, together with shorter views contained by woodland and strong hedgerow boundaries (over 2.5m height).
- Numerous ancient narrow winding lanes, except in areas of parliamentary enclosure where roads are typically straight with wide verges bordered by clipped hedges containing standard specimen oaks.
- Numerous scattered farms and dwellings centred around Durley.
- Buildings of diverse age and character.

Key Issues:

- Suburbanisation and urban fringe encroachment.
- Intrusive agricultural/industrial buildings and untidy peripheral areas.
- Loss and poor management of hedgerows and woodland.

Relevant landscape strategies:

- Conserving the varied open and enclosed views throughout the area.
- Protecting grasslands of ecological interest by enforcement of planning policies.
- Protecting and conserving hedgerows and woodlands, replanting as required to retain existing landscape pattern.

Relevant built form strategies:

- Conserving the scattered pattern of rural farm settlements.
- Respecting the small-scale nature of existing dwellings.
- Integrating any new development into the well-treed rural setting through careful siting and appropriate use of locally indigenous tree and hedge planting.

(Refer to the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment for further detail). Landscape types are listed in the appendix attached to this appraisal.

Shedfield Heathlands Landscape Character Area.

This character area is locally specific to the SE corner near Curdrige and represents only a small proportion of the study area within the Winchester district. The local hydrology and varied geology of the area have created some distinctive features that differ from the main study area. Most prominent are the pockets of poorly drained areas and low fertility combined with the more recent C19 and C20 expansion of local settlements initially triggered by the proximity of the railway line.

Key Characteristics of the Shedfield Heathlands LCA within the study area (from Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment 2004) are:

- Low lying, flat or gently undulating topography with a particularly distinct ridge at Curdrige.
- Varied geology of clays and sands resulting in a varied ecology as well as supporting thriving brick-making and sand-extraction industries up until the C20.
- Areas of poor drainage and minor streams on underlying clays.
- Mixture of small-scale horticulture and paddocks with associated small-holdings, polytunnels, glass-houses and a vineyard. Fruit production was particularly dominant in the area from the mid C18th to WWII.
- Views in the area generally restricted due to undulating topography, frequency of buildings, trees and tall hedgerows. Exception: distinct ridgeline along B3035 at Curdrige providing far reaching views N and W.
- Curdrige lies within an area where the influences of the C19 and C20 are strong. Straight boundaries, hedges and roads formed by formal enclosure in Victorian times and often sub-divided by fences more recently for use as paddocks. The proximity of the area to the railway station at Botley aided the development of its horticultural economy in the C19 and early C20. Combined with its brick making industry, this resulted in the relatively rapid expansion of Curdrige and other settlements. These settlements have generally retained their scattered, low-density structure.

Key Issues:

- Loss of ancient field systems.
- Retention and management of hedgerows and woodlands.
- Visually prominent suburban development lacking local character.
- Prominent structures/urbanisation.
- Heavy traffic.
- Soil erosion.

Relevant landscape strategies:

- Enforcement of planning policies to protect existing heathland from development or agricultural use.
- Conserving and enhancing the small-scale mosaic of heathland, pasture and woodland in and around settlements that include Curdrige.
- Conserving the varied open and enclosed views throughout the area.

Relevant built form strategies:

- Resisting outward expansion of settlements including Curdrige to ensure they remain as distinct rural settlements.
- Integrating any new dwellings into existing settlements with appropriate tree and hedge planting.
- Resisting development that would further suburbanise local settlements such as that associated with horsiculture.

(Refer to the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment for further detail). Landscape types are listed in the appendix attached to this appraisal.

Detailed description of landscape character/sensitivity.

Physical Landscape:

Ref: GIS Constraint maps

- **Topography**
This area forms part of the lowlands within the Hampshire Basin, bounded by the higher chalk downland. A key characteristic is the gently undulating rural landscape with the highest more open ground in the north east corner of the study area at Durley Manor Farm (70.00m) contrasting with the lower wooded areas of the River Hamble valley and its tributaries within the central and southern section. The area is relatively low lying in contrast to the higher chalk downland in the central and northern areas of Winchester district.

Ridgelines are a feature of both the study area and the wider landscape setting creating a distinctive NE to SW ground profile alongside and between the water courses. The ridgelines provide far reaching and panoramic views across the river valley and tributaries, which are most prominent at heights above 30.00m.

Another feature of the area is the significant influence of the topography on the local road network and railway line (now dismantled) which has evolved in response to the physical constraints of ridgelines and main river valley, again with a strong NE to SW alignment.

Sunken lanes are characteristic of the small scale rural landscape in the north eastern corner, enclosed by mature hedgerows and specimen oaks.

- **Landcover/land use**
The combination of landcover and land use has played a major part in establishing the character of the area. Land use is very mixed with a high proportion of pasture and rough grassland within a relatively small scale field pattern managed by a predominance of small farm holdings. The area is rich in semi-natural ancient woodland especially to the north and east of the study area between Curdrige and Durley. A distinctive feature of the local landscape is the presence of magnificent spreading and sometimes ancient oaks within mature field boundary hedgerows, often formed from

former blocks of woodland, and particularly evident alongside the many tracks and lanes so prevalent in the area.

The heavily wooded river valley sides are characteristic along the valley's length creating a strong sense of enclosure. Permanent pasture is also very dominant on the valley sides. Exploitation of the river and shores is minimal, unlike further south, with woodland often sweeping down to the shore's edge.

- Dry valleys / watercourses

The majority of the character area falls within the upper and middle reaches of the Hamble's small catchment area, the latter stretching virtually to the edge of the Meon valley. There is a dense network of chalk springs and small streams which flow south through the area into the Hamble. The main tributary flows from Bishops Waltham to Botley which passes through the SE corner of the SDA study area; it is joined by a second tributary known as Ford Lake which defines the district boundary. The river and tributaries fall within the Environment Agency floodzone categories 2 and 3.

Much of the well established woodland landscape in the study area is associated with the watercourses on lower lying land; the higher better drained areas consisting of lighter, silty soils are largely in agricultural land use and have a more open character. An exception is the predominance of semi ancient natural woodland on ridgelines and hills mainly to the east of the area, for example Mounts Copse, Brokes Copse and Breach Hill, which also have SINC designations.

- Agricultural land classification:

The nutrient rich sands and loams of the Bracklesham Beds have resulted in high agricultural land quality, most notably grades 1 and 2. A large proportion of the study area is highest quality Grade 1 located within the river valleys, with Grade 2 land covering much of the remaining area directly to the north. Lower quality grade 3 and 4 land exists immediately north of the railway line including Boorley Green, the northern part of the study area which includes Durley Street and Horton Heath and the SE corner around Curdrige.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (*Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*) states that the presence of the best and most versatile agricultural land defined as grades 1, 2 and 3a should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations, for example, biodiversity, quality and character of the landscape, amenity value or heritage interest when considering suitability of areas for development.

The River Hamble valley and that of its tributary Ford Lake consists of the highest grade farmland classified as Grade 1 agricultural land quality. This forms part of a wider band running E-W through the study area between the golf course north of Boorley Green and immediately south of Durley The table below compiled by DEFRA underlines the importance of grades 1 and 2 quality land as a valuable but scarce natural resource, especially in Hampshire, and

the need to identify and protect these areas for reasons of long term sustainability.

England		
Grade	Hectares	%
Grade 1	354,562	2.7
Grade 2	1,848,874	14.2
Grade 3	6,290,210	48.2
Grade 4	1,839,581	14.1
Grade 5	1,100,305	8.4
Non Agricultural	655,856	5.0
Urban	951,424	7.3
Hampshire County		
Grade	Hectares	%
Grade 1	1,548	0.4
Grade 2	17,854	4.9
Grade 3	209,336	56.9
Grade 4	55,772	15.2
Grade 5	19,476	5.3
Non Agricultural	41,282	11.2
Urban	22,449	6.1

Reference: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rds/lgmt/docs/ALC-Stats071105.pdf>

- **Tree Preservation Orders**

There are few TPOs in existence within the Winchester district part of the study area, the most notable protected area of trees being the semi ancient natural woodland around Breach Hill, south of Durley Mill Farm. Most of these protected woodland areas also have SINC status. This is in sharp contrast to the area south of the study area around Hedge End. It should not be assumed however that the low number of TPOs within the study area is due to the poor quality of the tree cover but rather the absence to date of change including pressure of development and associated potential threat of tree removal. If the proposed SDA went ahead it would change the status quo and a large number of TPO's are likely to be made for the long term protection of significant hedgerow, trees and planting buffers to lessen any adverse impact on landscape character.

Experiential characteristics:

Ref: GIS constraint maps including the WCC visibility constraints map (2009).

The area has many lanes and tracks which connect with an existing network of footpaths and bridleways to provide links between the small settlements and farmsteads scattered throughout, particularly around Durley. The exception is an area located either side of the district boundary and Ford Lake, which lies to the north of Botley Park Hotel and Country Club extending as far as Stapleford Lane.

The PROW network here is very sparse as there is only one public right of way commencing north of Boorley Green across the golf course to the tributary with no further links beyond. This footpath is not characteristic of others in the area, the majority of which follow distinct field boundary patterns. Unlike the Itchen valley, there are no national trails within the study area; Kings Way being the closest passing by Bishops Waltham en route to Winchester.

In terms of tranquillity, the Hamble river valley and main tributaries offer different experiences along their length. A sense of remoteness in an undisturbed and peaceful wooded setting may be found along the upper reaches in the study area, which is in complete contrast to the bustling waterside scene south of the M27. The wooded valley sides and predominantly natural waterside edge impart a strong sense of naturalness. The sense of intimacy and quiet extends in places beyond the river valley and tributaries most notably among the lanes, tracks and footpaths of the adjoining rural landscape away from the traffic noise of the busier Winchester and Botley Roads with their role as through routes to larger settlements beyond the study area boundaries. Another significant factor contributing to the low density road network and its sense of remoteness is the absence of 'rat runs' to main roads outside the study area as experienced in other parts of the district.

Historic Environment:

Ref: GIS constraint maps

The only two small settlements in the Winchester district part of the area are Curdrige and Durley, which appear to have a scattered informal layout with no real nucleated centres. The villages are generally linear alongside roads with Curdrige focusing around the common. The settlements evolved mainly from medieval times, the core of Durley for instance later extending to include the 19thC development of Durley Street. A variety of buildings and architectural styles adds to local distinctiveness from C16th timber-framed buildings and thatched cottages, Victorian brick with slate, to brick and tile of the 20th C.

The study area, which lies within the former Forest of Bere, consists mainly of two landscape types; lowland mosaic open and lowland mosaic small scale (ref HCC *draft integrated assessment*) representing a landscape where areas of woodland were cleared and informally enclosed for pasture. Most of the area within Winchester district is lowland mosaic small scale, thus by the time the Forest of Bere was disbanded in 1810, much of this area had already been the subject of informal enclosure, creating a pattern of irregular shaped small fields with a mix of open land and assart woodland in between, much of which is now identified as semi natural ancient woodland with SINC status. The largest of these woodland areas are situated down the eastern side of the study area, the most extensive being at Brokes Copse. The majority of the assart types correlate with the known medieval extent of the Forest of Bere. The long history of settlement and the relatively early enclosure of some of the fields mean that hedgerows frequently contain a wide variety of species. The most historic landscapes within the area would appear to include the ancient woodland and areas east of Durley Mill and Mincingfield Lane.

The more open character type which provides the setting for Boorley Green and extends north following the eastern upper slopes of Ford Lake tributary as far as Durley Street, is identified by the more regular, straight boundary fields typical of formal and parliamentary enclosure.

The heath associated landscape around Curdrige is associated with open and wooded commons. The character of this area changed dramatically following disafforestation and parliamentary enclosure with its distinctive regular pattern of small fields and straight boundaries, field sizes increasing with distance from settlement. Perhaps the most striking contrast however between this landscape and the main character of the area is the fact that it is the most intensively developed, at least within Winchester district; due to the rapid expansion of the local brick industry and horticultural economy which in turn was fuelled by the introduction of the railway close by.

Up until the mid C19, the general settlement pattern of the study area was 'low density dispersed.' Durley meaning deer wood or deer clearing is a place name reminder of the hunting history associated with the landscape. The distribution of scattered farmsteads in the area especially south of Durley remains a locally distinctive feature, originally established as a result of both the market gardening boom and the enclosure of the remaining Forest of Bere landscape in the mid C19.

There are two historic parks and gardens in the area identified on the local Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens; Snakemoor House, Durley (Post 1810 Park) and Sherecroft, Botley Hill, Curdrige (Garden). Fairthorne Manor, Curdrige (Post 1810 Park) lies just to the south of the study area. There do not appear to be any Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the study area. The nearest Conservation Area is Botley which lies largely within Eastleigh Borough. There are a number of listed buildings in the area consisting mainly of farm settlements, for example, Netherhill Farm, Little Snakemoor Farm, Durley Mill Farm and Lower Wangfield Farm.

Biodiversity:

Ref: GIS constraint maps

Ref: *HRA Screening Statement for Hedge End SDA* draft 1 (EBC Jan 2010)

Ref: Final Draft *PUSH Biodiversity Assessment for Hedge End SDA* (Chris Blandford Assoc. April 2010)

The study area lies within a wider highly sensitive contextual setting in terms of biodiversity and existing landscape character which include the following internationally designated sites:

- Solent and Southampton Water RAMSAR (wetland site of international importance).
- Solent maritime SAC (Special Area of Conservation)
- River Itchen SAC
- New Forest SAC
- New Forest SPA (Special Protection Area)
- New Forest RAMSAR

Sensitive sites within the study area include:

- River Hamble and its valley setting. The lower reaches of the Hamble from its mouth to Botley form part of the Solent maritime SAC and part of the larger Solent and Southampton RAMSAR site. The upper Hamble estuary and woods to the south of the study area are designated SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) status.
- There are several areas designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in recognition of their local significance for biodiversity; which include the wet woodland and watercourse in the upper reaches of the Hamble (beyond the estuary) and its tributaries and also the semi natural ancient woodland described earlier.
- Key habitats of nature conservation concern within the study area are Fen, Alder Carr, semi-natural ancient woodland, agriculturally unimproved grassland and Wet Woodland and Fen.
- BAP Priority Habitats: includes wet woodland in the valley floor, an important wildlife corridor; areas within ancient woodland e.g. near Durley Mill; small pockets of undesignated woodland throughout the study area e.g. Netherhill Farm, woodlands fringing large gardens at Curdrige; all potentially vulnerable to habitat fragmentation.
- Beyond specific designations, the characteristic diverse habitat variation of the upper valley and tributaries also plays an important role within the river valley landscape and beyond. Of particular significance are the well wooded river channels which are mainly broad leaved woodland, patches of improved and unimproved grassland and occasional well established orchards. Away from the river valley setting, diverse habitat variation remains evident with its mix of agricultural land including improved grasslands and arable, nurseries and small pockets of urban development, mainly residential with private gardens.

Visibility

Ref: WCC Visibility Constraints map

Views within the Winchester study area are predominantly short and often with a wooded backdrop with the one main exception of the river valley. Panoramic views with occasional long views towards the coastal plain in the south are evident from locally elevated land

where there are low hedges and a more open aspect, such as the area around Curdrige in the SE corner, Durley Manor Farm in the NE and the centrally located Hill Farm. Views are mainly from several ridgelines evident throughout the study area as a locally distinctive feature, and the higher land to the north around Durley. Some of the most prominent views are from the public right of way network on elevated land above the 30.00m contour line between Hill Farm and Durley with shorter views to wooded enclosures below this level. Views to the east are contained by a high NE-SW ridgeline (above 40.00m) around Curdrige, a visually prominent feature and physical constraint that has also influenced the local road network, such as the main Botley Road which follows this ridgeline providing filtered views across the study area.

High points as landmarks seen from public viewpoints include Hill Farm, Mount Folly Copse, The White House near Curdrige, Snakemoor Farm buildings and the Botley Park golf course. Wooded skylines are a feature of the area, for example, the NE corner of the study area east of Durley.

In contrast, much of the river valley landscape and its tributaries are visually contained by wooded valley sides that frequently extend to the waters edge, creating a natural setting for the valley floor. There are few if any extensive views from within the upper reaches of the valley with long views found instead on ridgelines looking across the valleys, for example, across the district boundary looking over Ford Lake to and from Botley Park golf course.

Landscape Sensitivity Summary within Winchester district part of the study area.

The SDA area of search does not contain any protected landscapes, the nearest designated landscape being the South Downs National Park which lies within 5km of the northern boundary. The aims of the European Landscape Convention and government's place-making agenda recognise the value of all places, not simply protected areas of 'highest' quality. The local characteristics/features of the landscape identified in the assessment and valued by the local community should therefore remain a significant factor when considering the suitability of development in this location.

The landscape appraisal demonstrates that considerable parts of the area within the Winchester district are very sensitive to new development in landscape and visual terms. This is consistent with the comprehensive and detailed Landscape Sensitivity Study for Hedge End SDA prepared for PUSH by Land Use Consultants (June 2010), which places all areas in Winchester district within the moderate to high sensitivity category. The Hamble river valley and its tributaries, including Ford Lake on the district boundary, is a significant landscape feature within the SDA recognised as an area of high sensitivity. The wooded valley sides, some comprising ancient woodland, are a key characteristic. They are potentially vulnerable to fragmentation and pressure of development in their role as undisturbed green corridors, more so where there are frequent links with mature hedgerows along field and lane boundaries within the wider rural landscape, for example, south of Netherhill Farm.

The contrasting but equally distinctive rural landscape with its sparse settlement pattern and sense of tranquility evident throughout much of the area is also considered sensitive to any large scale development and supporting road infrastructure as are the identities of the two small settlements of Durley and Curdrige. The area between Durley in the north, Ford Lake to the south and the high ridgeline to the east adjacent Botley Road is of particular significance with its varied topography and valley landform, intimate landscape structure, narrow, winding lanes, and scattering of small farmsteads and nurseries which are still in active use.

In terms of visual impact the most sensitive areas are the ridgelines with their panoramic and long views most notably around Hill Farm, Snakemoor Farm and Mount Folly Copse and, additionally, views across the valley to and from Botley Park golf course and the northern edge of Boorley Green. Some of the most prominent views are from the public right of way network on elevated land between Hill Farm and Durley. Restricted views within and to the north of Botley Park golf course are due mainly to limited public access. Opportunities may exist to improve the footpath network either side of the district boundary in this area which may also provide benefits in terms of improved green corridor links and biodiversity value. The undeveloped, tranquil wooded river valley and tributaries provide the least intrusive views but are highly sensitive in other respects, for example, disturbance and habitat fragmentation.

A summary of key sensitivities therefore includes

- Areas of ancient woodland contributing to rural character
- Small intimate scale of field pattern, lanes and footpaths
- Rich but vulnerable wooded river valley
- Strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity
- 'Undeveloped' character with its prevalence of small farmsteads and sparse settlement pattern
- Diverse landscape types which are of greatest biodiversity interest
- Panoramic and long views from the ridgelines
- Visual prominence of wooded skylines
- Need to balance public access and recreational use with remote and tranquil character.

Any new development should therefore be constrained by the topography, slopes and watercourse; ridgelines with their long views and skyline features; value of existing interconnecting footpaths and tracks throughout the site; importance of existing green corridors within and bordering the site in landscape and ecology terms; limitations of access into site. There is also the site's high quality but fragile landscape character to consider including protected areas and key features, most notably the highly sensitive River Hamble and its tributaries with its special landscape character supporting a highly diverse range of habitats and species.

In conclusion, there are no locations considered suitable for large scale development within Winchester district without significant landscape and visual impact on the character and sensitivity of the area. If it were necessary to develop the SDA it may be that its landscape and visual impact would need to be balanced against other considerations. The sensitivity of this area and the need to retain the separate identity of existing settlements would justify all of the land within Winchester District, between the potential SDA and the villages of Durley and Curdrige, being retained as open land, within a defined gap between the SDA and neighbouring settlements.

Linda Thomas CMLI MA : WCC Landscape Architect

18.08.2010

APPENDIX

(ref: *Winchester Landscape Character Assessment 2004*)

LANDSCAPE TYPES: WINCHESTER DISTRICT

The Durley landscape character area comprises two main landscape types, which are Mixed Farmland and Woodland (open and enclosed) and River Valley (floor and side) and one main Scattered Clay lowland settlement type. These landscape and settlement types are described in more detail below:

Mixed Farmland and Woodland: Open

Medium to large scale pattern of arable farmland; some woodland with a moderate degree of enclosure. The area around Curbridge is typical of this landscape type.

Mixed Farmland and Woodland: Enclosed

A considerably more wooded character with ancient semi-natural woodland, hedgerows with hedge banks and hedgerow trees providing a strong sense of enclosure. A mosaic of agricultural land-uses often relates to undulating terrain, with mixed arable on drier ridges and pasture in clayey hollows. Fields are often small or medium and irregularly shaped, and include some ancient field systems. The area around the settlement of Durley is typical of this landscape type.

This landscape forms most of the boundary with the chalklands to the north, the junction forming a spring line often associated with habitats of significant ecological interest as well as settlements. The land is lower lying than the chalklands to the north, the highest point being 100.0m OD north of Hundred Acres. Settlement patterns in the area are typified by small shrunken hamlets and farms together with sprawling, low density villages. Routes within this area generally comprise a network of narrow, winding roads and lanes remote from major through routes, providing a tranquil and secluded landscape.

River Valley Landscape Type

The River Hamble is relatively low-lying, at an altitude of 0 to 30.0m. It sits unobtrusively within the landscape and does not have the obvious or steep river valley sides typical of the Itchen and Meon. River valleys are typically a farmed landscape with rivers bordered by semi natural vegetation; the Hamble is no exception. Associated features may include rough grassland, former water meadows, small copses and poplar plantations. River valleys are frequently associated with a tranquil pastoral quality away from major settlements, encouraging informal recreational pursuits such as fishing, rambling and cycling.

Scattered Clay Lowland Settlement Type

This type is typical of the area around Durley. These settlements have no strong form and consist of a series of loosely connected dwellings and farms, scattered

over a relatively large area, although Durley as an older settlement with its Anglo-Saxon origins does have a nucleated historic core. More recent settlements such as Durley Street are focused along one main road. Development has expanded sporadically along neighbouring lanes, supplemented by small outlying clusters of dwellings associated with farmsteads and mills eg. Durley Mill. Settlements are well integrated within the surrounding countryside with hedgerows and woodlands forming characteristic boundaries and backdrops to the village settlements. Large specimen oak trees are important landmarks and features of the area.

Heath Associated Pasture and Woodland is characteristic of the Shedfield landscape character area and settlement type around Curdrige as described below:

Heath Associated Pasture and Woodland

This landscape type is found around Curdrige in the study area extending throughout the lower lying southern areas of the district, rising overall to heights of 70.0m. The landform is mainly flat and undulating. Much of the landscape is linked to former heathland indicated by presence of oak, birch, bracken, gorse and pine within wooded areas and hedgerows. The varied landscape is supportive of important ecological habitats although encroachment of C20 suburbanisation and increasingly busy roads and the use of lanes as 'rat runs' in specific areas have eroded historic and biodiversity value and the secluded, tranquil quality of the rural landscape.

Heath Associated Settlement Type

Curdrige is typical of the settlements in this type, which tend to have originated more recently than others in the District. The majority expanded in the C19 and C20 coinciding with the growth of horticulture and market gardening in the area, which was assisted by the proximity of the two new railway stations at Botley and Wickham and the enclosure of heaths, wood pasture and woodland by Parliamentary Enclosure Acts. Nurseries are still evident in the area.