

## **Landscape Appraisal: West of Waterlooville Area 4**

(follow on from LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper consultation response February 2008)

Linda Thomas, Senior Landscape Architect, Landscape team, Environment  
2 March 2009

### **Landscape Character Area: Forest of Bere Lowlands**

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

Landscape Type:                      Mixed Farmland and Woodland

Key Characteristics specific to this site:

- Undulating landscape at the foot of the chalk downs which drop steeply down to the coastal plain at Portsdown Hill to the south of this area.
- Varied geology mainly consisting of London Clay with areas of Bagshot sand and river valley alluvium.
- Land cover characterised by farmland and a high proportion of assarted woodland. The farmland is largely arable with pasture concentrated on lower ground but retains an exceptionally high cover of semi-natural habitats.

Key Issues:

- Suburbanised urban 'fringe' character of parts of the area.
- Opportunities to protect and enhance re-establish and link habitats and features characteristic of the Forest of Bere including heaths, grasslands and ancient woodland.

Landscape Strategies:

- Identify and restore ancient species rich hedgerows.
- Increase awareness of Forest of Bere.
- Conserve and restore green spaces that are characteristic of the area.

Built Form Strategies:

- Resist development which further fragments the restoration of the former Forest of Bere or suburbanises local settlements.
- Minimise the impact of intrusive structures.
- Retain the rural character of the local minor roads within the character area.

### **Physical Landscape:**

Ref: GIS constraint map

Landform

- Gently sloping ground from ridgeline in S half of site (approx 50.00m) to lower lying wet ground along N boundary (approx. 35.00m).
- Historic landscape character: strong associations with the Royal Forest of Bere, former royal hunting reserve. Surviving features within site include mature specimen oak trees and remnants of assarted hedgerows.
- Offsite trees alongside E boundary and SE corner are protected by woodland TPO and designated SINC. No protected trees (TPO) within site.
- Minor tributary streams within site flowing W to R Wallington.
- Geology: existence of London clay formation which may impact on proximity of existing/new trees to proposed development.
- Agricultural Land Classification: mainly 3b throughout.

Land cover:

- Land cover mainly open farmland, largely arable, with pasture concentrated on lower ground. Tree cover confined mainly to field boundaries, to include mature specimen oaks. More diverse range of habitats and species within and adjoining S half of site.

### **Experiential:**

Ref: GIS constraint map

- Tranquillity: perception of an enclosed, tranquil rural landscape in S half of site.
- Countryside Access: good interconnecting public rights of way throughout site with links to woodland areas of high amenity value beyond, mainly to W and S, and existing built development at Waterlooville to E.
- No current CRoW access within or close to site.

### **Historic Environment:**

Ref: GIS constraint map

- Historic landscape: strong associations with the Royal Forest of Bere, former royal hunting reserve. Surviving features within site include mature specimen oak trees and remnants of assarted hedgerows.

### **Visibility:**

- Views mainly of local prominence to E and W due to treed skyline on Southwick estate to the W and boundary trees in Plant Row and Barnfield Row along E and SE boundaries, latter restricting views of built development at Waterlooville.
- Intrusion of main pylons to W of site.
- Important views that contribute to landscape character and local distinctiveness:
  - a) Distant skyline views from elevated S half of site providing links with AONB and proposed SDNP to the North as far as Windmill Down N of Hambledon (110.0m), Broadhalfpenny Down (158.0m) and Catherington Down (130.0m).
  - b) Distant skyline views from elevated S half of site providing links with Portsdown Hill to the South.

### **Biodiversity:**

Ref: GIS constraint map

- 2 no SINC's offsite alongside E boundary (Plant Row) and SE corner (Barnfield Row).
- Extensive tracts of woodland further W, SW and S of site (designated SINC's).

### **Landscape Sensitivity:**

Whilst there are currently no protected features and areas within the site, consideration needs to be given to the special local characteristics in terms of amenity value, especially the southern half of the site, which includes assarted hedgerows, protected boundary vegetation and visual links with AONB, proposed SDNP and Portsdown Hill.