

Landscape Appraisal: West of Waterlooville Area 5

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

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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

- Historic landscape character: strong associations with the Royal Forest of Bere, former royal hunting reserve. Surviving features within site include woodland and remnants of assarted hedgerows.
- Geology: existence of London clay formation which may impact on proximity of existing/new trees to proposed development.
- Agricultural Land Classification: site includes grades 2 and 3A agricultural land.

Land cover:

- Highly diverse with land cover characterised by arable and pasture farmland, meadows, ponds / wetland areas and a high proportion of assarted woodland and field boundary hedgerows. Remote and enclosed feel to much of area due to woodland and field boundary hedgerows.

Experiential:

Ref: GIS constraint map

- Tranquillity: high due to remote and enclosed feel to much of area due to woodland and field boundary hedgerows.
- Countryside Access: good interconnecting public rights of way within site linking woodland and meadow areas of high amenity value with wider landscape and existing built development to E.
- No existing CRoW access within 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:

- Important views that contribute to landscape character and local distinctiveness:
 - a) Visual links to Portsdown Hill on skyline to S from ridgeline along N boundary (55.0m).
 - b) Filtered views N through woodland and field boundary hedgerows to AONB and proposed SDNP from ridgeline along N boundary.
 - c) Views E to Waterlooville mainly hidden from within site by woodland and field boundary hedgerows. Exception: NE elevated corner with panoramic view E of built development and distant views towards Stansted.

Biodiversity:

Ref: GIS constraint map

- Very diverse range of habitats and species (including protected species) evident throughout site with land cover characterised by arable and pasture farmland, meadows, ponds / wetland areas and a high proportion of assarted woodland and field boundary hedgerows.
- Good interconnecting public rights of way within and beyond site, providing links with green spaces and wildlife corridors allowing good interconnectivity with natural environment.
- Protected sites: 7no designated SINC covering extensive tracts of woodland and meadow within the site; further designated SINC covering woodland adjoining N boundary.
- Large tracts of ancient woodland within site.
- Outline consent for the MDA development (0602538/OUT) includes mitigation relating to biodiversity for part of the site.

Landscape Sensitivity:

This is a highly sensitive landscape with its high quality but fragile landscape character and its important existing green corridors, landscape infrastructure and protected areas and features within and close to the site. The location of this site is also a main consideration as it currently provides an effective high quality landscape buffer between the edge of existing and proposed built development to the east and the special landscape of Southwick Estate to the west. Any proposals for development within or near the site needs to avoid any adverse impact on the area through fragmentation and loss of existing special landscape character.