

Landscape Appraisal: Whiteley Area 2

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

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Landscape Character Area: Whiteley Woodlands

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

Landscape Type: Mixed Farmland and Woodland

Key Characteristics specific to this site:

- Irregular small to medium sized meadows closely integrated with a strong assarted woodland structure.
- Minor streams drain into the R Hamble to the west.
- Occasional long views but generally enclosed by woodland.
- Gently undulating lowlands underlain by a mix of sands, loams, gravels and clays.
- Few roads or footpaths in the landscape character area although the main South Coast railway line lies to the north, reducing tranquillity of the area.

Key Issues:

- Suburbanisation and urban fringe encroachment at Whiteley.

Landscape Strategies that apply to this site:

- Conserve and restore structure and condition of woodlands through appropriate management and by planting new woodland to link ancient woodland remnants.
- Conserve and enhance species rich grassland and hedgerows through appropriate management.
- Conserve the varied open and enclosed views throughout the area.

Built Form Strategies that apply to this site:

- Respect the small scale nature of existing dwellings in the countryside.
- Integrate new buildings into the well treed rural setting through careful siting and appropriate use of locally indigenous tree and hedge planting.

Physical Landscape:

Ref: GIS constraint map

Landform:

- Rich diversity of different landscape types as identified in Landscape Character Assessment within and surrounding site. Main features include irregular small to medium sized meadows; minor streams and associated wetland feeding into R Hamble; all closely integrated within a strong assarted woodland structure, important in terms of combined biodiversity/amenity value and as green corridors. Site is within river catchment area.
- Protected sites within and outside site. High quality but fragile landscape which abuts highly sensitive River Hamble within National Trust land.
- Agricultural Land Classification: the site includes grade 3A agricultural land and is therefore of 'the best and most versatile quality'.
- Geology: existence of London Clay formation.

Landcover:

- Existing hedges / trees as containment and/or screening
- Assart landscape fields with strong wooded enclosure
- Proximity of large tracts of woodland (Forestry Commission) providing opportunities for renewable energy resource (dry biomass).

Experiential:

Ref: GIS constraint map

- **Tranquillity:**
Mainly evident within central areas of site, along right of way and woodland areas. Intrusion of A3051 when close to W boundary and from railway to N.
- **Countryside Access:**
A public right of way in SE corner of site connects with an area of dedicated woodland (Forestry Commission) within and beyond site boundaries (also shown as CRoW access). Provides accessible links with green spaces and corridors of high amenity value, good connectivity with natural environment and enjoyment both within and beyond the site. Poor footpath links between site and R Hamble National Trust land to the W, exacerbated by busy A3051.

Historic Environment:

Ref: GIS constraint map

- **Historic parks and gardens:**
Fairthorne Manor and grounds cover an extensive area close to NW corner of site and National Trust owned land along the R Hamble.
- **Historic landscape character:** Assarted fields and woodland landscape, rare within Winchester District (ancient field system cleared from primary woodland), previously designated Area of Special Landscape Quality.
- **Ancient woodlands** within and to E of site.

Visibility:

- Views mainly confined to local prominence due to small/medium enclosed field pattern and woodland. Site visible from elevated railway embankment and from public footpath and woodland CRoW access in eastern half of site.
- **High Points:** North of Ridge Farm
- **Land marks:** the railway line on an embankment forms a significant visual and physical barrier along N site boundary.

Biodiversity:

Ref: GIS constraint map

- **SSSI's** – extensive area of mature woodland, which includes Blackmoor Copse, within and beyond E half of site.
- **SINC's** – woodland and meadows associated with the feeder streams to R Hamble within site, linking into further protected areas to S, W and E of site.
- River Hamble is a highly sensitive, protected site close to NW site boundary: a designated RAMSAR site (wetland site of international importance); a SAC (Special Area of Conservation); SPA (Special Protection Area) SSSI.

Landscape Sensitivity

Any new development needs to recognise the sites high quality but fragile landscape character; the importance of existing green corridors and infrastructure within and beyond the site; protected areas and features within and close to the site and, in addition, the highly sensitive location adjacent to protected River Hamble and setting with its special landscape character supporting a highly diverse range of habitats and species.