

Landscape Appraisal: Winchester Barton Farm Area 1

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

Linda Thomas, Senior Landscape Architect, Landscape team, Environment
12 January 2008

Landscape Character Area: Wonston Downs

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

Landscape Type: Open Arable (exposed)

Key Characteristics specific to this site:

- Gently sloping and undulating topography (50-110OD)
- Visually open and expansive landscape with long panoramic views over the downs and key views to Winchester
- Mainly arable with sparse tree/woodland cover consisting of shelterbelts, mainly beech or coniferous.
- Long straight hedgerows enclose a pattern of large fields

Landscape Strategies that apply to this site:

- Conserve the large and generally regular field pattern and wide panoramic views
- Conserve structure and condition of existing hedgerows and isolated woodlands and trees which contribute to biodiversity and character of landscape
- Manage semi-natural roadside verges to maximise biodiversity
- Conserve the historic rural character of lanes, footpaths and drove roads throughout the area

Physical Landscape:

Ref: GIS constraint map

Landform:

- Ridgelines

Two E-W main ridgelines are predominant features of the site

1. the first lies between Harestock and Headbourne Worthy; c65-70m OD, and follows public right of way within site (north of Barton Farm)
2. the second more significant ridgeline lies between Well House Lane and Down Farm Lane along the northern boundary, c65-90m OD.

- Dry valleys

Two main E-W dry valleys are predominant features of the site

1. route immediately to north of and parallel to Well House Lane, c50-60m OD. Sewage Treatment Works located within this valley setting.
2. southern end of the site which crosses railway line and comprises existing gap between settlement boundaries of Abbots Barton and Headbourne Worthy, c50-60m OD.

- Highest Point

Northern boundary of site, 80-90.0m OD.

- Steep gradients
 1. Steep sloping profile down to road south of Well House Lane, including junction with Andover Road.
 2. Steep slopes east of railway line within dry valley setting
- Significant changes of level on site boundaries
 1. Adjacent Andover Road North (between Well House Lane and S boundary)
 2. B3047 between Abbots Barton and Headbourne Worthy

Land cover:

- Mainly large arable fields on sloping ground in an open landscape setting.
- Small area of enclosed paddocks / areas of pasture south of Well House Lane.
- Existing vegetation within site boundaries is generally weak or non-existent
- Existing trees and hedgerows of amenity value outside site boundaries eg avenue in Andover Road.
- TPO trees in SE corner by Abbots Barton

Significant areas of vegetation within or close to the site area include:

1. Shelterbelt skyline feature of mainly beech with shrub understorey along ridge following public right of way. Unploughed margin either side of shelterbelt, approx 10.0m width provides a robust green corridor of significant visual and biodiversity value.
2. Railway embankment to east of site
3. Conifer belt north of sewage works and intermittent small copses to north of Well House Lane.
4. Roadside vegetation either side of Well House Lane
5. Trees and hedgerows adjoining Francis Gardens (includes TPO)
6. Long sections of N-S and E-W trees and hedgerows throughout the site identifying field boundaries and tracks.

NOTE: Existing shelter belts and hedges are significant features in an open exposed landscape and take many years to establish before providing amenity / biodiversity benefits. Because of this, they should be considered a valuable asset and retained and enhanced wherever possible.

Experiential:

Ref: GIS constraint map

Ref: Tranquillity map (CPRE website)

- Tranquillity
Proposed South Downs National Park, which includes Itchen Valley, to east of site
Open downland setting; peaceful.
Tranquil semi-rural valley setting between Abbots Barton and Headbourne Worthy defines different settlement character areas.
- Countryside Access

1. Kings Way / St Swithuns Way following Itchen Valley along eastern boundary
2. E-W right of way through site along ridgeline to Headbourne Worthy.
NB non-ploughed field buffer zone, approx 10.0m width either side of tree-line, of amenity and biodiversity value.
3. N-S right of way through site to Kings Worthy and South Wonston.
4. A significant characteristic of this area is the existence of many well-marked tracks that follow existing field patterns and interconnect with rights of way within the site.
5. N-S railway line through site very restrictive for E-W access.

Historic Environment

Ref: GIS constraint map

Ref: WCC Archaeology Officer Initial Site Appraisal (separate document)

- Western boundary: Andover road is one of main historic routes into city centre (Roman road) and recognised as an important green corridor in Winchester City and its Setting document (WCC 1999).
- Multi period site of potentially national importance E of railway line.
- Historic Parks and Gardens: Headbourne Worthy Grange (Hants Register)
- Village of Headbourne Worthy has a number of Listed Buildings that contribute to local distinctiveness of village and its setting.
- Landscape character setting of Headbourne Worthy enhances local distinctiveness.

Biodiversity

Ref: GIS constraint map

- Existing trees and hedgerows within and surrounding the site are significant in terms of biodiversity due to landscape character as mainly arable throughout. Existing large field pattern bordered by long sections of hedgerow provide valuable green wildlife corridors, especially when linked to copses and shelterbelts.
- Itchen valley to east of site is designated SSSI and SAC status. SSSI abuts proposed eastern boundary of site at Abbots Barton (Francis Gardens).

Visibility

Site appraisal

- Important views
Views south from ridgelines to Winchester city and beyond
Views E and SE from ridgelines to proposed SDNP
- Panoramic views
Far-reaching views to S and E from ridgelines
Views of Kings Worthy houses across railway and A34 to NE from northern ridgeline
Views to E and SE from ridgelines to proposed SDNP
Views to NE across Itchen valley from ridgeline on Abbots Barton site boundary
Views of Headbourne Worthy from Abbots Barton seen as a separate settlement within its wider landscape setting.

- Skyline features and land marks
Police HQ on Winchester skyline to S
Teg Down telecom masts to SW
Cheesefoot Head to SE (proposed SDNP)
Tree belt on ridgeline within site

Landscape Sensitivity Summary

Any new development to recognise constraints of site including topography and slopes; main ridgelines with associated far-reaching visibility and skyline features; value of existing interconnecting footpaths and tracks, including their setting, throughout the site; importance of existing green corridors within and bordering the site in landscape and ecology terms; limitations of vehicular access into site; sensitive eastern boundary to River Itchen in terms of biodiversity, landscape character and heritage; integrity of Kings Worthy and Headbourne Worthy within its landscape setting as separate settlements to Winchester; importance of existing ridgelines as integral to character of Winchester city and its valley setting.