

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN PART 2

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY APPRAISAL

WICKHAM

This appraisal has been prepared with reference to Hampshire County Council's guidance document '*Assessing Landscape Sensitivity at a Strategic Level*' (2006) which recognises the use of Landscape Character Assessments to inform land use and land management policy and, in addition, the need to assess the main attributes of landscape as a basis for gauging sensitivity. The approach in this guidance document does not try to place a value on different landscapes, nor does it seek to establish the capacity of landscape to accommodate development.

In addition, this appraisal is based on published Winchester City and Hampshire County Council documents on landscape character and type; physical constraints identified through a desk top exercise; and professional judgement from site visits. A more detailed landscape assessment may be required prior to the final identification and allocation of sites for development.

CONTENTS

	Page
1.0 Landscape and Townscape Character and Types	2
1.1 Landscape Character	
1.2 Townscape Character	
1.3 Landscape Type	
1.4 Summary	
2.0 Landscape Sensitivity	4
2.1 Physical landscape	
2.2 Experiential / Perceptual	
2.3 Historic Environment	
2.4 Biodiversity	
2.5 Visibility	
3.0 Sensitivity Appraisals	7
3.1 Area south of Southwick Road	
3.2 Area north of Wickham, east of A334	
3.3 Area north of Wickham, west of A334	
3.4 Golf course west of Wickham	
3.5 Ravenswood Hospital, near Knowle	
4.0 Summary of Key Landscape and Townscape Issues	10
Appendix 1 Visibility Constraints Map	
Appendix 2 Landscape Sensitivity Map	

1.0 LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AND TYPES

Reference:

County level¹

Landscape and Townscape Character Areas which identify key characteristics, qualities and forces for change:

- *Main character area: **Meon Valley 3e**.*
- *Secondary character area south-east of Wickham: **Forest of Bere East**.*

District level²

Two character areas create a diverse landscape setting for Wickham. They identify key characteristics, issues and designations with landscape and built form strategies specific to each area.

- *Main landscape and townscape character area (Wickham and surrounding areas to the north, north-east, south and west): **Lower Meon Valley**.*
- *Other character area (between Wickham and Wickham Common): **Forest of Bere Lowlands**.*

The appraisal also takes account of the following City and Parish Council documents:

- *Wickham Village Design Statement (2004) and draft update (2010)*
- *Wickham Parish Plan (2013).*

1.1 Landscape Character

1.1.1 Lower Meon Valley Landscape Character Area

- Fairly narrow Meon river valley in clay lowlands of Hampshire Basin
- Valley floor: riparian character with many species-rich habitats, e.g. unimproved meadows
- Paddocks and pasture (enclosed meadow) predominant throughout valley
- Many woodlands and assorted fields create intimate character
- Distinctive historic parkland landscape throughout valley
- Sheltered character with few detracting influences
- Railway and vehicular routes generally on higher ground following valley profile.

1.1.2 Forest of Bere Lowlands Landscape Character Area

- Undulating landscape of varied geology: locally sandy outcrops, poor soils
- Small enclosed fields, mix of pasture and arable, bounded by maintained hedgerows
- Large specimen oaks along field boundaries

¹ [Hampshire County Council Integrated Character Assessment 2010](#) (HICA)

² [Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment 2004](#) (WLCA)

- Semi-rural area with linear ribbon development along Wickham Road and the B2177
- Tranquil landscape
- Edge of settlement south-east of Wickham
- Bordered by main vehicular routes to and from Wickham.

1.2 Townscape Character (Wickham village)

- The main settlement in character area
- Defined settlement gap³ retains the generally open and undeveloped nature of the area between Wickham and Knowle / Fareham Strategic Development Area (SDA) to the south. Avoiding coalescence of settlements retains individual identity within their wider contextual setting.
- The village has a locally distinctive character with vibrant historic centre
- Compact character with well-defined settlement edge
- Local traditional building materials influenced by clay geology, e.g. red and grey bricks, clay plain tiles
- Disused railway line is a distinctive tree-lined feature linking town and country
- Good footpath network, including Meon Valley Trail along disused railway line, with links to countryside.

1.3 Landscape Types for Wickham and surrounding area

1.3.1 As well as identifying landscape character areas, the HICA and WLCA detail the characteristics of each landscape type. These include the distribution of areas, typical soils and geology, topography, archaeological and historic features and field patterns, vegetation, land use, settlement pattern, building materials, routes and degree of tranquillity. The WLCA also outlines key issues affecting landscape features typical of the area.

1.3.2 The four landscape types (WLCA classification) are -

- a. Meon River Valley (through centre of area)
- b. Mixed Farmland and Woodland (north and south of Wickham)
- c. Parkland (north-east [Rookesbury Park] and north-west [Park Place] of Wickham)
- d. Golf course (south-west of Wickham).

1.4 Summary

The descriptions of landscape character areas and landscape types outlined above have been used to inform the degree of landscape sensitivity for areas around Wickham as set out in the following sections.

³ Policies CP18 and SH4, Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (March 2013)

2.0 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Hampshire County Council's 'Assessing Landscape Sensitivity at a Strategic Level' (p6) states, "*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*". Five main attributes which contributed to this assessment have been used in this appraisal: physical landscape; experiential/perceptual; historic environment; biodiversity and visibility.

2.1 Physical Landscape

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

2.1.1 Landform

- Water course and associated features of value: middle section of River Meon as distinctive chalk stream is the main feature through this character area with its gentle meandering valley sides. Wickham village evolved as a crossing point on the river banks with water meadows close to the historic centre.
- Topography: significant north-east/south-west ridgeline forms a natural edge to Wickham along Titchfield Lane/Blind Lane (55m AOD). Other ridgelines further afield and of similar height contribute to the setting and containment for the village to the south with land continuing to rise in the east to over 90m AOD. Sporadic wooded hilltops of similar height are characteristic of the area both to the north and south (c. 60m AOD), e.g. Birchfrith Copse. The disused railway line following the river Meon forms a significant north-south linear tree-lined embankment through the village.

2.1.2 Land cover

- The area is an integral part of the Forest of Bere, a former royal hunting forest since the 11th century and the last to be disbanded in 1810.
- Large, mature specimen oak trees within field boundaries and in assorted woodland. Many are now covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), particularly alongside the A334 through Wickham and in fields to the east behind houses along School Road (also a SHLAA site).
- Woodland copses and ancient woodland prevail in the river valley and wider surrounding countryside; numerous of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).
- Rural lanes link up with main traffic routes into Wickham, often well contained by hedgerows and field boundary trees, e.g. Mill Lane, Blind Lane.
- Field boundaries: mature mixed indigenous hedgerows and trees on lower and high ground.
- Historic landscapes at Rookesbury Park and Park Place with veteran parkland trees of significance.

- Valley floor and sides typified by paddocks and pastures with little evidence of original water meadows remaining, except for the village centre (Millennium area).
- Treed ridgelines are characteristic of the area.

2.2 Experiential/Perceptual

Ref: GIS constraints map and site assessment; CPRE Tranquillity Map⁴; Dark skies (CPRE / SDNP)⁵

- Contrasting character between the intimate, enclosed landscape along river valley and along Meon Valley Trail, and the more open, expansive views from higher ground on ridgelines.
- Pedestrian connectivity in the countryside: good network of local paths linking Wickham to nearby settlements at Shedfield Common and Shirrell Heath. Meon Valley Trail links Wickham with villages further afield such as Droxford and West Meon to the north and Knowle to the south, although the latter is a very indirect looping route across the valley. Direct link between Wickham and Knowle is via Mayles Lane, much used by vehicles as a short cut and not considered safe or pleasant for pedestrians/cyclists.
- Pedestrian connectivity in town: good links around historic town centre and residential development around primary school and community centre. Few footpath links elsewhere, e.g. cul-de-sacs with no clear direction.
- Opportunities for improving pedestrian and cycle routes, especially between Wickham and Knowle.
- Tranquillity: public footpaths in surrounding countryside are very tranquil and birdsong predominates; some traffic noise is evident close to main routes.
- The South Downs National Park Authority is seeking to apply for dark sky status to protect quality of countryside where dark skies are most significant and to promote improvement of remaining areas. This may provide opportunities to increase enjoyment of landscape and night skies within the national park north-east and east of Wickham.

2.3 Historic Environment

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA; WCC Historic Environment record

- The historic centre of Wickham is a Conservation Area with many listed buildings, and remains relatively unaltered with on-street building frontages and narrow plots.
- Wickham is the main settlement in the area, mainly compact with some ribbon development along approach roads.
- Chesapeake Mill and the water meadows are significant features of the historic landscape along this section of the river Meon.

⁴ www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1839

⁵ www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/dark-skies
www.southdowns.gov.uk/looking-after/dark-skies

- Historically, coppicing and timber extraction, small scale agriculture and game hunting in the forest were carried out locally. Much of this intimate wooded landscape character remains with some urban edge encroachment, such as the golf course and 'horsiculture'.
- The Meon valley has always provided an important transport link between Solent and the South Downs even though the river is too narrow for trade.
- Locally designated historic parkland: Park Place (former deer park) and Rookesbury Park School (post-1810 parkland) are both highly valued landscapes that contribute to local distinctiveness.

2.4 Biodiversity

Ref: GIS constraints map; HICA; WLCA

- Long stretches along the banks of the Meon around Wickham, including the water meadows, are SINC.
- Woodlands and copses, many including ancient woodland and SINC, form a significant part of the wider setting around Wickham.
- Wickham Common east of the village is a SINC.
- The Meon Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area closely follows the river valley and includes ecologically valuable fragments such as wet meadows.
- Urban fringe uses on edge of settlement, e.g. golf course to south and west, recreation ground to south-east, horse paddocks to north, with diminished amenity and biodiversity value.

2.5 Visibility

A visibility constraints map for the Wickham area is included at Appendix 1.

3.0 SENSITIVITY APPRAISAL OF AREAS

A number of individual sites and areas of land in and around Wickham have been promoted for development through the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)⁶. Those of similar landscape character have been grouped together for the purposes of assessing their sensitivity in the local landscape (Appendix 2). Four categories of sensitivity are used –

- ☐ ***Most sensitive***
- ☐ ***Highly sensitive***
- ☐ ***Moderately sensitive***
- ☐ ***Least sensitive***

3.1 Area south of Southwick Road (SHLAA site 2438)

- Context: edge of settlement behind ribbon development in School Road. Part of a larger area of housing and recreation ground separated from the main centre of Wickham by river, disused railway line and approach roads.
- Character: tranquil, semi-rural character comprising two small enclosed fields of arable and pasture on sloping ground. Lowest point lies in the north-west corner of the northern field by Southwick Road. This area is sensitive in terms of archaeology and heritage (ref: WCC Historic Environment Record). Protected (TPO) mature oak trees reminiscent of the Forest of Bere are a significant local feature. Distinctive change of level with steeper east/west slopes through centre of northern field. The boundary of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) is adjacent to Southwick Road.
- Agricultural land quality: mainly grade 4, with grade 3b in southern section.
- Important views and landmarks to connect with place: from higher ground along eastern boundary to spire of St Nicholas Church and beyond to tree-lined corridor of disused railway line.
- Panoramic views: long views west over rooftops across the valley from higher ground within the site and south to wooded hilltop feature of Birchfrith Copse and Martin's Copse (TPO). Shorter views are contained by linear housing development and boundary vegetation.
- Skyline features: medium distance views of treed skyline feature to the south along ridgeline between Wickham and Knowle and treed corridor along Meon Valley Trail.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The two fields have different constraints and sensitivities. The field comprising the southern half of the area is ***moderately sensitive*** in terms of visual impacts and landscape character. The field comprising the northern half of the area adjacent Southwick Road is ***highly sensitive*** due to visual impact, its location adjacent the SDNP and landscape/heritage assets.

⁶ www.winchester.gov.uk/planning-policy/evidence-base/housing/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment/

3.2 Area north of Wickham, east of A334 (SHLAA sites 1908, 1909, 1910)

- Context: a large area of sloping ground forming part of a mainly north-east/south-west ridgeline, the highest point defined by the route of Titchfield Lane and Blind Lane. Mainly arable on higher ground with smaller enclosed horse paddocks on lower slopes along edge of settlement.
- Character of site: rural, generally tranquil landscape (some traffic noise close to main routes). Forms a significant part of Wickham's countryside setting. Large, specimen oaks feature along field boundaries and in copses. Smaller fields on lower slopes are well contained by diverse boundary vegetation and ground flora.
- Agricultural land quality: grade 3b.
- Important views: uninterrupted panoramic views east from higher ground in northern half of the site to the SDNP and south across rooftops and disused railway line to countryside beyond.
- Treed skyline features are a predominant characteristic of the area.
- Landmarks to connect with place: ancient woodlands on skyline; Wickham rooftops within contained valley setting; views to the SDNP; Rookesbury Park School.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The large arable fields on the main ridgeline in the northern part of the site are a **highly sensitive** location in terms of visual impact and their significant contribution to the countryside setting and containment of Wickham. The smaller paddocks on lower ground adjoining existing housing are **least sensitive** in terms of visual amenity and impacts on landscape character although biodiversity remains a consideration.

3.3 Area north of Wickham, west of A334 (SHLAA site 2488)

- Context: arable fields on sloping ground form part of main ridgeline with PRoW through centre of site.
- Character: rural, generally tranquil landscape, but some traffic noise close to main routes. Forms significant part of Wickham's countryside setting. Significant tree belt along northern boundary adjacent Titchfield Lane.
- Agricultural land quality: grade 3b.
- Important views from site: far-reaching views south-west across golf course and countryside.
- Treed skyline features are a predominant characteristic of the area.
- Landmarks to connect with place: Park Place and boundary planting.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The large arable fields on the main ridgeline are a **highly sensitive** location in terms of their visual impact and significant contribution to the countryside setting and containment of Wickham.

3.4 Golf course west of Wickham (SHLAA site 2020)

- Context: large area of sloping ground to west and south of the village on side of Meon valley extending from river bank to main ridgeline.
- Character: significant area of grassland and scrub for recreational use as a golf course with clubhouse. Very tranquil. Public access via PRowS and Meon Valley Trail. The area is valued for its good public footpath network between town and country. Part of the site lies within sensitive lower valley slopes of the Meon.
- Agricultural land quality: grade 3b
- Settlement gap between Wickham and Knowle south of the disused railway line.
- Important and panoramic views: uninterrupted views east across Meon valley from highest ground along northern half of site to treed ridgeline between Wickham and Knowle (ancient woodlands at Aytesbury Copse, Birchfrith Copse, etc). Also far-reaching views west and south along the river valley.
- Treed skyline features are a predominant characteristic.
- Landmarks to connect with place: ancient woodlands on skyline; village rooftops within contained valley setting.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The area of the golf course north of the disused railway line is a **highly sensitive** location. On higher ground, this applies in terms of visual impact and its significant contribution to the countryside setting and containment of Wickham. The more contained areas on lower valley slopes of the River Meon, although less sensitive in terms of visual amenity, remain sensitive in terms of their amenity and biodiversity value adjacent water course. The area south of the disused railway line is a **most sensitive** location adjacent to the River Meon. It also forms part of the landscape setting of Wickham, helping to retain its identity and preventing coalescence with Knowle further south.

3.5 Ravenswood Hospital near Knowle (SHLAA site 2286)

- Context: on the northern slopes of a significant east/west ridgeline some distance south from Wickham, but still within its countryside setting.
- Character: large fields of mainly pasture in a generally tranquil landscape. Large, specimen oaks feature along field boundaries and in copses. Ancient woodlands border the site.
- Agricultural land quality: grade 3b.
- Vehicular access: via Mayles Lane - a narrow, winding lane and busy local traffic link between Knowle and Wickham.
- Important views: far-reaching, north across Meon valley to golf course and treed skyline beyond. Far-reaching uninterrupted views to south.
- Treed skyline features are a predominant characteristic of the area.
- Landmarks to connect with place: Ravenswood Hospital; clubhouse on high ground across Meon valley.

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity

The area lies on a visually prominent, treed ridgeline between Wickham and Knowle. This is a **most sensitive** location in terms of visual impact and landscape character and for its importance as an integral part of the countryside setting that retains the identity of Wickham. Coalescence of settlements is potentially a concern with the proximity of Knowle and the Fareham Strategic Development Area (SDA).

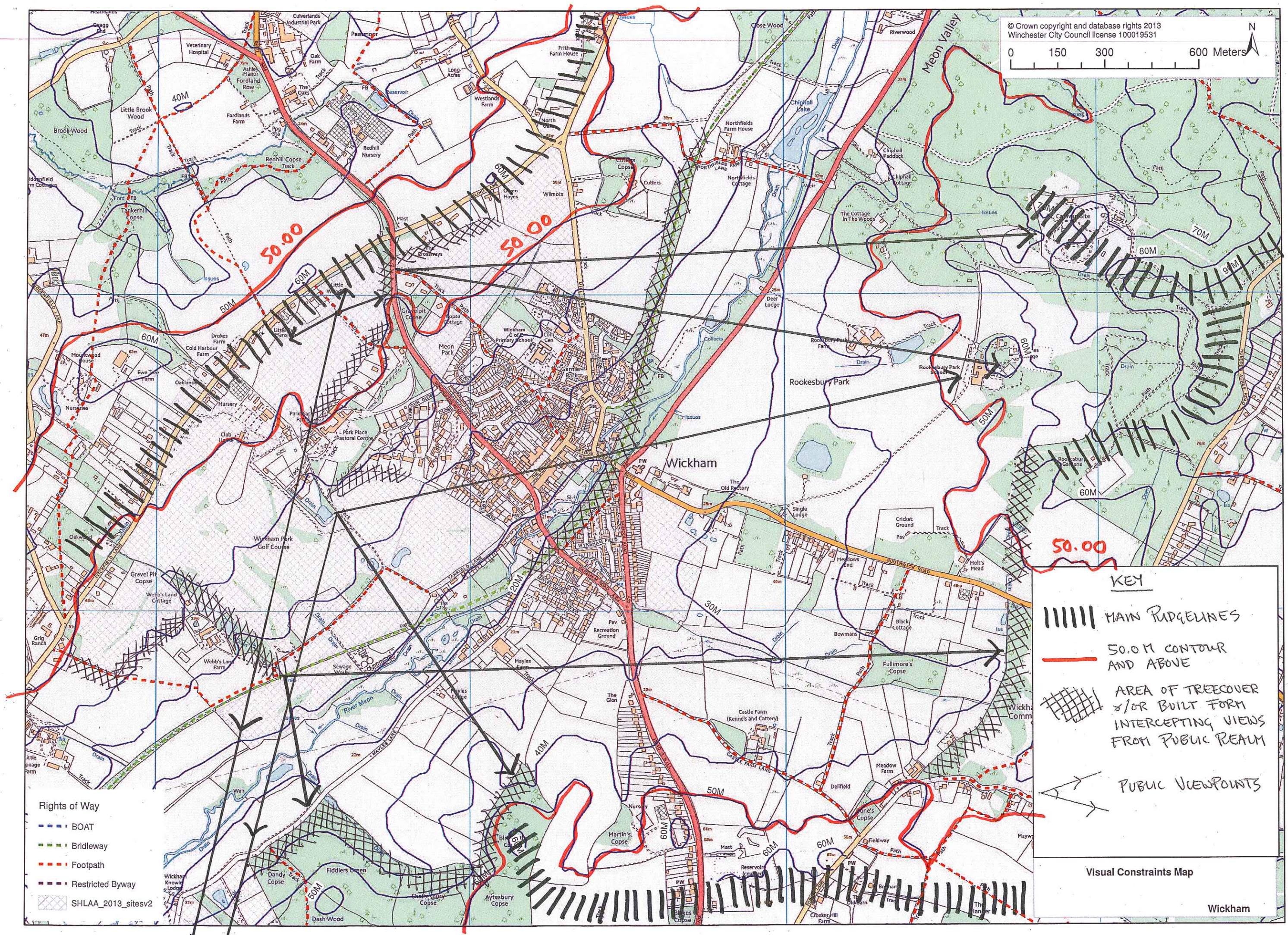
4.0 SUMMARY OF KEY LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE ISSUES FOR WICKHAM

Lower Meon Valley Landscape Character Area

- Proximity of South Downs National Park (SDNP) adjacent the disused railway line
- Coalescence of settlements (Wickham, Knowle and Fareham SDA)
- Localised intrusion of pylons in the landscape and close to Wickham (south side)
- Visual impact of development on high ground and ridgelines
- Under management of special landscapes including historic parkland and trees impacting on quality of place
- Riparian local character of river valley which is sensitive to change
- Undesignated areas with special qualities that contribute significantly to setting of Wickham are vulnerable to change
- Further loss of farmland to equestrian use and development to accommodate planned growth, resulting in loss of boundary hedges and oak trees, fragmentation of historic field patterns, loss of biodiversity and amenity value
- Potential loss of valued green space
- Over formalisation of semi-natural areas to provide recreational facilities.

Forest of Bere Lowlands Landscape Character Area

- Access to PRoW linking town and country via busy traffic through-routes
- Suburban fringe encroachment including 'horsiculture' related activities
- Localised intrusion of power lines and busy roads
- Proximity of SDNP immediately north of the B2177 (Southwick Road)
- Visual impact of development on high ground and ridgelines
- Further loss of farmland to equestrian use and development to accommodate planned growth, resulting in loss of boundary hedges and oak trees; loss of biodiversity and amenity value.



- Rights of Way
- BOAT
 - Bridleway
 - Footpath
 - Restricted Byway
 - SHLAA_2013_sitesv2

- KEY
- MAIN RIDGELINES
 - 50.0M CONTOUR AND ABOVE
 - AREA OF TREECOVER &/OR BUILT FORM INTERCEPTING VIEWS FROM PUBLIC REALM
 - PUBLIC VIEWPOINTS

Visual Constraints Map

