

Site Name: South East Dorchester

Date: 23rd April 2013

Key characteristics:

- The area of the site to be developed falls within the Dorchester Downs Landscape Character Area (WDDC LCA 2009).
- The site is formed by two large arable fields which slope gently (c.65m - 53m AOD) towards the centre of the site, forming a wide valley running east-west.
- These fields are bounded by hedgerows of varying condition, with a greater density of tree planting surrounding the junction of the A35 and A352. A small planted copse is also present to the north west of the site.
- The ridge to the south of the site forms a visible feature locally and in the wider landscape, with a stretch of woodland and two tumuli forming the skyline in a number of views.
- The character of the fields is very open at the elevated southern edge (outside of the site boundary), however the surrounding topography and vegetation on the A35 significantly restricts views out of the site at lower levels, resulting in a more enclosed character.
- Hedgerows running through and forming the boundaries of the site are important landscape features.
- The road network approaching the site varies in character from engineered urban (the A35 and the two roundabouts on the A352) with shelterbelt planting, wide verges and bunding, to a short stretch of rural road on the approach from the south east.
- There are open views of the site from the adjacent roads, and several dwellings on Came View Road. Wider views of the elevated ridge of land to the south of the western half of the site (outside the site boundary) are available to the north east and west.

The two fields comprising the site do contribute to the overall character of the Dorchester Downs Landscape Character Area, however they are of a more enclosed nature than much of the area. This is as a result of the ridge and woodland to the south, and the urban edge of Dorchester to the north and west. The LCA also notes the urbanising influence of the main road corridors on the area, and the noise, movement, and unnatural patterns associated with the A35 and the junction with the A352 are clearly detrimental features at this site.

Landscape Value

The site has a moderate - high amenity value, providing access from dwellings on this edge of Dorchester to the open countryside, facilitated by a number of public rights of way passing through the site. Being undeveloped countryside, the site plays a role in the landscape setting of the town, however this is more greatly performed by the elevated strip of land and wooded ridge lying above the southern site boundary, which forms the backdrop to the town in a number of wider views. The site itself does not appear to be visible from within Dorchester, with the exception of the allotments adjacent to the site, and the south-facing dwellings on Came View Road.

The site lies outside the Dorset AONB, however the designation boundary lies adjacent to the southern site boundary. Local and wider views from within the designation are considered as part of this assessment.

Sensitivities / Vulnerabilities (assumes no mitigation, discussed below)

- Development could negatively impact upon the two large arable fields that comprise the site, and the agricultural character of the area as experienced from adjacent receptors.
- The varied elevation of the site mean that there is a risk that a hard urban edge could be created facing open countryside, notably to the south and west of the site where a single strip of mitigation vegetation would sit below the ridgeline.
- Development could negatively impact upon the landscape setting of the town, though the current proposal to omit the more elevated ridgeline would minimise this effect.
- Development could form a new and dominant feature in views from within the site, and from the immediately adjacent highway network.

Analysis

Due to the localised sensitivities / vulnerabilities identified above, it is considered that mitigation could significantly reduce the impacts upon the landscape. There would still be a fundamental change in the character and appearance of the area, but the existing localised detrimental features reduce the significance of this impact to a degree.

It is clear in surveying the site that the ridgeline to the south of the boundary forms a prominent local landmark, and any development encroaching onto this area would significantly affect the wider landscape character. However, limiting the spread of development below this line as proposed would limit the effects to a local level.

The local road network is urban in character with wide visibility spays, lamp posts and visual clutter, engineered bunding and standard highways kerbs. Any changes to the road network resulting from development at the site would be expected to secure improvements to the character and appearance of these roads, notably around the two roundabouts in front of Came View which could be more sensitively designed.

Visual Baseline

Open views of the site are available from the adjacent road network, and from public rights of way that pass through and close to the site. Over a medium-wider distance, views are significantly limited by the surrounding topography, with only the small section of the site adjacent to the road being visible alongside development at Came View. Glimpses of the southern boundary of the western field are also occasionally available in elevated wider views. In these medium-wide distance views, the site is well defined by topography to the south, and by the urban edge of Dorchester to the north. The eastern edge is more open with only a poor quality hedgerow separating the site from the open countryside beyond, however local topography limits views from this direction to that available from West Stafford Road (viewpoint 9).

Although this assessment does not consider private views, it should be noted that views from dwellings on Came View Road, and users of the allotments between the site and the A352 would have clear views onto the site, similar to viewpoint 1.

The site does not form the skyline in even the immediately adjacent views; the ridgeline rising above the level of the site being the visually dominant feature and forming the skyline. Wider distance views from the elevated landscape of the South Dorset Ridgeway also pick up the back of this ridge, and moving further to the west, take in the elevated areas of the southern field rising above the site. There do not appear to be any available views of the

site from the wider landscape to the north and north east, in which it is not possible to identify the site or the ridgeline behind it. This is in line with the TZVI which anticipated that even development at 8m tall would not be readily visible from this direction.

Key views & Analysis

Viewpoint no. (ref Photoviewpoint Locations Plan)	Description of view	Anticipated change in view
1 a&b	<p>View from the A352 to the north east of site, looking south.</p> <p>The site forms the foreground of the view, and the wooded ridgeline and sweeping agricultural fields of the site form the dominant features.</p> <p>Sensitivity: Low. The character of the road is dominated by the presence of two roundabouts and the associated visibility splays, engineered land form, and shelterbelt planting. A transitory view, this photograph was taken from the field access off the road, and would only be available for a short stretch of road.</p>	<p>Development would become a dominant feature in this view, and it is likely that road frontage development would obscure views to the ridgeline when viewed from this elevation.</p>
2	<p>View from the public bridleway north of site, looking south west.</p> <p>The western portion of the site is visible in the foreground of the view, and runs to the west, curving around behind the A35 which is visible to the right of the image.</p> <p>The southern extents of the site are clearly visible as a remnant hedgeline set below the ridge, and the eastern portion of the site is screened from view at this point by the adjacent hedgerow.</p> <p>The movement and noise from the A35 impacts upon the character of this western portion of the site.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public bridleway.</p>	<p>Development would form a dominant feature in the view, and from this elevation it is likely that development close to the viewer would obscure views of the ridgeline.</p>
3	<p>View from the public footpath leading off the A352, looking west.</p> <p>The eastern portion of the site forms the foreground to the view, with the ridgeline to the south and south west of the site clearly visible on the skyline.</p> <p>The southern extents of the site boundary in this portion of the site are poorly defined within the field, but the</p>	<p>The area of site immediately in front of this viewpoint forms part of the low-lying floodplain which is not proposed to be developed. With careful design, it should be possible to retain much of the view to the ridgeline to the south west of the site, with development set below</p>

		<p>wooded ridgeway forms a definite boundary to the site.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public footpath.</p>	<p>this.</p> <p>Development would also form a dominant new feature to the left and right of the view.</p>
4 a&b	<p>View from the public bridleway to the south of site, looking east.</p>	<p>The western portion of the site forms the foreground to the view, and the southern extents of Dorchester formed by the A35 are clearly visible. The limited site visibility at this elevation (approximately 59m AOD) is evident, as is the strong character of tree planting in and around Dorchester.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public bridleway.</p>	<p>Development would form a new and dominant feature within the view. This would be mitigated to a degree by the visual presence of Dorchester and the A35 already present in the view.</p>
5	<p>View from the public footpath to the south of site, looking north west.</p>	<p>This is the view from just outside the AONB designation, and demonstrates the wider visibility of the elevated ridge to the south of the site.</p> <p>The site is visible in the middle-distance of the view in front of the existing urban edge of Dorchester.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public footpath.</p>	<p>Development of this site would extend the built form of Dorchester into a discrete parcel of land between the current urban edge and the ridge from which this view is taken.</p> <p>Trees present partially visible above the southern boundary of the site in the foreground demonstrate the potential visibility of rooftops of development if it were to be positioned right up against the southern edge, rising above the ridge in the foreground. To avoid this effect, it is suggested that mitigation planting and lower garden uses form the southern extents of the site, with built form set further into the site.</p>
6	<p>View from North Plantation to the south of site, looking north west.</p>	<p>Filtered views of the site are available from within the AONB through vegetation in North Plantation. The urban edge of Dorchester is visible beyond the site, set below the open countryside beyond, and the boundaries of the site are clearly defined in the view. This view is only available for a short stretch of footpath before topography and vegetation restrict views of the site from within the designation.</p>	<p>Development would bring the visible urban edge of Dorchester closer to the viewer, making it a more dominant feature in the view. The built form of the town would still appear as a feature in the middle-distance below a wider countryside setting.</p>

		Sensitivity: High. A public footpath within the AONB.	
7	View from the public bridleway north west of Stafford Farm, looking north west.	<p>Only the very northern-most corner of the site is visible below the development of Dorchester and Poundbury beyond, with Came View to the east. The remainder of the site is screening by local topography and vegetation.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public bridleway.</p>	There would be a negligible change to the view; the current site is discernible due to the street lighting and signage on this stretch of the A352, and improvements to this area and a strengthening of the eastern site boundary would further limit visibility of the site.
8	View from the public footpath to the south of the A35, looking north east.	<p>The site forms the centre middle-ground of the view as two low lying arable fields between the urban edge of Dorchester and the ridge to the south of the site. The urbanising impact of Dorchester and particularly the A35 are clear in this view.</p> <p>The discrete and low-lying nature of the site is also apparent.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public footpath.</p>	<p>Development would extend the urban form of Dorchester beyond the A35, but would be read well alongside existing urban development in Dorchester and at Came View.</p> <p>The eastern site boundary is noticeably open in this view, and mitigation to the eastern boundary would offer greater enclosure of the site; continuing the vegetation present alongside Came View and Old Came Rectory.</p> <p>Mitigation along the south western and southern flank of the site, and tree planting within the site would be key to ensuring that a hard urban edge was not created in this view.</p>
9	View from West Stafford Road (and NCN2) to the east of the site, looking west.	<p>The eastern portion of the site is partially screened by existing vegetation, and western by the local topography. The southern boundary of the western portion of the site is visible below the ridgeline, meeting up with the substantial vegetation around the A35. The sites appear as arable fields, with little in the way of development context.</p> <p>Sensitivity: Moderate - High. A fast stretch of road with a low sensitivity, and a National Cycle Network path with a high sensitivity. The urban features associated with the road, and the speed of traffic passing along it detract</p>	<p>The potential impacts of development in this view are more significant due to the absence of the urban form of Dorchester, which is screened by the topography and existing vegetation.</p> <p>The poor quality hedgerow along the eastern boundary affords views into the site, and these could be partially screened with new planting.</p> <p>The skyline would be retained, but the middle-ground would contain development features, which although partially screened would be</p>

		from the existing view.	dominant in the view.
10	View from Maiden Castle, looking north east.	<p>The view takes in the sweep of Dorchester set below the extensive downland landscape to the north and north east.</p> <p>A small portion of each of the fields within the site is just visible, partially read between existing development in Dorchester and Came View, and partially forming a small extension to the current built form at the base of the ridge to the south east of the town.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. Access Land on a significant local landmark, within the AONB.</p>	<p>The A35 is not read as a linear feature separating the site from the town from this angle, and much of the site lies as if within the town.</p> <p>The small extension of development to the east would form a minor change to the view, particularly if built form is kept from the southern limits of the site and effective mitigation is secured to the south and south west.</p>
11	View from the public bridleway, west of Maiden Castle, looking east.	<p>The change in angle of view from that above restricts views of the site, though the ridgeline above the site boundary is still visible providing part of the landscape setting to the town.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public bridleway within the AONB.</p>	<p>The tops of roofs may just be visible amongst and at the same level as the existing built form of Dorchester, but the change in view would be negligible.</p>
12	View from the A35 to the west of Dorchester, looking east.	<p>The urban form of Dorchester is visible over the southern side of the A35, and the ridgeline above the site is visible, clearly forming part of the setting of the town. The site itself is not visible.</p> <p>Sensitivity: Low. A busy trunk road within the AONB.</p>	<p>The tops of roofs may just be visible amongst and at the same level as the existing built form of Dorchester, but the change in view would be negligible.</p>
13	View from the public footpath east of Tilly Whim Lane, looking east.	<p>This view demonstrates the effect of existing built form in Dorchester in limiting views towards the site from this direction. A small amount of the ridgeline above the site is just visible.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A public footpath within the AONB.</p>	<p>The tops of roofs may just be visible amongst and at the same level as the existing built form of Dorchester, but the change in view would be negligible.</p>
14	View from Cuckoo Lane, south of the	<p>This view demonstrates the effect of existing built form and vegetation in Dorchester in limiting views towards</p>	<p>Development at the site would not be visible from this location.</p>

	A35, looking south west.	<p>the site from this direction. A small amount of the ridgeline above the site is just visible.</p> <p>Sensitivity: Moderate-High. A rural lane with public footpath links.</p>	
15	View from the road to Bincombe Barn, looking north east.	<p>The back of the ridgeline forming the southern extents of the site is visible, but the site itself is not visible, lying between this area and the urban edge of Dorchester.</p> <p>Sensitivity Moderate-High. A rural lane with public footpath links within the AONB.</p>	Development at the site would not be visible from this location.
16	View from the South Dorset Ridgeway (National Trail) to the east of Gould's Hill, looking north east.	<p>The back of the ridgeline forming the southern extents of the site is visible, but the site itself is not visible, lying between this area and the urban edge of Dorchester.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A National Trail footpath within the AONB.</p>	Development at the site would not be visible from this location.
17	View from the South Dorset Ridgeway (National Trail) to the south of Eweleaze Barn, looking north east.	<p>The northern flank of the ridgeline set above the site is just visible, and with a zoom, the urban street lights and clutter on the A352 junction east of the site are also visible immediately adjacent to Came View and Dorchester.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. A National Trail footpath within the AONB.</p>	Development at the site would not be discernible from the existing development in Dorchester with the naked eye, but with a zoom or binoculars, a small area of rooftops of development may just be visible within the existing built form of Dorchester. A negligible change to the view.
18	View from the base of the Hardy Monument, looking north east.	<p>The northern flank of the ridgeline set above the site is just visible, and with a zoom, the urban street lights and clutter on the A352 junction east of the site are also visible immediately adjacent to Came View and Dorchester.</p> <p>Sensitivity: High. Access Land on a significant local landmark, within the AONB.</p>	Development at the site would not be discernible from the existing development in Dorchester with the naked eye, but with a zoom or binoculars, a small area of rooftops of development may just be visible within the existing built form of Dorchester. A negligible change to the view.

Mitigation and opportunities for enhancement

- Limiting the extent of development away from the elevated southern area of the site as proposed (excluded from the site boundary) is a key requirement in terms of limiting the impact on the local and wider landscape. Avoiding built form on the very southern extents of the site within the site boundary, and using planting or lower uses such as gardens would also limit the degree to which rooftops might be visible in wider views.
- A comprehensive landscape scheme and appropriate tree planting should form the basis of a mitigation and enhancement scheme, and should be developed “up front”, prior to any planning application. It would not be possible, or appropriate, to completely screen development at the site, particularly from local views, however the intention should be to create a character of built form set amongst a tree canopy as currently present on the edge of Dorchester. The eastern edge and western corner are the weakest areas in terms of enclosure, and should be well supplemented with new landscape planting.
- Providing noise mitigation from the A35 is likely to be a key requirement if the site were to be developed, and this should be carefully designed in order to be sensitive to the landscape character of the area. Bunding is generally seen as an engineered solution and is not considered to be appropriate for this area. Instead, extensions to woodland and copse planting are likely to form more appropriate landscape features.
- Reinforcing the existing topographical definition of the site with strong planting features would be necessary to limit the wider impact of development upon the landscape. Forming a strong line of vegetation to the south of the site would aid in providing a dark backdrop to the development where rooftops may be visible in wider views. This would also retain a strong separation between the site and the important ridgeline. A naturalistic form of landscaping running into the development and avoiding "shelterbelt" planting would be most appropriate. This planting should be within the site boundary to best mitigate for the visual impacts of the development and to avoid encroaching onto the more open ridgeline.
- There would be marked benefits to the character of the area if improvements could be secured to the adjacent highway, notably around the two roundabouts and the A35/A352 junction system. A reduction in signage and visual clutter, and more sensitive management of the verges would offer significant visual improvements.
- Opportunities to enhance the biodiversity value of the arable fields with a planned network of green spaces and linkages would also be encouraged.

Conclusion

There is a high potential for locally experienced negative impacts to the landscape character and views of the site, typical of greenfield site development. Wider character impacts would however be minimal; the site forming a low-lying parcel of land that is not discernible as a landscape feature beyond a small radius. Provided development is kept away from the southern ridgeline (as currently proposed), the development of the site would not be considered to have a negative impact upon the wider character of the landscape or the AONB. The mitigation and enhancement measures outlined above could significantly reduce the localised impacts, particularly with regard to the existing detrimental features in this location.

With more specific regard to the AONB, the closest position of the designation lies to the eastern corner of the site. There is no public access in this area, the closest receptors therefore being the A352 approach from the south east, and the public footpath entering the site from the south at North Plantation. From within the designation on the A352, the site is screened from view by the plantation woodland. It is anticipated that new planting strengthening the eastern boundary beyond this point would form an integral part of the mitigation plan at the site, although complete screening of the site could likely not be achieved from the A352 once outside the AONB designation. A view from North Plantation is included in the assessment, and there would be an adverse impact on this view for a short stretch of public footpath.

Wider visual impacts upon the AONB and the wider undesignated landscape would be limited to glimpses of rooftops set within or immediately adjacent to the existing built form of Dorchester, and are not considered to result in a significant change to the visual quality of the area.