

**North Dorset District Council**  
Proposed Housing Sites  
Landscape Impact Assessment: Assessment template

NB: See methodology notes attached

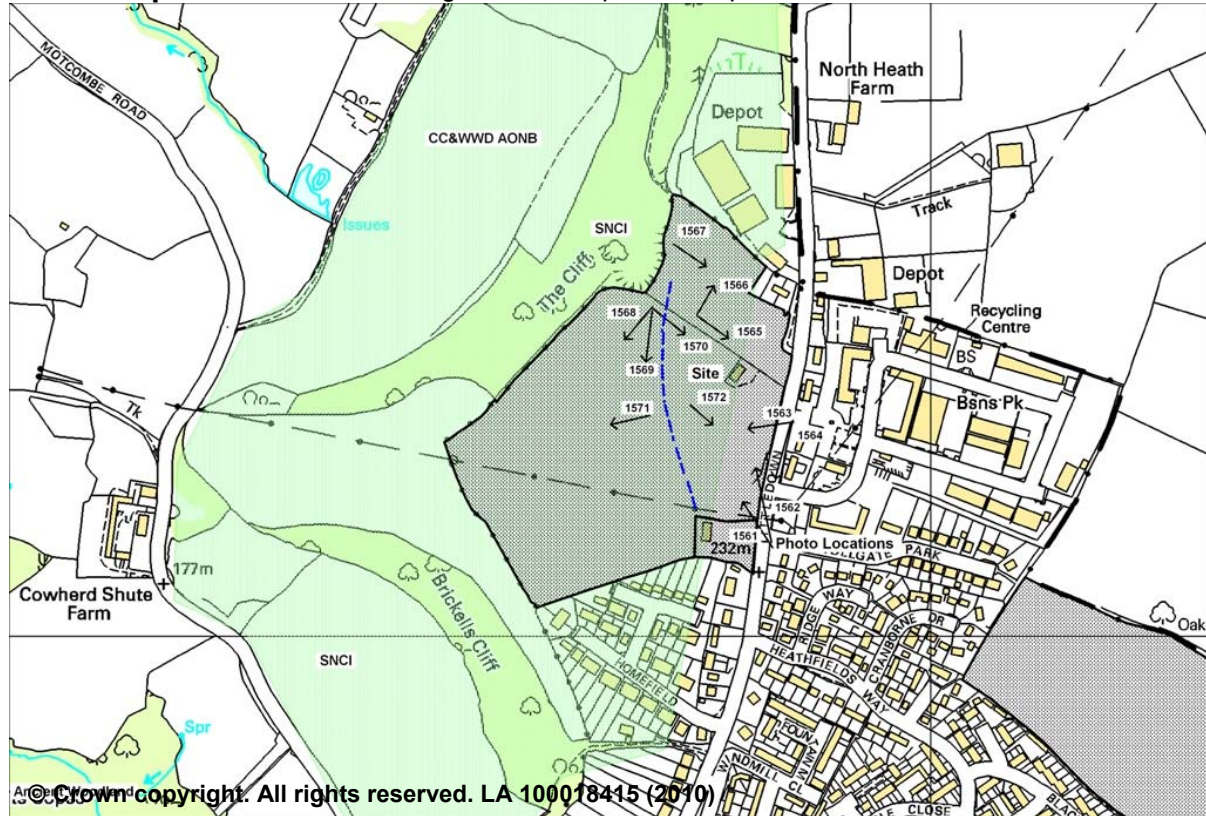
**Site name: Shaftesbury; Land to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park (C44)**

NDDC Ref:  
2/45/0550

Date: 30 June 2010

Proposed housing nos: 150

**Location plan:** with relevant designations and photo viewpoints



**Key Characteristics:** These are the key positive features or qualities, which if lost or changed there would be a significant consequence for the current character of the landscape

- ◆ *Flat plateau landform on edge of the Shaftesbury Greensand Terrace Landscape Character Area<sup>1</sup>.*
- ◆ *Extensive views south-west and west from the exposed south-western edge of the site.*
- ◆ *Open skyline 'downland' location along the southern part of the site.*
- ◆ *Important mature, native hedgerow sub-divides the site.*
- ◆ *Untidy edge of site with A350 contributing to an 'urban fringe' perception in southern part of site.*
- ◆ *Important relationship with existing trees & woodland, associated with The Cliff.*
- ◆ *The Cliff is an ancient woodland and the site along this edge coincides with the boundary of the ancient parish of Shaftesbury,*

<sup>1</sup> NDDC Landscape Character Assessment dated Nov. 2007

- ◆ *Hard edge to north-west with Little Down Industrial Estate.*
- ◆ *Well used public right of way crosses the northern part of the site giving access to The Cliff.*
- ◆ *More intimate feel to northern part of site.*

**Historic Landscape Character<sup>2</sup>:**

*This indicates that the two fields to the west of the A350 (only part of which form the proposed allocation) comprises the southern most field in a group of regular planned enclosures with ruler straight internal boundaries and more curving outer boundaries. These contrast with fields to the west which form older irregular enclosure. These fields date to before 1800 as they are present as enclosed land on the 1820s OS surveyors map and were created either as an early example of 18th century parliamentary enclosure or as less formally organised enclosure radiating out from Shaftesbury but still dating from the Post Medieval period. These fields were enclosed from open downland, the 1880s OS Surveyors map calls the area Little Down, and these previously formed open grazing on the edge of Shaftesbury. These fields have undergone no boundary modification since the 1880s. This type of field is common in the AONB landscape as a whole and seems to be part of a larger system of enclosure much of which has already been subsumed by the modern settlement development to the south radiating out from the historic core of the settlement along the A350.*

*The far northern edge of the boundary of the proposed housing site coincides with the boundary of the ancient parish of Shaftesbury, where it runs along the ancient woodland hanging known as The Cliff. This boundary is likely to be of considerable antiquity, and may be associated with large trees including coppices, and well formed banks. The eastern boundary of the site bounds the modern day A350 and marks the route of a historic turnpike. Boundary features relating to this history may survive, such as milestones, as well as historic trees marking the line of the route and well formed boundary banks.*

**Summary of overall character:** based on scale, landform, pattern/complexity, settlement & human influences, skyline, visual relationships & views, intervisibility, perceptual/aesthetic criteria.

*A flat, farmed grassland site of medium scale which forms part of the Shaftesbury Green sand Terrace Landscape Character Area.*

*The site forms part of a former unenclosed downland plateau which falls steeply away to the Blackmore Vale, west of the site. It is divided into two distinct areas sub-divided by a mature, native hedgerow which, when in leaf, visually separates two parts of the site. The northern site is smaller and more intimate in scale being enclosed by vegetation and along its northern boundary has a strong relationship with the Little Down Industrial Estate, residential property and The Cliff. This northern edge has a hard urban feel to it due to the domination of the large industrial units. There are very limited views into and out of this part of the site due to the roadside evergreen hedge, the mature native hedgerow and the trees/woodland associated with The Cliff. There is a well used public right of way crossing this northern part of the site to The Cliff which is an SNCI and an ancient & semi natural woodland. The southern part of the site is more open and exposed with a weak, untidy "urban edge" boundary with the A350. The site sits on the skyline when viewed from the south-west and has an urban feel fringe created by the weak, roadside boundary, an old agricultural shed/barn and electric power lines.*

**Sensitivities/vulnerabilities:** to include threats to key characteristics. Assumes without mitigation measures outlined below.

<sup>2</sup> Provided by Emma Rouse HEAP Project Officer Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

- ◆ *The hedgerow network and adjacent trees/woodland across and around the site would be affected negatively by development directly and/or indirectly, for example by impacting on root systems.*
- ◆ *The open and prominent south-west edge of the site would be affected in a negative way by new development creating a more prominent western extension of the urban edge. This would impact on the setting of the wider settlement.*
- ◆ *The intimate character of the northern part of the site would be negatively affected by new development, particularly if the boundary vegetation is affected in any negative way.*

**Value:** based on AONB status (including setting of AONB), wildlife, public 'good' (access/enjoyment & amenity value), setting for the wider settlement, historic value (see EH Conservation Principles)

*Most of the site is within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB; apart from a narrow strip along the eastern side of the site adjacent to the A350. This designation gives it a high sensitivity value in terms of landscape and visual impact. The public right of way across the northern part of the site gives it a high amenity/access and recreation value, and the fact that it is open, under-developed farmland gives it some amenity value for local residents and users of the A350. It has a low wildlife value apart from the mature hedgerow which provides a link with The Cliff SNCI and ancient woodland which has a high wildlife and amenity value. This part of the site also has a high historic and aesthetic value<sup>3</sup>.*

**Sensitivity Analysis:** this takes the form of a 'guidance statement' informed by scale, landform, pattern/complexity, settlement & human influences, skyline, visual relationships & views, intervisibility, perceptual/aesthetic criteria which will outline opportunities for mitigation/enhancement.

*The skyline significance of the elevated downland plateau is the key sensitivity issue. This can be partly resolved by 'pulling back' any future line of development to the east of the blue dotted line (on the location plan indicated above) and locate any public open space associated with the development along this south-western edge of the site. This public open space should include opportunities for native tree planting to tie-in with the existing vegetation around the site. The hedgerow and tree network within and adjacent to the site should be protected, retained and managed with suitable undeveloped buffering either side (for example 6 - 7 metres) of the existing mature hedgerow). This hedgerow and buffer could form the basis for public open space/access corridor running through the site to link in to any public open space on the south-west edge of the site. It is felt to be important to retain the evergreen hedgerow along the roadside part of the northern area. It is recommended the existing access to Little Down Industrial Estate and dwelling is used as any future access to the site. Enhancement of the roadside boundary along the A350 is seen to be essential mitigation. This can be carried out, for example by new hedgerow, tree-edge and/or boundary wall provision.*

*The use of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) and other sustainable construction techniques should be explored for this site. The submission of a Landscape Masterplan for the site is seen as essential to any future planning application as a means of coordinating the mitigation measures and should be submitted 'upfront' with any application. To be based on the Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Landscape & Development Checklist dated Feb 2008.*

<sup>3</sup> As defined by English Heritage in their 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' dated April 2008.

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