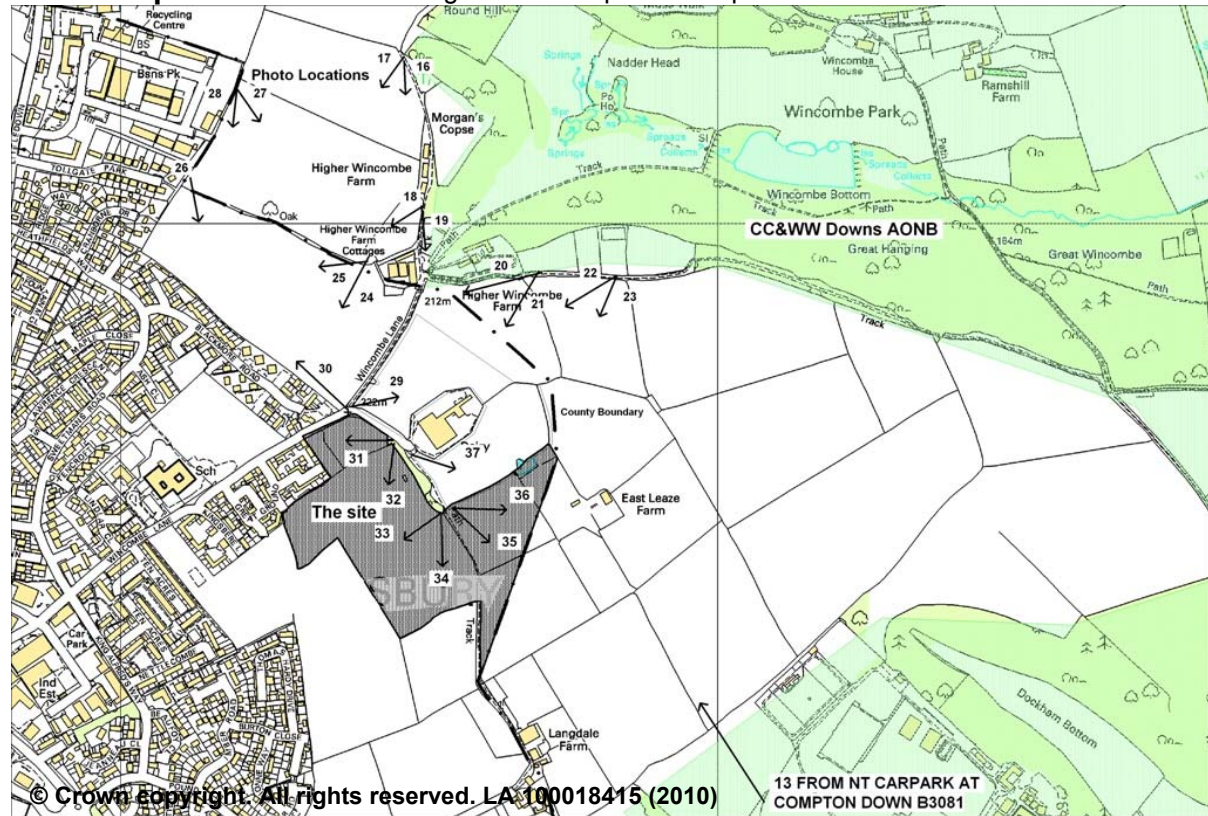


North Dorset District Council
Proposed Housing Sites
Landscape Impact Assessment: Assessment template

NB: See methodology notes attached

Site name: Shaftesbury; Land to the south of Wincombe Lane Proposed housing nos?	NDDC Ref: 2/45/0507	Date: 2 July 2010
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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.

- ◆ *Forms part of the elevated plateau on the edge of the Shaftesbury Greensand Terrace Landscape Character Area.¹*
- ◆ *Sub divided into separate blocks by dense and strong hedgerows and hedgerows trees.*
- ◆ *Flat to slightly sloping medium to small scale arable fields.*
- ◆ *Strong physical and visual links with recent housing development along western edges.*
- ◆ *Existing development seen on skyline from views within AONB.*
- ◆ *Public right of way runs through spine of site.*
- ◆ *Mature trees/hedgerow provides key feature down central part of site along line of footpath.*
- ◆ *Provides physical and visual buffer between Blackmore Vale Dairy and existing housing.*
- ◆ *Limited views out of site due to existing vegetation around and within site.*
- ◆ *South eastern fields extend into open countryside more than the rest of the site.*
- ◆ *Northern most field smaller and more intimate in character due to size and enclosing*

¹ North Dorset District Council Landscape Character Assessment dated Nov 2007.

mature hedgerows.

Historic Landscape Character ²:

The area in question lies just outside the boundary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but a desktop assessment of the historic landscape character of the area can still be undertaken based upon information provided by the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) for the AONB which extends just beyond the boundary. This indicates that the fields to the south of Wincombe Lane comprise a group of small fairly regular square fields. These contrast with the fields to the north which are larger, more regular and more typical of parliamentary enclosure. The fields to the west of the track/path which runs north south through the centre of the site date to before 1800 as they are present as enclosed land on the 1820s OS surveyors map and were created as less formally organised enclosure radiating out from Shaftesbury dating probably to the 16th or 17th centuries. This is an uncommon field type in the AONB as a whole. The fields as represented on the Ordnance Survey 1880s 6" maps have mature hedged boundaries with mature in-hedge trees, a pattern which survives today. These fields have undergone boundary modification since the 1880's with at least one east-west boundary having been removed. In contrast the fields to the east of the north-south track/path were created in the 19th century from open grazed land associated with Lower Heath Farm, although the boundaries here are just as wooded in character. The far north eastern corner of the site is associated with an historic orchard. The north-south track dates from at least 1800 and appears to provide access to this group of fields and Lower Heath Farm from Shaftesbury. The eastern boundary of the proposed site coincides with the historic county boundary but this does not follow existing field boundaries in this location.

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

The site forms part of the elevated plateau on the edge of the Shaftesbury Greensand Terrace Landscape Character Area within 300m of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. It is formed of a number of small to medium sized arable fields which are flat to gently sloping, subdivided by dense and mature hedgerows. These hedges are key features as are the few isolated 'in field' trees which are remnant hedgerow trees. The site is strongly influenced physically and visually by the recent housing development especially along the western edges where it creates a hard urban edge particularly along the more exposed north western edges. Elsewhere the existing hedgerows 'soften' the impact of this developed edge. This existing urban edge provides part of the far north eastern extent of the settlement and that to the north west of the site, is seen on skyline from views within AONB. A public right of way runs through spine of site along the line of a mature belt of trees/hedgerow providing a key feature down the central part of site. The site does provide a physical and visual buffer between Blackmore Vale Dairy and existing housing. The dairy is currently being expanded to the south of the existing complex.

Due to the existing vegetation around and within the site there are limited views out, particularly in the summer months, with only distant glimpsed views south to the chalk escarpment about 2 miles away.

The south eastern fields extend beyond the historic pattern of hedged field boundaries and in this way are at odds with the rest of the boundaries to the site. The northern most field has a smaller and more intimate character despite being dominated by existing housing.

Sensitivities/vulnerabilities: to include threats to key characteristics. Assumes no mitigation measures; which are outlined below.

- ◆ *Development would impact on the open undeveloped fields in the two 'fragmented' parts of the site to the east and south east which extend beyond the existing field*

² Provided by Emma Rouse HEAP Project Officer Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

pattern. This would add a more prominent hard skyline to views from the AONB when viewed looking north west and south west from rights of way with the AONB.

- ◆ *Development would affect the important hedges/trees around and within the site either directly or indirectly for example via damage to root zones.*
- ◆ *Development in the northern part of the site would have a negative impact on the AONB when looking west from the footpaths near Higher Wincombe farm as it would create an eastern extension of urban edge on the skyline.*
- ◆ *Development would have a negative impact on the amenity of users of the footpaths in the locality.*
- ◆ *Development would remove the 'buffering' function the site plays between Blackmore Vale diary and the existing urban edge.*

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)

The site is not within the AONB but it is within close proximity to this designation therefore has a high sensitivity value in its role as part of the setting of the AONB.

Apart from the trees and hedgerows, which have a high amenity, landscape and wildlife value, the site has little wildlife value being mainly arable fields.

The site does have a high amenity value as open agricultural land and for users of the rights of way.

The field boundaries also have a historic value as part of the pattern of the old enclosure pattern uncommon elsewhere in the adjacent AONB.

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.

Retaining and using the existing pattern of hedged field boundaries is essential to mitigating the identified impacts. These key features must be retained, protected and managed as the mature framework for any future development. Keeping development off sensitive skyline views from the AONB and limiting the extent of development and urban encroachment into under developed open countryside is also critical. This means not developing the far northern field and the 'exposed' south eastern corners of the area. By concentrating new development within the 'central' fields would help in this regard. It would also help ensure a better relationship with the existing pattern of recent housing development and retain the central core belt of woodland/trees as a landscape and visual 'buffer' along the more sensitive eastern edge of the site.

Retention, protection and management of the 'in field' trees is also important mitigation.

The development of the strategic Landscape Masterplan for the site is essential and should be developed 'up front' prior to any future planning application based on the Poole, Dorset and Bournemouth Landscape and Development checklist dated Feb 2008.





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