

**DRAFT - LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL
APPRAISAL**

LAND EAST OF CHICKERELL

FOR

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pegasus Planning LLP has been appointed by Persimmon Homes (South Coast) to assist in the promotion of land to the east of Chickerell for the location of the Weymouth Urban Extension. The land at Chickerell is identified as 'Option 3' by the West Dorset Local Development Framework - Options for Growth.
- 1.2 As part of representations to support the allocation of land to the east of Chickerell, this report assesses the landscape and visual context within which the 'Option 3' urban extension site sits, and considers the capacity of the site area to accommodate the proposed urban extension, in landscape and visual terms.
- 1.3 The proposed concept masterplan prepared to support the promotion of the land east of Chickerell responds to the findings of this appraisal, in order to ensure a contextual fit with the landscape. The location and extent of the site area is illustrated on Plan 1 'Site Context Plan', and a copy of the illustrative masterplan is at Appendix 1.

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APPENDIX 1 - DESIGN CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The proposed Chickerell urban extension site area is located on Greenfield land adjoining the eastern edge of Chickerell. The area is separated from the built edge of Weymouth by the Wessex Golf Centre to the north of the Chickerell Link Road, and Weymouth Golf Course and Chafey's Lake to the southeast.
- 2.2 The site is 21.53 hectares in area, located on land that slopes southwards from a height of 50m AOD below a smooth ridge to the north towards land north of the Chickerell Link Road at a height of 10m AOD.
- 2.3 The site is contained by the built form of Chickerell and mature hedgerows and trees bounding Putton to the west. To the east, an electricity substation with associated embankments and tree belts contains the central site area. The Wessex Golf Centre bounds the southern site area to the east. To the north, the land rises to a broad, rolling ridge, beyond which a series of vales and ridges extent towards the South Dorset escarpment beyond. To the northeast, pasture and arable fields run along the ridge top. The features of the site and its environs are illustrated on *Plan 2 'Landscape Features'*.

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- 2.4 A number of Public Rights of Way run through the surrounding area, connecting with the wider, open countryside to the north and west. Two Public Rights of Way run through the central site area, entering the site from Lower Putton Lane and Mariners Way to the west, and exiting the site to the south and north of the substation respectively.
- 2.5 The site area is visible from the Chickerell Link Road and in wider views from the rising land towards Wyke Regis to the south, as well as from Crook Hill beyond Chickerell to the southwest.

3. DESIGNATIONS AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 3.1 As illustrated on *Plan 1*, the Chickerell site area is located outside the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However, there are views of the site from within the AONB to the southwest of Chickerell. The context within which the site sits in relation to Chickerell and the surrounding built form can also be appreciated from distant views within the AONB from the wider landscape of the Ridgeway and Friar Waddon Hill, 4.5km to the north of the site.

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- 3.2 The Dorset AONB Management Plan recognises the potential pressures that major developments and extensions to urban areas on the edge of the AONB may have upon the designated area, including traffic, urbanisation and loss of tranquillity. There are several Management plan Policies that are of relevance to development of the site in this context, including:

Policy PD1a: Ensure that any necessary development affecting the AONB is sensitively located and sympathetic in style, scale and materials to local character.

Policy PD3b: Protect the quality of uninterrupted panoramic views into, within and out of the AONB.

Policy PD4d: Reduce urbanisation and other negative impacts of highway management on the AONB.

- 3.3 The context of the land east of Chickerell in relation to the landscape character of the AONB and views to and from the AONB are considered later in this appraisal. Local Planning Policy supports the AONB Management Plan in ensuring that development outside the AONB does not adversely impact upon its natural beauty or visual context. West Dorset Local Plan saved Policy SA1: 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' states that:

"Development which would harm the natural beauty of the AONB will not be permitted..."

- 3.4 The supporting text for Policy SA1 places this in context with development outside the AONB:

"Development either within or outside, but affecting the AONB, which would detract from the landscape's natural beauty will not be permitted... In order to meet the requirements of the Policy, development should not be visually prominent and should not detract from views from vantage points or otherwise spoil the appreciation of the area's landscape quality."

Land of Local Landscape Importance

3.5 Much of the site area is designated as 'Land of Local Landscape Importance' by West Dorset Local Plan saved Policy SA6. The area covered by this designation extends northwards across the site area from land adjacent to the driving range on the eastern site boundary, as illustrated on *Plan 1*.

3.6 Policy SA6 states that:

"Development proposals within Land of Local Landscape Importance... will be expected to respect the special features and qualities of local importance and the specific benefits that the land provides."

3.7 Land is considered to be of particular value locally because it contributes positively to the character of an area, either as a landscape feature in its own right and / or because of its inter-relationship with the built and natural environment. Land may be identified by the policy for the following reasons:

- It is an important part of the setting for a settlement or individual buildings;
- It is an attractive feature such as a particular hill or valley;
- It provides an open (or predominantly open) area between small settlements; and / or
- It provides an open area within or adjoining a settlement, the retention of which is essential to the character of that settlement.

3.8 The use of what is essentially a landscape designation to serve the dual purpose of both protecting landscape character and to safeguard gaps between settlements is confusing. An open area within or adjoining a settlement, whilst possibly being typical of a settlement's character, does not necessarily reflect land of particular landscape quality or character

3.9 This appraisal considers that the land within the site designated as Land of Local Landscape Importance provides an open area between the settlements of Chickerell

and Southill, as opposed to being of any particular intrinsic value as a 'landscape feature' or as an open area that is 'essential to the character' of Chickerell.

- 3.10 This is due to the eastern edge of Chickerell north of Lower Putton Lane being characterised by an abrupt built edge, combined with urban fringe land uses and degraded landscape features. The land to the east of Putton lies within the context of the substation, Wessex Golf Centre and the Chickerell Link Road.
- 3.11 Although there are some mature hedgerows and trees within the site area and the surrounding land, these would not likely warrant designation of the whole area on landscape quality grounds.
- 3.12 The land on the rolling land towards the ridge top to the north and northeast of the site is of more importance to the setting of Chickerell within the wider landscape, acting as a transition between the urban fringe and the ridge and vale landscape to the north. However, most of the land to the south of Coldharbour Lane is of urban fringe use, including the stabling, paddocks and grazing for horses to the north and east of the site.
- 3.13 The landscape character and features of the site and the locality are discussed in more detail later in this report.

Landscape Character

- 3.14 West Dorset Local Plan saved Policy SA3: 'Landscape Character Areas' seeks to protect local landscape character, by using the character areas identified by the West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment, 2009. The character assessment provides information on the make-up, characteristics and detrimental features upon each of the character areas across the District. The policy states that:

"Within each of the Landscape Character Areas development will be expected to respect and respond to the local landscape character. Proposals that conserve, enhance and restore features of local landscape importance will be encouraged. Development that significantly adversely affects the distinctive characteristics of the area's landscape, heritage and built environment will not be permitted."

- 3.15 The landscape character of the site and its surroundings is detailed in the next section of this report. This includes a review of the landscape character areas

identified by the West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment, and as defined within the Local Plan.

4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.1 This document divides the landscape of the District into Character Areas that share similar characteristics, and identifies the key characteristics and features that are detrimental to the landscape for each of these.

South Dorset Ridge and Vale Landscape Area

- 4.2 The site area sits within the 'South Dorset Ridge and Vale Landscape' Character Area. The landscape of this area is characterised by limestone ridges and clay vales, enclosed by the South Dorset escarpment to the north. The landscape towards the east of the area, where Chickerell and the site are located, is broader in scale than the more intimate areas to the west, where the topography becomes more undulating. Urban fringe uses are identified in this area, encroaching into the open countryside. Nucleated settlements with well-defined edges are located along the vales.
- 4.3 Key characteristics of the character that are true of the site and its surroundings area identified by the assessment include the following:
- Smooth ridge tops with an open character and views towards the Fleet and the coast;
 - Continuous patchwork of planned enclosures becoming larger and open at higher elevations; and
 - Tall and bushy hedgerows towards the settlement edge of Weymouth and Chickerell due to less intensive management regimes associated with urban fringe uses such as hobby farming and horse / pony paddocks.
- 4.4 Detrimental features identified by the assessment include:
- Pylons and masts are visually prominent creating visual clutter and detracting from the characteristic open views; and
 - Urban fringe land uses, including equine development, around the edges of Weymouth and Chickerell have an urbanising influence in this locality.

Local Landscape Character

- 4.5 The site is heavily influenced by its urban fringe location, contained between the eastern edge of Chickerell and the expansive electricity substation to the east.
- 4.6 The site is located on land that slopes southwards from a smooth ridgeline to the north of the site towards the Chickerell Link Road to the south, and comprises five fields of grassland used as grazing, divided by hedges and post and wire fences. Towards the north of the site, the hedges are predominantly bushy, gappy and unkempt, being strengthened by post and wire fencing in places.
- 4.7 The western site boundary is formed with the residential edge of Chickerell, with properties of Woodland Way, Edward Court and Lower Putton Lane forming a hard, defined built edge.
- 4.8 To the centre of the site, a watercourse and associated hedgerow and trees divide the site east-west. The watercourse has cut a smooth sided, rounded valley across the site, creating an enclosed, intimate space. This is further emphasised by mature trees at the end of Lower Putton Lane to the western site boundary and the trees bounding the substation to the east. The above is illustrated in *Photoview 1*, looking north from Public Footpath S16/23, south of the watercourse.

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- 4.9 To the south of the valley, the remainder of the site area is formed by one large, rectilinear field, bounded to the east and west by mature trees and hedgerows. As the field runs towards the bottom of the vale to the south, the topography becomes flatter and the site begins to be related to the urban fringe land uses to the south and southeast. To the west, the southern site area is bounded by a variety of land uses at Putton, including workshops, sheds and small strips of land enclosed by mature, spreading hedgerows and trees.
- 4.10 The land at Putton is allocated within the West Dorset Local Plan for mixed-use development (Policy EA6), including the retention of open land between Green Lane and the Chickerell Link Road to the southwest of the site as Public Open Space. The allocation area is illustrated on *Plan 1*.
- 4.11 To the south, the Chickerell Link Road and the Granby Industrial Estate form a strong built edge to the wider urban context of Lanehouse and Wyke Regis, which form a backdrop on the rising land to the south beyond.

- 4.12 The wider landscape to the north of the site is more typical of the open, undulating South Dorset Ridge and Vale character. The rising land forms a ridge south of Coldharbour Lane, beyond which a vale extends 1km to the ridge south of Buckland Ripers. There are clear views from the ridge towards the South Downs escarpment and Friar Waddon Hill, approximately 4.5 km to the north.
- 4.13 To the east of the southern site area, the Wessex Stadium and associated stands and floodlights dominate the skyline beyond a 9 hole golf course and driving range. These elements both combine to further strengthen the urban fringe location and character of the area.
- 4.14 To the north and northeast, the land gently rises to form a ridge, before dropping towards the River Wey north of Southill. The land on the smooth, rolling ridge top comprises paddocks and arable fields defined by mature hedgerows. The predominance of paddocks and associated stables and structures strengthens the urban edge character and degraded landscape of the area.
- 4.15 To the west of Chickerell, the land rises at Chickerell Hill, Crook Hill and Fleet beyond. In views from Crook Hill, the northern site area sits beyond the built form of Chickerell.
- 4.16 To the east of the substation, the urban edge of Southill is located beyond arable fields on the rising land of the ridge to the west of Radipole Lake.

5. LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The main landscape features of the site and its immediate environs are illustrated on *Plan 2 'Landscape Features'*.

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PLAN 2 – LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Landscape Features of the Wider Area

- 5.1 The South Dorset escarpment to the north forms a dramatic feature, forming a backdrop to panoramic views across the wider ridge and vale landscape.
- 5.2 To the southwest of the town, the scrub and trees surrounding the quarry on the top of Crook Hill create a distinctive skyline feature in views from the land to the north and east of the site.
- 5.3 The telecommunications mast and tower of All Saint's Church at Wyke Regis combine with housing along Wyke Road to form features on the skyline of the ridge approximately 2km south of the site, forming a backdrop to the built development of Charlestown, Westham and Weymouth Golf Course.
- 5.4 Closer to the site, the majority of features are of an urban or urban fringe nature, including the pylons and substation to the northeast and east, Wessex Stadium to the southeast and the buildings of the Granby Industrial Estate to the south, separated from the site 's immediate context by the strong linear feature of the Chickerell Link Road.
- 5.5 The embankments and tree belts surrounding the substation create a strong feature within the landscape between Chickerell and Southill, strengthening the urban fringe context within which the site lies.
- 5.6 The eastern edge of Chickerell creates a defined, hard residential edge along the western site boundary.
- 5.7 To the north of the site, an open fronted structure with sloping roof and large agricultural shed are located on the ridgeline, creating a strong feature and detractor in views from all directions.

- 5.8 A field managed as grazing and bounded by mature, bushy hedgerows adjoins the site to the north.
- 5.9 To the northeast, five arable fields adjoin Coldharbour Lane. These are bounded by mature, bushy hedgerows, resulting in a character typical of the wider ridge and vale landscape.
- 5.10 In contrast, the land to the immediate north of the substation comprises a number of small, rectilinear paddocks containing wooden stables and associated equine structures. Post and rail fencing define the paddocks, with those to the north and east of the area including clipped managed hedgerows running along the boundaries.
- 5.11 Three small areas of woodland are located to the north of the substation, including Eweleaze Spinneys to the north-western edge of Southill at Grafton Avenue. These provide a sense of enclosure, in contrast with the open landscape on the rolling high ground of the ridge to the north.

Landscape features of the site area

- 5.12 The site comprises 5 rectilinear fields bounding the eastern edge of Chickerell that are managed as grazing. The southernmost field is the largest, situated on the relatively flat, low-lying ground to the north of the Chickerell Link Road. Mature hedgerows and trees bound the field to the east and west.
- 5.13 The southern site boundary is formed by a post and wire fence to the south of the field. A hedgerow forms a more substantial field boundary 20m to the south.
- 5.14 To the north of the field, the land falls into a small valley at the centre of the site, where a watercourse runs west east along the northern field boundary. The boundary is formed by a gappy hedgerow and associated trees, strengthened by post and wire fencing. This hedgerow is illustrated in *Photoview 1*. South of the hedgerow, on the upper slope of the valley, a short section of hedgerow extends from the western boundary, indicating a former field boundary.

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- 5.15 To the north of the valley, the site is bounded to the west by properties of Lower Putton Lane, Edward Court and Woodland Way. The boundaries with gardens of these properties are formed by a variety of enclosures, including post and wire, close board fencing and hedgerows. The exception to this is where a small field bounded by gappy hedgerows lies between the site and properties of Lerrett Close and Mariners Way.
- 5.16 The northern site boundary is formed by mature, bushy hedgerows. The internal field boundaries are made-up of gappy hedgerows, supplemented with post and wire fencing.
- 5.17 A low voltage power line and associated pylons run from the substation across the site to the northwest and south.
- 5.18 Features that act as detractors in the landscape of the site and its surroundings include the following:
- Pylons and high voltage power lines running from the substation to the open countryside to the north and northwest;
 - The substation and associated structures to the east of the site;
 - Stands and floodlighting of the Wessex Stadium;
 - Large, monolithic buildings on the Granby industrial estate to the south; and
 - Sheds and structures dominating the skyline on the ridge top to the north of the site.

6. VISUAL AMENITY

- 6.1 In order to establish the potential effects of the proposed urban extension at east Chickerell upon visual amenity, views from within the public realm (i.e. public rights of way and public roads) have been considered. A number of Photoviews from a range of viewpoints are included within this appraisal to illustrate the visual context within which the site sits. Potential residential receptors are acknowledged where appropriate.
- 6.2 The area around Weymouth, including the Dorset AONB, is widely used and enjoyed as a recreational resource, and contains many Public Rights of Way, including National Trails. These are regularly used by both locals and visitors to the area, and the views from these rights of way and the visual setting of the wider landscape are therefore of importance when considering the effects of proposed development. Photoview locations and Public Rights of Way within the local vicinity of the site are illustrated on *Plan 1 'Site Context'*.

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PLAN 2 – LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Views from the South

- 6.3 In wider views from the south, the site rises on open land below the ridgeline to the north, and is seen in context with the eastern edge of Chickerell to the west and beyond the built form of the Granby Industrial Estate. The substation and associated tree belts enclose the site to the east, separating it from Southill. This is illustrated in *Photoview 2*, taken from Jasmine Close on the northern edge of Wyke Regis. In this panoramic view, the site is viewed within the wider setting of fleet and the coast to the west, the development at Southill and Radipole to the east and the South Dorset Escarpment forming a backdrop in the distance.

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- 6.4 In views from the link road, the site is set on the rising land beyond the Wessex Golf Centre and undeveloped land south of Green Lane. When viewed from this lower elevation, the northern site boundary sits just below the ridge top, with structures and pylons to the north of the site breaking the skyline and forming detracting elements in the view. This is illustrated in *Photoview 3*, from Hampshire Road south of the Granby Industrial Estate entrance.

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- 6.5 From the southwest, there are glimpsed views into the northern site area above and between buildings of Chickerell in the foreground. The southern site area is viewed against the backdrop of the substation and surrounding embankments and woodland. The north-eastern site area is viewed just below the skyline to the north of the substation.
- 6.6 From the southeast, the site is set against the backdrop of the built edge of Chickerell, viewed beyond the golf course in the foreground. The Wessex Stadium screens views towards the site from the link road east of the golf centre.
- 6.7 There are partial views of the northern site area from Weymouth Golf Course, to the south of Granby Way.

Views from the North

- 6.8 The site sits below and beyond the ridgeline in views from the open countryside to the north, northeast and northwest. Properties along Coldharbour Lane to the north of the ridge and Newland Farm and North Mead Farm on the ridge top are prominent features in views from the north.

Views from within the Dorset AONB

- 6.9 There are distant views from the South Dorset escarpment towards properties of Coldharbour and the ridge to the north of the site. In the panoramic views from this elevated position, the open fields to the northeast of the site are visible on the ridge top, set against development of the Granby Industrial and housing on the rising land towards Wyke Regis and Portland to the south. This is illustrated in *Photoview 4*, looking south from the Jubilee Trail (National Route, Footpath S37/17) at Friar Waddon Hill. The site is not visible within views from this location, as it sits on the south facing land beyond the ridge.

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- 6.10 There are also views of properties of Coldharbour, North Mead Farm and Newlands Farm on the ridge to the north of the site from the edge of the AONB to the northwest,

as illustrated in *Photoview 5*, from the entrance to Bagwell Farm. However, the site is not visible from this location, being sited on the land below and beyond the ridgeline.

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Views from the West

- 6.11 The built form of Chickerell largely screens the site to the west. Views of the site are generally limited to those properties overlooking the site on the eastern edge of the town, and Footpaths S16/21 and 23 that enter the site on the western boundary.

Views from within the Dorset AONB

- 6.12 There are views from Crook Hill, on the edge of the AONB, towards the site. In these views, the site is viewed within the context of Chickerell and the urban edge, set against the ridge top to the north of the site and the woodland bounding the substation to the east, as illustrated in *Photoview 6*, from Public Footpath S20/5.

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Views from the East

- 6.13 The site is largely screened in wider views from the east by the substation, tree cover and development of Southill, beyond which the land drops into the Wey valley.
- 6.14 There are views across the site from Public Footpath S16/21, which runs from Eweleaze Spinney north of the substation to Chickerell, north of Mariners Way, crossing the north of the site. In views to the east of the site from Footpath S16/21, the buildings of Woodland Way, Edward Court and the stables to the north form a backdrop and urban edge setting to the site.
- 6.15 The intervening buildings of the Wessex Stadium and Police Headquarters, as well as the substation and associated embankments and woodland planting largely limit views towards the site from the east and southeast.

7. LANDSCAPE CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

7.1 'Topic Paper 6, Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity' by The Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage, provides guidance on establishing the capacity of the landscape to accommodate change. Capacity is broadly defined as the combination of the following:

- Landscape Character Sensitivity: Natural, Cultural, Landscape quality / condition and Aesthetic factors (scale, enclosure, pattern, form);
- Visual Sensitivity: General visibility, Population (numbers and types of viewers) and Mitigation potential; and
- Landscape Value: Designations (National, Local), Tranquillity, Scenic beauty and Cultural associations

7.2 Using the findings of the landscape and visual appraisal, these factors are considered below, in order to assess the landscape capacity of the site to accommodate residential development.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

7.3 The site's urban fringe character is reinforced by the surrounding land uses, which include: the built edge of Chickerell to the west; substation and golf course to the east; Chickerell Link road and the Granby Industrial estate to the south; and paddocks to the northeast.

7.4 The site area to the north of Lower Putton Lane is bounded to the south and west by housing, which adjoins and overlooks the site with little separation other than post and wire and close board fencing along the site boundaries. The site is of a generally degraded character, with internal field boundaries comprising post and wire fencing and gappy, poorly managed, hedgerows. To the north and north-eastern site boundaries, the hedgerows contain significant numbers of trees, enclosing the site from the open land on the ridge top to the northeast, although these are poorly managed. The northern site area, to the north of Lower Putton Lane, is therefore considered to have a *Low* sensitivity to change in relation to landscape character.

7.5 To the south, tall and bushy hedgerows typical of the urban fringe character bound the site. Other than the hedgerows, there are no landscape features of any note

within the site to the west of the Weymouth Golf Centre. The golf course to the east and business units and workshops to the west strengthen the urban fringe context within which the site lies. The southern site area therefore has a *Low* sensitivity to change in respect of landscape character.

7.6 The small valley towards the centre of the site creates an enclosed area with a stronger sense of character. The enclosed space of the valley is therefore more sensitive to change, being of a smaller scale and containing the features of the watercourse and hedgerow. Despite this, the landscape is degraded and in poor condition, with gappy hedgerows and properties of Lower Putton Lane and the proximity of the substation serving to strengthen the urban fringe context.

Consultation Responses

7.7 In their consultation response to the Options for Growth of 7th August 2009, Natural England states that:

"Natural England is also concerned that major development at Option 3 will reduce the green buffer between the settlements of Chickerell and Southill, this buffer includes an area of pasture with boundary hedges that helps separate and define the two settlements."

7.8 This appraisal considers that the buffer between settlements is largely ensured by the sub-station and associated tree belts to the centre of the site and the golf course to the south. To the northeast of the site, the land comprises open paddocks, arable fields and pasture, providing both physical and visual separation between the two settlements, and maintaining the openness of the ridge in views from the open countryside to the north.

Visual Sensitivity

7.9 The site is well contained and hidden from views from the AONB to the north. In views from Crook Hill in the AONB to the southwest, the site is seen in context with Chickerell and the detractors of the substation and pylons. The valued views from this vantage point are generally away from the site, towards Fleet and the coast.

7.10 Given this, and the urban fringe context within which the site is viewed, it is considered to be of a generally *Low* visual sensitivity.

- 7.11 However, the northern site area is more exposed, being located on higher land towards the ridge top and, particularly in views from the south, development may be seen to break the skyline. Land to the northern and north-eastern site boundaries is therefore more visually sensitive, as mitigation of development on the skyline would require planting that may also break the skyline, affecting the open character of the ridge top.

Landscape Value

Dorset AONB

- 7.12 Although the site is located outside the AONB, the northern site area is visible from the high ground of Crook Hill, located just within the AONB to the southwest of Chickerell. The AONB is a National Designation, and the protection of uninterrupted panoramic views from the AONB form part of the Management Plan Policies. However, as mentioned above, the valued views from within the AONB are towards the unspoilt countryside towards Fleet and the coastline. Furthermore, development of the site would be viewed within the urban fringe context, adjacent to Chickerell.

Consultation Responses

- 7.13 In their consultation responses to the Options for Growth, Natural England and the Dorset AONB Partnership both voice concern over development of the land to the north of Chickerell as part of the Option 3 urban extension. This is because development in this location would be visible from within the AONB to the north and northwest. The site at east Chickerell does not extend onto the ridge top and is therefore not visible from these locations. The northern site area forms part of the irregular fragmented northern edge of the town, contained by stables and agricultural buildings to the north and west.
- 7.14 The Dorset AONB Partnership does, however, mention that:

"The option for further landscape mitigation measures along the ridge is limited as the ridge tops and higher slopes are characterised by their openness."

- 7.15 In response to this, the proposed development area does not extend to the ridgeline, and planting within the site would not impact upon the openness of the ridgeline.

Land of Local Landscape Importance

- 7.16 PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' favours the use of criteria-based policies based upon landscape character assessment to provide protection for valued landscapes outside nationally designated areas. This is to ensure that rigid designations are not in place that unduly restrict acceptable sustainable development. Local landscape designations should only be maintained if criteria-based policy cannot provide the necessary protection. In these cases, it should be stated what it is that requires protection, and why.
- 7.17 The identification of areas designated as Land of Local Landscape Importance (LLLI) within the West Dorset Local Plan was informed by landscape character assessments. However, as discussed earlier, although the site is located within LLLI, it is considered that this is to reflect the land's role as part of an open area between settlements, as opposed to it being of any intrinsic landscape value. This is due to the dual role of the designation to reflect both landscape character and the setting of settlements. Despite this, the small valley to the centre of the site and the hedgerow and watercourse within it are landscape features of some value, and worthy of retention.

Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Development

- 7.18 Taking the landscape character, visual sensitivity and landscape value identified above into consideration, the site can be assessed as having differing levels of capacity to accommodate development in various areas.
- 7.19 The northern site area, adjacent to the northern and north-eastern boundaries has a *Low-Moderate* capacity to accommodate development, as building in this area has the potential to break the skyline on the ridge top in views from the south and the north, including views from the AONB.
- 7.20 The north-western site area to the north of Lower Putton Lane has a *High* capacity to accommodate development, as the site is well related to the existing built edge of Chickerell, both physically and visually, and is located within the eastern extent of the settlement as defined by Lower Putton Lane to the south.
- 7.21 With the exception of the small valley to the east of Lower Putton Lane, the remainder of the site has a *Moderate* capacity to accommodate development, with

there being a *High* capacity closer to the edge of Chickerell to the west, where development would relate to the existing development at Putton. This would be further enhanced if Putton were to be redeveloped as a mixed-use site, as allocated in the West Dorset Local Plan.

- 7.22 The small valley to the centre of the site has a *Low* capacity to accommodate development, as it is an enclosed, intimate landscape area. There is potential for the hedgerow to be enhanced as part of development proposals, as it is gappy and poorly managed.

Review of the Design Concept Masterplan for East Chickerell

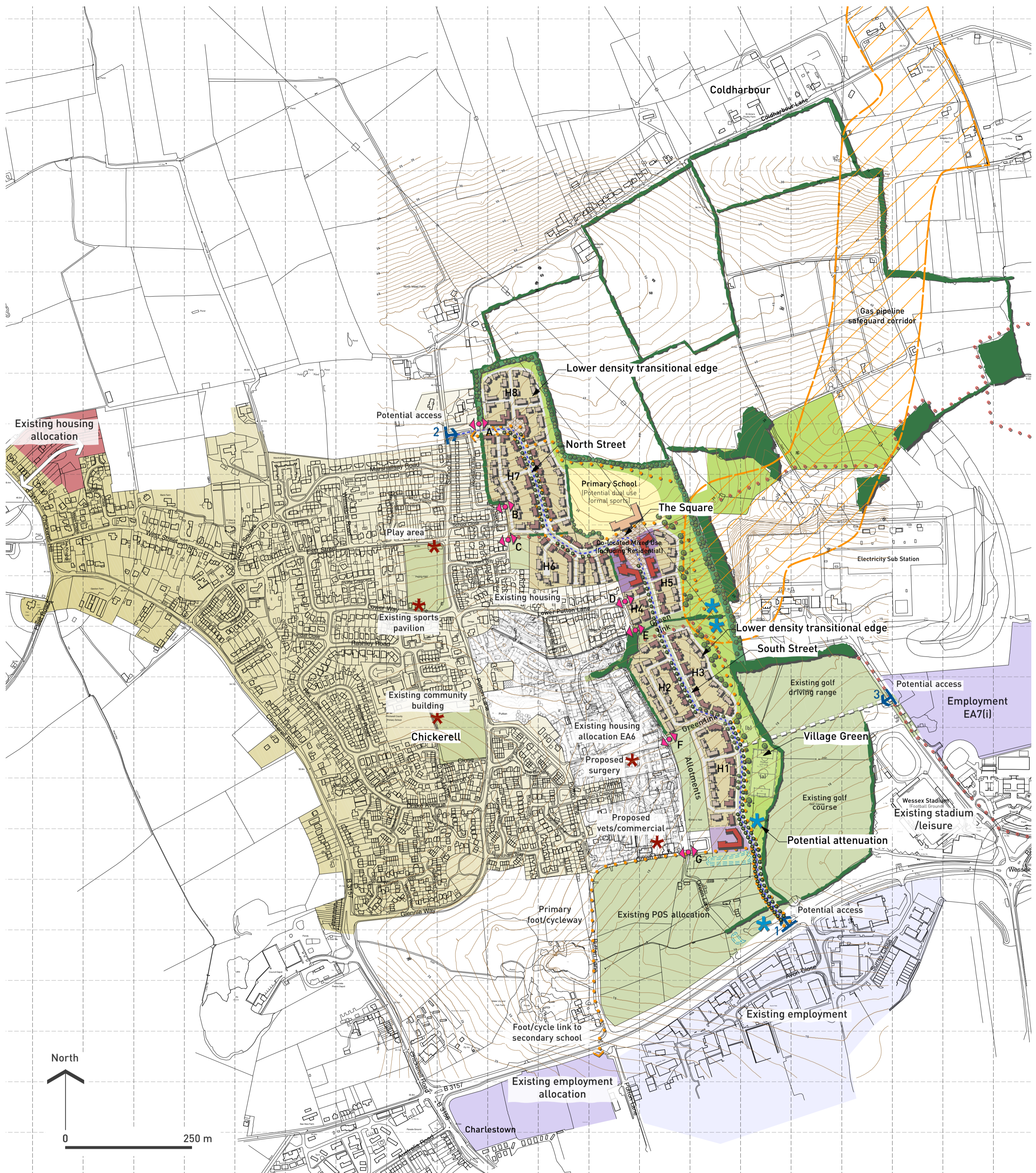
- 7.23 The design concept masterplan for the site, included at Appendix 1, has responded to the findings of this appraisal in order to minimise any adverse landscape and visual effect and to enhance the landscape character, where possible. It achieves this through the following measures:

- Concentrating development to the west of the site, in order to provide a green space and visual buffer to the substation and ensure the retention of a gap between settlements;
- Locating lower density housing toward the higher ground to the north of the site to limit development that may encroach upon the ridge top;
- Location of a primary school and associated open space / playing fields to the northeast of the site, in order to set-back development from the skyline and to ensure the retention of a landscape buffer to the open countryside on the ridge top to the northwest;
- Retention of the valley to the centre of the site within the developed area as a green link, allowing for the enhancement and management of the hedgerow and trees, and preservation of the area's character;
- Retention of internal hedgerows, to be gapped-up and enhanced; and
- Planting-up of the hedgerows along the north-western, northern and north-eastern site boundaries with strategic buffer planting to break up the developed edge towards the ridgeline and to provide a soft backdrop to the development in views from the south and southwest and east.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The land to the east of Chickerell is of a degraded character, with the landscape and visual setting of the area being heavily influenced by its urban fringe location and associated land uses, which include: the electricity substation and pylons to the east; the Wessex Golf Centre and Wessex Stadium to the southeast; paddocks and stables to the northeast; and Granby Industrial Estate to the south.
- 8.2 This appraisal has shown that the land to the east of Chickerell has a *High-Moderate* landscape capacity to accommodate development.
- 8.3 The design concept masterplan demonstrates that the site is able to accommodate a significant proportion of the housing numbers required for the Weymouth Urban Extension, without any significant impacts upon landscape character and visual amenity.
- 8.3 Although part of the site is located within the locally designated Land of Local Landscape Importance, the gap between the settlements of Chickerell and Southill would be maintained and the built edge set-back from the substation to the east, maintaining an open setting. The character and openness of the land to the northeast of the site would not be affected by development of the site.
- 8.4 Development would be located below the ridge top to the north of the site, and would not be visible from within the AONB and open countryside to the north. By siting development away from the north-eastern site area, buildings would not break the skyline in views from the south, or from within the AONB to the southwest. The above measures would ensure that the characteristic openness of the ridge and its setting within the wider landscape was maintained.

APPENDIX 1
DESIGN CONCEPT MASTERPLAN



Key

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|
|  | Proposed residential uses
(10.16ha, 375 dwellings @37dph) |  | Main street |  | Linear Park and Wildlife Corridor - allowing transition to wider landscape (potential for informal, formal recreation SANGS and other green infrastructure uses) |  | Proposed foot/cycleways
(including diversions where logical) |
|  | Mixed use co-located with primary school (including circa 20 residential dwellings) (0.93ha) |  | Indicative access streets |  | Existing Vegetation |  | Existing public rights of way
(including diversions where logical) |
|  | Primary school (2.1ha) |  | Potential vehicle access to development (1-3) (with allowance for foot/cycleways) |  | Existing hedgerows |  | Gas pipeline safeguarding corridor |
|  | Proposed bus route |  | Proposed strategic buffer planting |  | Contours at 1m intervals |  | Possible locations of flood attenuation areas |
|  | Potential pedestrian/cycle access connections (A-G) |  | Outdoor sports (a) Sports pitch (b) Kickabout area | | | | |