

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

The assessments are based on:

1. North Dorset District Council Brief dated May 2010.
2. 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for Scotland and England' produced by SNH and CoAg 2002.
3. 'Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment' Second edition. Spon Press
4. The Dorset Landscape Change Strategy; Pilot methodology. LUC January 2010.

1. Purpose and Aims (see Brief)

- To provide an initial assessment of each of the sites context and character.
- To ensure landscape implications such as landscape character and local distinctiveness issues are addressed 'up front' in the planning process to underpin and inform policy, design and layout decisions.
- To provide some indication or judgements about the potential impacts any development may have on landscape character.
- To provide an initial overview of potential enhancement/mitigation opportunities.

2. Scale and level of detail

The site location plans are 1:5000. The photo viewpoints will be indicated on these and where relevant designations and landscape areas or types. Existing Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) will be referred to in order to gain an understanding of the wider context of the site and how they 'nest in' to wider LCAs. The assessment will be based on the assumption that any development will be 2 story residential.

3. Resources and timing

The work will be carried out by the Senior Landscape Officer at DCC, a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute; following site visits to each site in June/July 2010.

4. Making judgements.

Some judgements will be made on the potential likely impacts the proposed development may have on local landscape character and a 'Guidance Statement' in respect of siting, design and management will be provided to ensure any change is focused in the most positive way. This will include potential mitigation/enhancement options if development is considered. This will help inform any further studies and future decision making.

This assessment is carried in the summer months when trees are in full leaf. The fact that there may well be more open views, and therefore potentially greater impacts, of the sites in the winter months, will be clarified where necessary.

NB: This work will not replace the need for more detailed site specific studies of landscape and local distinctiveness or other studies which may be required such as Biodiversity, Historic and Built environment, Arboricultural Assessments and Design and Access Statements.

5. Outputs

See attached template which will be used for each site

1. Some initial desk study assessment of aerial photos, PROWs, conservation verges, designations such as SSSIs and SNCIs. The 1994 and 2009 DCC Landscape Character Assessment, the Dorset AONB and Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB LCAs and sensitivity/condition/tranquillity assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation will also be assessed to understand the context and value of the sites.

2. The Field survey will include:

- A description of character and key characteristics* for each site.
- Identification of aesthetic/perceptual qualities and an understanding of local value
- Sensitivities/vulnerabilities
- Photos

This survey information will help to inform the judgements about the future of the landscape.

* These are features or qualities, which if lost or changed there would be a significant consequence for the current character of the landscape.

3. Potential threats to the key characteristics.
4. Opportunities for enhancement and mitigation.

Sites to be assessed

1. Blandford

- West Blandford (Deer Park) (SHLAA map C41)
- Lower Bryanston Farm and Blandford St Mary site (C40)
- Land at the A350/A354 Junction – Blandford (C40)
- Land to the NE of Blandford (Salisbury Road) (C42)

The latter two sites have not been put forward in the Core Policy 15 Blandford, however a number of consultees have suggested them as alternative sites, hence the need to assess them in addition to the two proposed by the Council.

2. Shaftesbury

- Land to the south of the Wincombe Business Park (C44)
- Land to the west of the A350 opposite Wincombe Business Park (C44)

3. SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) sites

A landscape assessment of some of the rejected SHLAA sites around Blandford (SHLAA map E2) and Shaftesbury (E29 & E40 – assess site around Blackmore Vale Dairy 2/46/0495)

The link to the SHLAA maps is as follows:http://www.north-dorset.gov.uk/index/living/building_planning/planning_policy/local_development_framework/strategic_housing_land_availability_assessment/shlaa_site_maps.htm

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NB: See methodology notes attached

Site name:	NDDC Ref:	Date:
Location plan: with relevant designations and photo viewpoints		
<p>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</p> <p>Historic Landscape Character:</p>		
<p>Summary of overall character: based on scale, landform, pattern/complexity, settlement & human influences, skyline, visual relationships & views, intervisibility, perceptual/aesthetic criteria.</p>		
Sensitivities/vulnerabilities: to include threats to key characteristics		
<p>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)</p>		
<p>Sensitivity Analysis: based on scale, landform, pattern/complexity, settlement & human influences, skyline, visual relationships & views, intervisibility, perceptual/aesthetic criteria. Will include a 'guidance statement' which will outline opportunities for mitigation/enhancement.</p>		