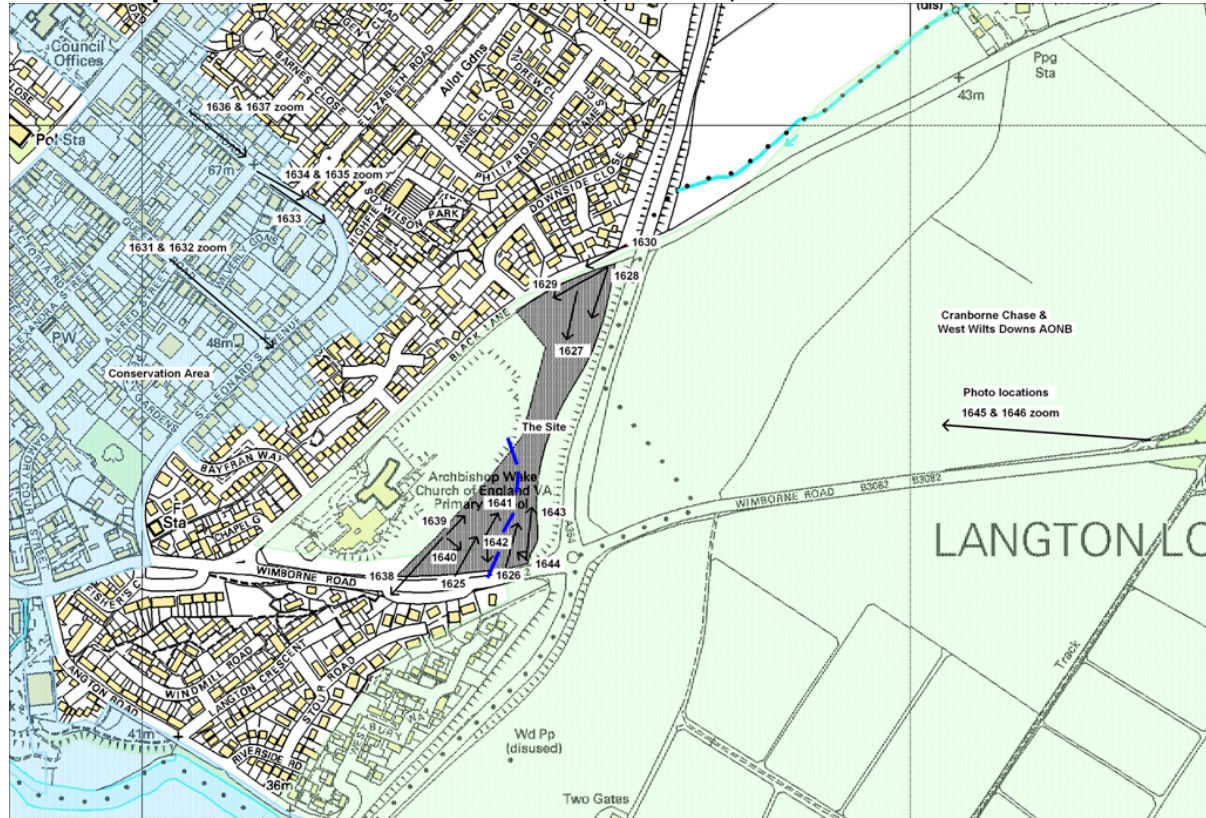


North Dorset District Council
Proposed Housing Sites
Landscape Impact Assessment: Assessment template

NB: See methodology notes attached

Site name: <i>Blandford; Junction of A354 and the B3082</i>	NDDC Ref: <i>2/03/0478</i>	Date: <i>13 July 2010</i>
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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
- ◆ *The site forms part of the western end of the Southern Downland Belt Landscape Character Area¹ which is a chalk valley and downland landscape type².*
 - ◆ *The area is part of former downland 'cut off' from the rest of the character area by the A354.*
 - ◆ *Mainly north facing, sloping and undulating large grassland field cut for silage.*
 - ◆ *Very dense tree belts surround the site on all sides and in particular on the western and eastern edges. The tree belts create an enclosed and distinctive corridor effect which defines the site.*
 - ◆ *Limited views into this site from the surrounding countryside due to the dense tree belt associated with the A354 in particular.*
 - ◆ *Some open views into the site from the B3082 and from elevated streets in the built up areas of Blandford to the north of the site.*

¹ Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment dated June 2003.
² Dorset County Council Landscape Character Assessment dated Nov 2009.

- ◆ *The site provides an undeveloped green backdrop from these elevated locations.*
- ◆ *Well used walking area on an informal basis as no official public rights of way.*
- ◆ *The site sits just within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB boundary.*
- ◆ *The South West corner of the site is low lying with a more isolated 'cut off' perception.*

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 western end of the Southern Downland Belt Landscape Character Area which sweeps in from the higher chalk downland to the east and is 'severed' from the rest of this chalkland character area by the A354. The site sits within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and is mainly a north facing sloping and undulating site formed of a large and long grass field. It is defined and enclosed by dense mature broad leaf tree belts which are very dense and robust. The tree belts on the western side are associated with the Blandford Adult Education Centre and the Archbishop Wake Primary School. The trees on the eastern boundary are associated with roadside planting along the A354 Blandford bypass. The southern edge of the site has weaker broken hedge lines with some maturing trees. Due to the vegetation, views into this site from the surrounding countryside to the east are limited. There are however, some open views directly into the site from the B3082 and from the elevated and built up parts of Blandford to the north west of the site. There is a distinct difference in perception from the relatively quiet isolated lower part of the site in the south west corner, where there are very limited views, compared to the more elevated northern parts of the site where there are distinct open views to the north west. This site has no statutory public rights of way but it is well used informally for dog walking and walking and the site creates an informal north south link between Black Lane and the B3082 Wimborne Road.

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

- ◆ *Development would impact negatively on the surrounding tree belts e.g. directly or indirectly by damage to root zones.*
- ◆ *Development would impact on the green undeveloped backdrop the site provides when viewed from the northwest impacting negatively on the setting and context of the settlement.*
- ◆ *Development would impact on the isolated perception identified in the south west corner of the site in particular.*
- ◆ *Some more open views into this site may be possible in the winter months, when trees are not in leaf, therefore increasing the identified impacts.*
- ◆ *It would also be a new green field development within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.*

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 within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB therefore elevating its sensitivity to high. The site also has some amenity and informal recreation value and as a

green undeveloped backdrop when viewed from the elevated areas to the north west, therefore having some value to the setting of the town. There is little wildlife value within the site apart from within the adjoining tree belts.

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 main sensitivity issue for this site is its designation as AONB and the key tree belts on either side of the site. However, despite this it is already physically and visually severed from the rest of the chalk downland landscape and therefore it is perceived as within the built up urban area more so than as seen as open continuous countryside. If limited development occurred within the south west quadrant of this site, this would significantly mitigate the adverse visual impacts identified. (The potential defined area would be within the blue dotted line on the plan above).

This mitigation would ensure development is kept off the higher elevated parts of the site and the whole of the more open, northern end of this site would be left undeveloped and potentially used as public open space with enhanced links/steps down to Black Lane. In order to ensure the protection, retention and management of the existing key tree belts, suitable buffers would be required against these edges and any new access should be located as far west, off the B3082, as possible.

The use of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) and other sustainable construction techniques should be explored for this site.

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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