

**Proposed Residential Development, Butts Close, Marnhull, Dorset**

## **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on instruction from P. D. Crocker Ltd. in relation to an outline planning application (all matters reserved except access) comprising the construction of up to 120 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure works including site access, parking provision, landscaping and drainage works at land to the south of Butts Close, Marnhull, Dorset.
- 1.2 The report makes an assessment of the visual and landscape effects of the proposal and proposes mitigating measures to reduce adverse impacts and enhance beneficial impacts.

## 2.0 Assessment Approach & Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology used in the preparation of this LVIA is in accordance with the published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd. Ed.2013) GLVIA published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment. The methodology and criteria used in assessment are found in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The approach to assessment firstly considers the baseline situation. The baseline takes into account national and local policy framework, site factors and published landscape character assessments where they are relevant to the proposal. The baseline situation is recorded below and on the accompanying diagrams (Appendix 5).
- 2.3 Landscape and visual impact assessment is undertaken by combining judgements on the sensitivity of the receiving landscape or visual receptors with those on the magnitude of the change proposed.
- 2.4 For the purposes of this study, discussions of landscape sensitivity have included consideration of landscape value, landscape condition and the susceptibility of the receiving landscape to the type and scale of the change proposed. Sensitivity is recorded on a scale of high, medium or low, with gradations between where necessary (Appendix 1).
- 2.5 Visual sensitivity is assessed through consideration of the value of a particular view and the susceptibility to change of people experiencing the view. For example, a popular viewpoint experienced by people out walking in the countryside will be more sensitive to change than a view glimpsed through a gap in the hedgerow experienced by people travelling on a major trunk road.
- 2.6 Judgements on the scale of the change proposed, the duration of the effect (from short term to permanent) and the geographical influence (extent) of the change are combined to assess the magnitude of landscape or visual effect. Magnitude of change is related to a scale of high to negligible. Effects are considered beneficial where they strengthen baseline characteristics or contribute to landscape strategies and policies and adverse where they result in the dilution of positive baseline characteristics or work against strategies. Neutral effects have neither positive nor negative effects on character and no impact on landscape strategies.
- 2.7 The attached viewpoint photographs have been presented in line with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 6/19 "Visual Representation of Development Proposals". The guidance proposes a proportionate approach to the complexity of visualisation presented, based upon factors such as the scale and complexity of development proposal, the sensitivity of the receptor and the context for the proposal. The proposal assessed here is not within a designated landscape of high value but is located to the southern edge of the village of Marnhull. In this case, type 1 visualisations have been considered appropriate. These are annotated photographs presented at 100% scaling (Appendix 4).
- 2.8 This report assesses the effects of development on the site and discusses mitigating measures to reduce any adverse effects.

### 3.0 Study Area and Proposal

- 3.1 The study area for the assessment was defined as a zone extending 3km from the site boundary and is shown in Appendix 5, figure 1. This area was then examined using desktop studies to identify a zone of theoretical visual influence (ZTV) based in LiDAR data which considers the wider topography and the potential intervisibility with the site, Appendix 5, figure 3.
- 3.2 The proposal (described in section 5 below) is for the development of up to 120 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure works including site access, parking provision, landscaping and drainage works at land to the south of Butts Close, Marnhull, Dorset. Features of the development with the potential to bring about change to landscape and visual character include:
- Change in use of the site from arable field to residential use, with new tree and amenity planting and changes to grassland management.
  - Development of internal road infrastructure and car parking.
  - Development of associated external landscape including play area and sustainable drainage infrastructure.
  - Indicative building design and materials are set out in the Design and Access statement.

## 4.0 Planning Policy Context

### National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- 4.1 The following are considered to be relevant to the consideration of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal:

Paragraph 130:

*“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. “*

Paragraph 174:

*“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air*

*and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*

*f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”*

#### **North Dorset Local Plan - 2016**

- 4.2 The following local plan policies are considered to be relevant to the consideration of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal:

##### **POLICY 4: THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

*Developments are expected to respect the natural environment including the designated sites, valued landscapes and other features that make it special. Developments should be shaped by the natural environment so that the benefits it provides are enhanced and not degraded.*

##### **Landscape Character**

*The landscape character of the District will be protected through retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely to arise as a result of a development proposal, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated in to the development scheme.*

##### **POLICY 5: THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

*Any development proposal affecting a heritage asset (including its setting) will be assessed having regard to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of that asset and securing a viable use for it that is most consistent with its conservation.*

##### **POLICY 15: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

*Development will be required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents and deliver environmental benefits. All elements of green infrastructure should be provided on site in line with standards of provision set in the development plan.*

## 5.0 Site Layout and Mitigation

- 5.1 The indicative site layout, shown in the Design and Access statement and drawings submitted with the planning application, shows how the proposed design responds to the site and incorporates mitigation factors highlighted through the landscape and visual assessment process.
- 5.2 The main access to the site is located from Butts Close via an existing field gate. An existing public footpath currently runs NW to SE across the site. This footpath would be integrated within the site design, through a tree lined street opening out onto green amenity space in the south. A further site access is provided from Schoolhouse Lane to the east.
- 5.3 The church tower of St Gregory's is a prominent local feature. Two important visual links across the site leading to the tower have been identified and incorporated into the outline layout. Ensuring these visual corridors remain free of built form would maintain views of the tower.
- 5.4 The provision of green amenity space, tree planting and play in the north-east of the site will help to provide a buffer to neighbouring Grade II listed houses and the conservation area, while a green buffer wrapping around the southern boundary of the site will help to provide a soft transition and buffer to the wider landscape along this edge.
- 5.5 Tree planting throughout the site; within the green buffer, in private gardens and on streets and parking areas, will help to soften the proposed buildings into their landscape setting, whilst above ground sustainable drainage features in the south of the site would also be a positive landscape feature.
- 5.6 The existing hedges to the site boundaries are retained and should be managed to create a robust and diverse native hedge with emergent trees. If small lengths of hedges are required to be removed to allow for access points/visibility splays they should be replanted to the back of these splays.
- 5.7 The site has approval for 39 homes with a layout concentrated on the west side of the field. The new proposals are of similar scale and layout, but across the entire field, incorporating additional green infrastructure measures as described above.

### Construction Effects

- 5.8 During the anticipated construction period, anticipated to be in the region of 2 years, there will be disturbance, machinery, construction equipment and temporary cabins which will be visually incongruous and out of character. As the site is finished and landscape proposals have had time to establish, the proposed development would coalesce into their setting.

## 6.0 Landscape Character and Sensitivity

### The Site and Surroundings

- 6.1 The site and surroundings are described below, and can be seen in viewpoints 1 - 10, and 27.

**Landform:** The site lies on a gently sloping field facing south.

**Land Cover:** The site is currently arable farmed and consists of a uniform area of crops across the entire site area. There is a large mature tree located close to the eastern boundary, approximately half way down the site. Along the east, south and west, the boundaries are mature native hedgerows, whilst the northern boundary is less well defined. Backing onto Butts Close and properties situated along New Street, there is a low chain-link fence fronted by some scrub planting, some blocks of hedge and a few trees forming the northern boundary.

**Land Use:** Currently arable crops with an outline planning approval on the western half of the site for 39 new dwellings.

**Settlement:** In the north-west, several two-storey of homes circa 2001 overlook the site. A terrace of older bungalows overlook the site close to the current field entrance and there are some larger properties further east on New Street which have south facing gardens abutting the northern site boundary. In the south, the outlook is rural, with a few houses individually located, including Chippel Lodge, close to the junction of Chippel Lane and the B3092. Slightly further south there is a small grouping of homes and cottages off Carraway Lane. East of the site lies Hillside and Hindgaston Gate properties, with a small lane leading south to Hindgaston House.

The Grade I church of St Gregory is a prominent local landmark and can be seen as part of the backdrop when viewing the site from the east or south (Viewpoints 5, 8, 9, 12). Careful site design can be used to ensure these key views across the site are not lost.

**Enclosure:** The site is mostly enclosed by hedgerows of varying condition and height. Along the northern boundary there are some large gaps and low wire mesh fence is the only boundary. In the east, south and west there is a dense mixed native hedge. Due to the gently sloping topography (sloping from north to south) the views looking south are open across the landscape towards the hills within the Dorset AONB approximately 8km away (Viewpoint 27). The site is accessed from the north via a field gate on Butts Close and from the south via a field gate onto the B3092 Road at the junction with Chippel Lane.

**Land Ownership:** Site is in private ownership.

**Perceptual / Aesthetic / Experiential Factors:** The site is typical of the pastoral fields bounded by trees and hedgerows within the wider landscape to the south of Marnhull. Looking north, there is a strong visual connection with the existing built development at Butts Close in the north (Viewpoint 7), overlooking the site. Looking south, there are long distance views of the pastoral countryside surrounding Marnhull and the site tends to feel more rural the further south you travel. The B3092 road warps around the east of the site with fairly regular traffic entering and leaving Marnhull.

**Public Access:** There are two public footpaths within the site, one in the north-western corner and one running north-south between Butts Close and the junction

between Chippel Lane and the B3092. There are no onward footpath connections from this southern junction, without walking some way along the public highway without pavement (Appendix 5, figure 1).

**Landscape Sensitivity:** Located to the south of Marnhull the site consists of a singular field bounded on 3 sides by roads and to the north by homes on New Street and Butts Close.

It does not lie within any designated landscapes (Appendix 5, figure 3), and the Dorset AONB is located approx. 8km away in the east.

Within the site itself there are no landscape elements of any great rarity or significance. Trees and hedgerows along the north and west are in poor or moderate condition, while the hedgerows along the eastern, southern and western boundaries are more complete. There are few trees - some hedgerow trees located in the south-west boundary with Chippel Lane and a lone mature tree half way along the eastern boundary. Overall, the site is judged to be in **medium** landscape condition.

There is some visual interaction between the site and the immediate surrounding area, especially in the south. The proposed development of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes would be of a similar scale to nearby existing dwellings in Butts Close and along New Street in the north.

North of Butts Close lies The Retreat, Grade II, Ranelagh Cottage and Cottage Attached Right, Grade II listed. These properties have some limited visual connection with the site, viewed down Butts Close and seen beyond existing built development (Viewpoint 1).

Adjacent to the north-west corner of the site there are a group of Grade II listed buildings: Granary, Stable Building with Interconnecting Wall, Stable Building, The Old Rectory, including the boundary wall of the Old Rectory. These properties all have substantial gardens, planted with mature tree and a hedge boundary which adjoins the site in the north-west. Nearby, north of New Street, sits the Grade I listed Church of St Gregory, with its prominent square tower.

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within Marnhull Village. The closest feature is a Minor Romano-British villa located approximately 2.1km to the south which has no visual connection to the site (Viewpoint 21).

Marnhull has two conservation areas, one located in the north and one in the south (Appendix 5, figure 3). The northern conservation area is located approximately 500m away from the site boundary, with no visual connection. The southern conservation area runs along New Street and abuts the site in the north-east corner. Existing homes along the south of New Street limit views between the conservation area and the site.

The site is deemed to have **medium to low landscape** value, with some good landscape elements on a local level, but with potential for improvement.

Susceptibility to change is judged as **medium**. The landscape has a moderate degree of interaction between landform and field pattern, with some existing context locally to the type of development proposed. The receptor has a **medium** level of ability to accept the type of development proposed with good opportunities for mitigation though site design and enhanced ecological and landscape planting.

Combining medium landscape condition, medium to low value and medium susceptibility to change, produces a result of **medium landscape sensitivity** which is judged as the degree to which the site and immediate surroundings can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character.

## National Character Area

6.2 The site is within the **Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour** National Character Area (NCA).

Key characteristics are summarised as:

- Large expanse of lowland clay vale and the Upper Greensand terraces and hills that mark the southern and eastern edges of the NCA.
- (Blackmore Vale runs north south and is located west of Marnhull)
- The Blackmore Vale, steeped in a long history of pastoral agriculture, is characterised by hedged fields with an abundance of hedgerow trees, many of them veteran.
- Rural settlement is mixed, with small villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads set in landscapes of medieval and later enclosed fields.
- The NCA lies partly within the Dorset and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty but much of it has no landscape designation.
- Despite the A303 trunk road and six main roads that cross the NCA, and the two sizeable towns, a low level of urbanisation (less than 1 per cent) and the intensely rural nature of the remaining areas lead to an overall sense of remoteness, peace and tranquillity.

There are four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the area as described within the Character Assessment:

*SEO 1: Protect, manage and enhance the diverse but coherent pastoral landscape character of the clay vales, limestone ridge and Greensand hills, their semi-natural grasslands and woodland and their characteristic wildlife, and manage the simple patterns of land use maintained by the long history of agriculture.*

*SEO 2: Work with local people to raise their understanding of the way in which the area's strong landscape character, sense of place and distinctive wildlife are rooted in the continuity of agricultural land use, strong historic landscape character and legibility of historic features.*

*SEO 3: Work with the local farming and land management community to maintain the distinctive landscape and natural beauty of the area, enhancing ecosystems and ecosystem services.*

*SEO 4: Protect, manage and enhance the Vale of Wardour's highly distinctive relationship between geology, landform and land use. Protect, manage and interpret the suite of national and Local Geological Sites.*

Due to the large scale of the NCAs, and the site location which is adjacent to existing housing and enclosed on the other three sides by roads, it is judged that the proposed development would be seen as a part of the existing village rather than an extension into the countryside, and the effects on the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour Landscape Character Area is of a scale and location as to be **negligible**. Therefore further analysis will be concentrated on site and district level landscape character. The potential impact of the proposals on the District scale Landscape Character Areas is described below.

## District Landscape Character Areas

- 6.3 The **North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment** (2008) has identified 17 local landscape character areas (LCA).

The Assessment states that *'If the key characteristics and/or features which are identified for each area were to change or are lost there would be significant consequences for the current character of the landscape. This would usually be negative but sometimes positive where some characteristics/features currently have a negative influence.'*

- 6.4 The proposed development site lies entirely with the **North Dorset Limestone Ridges** LCA, with these other character areas falling within the study area (refer to Appendix 5, Figure 2):

- Blackmore Vale
- North Blackmore Rolling Vales
- Upper Stour Valley

Theoretical visibility mapping, supported by fieldwork visits, shows there is visual interaction between the site and the North Dorset Limestone Hills and Blackmore Vale LCAs. These two character areas have been extracted from the North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment and can be found in Appendices 2 and 3. There is no visual connection between the site and the Upper Stour Valley LCA.

### Host Landscape – North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA

- 6.5 The site is located within the North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA (viewpoints 1-16, and 18-22) which has the following key characteristics:

- Elevated open plateau areas of undulating farmland landscape with distinctive sloping edges in places.
- Thick dense hedgerows and frequent small copses and plantations.
- Open views from higher areas across the Vale to the chalk escarpment.
- Many scattered villages and farmsteads and a distinctive settlement pattern along the ridges or on the side slopes to the ridges.
- The traditional use of locally available and distinctive limestone in the villages and in other buildings and structures.
- Numerous twisting hedge lined lanes, straighter ridge top roads and many public Rights of Way.
- Stalbridge Park is a key local feature of interest.
- Twinwood Coppice is a key local feature of interest.

- 6.6 The full character area description is attached at Appendix 2. Points of interest to the site include: the site lies on *'a rolling, elevated, plateau landscape between Stalbridge and Stourton Caundle.'* this *'forms part of a large area of limestone hills and ridges extending west to Sherborne and beyond.'*

*'14.2 The settlement pattern is distinctive with some on the plateau tops such as Marnhull' and 'both Sturminster Newton and Marnhull have some poorly integrated urban edges.'*

*'The locally distinctive limestone in this part of the area is Forest Marble and Cornbrash which is widely used across this area and contributes to the character of the villages, other buildings and structures such as walls.'*

**Landscape Sensitivity:**

- 6.7 The landscape is large scale with a negligible level of containment. Medium to large fields gently roll across the elevated area with a robust structure of hedges lining roads, and with pockets of woodland planting interspersed across the landscape. The landscape contains a lack of detracting features and major infrastructure are generally not present in the local area. Farm buildings and clusters and groups of houses can be seen across the landscape, often on elevated land with long range views across the countryside.
- 6.8 Homes within the LCA largely use of local stone and reflect local design characteristics. In the south of Marnhull, existing residential development is a combination of older stone homes and more modern homes predominantly constructed from bricks with clay tile pitched roofs, diluting the historic character of the area to some extent.
- 6.9 The North Dorset Limestone Ridges Landscape receptor appears to be fairly intact and is judged to be in **medium** condition with some landscape elements remaining intact and in good repair. Some buildings are in local vernacular and materials and some detracting elements are evident (Appendix 1, Table 1). The relative value attached to this Landscape receptor, based on Table 3 of Natural England's "Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, 2011" is **medium to low**, at a regional scale of value, with medium importance and rarity and some potential for substitution.
- 6.10 The proposed development would fit into the southern edge of the village between Chippel Lane, the B3092 and existing homes in the north. The landscape features impacted by the proposals, which would include green spaces, new planting and the retention of a distinctive mature existing tree is judged as low. There is some existing context within the receptor to the type of development proposed and there is judged to be a moderate degree of interaction between landform, topography, vegetation cover, field pattern and built form. Using the criteria for assessment of landscape susceptibility to change from Table 3 - Appendix 1, ability to accept change of the type proposed without undue consequences is judged to be **medium**.
- 6.11 Taking into account judgements about quality, value and susceptibility to change the sensitivity of the landscape, the degree to which the North Dorset Limestone Ridge Character Area can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character is assessed as **medium**.

## Blackmoor Vale LCA

- 6.12 The site is visible from a small area within the Blackmoor Vale LCA (viewpoint 17) which has the following key characteristics:
- A broad expansive clay vale which is tranquil and unified.
  - A unique mosaic of woods, straight hedgerows and grassland fields 'dotted' with distinctive mature hedgerow Oaks.
  - Open views across the undulating to flat pastoral landscape to the chalk escarpment backdrop.
  - Dense network of twisting lanes often with grass verges and sharp double 90° bends.
  - Small hump backed bridges with low stone or brick parapets
  - Many very small villages and hamlets built with locally distinctive materials, such as stone, redbrick, tile and thatch.
  - A network of ditches, streams and brooks which drain into the tributaries of the Stour.
  - Lydlinch Common (an SSSI) and Stock Gaylard Deer Park (an SNCI) are both key locally important features.
- 6.13 The full character area description is shown in Appendix 3. Points of interest to the site include: *'It is an open and expansive landscape with long views particularly to the chalk escarpment which defines its eastern and southern edges'.*
- 'The Vale becomes more undulating at the transition with the Blackmore Rolling Vales and Limestone Ridges character areas.'*
- 'There are also many small copses and plantations scattered across the Vale with groups of trees often associated with the villages and hamlets.'*
- Landscape Sensitivity:**
- 6.14 The Blackmoor Vale landscape surrounds Marnhull at a distance on three sides (Appendix 5, figure 2). The landscape east of the site consists of a large flat expanse of countryside with open views. There are views from the Blackmoor Vale LCA towards the site from the east and from the north to north-east (Viewpoint 17).
- 6.15 Photograph and field analysis has shown that there is a very low level of visual interaction between this LCA and the site, with views of the site hard to come by and, where found, the visual connection is very small in the context of the overall view.
- 6.16 The Blackmore Vale appears to have most landscape elements intact and is in good repair with few detracting elements, leading to a **medium-high** assessment for landscape quality.
- 6.17 The value is assessed as **medium to low** due to the regional scale and undesignated nature of the landscape. The susceptibility of the landscape to accommodate the scale of change proposed is assessed as being **low**. There are many existing references within this receptor the type of development proposed and few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change from the type of development being assessed. Marnhull village, whilst visible from this receptor, it well integrated into the landscape with substantial mature tree cover.
- 6.18 Combining these three judgements, produces a landscape sensitivity of **medium to low**, which results in the Blackmore Vale receptor having a high level of ability to accept the type of development proposed without harm to the special qualities of the Blackmoor Vale landscape character.

## 7.0 Landscape Effects

### Landscape Effects: Site and Immediate Surroundings

- 7.1 The proposal will lead to a change to the land use of the site from arable field to residential development with associated roads, public green space, landscape planting and play. The site layout would respond to its setting and maintain important local views of St Gregory's church tower.
- 7.2 The masterplan responds to the site landscape and visual constraints with a green landscape space at the site entrance from Butts Close which may include tree planting. This amenity green space would offset the proposed new buildings from the north-west corner of the site, helping to maintain the green outlook of homes located in the southern conservation area on New Street (Viewpoint 1) and those closer to the site on Butts Close itself.
- 7.3 Homes on Butts Close and the south of New Street will overlook the proposed development (viewpoints 2, 3, 7) and experience a changed outlook. Visual effects on nearby residential properties will be examined as a specific visual receptor in the next section.
- 7.4 In the north-east corner of the site, generous green landscape space and play would help to maintain the amenity of the Grade II listed buildings and provide a soft buffer in this location. The retention of the large mature tree half way down the site in the east and setting it within a buffer of green space, which could extend around the south edge of the site including a drainage attenuation basin and tree planting, would help create a soft transition to the development with the B3092 Schoolhouse Lane.
- 7.5 Due to the proposed development, the baseline situation of the site will be noticeably changed and lead to a **large** magnitude of change. The duration of this change is **permanent** with the extent judged to be **localised**, effecting the site and nearby surroundings. This will also reduce as proposed planting on site matures, helping the development integrate into the landscape.
- 7.6 The magnitude of effect is assessed as **high**, due to the major alteration to key elements of the site, so that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally changed. Combined with the **medium** landscape sensitivity assessment, this would lead to an overall significance of effect of **major-moderate adverse**, however the proposals will be seen in the context of existing nearby dwellings of a similar scale to the proposals and the key landscape features of the site, the boundary hedges and significant mature tree will both be retained.

### Landscape Effects: North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA

- 7.7 The development proposals will have a small effect on the North Dorset Limestone Ridges character area. The proposed development could include a green infrastructure strategy with potentially, enhanced hedgerow planting, tree planting, mature tree retention and viewing corridors for the locally recognised historic church tower. The development would also deliver play space and above ground sustainable drainage provision.
- 7.8 The visibility of the site has been observed to be mostly fairly local to the site, with most views constrained to within 1km of the site aside from directly east, where longer distance views may be glimpsed (viewpoint 17).

- 7.9 Other characteristics of the North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA include ‘*elevated open plateau areas of undulating farmland landscape*’.
- 7.10 Overall, taking into account the location, adjacent to the built edge of Marnhull, and scale of the proposals the scale of any adverse effects would be very small and the LCA will not be noticeably changed, resulting in a **negligible** scale of effect.
- 7.11 The duration of this change would be **permanent** with **limited** extent, due to the small visual connection with the surrounding area beyond 1km away from the site, thereby effecting a small part of the receptor area.
- 7.12 Combining the scale, duration and extent of effect leads to a magnitude of effect assessed as **negligible**. Combined with the **medium to low** landscape sensitivity assessment, this would lead to an overall significance of effect of **minimal neutral**.

#### Landscape Effects: Blackmoor Vale LCA

- 7.13 The Blackmoor Vale Character Area is described as a tranquil and unified landscape, with open views across the undulating landscape and a dense network of twisting lanes. Viewpoint 17 shows that the visual connectivity from the character area to the site is very low, due to the distance and scale of the proposals as seen from within LCA.
- 7.14 The assessment of predicted landscape effect on the Blackmoor Vale Character Area from the proposed development produced a **negligible** scale of effect. The duration of change would be **permanent** and the extent is assessed as **limited**. This results in a magnitude of effect on the special characteristics of this character area as **negligible**. Combined with the **medium to low** landscape sensitivity assessment, this would lead to an overall significance of effect of **minimal neutral**.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Landscape Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect	Overall effect
Site	Medium	High	Major-moderate adverse
North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA	Medium/low	Negligible	Minimal neutral
Blackmore Vale LCA	Medium/low	Negligible	Minimal neutral

## 8.0 Visual Baseline and Effects

- 8.1 Approximate theoretical visibility was calculated within the study area using LiDAR data and based on the estimated heights of the proposed development. See Appendix 5, figure 3. A number of viewpoint locations were assessed based on this information. Publicly accessible land with predicted visibility was visited during the fieldwork stage of the project. Viewpoint photographs are included in Appendix 4.

### Nearby residential properties - Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8

- 8.2 This collection of viewpoints represents nearby residential properties including homes on Butts Close and New Street, including the bottom edge of Marnhull's southern conservation area. Viewpoint 1 is looking south towards the site from New Street, approximately 75m away and shows existing homes at the entrance to Butts Close with the field gate entrance to the site central to the view. This would become the new a road entrance to the proposed development.
- 8.3 Bungalows and two-storey homes in Butts Close currently have direct views into the site and beyond (viewpoints 2 and 7). Patchy vegetation and low boundary fences create a sense of open connection.
- 8.4 Homes on New Street, further east (viewpoints 3 and 8) have less of an open connection to the site. Existing trees, denser hedgerows and larger gardens to the properties all play their part. Homes to the east have more than one storey, offering views into and across the site from upstairs rooms (viewpoints 8).
- 8.5 Proposed site design could include trees and public green space around the northern site entrance, which would pull the built development away from this edge. Further east, proposed rear gardens could back onto existing rear gardens of properties on New Street, and in the north easternmost corner a potential area of green open space and play could create a soft transition between the new development and homes accessed from New Street that are close to the site boundary, helping to preserve their amenity and setting.
- 8.6 The proposals would create a large change to these visual receptors, although site design should be employed to minimise any effects. Their sensitivity to visual change is of the king proposed is assessed to be **high** (Table 4, Appendix 1).
- 8.7 The assessment of the predicted visual effect is found by combining scale of effect with duration and extent. The scale of the effect is judged to be **large**, due to a major change to key elements and characteristics (Table 5, Appendix 1). The duration is **permanent** and the extent of effect is **limited**.
- 8.8 Combining the scale, duration and extent provides a magnitude of effect of **medium**.

### Walkers on public footpath across site - Viewpoints 7 & 22

- 8.9 Running across the site from north to south is the public footpath N47/28. A shorter footpath, N47/29, also connects Chippel Lane to Butts Close in the north-west corner of the site. Viewpoints 7 and 22 represent views from walkers using footpaths within the site.
- 8.10 At the time of photography the arable field had been recently cut, offering clear views northwards of two storey homes and bungalows on Butts Close from walkers travelling north. Looking south, walkers leaving Marnhull would experience views

across the field and beyond to the wider countryside. A couple of stone built houses situated off of Schoolhouse Lane are visible.

- 8.11 Users of this footpath would expect their views to change as the arable field is developed. Travelling north, users would be enveloped by new homes sooner than they would experience today as they enter Marnhull. Travelling south, users would be within residential development for a longer distance as they walked south from Marnhull towards the countryside beyond, however footpath onward connectivity to the south is not very good. The sensitivity to visual change for this receptor is assessed to be **medium**.
- 8.12 The scale of the visual effect is judged as **large** as there would be a major alteration to key features and characteristics of the landscape for users. Proposed green spaces and tree planting within the new development would mature over time, softening the new residential homes into the landscape, however the change to views would be **permanent** and the extent of effect is **localised**. Combining the scale, duration and extent using Figure 1 (Appendix 1) results in a **high** magnitude of effect.

#### Road users west of the site - Viewpoint 6

- 8.13 Viewpoint 6 represents road users west of the site. The road is narrow with a mature established mixed native hedge between it and the site, hiding views into the site. The southern part of the road also has mature hedgerow trees within it. During winter or after hedgerow management, there would be more visibility into the site. Road users would be largely concentrating on the narrow road and with elements of built development seen along this road already, the sensitivity is assessed as **low**.
- 8.14 The scale of visual effect resulting from the proposals is judged as **small**, with a **permanent** duration and **localised** extent. Combining scale, duration and extent results in a **low** magnitude of effect.

#### Road users east of the site - Viewpoint 10

- 8.15 Viewpoint 10 represents road users on the B3092, Schoolhouse Lane. The two lane road is currently a 40mph zone as it approaches Marnhull with mature hedgerows on both sides of the road. The church tower of St Gregory's is visible above the hedge on the right side of the road when travelling north, as is the mature tree half way down the site on the opposite side of the hedge. There is no visibility of the site currently, but the proposals would add a new vehicle entrance along this edge which would create change, and there would be some visibility of new houses along this edge.
- 8.16 During winter or after hedgerow management, there would be more visibility into the site. Removal of a section of hedge to create a new vehicle entrance would cause a change to the view, however users would be concentrating on the road which is on the edge of a village so built development is to be expected. Combining these points together would provide a sensitivity for this receptor to the change proposed as **low**.
- 8.17 The scale of effect would be **medium**, as a new entrance along this road would result in alteration of key elements and a noticeable change. The change would be **permanent** with **localised** extent. Combining the scale, duration and extent using Figure 1 (Appendix 1) provides a **medium** magnitude of effect.

#### Road users south of the site - Viewpoint 9

- 8.18 Viewpoint 9 represents road users on the B3092 who are approaching Marnhull from the south. There is currently a field gate which offers views into the site and a view of

St Gregory's church tower. This is a local landmark and any proposed development should aim to retain key views such as these in order to keep the sense of arrival when travelling towards the village. Road users are approaching a bend and will therefore be concentrating on the road, however this sight line is an important one for the southern Marnhull approach, so the sensitivity of this receptor is assessed as **medium**.

- 8.19 The proposed development could include a visual corridor without homes to preserve this view of the church tower. Proposed homes and roofs would be seen to each side of the visual link above the existing hedges, especially during winter months. The scale of effect of proposed development which could include a green open space corridor maintaining this visual link would be **medium**. The change would be **permanent** with **limited** extent. Combining the scale, duration and extent using Figure 1 (Appendix 1) results in a **low** magnitude of effect.

#### Road users and nearby residential properties along New Street - Viewpoints 1 and 4

- 8.20 These viewpoints represent road users and nearby residential properties along New Street which don't back onto site. Looking directly down Butts Close (Viewpoint 1) there is a small part of the site visible, flanked both sides by existing built development. An area of green open space located at this site entrance would largely maintain the status quo of this view, with new tree planting softening any views of the proposed development beyond. Aside from this view, further along New Street (Viewpoint 4), there are no clear views into the site. There may be glimpsed views of the proposed development seen between existing homes along New Street, however the scale of change to these views which already look out upon homes on the south of New Street would be **small**. Using Table 4 (Appendix 1) the susceptibility to change is **high**. The change would be **permanent** but with **limited** extent. Combining the scale, duration and extent using Figure 1 (Appendix 1) results in a **negligible** magnitude of effect.

#### Walkers on public footpath west of site and nearby properties - Viewpoint 5

- 8.21 Viewpoint 5 represents walkers on public footpath N47/22 and nearby properties east of the site. This receptor is classed as having **high** sensitivity to visual change. There are views into a large portion of the site from here, above the hedgerow boundary which runs along Chippel Lane. Existing homes in Butts Close and homes on New Street backing onto the site can be clearly seen, as can the church tower. The site forms a reasonable size part of the view and the proposals would be visible from here, seen above the hedgerow. The proposals would be in character with the existing homes seen from this location and scale of effect to this receptor is assessed as **medium**, as the characteristics of the view would be partially changed and would result in a noticeable change. These changes would be **permanent** in duration and a **limited** extent. The magnitude of effect that results is **medium**.

#### Walkers on the Stour Valley Way west of the site - Viewpoint 5

- 8.22 Viewpoint 12 represents walkers using the Stour Valley Way footpath to the west of the site. The views will be seen by users who are walking through the edge of the village either coming into the village or leaving for the countryside. The sensitivity of this receptor is classed as **medium**, as the area is users will be surrounded by existing homes and built development rather than solely within the countryside.
- 8.23 The site forms a small part of the view with existing homes, barns, vehicles and caravans dotted throughout. St Gregory's church can be seen in the distance, however

it is not the main focus of the view. The proposed development would lead to new one and two storey homes being seen on the site between existing hedgerows, existing development and the church tower. The scale of change is classed as **medium**, with **permanent** duration. The extent of this change would be **limited** to the local area. Combining these results leads to a **low** magnitude of effect.

#### **Walkers on the Hardy Way - Viewpoint 11**

- 8.24 Viewpoint 11 represents users of the Hardy Way long distance footpath west of the site. The path lies on the outskirts of Marnhull, and at this point is a concrete road, shared by farm access, with farm buildings to the north. There are views to the west across a grass field towards the site which can be seen beyond hedgerows on Schoolhouse Lane. A couple of existing homes can be seen this side of the hedges and further properties can be seen in the distance, beyond the site.
- 8.25 The site itself forms a small part of the view of users experience as they enter the edge of Marnhull with its associated buildings. The sensitivity is classed as **medium**. The proposed development would be visible, seen in the context of existing built development but softened into the landscape by existing mature hedgerows and trees which would remain. The scale of change is assessed as **medium**, with a **permanent** duration. The extent is **limited** to this receptor area. Combining these variables, results in a **low** magnitude of effect.

#### **Walkers on footpaths in the centre of Marnhull & nearby properties - Viewpoint 13**

- 8.26 Viewpoint 13 represents walkers on footpaths and properties in the centre of Marnhull looking south towards the site. Although walkers would be within arable fields, these are surrounded by existing homes and the sensitivity is classed as **medium**. The development is not visible from this location due to topography and existing trees, hedges and buildings, therefore the scale of change is **none**, which leads to a **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

#### **Road users on Eastwell Lane - Viewpoint 14**

- 8.27 Viewpoint 14 represents users of Eastwell Lane approximately 1.28km from the site in the east. The viewpoint is looking through a field gate offering the best possible views towards the site from the location, although the majority of the road is bounded by mature hedgerows which restrict views. Road users' main focus will be on other things rather than the long distance views, although when travelling through the landscape would expect a rural outlook. The sensitivity to change of the type proposed is assessed as **medium**.
- 8.28 The site is barely visible from this receptor, with a tiny glimpse of the site seen surrounded by existing homes in front of and beyond it. The overall sense of the view is a rural landscape with blocks of woodland and distant homes dotted across the distant landscape signifying the arrival of Marnhull. Proposed homes would be seen in the context of existing built development, and their roofs in particular would be seen, but again as part of the existing village. The scale of change to the visual character of this receptor is **negligible**, with **permanent** duration and **limited** extent. Combined, this would result in a **negligible** magnitude of effect.

#### **Walkers on the Stour Valley Way south of the site - Viewpoint 15**

- 8.29 Viewpoint 15 represents walkers on the Stour Valley Way long distance footpath south of the site, which the ZTV analysis suggests may have visibility of the site. This receptor is located in the countryside surrounded by fields and small blocks of

woodland, which creates a tranquil setting. There are some farm buildings dotted around, but there is a sense of quiet. The sensitivity of this receptor is **high**, however site visits have shown no visibility of the site or any of Marnhull due to vegetation, therefore the scale of change from the proposals will be **none**, leading to **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

#### **Walkers on footpaths west of site and nearby properties - Viewpoint 16**

- 8.30 Viewpoint 16 represents walkers on footpath N47/12 and nearby properties including some Grade II listed buildings. The sensitivity to change in the view is valued **high**, based on table 4 (Appendix 1). The foreground to the view is an arable field with the roofs of existing homes within Marnhull visible in the middle distance beyond the field hedge. The hedgerow and a number of mature trees limit longer distance views on the right of the houses. The site is located beyond these trees and intervening arable fields with no visibility, therefore the scale of change resulting from the development is **none**, leading to **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

#### **Walkers on footpaths east of site and nearby listed building - Viewpoint 17**

- 8.31 Viewpoint 17 represents walkers on footpath N47/56 to the east of the site and the nearby Grade II listed Thornton farmhouse. This receptor is located approximately 2.35km away from the site and due to the receptor type the sensitivity is classed as **high**. The photographic viewpoint shows a wide open expanse of farming countryside with large fields bounded by hedgerows and clumps of woodland. In the distance several buildings in Marnhull can just be spotted, in particular the church tower. The location of the site is very difficult to perceive with some roofs of existing homes in the locality of the site visible amongst trees and hedgerows. The proposed development would not make any perceptible change to this view, therefore the scale of change is assessed as **none**, leading to **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

#### **Walkers on footpaths south of the site - Viewpoint 18**

- 8.32 Viewpoint 18 represents walkers on footpaths within the countryside approximately 2km south of the site. The setting is rural with arable fields and blocks of woodland with users on the footpaths for recreation experiencing a high level of tranquillity only interrupted by farm buildings and their working activities. The sensitivity to change from this receptor is classed as **high**. Due to crops, field boundaries and mature trees there is no visibility of the site. Some buildings on the southern edge of Marnhull can be seen in the distance, however these make up a very small portion of the view and don't impact upon the character or the tranquillity. The scale of change predicted upon this receptor is **none**, leading to **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

#### **Listed buildings in Hinton St Mary - Viewpoints 19 & 20**

- 8.33 These viewpoints represent Grade II listed buildings within Hinton St Mary approximately 2km south of the site. The scale of sensitivity is classed as **high** in accordance with table 4 (Appendix 1). The views are on the northern edge of Hinton St Mary village looking north across open countryside consisting of arable fields with hedgerow boundaries. There is a small woodland blocking long distance views. The photographic image (Appendix 4) demonstrates no visibility from this location, being out of sight behind intervening trees. Therefore the scale of change resulting from the development is **none**, which leads to a value of **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

## Scheduled Ancient Monument - Viewpoint 21

8.34 Viewpoint 21 represents the only scheduled ancient monument within the 3km study area, which is the remains of a Roman building at the junction of Wood Lane and the B3092 road. The sensitivity to change of this receptor is classed as **high**. The site is not visible from this location due to the topography of the land, therefore the scale of change is **none**, which leads to **no change** result for magnitude of effect.

Table 2: Summary of Potential Visual Effects

Receptor (Viewpoint)	Sensitivity	Magnitude of effect	Overall effect
Nearby residential properties (1, 2, 3, 7, 8)	High	Medium	Major-moderate adverse
Walkers on public footpath across site (7, 27)	Medium	High	Major-moderate adverse
Road users west of site (6)	Low	Low	Slight adverse
Road users east of site (10)	Low	Medium	Slight adverse
Road users south of site (9)	Medium	Low	Slight adverse
Road users and nearby residential properties along New Street that don't back onto site (1, 4)	High	Negligible	Minimal
Walkers on public footpath west of site and nearby properties (5)	High	Medium	Major-moderate adverse
Walkers on the Stour Valley Way west of site (12)	Medium	Low	Slight adverse
Walkers on the Hardy Way (11)	Medium	Low	Slight adverse
Walkers on footpaths in the centre of Marnhull and nearby properties (13)	Medium	No change	No change
Road users on Eastwell Lane (14)	Medium	Negligible	Minimal
Walkers on the Stour Valley Way south of the site (15)	High	No change	No change
Walkers on footpaths west of the site and nearby properties (16)	High	No change	No change
Walkers on footpaths east of the site and nearby listed building (17)	High	No change	No change
Walkers on footpaths south of the site (18)	High	No change	No change
Listed buildings in Hinton St Mary (19, 20)	High	No change	No change
Scheduled Ancient Monument (21)	High	No change	No change

## 9.0 Conclusion and Assessment of Potential Significance

- 9.1 Following desk analysis and subsequent field work, the level of visibility of the development site within the study area has been seen to be constrained to the immediate site and surrounding area within approximately 0.5km and filtered views from a wider area to the east-south-east (Viewpoint 17).
- 9.2 Mitigation has been incorporated into the proposed layout and landscape design which will help preserve visual and landscape amenity, key views of the church tower and incorporate the proposals into the landscape setting. Tree planting and green space around the site entrance at Butts Close will help to minimise any adverse change to views resulting from the proposed development as seen from the conservation area (Viewpoint 1).
- 9.3 Two green corridors across the site, which would not include any buildings, will preserve local views of St Gregory's church tower from the west and from road users approaching Marnhull from the south on the B3092. The north east corner of the site, which lies closest to several Grade II listed properties and abuts the southern Marnhull Conservation Area, will include an area of green space and tree planting which would offset the built development and minimise the visual change between listed buildings, the conservation area and the new development.
- 9.4 Further mitigation includes retention of existing hedgerows, provision of a green buffer wrapping around the east, south and west of the site and a sustainable drainage attenuation basin in the south of the site within green space where the existing public footpath connects through the site.

### **Landscape receptors**

- 9.5 Within the site the development is predicted to result in a major-moderate adverse change to the landscape, due to the large permanent change from open field into built development. Proposed tree planting and green infrastructure to include above ground attenuation, and an offset of the built development from the existing mature hedgerows will protect landscape assets and help to improve the ecological diversity of the site. Key landscape features of the site are the boundary hedges and significant mature tree, which would be retained.
- 9.6 Other landscape effects are predicted to be minimal adverse. Effects are irreversible and will result in small levels of change to some perceptual aspects of the local landscapes. Effects will not be widespread, noticeable in only a few locations within a localised area extending into the countryside around 0.5km to the south and west, and up to about 2.5km in the east.

### **Visual receptors**

- 9.7 Visual receptors close to the site will experience a high change to their view. However, careful layout and site design which includes the use of tree planting and green spaces could reduce any adverse impact. The proposed development will adjoin existing properties on Butts Close and along New Street, and would be of a similar scale to the local character.
- 9.8 Adverse visual effects are likely to be experienced by nearby residential properties, walkers on footpaths across the site and walkers on public footpaths west of the site. The site and its context has a strong visual interaction with existing properties on Butts Close and other dwellings along the south of Marnhull. These receptors therefore already experience similar scale buildings, and the new proposals would be

viewed as an extension to this existing built form, limiting the perceived change in views of the site.

- 9.9 Slight adverse effects are predicted for road users east, west and south of the site and walkers on the Stour Way and Hardy Way passing close by the site. For road users and walkers approaching the village the development would result in a change to their perception of the village edge. Good design should ensure that new buildings fit with the local character and compliment the architecture of Marnhull. Minimal change would be experienced by road users along New Street and nearby residential properties and road users on Eastwell Lane.
- 9.10 All remaining visual receptors have been assessed to experience no change, either due to no visual connection or limited, glimpsed views of the site from a long distance away. In these views the proposed development will be seen against the backdrop of Marnhull, with the changes to the overall view small scale and forming a sufficiently small part of the overall landscape to be unobtrusive and not change the visual character.

### **Conclusion**

- 9.11 Overall, the visual envelope has been assessed to be limited to an area within approximately 0.5km from the site in the south and west, and up to about 2.5km in the east.
- 9.12 There are predicted to be no further significant visual negative effects from further afield. Significant adverse effects are limited to the immediate context of the site only, experienced by footpath users and nearby residents.
- 9.13 Landscape effects upon the district character areas would be minimal and a well-designed green infrastructure plan will help to enhance the biodiversity of the site and landscape value despite the anticipated negative landscape effects at a site level due to the new built form.