

Application details

Ref: P/OUT/2023/02644	Applicant: Mr P Crocker	Case Officer: Ross Cahalane
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Address: Land west of Church Hill, and Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull
Description: Hybrid planning application consisting of: Full planning permission for a mixed-use development to erect a food store with cafe, plus office space and 2 No. flats above. Erect building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet). Form vehicular and pedestrian accesses and parking. Form parking area for St. Gregory's Church and St Gregory's Primary School. Carry out landscaping works and associated engineering operations. (Demolish redundant agricultural buildings). Land west of Church Hill. Outline planning permission (to determine access) to erect up to 120 dwellings. Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane.
Case Officer comments to Consultee:
Consultee: Helen Lilley CMLI, Senior Landscape Architect
Date: 13 September 2023
Has a Pre-application discussion taken place with you?: Various

Support	
Support subject to condition(s)	
Unable to support	
No objection	
Request for further information	✓
Other	

Summary

The proposals are extensive, and will impact on the character of Marnhull and its setting, especially when considered in combination with other planned development in the village.

Policy 4 of the North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP) requires developers to clearly demonstrate that that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated. Although the proposals include measures to preserve important views to the St. Gregory's Church tower and the Conservation Area (CA) and to enhance the development, the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) do not clearly demonstrate how effective these will be in mitigating wider impact on the character of the settlement and its landscape setting. The cumulative impact of the proposals in association with other planned development is also not appropriately assessed.

As such, I do not consider that the application can be determined/the planning balance adequately addressed until further information is provided as follows:

- A cumulative impact assessment of the proposal in combination with the proposed developments to the north and east of the settlement (planning application numbers 2/2018/1808/OUT, 2/2018/1124/OUT and P/OUT/2023/00627) which takes account of cumulative landscape and visual effects, including sequential effects along the Hardy Way and Stour Valley Way.
- Type 4 visualisations, prepared in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals and which provide the same level of design detail as the submitted information (showing the location, size, degree of visibility and form of the development) at 0, 3, 10 and 20 years to illustrate the effectiveness of mitigation, including the rate of maturation of the proposed mitigation planting.
- Design details for the SuDS features.
- Detail of any further mitigation planting that may be required, including any identified in a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan. This should be incorporated into the planting plans, along with an outline of future maintenance/management arrangements, and details of any engineered tree pits that may be required.

Site description/context/significance

Site description

As described in the submitted LVIA's.

Landscape setting

The historic village of Marnhull was first formally recorded in 1150 in the listings of the Abbot of Glastonbury. It is surrounded by undulating mixed pasture and arable farmland, characterised by hedgerow boundaries with many mature trees which integrate the settlement into the landscape. Despite its size, the village retains strong rural perceptual qualities with high levels of tranquillity. The surrounding network of minor rural lanes which have not been significantly altered by modern development also contributes to the rural character of the village

The pattern of settlement is predominantly historic ribbon development along the two main routes of the village (Musbury Lane/Burton Street/Pilwell/Sodom Lane and New Street/Crown Road/Salisbury Street) and the conservation area is split into two areas one on each of these routes. There is C20th infill housing between the two main routes predominantly to the east of the conservation areas between Crown Road and Sodom Lane. The two main routes converge at the eastern edge of the village, and they form the northern and southern boundaries to the site.

The site is located on the upper ridge of the Blackmoor Vale. The tower of the Grade I Listed St Gregory's Church is a landmark feature on the skyline when looking towards the village and may be seen in conjunction with the site when viewed from Rights of Way to the south and east.

A strong network of Public Rights of Way (PROWs) surrounds the village, allowing appreciation of the landscape. These include parts of the Hardy Way and Stour Valley Way long distance recreational routes. The Hardy Way runs along the eastern boundary of the Church Hill site, and the Stour Valley Way runs along the southern boundary of the site boundary of the Butts Close site. PROWs N47/30 and 31 run through the Church Hill site, and N47/28 and 29 run through the Butts Close site.

Part of the northern extent of the Butts Close site adjoins, and part of the southern extent of the Church Hill site is in/adjoins the Marnhull Conservation Area.

Landscape character

Although this part of the Blackmore Vale is not in the AONB it is picturesque and has many cultural associations. The site is in the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour National Character Area (NCA). The NCA Profile indicates that tranquillity is an important part of the character of the landscape (page 23 under Experiential Qualities – Tranquillity and page 44). Although the proposed development is not of a scale that would present a threat to the character of the landscape at this national scale, it is important to note the Profile draws attention threats to character and tranquillity which include housing allocations and employment sites (page 28 under Drivers of Change).

In the North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment 2008 the site is identified as being in the North Dorset Limestone Ridges Landscape Character Area, with the landscape type being Limestone Hills. The assessment describes Marnhull in particular as having poorly integrated urban edges. The Dorset Landscape Character Assessment provides further detail on the key characteristics of the Limestone Hills Landscape Character Type, and is perhaps the more useful document to reference as it also provides key land management guidance intended to maintain and improve landscape character and inform development proposals – the following being the most relevant to the proposals:

- **Conserve and enhance the varied settlement pattern of the different limestone villages** and their relationship with the associated surrounding copses/woodlands.
- **Maintain the undeveloped character the area** e.g. by resisting intrusive developments on sensitive and exposed hillside locations.

Landscape sensitivity

The Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset - Assessment of Land Surrounding the Larger Villages (report prepared for Dorset Council by LUC October 2019) includes the following key landscape sensitivities:

- The topography to the north and west of Marnhull is steeply sloping and associated with the winding valley of the River Stour. To the south and east the landform is gently undulating, with some areas carved by the small valleys of minor watercourses.
- Pockets and copses of broadleaved woodland (including BAP priority habitat deciduous woodlands) located around the village providing an important landscape and ecological resource. **A strong network of hedgerows with mature trees is also characteristic of the landscape surrounding Marnhull.**

- **Existing settlement is low density and is laid out in a distinctive and historic linear settlement pattern.** There has been significant linear infilling between the two sections of the conservation area, **new development may lead to further development along connecting lanes or the loss of the linear settlement pattern of the village.**
- Views towards the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB to the east from elevated ground. Slopes adjacent to the valley of the River Stour are visually prominent from the opposing valley sides.
- Looking outward from the village are mostly undeveloped, wooded skylines with long-reaching views. **The tower of the grade I listed St Gregory's Church is a landmark feature on the skyline when looking towards the village and is visible from most directions.**
- Despite its size, the village retains **strong rural perceptual qualities with high levels of tranquillity.** The surrounding network of minor rural lanes which have not been significantly altered by modern development also contributes to the rural character of the village.
- **A strong network of public rights of way surrounds the village, allowing appreciation of the landscape. These include parts of the Hardy Way and Stour Valley Way long distance recreational routes.**

The Study also includes the following guidance and opportunities for mitigation:

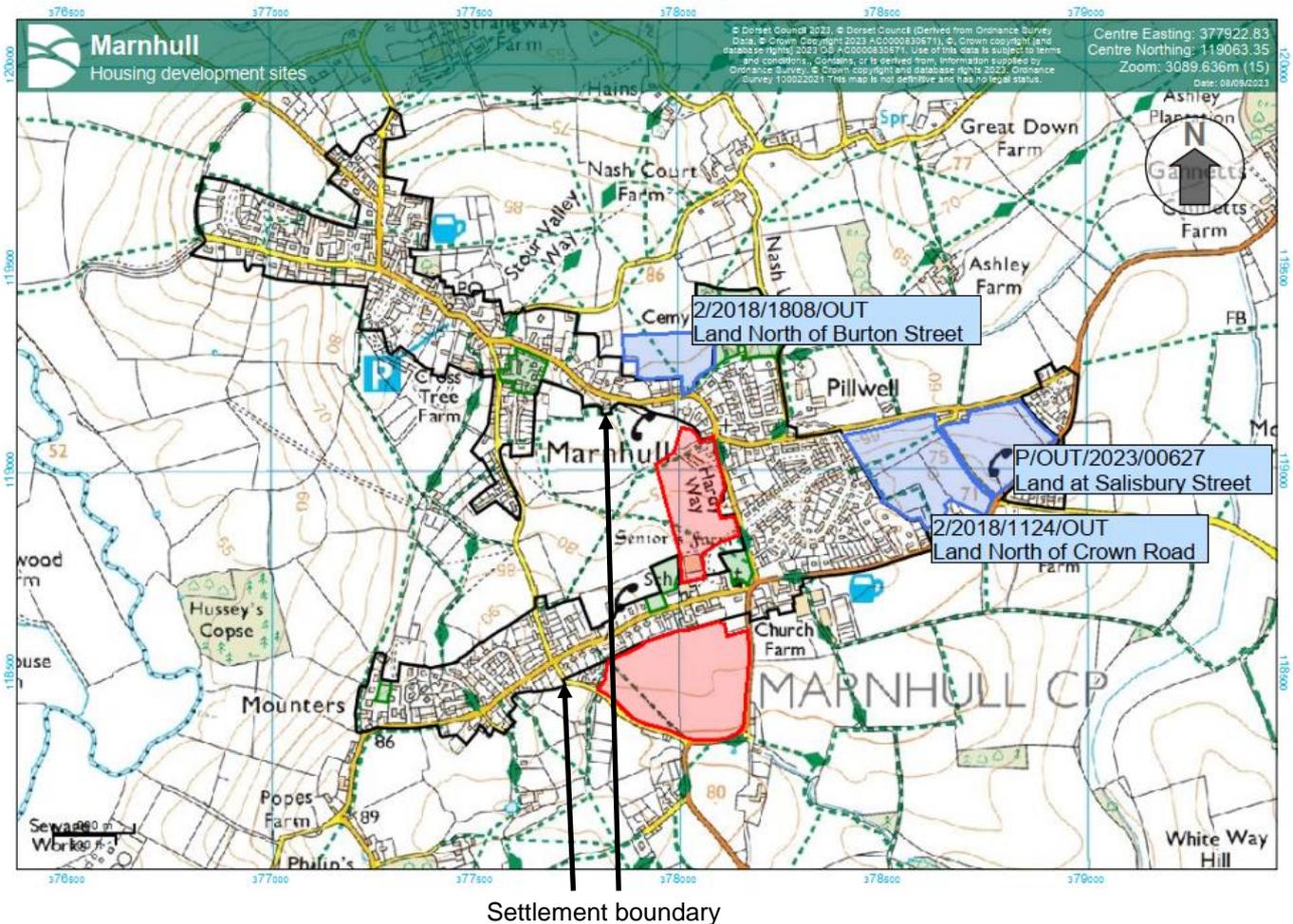
- Avoid siting development in visually prominent locations, including the upper valley slopes of the River Stour. **Proposals should not detract from landmark views, including views to the church tower.**
- Seek to retain BAP priority habitat deciduous woodlands and the strong network of hedgerows with mature trees which forms an important link between areas of semi-natural habitats. **Explore whether these can be enhanced as part of any development proposals.**
- **Ensure that new development is designed to be in keeping with the vernacular, form and density of the existing settlement. All development proposals should include adequate landscaping to screen the development into the landscape.**
- **New development should not result in the loss of public rights of way or detract from views experienced from these locations, particularly the long-distance footpaths of the Hardy Way and Stour Valley Way or views to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Development should not detract from the existing prominent skyline features such as the grade I listed St Gregory's Church.**
- **Retain the overall rural and tranquil character of the surrounding area. Ensure that any required upgrades to the rural road network are sensitively designed by avoiding excessive road widening, signage, lighting etc.**
- **Proposals affecting landscape that retains time-depth and heritage assets e.g. historic hedgerows, pathways, etc., should draw upon these features to help create a sense of place.**
- **Development should preserve or enhance the special interest of Marnhull Conservation Area and others nearby and any elements of their settings that contribute to their significance.** Conservation Area Appraisals delineating their special

interest should be prepared so that potential effects resulting from development may be fully understood and assessed.

- A Local List (and GIS shapefile) of non-designated heritage assets should be compiled to ensure that proposals for development fully assess any potential impact/enhancement to such assets.
- Listed Buildings and non-designated built heritage assets within the assessment area should be retained. **Elements of their setting that contribute to their heritage significance should be preserved or enhanced.**

Main issues

- Both sites comprising the application (outlined in red below) are outside the Settlement Boundary.



- Compliance with NPPF paras 130 and 131 in relation to design and trees.
- Compliance with NPPF paragraph 174 (part b), and NDLP Policy 4 in regard to:
 - Adequate mitigation of landscape and visual impact.
 - Cumulative impact in association with 2/2018/1808/OUT Land North of Burton Street (Outline application for 61 dwellings granted 16/09/2020); P/OUT/2023/00627 Land at Salisbury Street (Outline application for up to 67 dwellings to determine access only, appeal in progress); and 2/2018/1124/OUT Land North of Crown Road (Outline application for 72 dwellings to determine access only, won at appeal 01/07/2022).

The proposal

The current application consists of a hybrid planning application consisting of the following.

- 1) A full application for mixed use development to the east of Church Hill (Tess Square) comprising:
 - A food store.
 - Office space.
 - A café.
 - Mixed-use space for E class uses (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet).
 - 2x2-bed flats.
 - Central parking area with 137 parking spaces.
 - 7 extra spaces in the existing surgery car park.
 - A new parking area with 30 parking spaces for St. Gregory's Church and St Gregory's Primary School.
 - Landscaping and associated engineering operations.

The following are included in the LVIA as mitigation measures:

- Removal of existing group of trees and barn to create yew enclosed garden at the southern end of the site.
- 30 car parking spaces for St Gregory's Church with a drop-off area and traffic free footpath to the school through public green space.
- Visual corridor kept free of built development to preserve views to St Gregory's Church tower and the CA.
- Swales and attenuation basins with permanent ponds to maximise biodiversity and landscape value.
- New tree, native hedgerow and wildflower grass planting in open space to the west of the development.
- New native hedgebank along the western site boundary to restore an historic field boundary and reconnect wider green infrastructure assets.
- Integration of existing PROWs into new green space with benches.
- Buildings located in lower lying, less visible part of the site, close to existing businesses.
- Materials and scale of the development designed to complement the historic buildings.

Building materials include:

- Oak colour timber cladding.
- Oak window and door frames.
- Red brick.
- Rough and smooth cut stone (Marnhull/Bath/Cotswold colour).
- Grey stone plinth.
- Dark grey rainwater goods.
- Grey painted metalwork.

- Grey slate roof tiles.

Hard landscape materials in the car parking areas and round buildings:

- Smooth buff coloured concrete road.
- Buff colour gravel grid parking bays
- Stainless steel bike racks and handrails in car park.
- Natural stone paving and steps (limestone or similar).
- 'Tegula' block paving.
- Cobblestone courtyard
- Light buff porous asphalt paths.
- Gabions with stone fill retaining walls.

Hard landscape materials to the rear of buildings and in open space:

- Golden buff colour self-binding gravel informal paths and steps.
- Cotswold loose gravel surfacing.
- Timber post & rail fencing, gates, handrail and boardwalk.

2) An outline application for up to 120 (1- 2 storey) dwellings at Butts Close with all matters reserved except access.



The LVIA for the Butts Close site indicates that the following mitigation measures will/should be included:

- PROW that runs NW to SE across the site will enter green space with tree planting at the Butts Close entrance, and then be contained in a tree lined street that leads from this to amenity space to the south.
- Two visual corridors through the development will remain free of built form to preserve views of St Gregory's Church tower.
- Amenity space with tree planting and play provision in the north-east of the site to buffer neighbouring Grade II listed properties/CA.
- A green buffer round the southern boundary of the site.
- Tree planting in the green buffer, private gardens, on streets and in parking areas.
- Retention of existing hedges to the site boundaries, managed to create a robust and diverse native hedge with emergent trees.
- Replanting of small lengths of hedges removed for access points/visibility splays.
- Attenuation basin in the south to form a positive landscape feature.

Comments on proposal

2 previous applications relate to part of the Butt Close site:

- Previous application 2/2018/0448/OUT for 58 dwellings was withdrawn because of LPA **concerns over the quantum of development and resulting harmful impact on the landscape and setting of heritage assets.**
- Superseded by application P/OUT/2021/03030 for 39 dwellings which was approved on 02 March 2023. **Conditions were applied to this approval to limit the extent of the development to 39 dwellings and within the parameters identified** (conditions 5 and 18).

The site area and the number of units at the Butts Close site have both significantly increased in the current hybrid application. The proposal also includes significant development on land to the west of Church Hill (the 'Tess Square' site).

Although the application is supported by Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) which are undertaken in accordance with The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition GLVIA3), the visualisations provided in the appendices are annotated viewpoint photographs (Type 1) which illustrate baseline conditions and mark the location of the site only. Para 2.7 each LVIA states that these visualisations have been produced in line with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals (LI TGN 06/19), which recommends a proportionate approach to the complexity of visualisations based upon factors such as the scale and complexity of development proposal, the sensitivity of the receptor and the context for the proposal. It goes on to indicate that as the proposed development is not in a designated landscape of high value Type 1 visualisations are appropriate.

Type 1 visualisations are however the most basic type of visualisation outlined LI TGN 06/19, and are generally only used for Landscape and Visual Appraisals/relatively simple schemes where there is a combination of one or more for the following:

- The location not especially sensitive.
- The proposal is not contrary to Policy.
- The proposal is not likely to be contentious.
- There will be a relatively small magnitude of change.
- Detail of the form and scale of proposal is not available.

There is however a degree of complexity to the proposals and both sites are partly within, or adjacent to the Marnhull Conservation Area which is sensitive to development of the scale any type proposed. The proposals also deviate from the historic linear pattern of development, and there will be a degree of intervisibility with the Conservation Area. In addition to this, the Hardy Way runs along the eastern boundary of the Church Hill site, and the Stour Valley Way runs along the southern boundary of the site boundary of the Butts Close site. Both routes are popular promoted long distance walking routes and are sensitive to the type of development that is proposed. The outlook of the popular PROWS N47/28, 29, 30 and 31 will also be significantly altered where these footpaths run through each site. It is also clear that significant impact is likely to arise as a result of the proposals, and Policy 4 of the NDLP requires developers to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated. Whilst a number of measures have been incorporated into the proposals to preserve important views and enhance the development, it is not clear how effective these will be in mitigating the wider impact on the character of the settlement and its landscape setting.

For the above reasons, and because the proposed development is outside the development boundary and (based on previous applications) is likely to be contentious, I consider that Type 4 visualisations are required. These visualisations should provide the same level of design detail as the submitted information (showing the location, size, degree of visibility and form of the development) at 0, 3, 10 and 20 years to illustrate the effectiveness of mitigation, including the rate of maturation of the proposed mitigation planting.

The visualisations should provide as close a representation of the predicted visual effects as is possible as they will be relied on to explain the effects to non-specialists such as members of the public and councillors. They should also be verifiable, accurate and include a scale bar and clear viewing instructions on each visualisation. Winter photography should be included to illustrate the worst-case scenario when there are no leaves on the vegetation. Where this is not possible, a clear reason of why should be provided within the documents. (NB although outline permission only is being sought for the part of the application relating to Butts Close, much of the detail of the proposed development is known and has been provided in the indicative site plan/sections/street scenes along with the Design and Access Statement, which should allow for the provision of Type 4 visualisations.)

The LVIA's do not consider cumulative impact in any detail, however Marnhull has been the focus of a number of planning applications for large scale (in relation to settlement size) housing development in the last few years, with the applications being at various stages in the planning process. The village is already therefore set to expand significantly, with each

development proposal deviating from the historic linear pattern of development. The current application will impact further on the character and identity of the settlement, and the wider landscape setting will also be significantly impacted by further expansion of the settlement.

As such, I do not consider that the application can be determined and planning balance can be adequately addressed without proper assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects. A cumulative impact assessment of the proposal in combination with the proposed developments to the north and east of the settlement (planning application numbers 2/2018/1808/OUT, 2/2018/1124/OUT and P/OUT/2023/00627) is therefore required. The Type 4 visualisations should also take account of cumulative visual effects including sequential effects along the Hardy Way and the Stour Valley Way.

Hard and soft landscape proposals have been submitted for the site west of Church Hill. These appear to be acceptable on first sight, but the soft landscape proposals may need to be updated to include any planting that is recommended in the Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan once it has been provided. In addition to this, the Type 4 visualisations may reveal that further mitigation planting is required.

I do not intend therefore to provide full comments on the hard and soft landscape proposals at this stage. However, I do note that there may not be enough planting substrate to support healthy growth and maturation of tree planting where trees are to be planted in planting strips within the parking areas. Sufficient un-compacted soil volume must be provided for these trees to thrive - a rough guide to minimum soil volumes is as follows:

- Small tree - 7.5m³
- Small to medium tree - 10m³
- Medium tree 14m³
- Medium to large tree 24m³
- Large tree 31m³

Proprietary engineered tree pit systems such as the GreenBlue Urban ArborSystem (or similar and approved) may also need to be required to ensure that the root zone of the trees is not compacted where it passes beneath hard surfaced areas. Where engineered tree pits are required, further detail of this should be submitted ahead of determination of the application, as have to be assured that all tree planting which enhances the development/mitigates its impact will have the best chance of fulfilling that requirement well into the future (potentially throughout the design-life of the development).

The SuDS features on both sites are also identified as having a mitigatory role, however little evidence for this is provided. For these features to perform this role they need to be carefully designed so that they do not (as is often the case) end up being purely engineered features which actually detract from the setting, and effectively sterilise a part of the open space provision so that it cannot be utilised for informal recreational purposes. I therefore strongly recommend that the detailed design of the SuDS for both sites be worked up with the input of the applicant's Landscape Architect, and that the form of any attenuation basins/ponds is organic to give as naturalistic an appearance as possible. Rainwater harvesting and micro-SuDS such as rain gardens in planting beds/tree planting stations should also be considered so

that surface water is utilised to irrigate the planting, and also so that the amount of surface water that enters the attenuation basins/ponds in anything other than extreme storm situations is reduced. This will also help ensure that a more sustainable approach is taken to both the management of surface water drainage and the establishment/maintenance of the planting.

Where the basins/ponds will hold water permanently, any potential risk to the safety of small children should be designed out as these features look to be located within public open space. Further information on the design of multifunctional SuDS is available in the [Sustainable Drainage Systems Advice Note \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#) and the CIRIA SuDS Manual 2015.

Policy consideration

NPPF

- 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 131:

Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that

the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.

- Paragraph 174:

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

..... (preceded)

- 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;

..... (continues)

North Dorset Local Plan

- Policy 4 -The Natural Environment:

..... (preceded)

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 that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated in to the development scheme.

..... (continues)