
Cuthbury Allotments, Stone Park & Julians Road

Landscape Character Assessment



East Dorset District Council May 2009

Introduction

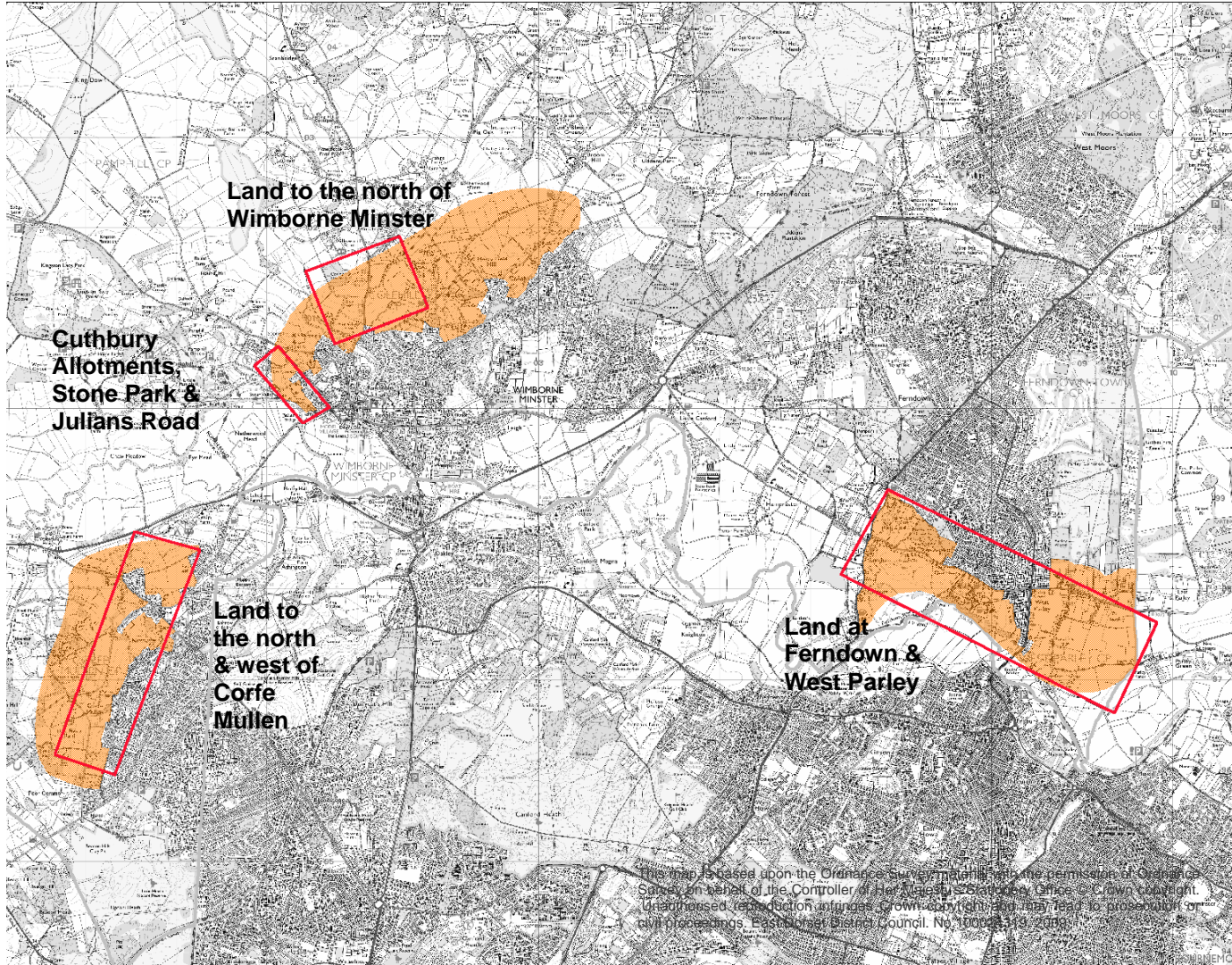
This landscape character assessment is one of four that have been prepared by East Dorset District Council to help to inform the planning process when considering proposals for residential development within the District which have emerged from the Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy (2008) identified three Areas of Search in East Dorset where urban extensions could take place to provide 2.400 new dwellings up until the end of the Plan period (2026). These are to the north and west of Wimborne, north and west of Corfe Mullen and south and east of Ferndown/West Parley (see map to right).

The Council have raised objections to the potential loss of Green Belt land around the existing settlements which would result if the development within the Urban Extensions were to take place (except for a limited area of land to the west of Wimborne) and consider that any development within East Dorset should be largely confined to the existing urban areas.

However, the Council recognises that it needs to fully consider a series of scenarios that could emerge from the delayed RSS process in order to retain control over the future planning of the District and therefore has commissioned Master Planning work to consider the implications of development on the Areas of Search, if this is the final outcome of the RSS process, or to be able to substantiate its objection to them in the interim. This work will be incorporated into the Local Development Framework.

The landscape assessments within each of the Areas of Search therefore provide an evidence base for more specific proposals to be developed for the areas in question. They largely concentrate on areas of land which are least constrained by overwhelming environmental constraints, such as land within the vicinity of lowland heathland which is protected by European legislation or major flood plains, and where there have been expressions of interest in bringing the land forward for development from landowners as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (2009) process.



Key:

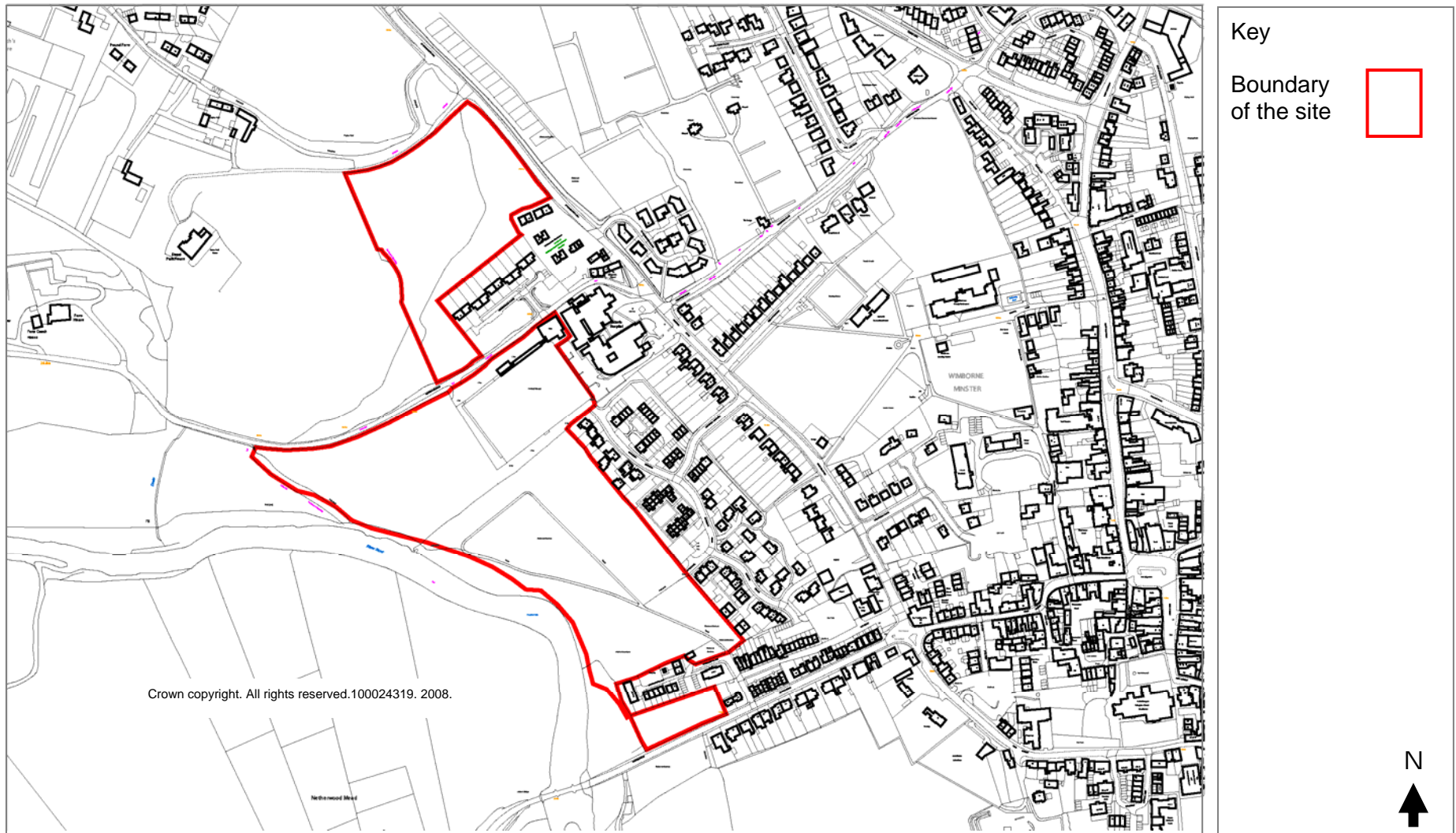
RSS Areas of Search



Landscape Character Assessment Areas



Location Map



Location



There are three component sites, the larger (6.4ha) lies to the west of Cuthbury Gardens at the town's western edge, just to the south of this area is the smallest (0.28ha) sandwiched between Cuthbury Close and Julians Road, the third site (2.42ha) lies to the north of Cowgrove Road and is bounded to the east by St Margarets Hill and to the north by the access road to Stone Park.

Planning Policy

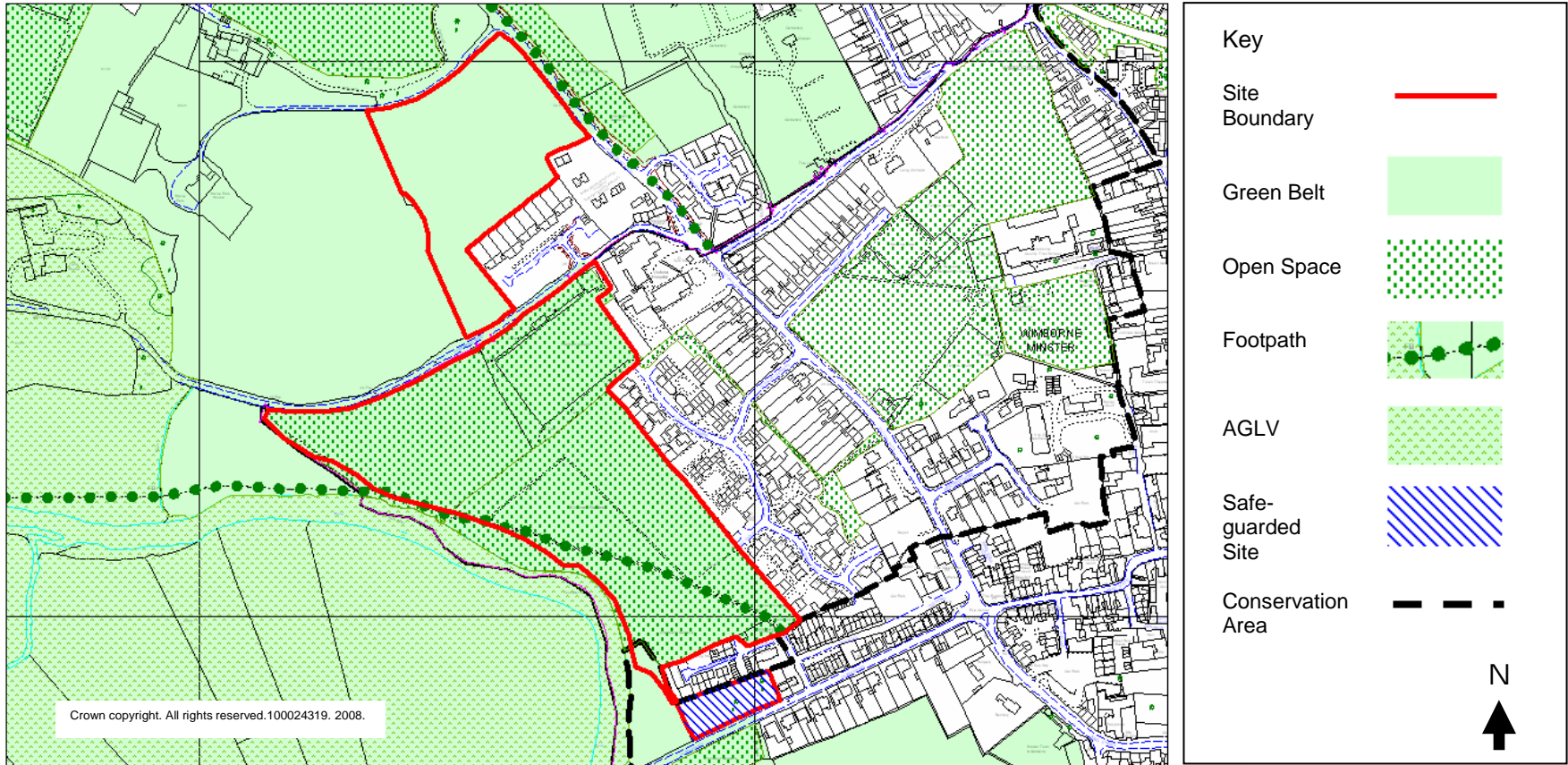
East Dorset Local Plan Policy

The land adjacent to Julians Road was designated as a site safeguarded from development until a review of the local plan is undertaken (Saved Policy ref: HUSUP3), the main part of the site between Cuthbury Gardens and the river is designated as open space (allotments and the football ground) and washed over by green belt, to the north of Cowgrove the land lies within the green belt.

The river valley to the west is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) in the 2002 Local Plan. This particular area is identified as the Stour Valley/Mapperton AGLV and is described in Areas of Great Landscape Value Supplementary Planning Guidance No 19 (June 1997).

The smaller of the sites and part of the adjacent large site lie within the boundary of the Wimborne Minster Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal (SPG No.15) notes the importance of the boundary vegetation of the site in the street scene views along Julians Road.

In the preamble to Policies for Wimborne the Local Plan notes that: *'The open land of the Stour floodplain and its valley surrounds the town to the south and west and has helped to limit its expansion and to maintain its sharply defined boundaries with the open country.'*



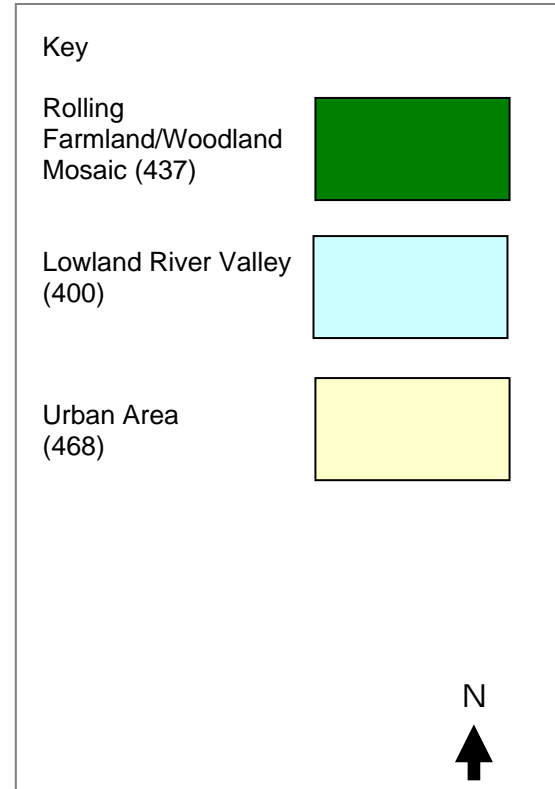
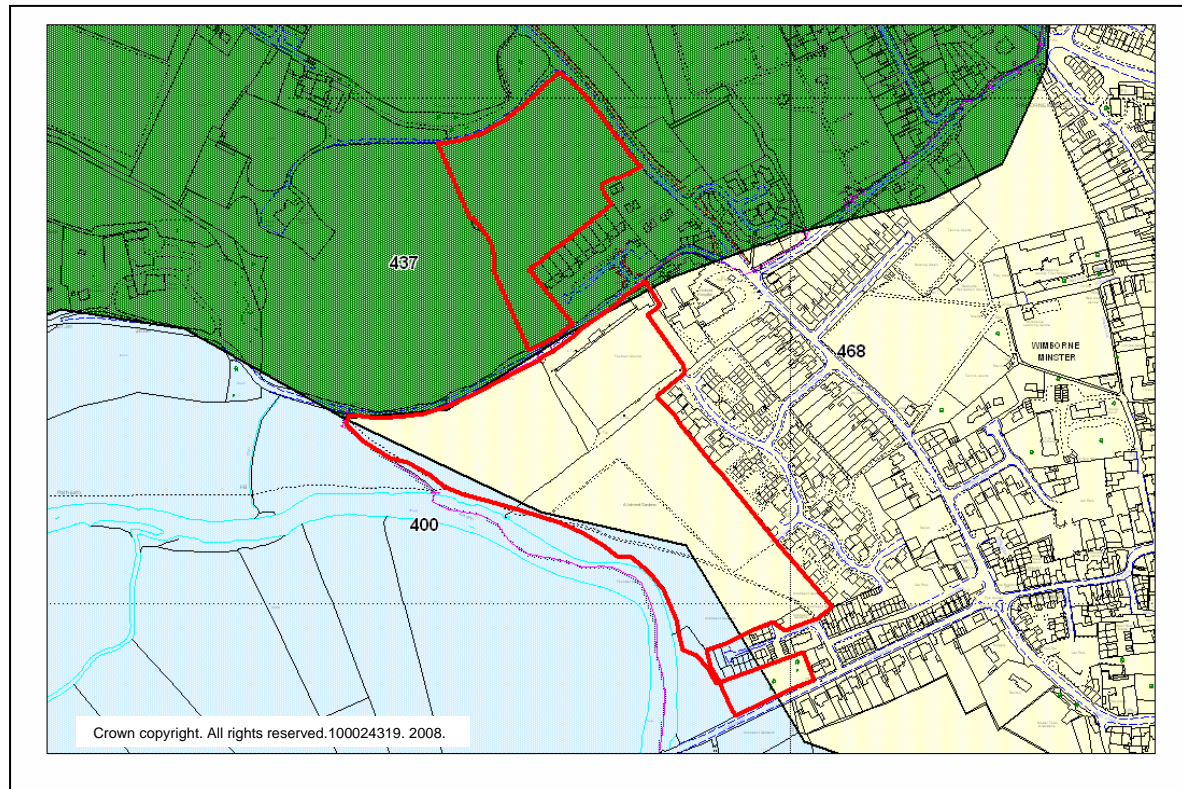
Extract from Local Plan Map 2002

Landscape Context

Landscape Type: Lowland River Valley & Rolling farmland/woodland mosaic

Landscape Description Unit No: 400 & 437 & 468

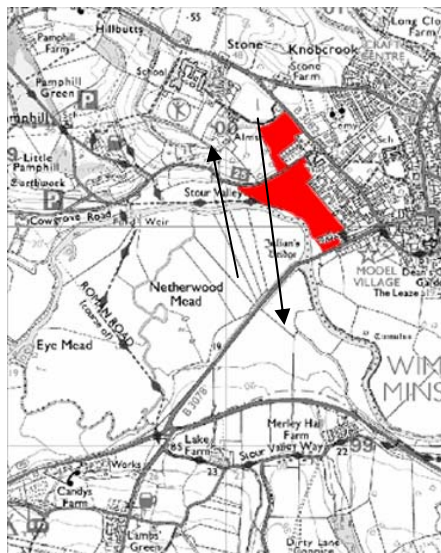
East Dorset Landscape Character Area: Lower Stour Valley; Woodlands-Colehill & Hillbutts farmland/woodland mosaic



The River Stour, its meanders and associated wide flood plain form an important landscape feature that runs from west to south east through the southern part of East Dorset District. The wide flood plain provides many long distance views along the valley floor.

The landscape character appraisal identifies these long distance views as key characteristics of the river valley. As shown below the views of the sites from the west are important elements of the landscape setting. A selection of significant views into and out of the sites is also identified in the appropriate section below. *(In the photo to the right Stone Park is visible on the horizon)*

Views over the river valley are also important features noted in the description of the elevated rolling farmland/woodland mosaic that forms the northern edge of the river valley. This is illustrated in the views to the south over the valley to the Merley/Corfe Ridge from the northernmost site at Stone Park. *(see photo lower right)*



Site Description

Surface geology and soils

The area immediately to the west of the Cuthbury Gardens development lies on valley gravel while the rising ground to the north of Cowgrove Road is formed by an area of London Clay. The associated soils are: on the lower ground near the river, moderately fertile loam and clay, naturally wet floodplain soils; to the north of Cowgrove Road the soils are freely draining, slightly acid loams with lower fertility. (Source: BGS Survey Map 1976 and National Soils Resources Institute)

Contours, levels, drainage

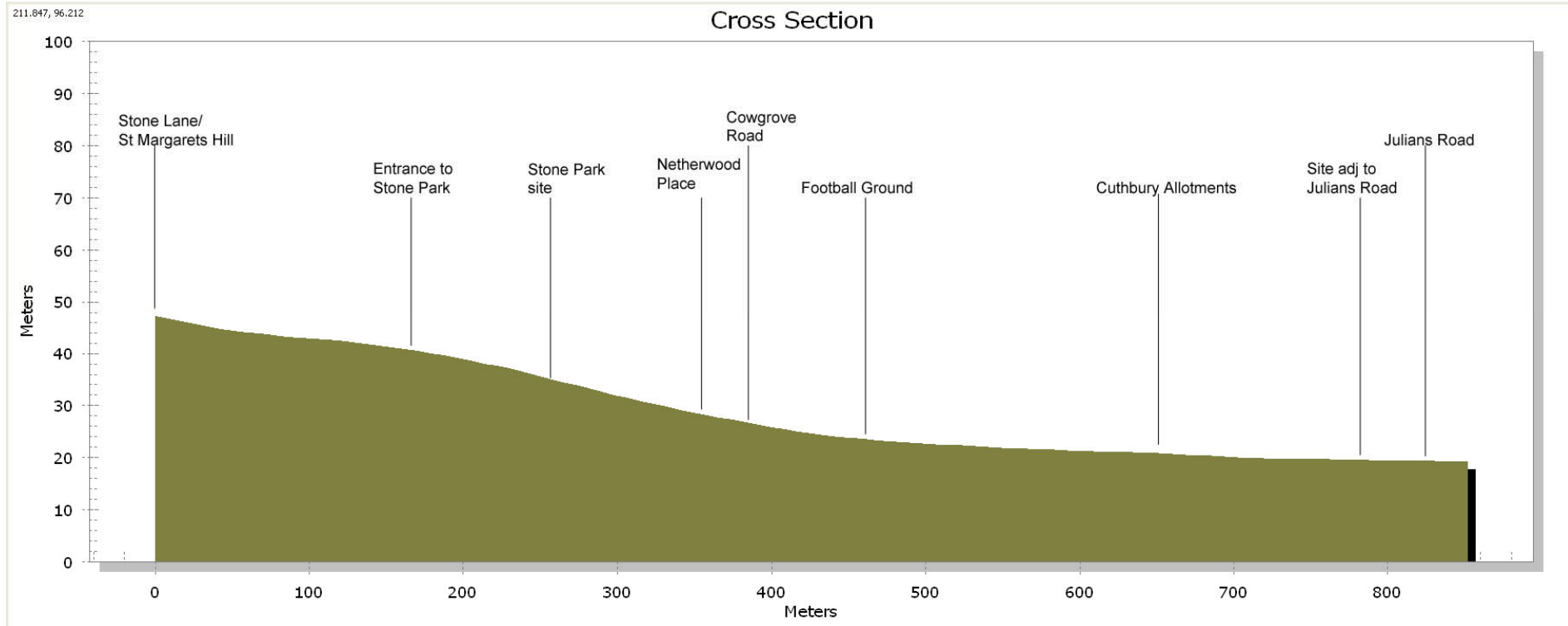
At Cuthbury the land falls gradually from around the 22m contour on the eastern edge to the 17m contour at the riverbank. The fall from Cowgrove Road to Julians Road is from 26m to 18m. The land at Stone Park rises from 27m alongside the Cowgrove Road to 40m at the entrance road to Stone Park. These falls are illustrated on the diagrams below.



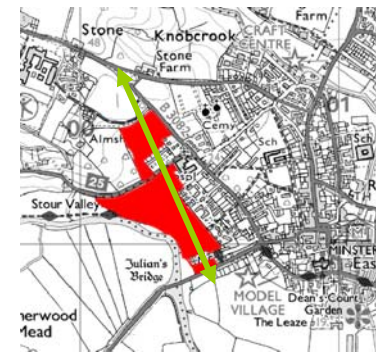
Contours at 2m intervals (© Intermap Technologies Inc. All rights reserved)



Landform model viewed from the south east (© Intermap Technologies Inc. All rights reserved)



Section through sites from St Margarets Hill to Julians Road (Vertical exaggeration approx. x3.5)(section line shown left)
 © Intermap Technologies Inc. All rights reserved



Natural features and vegetation and Biodiversity

There are a number of mature trees and well developed hedgerows on the boundaries of this area, particularly along St Margaret's Hill and Cowgrove Road that subject to a full ecological survey appear to be potentially valuable habitat as well as making a significant contribution to the landscape character. Any proposals for development would of course be expected to follow the principles established in the Council's Nature Conservation SPG.

The trees along Cowgrove Road and in Stone Park form an important backdrop to view of the site from the west and south. The trees and understorey vegetation on the boundary of the allotments and football ground also provide important screening as well as contributing to the wider landscape character (see photo left). There is also a very important group of trees and shrubs along the edge of the riverbank that provide an effective screen to views into the allotments from the west.

Whilst field trees are offered some measure of protection by the Forestry Acts, tree preservation orders will be necessary to safeguard the important individual and groups of trees. Hedgerows are of course protected by the Hedgerow Regulations.



Below - views to the west along Cowgrove Road, note the enclosure provided by the trees in Stone Park to the right and the impact of the football ground on the view along the road



Existing Land Use

The land to the north of Cowgrove Road forms part of the Stone Park Estate, and is given over to parkland. The northern part of the Cuthbury site is occupied by the Wimborne Town Football Club ground, which includes a training area; the allotments occupy the remainder of this area (see *photos left*). The small area of land adjacent to Julians Road is currently unused, but has been cleared of vegetation in the recent past.

Public Rights of Way

A public footpath that forms part of the long distance route known as The Stour Valley Way runs across the Cuthbury site from the entrance to the allotments in Old Road northwestwards to the river's edge and north to Cowgrove Road. There are also other links within the site from Cuthbury Gardens to the east. (see *photos left*)

Historic Landscape and Archaeology

There are no known sites of archaeological interest in this area. However it would appear that the field patterns have been maintained for a significant period.

A 'desk-top' assessment of the area has been undertaken based upon information provided by the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) undertaken for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the as yet unpublished Dorset HLC.

The building known as Stone Park is a Grade 2 listed building of 19th Century origin. This regency style house occupies a prominent site overlooking the Stour Valley. Part of the site under consideration lies within the park.

The parkland area situated within Stone Park appears from aerial view to be associated with typical parkland features such as large individual trees. The subdivision of this parkland occurred in the 20th century. This parkland is not featured on the 1820s OS surveyors map so is most probably a 19th century creation. The park provides an important setting for the house.



The almshouses that lie immediately to the south of Stone Park are also a feature of note and the 19th century OS 6" map indicates that they are located on the site of St Margaret's and St Anthony's hospital and may have formerly covered a wider area. The site is bounded on the south side by a lane which forms the boundary of the park and therefore may be associated with boundary features.

Seven of the cottages are listed grade 2 buildings; numbers 1 and 10 are of 16th Century origin. The 13th Century Chapel is Grade 2* and was originally a leper hospital.

The land to the east of the Stour has been reorganized several times in the 20th century with the allotments first appearing in the early 20th century (being featured on the OS 2nd county revision (1904-1939)). There is a suggestion that this area was formerly open meadows though all traces of this former land use have now been obscured.



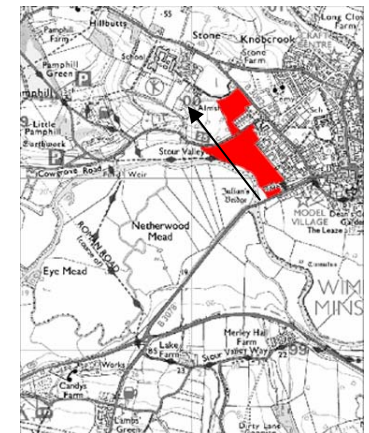
Above - Stone Park viewed from the valley floor



View across Stone Park (house in the foreground left). The parkland setting can be clearly seen in the photo. As shown the northern edge of the areas of interest (outlined in red) coincides with the driveway to the historic house.

The almshouses lie immediately adjacent to Cowgrove Road that divides the two larger sites. The allotments can be seen to the south of the football pitch

To the right of the allotments the course of the River Stour can be seen flowing down to Julians Bridge with the open landscape of the valley floor to the west and south beyond

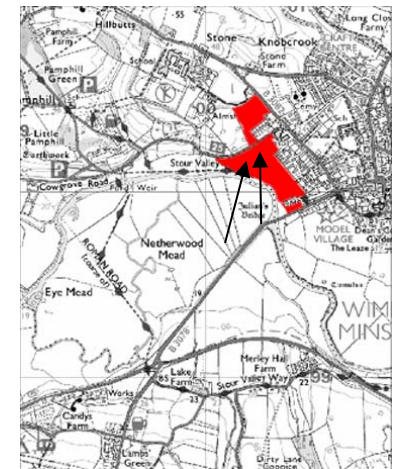


Views into the sites

Whilst roadside trees and field planting provide some screening there are many views into and across these sites from the Stour Valley and the B3078 as it approaches the town from the west.

As shown above and in the following photographs, the open valley floor affords views of Stone Park on the rising ground beyond the river valley, the allotments and part of the football ground from points along the western approach to the town.

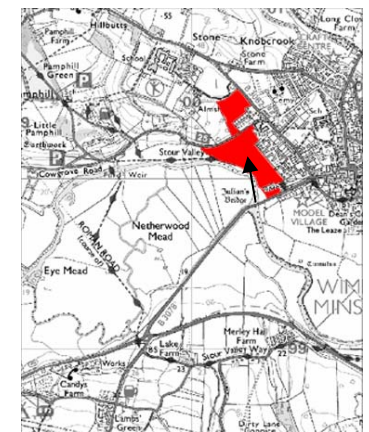






Above – The western edges of the town are well defined but ‘soft’. The three storey development at Cuthbury Close forms a strident feature that can be seen at some distance when approaching Wimborne Minster from the west and detracts from the town’s landscape setting.

Trees in Julian’s Road, on the far side of the bridge, form an attractive ‘gateway’ into the town.





The open valley floor affords long distance views or glimpses of the western side of Wimborne, such as that above from the hill leading up to Corfe Mullen. The flats at Cuthbury Close feature significantly in this view and provide a further indication of the effect new development can have on this sensitive edge to the town.



In addition to the views from the wider public domain into the sites, the smaller southern site is overlooked from the north by the development in Cuthbury Close.

Views out of sites



Although the scene is ‘flattened’ by the camera, the above photo illustrates that the views from the allotments site extend for a considerable distance along the valley floor. The wooded ridges of Henbury and Stony Down can be seen in the background



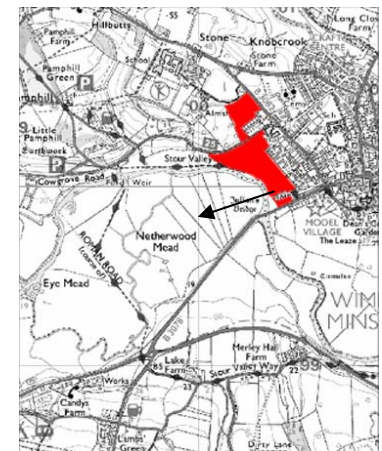


The view above extends from the western edge of the allotments/football ground site along the river to the Pamphill Ridge on the right. The 400kv pylon line can be seen on the skyline.





The views out across the valley can be found throughout the western edge of the allotments/Julian's Road site, the view above was taken from the edge of the Cuthbury Close site.





The view out from the smaller southern site is more restricted by the narrow belt of vegetation along Julian's Road however as shown on the photo the traffic can be seen moving across Julian's Bridge.



Traffic noise from the B3078/Julian's Road intrudes throughout the allotments site and traffic can be seen from within the site where Julian's Bridge crosses the Stour.

Key Characteristics

Long distance views from the west along the floor of the river valley to the sites

Long distance views from the site to the west and the AGLV and from the ridge to the south

Views into the sites from the Pamphill and Merley Ridges

Important groups of trees along the riverside and roadsides and within the sites

Unspoilt valley setting to historic town

Key Features

River Stour

Stone Park, the house and its grounds

Rural character of Cowgrove Road – vulnerable to change

15th C Julians Bridge listed Grade 1 and its setting

Riverside Walk

Lighting masts of football club

Flats in Cuthbury Close prominent in the views from the west along the B3078 road and from the Corfe Ridge

Road noise from Julians Road and St Margarets Hill

Site Analysis

The western edge of the town alongside the river remains generally 'soft' and low key, the allotments and part of the football ground providing a green buffer between the river and the housing on this side of town. This maintains the open character of the river and its associated flood plain. It will be important to ensure that any new development is set back from the river bank to reduce impact on the views along the valley into the site to maintain and protect this character.

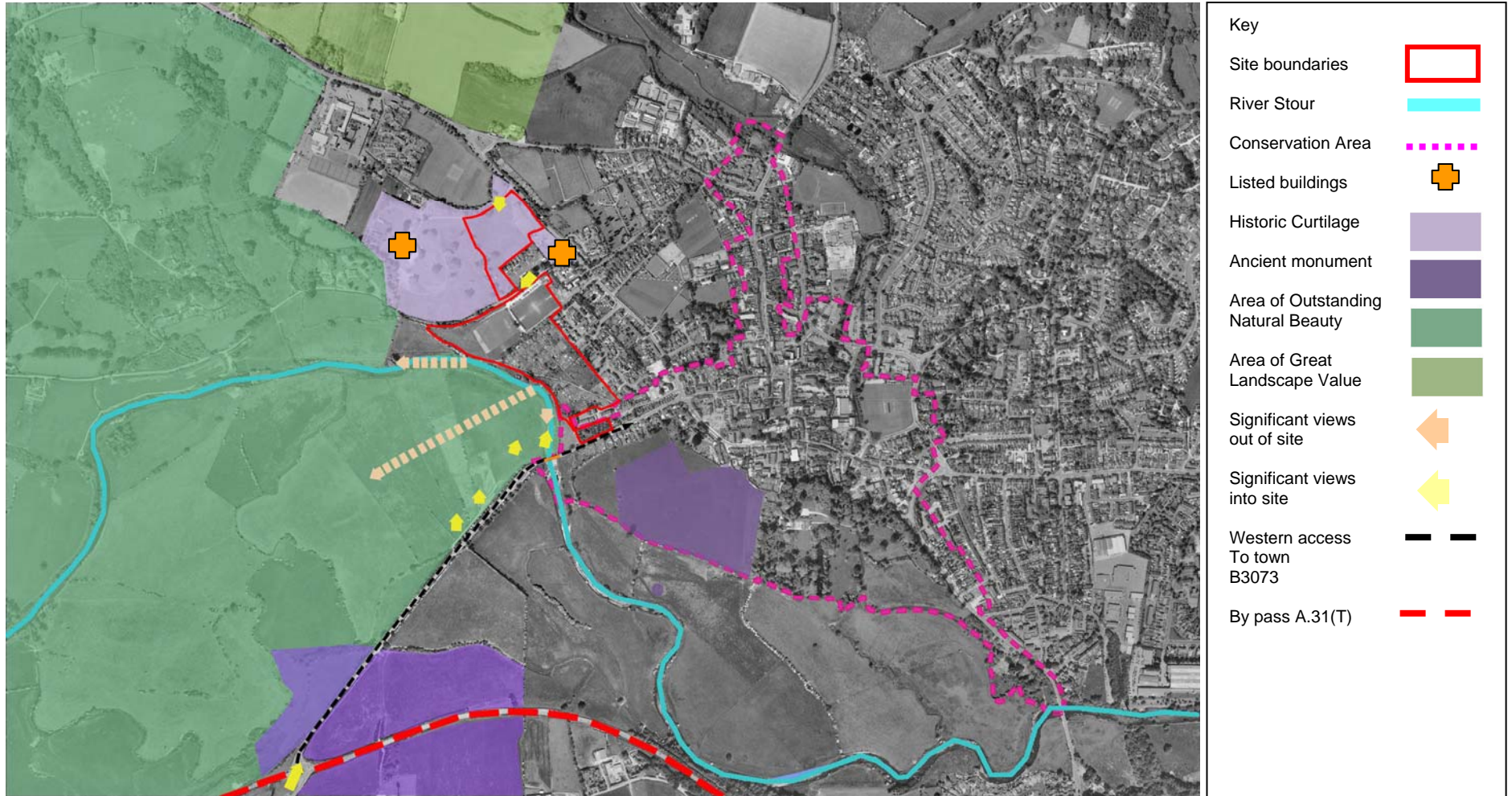
The visual impact of tall structures on the wider landscape character of the river valley is demonstrated by the flats at Cuthbury Close and the lighting masts around the football ground. The presence of the latter also emphasises the need for care and due regard for the Council's Local Plan/LDF policies to minimise or avoid light pollution when selecting and locating external lighting for any new development.

There is a particular concern with regard to siting development in the northern site as this will impact upon the historic landscape character and setting of Stone Park and the setting of the St Margaret's Almshouses as described above and noted on the analysis map.

Any development within the smaller southernmost site should, in addition to having regard to the impact on the views from the west, also have regard to the established street scene. Along Julians Road this is characterised by the trees along the site boundary and the Edwardian Villas to the south and the smaller villas and more recent housing further along its northern side. *(see photos to right)*



Site Analysis Map 1 – Wider Setting



Site Appraisal Map 2 –Constraints

