

ST.MARY'S HILL, BLANDFORD ST MARY

INITIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

Project no.
195

Report no.
195 R 001

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R01

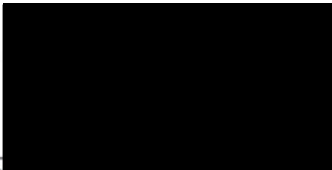
Client
Blandford St Mary (Homes) Ltd

Date
5th December 2013

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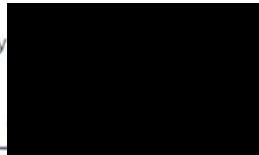
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Coe Design have been commissioned by Morgan Carey Architects on behalf of Blandford St Mary (Homes) Ltd to undertake an initial landscape and visual appraisal of the St Mary's Hill site, Blandford St Mary.
- 1.2 This report describes the proposed development, the methods used to establish the baseline conditions of the Application Site and surroundings; identify and describe potential impacts of the Proposed Development; and suggest primary mitigation measures
- 1.3 The impact of the Proposed Development on landscape character and views from public right of way are assessed with reference to relevant planning policy.
- 1.4 Visits to the site area were undertaken on 15.10.2013 and 29.10.13. The weather conditions were clear, sunny and bright with maximum 20% cloud cover.
- 1.5 The location of the Application site and the surrounding area and general site photographs are shown in Figures 1 & 2.

2.0 Proposed Development Description

- 2.1 Outline planning permission is being sought for new housing on the Application Site located at the St Mary's Hill site, Blandford St Mary.
The proposed layout of the proposed development is shown on Figure 2
- 2.2 Further information to be provided by MCA

3.0 Landscape Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 to be provided by others

4.0 Appraisal Methodology

- 4.1 The aim of this initial appraisal is to identify potential receptors to landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development and a series of critical viewpoints and baseline information against which the Proposed Development can be measured. Landscape impacts are defined as changes to the landscape fabric and character, which are often caused either by displacing or adding new elements. The term 'visual impacts' relate to changes in the perceived landscape, and may arise from intrusion or obstruction of views or by changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptor, e.g. Residents, users of public right of way, public open spaces and sensitive landscapes.
- 4.2 The assessment methodology follows best practice as set out in guidelines provided by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment's 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - Third Edition, 2013'.
- 4.3 *Baseline Information*
- The baseline study provides an assessment of existing landscape resources, which has been established through desktop study and field survey work carried out during October 2013. This includes:
- Initial landscape character assessment based on existing National Landscape Character Area study and Dorset County Landscape Character Assessment data (Figure 3)
 - Mapping of designations in the landscape using information from Dorset Explorer v3.0 to identify landscapes of value that may hold more significant sensitivity to change. (Figure 4)
 - Aerial photography available online and OS survey data is interrogated to assist in the definition of the initial mapping of the visual envelope (Zone of Theoretical Visibility) and identifying the visual receptors such as Rights of Way, roads, public footpaths and designated landscapes (Figure 6).
 - Fieldwork to verify desktop definition of ZVT and to study selection viewpoints based on identified visual receptors
- 4.4 For the purpose of visibility assessment a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) has been prepared that assesses the of the visual envelope of the Proposed Development; refer to Figures 5 & 6. The analysis assumes an observer height of 1.5m above ground level and a proposed building height of 2-3 storeys to be confirmed.
- 4.5 There are key points from which the Application Site can be seen. These viewpoints are analysed and recorded in Figure 6 and Viewpoints 1-10 to illustrate the extent of potential visibility of the Proposed Development. Viewpoints are identified using the following criteria:
- Receptor; Type and Distance, with Planning Designations;
 - Type of View; including whole or part of the Application Site, boundaries or buildings;
 - Distance; close distance < 200m, medium distance < 1km, long distance > 1km; and
 - Nature of Impact; open or partly filtered, extent and efficacy of potential visual barriers.

4.6 Limitations

All field surveys were originally undertaken in October of months of 2013 when trees were in partial foliage depending on the species and microclimates within the study area. The extent of views during winter was estimated taking into account the type and density of vegetation in identifying viewpoints for further study.

Existing mature tree on site have been used as a benchmark for identifying views sensitive to change where the ground plane is not visible.

Isolated trees and shrubby vegetation within and immediately surrounding the Application Site, partly obstructs close views. At medium to long distances from the Application Site, layers of vegetation start to build up forming a denser visual barrier, which both obstructs and frames views of the Application Site. Considering this context and the overall scale of the Proposed Development, it is anticipated that winter views, when trees are not in leaf, will not be significantly different to summer views.

4.7 Equipment

This includes use of a Nikon D80 Digital Camera, 50mm lens setting, Camera height 1.5m. Panoramic views have been constructed for single photographs using Adobe Photoshop software and have been re-scaled proportionally within the study where required to display the entire view as taken at the viewpoint. Raw jpegs can be provided as required. Location, height and re-scaling of images has been detailed with each individual image.

5.0 Identification of Landscape and Visual Receptors

5.1 Scope

This section describes the existing landscape character and current visual resources in the Application site and the surrounding study area. This endeavours to establish the baseline condition against which the proposed Development can be measured.

The identification of landscape effects is concerned with assessing the potential effects of the proposed development on the landscape as a resource in its own right. Assessing the baseline conditions, which includes a review of existing background data, establishes an understanding of the elements that make up the landscape and constitute its distinctive character and aesthetic and perceptual aspects. This can later be used to indicate the potential effects resulting from the impact of the proposed development as required for planning. Landscape designations are considered and provide an indication of the value and sensitivity of the landscape to change.

The identification of visual effects is concerned with assessing the potential effects of the proposed development on specific views and on the general visual amenity as experienced by people. The landscape baseline data is assessed to establish the visual baseline. Visual mapping is undertaken to establish the Zone of Theoretical Visibility. A range of receptors are examined and a series of viewpoints identified.

5.2 Landscape Baseline Information

5.2.1 Landscape Character - Context - Refer to Figure 3

National Character Areas (NCA) - The Application Site and surrounding study area is part of NCA 134 Dorset Downs and Cranbourne Chase which is predominantly characterised as follows:

- *The character is predominantly rural and agricultural characterised by large open fields of pasture and arable land, blocks of woodland appear draped over the undulating topography.*
- *The wide flood plain of the River Stour brings a lowland interlude to the downland, and provides the location for the NCA's second-largest town, Blandford Forum.*
- *The NCA features one of the densest assemblages of prehistoric sites and monuments in Europe, revealing some 8,000 years of human activity.*
- *Isolated farmsteads punctuate the highest areas, contrasting with closely spaced, linear villages and hamlets close to water along the valley bottoms.*
- *River valleys, dry in their upper sections, are often occupied by winterbournes, each with its own character, with thick hedgerows, flood meadows and linear villages in a variety of vernacular styles.*
- *Food production is the most visible service provided. The provision of drinking water and the charging of chalk rivers that flow southwards (via the chalk aquifer), are essential services*
- *Two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), cover 78% of the NCA: the Dorset AONB and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.*
- *The signature chalk downland is internationally recognised in three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): 3% (3,486ha) of the NCA is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).*
- *The area is synonymous with Thomas Hardy. Other artists associated with the area are Elisabeth Frink, Stanley Spencer, Lucian Freud, Henry Lamb and E.Q. Nicholson.*

5.2.2 Landscape Character - Local

The Dorset Landscape Character Study indicates the following landscape types within the study area:

- *Open Chalk Downland*
- *Valley pasture*
- *Chalk Valley and Downland*
- *Urban*
- *Chalk/Ridge Escarpment*

The Application site itself is found within the Open Chalk Downland area known as the South Blandford Downs. This is an intensively farmed arable landscape of medium to large scale fields bounded by low straight and clipped hedges.

5.2.3 Designations - The Application site is not subject to any significant landscape designations but in its immediate context are the AONBs. Other designations within the study area include Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings found along the linear hamlets of Lower Blandford St.Mary and Littleton and an area Ancient Woodland is found within 1km of the Application site. A number of Scheduled Monuments are present within the wider area on higher ground. Refer to Figure 4

5.2.4 Topography - The Application Site is gently sloping from South West to North East forming one side of the River Stour Valley area which splits the two Downland AONBs. The site levels vary from 70m AOD in the West to 43m AOD in the East

5.2.5 Boundary - The boundary to the North is formed by the highway and wooded highway embankments of the A354. To the East the site is separated from the Stour River Valley areas by the A350. The immediate context of the South and West boundaries are adjacent fields and droves which form part of the Open Chalk Downland area.

5.2.6 Vegetation

The Application site is framed by Agricultural type hedgerows, straight and clipped which are typical of those found in the local character area. Mature trees are found at sparsely and randomly spaced intervals within these hedgerows. A stand of trees on the upper area of the Application site is highly visible from the surrounding area. A number of similar stands of trees can be found in the surrounding fields.

Further description of the surrounding area to be expanded as required by Planning.

5.0 Identification of Landscape and Visual Receptors (continued)

5.3 Visual baseline

10 views have been identified from surrounding areas from where either the site's existing ground level is visible or where elevations of the Proposed Development could be visible. Refer to Viewpoint Sheets 1-5 in Appendix.

Viewpoint 1 - View East of site from A354.

The site ground level is not visible however the existing stand of trees in the upper site indicate that elevations of the Proposed Development could be partially visible

Viewpoint 2 - View South of site from adjacent field A354.

The site ground level is not visible due to the hedgerow found to the site's western boundary. However the existing stand of trees in the upper site indicate that elevations of the Proposed Development could be partially visible. Some of which would also be visible from the road where the height of the highway bund is reduced.

Viewpoint 3 - View Southwest from roundabout on corner of Conservation Area, opposite NE site corner

The lower area of the site can be clearly seen across the highway with the existing hedgerow and bund providing screening to the ground levels of the upper site. Elevations of the proposed development are likely to be clearly and partially visible.

Viewpoint 4 - View Southwest of site from Statutory Right of Way within AONB along Wimborne Road

The majority of the site is clearly visible with the site topography and aspect providing clear views across the Stour Valley of lower and upper areas of the Application Site. Existing trees on the Wimborne Road are immature and provide some screening of the site further up the road.

Viewpoint 5 - View Southwest of site from stud farm along Wimborne Road within AONB

The majority of the site is clearly visible with the site topography and aspect providing clear views across the Stour Valley. The lower areas of the are screened by the existing tree line opposite the site along the A350. The upper areas of the Application Site including the stand of existing trees are clearly visible

Viewpoint 6 - View West of site with AONB from Statutory Right of Way south of Buzbury Rings Schedule Monument

The majority of the upper areas of the Application site are clearly visible although at a significant distance, including the stand of existing trees. The lower areas of the site are screened by various copses found within the fore and mid ground on the eastern side of the Stour River Valley.

Viewpoint 7 - View West of site from junction of Statutory Rights of Way within AONB

The upper areas of Application site are visible at long distance indicated by the stand of existing trees. The lower are middle level areas of the Application site are screened by the existing topography of fields in the foreground of the view.

Viewpoint 8 - View Northwest of site from Statutory Right of Way near Charlton on the Hill

The ground level of the site is not visible due to topography within the foreground. However the tops of the existing stand of trees are visible indicating that the Proposed Development could be seen subject to further analysis.

Viewpoint 9 - View Northwest of site from Statutory Right of Way between Higher Dairy and Littleton

The ground level of the site is not visible due to topography and vegetation within the foreground. However the tops of the existing stand of trees are visible indicating that the Proposed Development could be seen subject to further analysis.

Viewpoint 10 - View Northwest of site from Statutory Right of Way at end of Trailway

The ground level of the site is not visible due to topography existing hedgerow on the southern border of the site within the foreground. However the tops of the existing stand of trees. The Proposed Development elevations could be clearly seen.

6.0 Mitigation of Landscape and Visual Effects

6.1 Scope

Mitigation is concerned with preventing/avoiding, reducing or compensating for landscape and visual effects that are judged to be significant and adverse.

Full mitigation proposals would need to be established later as required for planning. These would be determined against the sensitivity of identified receptors and the resulting significance of potential impacts (which are to be assessed in greater detail as required). The process that would be undertaken in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment would establish by insertion of a wire frame of the proposed development and photomontage the visual impact. The receptors would then be evaluated for a qualitative assessment and potential value of the effect of the impact. Mitigation proposals would then be assessed as per the landscape character methodology outlined in the following text.

This section seeks to highlight the general parameters within which mitigation of the likely significant and adverse landscape and visual effects of the proposed development can be incorporated.

At this initial stage primary measures of mitigation (measures incorporated through the design process) are of the greatest concern.

The nature of mitigation measures achieved through landscape proposals need to be established against the local landscape character pattern (to be agreed with the local planning authority).

6.2 Types of landscape and visual effects of the proposed development

The receptors highlighted in this initial study can be broadly divided into two groups; those to the south and west of the proposed development site (within the open chalk downland) and those to the Northeast of the proposed development site (within the AONB designated Chalk Valley and Downland character area).

It is likely that the type and significance of potentially adverse landscape and visual effects within these groups will be broadly similar and require similar methods of mitigation

6.3 Mitigation Measures

6.3.1 Opportunities to mitigate impacts from the South and West

Due to the aspect of the proposed development site views to the site ground plane are entirely obscured. Views to areas above the ground plane in which the proposed development could be may be visible and therefore areas of proposed buildings above the ground floor level could possibly be seen.

Primary measures for consideration

- *Site levels - Situating proposed buildings on land falling away from the visible boundary and considering use of cut areas required on such a sloping site to reduce the vertical prominence of buildings within the landscape view.*
- *Alterations to landform - where opportunities to utilise the existing pattern of ascending landscape can reduce the visual prominence of buildings within the landscape view*
- *Strategic location of planting in accordance with the local character type to strengthen this locally*

characteristic feature and for screening (long hedge lines, found along droves, with specimen trees at intervals) in the foreground and utilising landscape vegetation patterns with consideration to the character of surrounding areas.

- *Use of appropriate form, detailed design, materials and finishes within buildings with consideration to visual character of long views to the town beyond.*
- *Retention of existing boundary and visually prominent and characteristic landscape features on site (mature group of trees)*
- *Avoiding and reducing obtrusive light from the development*
- *Wide areas of planting around edge of site to soften appearance*

6.3.2 Opportunities to mitigate impacts from the North and East

Due to the aspect of the proposed development site views to the site are prominent when seen over the Stour Valley. The identified visual receptors are sensitive due to their long and panoramic views over distinctive landscape areas; the open chalk downland around the application site and the Stour Valley in the mid ground. Views out of the AONB designated landscape are to be considered as potentially more sensitive to change as they form part of the perception of the wider landscape from important sites.

The aspect of the application site ground plane towards the visual receptors gives prominence to development in the background as well as the foreground of the application site. Mitigation to reduce the effect of a series of roof planes and elevations appearing as single dominant elements is considered to be the most significant measures to be pursued.

Primary measures for consideration

- *Site levels - situating proposed buildings in a way that reduces the perceived extent of the elevation and roof plane in the view and altering landform further to this aim.*
- *Strategic location of planting and open space areas in accordance with the local character type to strengthen the prominence of locally characteristic natural features, for strategic screening and visual fragmentation of development's visual projection.*
- *Use of appropriate form, detailed design, materials and finishes within buildings - break up scale of building roofs to views from higher elevations using different tones, green roofs etc. Vary elevation height accordingly to limit impact on sky line and longer views.*
- *Avoiding and reducing obtrusive light*
- *Consideration of landscape enhancement off site to offset landscape and visual impact by improving the prominence of locally characteristic landscape features within views from particularly sensitive locations*
- *Wide areas of planting around edge of site to soften appearance*

INITIAL LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

Appendices

General Site Photographs of St Mary's Hill Application Site



Figure 1.1 - View of site looking Southwest from A350



Figure 1.1 - View of site looking South from A350

FIGURE 2

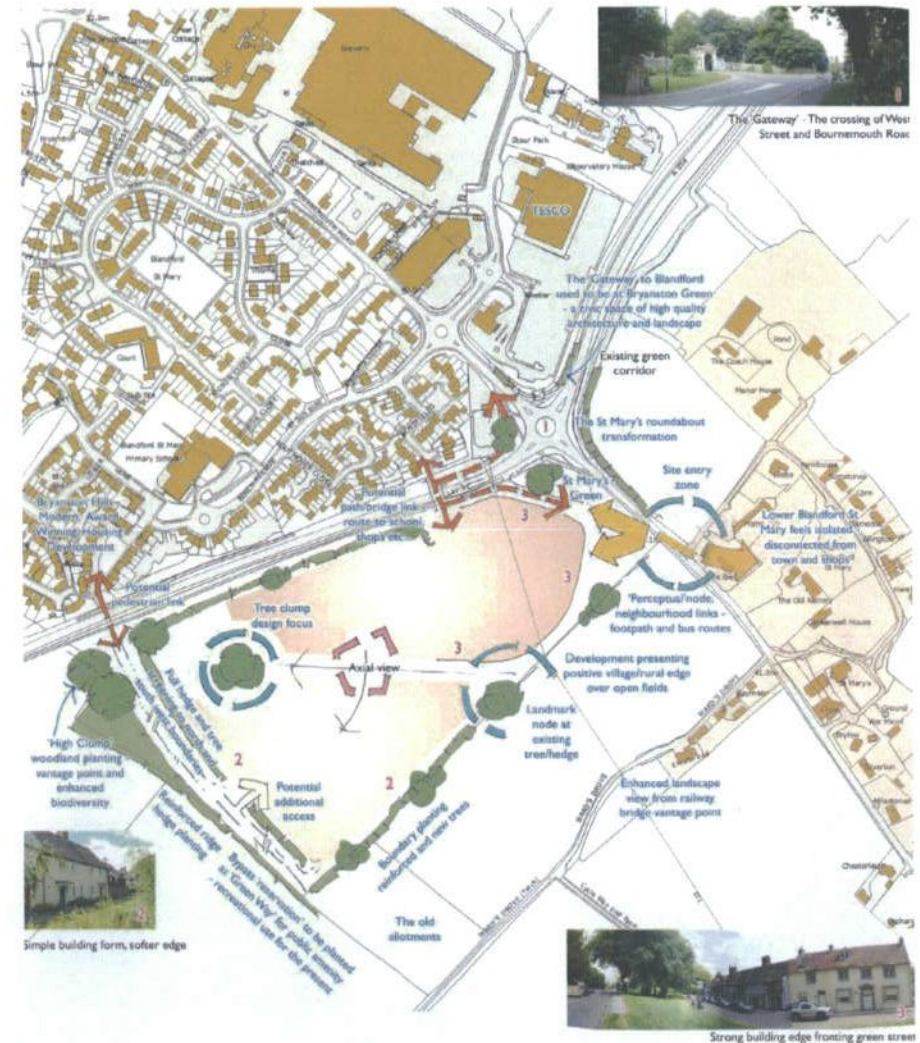
Proposed Development - Landscape and Context

by Morgan Carey Architects



Proposed Development - Ideas and Opportunities

by Morgan Carey Architects



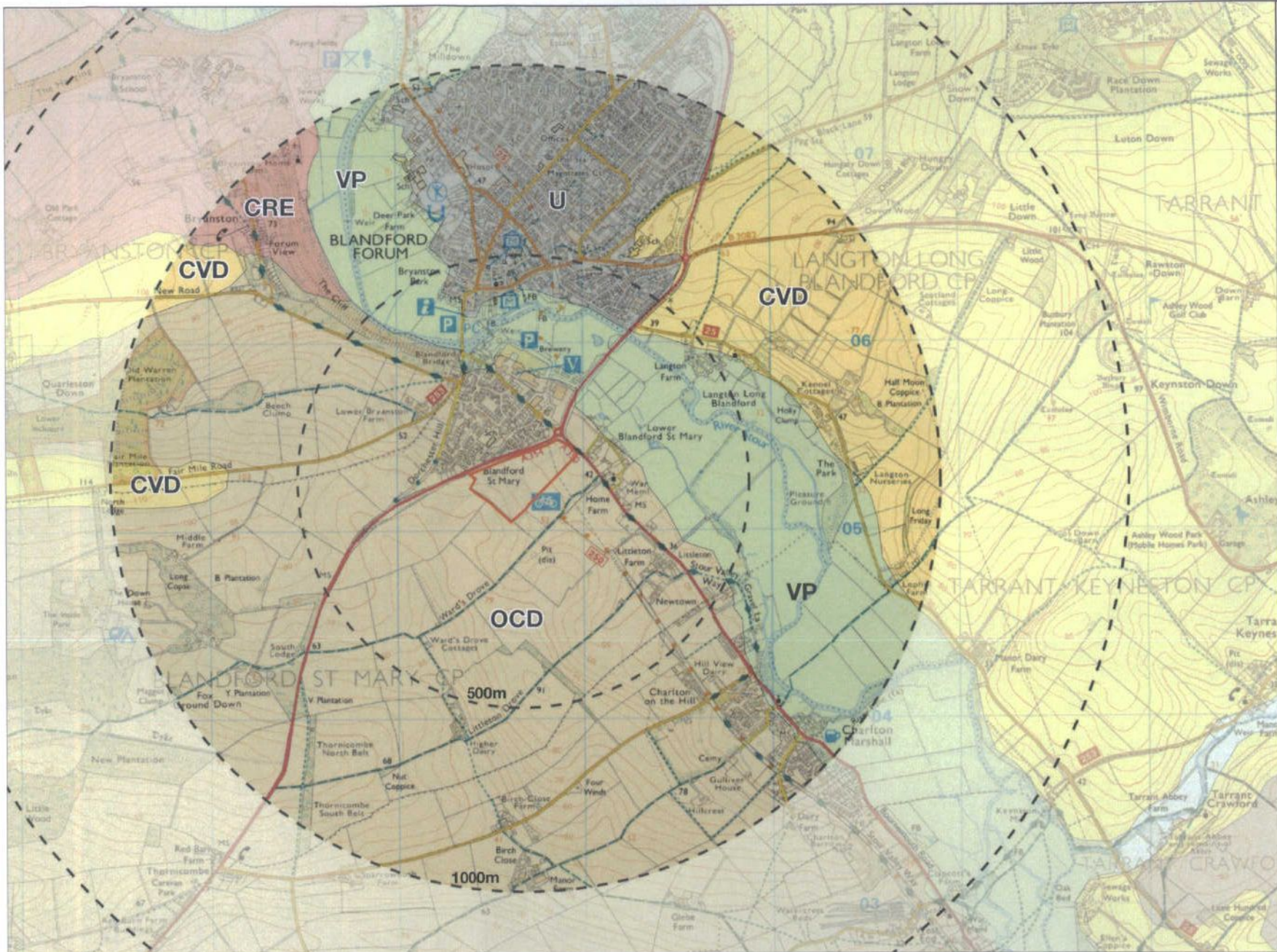




FIGURE 3

SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

-  500m distance intervals from proposed Application Site Boundary
-  Proposed Application Site Boundary

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA

Character Area 134
Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase
(the entire study area resides within this zone)

DORSET LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TYPES

- OCD** Open Chalk Downland
- CVD** Chalk Valley and Downland
- CRE** Chalk Ridge / Escarpment
- VP** Valley Pasture
- U** Urban

Project
St Mary's Hill, Blandford St Mary

Skeleton No
195 SK 001

Scale
1:10000 @ A3

Date
29.10.13

Drawn
JdB



Title
Landscape Character Assessment

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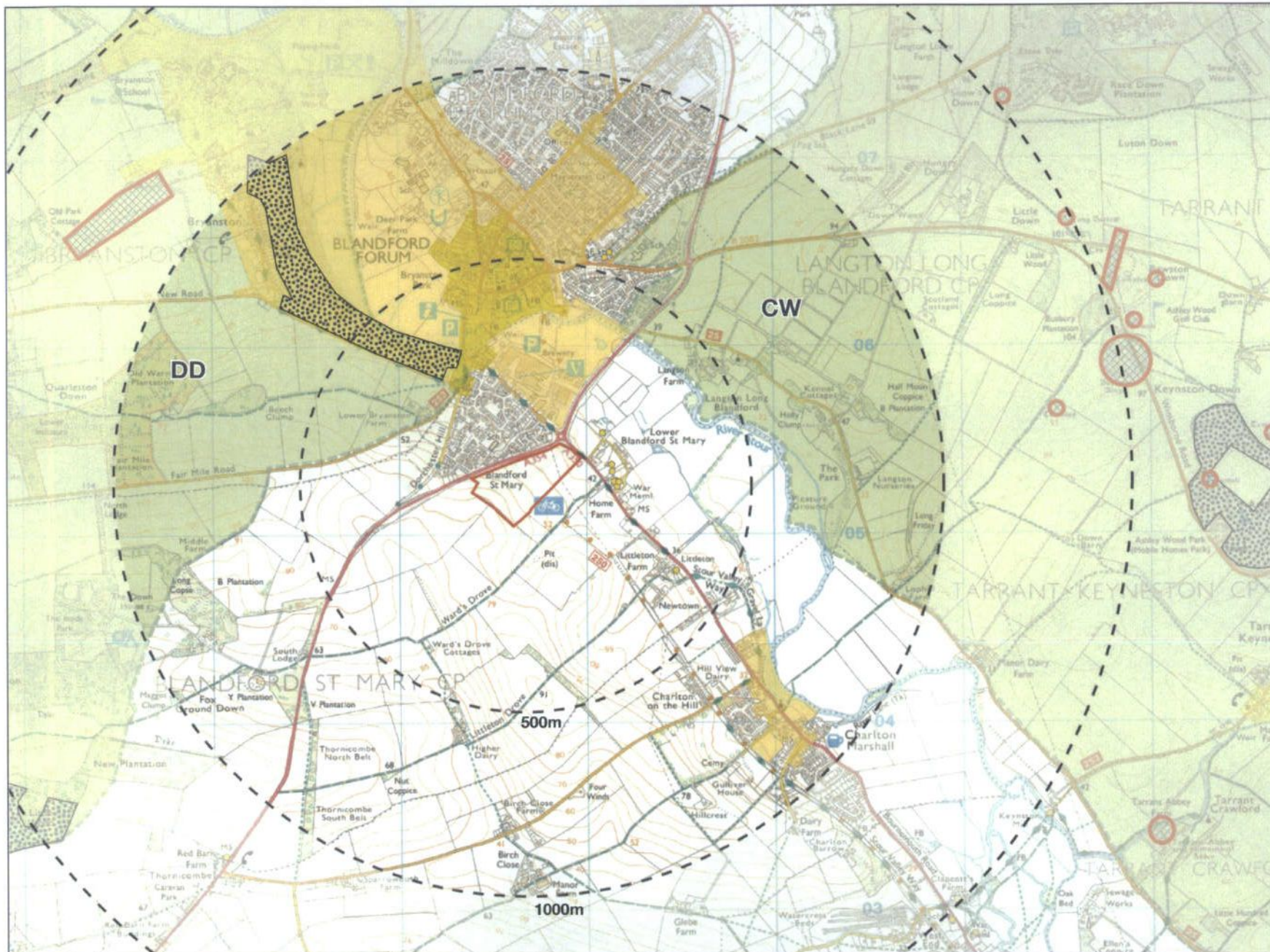


FIGURE 4

SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

500m distance intervals from proposed Application Site Boundary

Proposed Application Site Boundary

DESIGNATIONS

AONB

DD Dorset Downs AONB

CW Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB

BUILT HERITAGE

Conservation Area

Listed Building (outside Conservation Area / AONB)

HISTORIC

Scheduled Monument

Ancient Woodland

Project
St Mary's Hill, Blandford St Mary

Sketch No
195 SK 002

Scale
1:10000 @ A3

Date
29.10.13

Drawn
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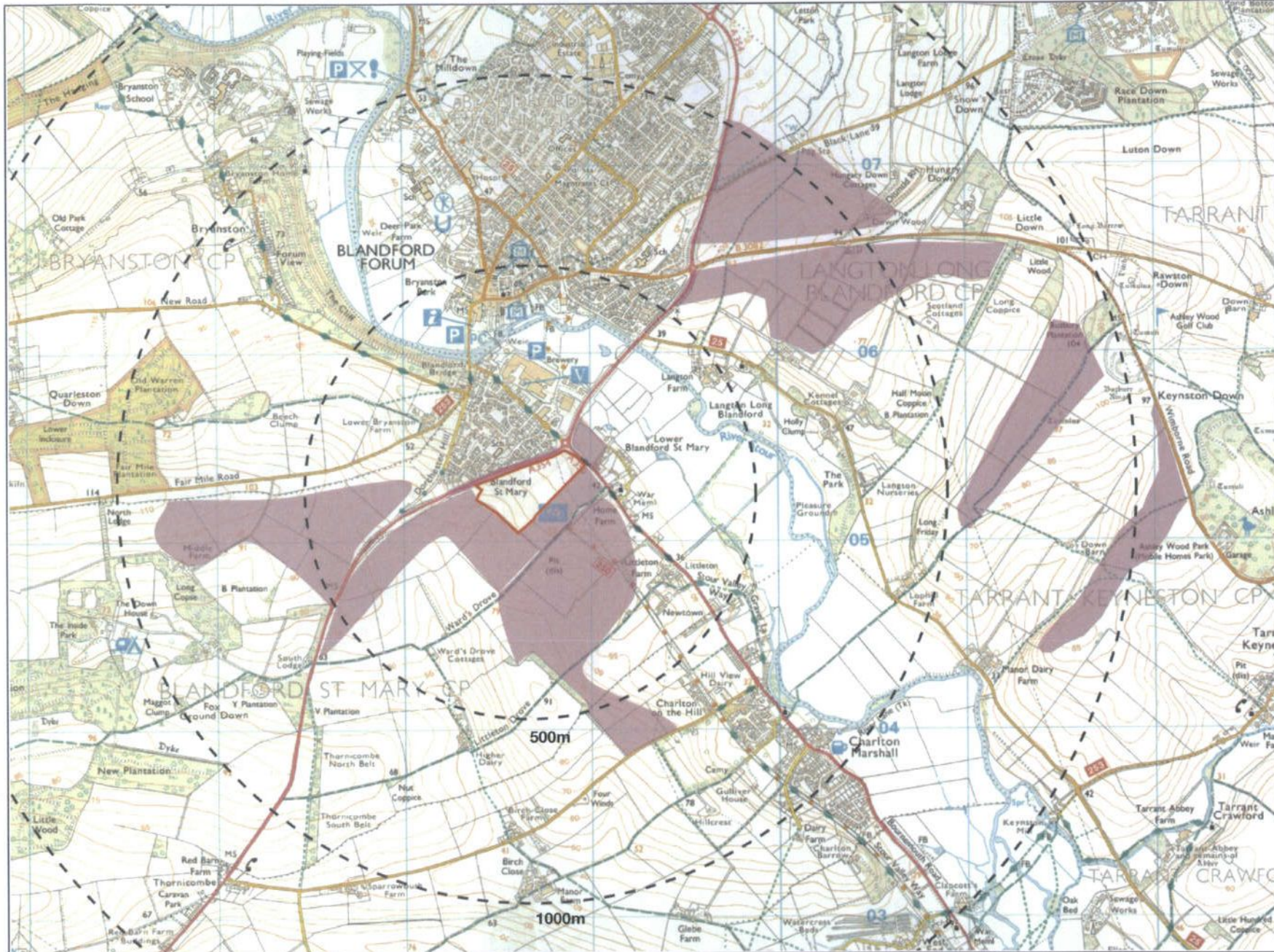




FIGURE 5
SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

 500m distance intervals from proposed Application Site Boundary

 Proposed Application Site Boundary

ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ZTV)

 Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Project
St Mary's Hill, Blandford St Mary

Sketch No
195 SK 003_01

Scale
1:10000 @ A3

Date
05.12.13

Drawn
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Zone of Theoretical Visibility

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FIGURE 6

SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

 500m distance intervals from proposed Application Site Boundary

 Proposed Application Site Boundary

VIEWPOINT LOCATIONS

VISUAL RECEPTORS

 Zone of Theoretical Visibility

 Roads

 Rights of Way - Footpaths

 Rights of Way - Bridleways

 Other - The Trail-way

VIEWPOINTS

 Selected View Locations



Project
St Mary's Hill, Blandford St Mary

Sketch No
195 SK 004_01

Scale
1:10000 @ A3

Date
05.12.13

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Location of Visual Receptors and Assessment Viewpoints

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