

Extract from the Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset Area Assessment of land surrounding the larger villages –LUC Oct 2019

The village of Marnhull is situated in the west of the North Dorset area, on the upper valley slopes of the River Stour (to the north and west) and is characterised by hedgerow boundaries with many mature trees which integrate the settlement into the landscape.

To integrate the settlement within the landscape is a key aim of the landscape mitigation. It is our view that the scheme has been adequately mitigated to enable the development to assimilate into the settlement and the landscape.

Key sensitivities

Landscape

- 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.*

On the southern site boundary: This will be retained and enhanced as part of the landscape proposals

- 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.*

This liner pattern is so diluted in the area of the application site so as not to be evident, perhaps slightly to the south but that is not within the conservation area.

- 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.*

The AONB is 10km distance and intervisibility not considered relevant. No views identified from the opposing valley side to the north, Fifehead Magdalen and environs.

- 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.*

Not in the study area, only visible to the north/north east of the application site

- 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 rural lanes to the east and north will be retained and the character impacts minimised.

- *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.*

No views from the Stour Valley Way. The proposals will still retain the perception of a rural village and not interrupt views to the church from The Hardy Way to the north-east. The significant planting propose as part of the mitigation will ensure that in time only a small sections of the proposals will be visible from the footpaths in the landscape to the north/north-west. The proposals will be partially visible and appear a minor addition of new development with a wooded ridge as a backdrop not a significant new housing development across the ridge.

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.*

The potential prominence of the site has been recognised. In the local landscape, the most significant character effects would tend to be limited to the site itself, close distance near the site boundaries and extending north and north-eastwards up to a low ridgeline at Great Down Lane. The potential degree of effect as a result of the proposed development on the local landscape character and the site itself is therefore assessed as moderate/substantial. The highest degree of visual effect has been assessed as moderate/substantial immediately on the south-eastern site boundary at the proposed access and at close distance in the open countryside north of the site, where the proposals have the potential to be a prominent change.

We have therefore introduced mitigation with the large POS across the more visually prominent areas of the ridge and significant native plating to provide screening. In combination the LVIA concludes that the more substantial landscape and visual effects are appropriately mitigated.

On the day of the site visit, no views towards the church have been identified from within the site due to the proximity of the housing on Ashley Road and the intervening ridge screening views in the eastern parts of the site. In the wider landscape the only views identified towards the church are to the north and north-east. I don't think the proposals will interrupt views towards the church tower from these locations

- *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.*

This has been done with significant additional native planting including, native hedges, woodland blocks and individual and native broadleaf trees.

- *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.*

This has been done, only small sections of the proposals will be visible in the wider landscape once planting matures. Many other dwellings will be partly screened or filtered by trees and hedgerows.

- *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.*

PRoW within the POS where the more significant views outwards which give an appreciation of the wider landscape setting in the north-eastern parts of the site will be preserved.

- *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.*

The rural character of the adjacent roads has been considered and largely preserved.

- *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.*

Hedgerows and paths have been retained and hedgerows have been enhanced.

- *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*

- *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.*

The setting of the Grade II listed building to the north-east has been considered and it is preserved by offsetting development.