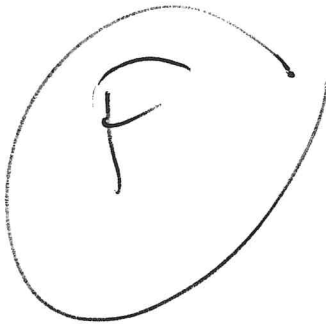


Land adjoining Cockles Lane, Weymouth
Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Final Draft

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Savills has been commissioned by Betterment Properties to undertake a landscape and visual appraisal of an area of land adjoining Cockles Lane within the western part of the built-up area of Weymouth, Dorset. This appraisal utilises The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition* (2002.)
- 1.2. The site, as shown in Figure 1 comprises an area of approximately 38.7 ha of pasture farmland. It is bounded by Chickerell Road to the north, Lanehouse Rocks Road to the west and residential development associated with Chickerell Way to the east. To the south of the site lies a cemetery, paddock and residential properties associated with Wyke Road.
- 1.3. Subject to the provisions of the LDF and necessary permissions, Betterment Homes proposes a residential development and public open space. This could include provision for a small local centre that could accommodate a food store, small shops, a restaurant/café/public house, a community centre/meeting hall, a neighbourhood nursery/crèche and a branch doctor's or dentist's surgery. Public open space provision would include formal sports pitches and children's play space together with informal open space and nature conservation areas.

2. Methodology

Introduction

2.1. The appraisal was based on the following methodology:

- Baseline landscape and visual surveys
- Mitigation recommendations
- Identification and assessment of potential landscape and visual effects

Baseline Surveys

- 2.2. The baseline landscape and visual assessment was based on a desk study and a field survey. The desk study included a review of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map of the area, aerial photographs, the MAGIC website, relevant landscape designations and published landscape character assessments relating to the site. This explored the character of the landscape and any particular values attached to it and acted as a basis for the subsequent field survey.
- 2.3. Field surveys were undertaken by a chartered landscape architect and urban designer on 10th and 23rd October 2007 and 01 August 2008. These visits were used to confirm the information arising from the desk study, produce a photographic record of the site, appraise any landscape features not already highlighted by the desk study and to assess views into and out of the site. The surveys included driving and walking local roads and walking public rights of way within the vicinity of the site, including the site itself.
- 2.4. To assess the visual influence of the site, a wider area was appraised than is shown on the appended Figures. This survey extended from Winterborne St Martin in the north, to Wyke Regis in the south and from Portesham in the east to Osmington in the west. The site was not visible from these limits and the study area was ultimately narrowed to the extents shown on Figures 1 to 5. The size of the study area varied according to the scope of the potential effects, with the study area for the assessment of visual amenity being larger than that of landscape effects.
- 2.5. The field survey highlighted potentially sensitive visual receptors, based on the definitions set out in Table 2.1, and also the potential Zone of Visual Influence, from where parts of the site may be seen.

Table 2.1 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

(Source: Adapted from The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition (2002.)

Visual Receptors with high sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Views of or from within valued landscapes ● Users of recreational landscapes/public footpaths and bridleways including tourists and visitors ● Residents
Visual Receptors with low sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Users of public roads and railways ● Workers

2.6. The site visit was also used to judge the character of the landscape, its value/ quality, its sensitivity and its capacity to accept change. Landscape value/quality is reflected by designations attached to it and other criteria indicating value, such as tranquillity, scenic beauty, cultural associations or conservation interests. The value/quality of the landscape of the area was judged according to the definitions set out in Table 2.2.

2.7. The overall 'landscape sensitivity' of the study area was appraised by considering its 'landscape character sensitivity' and its 'visual sensitivity', as shown in Table 2.3. Landscape sensitivity is based on judgements about the sensitivity of natural factors, cultural factors, landscape quality/ condition and aesthetic factors. Visual sensitivity is based on judgements about general visibility (in terms of landform and vegetation cover), visual receptors (types and numbers of those who would have views of the site) and the scope for mitigating visual impacts (through the use of planting or earth modelling for example). Landscapes which are described as highly sensitive are at risk of having their key characteristics fundamentally altered by development, which could lead to a change landscape character.

2.8. Landscape capacity describes the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts and types of change. This reflects both the sensitivity of the landscape and the value attached to it, as shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.2 Landscape Quality

(Source: Adapted from *The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition (2002.)*)

Category of Landscape Quality/Value	Criteria	Typical designations
Low (poor/ very poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas generally negative in character with few, if any valued features • Weak or degraded landscape structure; characteristic patterns of landform and land cover often masked by land use • Mixed lands use evident/ dominates • Lack of management/ intervention has resulted in degradation • Frequent/ extensive detracting features 	None
Medium (ordinary/ good)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas that exhibit positive character but which may have evidence of erosion of features resulting in areas of more mixed character. • Distinguishable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and cover, although these may be masked by land use in places • Change may be unlikely to be detrimental • Scope to improve management of vegetation • Some features worthy of conservation • Some detracting features • Sense of place 	Better examples may be nationally, regionally or locally designated
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas that exhibit a very strong positive character with valued features that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony • Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of landform and land cover • Management for land use and land cover is appropriate although there may be scope to improve • Distinct features worthy of conservation • Sense of place • May be occasional detracting features • May be of particular importance to conserve and may be particularly sensitive to change in general 	Nationally, regionally or locally designated. Exceptional areas may be internationally or nationally recognised.

Table 2.3 Landscape Sensitivity to Change

(Source: *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland: Topic Paper 6, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Agency*)

Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
	Medium	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
	Low	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
		Low	Medium	High
Visual Sensitivity				

Table 2.4 Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Change

(Source: *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland: Topic Paper 6, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Agency*)

Landscape Sensitivity	High	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
	Medium	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
	Low	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
		Low	Medium	High
Landscape Value/Quality				

Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

- 2.9. An assessment of the potential residual landscape and visual effects of developing the site was undertaken, assuming that recommended mitigation proposals as set out in Section 4 would be incorporated in the design and implementation of the development.
- 2.10. The potential significance of the landscape effects was based on the sensitivity/ value of the landscape as well as the potential magnitude of the change. The criteria for the landscape effects are set out in Table 2.5.
- 2.11. The significance of the potential visual effects is dependent on both the magnitude of the effect and the sensitivity of the visual receptor. Tables 2.6 and 2.7 sets out the criteria used to define the significance of the effects.

Significance Criteria for Landscape Effects

(Source: Adapted from *The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition (2002.)*)

Significance	Definition
Severe adverse	Proposed scheme would result in effects that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are at a complete variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape. • Permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of valued characteristic features, elements and/or their settings • Cause a very high quality landscape to be permanently changed and its quality diminished
Major adverse	Proposed scheme would result in effects that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot be fully mitigated and may cumulatively amount to a severe adverse effect • Are at a considerable variance to the landscape degrading the integrity of the landscape • Will be substantially damaging to a high quality landscape
Moderate adverse	Proposed scheme would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be out of scale with the landscape or at odds with the local pattern and landform • Will leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality
Minor adverse	Proposed scheme would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape • Affect an area of recognised landscape character
Neutral	Proposed scheme would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape • Maintain existing landscape quality
Minor beneficial	Proposed scheme has the potential to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the landscape quality and character • Fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape • Enable the restoration of valued characteristic features partially lost through other land uses
Moderate beneficial	Proposed scheme would have the potential to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit in very well with the landscape character • Improve the quality of the landscape through removal of damage caused by existing land uses.

Table 2.6 Visual Impact Significance Criteria: Visual Receptor Groups with a Higher Sensitivity to Visual Change

Source: Modification of criteria contained in "Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (Second Edition) 2002"

Significance	Definition
Severe	Where the Published Scheme would be the dominant feature to which other elements become subordinate, markedly affecting and changing the overall character of the scene or view
Substantial	Where the Published Scheme would form a major and immediately apparent part of the scene that affects and changes its overall character and therefore the view
Moderate	Where the Published Scheme would form a visible and recognisable new element within the scene and may be readily noticed by the observer
Slight	Where the Published Scheme would be a minor component of the wider view and may be missed by the casual observer – awareness of the proposals would not have a marked effect on the scene
Negligible	Where the Published Scheme would be scarcely appreciated and, on balance, would have little effect on the scene
No Change	Where no part of the Published Scheme would be discernible

Table 2.7 Visual Impact Significance Criteria: Visual Receptor Groups with a Lower Sensitivity to Visual Change

Source: Modification of criteria contained in "Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (Second Edition) 2002"

Significance	Definition
Moderate	Where the Published Scheme would form a dominant or major and immediately apparent part, to the observer, of the scene that affects and changes its overall character
Slight	Where the Published Scheme would form a visible and recognisable or minor new element within the scene and may be readily noticed by the observer
Negligible	Where the Published Scheme would be scarcely appreciated and, on balance, would have little effect on the scene and therefore the observer
No Change	Where no part of the Published Scheme would be discernible to the observer

3. Landscape Baseline Survey

Landscape-related Planning Policy Background

3.1. The site is currently covered by policies set out within the Weymouth and Portland Local Plan ('WPLP') (2005). It is designated as an Area of Local Landscape Importance (Policy N13) and Important Open Gap (D2). The site also contains a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (Policy 16). Part of the site is currently the subject of an application for designation as a Town Green. If allowed, this area would become protected public open space. A High Court decision on this is currently awaited. All designations and proposed designations are shown on Figure 2.

3.2. Policy N13 states:

"Development in an Area of Local Landscape Importance (ALLI) will be permitted only where it causes no significant harm to the intrinsic landscape quality of the area. Any development that is permitted shall be sited and designed so as to minimise the impact on that landscape."

3.3. Planning Policy Statement 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' (PPS7) states that the government believes that 'carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessments' (para 24) should be sufficient to protect areas of landscape that are highly valued locally, without the need for local landscape designations. PPS7 goes on to say that local landscape designations should only be maintained 'where it can be clearly shown that criteria based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection' (para 25). This requires a 'formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned'. WPBC does not currently have a landscape character assessment yet there is no evidence to show that criteria-based policies would be inappropriate. Policy N13 is therefore not compliant with the recommendations of PPS7 and it cannot be assumed that it will ultimately be retained in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

3.4. The proposed concept masterplan for the site ensures that large areas of the site, including the Town Green application site and the land designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest will remain undeveloped and will continue to be managed as open space. These open spaces will be focussed on the southern, higher parts of the site, thus minimising the visual impact of development on the surrounding area.

3.5. Land designated as 'Important Open Gaps' is considered by the WPLP to be 'particularly important in preserving the identity of individual settlements by preventing the coalescence of two distinct areas and by providing 'open green corridors of aesthetic and wildlife value, and by linking open areas that extend from the open countryside into the heart of urban areas' (WPLP). Policy D2 states:

Developments in Important Open Gaps will only be permitted where:

- (i) the development would be designed and sited so as not to be visually intrusive;*
- (ii) the proposal, either individually or cumulatively with other proposals, does not significantly harm the open character of the gap;*
- (iii) the setting, individual character and identity of built up areas adjoining the gap is maintained;*
- (iv) the proposal would not lead to the coalescence of development within or across the gap.*

3.6. The site forms much of the Westham and Lanehouse/Lanehouse and Wyke Regis Open Gap. Appendix 2 of the WPLP states that the Gap was drawn with regard to the gradient of the land following the existing development boundary and field boundaries as appropriate. Views from two of the three main roads and residential areas bounding the area (Lanehouse Rocks Road to the west and Chickerell Road to the north) are considered to be important. Views from Wyke Road to the south however, are concealed by intervening paddocks and hedgerows. Attractive views from the network of statutory paths crossing the site are also considered to be important. The Council consider the Gap is considered to form an important function by protecting an area of open space; maintaining the individual identity of Westham/ Lanehouse and Wyke Regis by preventing coalescence and providing a link between the town and the Heritage Coast and countryside.

3.7. There are no listed buildings within the site although to the south, one terrace, 140-146 Wyke Road lies one field away from the southern boundary of the site and overlooks the site at an elevated level. To the north, Westdowne House on Westdowne Close is also listed, overlooking the north-west boundary of the site (see Figure 6).

3.8. Although there are no nationally designated Sites of Scientific Interest, Sites of County significance for wildlife have been selected by a panel of nature conservation organisations and designated by the Borough Council as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs). Policy N16 states:

“Developments likely to have an adverse impact on a Site of Nature Conservation Interest Regionally Important Geological Site, or Local Nature Reserve will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the harm to the substantive nature conservation value / geological interest of the site.”

Published Landscape Character Assessments

3.9. One published landscape character assessment covers the study area, describing the key characteristics that contribute to its distinctiveness and providing guidelines for protecting and enhancing its landscape. This was produced by the Countryside Agency in 1999.

Countryside Character Volume 8: Countryside Character: South West England (The Countryside Agency, 1999)

- 3.10. The site lies within the Countryside Agency's Character Area 138 Weymouth Lowlands. This is focussed on the Lyme Bay and Weymouth Bay coastline running from Burton Bradstock in the West to beyond Osmington in the east. It includes the town of Weymouth, stretching as far north as Broadway and Portesham. Key characteristics of this character area that are typical of the study area include:
- Varied area, united by underlying broad ridge and valley pattern
 - Extensive urban and urban fringe land use around Weymouth
- 3.11. Generally, the site does not have the coastal characteristics that are typical of the area, such as coastal grassland, arable fields, treeless ridge tops and valley-side woodlands. The site is typical of the inland areas though, which are characterised by 'long, gently-rounded, hogs-back ridges separated by broad, clay vales' (p 107). Where gradients steepen, 'there is scrub and permanent grassland' (p107).
- 3.12. The area is described as being bounded by chalk to the north with a varied sequence of Jurassic limestone to the south, between which there are gentle limestone hogs-back ridges with clay vales between (p108).
- 3.13. Recommendations for the future management of the landscape are generally not applicable to the site, however the management of hedgerows and the planting of a replacement generation of hedgerow trees could be undertaken.

Landscape Character, Sensitivity and Capacity to Accept Change

- 3.14. Given that there is not a detailed landscape character assessment for the area, a further landscape character assessment has been prepared as part of this appraisal. This also enabled the landscape to be assessed according to its capacity to accept change, in this case the construction of two and three storey housing in the range of 40-50 dph. The definitions used to appraise sensitivity and capacity to accommodate change are given in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.
- 3.15. The character of the area around the site is fairly uniform, and has been classified as '**Mid-twentieth Century Suburbs.**' This area includes housing within Wyke, Lanehouse and Westham. These suburbs consist predominantly of two storey housing, mainly on estates, some of which were developed as Council housing. The area also includes some areas of bungalows, together with supporting services such as local shops, filling stations, public houses and surgeries. Dwellings include terraces, detached and semi-detached properties. Building

materials and styles are generally not specific to the local area. Typical examples of this type of landscape are shown in Views 4, 5, 11, 14, 15, 23 and 25.

- 3.16. The site itself consists of two landscape character areas, according to their differing landform. **'Low Lying Urban Pasture'** forms the northernmost three fields of the site. Here the land is relatively flat, centred on a number of small drainage channels. The land consists of relatively small fields of improved grassland, surrounded by hedgerows that are generally poorly managed with a high proportion of elms suffering from Dutch Elm disease. The fields are all bounded by existing suburban residential properties which erode any rural character.
- 3.17. The rest of the site slopes upwards towards the south, rising from 10m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 69m AOD. This area is classified as **'Hillside Urban Pasture.'** The topography includes undulations, with a dry valley running in a south-west/north-east direction towards St Augustine's Catholic Primary School. There are also a number of small ponds mapped in this area, although these appear to have dried up. This landscape type includes three fields that contain a higher proportion of scrub than elsewhere on the site. The two most species rich fields have been locally designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest in the WPLP (see para. 3.8 above). Like the 'Low-lying Urban Pasture' area, hedgerows in this area are generally poorly managed and overgrown, with a high proportion of dead elm trees.
- 3.18. The most elevated parts of this area have views north-eastwards towards Weymouth Bay and north across Lanehouse and Westham to the countryside beyond. This landscape character area has a number of public footpaths running around and across it, including Cockles Lane, a historic drove road. These provide links between the adjacent residential areas and are used for informal recreation such as dog-walking.
- 3.19. The landscape sensitivity and capacity of each landscape character type to accommodate change has been assessed according to the methodology in Chapter 2, with the results shown in Table 3.1. This shows that the mid-twentieth century suburbs are of 'low' landscape character and visual sensitivity and landscape value and have a 'high' capacity to accommodate change. The Hillside Urban Pasture has a 'medium' Visual Sensitivity whereas the Low-lying Urban Pasture has 'low' Visual Sensitivity due to its less elevated nature. Both have 'medium' Landscape Quality and Landscape Character Sensitivity and ultimately have a 'medium' Capacity to Accept Change.

Table 3.1 Site sensitivity, quality and capacity to accommodate change.

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Quality/ Value	Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Change
Mid-twentieth Century Suburbs	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Hillside Urban Pasture	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Low-lying Urban Pasture	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

Landscape Features

Landform and Land Use

- 3.20. The wider study area consists of a landscape dominated by undulating chalk and limestone ridges and clay vales as described in the Countryside Agency's landscape character assessment (see above). To the north of Weymouth, the area has a remote, rural character, whilst the southern part of the landscape is dominated by the urban development of Weymouth and Portland.
- 3.21. The site is formed of a north-facing slope that rises from 10m adjacent to Chickerall Road to 69m towards Wyke Road. It consists of 12 pasture fields, ranging from improved pasture to species rich grass and scrub. There were no animals grazing the fields at the time of the field survey, although it is understood that the lower pastures are grazed by horses.

Vegetation

- 3.22. In addition to the pasture fields, the site has a strong network of hedgerow boundaries. These however, are dominated by semi-mature elm trees that have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease, together with some colonising sycamore. Other typical species include hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, ash, hazel and dog rose. Preliminary ecological surveys by Kevin Cook indicate that none of these appear to be protected under the Hedgerow Regulations Act, although some resurveying is required.
- 3.23. A few small areas of woodland can be found on the site. The MAGIC website show that these do not have the characteristics of ancient woodland. The ecological survey by Kevin Cook shows that this vegetation tends to be enlarged hedges or planted elms, horse-chestnuts and sycamores. These are of moderate conservation value.

- 3.24. The site has a number of trees and groups of trees that are covered by Tree Preservation Orders, some of which are located along Cockles Lane (see Figure 6.)

Movement and Access

- 3.25. The study area is bounded by/has connections to roads to the west (B3157 Lanehouse Rocks Road), north (Chickerell Road) and east (Westdowne Close, Roundhayes Close, Hardy's Avenue, Markham Avenue) which offer the potential for vehicular and/or pedestrian access points. To the south, the site has no direct connections to Wyke Road although a public footpath offers a pedestrian connection.
- 3.26. There is a network of linked public footpaths running across the site. These connect to Lanehouse Rocks Road/ Cockles Lane, Roundhayes Close, Markham Avenue and Wyke Road.
- 3.27. This network of roads and footpaths offers excellent opportunities for both recreational walking and cycling as well as enhanced connectivity between Wyke Regis, Lanehouse and Westham.

Important Views

- 3.28. The sloping topography of the area means that views into and out of the site vary according to location (see Figure 3). The southern, most elevated, part of the site has distant views to the north and north-east. On very clear days, these can reach as far as Hardy's monument to the south west of Martinstown, however when visited as part of the site visit, it was apparent that visibility to this distance is generally infrequent and even on clear days would form part of a much wider panorama. (See Views 33 and 34). The northern part of the site has a far smaller Zone of Visual Influence (AVI) due to its lower lying nature.
- 3.29. Figure 4 shows two Zones of Visual Influence (ZVI) for the site as a whole, from where views of at least part of the site may be visible. The Secondary ZVI covers the extent of visibility when distant views of the site may be obtained on a very clear day. This approximately follows the course of the South West Coast Path to the north and elevated areas around Preston to the north-east of Weymouth. The Primary ZVI covers land that would generally have views of the site regardless of weather conditions. Due to the presence of existing housing and hedgerows around the site, this is generally fairly limited to the streets immediately around the site, within Lanehouse and Westham. Neither ZVI stretches to the south of the site, as the presence of existing paddocks, cemetery and hedgerows combined with the north-facing slope of the topography screens views.

- 3.30. Given that the site visit was undertaken in summer, it should be noted that the ZVI may be slightly greater in the winter, due to vegetation loss, although where possible this factor has been estimated and taken into account.
- 3.31. Visual Receptors will tend to be residents around the site's immediate boundaries, users of the existing footpaths across the site, and users of roads bounding the site. Some residents from the wider area of Lanehouse may also get some glimpses into the site depending on how it is developed. Users of the wider countryside may get distant views of the southern part of the site, although these would be in the context of the rest of the built-up environment of Weymouth. Table 3.2 sets out potential visual receptors and assesses their sensitivity, as defined in Table 2.1.
- 3.32. The significance of effects the development has on these visual receptors is described in Section 5.

Table 3.2 Potential Visual Receptors

Potential Visual Receptors	Sensitivity
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Chickerell Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Radipole Lane (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Lanehouse Rocks Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Westdowne Close (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Hardy Avenue (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Francis Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Baycliffe Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Ludlow Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Lichfield Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Leamington Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Markham Avenue	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Roundham Gardens (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Wyke Road (part)	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of Cockle Lane	Low
Vehicular and pedestrian users of B3517 north of Weymouth towards Portesham	Low
Users of footpaths running through the site	High
Users of South West Coast Path and footpaths within countryside between Weymouth and South West Coast Path	High
Residents of Chickerell Road (part)	High
Residents of Lanehouse Rocks Road (part of southern end)	High
Residents of Tollerdown Road (eastern side)	High
Residents of Westdowne Close (western end)	High
Residents Hardy Avenue (part of southern side)	High
Residents of Francis Road (part of southern side)	High
Residents of Roundham Gardens (eastern end)	High
Residents of Bradford Road (part of south-western side)	High
Residents of Baycliffe Road (part)	High
Residents of Ludlow Road (eastern side)	High
Residents of Lichfield Road (eastern side)	High
Residents of Leamington Road (part of southern side)	High
Residents of Roundhayes Close (southern end)	High
Residents of Markham Avenue (southern end)	High
Residents of Cockles Lane	High
Users of St Augustine's Primary School	High

4. Mitigation Recommendations

4.1. The baseline surveys indicated that the most sensitive landscape and visual aspects of the site are:

- Views towards the southern part of the site, which is the most elevated area of the site.
- The presence of an area of species diverse grass and scrub which is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest
- Cockles Lane, an historic drove road now used as a public footpath
- The presence of a network of other public footpaths running through the site
- The open character of the site in an area otherwise developed with suburban housing
- The presence of existing residential properties along some of the site boundaries, especially to the north.
- The presence of a small number of trees covered by TPOs, together with a network of established hedgerows.

4.2. To minimise any adverse landscape and visual effects on these elements a masterplan is proposed that includes the following design concepts:

Mitigating Potential Effects on Vegetation

- Any pedestrian/cycle or vehicular access point across Cockles Lane would be sensitively designed to minimise the impact on the character and vegetation of the lane.
- Trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders would be retained where appropriate.
- Boundary hedgerows would be retained where possible, with a substantial management and replanting programme implemented to enhance their current condition. Dead elm trees would be removed for example and standard trees planted as random specimens. This will be carefully designed to provide a native mix of species typical of the area. The location of planting and open spaces will seek to achieve a network of green corridors linking with the countryside beyond the site.
- Planting would include buffer zones, strips of rough grassland and native scrub to encourage nesting birds and enhance feeding for badgers.
- Public access to the Site of Nature Conservation Interest would be carefully designed to maximise visitor access and educational opportunities whilst protecting its nature

conservation value. Access to the SNCIs could be revised so dog walkers move through improved grasslands before entering the SNCI.

- Active management plans would be prepared for both retained and vegetation on the site

Mitigating Potential Effects on Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

- The setting of Lanehouse and Wyke Regis would be respected. The majority of the south-west part of the site which is currently subject to a Town Green application, would be managed as public open space. The two fields designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest would also be retained as public open space.
- By retaining a significant amount of open space within the site, the 'hillside urban pasture character' would be conserved. This land would predominantly be kept as general open space with design improvements focussed on enhancing the biodiversity and local distinctiveness of the area through the use of locally indigenous plants.
- Hedgerow tree planting could be used to reduce any visual effects on existing adjacent properties.
- To visually integrate the new development with the surrounding landscape, areas of open space will be retained and sufficient space allowed for the provision of private gardens and street tree planting. Housing densities will average 40dph, with buildings being mainly 2 to 2.5 storeys and no higher than 3 storeys, in line with the massing of adjacent properties. By leaving large areas of the site undeveloped, the location for the built form can be carefully chosen to minimise its visual impact when viewed from outside the site. In particular this will allow development to be focussed on the least elevated areas of the site.
- By retaining the SNCIs as open space, the setting of listed buildings 140-146 Wyke Road would not be adversely affected. The setting of Wesdowne House has already been compromised by the construction of adjacent housing on Wyke Close and the site development offers the opportunity to enhance this setting, creating a structure of built form and trees that respect and relate to the listed building.
- The detailed design of the buildings and landscape of the site could utilise elements of local vernacular architecture and materials to contribute to the local distinctiveness of this area of Dorset. The use of traditional styles and materials will also enable the development to integrate readily with its setting.

Mitigating Potential Effects on Movement

- The public footpaths running through the site would be retained and where appropriate would be accompanied by cycle routes. Additional pedestrian/ cycle routes linking to the wider area would also be included, subject to agreement with external parties, including Ludlow Road, Markham Avenue and Westdowne Close.
- The development of the site offers the opportunity for enhanced permeability within the Lanehouse/ Westham/ Wyke Regis area, allowing greater access to local residents to local facilities both within the site and in the surrounding area.

5. Landscape and Visual Assessment

Magnitude and Significance of Potential Landscape Effects

Landscape Character

- 5.1. The development proposals would result in just over half of the site being given over to mainly 2 – 2.5 storey high housing. The housing would be set within a network of existing mature hedgerows and small open spaces. To the south and south-east of the housing a substantial area of pasture would be managed as urban pasture as well as sports pitches and play facilities. Much of the proposed open space will be natural in character, including existing hedgerows and scrub. Due to the significant effects of Dutch Elm disease on the site, there will be an important opportunity for substantial amounts of replanting with native woodland species.
- 5.2. Where stretches of hedgerow would be removed for access, replacement native trees and shrubs would be planted in close proximity, to retain the semi-rural structure and character of the area.
- 5.3. The development will be predominantly focussed on the 'Low-lying urban pasture' landscape character area, to minimise both the landscape and visual effects of the development. The important rural character Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and large areas of open land adjoining them in the southernmost part of the site would be retained. The 'Low-lying urban pasture' landscape character area has a 'medium' capacity to accommodate change and is of 'medium' landscape sensitivity (see Table 3.1). Given that the area immediately abuts an area of Mid-twentieth Century Suburbs, and is relatively well concealed by surrounding buildings and hedgerows and vegetation, the overall effect on landscape character would therefore be minimised. Overall, using the criteria listed in Table 2.5, the proposals are judged to generally have a 'minor adverse' impact on landscape character.

Landscape Features

- 5.4. By focussing the development on the flattest area of the site, the need for earth-modelling would be minimised. Further to the south of the site the impact of development would be reduced by following contours where possible. Using the criteria listed in Table 2.5, the proposals are judged to have a 'neutral' impact on the site topography in the north of the site and a 'minor adverse' impact on its southern topography.
- 5.5. Whilst the site has a strong network of field boundary hedges, these are in poor condition, due to lack of management and the effects of Dutch Elm Disease. Whilst some stretches would be removed to allow for the construction of access roads, where appropriate hedgerows would be

retained. The development offers the opportunity to enhance hedgerows through management and replanting. Subject to a survey of their condition, all healthy trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders would be retained wherever practical. The development of the site offers the opportunity for the planting of additional hedgerows and open spaces to help integrate the new housing. Using the criteria listed in Table 2.5, the proposals are judged to have a 'minor beneficial' impact on vegetation.

- 5.6. The proposals will not result in the loss of any public rights of way. It will offer the opportunity for additional informal recreational routes through the public open space as well as formal pedestrian and cycle links through to Ludlow Road, Markham Avenue, Westdowne Close, Round Hayes Close, Lanehouse Rocks Road and potentially Wyke Road. This will enhance the permeability of the area and be of particular benefit to existing residents to the east of the site. Using the criteria listed in Table 2.5, the proposals are judged to have a 'minor beneficial' impact on movement and access routes.

Magnitude and Significance of Potential Visual Effects

- 5.7. By retaining a swathe of open space along the southern part of the site, the proposed concept masterplan would maintain the identity of the built up areas of Lanehouse and Wyke Regis. The areas of the site that would be developed would integrate with the existing neighbourhood of Lanehouse.
- 5.8. Figure 4 illustrating the Zone of Visual Influence shows that the majority of important views into the site are from the north. These are generally either from the area immediately around the site boundary, including limited stretches of Chickerell Road, Radipole Lane, Roundhayes Close and Markham Avenue or as more distant and glimpsed views from the countryside between Weymouth and the route of the South West Coast Path. Generally, the presence of mature vegetation and existing built form screens much of the northern part of the site. The most visible, elevated, parts of the site, to the south, would not be developed. There would be no views of development from Wyke Road and limited views from Lanehouse Rocks Road.
- 5.9. Table 5.1 summarises the significance of any visual effects to the visual receptors identified in Table 3.2, both in winter of the year after construction and in summer 15 years after construction. These are considered to be the worst and best case scenarios respectively, with the latter benefiting from seasonal vegetation on trees and hedgerows and from the establishment of any mitigation planting. It is important to note that the streets listed are only generally affected for limited stretches of their length.
- 5.10. This assessment that shows that even in the Winter of Year 0, the main visual effects are going to be predominantly limited to users and residents of the streets and properties immediately

adjacent to the site boundaries, with glimpsed longer distance views from short stretches of Chickerell Road and Radipole Lane. As mitigation planting establishes however, the development will integrate with the surrounding residential land uses.

Table 5.1 Significance of Visual Effects

Photographic Viewpoint	Potential Visual Receptors (nb full extents of streets will not be affected, see Table 3.2 for further details)	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor	Significance of Visual Effects (Winter, Year 0)	Significance of Visual Effects (Summer, Year 15)
20,21,25	Users of Chickerell Road	Low	Moderate	Slight
29,30	Users of Lanehouse Rocks Road	Low	Slight	Negligible
35	Users of Radipole Lane	Low	Moderate	Slight
	Users of Westdowne Close	Low	Slight	Negligible
15, 16	Users Hardy Avenue	Low	Negligible	No change
17	Users of Francis Road	Low	Negligible	No change
18	Users of Baycliffe Road	Low	Negligible	No change
22	Users of Ludlow Road	Low	Slight	Negligible
4,23,24,25	Users of Lichfield Road	Low	Slight	Negligible
4,25	Users of Leamington Road	Low	Slight	Negligible
	Users of Roundhayes Close	Low	Slight	Slight
19	Users of Markham Avenue	Low	Negligible	No change
14	Users of Roundham Gardens	Low	No change	No change
31	Users of Wyke Road	Low	No change	No change
25	Users of Cockle Lane	Low	Moderate	Slight
34	Users of B3517 and area north of Weymouth towards Portesham	Low	Negligible	No change
1,2,3,4,7,9,25, 26	Users of footpaths running through the site	High	Substantial	Moderate
33	Users of South West Coast Path and footpaths within countryside between Weymouth and South West Coast Path	High	Negligible	No change
20,21,25	Residents of Chickerell Road	High	Substantial	Moderate
29	Residents of Lanehouse Rocks Road	High	Substantial	Slight
	Residents of Tollerdown Road	High	Substantial	Moderate
7	Residents of Westdowne Close	High	Substantial	Slight
15,16	Residents Hardy Avenue	High	Substantial	Moderate
17	Residents of Francis Road	High	Negligible	No change
5,14	Residents of Roundham Gardens	High	Substantial	Moderate
	Residents of Bradford Road	High	Substantial	Moderate
18	Residents of Baycliffe Road	High	Negligible	No change
22	Residents of Ludlow Road	High	No change	No change
6, 4,7,23,24,25	Residents of Lichfield Road	High	Substantial	Moderate
4,25	Residents of Leamington Road	High	Substantial	Moderate
11,12,13	Residents of Roundhayes Close	High	Substantial	Moderate
9,19	Residents of Markham Avenue	High	Moderate	Slight
25	Residents of Cockles Lane	High	Substantial	Moderate
10	Users of St Augustine's Primary School	High	Negligible	No change

6. Summary

- 6.1. This assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development of the Betterment Homes site at Cockles Lane Weymouth is based on methodology set out in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (2nd edition) (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2002.) This included a desk-based study and field survey.
- 6.2. The site consists of 12 pasture fields to the west of Lanehouse. The southern part of the site slopes relatively steeply, rising from 10m AOD to 69m AOD, whilst the northern part of the site is relatively flat. Much of the site is accessible via a network of public footpaths. The majority of the fields are bounded by relatively strong hedgerows. These however, are suffering from lack of management and a significant number of dead elm trees that have been affected by Dutch Elm disease.
- 6.3. Within the Weymouth and Portland Local Plan the site lies within an area currently designated by the Council as 'Important Local Gap' and an 'Area of Local Landscape Importance'. There are a number of Tree Preservation Orders covering vegetation on the site. To ensure that the development has no significant impact on the Area of Local Landscape Importance or Important Local Gap, nearly half the site will be retained as open space. This will generally be managed to retain its semi-rural character, with only native trees and shrubs planted. Development will be focussed on the least visible areas of the site, integrating with existing development at Lanehouse. A swathe of open space between Wyke Regis and Lanehouse will be conserved, respecting the Local Gap. Any vegetation covered by Tree Preservation Orders that is in a healthy condition will be incorporated within the scheme layout wherever practical.
- 6.4. Two fields within the site consisting of scrub and species-rich grassland are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. These areas would be retained, providing an opportunity to enhance their biodiversity and long-term management.
- 6.5. The site is included in one published landscape character assessment, the '*Countryside Character Volume 8: Countryside Character: South West England*' (Countryside Agency, 1999.) The site lies within the 'Weymouth Lowlands' Character Area. The site is typical of the inland parts of this area, which is characterised by 'long, gently-rounded, hogs-back ridges separated by broad, clay vales'. The assessment includes recommendations for managing hedgerows and planting hedgerow trees and this would be supported in the development's landscape framework.

- 6.6. The value and quality of the site and its surrounding landscape, together with its capacity to accept change was judged using a more detailed landscape character assessment. The southern part of the site is classified as 'Hillside Urban Pasture' and the northern part of the site 'Low-lying Urban Pasture'. The area surrounding the site is categorised as 'Mid-twentieth Century Suburbs.' The Low-lying Urban Pasture has 'low' visual sensitivity, whereas the Hillside Urban Pasture has 'medium' visual sensitivity. Both areas have 'medium' landscape character sensitivity and 'medium' capacity to accommodate change.
- 6.7. Due to the elevated nature of the southern part of the site the most important views in and out of the site relate to this area. Views from the south are limited, due to the topography and existing hedgerows, whilst existing housing screens views from the wider area to the north.
- 6.8. The development will result in the replacement of approximately 18.6 hectares of low-lying and hillside pasture with an area of residential properties. Given that the site has a 'medium' capacity to accept change and development is focussed in the lower lying areas of the site immediately abutting an area of residential suburbs and is considered to have a 'medium' capacity to accept change. The residual adverse effects on landscape character would therefore be minor.
- 6.9. The proposed development would retain and enhance the majority of the existing hedgerow vegetation. Native trees and shrubs would be planted, including some forest-scale trees such as ash. Housing densities would be sufficiently low to include additional planting within private gardens and within the public realm. The residual effect of the proposals on vegetation is therefore considered to be 'minor beneficial'.
- 6.10. Ground modelling will be minimised, through the use of the flattest areas of the site and ensuring routes and development follows slope contours. The residual effect of the proposals on the southern site topography is therefore considered to be 'neutral' and the effect on the northern site topography 'slight adverse'.
- 6.11. The routes of the existing footpaths will be retained and further pedestrian and cycle paths provided to link the site with existing housing. The residual effect of the proposals on movement and access is considered to be 'minor beneficial.'
- 6.12. To minimise the visual impact of the development the most elevated, southern part of the site would be left as undeveloped pasture which would be available for informal recreation, nature conservation and formal sports pitches. No buildings would be higher than three storeys, with the majority being 2 – 2.5. There are few long distance views into the site, and the main effects would be on a relatively small group of visual receptors; residents and users of roads immediately abutting the site boundaries and users of footpaths running through the site. As

additional tree planting matures, the proposed buildings will visually integrate with the surrounding area.

- 6.13. In summary, with appropriate masterplanning and planting, this site within the built-up area of Weymouth can be sensitively developed to retain its open character whilst allowing the sensitive expansion of Lanehouse.

