

Appendix 8.3: Summary of relevant Landscape Character Assessment and Guidance

8.1 Introduction

Landscape Character Assessment is a descriptive approach which seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach ensures that account is taken of the different roles and characters of different areas, following principles set out in the NPPF and National Design Guide.

The extent of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in the vicinity of the Site, as featured in published assessments, is illustrated *Figure 8.3*.

Summaries of these published assessments, as of particular relevance to the Site and Proposed Development, are set out below. Extracts of the published assessments are included in *Appendix 8.2*.

8.2 National Landscape Character (NCA)

The Site and surrounding landscape are situated within NCA 128: South Coast Plain¹. The key characteristics of the South Coast Plain NCA of relevance to the Site and surrounding area include:

- *“The underlying geology of flinty marine and valley gravels extends several miles inland to the dip slope of the South Downs and the South Hampshire Lowlands. This gives rise to deep and well-drained high-quality soils.*
- *There are stretches of farmed land between developed areas, often with large arable fields defined by low hedges or ditches.*
- *... small areas of species-rich meadow remain inland.*
- *The area has significant urban development, with settlements along the coastline dominated by the Portsmouth conurbation, suburban villages and seaside towns including Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing*
- *linked by major road and rail systems.” (p.6).*

Within the Statements of Environmental Opportunity section of the NCA profile, several landscape management guidelines are identified including:

- *“(...) SEO 2: Plan for the creation of a strong landscape framework within and around major settlements and identified growth areas, while managing and enhancing existing greenspace and access, and balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the natural environment. For example by:*

¹ Natural England: National Character Area Profiles, NCA 128: South Coast Plain

- *Developing a comprehensive framework of green infrastructure throughout the NCA and the creation/improvement of other green spaces that link into the heart of urban areas and contribute to urban greening, meeting Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) where possible.*
...
- *Creating new areas of multifunctional greenspace within and surrounding identified growth areas, including community food gardens and significant areas of new saline and freshwater wetlands forming sustainable urban drainage systems to improve water quality, provide a local recreational resource, enhance landscape setting and aid flood alleviation.*
...
...
- *Seeking to maintain and enhance areas of open countryside in this heavily urbanised NCA, to preserve the distinct settlement pattern and ensure that local communities have access to greenspace for their wellbeing and enjoyment.*
...
- *Ensuring that development and its associated infrastructure (including light, noise and air pollution) does not intrude on the special qualities of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the South Downs National Park; and ensuring that the landscape character within these areas and their settings is conserved, restored, reinforced or created as appropriate to reflect the ambitions of their respective management plans.*
- *Promoting and enhancing the rights of way network throughout the area, especially along the coast and linking to the South Downs, while developing new permissive access that links towns and settlements to quality greenspace and other areas of interest as part of a cohesive network of inspiring access provision for all."*

8.3 County Landscape Character

8.3.1 Hampshire Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2012)²

As shown in *Figure 8.3*, the south of the Site (south of Southleigh Road) is defined within the county-wide landscape character assessment as part of the Landscape Character Area (LCA) 9G: Havant and Emsworth Coastal Plain. The north of the Site lies within the Forest of Bere East LCA (2F).

Key characteristics of **LCA 9G: Havant and Emsworth Coastal Plain**, of relevance to the Site and its landscape setting, include:

- *"A former river terrace landscape of Pleistocene origin with extremely fertile and national important agricultural silty loam alluvial soils.*
- *Springs emerge on the chalk clay boundary and form short crystal clear chalk streams.*

² Hampshire County Integrated Character Assessment, 2012

- *An early small scale enclosure landscape which has been substantially modified to larger open fields in the northern half of the character area.*
- *Remnant mature oaks in suburban settings along verges and stream courses likely to have been associated with former field hedges.*
- *Varying tranquillity levels declining in proximity to modern development/busy transport infrastructure.*
- *Good access for walkers from settlements down to the harbour shore.*
- ...
- *A historically nucleated settlement pattern that has expanded massively in post second world war– including social housing area of Leigh park*
- *A particular concentration of historic tide mills and ponds which have now been converted and adapted to modern uses and evidence of relatively small scale Salterns”*

Experiential/perceptual characteristics include:

“Views from the adjoining character areas to the north give the impression of open farmland and wooded suburbs of natural and ornamental planting.”

Threats include:

- *“Potential permanent loss of agricultural land to urban extensions particularly in the Havant Emsworth Gap.*
- *Possible change in use due to pressure for Gaps to provide greater range of uses and as a green infrastructure resource.*
- *Urban fringe related land management changes such as proliferation of horticulture related fields and formal amenity areas on land which traditionally supported market gardening/dairying.”*

Opportunities include:

- *Improve and maximise the function of gaps by co-ordinated stewardship of land designated as Gaps.”*

Key characteristics of **LCA 2F: Forest of Bere East** of relevance to the Site and its landscape setting include:

- *“A low lying landscape with shallow undulations, predominantly south sloping*
- ...
- *Predominantly pasture, commercial forestry and woodland with small some smallholdings.*
- *High proportion of woodland, both coniferous plantation and ancient semi-natural woodland...*
- *Woodland creates a secluded landscape, contrasting with the adjoining major towns, although there are strong urban fringe influences around large settlements.*

- *High proportion of semi natural habitats including ancient woodlands, wet woodland, remnant heath, unimproved neutral meadows and acid grassland supporting a rich biodiversity.*
 - *Part of the former hunting reserve of the Royal Forest of Bere, which has shaped the pattern of woodland, commons and assart fields. Hedgerow oaks and hedgebanks are common features. The fringes are typically of later formal enclosure.*
 - *Routes vary from straight roads with wide verges associated with formal enclosure, to narrow, winding, hedged lanes.*
 - *Historically, mixed settlement pattern of low density dispersed farms, with linear settlements along stream tributaries and common edges.*
- ...

The following key qualities and corresponding threats and opportunities are identified for this character area:

“Mixed settlement pattern of low density in the core former forest, and traditionally dispersed small settlements on the Forest edge where there are Victorian smallholdings and later mixed piecemeal development

Threats:

- *Modern conversions and piecemeal development in small common and former forest edge settlements, and continuing change of use from small holdings to residential.*
- *Increased traffic from commuter rat runs from burgeoning surrounding population.*

Opportunities:

- *Influence LDF policy related to this quality (Winchester, Havant, Fareham councils) – in particular MDAs/SDAs (West of Waterloooville and North of Fareham) and SHLAA sites that are considered for housing allocation /reserve sites.”*

8.4 District Landscape Character

8.4.1 Havant Borough Townscape, Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment

The Havant Borough Townscape, landscape and Seascape Character Assessment explores the “*historical and contemporary events and influences that have shaped the Borough’s development*”, with the overall objective of providing a clear framework to guide future development and management of the borough’s landscape.

The character assessment identifies that the Site lies fall within two borough Landscape Character Types (LCTs), LCT B: Lowland Settled Wooded Farmland and LCT F: Open Upper Harbour Plain. The north of the Site lies within LCT B, LCA 21: Southleigh Forest and the south of the Site lies within LCT F, LCA 22: Southleigh Agricultural Plain, to the south.

Key characteristics of **LCA 21: Southleigh Forest** of relevance to the Site and its setting are as follows:

“Physical; landform, soils and land cover

- *The landform gently slopes down from Comley Hill to the north in a southerly and westerly direction... the lower slopes becoming more open with the designed parkland to the south of Southleigh House and the open arable landscape to the west;*
- *The underlying geology for this LCA is London Clay with periglacial drift deposits of Head found in a band to the north and to the south. River terrace deposits align along the southern boundary;*
- *Further to the south west, the soils are loamy with a naturally high water content producing fertile plains (grade 1) under arable production;*
- *The parkland at Southleigh House consists of small woodland copses and individual trees within an area of grassland*

Historic and built environment

- *This is one of the few areas in the Borough where the sparseness of the historical settlement pattern survives with only few later additions, and contains a number of important listed buildings;*
- *The central area retains the designed parkland character associated with Southleigh House;*
- *Linear intermittent hamlets with predominantly mixed hedgerow boundaries with mature oak trees evoking a rural character;*
- *Individual farmsteads with farm house, outbuildings and adjacent small paddocks;*
- *The 16th century timber-framed and thatched house of 'East Leigh', at the junction of Southleigh Road and Eastleigh Road is one of the very rare surviving examples of the early local vernacular building tradition of the Borough*
- *To its north, though of somewhat later date, the small cluster of flint and brick buildings at Home Farm demonstrate the later vernacular building materials of this area, including the decorative use of tabular flint in the Victorian period;*
- *Southleigh Park retains a number of flint and brick ancillary buildings including stables and a model dairy, which together comprise a fine group, though their setting has been seriously compromised by the modern tinted glass office building to the north;*
- *Line of gentlemen's houses built in the early 19th century within parkland estates, following the enclosure of parts of the Forest of Bere;*
- *Interesting group of buildings focussed on Home Farm now constitutes one of the rural hamlets in the borough.*

Experiential: tranquillity, visual perceptions and access

- *...The parkland area of Southleigh House is private. Further to the west, the large arable fields are inaccessible as well as the mixed range of fields to the east;*

Visual: openness/enclosure, prominence and visibility

- *The woodland provides an enclosed landscape with a variety of vegetation types, including a high density of holly, areas of coppice and yew;*
- *Eastleigh Road due to its thick hedgerows is predominantly enclosed, while further to the north views along the elevated Bartons Road focus down across the landscape to the A27 (T) and beyond. Farmsteads are seen as individual clusters within this open rural scene.”*

The character assessment for LCA 21: Southleigh Forest identifies the following to be local key issues of relevance to the Site:

- *Loss of boundary hedgerows leading to large fields...*
- *Encroachment of urban character into adjacent rural areas*
- *Potential loss of settings of historic buildings”*

The character assessment for LCA 21: Southleigh Forest puts forward the following guidelines to conserve and enhance the local landscape character, of relevance to the Site and its setting:

“Land management:

- *Maintain and manage woodland strip adjacent quarry;*
...
- *Continue to manage a variety of vegetation types within Hollybank Wood;*
...
- *Maintain and enhance the broadleaved woodland, replacing coniferous woodland when appropriate with broadleaved species;*
- *The woodland resource needs to be protected from loss through development;*
- *Encourage the use of field margins for ecological benefits by providing habitat through hedgerows and land that is not cultivated for farming.*

Built form and development:

- *Retain, manage and improve the parkland character of Southleigh House. Retain the historic setting for Southleigh House and associated buildings within this rural landscape;*
- *Avoid urbanisation of site with lighting, road details and sight lines;*
- *Maintain the scale and size of farm settlements at Locks Farm and Home Farm;*
...
- *The surviving elements of the 19th century estates, and their landscape settings should be protected from further erosion by development;*
- *The long distance views from Southleigh Park, once common to all of the estates, should be protected.”*

Key characteristics of **LCA 22: Southleigh Agricultural Plain** of relevance to the Site and its setting are as follows:

“Physical: landform, soils and land cover:

- *Predominantly flat plain, which slopes down to the east, with the A27 (T) elevated on a low embankment;*
- *A high density of ditches align the intermittent thin hedgerows flowing east into a tributary which eventually feeds into the western Mill Pond at Emsworth;*
- *To the east, areas of rough grassland with a band of woodland which demarcate the alignment of the River Ems;*
- *Young tree and shrub planting on the embankments of the A27 (T).*

Historic and built environment

- *The isolated buildings of Southleigh Farm are retained on the northern edge of the LCA. The rest of the area is dominated by medium, regular sized fields with straight boundaries. This historic landscape has been degraded through the removal of historic boundaries but the underlying pattern can still be distinguished from the remaining hedgerows, wire fencing and farm tracks;*
- *Sparse settlement pattern with Southleigh Farm as a cluster of buildings set towards the higher ground along the northern boundary of this LCA and a motel and restaurant located adjacent the A27 (T);*
- *This is one of the least altered LCAs within the borough, with a single farm complex remaining the only built form in the area. Southleigh Farm comprises an interesting group of substantial Victorian farm buildings, including a fine flint and brick barn complex; a relatively rare surviving example of the local vernacular building materials;*
- *The farm buildings form an impressive and attractive feature in this area of flat agricultural land.*

Experiential: tranquillity, visual perceptions and access

- *Areas of tranquillity exist towards the north away from the elevated A27 (T);*
- *An inaccessible landscape with access only permitted within the recreation ground and along a short footpath to Emsworth. To the east accessibility is permitted along the River Ems park and access to the Sussex Border Path.*

Visual: openness/enclosure, prominence and visibility

- *An open landscape with the adjacent urban areas and the A27 (T) providing distant enclosure*
- *Pockets of enclosure exist south of the A27 (T) within the small chain of hedged fields to the east;*
- *To the east, vegetation adjacent the Ems River [sic] provides an enclosed landscape, limiting views;*
- ...
- *Long open views across agricultural plain from the eastern edge of Havant and from the western edge of New Brighton*
- *Intermittent views from the elevated A27 (T) through roadside vegetation"*

The Landscape Character Assessment for the Southleigh Agricultural Plain (LCA 22) identifies the following to be local key issues of relevance to the Site:

“Specific local key issues

- *Poor quality edge treatment in adjacent urban areas has adverse impact on the LCA22*
- *Erosion of tranquillity through noise from the A27 (T)*
- *Further expansion of the housing area to the west (LCA19) could adversely affect the present open rural setting of the farmstead and the setting of the group of locally listed buildings...*”

The character assessment for Southleigh Agricultural Plain (LCA 22) puts forward the following guidelines to conserve and enhance the local landscape character, of relevance to the Site and its setting:

“Land management:

- *Maintain and manage small field hedgerow character to the east adjacent to New Brighton;*
- *Improve boundary treatment along adjacent urban areas;*
- *Maintain and improve the rural character for the recreation ground to the west of New Brighton;*
- *Improve and manage roadside vegetation of A27 and the motel.*

Built form and development:

- *Maintain the scale and size of Southleigh Farm, its boundary treatment to the wider landscape and the character of the small cluster of hedged fields located adjacently;*
- *Minimize visual intrusion of the proposed area of housing on the adjacent area of open land by providing an attractive vegetated buffer which also links into the surrounding vegetation pattern. Avoid building adjacent to the periphery which would have a degrading impact on the adjacent area of open land;*
- *Provide recreation routes to the west for adjacent urban areas*
- *Continue to protect the setting of the locally listed buildings.”*

The Landscape character assessment for **LCA 19: Denvilles**, adjacent to the south-west of the Site notes the following points of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development:

Specific Local Key issues:

- *“Lack of access to adjacent open landscape to the east*
- *Poor treatment along boundary of new housing adjacent open landscape.*
- *Potential for pressure of development for further encroachment of residential areas into farmland to the east. This would adversely affect the setting of the important listed building on Eastleigh Road, and could affect the wider landscape setting of Southleigh Farm.*
- *Further development of this area would put increased pressure on Southleigh Road and the level crossing at Warblington Halt”*

Built form strategy and guidelines:

- *“Any new development adjacent to the open area of countryside to the west [sic] must include sufficient boundary edge treatment so to improve and not to compromise the adjacent open rural landscape character.*
- *Improve recreational access to the adjacent area of LCA22 and consider a joint recreation cycleway/footpath link across to New Brighton.*
- *Further development on the eastern side of the residential area should be of a loose grain to form an intermediary between urban and rural, and be in keeping with the generous plot sizes of the early houses in the south-east quadrant.*

It should be noted that this guidance was compiled before the completion of the recent housing development on this settlement edge.