

Coombe Bissett and Homington Neighbourhood Plan (CB&HNP) - AECOM site-specific conclusions and indicative comments from Wiltshire Council and CCWWD AONB Views on Assessed Sites

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NB: this document will be periodically updated as additional information is presented.

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Document Summary

This document is to be read in conjunction with the Site Assessment Topic Paper. It sets out Wiltshire Council and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's (the 'AONB') view on the impact some sites may have on the AONB, areas with high landscape sensitivity and access issues (highways). ***Please note, these are indicative views only based on discussions on environmental factors to date. These are not based on detailed plans or policies relating to these sites. Some issues could be mitigated from the perspective of Wiltshire Council and others less so.***

Context

An initial view of the sites from the AONB is also detailed, based on email correspondence between Christine Cooper and Richard Burden on 14th January 2020 requesting the AONB give a view on the two 'suitable' sites and Kenora Paddock; at the time this site was favoured in terms of environmental impact by Wiltshire Council due to its location outside of the AONB (the AONB initial view on The Bundy Field and East of Shutts Lane are yet to be determined). However, Mr. Burden did say by email that he was "uncomfortable" about either the land rear of Avalon or Kenora Paddock being developed. Wiltshire Council's view on Highways and Landscape issues are also noted for Kenora Paddock (which they prioritised for a preliminary assessment based on their interpretation of a sequential approach for sites outside the AONB). Wiltshire Council have also commented on some sites regarding Highways or Landscape considerations.

It will be essential to ascertain the community's view of these sites and consider other local criteria, where relevant, pending further comment by the AONB on specific design features or codes for sites favoured for development by the community.

Summary of Wiltshire Council and AONB Views on Sites

Table 1 - Highways, Landscape Matrix - combined impact analysis from AECOM Site Assessment Report, Wiltshire Council and the AONB

Site Name	Land Type	Built Up Area	AONB	Landscape Sensitivity	Agricultural Ground Loss	Conservation Area	Flood Zone ¹	Biodiversity Loss	Wiltshire Council view	AONB initial view Jan 2020
Sites deemed 'suitable' by AECOM										
The Old Vicarage	Mixture	Within – also in settlement boundary	Within	Medium	No Loss	Yes	Zone 1	Low	Access and visibility needs improving. Landscape view tbc.	Issue of local character being compromised and loss of mature trees
Rear of Avalon - Eastern half of site	Mixture	Within	Within	Low	No Loss	No	Zone 1	Low	Access and visibility needs improving. Landscape view tbc.	Extension of settlement/bulge on valley side vs. closer to settlement
Sites deemed 'potentially suitable' by AECOM										
Kenora Paddock	Greenfield	Adjacent	Adjacent	Medium	Some Loss	No	Zone 1	Medium ²	Highways and Landscape issues can be mitigated	Road widening would urbanise the area; extension of settlement
East of Shutts Lane	Greenfield	Adjacent	Within	Medium	Some Loss	No, but land directly to the north is	Zone 1	Medium	Access and visibility needs improving. Landscape and rights of way tbc	tbc
The Bundy Field (off Thorne Close) - Western half of site	Greenfield	Adjacent	Within	Medium	Some Loss	No, but land on Eastern half of the site is; also, land to the North of the Western side is	Zone 1, section in Zone 3	Medium	Access and visibility needs improving for either Homington Rd or A354 access. Landscape view tbc.	tbc

Light green – low risk of adverse impact or net enhancement

Yellow – moderate risk

Pink - higher risk of adverse impact

¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change#flood-zone-and-flood-risk-tables>

² TBC depending agricultural grade of land. The criteria of landscape sensitivity and biodiversity loss have the same results and could be combined, however further review by the community may lead to different classifications of risk against these categories.

Detailed Views of AECOM, Wiltshire Council and AONB on Sites. *NB: Wiltshire Council and AONB indicative views.*

I. The Old Vicarage

Assessment: Suitable

Key issues: Within settlement boundary, mature trees, requirement to fit with Conservation Area. However central location that could be suited to dwellings for downsizing

Flood Zone: 1

AECOM Recommendations: The site is suitable to take forward for a residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan, providing that the design positively contributes to the setting of the Coombe Bissett Conservation Area and nearby heritage features, retains the mature trees at the site entrance, delivers environmental net gains and incorporates sustainable drainage techniques and permeable materials to alleviate surface water flood risk issues (p.13).

AONB initial view on the site, January 2020: The redevelopment of the Old Vicarage site could put at risk the character of that part of the village that is very close to the river and its flood plain. Considerable attention would be needed to numbers, design, and materials. The conservation of trees would probably be an important element in sustaining local character.

Wiltshire Council view on Highways, March 2020:

The Old Vicarage

The Old Vicarage site is located on Homington Road which benefits from a footway from the site entrance towards the village centre.

The proposal is to use the existing access which is a shared access to The Glebe.

I consider the following essential requirements to make the site acceptable from a highway perspective:

- The visibility from the shared access is adequate, visibility splays should be provided in both directions at 2.4m x 43m
- The shared vehicle access should be widening to allow 2 vehicles to pass
- The driveway should be widened to allow 2 vehicles to pass or passing bays created
- I assume refuse collections will be from the edge of Homington Road and if so, provision for refuse bins should be provided at the edge of the site for collections days, so as bins will not be on the carriageway edge or within the visibility splays of the access

Wiltshire Council view Landscape: requested, awaiting feedback.

II. The land rear of Avalon (Eastern side)

Assessment: Suitable

Key issues: Within the AONB, access issues, possible issue of lost small-scale employment – yet to be verified

Flood Zone: 1

AECOM Recommendations: Development within the eastern half of the site presents an opportunity to reuse previously developed and underutilised land which benefits from a relatively central location within the settlement with good accessibility to local services and facilities. Therefore, this area of the site is suitable to take forward for a small-scale residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan providing it can be demonstrated that the issues concerning highways safety can be resolved, and drainage techniques and permeable materials are incorporated into the design. It should also be noted that the site is currently used for small-scale employment uses. Comparatively, development within the western half of the site has the potential to increase the surface water flood risk potential to neighbouring properties, given its sloping topography and the likely removal of existing natural vegetation. Likewise, the elevated and sloping topography at this location is particularly significant given its setting within a nationally protected landscape. As such, the western half of the site is less suitable to take forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. (p.14)

AONB initial view on the site, January 2020: The Avalon site would widen the ribbon development leading into the village, creating a bulge on the valley side. It could, of course, be argued that the land north of the Avalon site is more closely associated with the core of the village. In simple terms, ignoring for the moment land availability, sites closer to the village core would not only be more sustainable but also consolidate, rather than extend, the settlement form.

Wiltshire Council view on Highways, March 2020

Rear of Avalon

This site is located off the A354 on a long relatively straight section that is subject to a 30mph speed limit.

The existing access to the site is restricted in width with limited inter-pedestrian visibility.

I consider the following essential requirements to make the site acceptable from a highway perspective:

- The visibility from the vehicle access should be provided in both directions at 2.4m x 90m
- Inter-pedestrian visibility should be provided at both sides of the access to the rear of the existing footway of 2.4mx2.4m
- The vehicle access should be widening to allow 2 vehicles to pass
- The driveway should be widened to allow 2 vehicles to pass or passing bays created
- I assume refuse collections will be from the edge of the A354 and if so, provision for refuse bins should be provided at the end of the driveway of the site for collections days, so as bins will not be on the carriageway edge or within the visibility splays of the access

Wiltshire Council has recently raised concern that the land at the rear of Avalon was not suitable for development since it was within the AONB and outside of the settlement boundary. They suggested that other sites with development potential outside the AONB should be explored to determine if that might be more suitable (see section **Error! Reference source not found.** - **Error! Reference source not found.**) – i.e. to follow a sequential test when assessing sites in the AONB.

However, the specific wording of a 'sequential test' is not within the NPPF nor the Wiltshire Council Local Plan. Amy Burnett has followed up with other colleagues about this particular interpretation of the AONB as a sequential test and has found that while they had not heard of a sequential test more formally in this context, in practice LPAs will likely look to areas with least constraints when allocating sites for the Local Plan.

However, to address the concerns raised by Wiltshire Council and the AONB, redeveloping brownfield sites, even if within the AONB, could be considered an enhancement. Therefore, if CB&HNP policies can evidence there is a net enhancement to the AONB this could supported by the AONB.

Any allocation at this site would need to consider the effect of the loss of employment uses and the potential to compensate for it elsewhere within the Parish or through other enabling policies.

Wiltshire Council view Landscape: requested, awaiting feedback.

III. Kenora Paddock

Assessment: Potentially suitable

Key issues: Possible loss of grade 2 agricultural land, access issues, visual sensitivities

Flood Zone: 1

AECOM Recommendations: Access constraints, agricultural land quality and visual sensitivities from neighbouring properties provide constraints to what is otherwise a relatively unconstrained site which benefits from good connectivity to the village centre. Although there are issues associated with the narrow and steep site entrance, it is likely that this can be appropriately mitigated through high-quality design which integrates with the neighbouring properties at Drove Close and retains existing trees and hedgerows. As such, the site is considered potentially suitable to take forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan (p.10).

AONB initial view on the site, January 2020 The Kenora site is a relatively long way up a narrow lane and the scope for widening that lane to make it two way, without significantly impacting on the hedges and land on one or both sides, is minimal. The access to the Avalon site is from the busy A354 and visibility splays and right turning traffic across the downslope flow of traffic – in an area where speed control is an issue – could be problematic. Widening to create a turning lane / island would significantly urbanise the entry to the village as well as possibly reducing verges / encroaching on adjoining land. Development of the Kenora site would appear to extend the settlement up the valley slope, eroding the gap between Drove Close and Manor Farm.

Wiltshire Council view on the site, December 2019:

Highways

Essential requirements to make the site acceptable from a highway perspective:

- Localised widening of the whole site frontage and cleared of vegetation and obstructions to maximise visibility and enable vehicles to pass
- The existing vehicle access should be stopped up and a new vehicle access created to maximise visibility in both directions
- The gradient of the vehicle access should be to highway specification
- Investigate the possibility of extending the 30mph speed limit to the north side of the proposed site
- A footway between the new site and Drove Close should be installed

Landscape

I agree with the appraisal that in landscape terms the site is not highly constrained. It is in the setting of the AONB and readily overlooked by some existing properties but with a robust landscape infrastructure these views could be filtered.

The site appears to be relatively enclosed by boundary vegetation. If it comes forward there is an opportunity to implement some advance planting in the form of gapping up/new hedgerows where required, e.g. reinforce the western boundary that interfaces with the AONB.

Essentially, Wiltshire Council have confirmed that they consider the highways and landscape mitigation for Kenora Paddock to be achievable.

Amy Burnett also followed up with colleagues regarding a suggestion by Wiltshire Council that an agricultural land assessment should be carried out at Kenora Paddock to determine suitability for allocation. At present, this cost is implied by Wiltshire Council to be incurred by the CB&HNP. Amy Burnett contacted a consultancy specialising in these assessments who said they had not heard of a Neighbourhood Planning group requesting such a service and this is a cost typically incurred by the developer at planning application stage. Informal communication with the AONB also suggested it was not a cost that should be borne by the CB&HNP group.

IV. The Bundy Field

Assessment: Potentially suitable

Key issues: Potential change to the character of the landscape and village, loss of greenfield land, within AONB and adjacent to Conservation Area.

Flood Zone: 1 and 3

AECOM Recommendations: The main constraints to development of the whole site concern the potential change to the character of the landscape and villagescape, resulting in the permanent loss of an area of greenfield land within the AONB. However, there are contrasts between the eastern and western sections of the site in terms of the potential for development. The eastern half of the site is within the Coombe Bissett Conservation Area and is not currently accessible via the road network. As such, this section of the site is less suitable to take forward for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan. Comparatively, the western half of the site benefits from good connectivity and access to the village centre. Therefore, this area of the site is potentially suitable for a small-scale residential allocation which meets a locally identifiable housing requirement, providing the site incorporates a high-quality design which is sensitive to its setting within the AONB and proximity to nationally and locally designated heritage assets, delivers environmental 'net gains' and appropriately mitigates potential flood risk concerns (p. 12).

AONB initial view on the site, January 2020 tbc

Wiltshire Council view on Highways, March 2020

The Bundy Field

The site can be accessed off Thorne Close, Homington Road or the A354.

To access the site off Thorne Close, access is required off Homington Road. The bend at the junction with Homington Road has severely substandard visibility of on-coming traffic for vehicles turning right into the site and, therefore, I cannot support an increase in traffic movements at this junction. Thorne Close is substandard in terms of width and visibility around a bend half way along its length and cannot be improved sufficiently for any increase in traffic and pedestrian movements. There are no separate pedestrian facilities for its entire length. Thorne Close is only recorded as public highway from its junction with Homington Road to just before the bend, the rest of Thorne Close is not recorded as public highway but is registered to Wiltshire Council.

To access off Homington Road, I consider the following essential requirements to make the site acceptable from a highway perspective:

- Visibility from any new vehicle access should be provided in both directions at 2.4m x 43m
- The vehicle access should be wide enough to allow two vehicles to pass and be suitable for refuse vehicles
- The gradient of the vehicle access road should be to highway specification, there is a significant height difference between Homington Road and the site

A vehicle access off the A354 would be acceptable and I consider the following essential requirements to make the site acceptable from a highway perspective:

- Visibility from the vehicle access should be provided in both directions at 2.4m x 90m
- The vehicle access should be constructed to highway specification
- A right hand turn lane should be investigated on the A354, this would allow better traffic flow to continue on the A354.
- If a new vehicle access is proposed, the existing agricultural access should be stopped up

A key concern for development at The Bundy Field raised in the Community Questionnaire is the site's propensity to flood. Any decision to allocate the site will be influenced by the AONB's position on visual impact, in similarity to issues raised about the suitability of the Rear of Avalon.

Wiltshire Council view on Landscape: tbc.

V. Land East of Shutts Lane

Assessment: Potentially suitable

Key issues: Visual sensitivities, access issues, loss of greenfield land, within AONB and adjacent to Conservation Area.

Flood Zone: 1

AECOM Recommendations: Landscape and visual sensitivities, heritage considerations and access concerns provide notable constraints to development at this location. Likewise, a residential allocation at this location is likely to result in the permanent loss of greenfield land, which cannot be mitigated. Nonetheless, the site benefits from pedestrian access into the village centre and is within proximity to several local services and facilities. Therefore, the site is considered potentially suitable to take forward for a small-scale residential allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan which incorporates a high-quality design which is sensitive to its setting within the AONB and proximity to the Coombe Bissett Conservation Area (p.11).

AONB initial view on the site, January 2020 tbc

Wiltshire Council view on Highways, March 2020

East of Shutts Lane

Shutts Lane is recorded as a Byway, Byway Coombe Bissett 8 and is of narrow width with no pedestrian facilities for its entire length. The junction with Homington Road has substandard visibility to the East.

The proposal is to use the existing access which is off the Byway/Bridleway at the end of Shutts Lane. Access rights and surfacing would need to be considered and I would suggest that Rights of Way are also asked to comment on the use of this.

On my visit there were 4/5 vehicles parked on Shutts Lane, I assume associated with the school, 10 parking spaces are proposed within the proposed site for school parking. It was evident that on street parking occurs for much of the length of Shutts Lane from the school access towards the Village Hall, due to the deterioration of the verge along Shutts Lane and a notice asking for vehicles not to park there on refuse collection day.

I consider the following essential requirements to make the site acceptable from a highway perspective:

- The visibility that is available at the junction of Shutts Lane and Homington Road to the east should be confirmed, can it be improved by realigning the splay?
- Widening of the whole site frontage to allow 2 vehicles to pass
- If the existing vehicle access is to be utilised for the site access, visibility should be provided in both directions at 2.4m x 43m and it should be widened to allow two vehicles to pass and be suitable for refuse vehicles
- If a new vehicle access is to be provided, the existing vehicle access should be stopped up
- Any new vehicle access should have visibility splays in both directions of 2.4m 43m and be wide enough for 2 vehicles to pass and be suitable for refuse vehicles
- The gradient of the vehicle access road should be to highway specification, there is a significant height difference between Shutts Lane and the site
- A footway across the whole site frontage should be installed
- Parking restrictions along Shutts Lane should be investigated

Wiltshire Council view on Landscape: tbc.