

Landscape Assessment

29.1.2024: Revised 23.5.2024

Tisbury footpath link; Fonthill Estates.

1. Introduction.

This assessment provides a description of the sites landscape character, its value and its susceptibility to the development in question and will include any opportunities for appropriate mitigation and/or enhancement.

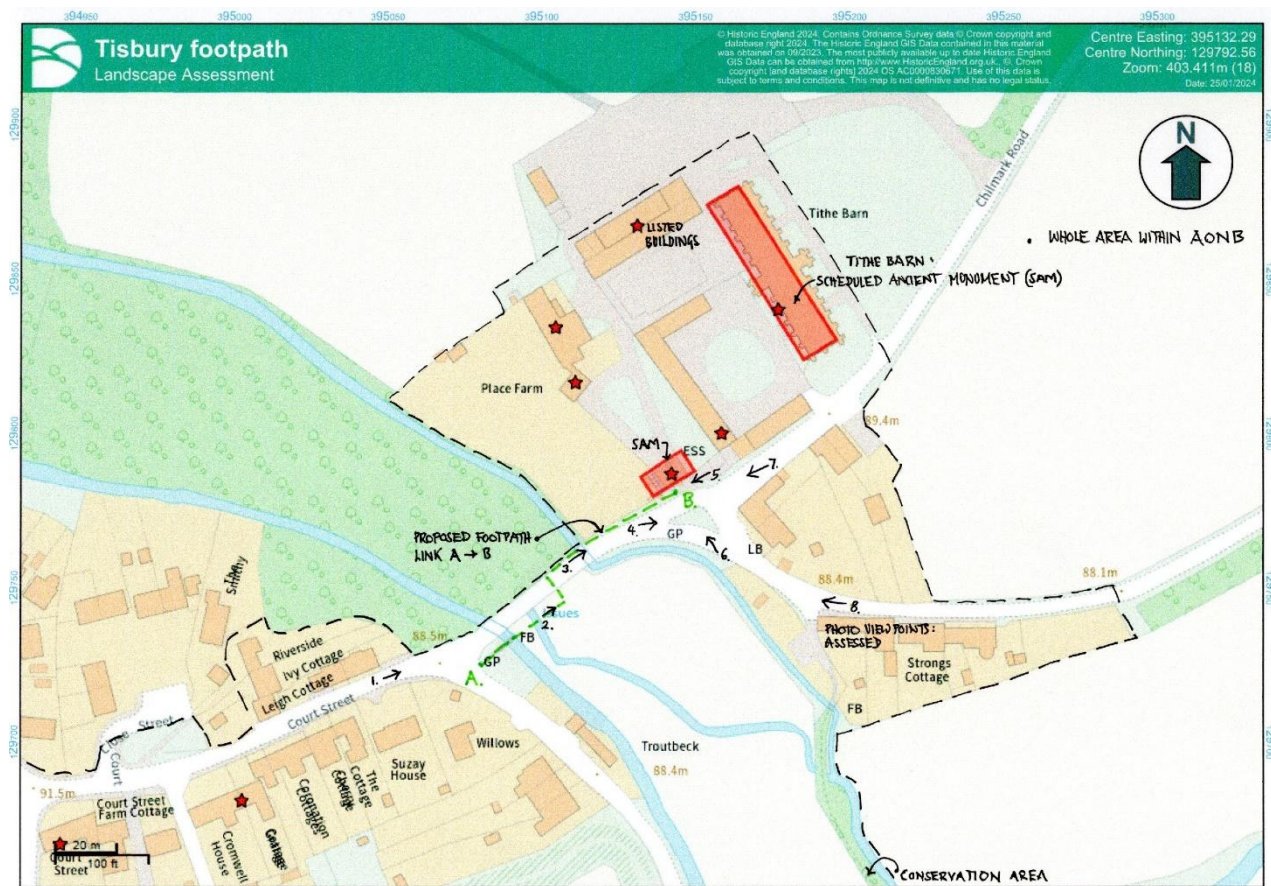
It is based on the proposals shown on the Condon Drew Associates site plan dated 3.1.2024 (Dwg. No. 1863-005), other information provided by Fowler Fortescue Ltd and that on the planning portal.

It is to accompany a planning application for the development and in particular because the site area lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Tisbury Conservation Area and within the setting of Listed Buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The scale, design and impact on landscape character of the countryside, trees and heritage assets are all therefore important Planning considerations.

See Site Context and photo viewpoint locations. Plan 1. below.

NB: all the area shown is within the AONB.



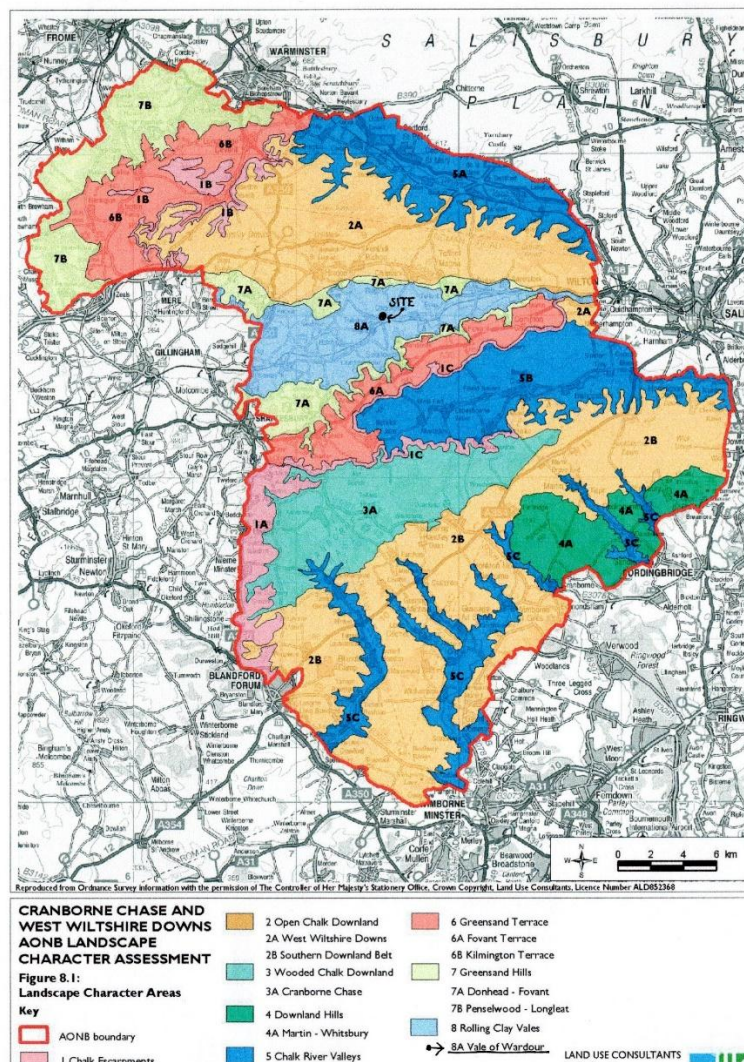
2. Site context.

The proposed footpath link is sited on the eastern side of Tisbury at the junction of Chilmark and Chicks Grove Roads by the small 'green' immediately adjacent to Place Farm. It lies within the AONB which washes over Tisbury, and within the village Conservation Area (dated February 2009) which defines it as within the 'Place Farm character area'.

It is within the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour National Character Area (NE539) Number 133; as defined by Natural England 2013. It is also within the Vale of Wardour Rolling Clay Vales Landscape Character Area (LCA) as defined in the Salisbury District Council document 'The Landscape of Salisbury' dated Feb 2008.

In all these documents the importance of conservation and restoration of key features of the landscape, the safeguarding of the rural character of lanes, the consistent use of building materials and the restoration of trees are all stressed as key objectives. They stress that the 'urbanisation of the rural roads has also had a deleterious effect on character'.

- See below its location in the Vale of Wardour landscape character area as defined in the June 2003 AONB Landscape Character Assessment.



3. Key Landscape Characteristics of the site¹

- a. The small 'green' and surrounding historic buildings, walls, bridges and structures create a distinctive and important character.
- b. A semi-rural 'village' perception to the area distinct from the rest of the conservation area.
- c. Relatively tranquil despite the road environment.
- d. Distinctive local materials and largely intact buildings and structures make a positive contribution to the site.
- e. A unique setting and entrance 'focal point' to the eastern side of the village created by the combination of the bend in the road and the historic buildings and structures.
- f. Site contributes positively to the setting of the listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.
- g. The trees in and around the area contributes to the area's distinctiveness particularly those along the flood meadows.
- h. The traditional black and white wooden signposts are also distinctive positive features.
- i. Some glimpsed views northeast out into the open countryside and southeast across the River Nadder meadows.
- j. The meadows themselves also contribute to the areas character in a positive way and act as a softer 'natural' contrast to the locally buildings and structures.

4. Summary of overall character of the site. *Based on scale, landform, pattern/complexity, settlement & human influences, skyline, visual relationships & views, intervisibility, perceptual/aesthetic criteria.*

The site has a distinct character created by the combination of the adjacent historic buildings, the walls, the bridge, the small 'green' in its centre and the bend in the road. The bend foreshortens views and helps focus attention on the attractive adjacent buildings. This all creates a unique sense of place and a 'focal point' in this small part of the village. This also creates a semi-rural 'hamlet like' feel to the space.

The distinctive local materials used in the area and the intact, high-quality buildings, contribute positively to the setting and character of the area. The traditional black and white signposts, the trees associated with the river Nadder meadows, and the glimpsed views all contribute to the character of the area. It therefore has a high scenic value due to the pleasing aesthetic and visual relationships with all the elements mentioned above.

The meadows which run across the area from the northwest to southeast, bisected by Court Street, form a key part of the wider character and a contrast with the built pattern of development. The meadows on the south side of Court Road are within the Conservation Area.

¹ A site or Landscape Character Areas' key characteristics are aspects of character which give an area its distinct sense of place. It can include key features of importance, which are elements of the landscape of particular prominence or those which catch the eye. If the key positive characteristics were to change or be lost there would be significant negative consequences for the character of the landscape. Equally if key negative characteristics were to be enhanced, this may result in positive consequences for the character and visual amenity of the landscape.

5. Landscape Value².

The site has high value due to the intactness and quality of the overall built environment. This is focused on its setting at the bend in the road, the small 'green' and the juxtaposition of these and the scenic and historic buildings associated with Place Farm. Its historic and cultural value is recognised by its designations particularly as a Conservation Area as well as the presence of listed buildings and the fact it lies within the AONB. The glimpsed views from the area out to open countryside to the northeast as well as over the River Nadder water meadows and floodplain either side of Court Street all add to its scenic, amenity and recreational value. These are all viewed from public rights of way which adds to its value.

The whole area therefore contributes significantly to the value of this part of the Conservation Area and in particular as a valued setting and context for the adjacent listed buildings. It provides therefore a representation of the typical character of the wider Conservation Area in terms of the local materials.

The site does have some biodiversity value provided by the water meadows/floodplain of the river Nadder either side of Court Street and in the vegetation and trees around the site, for example along the fringes of the water courses.

6. Visibility of the landscape/site³. See also photo assessment below.

The site is viewed primarily from road users passing through the area, pedestrians accessing the area from the footbridge off Tisbury Row and those coming and going from Place Farm and the Tithe Barn.

It is a reasonable assumption to assume that pedestrian's attention when passing through this area, will be focused largely on the environment, views and the visual amenity of their surroundings. The quality of the heritage assets in this small area is I feel significant, and this enhances overall visual amenity.

Both the above statements point to the area having a moderately significant level of visual sensitivity.

The number of occupiers of residential properties in the area is limited but this does have some significance in terms of views of the area and visual sensitivity.

² This is based on Perceptual aspects such as scenic value, tranquillity, wildness, openness, views and remoteness; Cultural and historic associations; Amenity and recreational value; and Wildlife, geodiversity and biodiversity significance.

³ The degree to which people are susceptible to and concerned about changes in views and visual amenity is a function of:

- The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations
- The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.

The most sensitive receptors are: users of all outdoor recreational facilities including rights of way, whose interest may be focused on the landscape such as visitors to heritage assets, communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or values views enjoyed by that community and occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development.

7. Survey of photo viewpoints. See location plan above for viewpoints: Plan 1 above.

Photos taken 24.1.2024.

Viewpoint 1.



View looking northeast along Court Street towards the stone bridge over the water course which is a tributary of the River Nadder. The main site area is not visible from here so it is a viewpoint of low sensitivity, the magnitude of change in the view as a result of the development will be insignificant and the overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact therefore is negligible and also insignificant.

The proposed traffic warning sign and road marking will however be highly visible in this view. This will create a significant adverse landscape and visual impact on the semi-rural character of this view due to the 'hard engineering' appearance and 'urban' aspect of such a proposal.

Viewpoint 2.



View looking northeast from the footbridge off Tisbury Row which forms the start of the proposed footpath link. The proposal is to reinstate the footbridge and pathway across the meadow to where it will turn to cross over Court Street. This photo helps provide some context to the character of the area being assessed.

The main site area by Place Farm is not visible from here so it is a viewpoint of low sensitivity, the magnitude of change in the view as a result of the development will be insignificant and the overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact therefore negligible and also insignificant.

The proposed enhancement to the footbridge and pathway will however be highly visible in this view. This will though positively enhance the run down and derelict feel to this view when the pathway is restored and therefore it will have a beneficial landscape and visual impact.

Viewpoint 3.



View looking northeast along the verge where the proposed footpath link will be located and to where the transition between the 'virtual footway' and 'non-hard' surface path is proposed. Place Farm is to the immediate left in this view and the 'green' seen on the right.

As the development will be prominent in this view it is a highly sensitive viewpoint and the magnitude of change due to the development will also be high. The overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact is therefore high and significant.

Mitigation and/or enhancement measures if implemented however, do have the potential to reduce this overall level of significance to moderate or minor.

Viewpoint 4.



View looking east along the length of the 'green' which shows the eroded edges to this area of grass highway verge. The traditional black and white finger post is also seen in this view.

The main site area is not visible from here so it is a viewpoint of low sensitivity, the magnitude of change in the view as a result of the development will be insignificant and the overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact therefore negligible and also insignificant.

There is a potential opportunity however to improve this green as part of any mitigation and/or enhancement measures considered appropriate.

Viewpoint 5.



View looking southwest along the line of the proposed 'non hard' surfaced put footpath which starts where the manhole is located. The entrance to Place Farm is on the immediate right. As the development will be prominent in this view it is a highly sensitive viewpoint and the magnitude of change due to the development will also be high. The overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact is therefore high and significant. Mitigation and/or enhancement measures if implemented however, do have the potential to reduce this overall level of significance to moderate or minor.

Viewpoint 6.



View looking NW along the southwestern edge of the 'green' from the Chicksgrove Rd towards the entrance to Place Farm. The proposed footpath link will run along the grass strip seen at the foot of the wall.

In this way it is a highly sensitive viewpoint but the magnitude of change in the view as the result of the development should be minor. The overall level of significance of any landscape and visual impact will be minor/moderate due to the angle of view of the proposal from this location. Mitigation and/or enhancement measures if implemented also have the potential to reduce further this overall level of significance and to even enhance the setting of the listed buildings and Conservation Area.

Viewpoint 7.



View looking southwest down Chilmark Road with the entrance to Place Farm on the right and the 'green' seen on the left. The proposed footpath link will run down the far verge on the right against the wall. In this way it is a highly sensitive viewpoint and the magnitude of change in the view as a result of the development will be moderate/major. The overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact therefore is major/moderate and significant.

Mitigation and/or enhancement measures if implemented also have the potential to reduce further this overall level of significance and to even enhance the setting of the listed buildings and Conservation Area.

Viewpoint 8.



View looking northwest along Chicksgrove Road directly towards the 'green' and through the archway into Place Farm. The development will not readily be seen from this view, so the viewpoint is of moderate sensitivity. In magnitude of change in the view as a result of the development will be minor and the overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact is therefore low and insignificant.

Viewpoint 9



View looking northeast up Court Street towards the development site which is on the left side hand side seen as the narrow grass strip of verge. The 'green' is seen on the right-hand side as the road bends to the right. In the middle of the view on the right-hand side, the timber field

gate indicates where the proposed band of coloured 'high friction' surface will cross Court Road. This will lead into the proposed virtual footway which will run along the left-hand wall. The about aspect of the development proposals will be highly visible so this viewpoint is highly sensitive. Magnitude of change as a result of this part of the development will be major and overall level of significance of landscape and visual impact is therefore high and significant. This is due to the fact it will introduce a new 'engineered' feature into a settled and intact semi-rural view.

8. Landscape susceptibility to the development in question⁴.

Based on the site visit to the area, the photo viewpoint assessment and considering the sites value, it is felt the site is of high susceptibility (major/moderate) to the development in question. Generally, the quality of the built environment and its overall intactness contribute to this susceptibility.

To assess susceptibility, I have divided the proposals into four elements:

1. The path link, new gates and new footbridge across the meadows on the south side of Court Street.
2. The high friction surfacing and 'virtual footway'.
3. The 'non hard' footpath.
4. The traffic warning signs and road markings.

The path link, new gates and new footbridge

Despite being in a sensitive location on the edge of the meadows, this part of the development has the potential to enhance the context and setting of the Conservation Area and wider AONB if implemented in a sensitive way. It can restore the existing structures which are largely derelict and also enhance opportunities to enjoy views of the open meadows.

The high friction surfacing and 'virtual footway'.

This as mentioned is highly sensitive area due to its current semi-rural and undeveloped character which make it highly susceptible to adverse change. However, if the correct colour and texture of the surfacing is used the susceptibility and therefore adverse impacts could be minimised.

The 'non hard' footpath.

A highly sensitive area with a high level of susceptibility to any adverse change due in particular to its immediate location adjacent to listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. As mentioned however with appropriate and sensitive mitigation and/or enhancement, this susceptibility could be significantly reduced or even turned into a positive contribution to the character of the area.

⁴ Landscape susceptibility is a product of landscape value and sensitivity. It is defined as the extent to which the landscape/site can accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of any positive baseline situation and character.

It is based on judgments about the susceptibility of aspects most likely to be affected:

- Natural factors- e.g., extent and pattern of semi-natural habitat
- Cultural factors- e.g. land use, enclosure pattern
- Landscape condition- e.g. representation of typical character
- Aesthetic factors- e.g. scale, enclosure, pattern, form/line, movement
- Landscape value- see 5 above

The traffic warning signs and road markings.

The proposed locations of these signs and markings are in sensitive positions within the Conservation Area at either 'entrance point' into the main part of the site being assessed. It is not clear how much flexibility there is to mitigate the anticipated adverse impacts of these features. This is despite the guidance and advice in the Manual for Streets⁵ and in the AONB Rural Highway Guidance⁶.

9. Opportunities for mitigation and/or enhancement⁷

As the site lies within an area assessed as susceptible to development and there are major to moderate adverse impacts assessed from some of the sensitive viewpoints, this provides 'a hook' to justify a range of appropriate mitigation and/or enhancement measures.

To assess these opportunities, I have used the four elements from above in 8:

The path link, new gates and new footbridge

The use of local timber and local Wiltshire construction styles for the pedestrian and vehicular gates and for the boardwalk and footbridge, will all positively enhance this part of the development proposals.

The high friction surfacing and 'virtual footway'.

Using a grey rather than a buff-coloured crossing and virtual footway, to pick up the colour in the local stone, may be a more suitable option. Relocating the existing Tisbury sign and ideally creating a more traditional one to match the black and white finger post, will enhance this aspect of the scheme significantly. Attaching this new sign to the finger post could also be considered.

The 'non hard' footpath.

This 'non hard' option is preferable to a standard tarmac surfaced path with concrete edging kerbs which would have an adverse landscape and visual impact on the immediate area.

The traffic warning signs and road markings.

As mentioned, it is not clear how much scope there is to mitigate the need and use of these features bearing in mind the standard Highway advice. However, bearing in mind the Manual for Streets and AONB Highway guidance, every effort should be made to reduce the adverse impact of these features on the character of the area. For example, the smallest sign sizes should be used and the feasibility of having just the signs without the road markings should be explored.

⁵ <https://www.tsrgd.co.uk/pdf/mfs/mfs2.pdf>. Advocates the principle of 'Using the minimum of highway design features necessary to make the streets work properly. The starting point for any well-designed street is to begin with nothing and then add only what is necessary in practice.' Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation 2010

⁶ file:///C:/Users/HP/OneDrive/Documents/CONSULTANCY/CC%20AONB/Tisbury/CCAONB_Guide_to_Rural_Highways.pdf

⁷ Opportunities and the scope to mitigate the potential adverse impacts will be outlined (the purpose of mitigation is to avoid, reduce and where possible remedy or offset any negative impacts).

Other enhancement opportunities to be considered.

The following measures could also be considered as a wider mitigation and enhancement package. This could help to conserve and enhance the wider area.

- The restoration of the eroded verges around the 'green'. This could be by using local stone kerbs, such as Portland stone or Blue Lias or by pinning turf to the reshaped verge edges.

The above mitigation and enhancement proposals will help to conserve and enhance landscape character, reduce the 'urbanisation of rural roads' and help in maintaining the 'strong' strength of character as defined in the AONB Landscape Character Assessment. They are also in line with the Management Objectives for this Character Area as stated in both the AONB and Salisbury District Assessments and in line with the 'proposals for enhancement' in the Tisbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan⁸.

There is an opportunity therefore to 'conserve and in particular enhance' the overall landscape setting of the area as part of this development. This will be in line with National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the AONB Management Plan objectives and policies.

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⁸ [file:///C:/Users/HP/OneDrive/Documents/CONSULTANCY/CC%20AONB/Tisbury/annexe_10 -
tisbury_conservation_area_appraisal.pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP/OneDrive/Documents/CONSULTANCY/CC%20AONB/Tisbury/annexe_10_-_tisbury_conservation_area_appraisal.pdf)