

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

for

Laverstock and Ford Parish, Wiltshire

Executive Summary



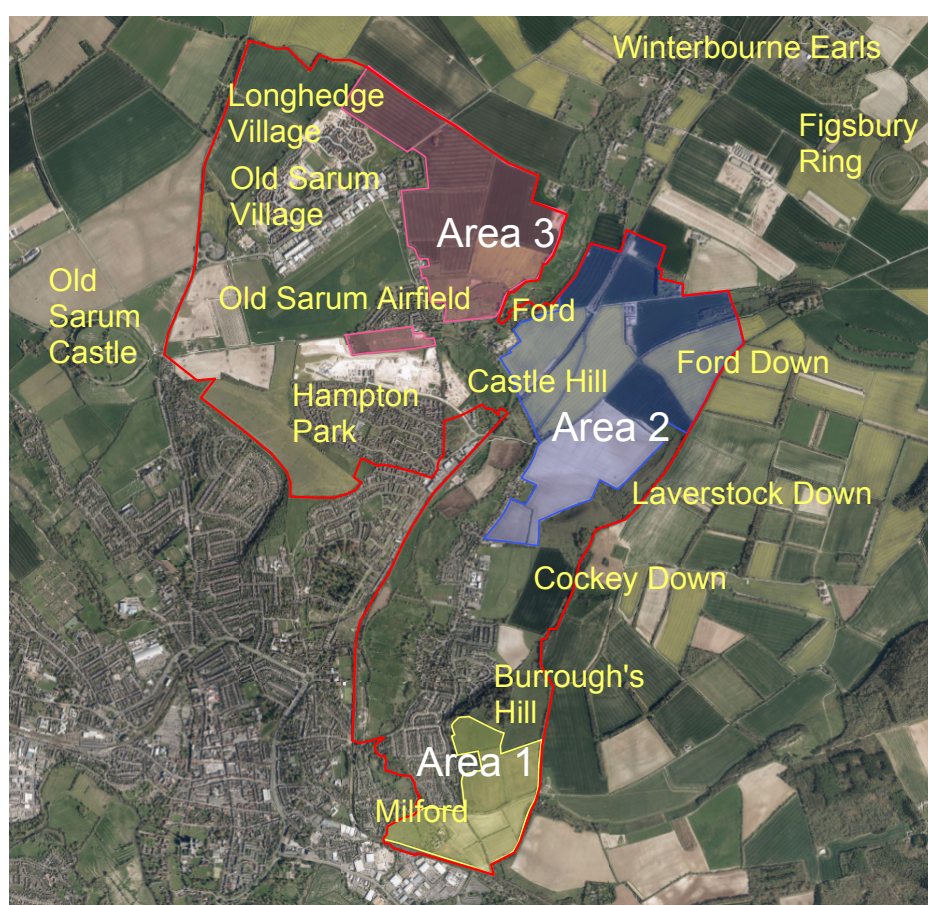
L138/R03C

23 June 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by Laverstock and Ford Parish Council in order to provide background information with regard to the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape of the parish of Laverstock and Ford in Wiltshire in relation to potential future residential development. This information is intended to form part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The plan is led by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG).

The scope of this study is to identify and analyse the potential impact of further development on the landscape of the parish, especially when viewed from the main public rights of way and viewpoints used by residents and visitors within the parish and also from adjacent locations, such as Old Sarum and Figsbury Ring Scheduled Monuments, the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area and the main roads into the parish. The result is a baseline mapping of low to high sensitivity of low rise (2 storey) housing development across the three identified areas of the parish (shown in Fig. 1.1 below). Outline recommendations for mitigation and development have been made.



This report should be read in conjunction with the main report: Laverstock and Ford Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (L138R01) and the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Methodology (L138R02).

This report was produced by Helen Palmer CMLI of LandShape Ltd. For Laverstock and Ford Parish Council under the guidance of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Fig. 1.1 Area breakdown for the study

2. STUDY AREA

Laverstock and Ford Parish is shaped as an arc around the north and east of Salisbury City. It provides a much valued transition from urban to rural spaces, with community open spaces and farmland, commercial farmland, an historic grass airfield, recreation grounds and many footpaths and byeways. The parish does not have a single definable “community centre”. Instead, it consists of several settlements, comprising its current 4200 dwellings, some long established but the majority built over the past 30 years.

The NPSG have identified a proposed area of study which covers areas which are currently either open space which may have potential for development or they have been identified on the Wiltshire Council SHELAA database for potential development.

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL AMENITY

The existing Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment and the assessments carried out as part of this study have summarised in general that the landscape character and visual amenity varies over the parish dependent on elevation; distance from Salisbury; proximity of existing development and public access. In summary, the parish is influenced strongly by the topography of the landscape, with extensive views in all directions possible from many of the higher areas, which are often open to public access via long distance footpaths (Monarch's Way), new country parks (Castle Hill and Old Sarum Village) and access land (Cockey and Laverstock Downs). These higher areas also act as focal points and visual backdrops throughout the parish and provide visual connection to the rural surrounds from the city of Salisbury. Lower areas are influenced by the River Bourne and its valley and flood meadows which provide the heritage context for the settlements in the area. Visibility is lower in these areas but they are richer in smaller scale character with listed buildings and structures and more vegetation.

Heritage and visual context is also provided by the hillforts at Old Sarum Monument and Figsbury Ring. The first dominates visually parts of the parish and is also a focal point for views and communications such as Roman roads.

The River Bourne is an important element to the landscape character; it is a SSSI along its length as part of the River Avon system. It also provided early communications and settlements along its valley, with Ford village being the southernmost of the Winterbourne villages along the river's length. This settlement history gives rise to significant heritage features, particularly around Milford in Area 1.

The proximity of Salisbury is felt throughout the parish. The focal point of Salisbury Cathedral spire is visible from many areas including footpaths. Many of the residential developments which date from the 19th century to very recent are overspill accommodation for the city as it has expanded. This has created an urban fringe to the city which extends into the parish, detracting from its rural origins. To the north and east of the parish, this urban influence declines and the northern areas have far more rural influence, both in character, with large open agricultural fields, and visual amenity, with long views over the parish to the plains to the north and north-west.

In general, visual sensitivity throughout these more rural areas is considered to be high due the strong sense of openness and panoramic views. In the Bourne valley the visual sensitivity is less high due to the screening of the views from the vegetation along the meadows but is still generally high due to the character of the meadows and traditional settlements along the valley.

Tranquillity throughout the parish is generally considered to be moderate to good, increasing with distance from Salisbury and the settlements but interrupted by the roads and rail corridors such as the A30 and A338. Commercial development at Old Sarum Airfield and along the roads detracts from the landscape and visual character in places.



Fig. 3.1 Westerly view from Figsbury Ring across the parish.

4. AREA 1 - LAVERSTOCK AND MILFORD

Area 1 is the southernmost part of the parish, from the southern railway embankment to the north of Milford Village and to the north east of Burrough's Hill. The area includes the floodplain of Milford along the River Bourne which is a SSSI and frequently floods. Area 1 includes scheduled monuments of Milford Bridge and the pottery kilns plus listed buildings. Most of the area is low lying although rises to Burrough's Hill which is visible from outside the parish and connects with the adjacent Cockey Down. The area is crossed by various public rights of way including The Clarendon Way and Gypsy Lane from which views are available across the fields to Salisbury Cathedral spire. The area is busy with residents, dog walkers, cyclists and some traffic, including trains on the embankment. Most of the fields are edged with hedges and there are occasional tree belts. The fields are arable or grazing. Area 1 is a generally rural area with considerable urban fringe influence. The landscape is mostly enclosed with rural influence increasing towards the east and north. There is a local sense of place. Tranquility and remoteness increase towards the east as the area becomes more rural.

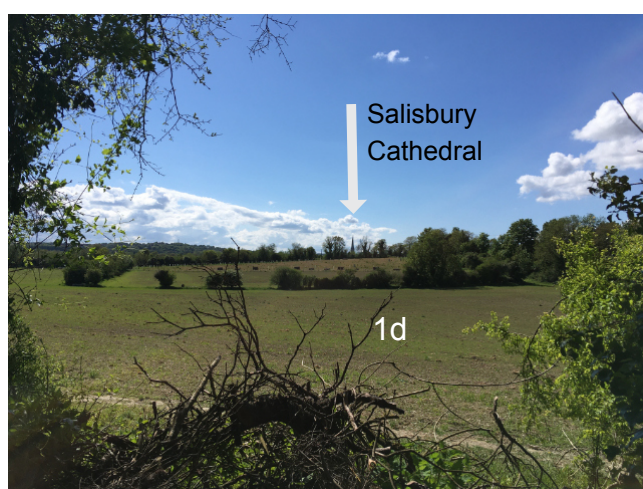


Fig. 4.1 South west view from the footpath to the south of the Clarendon Estate showing glimpsed views through the hedge across the fields to the east and to Salisbury Cathedral

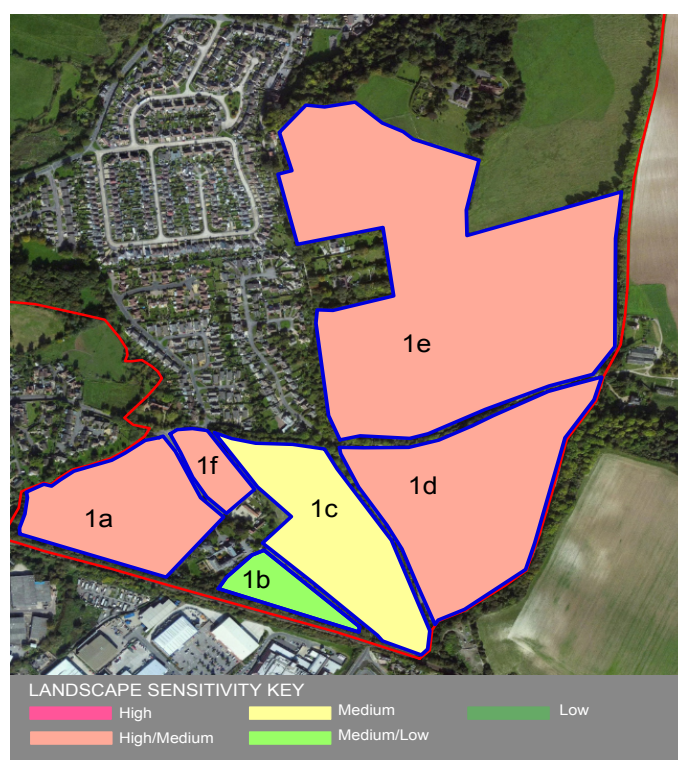


Fig. 4.2 Landscape Sensitivity of Area One

Landscape Sensitivity Summary and Development Recommendations

Area 1 has a mix of sensitivities although the majority is high/medium sensitivity. The lower elevations are generally visually enclosed, and therefore less visually sensitive but have more sensitive landscape character due to the River Bourne and its associated heritage. The Clarendon Way allows for sensitive pedestrian receptors to cross the area with views over the fields to Salisbury and the higher areas of 1e are steeply sloping and are visible from the eastern edge of Salisbury.

Development is generally not recommended on the higher elevations of this area due to its visibility from surrounding areas. Development near to the river is not recommended due to flooding and heritage elements. Development could take place along the lower enclosed areas of Milford Mill Road if it was low storey and in keeping with the local vernacular. Care should be taken to avoid obstructing the views of Salisbury Cathedral spire.

Sensitivity	Development Recommendations and Mitigation
Medium/High 1a – Adjacent to SSSI of River Bourne; flood risk zone 3; part of important view from Milford Bridge 1d – adjacent to Clarendon Way and Gypsy Lane; connects with wider rural landscape and longer views 1e – steep landform; high level of visibility from other areas both inside and outside the parish such as Shady Bower; adjacent to the Clarendon Way, connected to adjacent rural landscape 1f – adjacent to SSSI of River Bourne; Scheduled Monument due to mediaeval kilns, adjacent to Clarendon Way;	Medium/High 1a, 1f - Development is not recommended due to potential for flooding and the proximity of listed buildings and scheduled monuments. 1d – Development in the higher areas and adjacent to the Clarendon Way and Gypsy Lane is not recommended as it is likely to be viewed over a wider area and will affect the landscape character of the area, particularly on the local scale. 1e - Development on these areas, even if limited to lower storey, will be visible from higher distances, especially from the outskirts of Salisbury. Development is not recommended, but if essential could be limited to a narrow band east of Duck Lane, continuous with existing houses, limited to single or low storey only to ensure the skyline views are not breached and that development stays within the context of the existing buildings.
Medium 1c – adjacent to Clarendon Way and Gypsy Lane; connects with wider rural landscape and longer views including Salisbury Cathedral spire. Enclosed by hedges with a gentle rolling topography with the lower elevations adjacent to Milford Mill Road more visually enclosed.	Medium 1c Large scale development is not suitable for this area. Development on lower southern areas of 1c should be limited to linear or small clusters of housing along Milford Mill Road respecting the vernacular tradition of the farm cottages existing along the road. Existing vegetation should be retained and enhanced to ensure that views from the west to the east are not affected. Mitigation planting should be provided to screen development from views along the footpaths to the east and north.
Medium/Low 1b – Area 1b is visually enclosed by the railway line and hedge to Milford House and the road and is not visible from long distance. There are views across this area towards Salisbury Cathedral spire.	Medium/Low 1b - Development here together with mitigation planting would be unlikely to affect the landscape character or affect visual amenity although it would be visible from Gypsy Lane. This is one of the main and historical routes into the parish from the south and has a very different character from the south of the railway line. Care should be taken to maintain the semi-rural character on entering the parish here. Any development here should be low storey and in a linear fashion, using the vernacular style of the existing farm buildings already along this road to create an attractive character. Development should be low to avoid preventing views across towards Salisbury Cathedral Spire from Gypsy Lane, Queen Manor Road and more distant footpaths.

5. AREA 2 - NORTH LAVERSTOCK AND COCKEY DOWN

Area 2 is the collection of fields to the east of Church Road and to the north of the schools. The fields lie at the base of the scarp slope of Cockey and Ford Downs and are gently sloping with the slope steepening closer to the downs. The fields are arable with boundary hedges in some places although open in others. There are wide views from the top of the downs and the downs create a visual backdrop to the area from most views. The River Bourne which is a SSSI lies in the valley to the west of this area and there is settlement along the river in a linear form along Church Road which also contains several schools, while the older village of Ford has a local vernacular character. The A30 enters this area from the north-east and has wide views across the landscape towards Salisbury as it crosses Ford Down. An historic Roman road crosses this area, following Old Malthouse Lane in parts. There is a strong sense of place on top of the Downs, lower sense of place at lower elevations. Old Ford village has a local sense of place. There is good public access throughout with footpaths and CROW Act land on the downs and is a mostly rural area with little urban fringe influence. There is mostly open landscape at higher elevations with some enclosure from boundary hedges at lower elevations with rural influence and openness increasing towards the east and north.



Fig. 5.1 Panorama from Cockey Down looking east over areas 2a and 2b with the River Bourne and Old Sarum airfield beyond. Laverstock schools are just visible at the left of the photo

Landscape Sensitivity Summary and Development Recommendations

Area 2 has a mix of high and high/medium sensitivities. The majority of this area is highly visible from sensitive viewpoints such as Figsbury Ring and the Downs and it has a very rural and open character with connections to the wider rural landscape. Any development on the higher fields (2b, 2h and 2i) would be extremely visible and intrusive from public rights of way such as Monarch's Way on the north side of the Bourne Valley and other viewpoints and would affect the character of the entry into the parish along the A30. Development in these areas is not recommended due to this high visual sensitivity. The lower areas have a high/medium sensitivity due to their lower elevation although proximity to the River Bourne increases landscape character sensitivity in places and again large scale development is not recommended here. Sensitivity decreases in localised areas of the fields which are more enclosed with hedges such as around St. Thomas's Bridge and Broken Cross and small scale development may be possible here where visual enclosure is provided by vegetation.

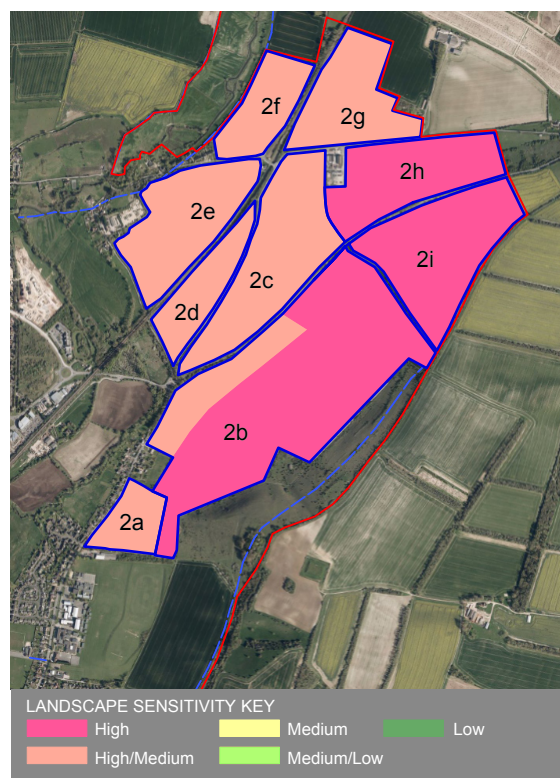


Fig. 5.2 Area 2 Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Development Recommendations and Mitigation
High 2b (upper areas) and 2i, have a steeply sloping landform 2b (upper areas), 2i, 2h - high level of visibility from other areas of the parish such as Church Road, Old Sarum Village, Old Sarum Monument, A30, A338, Monarch's Way. In particular they also create the gateway into the parish and to Salisbury when travelling southwest along the A30, with long views for users of the road to the south and west. 2b and 2i connect with Cockey and Ford Downs and adjacent rural landscape to create a significant visual backdrop to many local and more distant locations. Adjacent to permissive access area and CROW act area of Cockey Down and crossed by a local footpath. Highly visible to users of the A30 on entering the parish from the north. 2h - highly visible from viewpoints including Cockey Down, Green Lane and Monarch's Way. Any large scale development in this field is likely to be highly visible.	High 2b and 2i (upper) – these areas lie on the scarp slope of the downs and are not physically suitable for development. 2b (upper), 2i, 2h - These areas are unsuitable for any development excepting possible agricultural or individual buildings which relate to the surrounding agricultural landscape - e.g. adjacent to existing developments along Old Malthouse Lane.
Medium/High 2a – this area lies along Church Road within the context of the existing development on the opposite side of the road and the nearby schools. There are also hedges dividing this area from area 2b and the adjacent buildings. This area is flat and at a lower elevation but connects visually with the higher land of Cockey Down beyond and provides a visual gap when viewed from the road which is considered locally important. The area also provides a visual connection from the River Bourne to the skyline of Cockey and Ford Downs. Any development in this area would interrupt this view. 2b (lower) – this area is mostly screened behind the high hedges along the A30 and A338 at St. Thomas's Bridge. Development here would not impinge significantly on the views of the higher elevations of the downs.	Medium/High Large scale development in any of these areas is not recommended, but individual or small developments where there is local enclosure through topography or vegetation may be possible. 2a - Any development along Church Road should be in a series of clusters to allow the views of the Downs beyond to still be viewed between any houses, in a similar way to the closes on the other side of the road which allow views of the River Bourne. In this way, visual connections will be maintained across this landscape. 2f – any new development should be limited to the existing houses along Spire View, around the existing development at Broken Cross and should be well screened with mitigation planting.

Sensitivity	Development Recommendations and Mitigation
Medium/High 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 2g - these areas are lower lying, flat or rolling topography, mostly enclosed with hedges, but with long views across from certain footpaths and viewpoints. These areas connect with the wider rural landscape and/or the Bourne water meadows and are visible from higher viewpoints such as Figsbury Ring and the Monarch's Way. Large scale development on these areas would be highly visible from the wider landscape; however, smaller areas or clusters of development screened by existing vegetation or mitigated with new planting may be acceptable.	Medium/High 2c – any development should be located in association with the existing industrial complex and Broken Cross on Old Malthouse Lane and should be well screened with mitigation planting. There may be scope for small scale development at the south-west end of the field where there is existing boundary hedge screening, 2d - new development should be limited to the road on the south-west edge of 2d where there is visual enclosure. Any development should be low key and low height, relating to the local vernacular. Existing vegetation should be retained and enhanced to ensure that views from the west to the east are not affected. Mitigation planting should be provided to screen development from views along the footpaths to the east and north.

6. AREA 3 - FORD AND EAST OF OLD SARUM AIRFIELD

Area 3 includes the fields between the village of Ford and the east of Old Sarum Airfield. These lie on the north-central part of the parish and connect with the rural areas of Winterbourne Earls along the River Bourne to the fields to the north. The area is crossed by two Roman Roads – The Portway and Ford Road, both of which lead to Old Sarum Monument which is a significant visual focal point to the west outside the parish. The fields are mostly arable, particularly to the north, with grazing closer to the river and most are enclosed by hedges. There are wide views from many points in the area and the downs to the east create a visual backdrop with clear views towards Porton Down to the north-east. The airfield, still commercially active, lies to the north-west of Ford and forms the major part of the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area with many listed buildings many of which are still used commercially today. There are large areas of new residential building to the north of the airfield. The area is the most distant in the parish from the urban area of Salisbury and hence has more rural than urban connections and has a more rural feel, particularly in the old villages along the River Bourne which is a SSSI as part of the River Avon system. Footpaths provide good connecting routes especially the Monarch's Way which has long views along its length. Permissive access to other areas on the new Castle Hill country park adjacent to Ford is well used by local residents.



Fig. 6.1 View from Monarch's Way looking east towards Ford and Cockey Down

Landscape Sensitivity Summary and Development Recommendations

Area 3 is mostly high and high/medium sensitivity due to its mostly open and high elevation. Field 3b is highly visible from many locations including Figsbury Ring and Cockey Down and connects with the wider rural and open landscape. The Monarch's Way allows for sensitive pedestrian receptors to cross the area with views over the fields to Cockey Down and is adjacent to field 3a. Field 3b lies near to the River Bourne which floods and is a SSSI.

Development is generally not recommended on the higher elevations of this area due to its visibility from surrounding areas, particularly from Cockey and Ford Downs and Figsbury Ring.

Development near to Old Sarum Village is not recommended due to the proximity of the Monarch's Way and the location on the skyline. Development may be possible at Manor Farm adjacent to Green Lane although the proximity of the active airfield may prevent this.

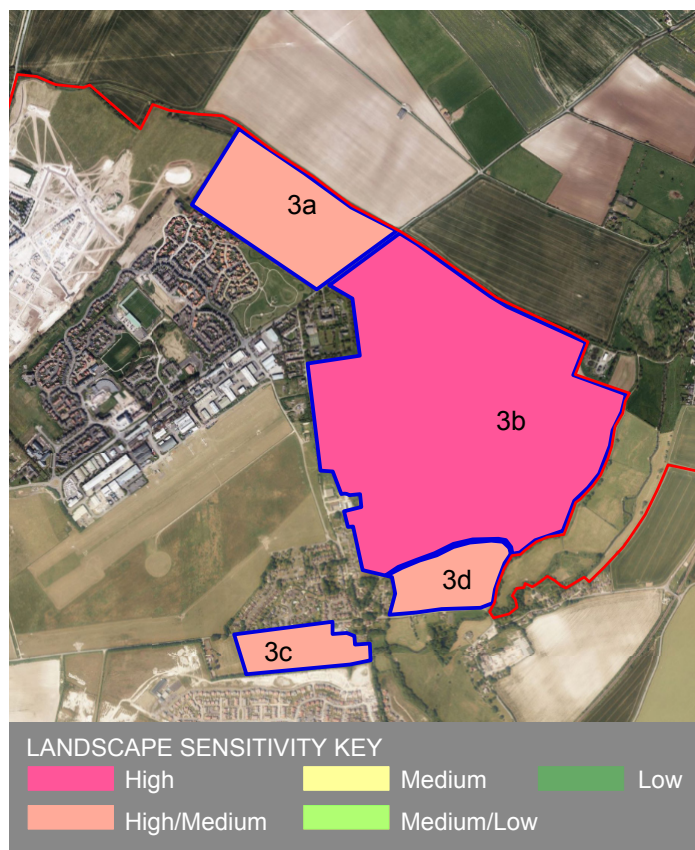


Fig. 6.2 Area 3 Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Development Recommendations and Mitigation
High 3b – this field is significantly visible from important viewpoints including Old Sarum and Figsbury Ring scheduled monuments and surrounding areas due to its elevation and topography – lying on the slope between The Portway and Ford Road in the Bourne Valley. Any development here would be highly visible from many footpaths including the adjacent Monarch's Way and Cockey Down plus the monuments.	High 3b – development not generally recommended for this area. However it might be possible to include small scale development at Manor Farm and adjacent areas around Green Lane where incorporated into existing development. The location of the active runway may be a factor in development here.
Medium/High 3a – higher elevation field on the visual skyline on the edge of Old Sarum Village and immediately adjacent to the Monarch's Way. Visible from Figsbury Ring and Cockey and Ford Downs but due to topography not as visible as field 3b. Creates valuable open gap between the new village development and the Monarch's Way. 3c – This field is enclosed on all sides by vegetation and/or buildings and is mostly visually enclosed, particularly towards the eastern end. There are views into the field from Green Lane to the east, plus from Ford Road along its length where permitted through the vegetation; there are clear views into the field between the boundary trees from the western end of Ford Road. The field acts as a visual and physical gap between the new development at Riverdown Park and the village of Ford. The field relates visually and in character terms with the Bourne valley and Green Lane and with the wider rural landscape towards the west immediately to the west of Green Acres and to the north across Old Sarum Airfield. The lower eastern elevations are not generally visible from the wider landscape, however as the elevation rises to the west, the field can be partially viewed from Figsbury Ring (distant) or from right of way LAF01 as it crosses Ford Down and the A30. Development within the field, particularly on the western end is likely to be visible in the wider landscape framework due to the rising elevation. 3d – lower elevation field connecting with 3b and lying along the Bourne valley adjacent to the SSSI. Has tendency to flood. Lower elevation means not so visible from important viewpoints but highly visible from local footpaths including Monarch's Way.	Medium/High 3a – development not recommended for this area due to location of Monarch's Way and open space and country parks from the new developments. 3c - Development here at the western end in particular would be visible in the wider landscape and would remove the open landscape character of this space. Development along the eastern end would be visible from the footpaths LAF017 and LAF011. Development is not recommended in this area for these reasons. Individual buildings in this space may be included if the mitigation were to ensure the continuity of the landscape character of this area. 3d – development not generally recommended for this area due to continuation of landscape character along Ford Road. Possible individual developments could be mitigated against with suitable screening if in the vernacular of Ford village.



7. CONCLUSION

The study shows that the majority of the parish is designated as either high or high-medium sensitivity due mostly to its high level of visual amenity, with the topography allowing wide views of most of the undeveloped areas of the parish. Any development will be highly visible in most of these areas and is, therefore, not recommended. Lower elevations such as Area 1 are less visually sensitive but higher in landscape character and biodiversity and, therefore, the overall sensitivity remains generally high. There are few areas remaining within the parish which are suitable for large, or even small scale development without having significant impact on the general landscape amenity.