Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

LANDSCAPE

Officer name: Mark Goodwin CMLI (Landscape Architect)

Date: 07.03.2016

Application No: 14/12118/OUT
Proposal: Mixed Use Urban Extension Comprising Residential (Class C3), Local Centre (Classes A1-A5) and (Classes D1 and D2), Primary School, Public Open Space Including Riverside Park and Allotments, Landscaping, 4 Vehicular Accesses, Site Roads and Associated Infrastructure.

Site Address: Rowden Park, Patterdown Road, Chippenham, Wiltshire.

Case Officer’s: Charmian Burkey

Recommendations:

☐ No Comment
☐ Support
☒ Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
☐ Object (for reasons set out below)
☒ No objections

Recommendation

No landscape or visual reasons highlighted as a reason to object Support subject to use of satisfactory planning conditions and legal agreement to control detailed landscaping matters

Summary

The Wiltshire Core Strategy – Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy, identifies Chippenham as a ‘Principle Settlement’ in the hierarchy of Wiltshire settlements. Principle Settlements are identified to deliver a greater proportion of Wiltshire’s overall housing and employment land. It is accepted that this amount of growth can’t be delivered through re-development of large brown field sites in Chippenham, as there aren’t any. Therefore green field sites will be necessary to allocate for development in order to deliver this new strategic growth for the town.

All new development has the potential to result in landscape and visual change effects. So it should not be unexpected that this proposed large scale urban extension on green field land will result in some adverse (harmful) changes to the landscape as a resource, and also result in some adverse visual effects for people (visual receptors) viewing this proposed new development.

The landscape character assessments (Forming part of this Council’s policy evidence base) identify that large scale urban development connected with the future expansion of Chippenham is a specific issue which needs to be planned carefully in order to minimise harmful urbanising effects to landscape character and amenity. The ‘Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment’ (TEP report) identifies that the future expansion of Chippenham needs to pay particular regard to the separate identity and character of its outlying rural settlements and built heritage assets which are important characteristic features of the wider landscape character.
A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was submitted with this application. The LVIA has identified a number of harmful landscape and visual effects, some of which have been assessed as likely to generate ‘significant’ and ‘moderately significant’ effects. The assessment identifies that the proposed development will generate a moderately significant adverse effect in relation to the proposed housing areas to the local landscape character of the site and its surrounding area, due to the scale of the proposals and the complete change of land use. In my opinion the resulting effects on ‘local landscape character of the site and surrounding area’ will represent a significant adverse effect resulting from the permanent change of existing rural farmland pasture with permanent new urban mixed use development.

I note that a moderately significant beneficial effect has been assessed for the local landscape character of the site and surrounding area in relation to the riverside park land. The reason given is that The Riverside Park landscape character will not be fundamentally changed, with existing features such as hedgerows and woodland fragments strengthened. In my opinion the future character of the Riverside Park land could significantly change (adversely or beneficially) if or when the existing agricultural hay cropping or grazing management is discontinued. The likely resulting change effects will be directly linked to the intended future use/s and management of this land which is currently uncertain. To this end I recommend that a Landscape Management Plan will be necessary to secure for this proposed Riverside Park land. This Management Plan should clearly define the envisaged use and function of all land, and outline management aims and objectives. My concern is that the agricultural pastoral character of this land, or large parts of it, may significantly change either though neglect or through changed management and maintenance regimes. I suggest that the management and maintenance of this park land needs some further resolution and refinement, focused on future economic viability (i.e. ongoing maintenance arrangements in perpetuity), its value and function to local landscape character and the local community before it can be considered as a sustainable future land use.

While this application must be considered on its own merit, a number of other large outline planning applications for mixed use urban development schemes have also been made to the Local Planning Authority, all of which are located outside the towns existing defined limits of development, and all of which will result in some adverse landscape and visual change effects. All of these application sites are included as ‘Strategic Site Areas’ which have been assessed within the ‘Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment', prepared by TEP (2014). This report forms part of the council’s wider evidence base underpinning the emerging ‘Chippenham Site Allocations Plan’. ‘Strategic Area E’ (this site) is being promoted as one of the Council’s preferred allocation sites for strategic settlement growth at Chippenham.

The application site is located within ‘Strategic Area E’. Given the identified landscape sensitivities and qualities to be safeguarded, the TEP landscape assessment ascribes the area forming the setting to the listed Rowden Manor and the flood zone associated with the River Avon with a low development capacity, whereas the western part of ‘Area E’ has been ascribed a moderate-high development capacity. This farmland currently serves a landscape function as physical separation between Pewsham and the Rowden Hill area. The landscape is also important in defining the rural approach into the town along the B4528/B4643. The application site is not generally visually prominent from the wider landscape. Some areas of land within Area E will be visible for some receptors, such as those elevated receptors from Pewsham (Englands) and from short lengths of the A4 (Pewsham Way). The greatest visual change effects will be for those receptors using the B4528/B4643 (Patterdown Road) and from properties with slightly elevated views over the development site, and also views experienced from Public Rights of Way crossing or in close proximity to the proposed urban development areas. Properties and public vantage points along the elevated limestone ridge to the east will also experience a change effect in views, one of increased urban influence and development in the context of a small part of a much wider panoramic view of the town and as a filtered long distance view against an existing urban backdrop baseline (viewed from elevated receptors from the east) it should also be noted that the landscape baseline situation from which to assess change effects should allow for the employment allocation at Showell Farm and also the mainline railway electrification project which will introduce
overhead gantries and power lines, and likely require the removal of a large amount of existing vegetation from the embankment.

There can be no doubt that the development proposal will result in the permanent loss of agricultural grazing / hay cropping farm land which results in the narrowing of the existing green wedge of countryside separating Pewsham from the Patterdown area, replacing farmland with new large scale urban development. The development will also urbanise a section of the south eastern B4258 / B4643 (Lackham College /A350 roundabout) road approach, which will be most visible as a change effect for road users travelling between Patterdown and Showell Farm Nursery and for residential properties along this same stretch of Patterdown Road.

The proposed housing development areas do not breach the Rowden Conservation Area boundary, and based on the location and scale of the new housing being promoted within this site, I don’t judge that the illustrative urban / rural housing area transitions adjoining the southern and western conservation area boundary will generate severe or significant adverse landscape or visual effects or impacts likely to generate harm to the setting of Rowden Conservation Area (please note my comments in this regard are not offered or intended as commentary on heritage designations, but as landscape and visual impact observations). Advice and comment on heritage matters will be provided by my colleague Caroline Ridgwell.

I consider the application is able to demonstrate that the housing proposals will not harm the character of the River Avon corridor or tributary watercourses. That important landscape features are capable of being conserved and enhanced along these watercourses. I must highlight again, (further to my pre-application comments during early meetings) that due to the sheer size of the proposed riverside park land and its intended detachment from Milbourne Farmstead, I raise some concerns over the uncertainty of the future use and character of this land, as there is a risk that the existing pastoral farmland character may be permanently changed to something else, either through neglect or deliberate changes to existing management regimes. The resulting change effects may result in positive, neutral or beneficial landscape effects, which also have the potential to be cumulative in nature and effect, assessed in combination with Rawlings Green and East Chippenham sites, where further large areas of existing riverside pasture within this same local landscape character area are also proposed as new areas of public riverside parkland).

The development parameter plans and the illustrative masterplan demonstrate that existing hedgerows, trees and woodland are capable of retention and successful integration within illustrative development layouts. In my opinion the current illustrative material demonstrates a well considered and measured design approach to achieving sensitive transitions between new urban areas and existing countryside. The illustrative proposal also demonstrates protection and enhancement of green infrastructure routes and connections, through and adjoining the site along with sustainable drainage principles and systems.

It is considered that while the scheme might benefit from some further landscape planting in the southern housing areas, and possibly to the east of the Patterdown Valley housing character area, that these issues are relatively minor in nature, and could be satisfactorily addressed as part of detailed landscaping matters.

The LVIA identifies that resulting effects of new development can be mitigated to some extent through; the sensitive siting of residential areas, being sympathetic to the existing topography and landscape character and urban grain, by using a landscape led masterplan with strong structure planting throughout development and boundary planting along edges, through the creation of a Riverside Park, additional planting and improved pedestrian and cycle access across the site, enhancement of existing hedgerows and strengthening of field patterns, enhancement of riparian corridor with areas of wet meadow and new woodland planting linking existing fragmented blocks and historic landscape / heritage interpretation.

I note that the housing areas have been separated into phased development areas, I find no indication of when new planting or rights of way enhancement will be delivered or phased in the riverside park areas.
The arrangements and trigger points for the delivery of mitigating structural landscape planting, green infrastructure enhancements and rights of way improvements within the riverside park land needs to be agreed alongside phased housing delivery, and secured by planning condition or legal agreement.

**Background & Context**

The proposed development site lie’s in countryside beyond the town’s existing south-western limits of development (settlement boundary). The site comprises approx. 126 hectares of gently sloping small to medium sized pastoral fields located on the western valley side of the River Avon (comprising a mix of Grades 1, 2 & 3b land in the ALC) within the current landholding of Milbourne Farm. The application site lies to the south of Patterdown, east of Hunters Moon and the London (Paddington) to Bristol Railway line. The site is bordered along its western edge by the Patterdown Road (B4528/B4643) and to the south by Showell Nursery site, with Lackham College and the busy A350 further south. The site is bordered along its eastern edge by the River Avon and associated floodplain areas. Further south-east the small National Trust Village of Lacock and its Abbey are separated from the site and wider urban influences of Chippenham by the intervening rolling wooded landform and well vegetated meandering River Avon corridor.

This is a rural settled landscape with scattered farmsteads and listed buildings. Rowden Conservation Area occupies the northern part of this site with Rowden Manor site and its associated buildings at the heart of this designation.

This application site is ‘Greenfield’ land extending south and west of Chippenham, on land which is being considered as a strategic development site option within the emerging ‘Chippenham Site Allocations Development Plan’. The site is included within ‘Strategic Area E’ and has been evaluated for its landscape sensitivity and development capacity within the scope of the ‘Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment’ prepared by TEP, 2014 (Doc. ref: 4646.006).

A description of the proposed development is outlined in the ‘Non-Technical Summary’ to the Environmental Statement accompanying Planning Application Ref: 14/12118/OUT (prepared by D2 Planning Ltd), and in the ‘Design & Access Statement’ (prepared by LDA Design) version 1.5, Nov 2014.

This application seeks outline planning approval for a mixed use urban development (All matters reserved except for access), comprising:

- Up to 1000 new residential dwellings (including affordable housing) and associated car parking;
- 1.2 ha of primary school site capable of accommodating 1 form entry school and pre-school;
- A local centre comprising a mix of land uses to include:
  - A) Retail convenience store up to 400 sq. M (Class A1) gross sq. M net sales area floorspace.
  - B) Four shops up to 400 sq. M (Class A1-A5).
  - C) Community uses up to 700 sq. M (Class D1 & D2) including dentists, vets, doctor’s surgery, community hall etc.
- Public Open Space, including Riverside Park, recreational facilities (formal and informal) and allotments.
- Provision of four points of access onto Patterdown Road.
- Associated infrastructure including roads, haulway, footpaths, cycleways, footway / cycle bridges, balancing ponds, drainage systems, street lighting and strategic landscaping.

**Relevant Policy, Guidance and Legislative requirements**

**National Planning Policy Framework (2012)**

- Achieving sustainable development (Para.7)
  
  Sustainable development includes an ‘Environmental’ role as well as ‘Social’ and ‘Economic’ roles. “contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment;”

- Core Planning Principles
Para.17. “Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;”

- Section 7. Requiring good design

Para.58. “Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:
  - respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;”
  - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

Para.61. “planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.”

Para.64. “Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”

- Section 11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

**Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)**
- Core Policy 51: Landscape;
- Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure;
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping;

**North Wiltshire District Local Plan (2011)**
- (Saved Policy) NE14: Trees Site features and the control of new development.

**Wiltshire Council’s Landscape evidence base comprising:**
- North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – 1:25,000 (2004)
- Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – 1:50,000 (2005) [http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/landscapeconservation/wiltshirelandscap.htm]
- Chippenham Site Allocations (CSA) (emerging) Development Plan Document (DPD) - Evidence Paper 4: Landscape - Comprising; Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment, supporting Landscape Figures, and Appendices) [http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/chippenhamsiteallocationsplan/chippenhamplanprogramme.htm]

**Landscape Character**
The development site lies within Landscape Type; ‘12: Open Clay Vale’ in Landscape Character Area ‘12B: Avon Open Clay Vale’, within the ‘Wiltshire County Landscape Character Assessment’ (2005), and at the district level within Landscape Type; ‘11: Lowland River Farmland’ in Landscape Character Area ‘11: Avon Valley Lowland’, within the ‘North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment’ (2004). Key landscape characteristics of these character areas identified within the Landscape Character Assessments include:

**Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – Character Area: 12B Avon Open Clay Vale**
- Level land form with wide open skies and views to ridges and downs.
- Pastoral land use with some arable.
- Large scale geometric fields with hedgerows or open drainage channels defining boundaries.
- Presence of rivers, tributaries, drainage channels and open water bodies.
- Watercourses lined with riparian vegetation with prominent lines of Willows (some pollarded).
- Floristically rich hay meadows.
- Settlement pattern varies from large towns and small scattered villages to sparse farmsteads.
- Buildings in varied materials of brick, render and stone.
- Crossed by major transport corridors, and a network of minor roads linking settlements.
- Historic use for transport evident in canals.

**North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – Character Area: 11 Avon Valley Lowland**
- Low-lying river landscape, between 70m and 30m AOD on river terrace and alluvial geology with heavy soils, interspersed with light sands.
- Dominant presence of water in the form of ditches, streams and river with related riparian vegetation and structures.
- Damp meadow and pasture along watercourses/valley floor.
- Intact and predominantly well managed hedgerows frequently with hedgerow trees.
- Strong rural sense of place, which begins to break down around Chippenham and communication corridor.
- Green Valley floor through Chippenham.
- Broad expansive skyline, frequently unbroken by development.
- Significance of electricity transmission lines.

The management guideline's for the Landscape character areas relevant to the development site state:

**Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – Character Area 12b**
- Retain and manage the hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees.
- Retain and manage hay meadows.
- Introduce new tree planting along watercourses using typical riparian species such as alder and willow.
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements.
- Consider screening views to intrusive urban edges through planting new woodland.

The overall strategy for the Open Clay Vales Landscape type is to conserve the elements that contribute to the rural, tranquil landscape; the rivers, streams and open water, the meadows and riverside trees, the brick and stone villages and farmsteads and to improve elements in decline such as the hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and the large settlement edges and major transport corridors.

**North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment – Character Area 11**

Para 4.211 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve the rural character, and ensure development of the urban fringe and communication corridors does not compromise the nature of the area.

Para 4.212 Individual elements within the landscape which make up the character should be maintained, conserved and when necessary replenished. This should include the retention of the ditch system which runs through the area, maintenance and replacement of hedges.

Para 4.213 Conserve and where possible enhance the biodiversity of the watercourse, its environs and adjacent habitats.

Para 4.214 Features of historical and archaeological interest relating to man’s use of this wet landscape and early settlement features will also require care and protection.

Para 4.215 Minimise the landscape and visual effects of the expansion of Chippenham.

Management Strategy Actions for this LCA relevant to the development site include:
- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including allowing new trees to emerge in existing hedges and discourage field amalgamation.
- Consider where development related to Chippenham is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.
- Conserve the alignment and features of the Wilts and Berks Canal.
- Enhance the sense of place through use of appropriate building materials in respect of new development, extensions or other built features – especially through the use of materials used in vernacular buildings.

In terms of Landscape Sensitivity the LCA states at Para 4.219 “Only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.” and at Para 4.220 “Around Chippenham, the original settlement in the valley bottom has expanded up the valley sides. These areas are exposed to wider views and are sensitive to further development. Care is required in further expansion of the town to minimise the effect on landscape and visual receptors. Development should be carried out in conjunction with the development of a strong landscape structure to repair urban fringe landscapes.”

**Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment**

I refer to the findings of the ‘Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment’ undertaken by TEP Landscape Consultants (December 2014). This strategic study provides useful information on the development site in the context of its wider surroundings and contributes to the landscape evidence base underpinning the emerging Chippenham Site Allocations DPD.

The development site lies within ‘Strategic Area E’ of the TEP study. The following paragraphs from the study are relevant to this development site:

**Section 4. Analysis of Landscape Sensitivities**

**Key Approach Routes**

Southern Approach to Chippenham (Patterdown/Rowden Hill/Bath Road A4)

Para 4.11 “The southern approach from Melksham, in common with other approaches has a rural character. However, what is distinctive is the effect of recently matured trees that largely channel views within the road corridor. However, just before the roundabout with West Cepen Way, there are sweeping views towards Chippenham. On the skyline, some of the larger building structures of the town are just discernable above mature trees, including St. Pauls Church Spire.”

Para 4.12 ‘After the roundabout the rural character continues, with trees, hedgerows along the roadside but with some glimpsed views towards the adjacent fields. There are also some isolated properties fronting the road. The road follows the contours of the local landform by first sweeping west towards the main railway and then due north towards the edge of Chippenham. To the west of the approach vegetation to the railway embankment screens any views westwards, while to the east there are some glimpsed views towards the adjacent fields where there are breaks in the roadside hedgerow.”

Para 4.13 Apart from the entrance to a new housing area, the character of the approach remains rural until it arrives at Rowden roundabout. Here the character changes to suburban, although most residential plot boundaries are defined by high hedges and mature trees. Closer to the Bridge roundabout, the plot boundaries are also enhanced by low stone retaining walls, with hedges and shrubs above the walls and mature trees behind. The mature boundaries in this section of the approach are special and should be safeguarded. From Rowden roundabout the road rises up towards Chippenham Hospital, it then commences a slow descent down to the town centre. At the Bridge Roundabout the approach reaches the gateway to the urban/town centre.”

**Distinctive townscape and landscape**
Para 4.24 ‘The land to the south west of Chippenham centre also follows the River Avon and is characterised by riparian tree planting and woodland at Mortimores Wood which provides enclosure and helps to reinforce riparian Character. Rowden Manor a Grade II* listed property with associated farm buildings and an area designated as a Scheduled Monument provides a distinctive but localised feature in the landscape as it is generally set in wooded surroundings. The distinctive character is more apparent south of the manor where long linear field patterns and mature hedgerows and woodland remain creating a strong degree of enclosure and close association with the river. North of the Manor the field pattern is larger and less defined. The broad river valley landform is a prominent feature although the river Avon has a more localised influence on the adjacent land. There are views across the southern edge of Chippenham where the landscape provides a partially wooded edge to the town. St. Andrews Church is prominent in the view and provides the visual connection between this landscape and the centre of Chippenham. There are also views of The Ivy Longhouse and The Ivy Westwing, part of a large manor house (now 2 dwellings) off Bath Road. These properties are set in mature grounds and this presents the only opportunity to view the house. Modern development present in the foreground does reduce some of the connection to the historic core but the land still provides an important green finger into the town.

Para 4.25 ‘Other areas of distinctive landscape are visually but not physically connected to the town. These are the northern and western slopes of the limestone ridge that extends round the southern and eastern edges of the town and provides a wooded backdrop. These hills are important in defining the character of views across the town and are therefore considered a crucial part of its setting. Views of the limestone ridge are most notable from the southern edge of Birds Marsh Woodland; the northern edge of Chippenham; from rural roads to the west of Chippenham; from the southern approach into Chippenham along Patterdown/Rowden Hill and from some properties on the edge of the town such as Riverside Drive.’’

Supportive townscape and landscape
Para 4.36 ‘The land around Rowden Manor has an historic association with the Manor. Land on the west edge further away from the River Avon is characterised by small field pattern, linear woodlands a mix of land uses including a rifle range and long views towards Chippenham. This landscape provides a gently undulating rural setting and foreground context to views of Chippenham. The churches are generally not visible from the adjacent streets but occasional glimpses are possible from public rights of way. The edge of the settlement is generally softened by trees and hedgerows and views of the urban edge is limited to a caravan storage area off Rowden Lane and also more distant easterly glimpses of the rising edge of Pewsham beyond woodland. The wooded hills of Derry Hill, Naish Hill and Bencroft Hill provide a wooded backdrop to views to the south and east.’’

Pages 34 and 41 describe the special qualities of the Land to the south of Rowden Manor as follows:

‘6. Rowden Manor

- Integrity and setting of Rowden Manor;
- Linear belts of woodland closely associated with the River Avon and smaller rivers and streams;
- Woodland planting along Pudding Brook and railway which make Chippenham less prominent in views from the B4643;
- Irregular field pattern with a network of intact hedgerows and trees combining with linear woodland to create a perceived wooded character to the landscape;
- Remote character to the south of Rowden Manor
- Long views towards Chippenham which is on high ground with green fingers of woodland appearing to extend into the settlement;
- Development on rising ground and pasture and fields on lowest ground; and
- Views towards St. Andrews Church and The Ivy and The Ivy Longhouse providing visual links to the historic core of Chippenham.’

Section 5 of the TEP study includes the development capacity recommendations for Strategic Area E, presented on A3 pro-forma’s, from which the following have been abstracted:
**Strategic Area E description**

'The Strategic Area is located 1km southwest of Chippenham town centre on the western side of a valley formed by the River Avon. The northern part of the Strategic Area is occupied by grassland subject to an annual hay crop rotation, with hedgerows forming field boundaries. The southern part has smaller field parcels, with more substantial field boundaries (including hedgerow trees) and managed for arable and pasture. Rowden Manor (Grade II* Listed) is located in the northern part of the area, and with some associated farm buildings, some converted into dwellings. The northern boundary of the Area is defined by low density residential areas of Chippenham and Chippenham Community Hospital. The eastern boundary is defined by the River Avon and associated vegetation, which includes a small area of ancient woodland (Mortimores Wood), a remnant of the royal hunting forest, known as Pewsham Forest. The southern boundary is defined by agricultural land and a horticultural nursery. The B4528/B4643 and main railway line form the western boundary.'

**Rowden Conservation Area**

'A significant part of the strategic Area is designated the Rowden Conservation Area (Since 1989 and later extended 1996), this is largely due to the historical associations of Rowden Manor and the green finger of countryside that follows the line of the River Avon into the centre of Chippenham. It was designated to preserve the historical character of an area of agricultural land with strong associations with Rowden Manor and the topography and visual enclosure from the river valley around the manor. Preservation and appropriate enhancement of the Conservation Area will be a key consideration in any development proposals going forward in Area E.'

**Landscape quality general description**

'The Strategic Area has an undulating landform with a connected network of vegetation, particularly associated with small tributaries to the River Avon. The northern part of the strategic Area (north of Rowden Manor) has some consistency with the wider landscape character area, however the grassland areas are relatively large with limited field boundaries and there are extensive views north towards the central part of Chippenham. The southern part of the Strategic Area (south of Rowden Manor) is more attractive and remote, partly due to being located on lower ground than the surroundings and being associated with the local River Avon valley and visual connections with the elevated limestone ridge to the east which is largely wooded. Watercourses, lined with vegetation are also present and there are some views to the wider rural landscape to the south. Overall, the southern part has a higher landscape quality than the northern part.'

**Visual quality general description**

'Visibility of the Area is limited from the key approach route, however it is more visible from the Pewsham Way and Avenue La Fleche (A4) located to the east with open views of the Area north of Rowden Manor. The public rights of way (PRoW) network provides some visibility of the Area, although views tend to be contained by field boundaries. Further to the south of the Area, the PRoW network provides a number of attractive views looking south towards the mature network of field boundaries and the backdrop of Bowden and Derry Hill in the distance. In general the visual prominence of the Area is limited by its location on lower ground in the River Avon valley and the screening effect of the railway embankment to the west and Chippenham to the east. The northern part of Area E has some views of development located on a ridgeline leading to Chippenham town centre although softened by vegetation. However, the residential area of Pewsham is quite dominant as the development extends over an area of high ground and is therefore more visible. Overall the southern part of Area E has a higher visual quality.'

Informed by the Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment, **qualities to be safeguarded** in Area E include:

- Integrity of River Avon valley and functioning floodplain
- Strong network of mature intact hedgerows which create an enclosed wooded character to the southern part of the area
• Some views towards the limestone ridge of Naish Hill and Bowden Hill
• Setting to Rowden Manor and associated buildings
• Views of rooftop/skyline of Chippenham’s historic core, including St. Paul’s and St. Andrew’s church spires
• Undulating landform of the area, with smaller tributary valleys linking with River Avon valley
• Mortimore’s Wood and strip of woodland north of Showell Farm Nurseries
• Higher level of southern approach compared with Area E, maintaining a separation between the road and proposed development and maintaining views from the road across the wider landscape
• Rural character of southern approach.

Strategic Site Assessment Framework

‘Encroachment of development

Development could screen views towards the rooftop/skyline of the historic core of Chippenham, however the retention of green buffers particularly along the River Avon would help mitigate the loss of some of these views. Development in the northern part of Area E would affect views from parts of Pewsham and Pewsham Way (southeast approach), however views of development could be filtered or screened by increased planting along the River Avon corridor and along the edge and within areas of new development. There is no potential intervisibility between Area E and the southern outlying settlements; Lacock, Derry Hill and Studley.’

‘Impacts on heritage assets

Area E includes Rowden Manor, Grade II* Listed building and Scheduled Monument, the land around these assets is also designated a conservation area. This designation is designed to preserve the special interest of the area that, which specifically includes the agricultural land that is associated with and contributes to the significance of Rowden Manor and Farm.’

‘Development Capacity

This is a sensitive landscape that provides a green finger linking the town centre to the rural area to the south and provides physical separation between Pewsham and the Rowden Hill area. The landscape is also important in defining the rural approach along the B4528/B4643. Despite its sensitivity, Area E does not extend a large distance beyond the overall footprint of Chippenham (Pewsham to the east and Hunter’s Moon to the west) and is not generally visually prominent. Development could be accommodated in parts of Area E provided the setting of Rowden Manor is maintained and key features of the River Avon valley are preserved.’

‘Given the landscape sensitivities and qualities to be safeguarded the development capacity for Area E has been ascribed a low development capacity for the area forming the setting to the listed Rowden Manor and the flood zone associated with the River Avon’ (to the east). ‘Whereas the western part of Area E has been ascribed a moderate-high development capacity as relative to some of the other strategic areas, the land is not visually prominent and is screened from views from the west by the wooded Great Western railway embankment. Views from the east are largely screened by the rising landform of Area D.’

Scope for mitigation (Para 6.46)

• Retain rural/semi natural character of the southern approach to Rowden Hill through the retention of hedgerow and trees and potential green buffer (similar effect to Pewsham Way);
• Retain dry stone walls on the approach to Rowden Hill
• Retain higher level of southern approach compared to Area E, maintaining a separation between the road and proposed development and maintaining views from the road over development across the wider landscape;
• The surroundings of Rowden Manor make a positive contribution to its significance. This contribution is particularly derived from the association between Rowden Manor and the no-designated earthwork remains of a possible Civil War entrenchment to the north of the site, and
the designated earthwork remains of a moat to the south of Rowden Manor, as well as the group of listed and non-listed historic buildings and farmland in which they are experienced;

- The setting of Rowden Manor could be enhanced through the creation of a management plan to safeguard the archaeological interest and appearance of the non-designated Civil war entrenchment and designated moated site. Management options could include the use of the land as pasture and an appropriate grazing regime. Also, to safeguard and manage the rural appearance of the area surrounding Rowden Manor.
- Ensure that new development does not increase the harsh urban influence on the surrounding landscape through appropriate planting of woodland belts, copses and trees on the edge of built development;
- Ensure any employment development is suitably screened by woodland development and entrances and buildings where visible are more reflective of a rural environment or extended farm than a business/industrial Estate. Utilise woodland and hedgerow boundaries to entrance roads to ensure that development is not highly conspicuous from the roadside;
- Retain the mature network of hedgerows and trees within areas of greenspace to provide linkages through development to the wider countryside and retain the distinctive enclosed mature setting to the landscape;
- Use landform and arrange layout of built form to retain long views towards St. Andrew’s and St. Paul’s church to the north and views towards the limestone ridge to the southeast;
- Protect the setting of the listed Rowden Manor site;
- Potential to extend development as far south as West Cepen Way roundabout;
- Area for safeguarding from development to include setting for Rowden Manor and flood zone.’

**Recommendations**

The recommendations have been devised taking account of the special qualities to be safeguarded and also the management strategies provided in the published landscape character assessments. Key management recommendations include:

- ‘Conserve the network of intact hedgerows within the area to retain their good condition;
- Maintain the distinctive mature hedgerow trees and woodlands throughout the landscape and seek opportunities for new woodland and hedgerow planting to maintain green links between wooded areas;
- Conserve and where possible enhance the riparian character along the River Avon with a network of planting extending from the river corridor.
- Enhance semi-natural character of River Avon corridor to create riverside open space, with network of footpaths.’

The TEP study is a strategic assessment which is a useful starting point for understanding the site’s context and the landscape and visual constraints for development associated with the wider area.

**Landscape and Visual Impact**

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was included with this application. The development proposals assessed are outlined in the Design and Access Statement (LDA) (November 2014) and indicatively shown on the ‘Illustrative Masterplan’ (LDA/SLR) included at page 49 of DAS.

The landscape and visual effects likely to result from this proposed development are described at ‘Chapter 4. Landscape & visual issues’ of the Environmental Statement (D2) (November 2014) The ES summarises landscape and visual impacts on pages 33-34 as follows;

**‘Landscape Impacts**

4.6.10 The assessment has found an adverse impact on the land use and character of the site. This is the same for all residential development. It also finds benefit to the character of Pudding Brook, the River Avon Park, and the interpretation of the Rowden Conservation Area and Civil War Battlefield.’
Visual Impacts

4.6.11 There will be visual impacts in the short and long term from Viewpoint 2, (CHIP6) where it crosses the site. Viewpoints at Showell Nursery and Rowden Manor will incur short-term visual impacts as a result of construction, but these will not be significant in the long-term.

4.6.12 All other 11 viewpoints have no significant impacts during construction, on completion, or after 15 years.

The LVIA records potential landscape effects to character and landscape features in Table L3 & L4 (Appendix 4.5) and potential visual effects for people in Tables L1 & L2 (Appendix 4.5), these tables summarise the predicted landscape and visual effects likely to occur, during construction/on completion and 15 years after planting for a number of given and representative receptors.

Landscape effects (officers comments)
The landscape effects resulting from the proposal assessed within the LVIA, both in terms of landscape character and landscape features concludes resulting effects to be generally adverse (mostly slight or negligible in magnitude and nature) and ‘Not Significant’. However, a ‘Moderately Significant Adverse’ effect has been assessed for changes to the existing ‘Local landscape character of the site and surrounding area’ (housing area) resulting from the change of farmland to urban uses, and the permanent loss of agricultural pasture/farm land as a resource. In my opinion the resulting effect on local landscape character of the site and surrounding area would represent a ‘Significant’ adverse effect resulting from the permanent change of an existing pastoral farmed landscape with large areas of permanent new urban mixed use development.

I also suggest that some adverse effects are also likely to result from ‘enclosure’ of the site by new urban form and planting and result in the separation of Patterdown Road from open rural countryside to the east. In my opinion the assessment of ‘Urban morphology of Chippenham’ (settlement growth /pattern) understates the potential for adverse resulting effects. The development proposal will introduce a large urban extension and outcrop into a Greenfield area of countryside which reduces the rural separation between Pewsham and Patterdown. It will also urbanise part of an existing rural approach into the town (Patterdown Road), and permanently change the agricultural association of land with Milbourne farmstead.

I note that a moderately significant beneficial effect has been assessed for the local landscape character of the site and surrounding area in relation to the riverside park land. The reason given is that The Riverside Park landscape character is stated as not to be fundamentally changed, with existing features such as hedgerows and woodland fragments strengthened. In my opinion the future character of the Riverside Park land remains uncertain. The character of the riverside park could significantly change (adversely or beneficially) if or when the existing agricultural hay cropping or grazing operations are discontinued. The likely resulting change effects will be linked to the future use and management of this land which I believe to be well intentioned, but are currently uncertain. To this end I recommend that a Management Plan is necessary to secure for this proposed Riverside Park land. This Management Plan should clearly define the purpose and use of land, and prescribe management aims and objectives and future maintenance arrangements. My concern is that in the longer term the agricultural pastoral character of this land, or large parts of it, may change significantly either though neglect or through changed management regimes. The management and maintenance of this park land needs some further refinement, focused on economic viability (i.e. ongoing maintenance arrangements in perpetuity), its function and value to local landscape character and the local community before it can be considered as a sustainable future land use, or contribute appropriate landscape or heritage enhancement.

I highlight that there is some potential for a cumulative adverse landscape effects to be generated from this development in combination with ‘East Chippenham’ and ‘Rawlings Farm/Rawlings Green’ sites, This specifically relates to the loss of existing pastoral riverside farmland character, replaced by Riverside Park land with greater urban influences, resulting from the temporary or permanent changes to existing agricultural land management practices.
Visual effects
The assessment of visual effects resulting from the proposal, assessed within the LVIA, concludes that resulting effects on views are mainly adverse and mostly not significant. However a ‘Significant Adverse’ permanent visual effect has been assessed for changes from Viewpoint 2 (Footpath CHIP6, south of Patterdown) this would also be a representative effect for other short sections of existing rural footpath subsumed within the new housing areas;

The LVIA also assesses ‘Moderately Significant Adverse’ visual impacts from viewpoint 1 (Patterdown Road/B4528, slightly north of Showell Farm Nursery), & viewpoint 3 (Footpath LAC09, south of Rowden Manor), both during construction and at completion of development. For viewpoint 3 the predicted effect and resulting impact is expected to reduce to ‘Not Significant’ at year 15 and beyond, as the landscape structure, hedgerows and woodland planting matures. For viewpoint 1, the ‘Moderately Significant adverse’ visual impact is predicted to remain due to its proximity to the main access.

Southern visual receptors (parallel with and south of the application site) are also likely to experience a ‘Moderate Adverse Cumulative’ effect, in combination with the urban development at Showell Farm employment site during construction and at completion, while I would evaluate that ‘Negligible or No Adverse Cumulative effects’ are likely to arise with the Hunters Moon site. I do not consider there is potential for cumulative urbanising effects to arise with any other current major mixed use development sites currently consented at Chippenham, or within planning.

Mitigation of landscape and visual effects
It is important to consider that the assessment of landscape and visual effects, within the LVIA is based on development proposals incorporating the mitigation and design principles included within the submitted development parameters and illustrative masterplan.

The Outline primary mitigation measures are identified within the application as follows;
- Reducing visual impact of the scheme by locating built development to the western areas of the site, outside the Conservation Area and away from the river and floodplain.
- Retaining and strengthening the surrounding woodland and tree structure that filters views of housing areas from the Rowden Conservation Area and surrounding countryside.
- The illustrative layout has been designed to provide urban development within a strong landscape structure that respects and responds to existing landscape features on site such as the watercourses, woodland blocks and bat corridors.
- The proposals aim to enhance various ecological habitats and connections between them through improving the hedgerow network and widening riparian corridors.
- Improving accessibility to countryside for residents of the proposals as well as the wider urban population, by linking into the existing Public Rights of Way network.

Landscape Officer Comments and Observations
I have visited the site, including the surrounding area to assess the potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity, and to review the findings of the Landscape and Visual Chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES) submitted with this application.

The proposed application site comprises a number of small and medium sized agricultural fields which are all currently laid to grass. These fields are typically enclosed by intact mature hedgerows and a number of mature hedgerow trees along with some linear blocks of woodland. The fields to the northern end of Conservation Area and site are more open and exposed to the visual town context due to a weaker enclosing landscape structure, in combination with the elevated topography and elevated urban antage points over this land. Adjoining elevated urban areas at Rowden and the elevated wooded Great Western Railway embankment define and provide a visual barrier to the north and west of Chippenham. Field boundaries fronting the Patterdown Road, which denote the development site’s western boundary, comprise a mix of surviving lengths of native hedgerow, some tall which block onward views, and some
maintained lower allowing views over the site towards the elevated limestone ridge located to the east. There are also lengths of domestic boundaries associated with dispersed residential development and conversions, and some lengths of timber highway fencing. Natural stone walls are also evident along sections of Patterdown Road. Small River Avon tributary watercourses (Pudding Brook, Milbourne Brook, Holywell Brook) cross the site in a west to east direction. The Chippenham Rifle Club outdoor shooting range and an allotment area, are located within a linear strip of land (excluded from the surrounding development site) adjoined to the southern side of Pudding Brook. The eastern boundary of the application site is delineated by the meandering River Avon and its associated riparian vegetation.

The majority of the proposed (housing) development site occupies the flatter and more gently sloping pastoral land located to the south (around Milbourne Farm and to the north of Showell Farm) which falls gently east towards the river. Further north the southern slope of Rowden Hill denotes the limit of housing proposals. This south facing land is higher in elevation and overlooks the well vegetated Pudding Brook. This higher landform extends north towards the hospital and provides opportunities for elevated views from its east facing slope (proposed park area) towards Pewsham, overlooking the River corridor, Rowden Conservation Area and the well wooded Rowden Manor site. The existing residential development and the hospital site forming the western edge of the Conservation Area are visually exposed from eastern receptors and these slopes also enable some north-eastern views of the town and the A4 relief road from the Conservation Area. This harsh urban edge would benefit from some additional tree planting as enhancement within the Conservation Area at higher elevation, to help soften this existing urban edge.

Views from the north towards the site (proposed housing areas) from Pewsham (Englands), Avenue La Fleche/Pewsham Way (A4), and from CHIP19 an elevated footpath running around the south western edge of Pewsham estate, and also from lower riverside receptors will be restricted to occasional glimpsed views, largely screened by existing intervening layers of filtering riparian and field pattern vegetation. Where glimpsed views of new urban development may be possible, views will be fragmented and viewed in the context of a strong wooded landscape provided by the retained and supplemented green infrastructure network and structured landscaping within and adjoining proposed housing areas. The application site is completely screened from all western medium and longer distance receptors by the topography of the well vegetated Great Western Railway embankment. The site is visually prominent for close receptors bordering the west of the site such as Patterdown Road users and from a few dispersed properties along this road. The site is also obviously more visually prominent from the existing Public Rights of Way which pass through or adjacent to the proposed development site. Elevated longer distant visual receptors located to the east and south from the elevated limestone ridge will experience some change effects, however I consider that due to their elevated nature and the presence of intervening filtering vegetation, and the nature of potential views which form a smaller part of a much wider panorama that also currently includes the wider urban backdrop of the town (from these elevated vantage points), that changes resulting from development would not give rise to particularly severe adverse visual effects. The LVIA clearly establishes that there is no potential for inter-visibility with the settlement of Lacock further to the south-east.

The existing footpath network will be affected in the following ways; CHIP5 a short Bridleway sharing the route of the vehicular access track to Rowden Manor from the end of Rowden Lane, and CHIP1 which links CHIP5 north towards the waterworks and the Avenue La Fleche are unlikely to experience any views of housing areas due to intervening topography and field boundary vegetation. The following existing relatively short linking sections of footpath will be completely absorbed into the proposed urban development areas; CHIP6 running along the top of the slope on the north side of Pudding Brook (VP2); CORM94 which provides a short link between Patterdown Road through the rifle range and up the slope to join with CHIP6; and CORM90 which passes through Milbourne Farm providing a link from Patterdown Road to the rural PRoW network further east.

Further east, offset from the meandering course of the river, footpath LAC039 extends from Puckling Grove, close to Lackham College in the south to join footpath LAC09, towards Rowden Manor and
onward links to CHIP5 & CHIP1 at the far north of the site. Views from the lower flood zone footpaths (LAC09 & LAC039) are likely to experience some limited and glimpsed views of the upper edges of new housing areas, through and over existing gaps in tributary riparian, and field boundary vegetation. However most potential views will be filtered and screened by existing and proposed intervening vegetation in the longer term. A very short section of footpaths LAC09 and LAC039 (close to Lackham College) are elevated, but drop with contour quite quickly down to the lower vale floor level. From these short elevated sections of path, receptors travelling north are likely to experience medium distance views of narrow and broken horizontal bands of new urban development (roofs) to the east and north of Showell Nursery, including the south facing Pudding Brook upper Valley housing area. A short east to west footpath (LAC016) joins CORM90 at Milbourne Farm (west) to LAC09 in the east. Views from LAC016 will experience an increased urban context especially travelling west, views to the south of proposed southern most housing areas are likely to be screened by some significant green infrastructure and woodland planting.

In my opinion the southern boundary of the southern housing area could and should be strengthened further with some additional linear woodland planting. I also observe that the housing density of the southern ‘Woodland character housing area’ appears to be quite high as currently illustrated. This seems to contradict the lower density vision for this area outlined in the Design and Access Statement. I suggest the proposed Bat corridors through this southern housing area could be widened by additional woodland planting, which would help break up urban mass and further add to the sense of place and strengthen green infrastructure links.

The introduction of lighting within this rural area generated by new housing, street lighting and additional highway junction lighting will result in a notable night time change effect within this existing dark area of farmland. However, the existing urban influences of the A350 / Patterdown Road junction and lighting, overhead electricity lines suspended from large pylons, the elevated railway embankment (soon to be electrified by overhead electricity lines suspended from gantries) contribute urbanising influences on the local character and viewpoints further south and east of the site.

Conclusion
This site, Area E, is one of the Council’s preferred site Allocations within the emerging Chippenham Site Allocations Plan - Development Plan Document.

I highlight the obvious and significantly adverse landscape effects likely to result from this development as the loss of a large area of greenfield farmland (the proposed housing areas) as a landscape resource, to be permanently replaced by new urban development. The adjoining section of Patterdown Road will also become permanently urban in character.

Major and moderate Adverse visual change effects resulting from this development will include the change of existing rural views across the site towards the limestone ridge, to views through and over urban development in the foreground for the short sections of existing rural footpaths incorporated into or adjacent to the proposed new urban housing areas, and also for Patterdown Road users and the few residents, along the length of Patterdown Road sharing a boundary with the application site.

The current outline illustrative proposal demonstrates that sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement of green infrastructure and landscape character could be appropriately incorporated into a development at this site. I find the illustrative proposal to demonstrate that urban development will not compromise the existing character or landscape value of the conservation area. There is an opportunity to soften an existing harsh urban edge to the north of the Conservation Area through the introduction of tree planting in groups at the higher contour elevation to break up the existing urban edge.

Within the riverside park areas there is potential for a change of character to result from the existing pastoral farmland character to something else if or when the existing grazing and hay cropping of land associated with Milbourne Farm ceases or changes. If the LPA is minded to grant outline planning
consent for this development, I highlight that until a Management Plan is submitted to the LPA for the proposed ‘Riverside Park’ land, the resulting landscape effects of taking this large area of land out of agricultural use remains uncertain. I suggest there is also a degree of uncertainty about the long-term economic viability of maintaining such a large area of open space in perpetuity. The use of a suitably worded planning condition, or inclusion within a s.106 legal agreement may be considered to be an appropriate way to address these issues.

Suggested Conditions

1. Standard pre-commencement condition requiring the submission of detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme for the written approval of the LPA.

2. Standard condition requiring the implementation of the approved hard and soft landscaping, within an agreed programme, or phased programme of delivery. Include standard annual plant replacement clause for dead, dying or missing plants to cover the first 5 years following implementation of planting. (Advanced structure planting within the Riverside Park land would be welcomed alongside the first phase of housing delivery).

3. Condition requiring the submission of a ‘Riverside Park Management Plan’ for the written approval of the LPA. The Management Plan shall set out a clear vision for how the Riverside Park land holding will be used by people and community groups, and how the land (individual fields / land parcels) will be managed in perpetuity by the designated management body. The Management Plan shall clearly define and prescribe how management objectives and maintenance operations will protect and enhance the existing heritage, ecology and landscape value and character of the site, within the context of wider green infrastructure links and functions of this land.

END