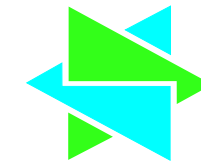


**Regional Spatial Strategy
Urban Extension Environmental Capacity Appraisal
Land within the AONB surrounding Bath**

**REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY
Urban Extension Environmental Capacity
Appraisal
Land within the AONB surrounding Bath**

March 2007



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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Introduction

This document sets out the results of a multi-disciplinary appraisal of environmental and urban design factors affecting development cells within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) immediately surrounding Bath.

The 'Environmental Capacity Appraisal' of the impacts of an urban extension within the AONB supplements work already undertaken by the Council (see below) and is a vital element of the Strategic Sustainability Assessment (SSA) of an urban extension to Bath.

Background

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) identifies an area of search for an urban extension to the south west of the city i.e. outside the AONB. In responding to the draft RSS the Council undertook a Landscape and World Heritage Study of this area of search. As its title suggests the study assessed the impacts of potential development on this side of Bath in terms of landscape factors and impacts on the World Heritage Site. It showed that development in this area would cause significant harm to the landscape setting of the city and that this would have an adverse impact on the values of the World Heritage Site.

In addition an environmental capacity appraisal of a number of potential sites for an urban extension to both Bath and Bristol was carried out. In relation to Bath two potential development sites within the area of search were initially assessed, one west of Twerton and the other south of Odd Down. Following a Strategic Sustainability Assessment (SSA) of the area of search a third site within the area of search at Haycombe was assessed. The environmental capacity appraisal was a multi-disciplinary study looking at a wider range of environmental impacts and urban design opportunities. Development capacities were calculated, using a land use budget approach, for those sites considered to be potentially suitable for development. The outcome of the appraisal showed that development in these areas of search would cause high adverse impacts over a range of environmental issues and urban design factors. However, the SSA highlighted the potential social and economic benefits of an urban extension to the city.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

In order to fully consider the most sustainable location for an urban extension to Bath it is necessary (as advised by the South West Regional Assembly) to undertake a SSA of the entire periphery of the city. The urban periphery has been divided in to six broad development cells for the SSA, with one of these development cells (F) corresponding to land outside the AONB i.e. broadly the area of search set out in the draft RSS. This environmental capacity appraisal relates to the development cells within the AONB, which has not been subject to the previous appraisal work. The conclusions of this study will feed directly into the SSA, thereby enabling the relative sustainability of areas around the city to accommodate an urban extension to be identified.

This appraisal identifies potential strategic urban design opportunities and impacts, as well as identifying environmental considerations.

Further detailed environmental, social, economic and resource studies will be required as part of the Local Development Framework process to refine these capacity studies.

The working group comprised the following disciplines:

- Urban Design
- Landscape Architecture
- Nature Conservation
- Archaeology & Historic Environment
- World Heritage

This working document comprises:

- Methodology
- Appraisal Summary
- Site Capacity Summary Plans

Methodology

The overall area assessed comprised all land designated as AONB (except National Trust land – see below) within an approximately 1km swathe extending from the developed urban edge of the City outwards – see map on page 6.

The National Trust own significant land in this area all of which is thought to be inalienable. It was therefore excluded from the assessment.

Each area of search was assessed for impact to landscape and visual, nature conservation, historic environment and World Heritage, and for strategic urban design opportunities and constraints. These assessments included site visits and desktop studies. Each of the disciplines has an individual methodology (given below) and all except urban design were appraised under the following sections:

- Identification of existing conditions;
- Impact assessment;
- Potential for mitigation; and
- Identification of any further work required.

The assessments for each area of search were then jointly considered to decide the overall impacts of development for each area of search. The capacity is expressed graphically on maps as follows:

Red	Areas where the group considered development would have a high adverse impact across a range of environmental factors and urban design considerations.
Orange	Areas where the group considered development would have a high adverse impact on one environmental factor or urban design consideration. The group recommends that further work should be carried out to assess the full implications of the impacts.
Yellow	Areas where the group considered development would have a less negative impact on environmental factors and urban design considerations. The group recommends that further work should be carried out to assess the full implications of the impacts.

Urban Design

A brief strategic urban design appraisal was undertaken of each area of search. This outlined some of the principal opportunities for potential new development to link into and make use of the existing infrastructure and facilities within an area: A high level of integration is considered fundamental to achieving a sustainable urban extension. Further work would be necessary for sites to be promoted through the LDF process, identifying other urban design issues such as character and context, structure, height and massing at a higher level of detail.

Landscape and Visual

The methodology is supported by an understanding of landscape character and in particular the published Rural Landscapes of Bath and North East Somerset – A Landscape Character Assessment adopted as SPG by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Three criteria were assessed in relation to potential development:

1. The impact of development on the landscape character in particular the sense of place, the character area (both the part affected and as a whole) and the quality of the landscape.
2. The impact of development on visual effects in particular the views from within and outside the area, the impact on skylines and approaches and the overall conspicuousness of development.
3. The potential for mitigation of possible development.

The overall area was sub-divided into a number of manageable survey areas on the basis of character and topography. Each area was surveyed by two Landscape Architects before selecting a suitable representative viewpoint or viewpoints from which to complete an assessment form. A photographic record was made including photographs taken into the areas from the wider countryside. Aerial photographs were used to verify recorded information and supplement photographs.

Archaeology & Historic Environment

A 'Rapid Desktop Assessment' was carried out for each area consulting the following sources for the Historic Environment:

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM)
- Conservation Areas (CA)
- Listed Buildings (LB)
- Historic Parks and Gardens (HPG)
- Historic Battlefields
- Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- Historic Landscape Characterisation

This information was used to gain an overview of the known historic environment character and status of each site. The broad impacts of development and options/potential for mitigation were then considered.

World Heritage

The Bath areas of search were assessed for impact against the outstanding universal values of the World Heritage Site, as identified in the original nomination papers (1986) and the World Heritage Site Management Plan (2003), and against identified characteristics (set out in the assessment tables below) of the landscape around the city as setting to the World Heritage Site.

Nature Conservation

A 'Rapid Desktop Assessment' was carried out for each area consulting:

- Statutory wildlife designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), etc);
- Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIG);
- Phase 1 habitat information;
- local wildlife designations (this differs for each authority – e.g. “Wildlife Network” sites for Bristol; bat protection zones for Bath);
- Strategic Nature Areas as identified in the regional spatial strategy and Nature Map;
- Existing / recent records for notable species, with particular reference to Species of Principal Importance; and UK protected and European protected species;
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and semi-natural habitat, including rivers and streams, ponds and other water bodies;
- Ancient Woodland Inventory sites;
- BAP and other relevant Project data -different for each authority e.g. hedgerow data; Batscapes data; greater horseshoe bat corridors; proximity to BAP project areas;
- Green infra-structure information as available from aerial photographs and draft Horseshoe Bat Corridor information.

This information was used to gain an overview of the known ecological character and status of each site. The broad impacts of development and options/potential for mitigation were then considered.

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Appraisal Summary

This summary presents the key findings of the B&NES RSS Urban Extension working group following an environmental capacity appraisal of the AONB immediately surrounding Bath. This summary should be read in conjunction with the individual site appraisals. Any sites to be promoted through the LDF would require further detailed assessments; this may reduce capacity and could prevent development in some areas.

It should be noted that some impacts such as those concerning hedgerows that are a Priority Habitat are likely to apply to all sites and a more detailed study would be required to assess the impact fully. Mitigation for impact on hedgerows would be required.

It is important to note that all of these areas are within the AONB, and their suitability for development needs to be assessed against the criteria of PPS7, as well as the environmental criteria contained within this appraisal.

Areas 1, 2, 3ii (Cell A) and 4 to 14 (Cells B,C, D, and E)

These are all areas where the group considered development would have a **high adverse impact across a range** of environmental factors and urban design considerations, see individual appraisals for more detail of the impact.

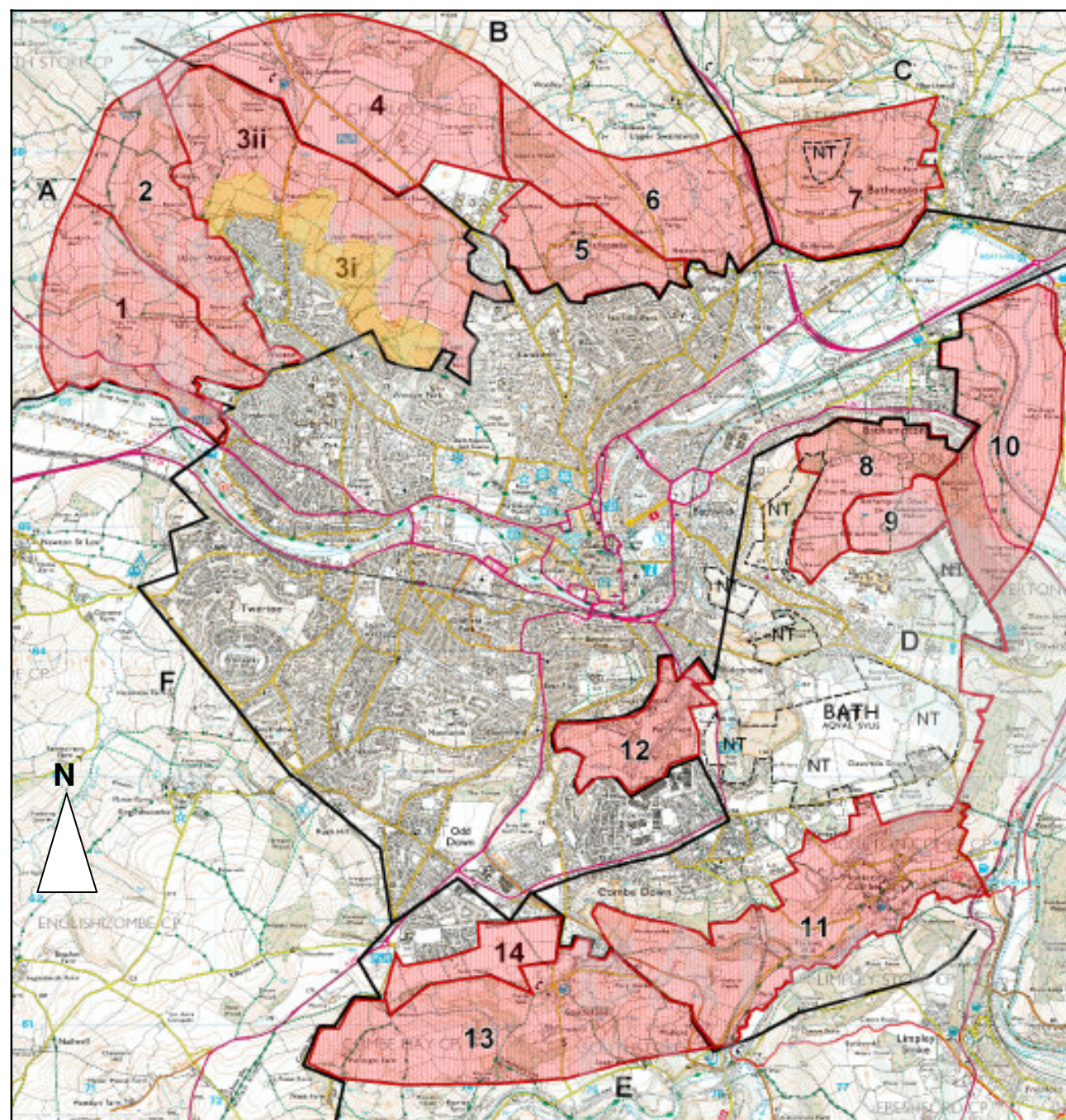
Area 3i (Cell A)

This area is the only one where the group considered development would have a **high adverse impact on one** environmental factor or urban design consideration, with the key issue being important nature conservation interests. The group recommends that further work should be carried out to assess the full implications of the impacts.

Without prejudice to the considerations regarding the AONB, it is considered that development within this area would have significantly less adverse environmental impact on a range of factors than the alternative sites considered either within the AONB, or outside the AONB. There is scope for some development on these lower slopes while maintaining the upper undeveloped slopes which form a characteristic green backdrop to the city. It could also provide a well integrated development that utilises existing facilities within the locality and allows a choice of modes of transport, including walking, to Bath city centre.

Next Stages

The information contained within this 'Environmental Capacity Appraisal of AONB sites surrounding Bath' will, in conjunction with the original 'Environmental Capacity Appraisal of non-AONB sites' and the 'Strategic Sustainability Assessment', inform Bath and North East Somerset Council's statement to the Regional Spatial Strategy Examination in Public. Further work is required for many of the sites contained in both the 'Environmental Capacity Appraisals' and the need for this further work should be clearly articulated. It is likely that this further work will inform the Local Development Framework.



Map indicating location of appraisal areas.

For the avoidance of doubt Area 3i is coloured orange, indicating that development would have a **high adverse impact on one** environmental factor or urban design consideration

Cell A

Area 1 - Kelston Slopes

Urban Design

(Cell A, including Areas 1, 2, 3i and 3ii)

Opportunities

Assuming new development to be adjacent to existing, then there are generally good opportunities to link into the existing and comprehensive facilities provided in Weston, and adjoining areas, including:

- Nurseries
- Primary and Secondary Schools
- Shops
- Medical Services
- Public transport infrastructure
- Open spaces and recreational activity

Limitations

Key limitations are likely to include the steep topography in places, as well as water courses which will influence the form of development and the network of streets and spaces. This may influence the level of connectivity.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

This area comprises the steep south facing slope of the River Avon valley. The slope is indented. The Cotswold scarp slope is a distinctive and strong feature of this area with a promontory of higher ground which forms part of the distinctive undeveloped backdrop to the city. Small to medium sized pasture fields are bound by a mix of trimmed and untrimmed hedgerows. The hillside is well treed primarily with copses, bands of woodland and hedgerow trees. A few farms nestle on the hillside and occasional properties are sited close to the A431 west of Bath.

The landscape is highly rural and whilst close to the city with some development being visible to the east, the area has very little connection with urban Bath.

Due to the wide breadth of the valley, roads, rail, cycleway and public rights of way routed along the valley there are extensive views throughout and this hillside is highly prominent.

Landscape Impacts

Development on this hillside would have a high impact on the open rural character of this landscape. It would interrupt the rural integrity of the Cotswolds hillside, a strong and prominent feature of the area. Development would involve the loss of trees and the strong pattern of hedgerows.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on views across and from within the valley; from transport routes and the network of public rights of way, including the River Avon Trail and the Cotswold Way, routes of national importance. Development would be a prominent intrusive element of the view from the A4, the key route from the west, and the intercity rail route between Bristol and London.

Development would appear incongruent; intruding into this attractive rural landscape surrounding the urban area for which the city is well known.

It would appear as an isolated settlement because of its poor connectivity with the city. It would conflict with the predominantly well contained character of Bath's urban area.

The views from the small number of properties in and looking towards this area would also be highly impacted by development as it would change from a highly rural to an urban one.

Mitigation

Due to the high visual prominence of this area there is low potential for mitigation from views from the valley bottom and hillsides.

Summary

The landscape impacts would be high

The visual impacts would be high

The potential for mitigation would be low

Historic Environment

(Cell A)

Existing Condition

- The Bath Main Conservation Area extends into the appraisal area covering the open fields north of Primrose Hill.
- Kelston Park (Historic Park and Garden) lies within the appraisal area between Sion Hill and Primrose Hill.
- At least 18 Listed Buildings (mainly Grade II) lie within the appraisal area, including Beckford's Tower and Lansdown Cemetery (Grade I).
- The SMR contains records of Romano-British finds and medieval strip lynchets at Upper Weston Farm. On the higher ground at Lansdown (along the Roman road) there is evidence of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and later Roman burials, as well as the medieval settlement and chapel.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any buried archaeological remains, including Prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity and occupation at Lansdown. There are concerns about the visibility of any development and its impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings on Lansdown Road and the Bath Main Conservation Area.

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their actual location. The setting of the Bath Main Conservation

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Area and Listed Buildings could be protected by careful planning at Primrose Hill, with any development not extending too far up the valley slope above Upper Weston.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the historic environment, in particular the setting of Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

Summary

Requires full assessment and evaluation of the historic environment and appropriate mitigation.

World Heritage Issues

Existing Conditions

The study area straddles the World Heritage Site boundary and extends into the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site and its setting at this point are:

- highly rural steeply sloping landscape setting to the World Heritage Site, contributing to its green skyline
- long distance views to the area from the west (particularly the key approaches to the World Heritage Site, the A4 and railway route), valley bottom and southern slopes of the World Heritage Site
- very little connection to the city from within this area, with a rural feeling edge to this part of the World Heritage Site
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on the distinctively rural character of the setting of the WHS and would produce a poorly connected extension to the city, to the detriment of the rural edge of the World Heritage Site and the contained character of the city. Development would make the city newly visible to wide areas of the surrounding countryside, and would change the character of the approach to the World Heritage Site.

Mitigation

It would be very difficult to mitigate the impacts of development in this area due to the prominence of the area.

Summary

The impact on the rural edge and setting of the World Heritage Site would be high. The potential for mitigation is low.

Nature Conservation

Cell A – taking in areas 1, 2 and 3(ii) but excluding 3(i)

Existing conditions

- The area includes a mosaic of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)
- The vast majority of the area is covered by a Strategic Nature Area (SNA) – a RSS designation. Numerous SNCI's and Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species fall within the SNA.
- The area contains several fields of species rich grassland (a BAP priority habitat) and a number of records of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species.
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

Development within the SNA would cause significant habitat fragmentation in an area of high ecological importance and reduce the area of strategic capacity for habitat restoration and enhancement. It is likely that the SNA would suffer indirect impacts through development of land outside the SNA boundary from resultant increased urban fringe pressures. There would be further impacts on SNCIs and priority habitats.

Mitigation

As areas identified as the best in the region to conserve, create and connect wildlife habitat at a landscape scale the loss of land from the SNA would be difficult to mitigate. Some degree of compensation could be achieved through off site habitat enhancement and long-term management at an appropriate location and scale, however the legal mechanisms are difficult and untested locally. Outside of the SNA it would remain difficult to mitigate for any development affecting SNCIs and the priority habitats. Buffer areas would be required to protect the SNCI sites as would protection and retention of key hedgerows. Within the SNCIs compensatory provision of at least equal value would be required should material factors regarding development be judged sufficient to override the local biological and community/amenity value of the site.

Summary

The SNA, SNCIs and priority habitats would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of their boundaries would need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon them as well as in terms of the land parcel itself and other priority habitats and species. Detailed site surveys and further impact assessments would be required prior to site design and capacity decisions.

Cell A Area 2 - Weston Slopes (South)

Urban Design

see summary above for Cell A

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

The indented steep north east facing slopes of this asymmetrical Weston Brook valley rise up sharply to the Cotswold Way, a national trail which follows the ridgeline of a green promontory of higher ground. This promontory forms part of the distinctive undeveloped backdrop to the city and contains the important local viewpoints of Dean Hill, Kelston Roundhill and Prospect Stile at the edge of this area overlook the entire valley. The area is rural with small and medium sized fields bounded by predominantly trimmed hedgerows with occasional trees. A small wood nestles on the lower valley sides and long thin wooded areas feature along much of the top of the slopes. A minor road runs along the valley bottom and turns into an unmade track serving a few isolated properties at the edge of the area. Development is contained on the opposite hillside and the valley bottom and whilst there is a visual connection to the urban area at Upper Weston, the undeveloped character forms an important rural setting to the city and the Cotswold Way. In contrast to the extensive slopes on the opposite side of the valley (Area 3), this side is more compact and intimate and the skyline is generally lower in height.

Landscape Impacts

Development on this hillside would have a high impact on the highly rural character of this landscape and setting to the urban area. Development would involve the loss of trees and the strong pattern of hedgerows.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on views from the Cotswold Way and other public rights of way in the area which are presently in the rural area. It would have a high impact on important views from the top of Weston Lane, of Upper Weston framed by rural fields and woodlands on the opposite side of the valley. Development would also have a high impact on views from the adjacent residential area because the rural views would be lost.

Mitigation

Due to the high visual prominence of this area from Upper Weston, a busy route entering the city, from the Cotswold Way and many residential properties looking across to the area there is low potential for mitigation from views.

Summary

The landscape impacts would be high
The visual impacts would be high

The potential for mitigation would be low except for development in two small fields in the valley bottom which are quite well visually contained due to the topography, and additional planting would improve the potential for mitigation

Historic Environment

see summary above for Cell A

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- highly distinctive ridgeline with steep slopes that contributes to the rural setting and green skyline of the World Heritage Site
- important views within this rural area, particularly from the Cotswolds Way
- important wide views across the World Heritage Site
- strong urban edge in valley bottom framed by rural countryside
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on the distinctively rural character of the setting of the World Heritage Site. Due to the narrowness of the undeveloped slopes leading up to the ridge, there is little scope for development extending away from the existing urban edge without fundamentally altering the rural undeveloped character of this part of the World Heritage Site setting, and losing the green backdrop. Views from the Cotswolds Way and surrounding countryside would also be compromised.

Mitigation

Due to the high prominence of this area, and the narrowness of the undeveloped slopes, particularly when viewed from Upper Weston and the Cotswolds Way, it would be very difficult to mitigate development in this area.

Summary

The impact on the rural edge and setting of the World Heritage Site would be high. The potential for mitigation is low.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell A

Cell A Areas 3i and 3ii – Weston Slopes (North)

Urban Design

see summary above for Cell A

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

The steep gently indented and extensive south west facing slopes of the River Avon and Weston Brook valleys. Fields are medium to large sized, bounded by untrimmed hedgerows with small to medium trees at the west side, more trimmed hedgerows to the east side, rising above predominantly residential development of two storey houses on the lower slopes with a distinctive edge to the urban area. Even though the area assessed is directly above urban development which occupies the lower slopes of the valley, it remains highly rural in character and contributes to the fine landscape setting to the city, this being an important characteristic of Bath. Scrub is developing in some of the higher fields. New woodland has been planted in two fields to the east of the area, and trees have a dominant presence in the area in the form of small copses, bands of woodland and hedgerow trees which create a soft character. There are just a few isolated farms on the east side of the area and a small scattering of residential properties at the head of the valley.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact on landscape character on the upper valley slopes as it would cause the loss of the present extent of rural fields which create a fine setting that contains the northern extent of the city's urban area. It would inevitably lead to the loss of the field pattern and hedgerows and trees.

Development on the lower slopes would only have a medium impact as it retains a significant rural landscape and the rural skyline on the upper slopes to frame the city.

Visual Impacts

In visual terms there is a strong difference in degree of impact of potential development between the upper and lower slopes of the valley sides and they are therefore discussed separately.

Lower to Middle Slopes

Development restricted to these slopes and extending up from the existing built edge of Weston would have a low to medium impact on wider views depending on the characteristics of the development and the distance up the slope. Currently development at adjacent Lansdown extends significantly higher up the hillside than existing development at Weston and it is well treed.

Impacts on views from PROWs and from residents of adjoining properties would inevitably be high due to the loss of current rural views.

Upper Slopes

Extending development onto the upper slopes of the valley side would have a contrasting high impact. Views to the all important green upper slopes and skyline which are so typical of the setting of the City would be replaced by urban development. Examples of views affected are those from the south facing hills of the River Avon valley, more limited views from the A4 entering Bath from the west, views from the Cotswolds Way and from various parts of Weston village.

Mitigation

It would not be possible to mitigate development extending up the entire hillside as it would involve the loss of the characteristic rural setting to the city. Due to the topography the area is highly prominent and planting, even in many years time, could not mitigate housing at high densities in such a prominent location.

The potential for mitigation of development restricted to the lower fields would be high because of its direct relationship to existing development and the retention of a significant landscape setting to the city. Mitigation should include decreasing densities further from the existing development to allow for more space to integrate trees. The more rural landscape character could also be extended down into the development for example, with an open space located alongside an existing footpath which follows a dip in the slope, which would improve a link to the countryside, by retaining the strong field pattern and strengthening existing hedgerows.

It would be difficult to mitigate the loss of rural views for residents living adjacent to the fields.

Summary

The landscape impacts would be high on the upper slopes and medium on the lower slopes. The visual impacts would be high for the upper slopes and low to medium for the lower slopes. The potential for mitigation would be low for development of the upper slopes and higher for development on the lower slopes. The potential for effective mitigation of loss of rural views to adjacent residents is low.

Historic Environment

see summary above for Cell A

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area straddles the World Heritage Site boundary and extends into the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site and its setting at this point are:

- highly rural steeply sloping landscape setting to the World Heritage Site
- highly prominent and extensive hillside rising above the widely visible urban edge, contributing to the World Heritage Site's green skyline
- long distance views to the area from the west (particularly the key approaches to the World Heritage Site, the A4 and railway route), the Cotswolds Way, the valley bottom and southern slopes of the World Heritage Site
- strong urban edge on lower valley slopes framed by rural countryside

- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Further development on the lower slopes immediately adjacent to the urban edge would have a high localised impact (i.e. on loss of local views and loss of rural character) but would have a lesser impact on the character of the World Heritage Site and its setting if: a strong urban edge were maintained; a substantial area of the upper slopes were left with its rural character providing the green setting and skyline for the city; and the development were of a scale and design that integrates it into the local character.

Development on the upper slopes would have a high impact on the setting of the World Heritage Site, particularly causing the loss of the green backdrop and skyline which is so characteristic of this part of the World Heritage Site.

Mitigation

No mitigation would be possible for development on the upper slopes.

Development on the lower slopes should be possible to mitigate due to its close proximity to existing development and the retention of the slopes above as green setting and skyline to the World Heritage Site.

Summary

Development on the upper slopes would have a high impact and would not be able to be mitigated.

Development on the lower slopes would have a medium impact and it would be possible to mitigate.

Nature Conservation

Also see summary above for Cell A

Area A3(i)

Existing conditions

- Sections of the area are covered by a Strategic Nature Area (SNA) – a RSS designation.
- The area contains a concentration of fields with species-rich grassland (a BAP priority habitat) and records of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species including skylark, yellowhammer, nightingale, pipistrelle bats and long-winged conehead.
- Penn Hill east and west SNCI and Primrose Hill SNCI abut the area to the east.
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

Development within the SNA covered sections would cause significant habitat fragmentation in an area of high ecological importance and reduce the area of strategic capacity for habitat restoration and enhancement. It is likely that the SNA would suffer indirect impacts through

development of non-SNA designated land through the resultant urban fringe pressures. Development of the eastern side of the area could also impact on the SNCIs through the resultant added urban fringe pressures. Development of fields containing species rich grassland would lead to loss or deterioration of this BAP priority habitat, as could potentially be the case with particular hedgerows. Development on the western edge of the area would impact upon the immediate foraging grounds of a sizeable pipistrelle roost in that area.

Mitigation

The loss of land from the SNA cannot be mitigated. Some degree of compensation could be achieved through off site habitat enhancement and long-term management at an appropriate location and scale, however the legal mechanisms are difficult and untested locally. Outside of the SNA it would remain difficult to mitigate for any development affecting SNCIs and the priority habitats. Buffer areas would be required to protect the SNCI sites as would protection and retention of key hedgerows.

Summary

The SNA, SNCIs and priority habitats would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of their boundaries would need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon them as well as in terms of the land parcel itself and other priority habitats and species. The impacts would be less in a small number of fields that are outside the SNA, not containing species-rich grassland, not abutting the SNCI's and with less developed hedgerows. Detailed site surveys and further impact assessments would be required prior to site design and capacity decisions.

Cell B Area 4 – Lansdown Plateau

Urban Design

Opportunities

- Given the existing employment area of the MOD, there are opportunities to create a mixed use environment for the potential benefit of new residents and employees.
- The Park and Ride site is in the centre of this area providing quick access into the centre of Bath.

Limitations

- The plateau and skyline position of this area is a severe limitation on the ability of development to appropriately respond to the character of the city.
- For development to be successful from an urban design point of view, particularly as this is an important route into the city, it would need to relate to the characteristics of related development. Given that this character is a very low density of development, it would therefore be difficult to contribute significantly to housing need from this site.
- This area is generally remote from the existing built up area and so access to existing facilities is generally limited. On-site provision of facilities would need to be made.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

This consists of the Cotswolds plateau which is open, exposed and fairly flat. Used extensively for playing fields with other recreational uses including a golf course and the Bath Racecourse. There are a few dwellings; also, park and ride and small scale farming use. Large fields bounded by dry stone walls in varying condition. Belts of mainly deciduous trees with some conifers along Lansdown Road and lines of trees, especially conifers, forming shelter belts at some field boundaries. Many boundaries are devoid of trees. The sky has a big presence here. Rural character with urban fringe influences from lighting, signage and playing fields. Views from more open parts of plateau to Charney Down and hills beyond. The main part of the open Cotswold plateau extends northwards from a development line that tapers out towards the top of the Lansdown slopes and is surrounded on most of its boundary by rural fields. The area is separated from the urban area.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact on the plateau as it would destroy the open exposed characteristic of plateaux. Development on the plateau would be a significant departure to Bath's character of being well contained by the surrounding topography. It would have a high impact due to the inevitable loss of trees and dry stone walls.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on views from the Lansdown Road, a major route into Bath, through the loss of the rural views and openness and fragmentation of characteristic dry stone walls and lines of trees. Development would have a high impact on views from the public rights of way crossing the plateau through loss of rural views.

The impact would be high because development would appear isolated because of its poor connectivity with the city.

The impact on wider views would be high; some development would be visible beyond the plateau and by night lighting would be intrusive on the skyline over a large area. Existing lighting from the park and ride illustrates the intrusive nature of lighting on the plateau as it can be seen over many miles.

Mitigation

There is low potential in terms of mitigating skyline development affecting the wider rural landscape. There is some potential in local terms if small scale development was considered as it would be relatively easy to establish good screening tree belts.

Summary

Landscape and visual impacts would be high

Low potential for effective mitigation except small scale development located closer to the road which could be screened. However, low overall potential as too isolated from the city.

Historic Environment

(Cell B)

Existing Condition

- Two Bronze Age round barrows (Scheduled Ancient Monument) lie immediately to the north of the Blathwayt Arms at Lansdown.
- The Charlcombe Conservation Area lies within the appraisal area covering the whole of the historic medieval village.
- At least 13 Listed Buildings (mainly Grade II) lie within the appraisal area, including Chapel Farmhouse and Charlcombe Church (Grade II*).
- At Lansdown the SMR contains records of Prehistoric flints and Bronze Age barrows/finds and a medieval chapel with burials. At Upper Langridge there is evidence of Roman buildings and burials, and at Charlcombe the medieval village, including its church and manor.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any buried archaeological remains, including Prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity and occupation at Lansdown and Charlcombe. There are serious concerns about the visibility of any development and its impact on the setting of Listed Buildings at Lansdown Road and the Charlcombe and Upper Swainswick Conservation Areas.

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their actual location. However, it is difficult to see how the impact

on the settings of the Listed Buildings and rural character of the Conservation Areas could be mitigated.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the historic environment, in particular the settings of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

Summary

Development would result in a negative impact on the historic environment.

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area straddles the World Heritage Site boundary and extends into the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site and its setting at this point are:

- distinctive rural open plateau setting and approach to the city which is largely hidden until arrival at its edge
- Roman Road approaching the World Heritage Site through a complex archaeological landscape, with potential for associated Roman archaeological remains
- little feeling of connection with the city
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development on the plateau would alter the rural character of this part of the setting of the World Heritage Site and extend the city out away from the bowl in which it sits, thereby newly revealing the urban area to a wide area of countryside.

Mitigation

It would be difficult to mitigate against development in this area due to its skyline position and open nature.

Summary

The impact on the rural character of this part of World Heritage Site and its setting, particularly the approach to the city, would be very difficult to mitigate. Any development here would be isolated from the urban area.

Nature Conservation

Area B – taking in Areas 4, 5 and 6

Existing Conditions

- The area includes a mosaic of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)
- The majority of the area is covered by a Strategic Nature Area (SNA) – a RSS designation. Numerous SNCI's and Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species fall within the SNA and each sub area 4, 5 and 6 are affected by them.
- The area lies within 3km of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC, designated for it's horseshoe bats
- The area contains a high percentage of fields of species rich grassland (a BAP priority habitat), particularly in areas 5 and 6, as well as broad-leaved woodland (a BAP priority habitat) and a number of records of BAP priority species.
- The area of land outside the SNA (located mostly in the west of area 6) contains all or part of 3 SNCIs, the lam brook corridor, B&NES BAP priority species including pipistrelle bats and cornfield knotgrass as well as areas of species-rich grassland and other priority habitats.
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

Development within the SNA would cause significant habitat fragmentation in an area of high ecological importance and reduce the area of strategic capacity for habitat restoration and enhancement. It is likely that the SNA would suffer indirect impacts through development of the adjoining land from urban fringe pressures. Development in the land not covered by the SNA could impact on the SNCIs and notable species and habitats found within them as would be the case inside the SNA.

Mitigation

As areas identified as the best in the region to conserve, create and connect wildlife habitat at a landscape scale the loss of land from the SNA would be difficult to mitigate. Some degree of compensation could be achieved through off site habitat enhancement and long-term management at an appropriate location and scale, however the legal mechanisms are difficult and untested locally. Outside of the SNA it would remain difficult to mitigate for any development affecting the SNCIs and the priority habitats. Within the SNCIs compensatory provision of at least equal value would be required should material factors regarding development be judged sufficient to override the local biological and community/amenity value of the site.

Summary

The SNA, SNCIs and priority habitats would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of their boundaries would need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon them as well as in terms of the land parcel itself and other priority habitats and species. Detailed site surveys and further impact assessments would be required prior to site design and capacity decisions. Due to proximity to the SAC an assessment of the likely significant effect upon the horseshoe bats would be required under the Habitat Regulations which would then inform whether an appropriate assessment was needed.

Regional Spatial Strategy
Urban Extension Environmental Capacity Appraisal
Land within the AONB surrounding Bath

Cell B

Area 5 – Charlcombe Valley

Urban Design (for areas 5 and 6)

Opportunities

- The areas adjacent to the existing developments offer some potential to link into the existing facilities provided in Fairfield Park and Larkhall,

Limitations

- This area is visually very remote from the existing built up area, therefore any development in this area will read as a new settlement rather than as an urban extension.
- The northern part of the site (Area 6) is very isolated from existing development and its associated facilities.
- Topography is likely to prove problematic.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

A small steep sided valley indenting the River Avon Valley. There is a characteristic band of woodland on the slopes above Charlcombe and more woodland further down. Medium sized fields used for grazing, bounded by clipped and taller hedgerows, occasional scattered trees in hedgerows and fields. Charlcombe village nestles on the hillside well surrounded by trees. There is a sense of the valley being intimate and tucked away yet is it highly visible from Bathampton Down across the River Avon Valley where the open fields contribute to the characteristic rural landscape setting to the city. A narrow lane winds its way around the valley.

Landscape Impacts

Development of this valley would have a high impact on the highly rural landscape that is part of the important rural setting to the city. The existing edge of settlement here is well defined and any further development would have a high impact by causing the loss of trees and hedgerows which presently emphasise the limit of the urban area.

It would have a high impact from Charlcombe village, which presently enjoys an intimate and peaceful rural setting on the valley sides.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on this landscape that is highly visible from across the River Avon Valley. The impact would be high on views from three public rights of way which rise up the hillside and the minor roads at the edge of the area and leading to Charlcombe. Existing residential occupiers adjacent to the fields would be highly impacted by loss of rural views.

Mitigation

Effective mitigation would not be possible given the highly visible nature of the valley afforded by being on the upper slopes of the Charlcombe Valley. Furthermore, it is not possible to mitigate

the loss of the contribution this landscape makes to the important landscaped setting along the north part of the city.

Summary

Landscape and visual impacts are high

The potential for mitigation is low given the visual prominence of the area

Historic Environment

See summary above for Cell B

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area straddles the World Heritage Site boundary and extends into the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site and its setting at this point are:

- highly visible steep sided valley against a well defined urban edge
- rural in character, well treed
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on its rural character and on its role as rural setting to the World Heritage Site.

Mitigation

Due to the prominent nature of this sloping area it would not be possible to mitigate against development here, either from impact on the local rural character or on its character as rural setting to the urban World Heritage Site.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on the rural setting to the World Heritage Site and would not be possible to mitigate.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell B

Cell B Area 6 – Lam Brook Valley

Urban Design

See summary above for Cell B

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

Whilst Little Solsbury Hill is part of the valley it has been surveyed separately because of its high importance.

This is the broad steeply sloping valley of the Lam Brook. The valley is well overlooked from the A46, from minor lanes in and around the area and from Little Solsbury Hill and across the River Avon Valley at Bathampton Down and Brown's Folly wood; important local landmarks. The medium sized fields are bound by clipped and taller hedgerows; sparser hedgerows generally located on the east facing slopes, and some fields have an undulating surface. The hedgerows and high banks defining the lane between Larkhall and Woolley are particularly distinctive in that they are very neat and clipped, quite broad and emphasise the bending and undulating character of the lane. The course of the brook is well marked by rows of trees. There are individual trees in a few fields. This area has a rural character with scattered individual dwellings and farms and one small group of a dozen dwellings. If it were not for the A46 it would be peaceful, but the years have softened the impact of the road on this attractive valley. The area is not well connected to the built up area of Larkhall whose northerly extent is well contained at Valley View Road and relates visually more to the R. Avon valley. Minor roads follow the contours on each side of the valley leading to Woolley and Upper Swainswick.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact on openness and rural character. It would not be well connected to the urban area so would feel very isolated. Development would cause the loss of hedgerows, and because some of them are rather sparse they would unlikely to be able to be retained in a development so the historic field pattern would be lost. Fuller hedgerows would also be lost or fragmented by development. The distinctive hedgerows along Woolley Lane would likely be lost.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on rural views from the A46; the most important route entering the city from the north, from lanes, and from public rights of way further up the valley and on Little Solsbury Hill. It would have a high impact from the nearby landmarks – Little Solsbury Hill, Brown's Folly wood and Bathampton Down as this valley contributes to the important landscape setting north of the city – a characteristic of Bath.

Mitigation

Due to the high visibility of the valley from footpaths, the A46, lanes and dwellings, it would not be possible to effectively mitigate the loss of the rural valley character and views.

Summary

High impact on open rural character
High impact on views due to high visibility
Low potential for effective mitigation given prominence of area
Too isolated from city

Historic Environment

See summary above for Cell B

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- steep sided valley with close relationship to Little Solsbury Hill
- rural character with the urban edge of the World Heritage Site (at Larkhall) well contained
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on its rural character and isolation from the urban area. Development here would also bring the urban edge out further into the countryside and into wider view, particularly from the A46 approach to Bath.

It would urbanise the rural setting of the World Heritage Site.

Mitigation

It would not be possible to mitigate development in this area due to its high prominence.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on the rural setting of the World Heritage Site and would not be possible to mitigate.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell B

Cell C Area 7 –Little Solsbury Hill

Urban Design

Opportunities

- Limited opportunities to link into existing facilities in Larkhall and Batheaston, although this is highly dependant on location within the area, and impeded by topography.

Limitations

- Development in this area would result in the visual and physical joining up of Batheaston and Larkhall, which would be seen as a significant easterly extension of the city. This would clearly have a severe visual impact.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Landscape and Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

Little Solsbury Hill is a prominent hill of historical importance that dominates the locality. It is prominent in views from nearby settlements and the surrounding landscape, including from well down the River Avon Valley opposite Claverton. It is highly rural in character. The small and medium sized fields are mainly grazed and bounded by neatly clipped hedgerows with few trees in them. A few taller hedgerows and scrub and developing woodland is present in some areas with wooded areas mostly on the higher slopes but with some at lower level. The presence of the fuller hedgerows and woodland softens the character. The hill top is pasture. The slope above Bathampton is quite indented. The A46 was cut into its lower slopes to the west, and narrow lanes or track circle the hill. Public rights of way rise up and go around parts of the hill.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact on this strong local landscape feature. It would have a high impact on the open exposed character and distinctive landform.

The hill is not connected to the urban area and relates to the wider rural landscape. Development would have a high impact on the well contained linear character of Northend and would intrude on the unique setting of Northend Church and Church Farm, commanding a hillside position above the village.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on the many views to this prominent landmark; from roads, inter city rail, lanes, public rights of way and properties.

Mitigation

There is very low potential for mitigation given the high prominence of this hill.

Summary

High impact on character and views due to prominence of hillside
Very low potential for mitigation

Historic Environment

Existing Condition

- Little Solsbury Hill (Scheduled Ancient Monument) an Iron Age hillfort lies in the centre of the appraisal area, which therefore constitutes the monument's setting.
- Two Grade II Listed Buildings lie within the appraisal area – Field End and Bailbrook Mission Church.
- The SMR contains records of Prehistoric and Roman finds from Solsbury Hill, along with medieval field systems in and around the hillfort. A Bronze Age burial is also recorded south of the hillfort at Bailbrook Farm.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any buried archaeological remains, including Prehistoric to Roman finds and medieval field systems. There are serious concerns about the visibility of any development in this area and its impact on the setting of Little Solsbury Hill (Scheduled Ancient Monument).

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some below ground archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their actual location. However, it is difficult to see how development could not impact on setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. From the summit of the hillfort there are clear views of the surrounding area, including the medieval field systems.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the historic environment, in particular the setting of Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Summary

Development would result in a negative impact on the historic environment.

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- prominent Hillfort and natural landmark in a key gateway area to the World Heritage Site
- highly rural in character, exposed and open landscape

- open to wide views, particularly from transport routes leading to World Heritage Site (rail, road)
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on this strongly rural natural feature, and would urbanise what is a key natural landmark in a gateway area to the World Heritage Site.

This area is not connected to the urban area and development would be very intrusive to the rural setting of the World Heritage Site.

Mitigation

It would be very difficult to mitigate development in this area due to its prominence.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on its rural character and the role of this feature as a strong natural gateway landmark to the World Heritage Site.

Nature Conservation

Existing Conditions

- The area is centred around a large Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)
- The vast majority of the area is covered by a Strategic Nature Area (SNA) – a RSS designation. Numerous SNCI's and Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species fall within the SNA.
- The area lies within 2km of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC, designated for its horseshoe bats and there are further horseshoe bat roost records within and just outside area 7
- The section of land outside the SNA contains B&NES BAP species including pipistrelle bats and contains a high percentage of species-rich grassland and broadleaved woodland (BAP priority habitats).
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

Development within the SNA would cause significant habitat fragmentation in an area of high ecological importance and reduce the area of strategic capacity for habitat restoration and enhancement. It is likely that the SNA would suffer indirect impacts through development of the adjoining land from urban fringe pressures. There would be further impacts on SNCIs and priority habitats. Development in the land not covered by the SNA could impact on the foraging grounds of bats associated with the nearby Browns Folly and Bathampton elements of the Bath & Bradford on Avon SAC, this also applies to land within the SNA.

Mitigation

As areas identified as the best in the region to conserve, create and connect wildlife habitat at a landscape scale the loss of land from the SNA would be difficult to mitigate. Some degree of compensation could be achieved through off site habitat enhancement and long-term management at an appropriate location and scale, however the legal mechanisms are difficult and untested locally. Hedgerows, waterbodies, grazed pasture and woodland would be likely to be considered of particular value for foraging bats and would need to be addressed. Further surveys would be needed probably including radio tracking to assess the effects of habitat fragmentation on the foraging bats. It would be difficult to mitigate for any development affecting the SNCIs and the priority habitats. Within the SNCIs compensatory provision of at least equal value would be required should material factors regarding development be judged sufficient to override the local biological and community/amenity value of the site.

Summary

The SNA and SNCIs would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of their boundaries would need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon them as well as in terms of the land parcel itself. Additional consideration would need to be given to the affects of any development on the foraging bats associated with the nearby SAC and other bat roosts as well as on other priority habitats and species. Detailed site surveys and further impact assessments would be required prior to site design and capacity decisions. Due to proximity to the SAC an assessment of the likely significant effect upon the horseshoe bats would be required under the Habitat Regulations which would then inform whether an appropriate assessment was needed.

Cell D Area 8 – Bathampton (Upper Slopes)

Urban Design

(Cell D - comprising Areas 8, 9 and 10)

Opportunities

- Northern extension of Bathampton village could utilise its existing facilities.
- Development further away from the existing built up area would be more isolated and the provision of its own basic facilities would be required.

Limitations

- Development in these locations would be visually very prominent, and in the case of area 10 would result in a significant change within the undeveloped Limpley Stoke valley.
- Bathampton would probably be seen as an easterly extension of Bath, rather than a separate settlement.
- Prominent and important hillsides

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

This area comprises the higher steep north and north-west facing highly rural slopes above Bathampton rising up to Bathampton Down. The hillside is predominantly wooded with deciduous trees; the few fields above the settlement and at the skyline are grazed. Hedgerows are unclipped and scrub development is taking place within some of the fields which enhances the heavily treed character of this hillside.

There are public rights of way throughout the area.

There is a clear definition of the northern extent of the settlement with no development creeping up this rural hillside.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact in that it would cause the loss of the characteristic strong woodland and field character of this prominent hillside around the edge of Bathampton Down. Existing development is linear along the A36 so any development would impact this character and create 'large estate' character. There may be an opportunity for limited development in one field and part of another field but this would be small scale.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on the many views to this prominent hillside and landmark; from major roads (A4, A36 and A46), inter city railway, the village, settlements on the other side of the valley and many footpaths in the rural area.

Mitigation

There is very low potential for mitigation given the highly prominent location of this hillside. Planting in the foreground of the 1.5 fields may soften the impact of limited development, although residents are likely to resist this in favour of an open view.

Summary

High impact on character and views given prominence of sites

Very low potential for mitigating development on prominent slopes

Some potential for mitigating development in 1.5 fields just above existing development

Historic Environment

(Cell D - comprising Areas 8, 9 and 10)

Existing Condition

- Bathampton Camp (Scheduled Ancient Monument) an Iron Age hillfort lies in the north of appraisal area, which therefore forms part the monument's setting.
- The appraisal area contains a significant number of Ancient Woodlands – Klondyke Copse and Bathwick, Bathampton, Hengrove and Claverton Woods.
- The Bath Main Conservation Area extends into the appraisal area covering Bathampton Down and Claverton Down
- On the west side of the appraisal area is Claverton Manor and gardens (Historic Park and Garden).
- At least 6 Listed Buildings (mainly Grade II) lie within the appraisal area, including the Grotto at Claverton Manor and the Sham Castle (Grade II*) off North Road.
- The SMR contains numerous records revealing this to be a highly significant historic/archaeological landscape. These records include Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age field systems, enclosures and occupation (including Bathampton Camp), Roman occupation and burials, the possible course of the Wansdyke, along with medieval strip lynchets, pillow mounds and deer park.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any buried archaeological remains in what is a highly significant historic landscape – with monuments recording human occupation four millennia. There are serious concerns about the visibility of any development in this area and its impact on the settings of Bathampton Camp (Scheduled Ancient Monument), areas of Ancient Woodland, Claverton Manor (Historic Park and Garden), Listed Buildings and the Bath Main Conservation Area.

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their precise location. However, it is difficult to see how development could not impact on setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, Ancient Woodland, Listed Buildings and Conservation Area. From the summit of Bathampton Camp there are clear views of the surrounding area, including the Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age field systems and medieval pillow mounds.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the various historic environment designations.

Summary

Development would result in a negative impact on the historic environment.

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- prominent wooded hillside that forms a natural landmark in a key gateway area to the World Heritage Site
- area of long term historic occupation, including Roman archaeological remains and potential for Roman stone quarries which have direct relevance to the World Heritage Site
- rural character, well treed
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on the rural character of this hillside, and would urbanise this key natural feature that forms a dramatic landscape backdrop to this gateway area.

Mitigation

It would be very difficult to mitigate development on this prominent hillside.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on the character of this area as part of the rural setting to the World Heritage Site and would be very difficult to mitigate.

Nature Conservation

(Cell D - comprising Areas 8, 9, 10 and 11)

Existing Conditions

- The area includes a mosaic of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI's) which cover the entirety of areas 8 and 9 and comprise around half of areas 10 and 11.
- The area is almost entirely within a Strategic Nature Area (SNA) – a RSS designation. Numerous SSSI's, SNCI's and Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species fall within the SNA.

- The area contains sites forming part of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC, designated for its horseshoe bats, and forms part of the main feeding area (sustenance zone) for the bats. There are further horseshoe bat roost records within the area
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

Development within the SNA would cause significant habitat fragmentation in an area of high ecological importance and reduce the area of strategic capacity for habitat restoration and enhancement. It is likely that the SNA would suffer indirect impacts through development of the adjoining land from urban fringe pressures. There would be further impacts on SNCI's and priority habitats. Development in the land not covered by the SNA would impact on the foraging grounds of bats associated with the nearby Browns Folly and Bathampton elements of the Bath & Bradford on Avon SAC, this would also apply to land within the SNA. Radio tracking of the Combe Down bats showed that area 11 was a key foraging area for them.

Mitigation

As areas identified as the best in the region to conserve, create and connect wildlife habitat at a landscape scale the loss of land from the SNA would be difficult to mitigate. Some degree of compensation could be achieved through off site habitat enhancement and long-term management at an appropriate location and scale, however the legal mechanisms are difficult and untested locally. Hedgerows, waterbodies, grazed pasture and woodland would be likely to be considered of particular value for foraging bats across the area and would need to be addressed. Further surveys would be needed probably including radio tracking to assess the effects of habitat fragmentation on the foraging bats. Within the SNCI's compensatory provision of at least equal value would be required should material factors regarding development be judged sufficient to override the local biological and community/amenity value of the site.

Summary

The SNA, SAC, SSSIs and SNCI's would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of their boundaries would need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon them as well as in terms of the land parcel itself. Additional consideration would need to be given to the affects of any development on the foraging bats associated with the nearby SAC as well as other priority habitats and species. Detailed site surveys and further impact assessments would be required prior to site design and capacity decisions. Due to proximity to the SAC an assessment of the likely significant effect upon the horseshoe bats would be required under the Habitat Regulations which would then inform whether an appropriate assessment was needed.

Cell D

Area 9 – Bathampton Down

Urban Design

See summary above for Cell D

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

Distinctive open plateau top, which, in spite of urban intrusions present such as a golf course (typical golf course type planting) and reservoir, has a remote and solitary character. It also feels exposed. The down is an historic hill fort. The university campus is close to the down, but trees at the boundary help to maintain the open rural character. From other edges of the down, there are either extensive views across the River Avon Valley or views are restricted by woodland on the slopes. The landform on the down is undulating and there is evidence of past quarrying.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact because of the down's open, exposed and isolated character that is very detached from the urban area and relates strongly to the wider rural landscape. Development on any part would have a high impact on the integrity of the downland plateau.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact from local views; footpaths on hillsides across the valley and around the down. From this and wider viewpoints, if development was kept well back from the edges of the plateau, with planting mitigation development may have a medium impact. Lighting could have the greatest impact, whether street lighting or from individual properties.

Mitigation

Planting around the edges of the plateau could, in years' time, effectively screen housing set back from the hedge, however, light spillage is likely to remain intrusive. It is not possible to mitigate the loss of the open exposed isolated character of the plateau which is not well connected to the urban area.

Summary

High impact on character
High impact on local views and a medium impact on more distant views
Effective mitigation is not possible for loss of character

Historic Environment

See summary above for Cell D

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- Plateau area with close relationship to the Bathampton slopes and River Avon Valley
- rural and isolated in character, with little visual connection to the urban area
- area of long term historic occupation, including Roman archaeological remains and potential for Roman stone quarries which have direct relevance to the World Heritage Site
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on its rural and isolated character, and would be separated from the existing urban area.

Mitigation

It would be very difficult to mitigate against the impact of development in this area due to its rural undeveloped character and isolation from the urban area.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on its character as part of the rural setting to the World Heritage Site and would be very difficult to mitigate against.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell D

Cell D Area 10 – River Avon Valley

Urban Design

See summary above for Cell D

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

This is a highly rural and undeveloped landscape; the valley form is strong. It is a broad steep sided valley with a few scattered farms and dwellings and Claverton village nestling in a linear fashion along the hillside. It is an open landscape, more so where fields have been amalgamated and the hedgerows are clipped. The area is heavily wooded, predominantly from the top of the slopes down, but there is a harmonious balance of fields and woodlands. Unclipped hedgerows, parkland trees and small copses add to the well treed character of the valley. The fields are medium and large sized and grazed. Claverton Manor is well placed close to the top of the hill with a backdrop of trees.

Public rights of way are plentiful including the Avon Walkway, a national trail. The A36, railway, river and canal are routed along this valley.

There is no relationship of the valley to the urban area.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact on this landscape because it would be incongruent in such a rural landscape with no relationship with the urban area. It would involve the loss of woodland, trees and hedgerows and field pattern. It would also have a high impact on the setting to Claverton Manor and the village.

Visual Impacts

The impact of development would be high in terms of views from all the transport and recreational routes in the lower valley, from public rights of way (especially on local beauty spots such as Brown's Folly), dwellings within the village and isolated properties including Claverton Manor.

Mitigation

The potential for mitigation is low given the high visibility of the valley from all parts / levels of the valley and beyond; Little Solsbury Hill and the eastern end of the Midford valley. It would not be possible to mitigate the loss of the extensive woodland / rural character.

Summary

High impact on landscape character

High impact on views

Low potential to mitigate the loss of this open rural landscape with heavily wooded slopes

Historic Environment

See summary above for Cell D

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- distinctive river valley and open rural landscape
- no visual connection with the urban area of Bath
- prominent landscape in views from the north (i.e. Solsbury Hill, and particularly from two of the main public transport approaches to the World Heritage Site
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on its rural character and would be inappropriate due to its lack of connection to the city.

Mitigation

Mitigation would be very difficult in this area due to the prominence of the valley and its rural character, which would be urbanised.

Summary

Development would have a high impact on the rural character of this area and would be very difficult to mitigate against.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell D

Cell D Area 11 – The Midford Valley

Urban Design

Opportunities

- Provision of new facilities for existing settlement; although at significant environmental cost.

Limitations

- Development in this area is far removed from any concept of a sustainable urban extension; instead development would create an extension to the village of Monkton Combe. The level of change to this area would be so significant as to create a new settlement where existing facilities should be shared, and expanded upon.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

A moderately broad steep sided valley with indented sides. Horsecombe Vale is a smaller more intimate valley off the Midford Brook. The rural valley is well wooded, particularly the upper third, and trees mark the course of the brook. Fields are grazed and small to medium; some have been amalgamated to make larger ones. Where this has happened, along with sparsely stocked / clipped hedgerows, the landscape is more open than the parts where woodland cover is strong and tall hedgerows are plentiful. In the east of the area a few small areas of Bath's development are seen along parts of the skyline but in a well treed setting. Apart from Monkton Combe low on the slopes, there are very few properties in the valley. Midford Castle stands high on the hill framed by woodland. There is no relationship with the urban area; where small areas of development are visible they are contained as well treed incidents like a sparse village along a ridge line. A few minor roads pass through the valley; public rights of way follow the brook and go up the hillsides.

Landscape Impacts

Main Valley

Development would have a high impact due to loss of integrity of tranquil rural valley, also because of the loss of woodland, field pattern and the indented character of the hillsides. A high impact also because the area is not well related to the urban area and is more strongly linked to the wider rural area. Development would spoil the rural setting to Midford Castle.

Horsecombe Vale

Parts of Combe Down and Odd Down spill over the skyline to a much greater extent here. It appears intrusive and incongruous in such an attractive rural valley giving it an urban fringe feel.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact from roads (including the A36), footpaths and dwellings in local and longer views because of the high visibility of the valley.

Mitigation

The potential for mitigation is low given the high visibility of the area arising from the topography. It is not possible to mitigate the loss of the heavily wooded character, intimate rural lanes and field pattern.

Summary

High impact on landscape character

High impact on views due to prominence of hillsides

The potential for mitigation is low given the loss of the well wooded character and rural views.

Historic Environment

(Area 11, Cell D)

Existing Condition

- Monkton Combe Lockup (Scheduled Ancient Monument) a stone prison/cell lies in the centre of the historic village.
- The appraisal area contains three areas of Ancient Woodlands – Claverton Wood and Priory Wood.
- The Bath Main Conservation Area extends into the appraisal area at Combe Down along with the Monkton Combe Conservation Area.
- The appraisal area contains two Historic Parks and Gardens – Midford Castle and Combe Grove Manor (north of Monkton Combe).
- At least 52 Listed Buildings (mainly Grade II) lie within the appraisal area, including Midford Castle and industrial buildings such as De Montalt Mill.
- The SMR contains records of significant industrial archaeology in the area, such as De Montalt Mill, the Tucking Mill and tramway, various quarries and the Somerset Coal Canal. There is also evidence of earlier occupation such as medieval field systems and Roman finds at Combe Grove Farm.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any archaeological remains, including the significant industrial archaeology and monuments within the appraisal area. There are concerns about the visibility of any development and its impact on the setting of Bath Main and Monkton Combe Conservation Areas, and Listed Buildings – between Combe Down and Monkton Combe

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their actual location. However, it is difficult to see how the impact on the settings of the Listed Buildings and rural character of the Conservation Areas could be mitigated.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the historic environment, in particular the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

Summary

Development would result in a negative impact on the historic environment.

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies in the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- steep sided rural valley with the smaller Horsecombe Vale off to the west
- limited physical or visual relationship with the urban area and what development is visible in the main valley is softened by trees
- Horsecombe Vale is one of the few places where the World Heritage Site can be seen spilling out from its bowl and down the outer slope, to the detriment of the rural surroundings and the character of Bath as a contained city
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Further development on the edges of Combe Down and Odd Down would extend the spillage of the World Heritage Site out from its landscape bowl and down the outer slopes, increasing the intrusion of urban development on the rural setting of the World Heritage Site.

Development in the main Midford Valley would urbanise a distinctive rural environment and would be poorly connected to the existing urban area.

Mitigation

It would be very difficult to mitigate development in this area due to its prominent nature and the incongruity of urban development in a rural environment.

Summary

Development would have a high impact on the rural character of this area, and its separation from the existing urban area. The potential for mitigation is low.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell D

Cell D Area 12 – Perrymead

Urban Design

Opportunities

- Good opportunities to link into many of the existing facilities in the area
- Very close proximity to the wider benefits of central Bath

Limitations

- Ability of development to respond to the special character of this area.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Condition

This valley exhibits a strong characteristic of Bath comprising countryside extending right into the urban area. Whilst there are urban influences of dwellings around and within the area, this intimate small valley retains a strong rural character. The complex topography and well treed character mean that within the valley only small parts of it are seen at the same time. It feels very separate and boldly contrasting to the urban area because the steep topography limits access to the valley; there being none from the west and a few very winding roads entering from the east. The roads are frequently bounded by high stone walls, buildings, hedgerows and even a water course – features which make an important contribution to the character of the valley. It's inclusion in the conservation area is well deserved.

The valley is well wooded at all levels, with small fields bound by tall hedgerows. The abundant tree cover contributes to the intimate feeling in the valley by limiting views to only small areas at once.

The valley includes a church and cemetery, a school and individual dwellings usually set within generous gardens.

This is an important green lung within easy reach of a large population who walk the roads and course of a former railway which links to other parts of the city.

Landscape Impacts

Development here would have a high impact on the unique character of this intimate hidden little valley. It would cause the loss of wooded area, hedgerow trees and narrow bounded walls which are crucial to its character.

The presence of trees at the skyline is another important characteristic of Bath so their loss would contribute to erosion of the city's setting.

Land available for development is low.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact on views from the roads, paths and properties in the area, and from properties along Greenway Lane which overlook the valley, from Beechen Cliff School and Alexandra Park in its prominent hilltop location.

Mitigation

The potential to mitigate high density development would be low because of the high visibility of the area due to the topography and being overlooked from Ralph Allen Drive, Beechen Cliff School, Alexandra Park, properties in Greenway Lane and wider views from the National Trust landscape to the east.

Summary

High impact on character of valley which contributes to Bath's special characteristics

High impact on views within and around the valley

Low potential for mitigation due to topography and overlooking of the valley

Historic Environment

Existing Condition

- The appraisal area sits entirely within the Bath Main Conservation Area and includes the Abbey Cemetery and Perrymead RC Cemetery.
- The appraisal area contains two Historic Parks and Gardens – Widcombe Manor and Crowe Hall.
- At least 16 Grade II Listed Buildings lie within the appraisal area, and two Grade I Listed Buildings – Widcombe Manor House and its fountain.
- The SMR contains records of Roman and medieval activity within the appraisal area including a possible Roman cemetery and the site of old Widcombe Manor and fishponds.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any archaeological remains, including the known Roman and medieval activity. There are concerns about the visibility of any development and its impact on the setting of the Bath Main Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Historic Parks and Gardens, along with its proximity to Prior Park

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their precise location and extent. However, it is difficult to see how the impact on the settings of the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Historic Parks and Gardens could be mitigated.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the historic environment, in particular the setting of the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Historic Parks and Gardens.

Summary

Development would result in a negative impact on the historic environment.

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area lies within the World Heritage Site boundary.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site at this point are:

- distinctive rural character extending into the city itself, giving the World Heritage Site its characteristic intimate connection with the countryside
- steep topography and intimate feel, limited connection from within to the urban area around it
- views into the valley from key sites such as Alexandra Park and Ralph Allen Drive, and from the National Trust skyline land to the east
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on the rural hidden character of this valley, and would be detrimental to the character of the World Heritage Site as an urban site with a very rural feel.

Mitigation

The prominent nature of the site, visible to key views from a wide area, would make it very difficult to mitigate the impact of development here.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on the essential rural character of this part of the World Heritage Site and would be very difficult to mitigate against.

Nature Conservation

Existing Conditions

- The area is dominated by the Lyncombe Vale and Perrymead Fields Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)
- The area lies within 1km of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC, designated for its horseshoe bats and forms part of their foraging area. There are further horseshoe bat roost records within the area itself.
- English Nature Report no 174 states a management objective for feeding areas for greater horseshoe bats to “restrain creeping urbanisation into the 3-4 km area around breeding sites by opposing building developments through planning procedures”.
- The area additionally contains records of Avon BAP priority species including white helleborine and bath asparagus with much of the land described as semi-improved neutral grassland.
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

There would be likely significant impacts on the SNCIs and priority habitats. Development would impact on the foraging grounds of bats associated with the nearby Combe Down element of the Bath & Bradford on Avon SAC. Radio tracking of the Combe Down bats showed the area to be used for foraging, and the loss of woodland, grassland and surrounding large hedgerows would impact upon the bats.

Mitigation

Further surveys would be needed probably including radio tracking to assess the effects of habitat fragmentation on the foraging bats which would be likely to be significant. Particular issues would include the loss of suitable foraging grounds within range of the SAC, effects upon the bats roosting within the area itself and fragmentation of flight paths. Within the SNCIs compensatory provision of at least equal value would be required should material factors regarding development be judged sufficient to override the local biological and community/amenity value of the site.

Summary

The effects on the SAC and SNCIs would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of the SNCI boundaries would still need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon the SNCIs and SAC as well as in terms of the land parcel itself. Particular consideration would need to be given to the affects of any development on the foraging bats associated with the nearby SAC as well as other priority habitats and species. Due to proximity to the SAC an assessment of the likely significant effect upon the horseshoe bats would be required under the Habitat Regulations which would then inform whether an appropriate assessment was needed.

Cell E Area 13 – Cam Valley

Urban Design

Opportunities

- Provision of new facilities for existing settlement; although at significant environmental cost.

Limitations

- Very detached from the existing built up area of Bath, and so not possible to achieve the sustainable urban extension desired.
- Huge implications for the quality and character of the built form of the existing villages.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

This valley is similar to Midford Valley but is wider and there is a greater extent of open pasture to woodland. Hedgerows vary from clipped to taller unmanaged ones which contribute to the soft well treed character. Much of Southstoke is screened by trees, except for a handful of houses spread along the ridgeline among trees. There are scattered farms and dwellings in the valley but there is no relationship with the urban area. There are very few minor roads and the area is tranquil. The valley is a haven for walkers as public rights of way are present throughout the valley.

Landscape Impacts

Development would have a high impact on the highly rural character and integrity of this valley. It would involve the loss of woodland and hedgerows and intimate little rural lanes. It would not relate to the urban area.

Visual Impacts

Development would have a high impact due to the high visibility within the valley from roads, footpaths and properties. Urban development would appear incongruent in such a rural setting with no visual connection to the urban area.

Mitigation

Low potential for mitigating development due to location on widely visible prominent slopes. Much of Southstoke has been screened by trees growing on the lower slopes and within gardens in the village. This has happened over decades (centuries for the larger trees). Southstoke is a very picturesque village that responds well to the topography so screening the village would not have been deliberate. There would not be the same scope for screening new urban development at the higher densities currently required.

Summary

High impact on rural character and landscape features

High impact on views

Low potential to mitigate urban development in rural location with no connection to the urban area

Historic Environment

Odd Down and South Stoke (Cell E)

Existing Condition

- The Wansdyke (Scheduled Ancient Monument) Post-Roman linear earthwork lies immediately the north of the appraisal area, which therefore forms part of the monument's setting.
- The Southstoke Conservation Area lies to the south of the appraisal area, and just touches its boundary on Southstoke Lane.
- The Cross Keys Inn (Grade II Listed) sits at the north-east corner of the appraisal area on the Midford Road.
- Within 200m of the appraisal area there is evidence of Prehistoric activity in the form of flint scatters. Along with Bronze Age and Roman occupation south-west of Sulis Manor.

Impact Assessment

Development of the area could potentially have a very damaging effect on any buried archaeological remains, including the known Prehistoric and Roman occupation in the area. There are serious concerns about the visibility of development and its impact on setting of the Wansdyke (Scheduled Ancient Monument). Previous residential development to the west of the area has placed considerable pressure on the Wansdyke, and lead to serious erosion of the monument. Furthermore there are concerns about the overall housing density and the impact on rural setting of Southstoke Conservation Area to the south.

Mitigation

Whilst there is the potential to preserve some archaeological sites within open spaces, this requires detailed knowledge of their actual location. In the neighbouring residential development at Sulis Meadow a green corridor was retained to the south of the Wansdyke to protect its setting. However, it is highly questionable as to how successful this measure has been in protecting this fragile and nationally important earthwork. A wider corridor with more clearly controlled/defined pedestrian crossing points could be considered. Nevertheless, there are serious concerns that development in this area will lead to similar damage and erosion of the monument. Furthermore, it may prove equally difficult to protect the setting and the rural character of Southstoke Conservation Area.

Additional Work

Any proposed mitigation will require knowledge of the exact location, extent, date and significance of past settlements/activity. This will require fieldwork to examine the area such as trial trenching and/or geophysical survey. More detailed desk-based assessment will also be needed to address the wider impact on the historic environment, in particular the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument and Conservation Area.

Summary

Development would result in a negative impact on the historic environment.

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site setting at this point are:

- distinctive rural open valley with views to and from the wider landscape to the south
- there is no visual relationship with the city, which is hidden up on the plateau
- rural approach to the city up through Southstoke which is a distinct and separate village.
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

Development in this area would have a high impact on the rural character and make the city newly visible to a wide area of countryside, urbanising the area. The development would not visually appear to be part of the city.

Mitigation

The prominent nature of this area would make it very difficult to mitigate development here, particularly considering the steep topography.

Summary

Development in this area would have a high impact on the character of the World Heritage Site setting. It would be very difficult to mitigate against.

Nature Conservation

Cell E – comprising areas 13 and 14

Existing Conditions

- The area includes numerous Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)
- The vast majority of the area is covered by a Strategic Nature Area (SNA) – a RSS designation, which dominates area 13 and borders area 14. SNCI's and Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species fall within the SNA.
- The area lies within 1km of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC, designated for it's horseshoe bats and there are further horseshoe bat roost records within area E
- English Nature Report no 174 states a management objective for feeding areas for greater horseshoe bats to "restrain creeping urbanisation into the 3-4 km area around breeding sites by opposing building developments through planning procedures".
- Areas of land outside the SNA were still shown to be utilised by foraging bats and also contain records of Avon BAP priority species including slow-worm and bath asparagus.
- There are several substantial hedges in parts of this area which may be important and qualify as species rich hedgerows (a BAP priority habitat), but have not been surveyed.

Impacts

Development within the SNA would cause significant habitat fragmentation in an area of high ecological importance and reduce the area of strategic capacity for habitat restoration and enhancement. It is likely that the SNA would suffer indirect impacts through development of the adjoining land from urban fringe pressures. There would be further impacts on SNCIs and priority habitats. Development in the land not covered by the SNA would impact on the foraging grounds of bats associated with the nearby Combe Down element of the Bath & Bradford on Avon SAC, this would also apply to land within the SNA. It is likely that the integrity of the SAC would be adversely affected. Radio tracking of the Combe Down bats showed that area 13 was a key foraging area for them. There was no record of them utilising area 14 though their flight path abutted this area.

Mitigation

As areas identified as the best in the region to conserve, create and connect wildlife habitat at a landscape scale the loss of land from the SNA would be difficult to mitigate. Some degree of compensation could be achieved through off site habitat enhancement and long-term management at an appropriate location and scale, however the legal mechanisms are difficult and untested locally. Hedgerows, waterbodies, grazed pasture and woodland would be likely to be considered of particular value for foraging bats across the area and would need to be addressed. Further surveys would be needed probably including radio tracking to assess the effects of habitat fragmentation on the foraging bats which would be likely to be significant. Although area 12 is currently the key area section upon which the bats rely development in area 13 would also have an impact and would need to be robustly mitigated for. This would be likely to require the form of buffering development with vegetation to allow a continued flight line and to block light pollution. Area 13 despite it's current lack of shown use by the colony additionally has good potential to become part of their key feeding area if grazing were to be initiated. Within the SNCIs compensatory provision of at least equal value would be required should material factors regarding development be judged sufficient to override the local biological and community/amenity value of the site.

Summary

The SNA, SAC and SNCIs would significantly restrict development in this section. Any parcels of land falling outside of their boundaries would need to be assessed in terms of their impacts upon them as well as in terms of the land parcel itself. Additional consideration would need to be given to the affects of any development on the foraging bats associated with the nearby SAC as well as other priority habitats and species. Detailed site surveys and further impact assessments would be required prior to site design and capacity decisions. Due to proximity to the SAC an assessment of the likely significant effect upon the horseshoe bats would be required under the Habitat Regulations which would then inform whether an appropriate assessment was needed.

Cell E Area 14 – Odd Down

Urban Design

Opportunities

- Good potential to link effectively into existing development, facilities and public transport (Park and Ride).

Limitations

- Challenge of providing an appropriate edge to the city, and to respond to the varied character of surrounding developments.

Landscape & Visual Aspects

Existing Conditions

This area comprises a fairly flat plateau that slopes gently to the south and east. It is located between the southern extent of housing at Odd Down and Southstoke. The area is divided into two parts by Sulis Manor. The Wansdyke is along the northern boundary of the east of the area. The area is immediately adjacent to housing on the plateau. The countryside is directly to the south of the area, and whilst the west part slopes down to countryside and there are clear views of it from the rural area, the east side is largely well contained by a mature wooded area around a property on the edge of Southstoke. The area is open; there are dry stone walls bounding the medium sized fields on the east side, the west side comprises two small sized fields bounded by housing to the north and trees to the east and west. The south side of both areas have recently planted tree belts exhibiting varying degrees of success. A public right of way follows the Wansdyke, the south of the area and crosses the east side. There are views into the site from the road to Southstoke.

Landscape Impacts

West side

High impact on rural character. Existing adjoining housing is well screened from the countryside. The area is related to existing housing when seen from the immediate area although separated by a thin tree belt; high impacts on the few hedgerows in the area that would be lost.

East side

Medium impact on dry stone walls given their fragmented presence. Low impact on vegetation as there is none to be lost – assuming new tree belts at south and east sides would be retained. Low impact on rural character because the area is well related to the urban area given the location of housing on three sides.

Visual Impacts

West side

High impact on views from a wide rural area due to prominent location of site at edge of plateau where there is presently no connection with the urban area. Medium impact on Sulis Manor which would lose the rural outlook to the west.

Medium impact on footpath users because they would lose a modest rural view on the north side of the footpath over the short length of the development.

East side

Low impact on wider countryside because this part is away from the ridge and part is well screened by mature trees within the grounds of a substantial property.

Development would have a medium impact on surrounding dwellings that would lose a view of fields – albeit with housing on three sides.

Medium impact on walkers who would lose semi-rural views across the few fields; although the fields are surrounded on three sides by housing.

Mitigation

West side – Low potential to mitigate housing (including lighting) in prominent edge of plateau location widely visible from the Cam Valley. Medium potential to soften the outlook towards the development from existing houses. Medium potential to screen the development from the adjacent footpath.

East side – High potential to mitigate the development in views from the rural area, provided substantial tree planting is carried out in the south west part of the site (south of a curved line drawn between the s-e corner of Sulis Meadows and the n-w corner of the large property on the northern edge of Southstoke).

Medium potential to mitigate the outlook for existing residents (most views from rear gardens).

Low potential to mitigate for the loss of the open semi rural outlook from the footpaths (including the Wansdyke).

Summary

West side

High impact on landscape character and hedgerows

High impact on rural views

Medium impact on walkers

Medium impact on adjacent housing

Low potential for mitigation

East side

Medium impact on landscape character

Low visual impact

High potential for mitigating development - dependent on substantial planting in the south west part of the area

Medium potential to mitigate outlook from adjacent properties

Low potential to mitigate significant change of views from footpaths

Historic Environment

See summary above for Cell E

World Heritage

Existing Conditions

The study area abuts the World Heritage Site boundary and lies within the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The key characteristics and values of the World Heritage Site at this point are:

- flat plateau site separating the urban edge from the steep slopes down to Southstoke
- close relationship to the surrounding urban area
- bounded on the northern side by the Wansdyke Scheduled Monument which runs along the World Heritage Site boundary and is a historic barrier to development beyond this point
- south west corner of this area has wide views to and from the rural Cam Valley
- this area forms part of the distinctive geological landform in which the World Heritage Site lies.

Impacts

With the exception of the southwest corner, development in this area would have medium impact on the rural setting of the World Heritage Site, due to the existing largely urban feel of this section of the city's edge and so long as development stopped before the edge of the plateau had been reached.

However, the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Wansdyke has historically formed a barrier to development of the World Heritage Site in this area, until the neighbouring development at Sulis Meadows. This development has caused extensive physical damage to the Wansdyke due to the pressure of people crossing it inappropriately. Further development along the Wansdyke is likely to have the same effect.

Development in the southwest corner of this area would have a high impact on the rural setting of the World Heritage Site, newly revealing the urban form to the surrounding rural landscape.

Mitigation

It would not be possible to mitigate development in the southwest corner of this area due to its prominent nature.

It would be possible to mitigate the impact of development on the eastern side of the site with planting.

It is highly unlikely that effective mitigation would be achievable against the impact of increased human pressure on the Scheduled Ancient Monument, as well as the further loss of its current rural setting. In addition, crossing the Wansdyke again with development further weakens its historic role as a barrier to urbanisation in this area.

Summary

Development in the southwest corner of this area would have a high impact on the rural setting of the World Heritage Site and would not be possible to mitigate.

Development on the eastern side of the area would have a medium impact on the immediate rural setting of the World Heritage Site, in that some would be lost, but the impact of this development on the wider rural and geological setting of the World Heritage Site (i.e. the slopes down towards and past Southstoke) could be mitigated through screening with planting.

Development in this area would have a high impact on the historic role of the Wansdyke as a historic barrier to development of the World Heritage Site beyond this point, as well as its management, and effective mitigation is unlikely.

Nature Conservation

See summary above for Cell E