LANDSCAPE & VISUAL SETTING ANALYSIS

HILPERTON LANDSCAPE GAP, HILPERTON

for
Hilperton Parish Council

October 2017
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Reason for the report
Indigo Landscape Architects were commissioned by Hilperton Parish Council to undertake a Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis of the landscape area between Hilperton and Trowbridge and make recommendations on the extent of a ‘Hilperton Landscape Gap’ between Hilperton and Trowbridge. Figure 1 shows the Study Area.

Scope of the work
The scope agreed was to undertake a desk study exercise to review existing Landscape Character Assessment and designations associated with the area to understand the Landscape Character of the site and its surrounding context.

The work required a site visit to check / assess the Landscape Character of the Study Area and confirm key views from publicly accessible areas of the surrounding landscape which affect the setting of the village to inform the proposed extent of the ‘Hilperton Landscape Gap’.

Following completion of the desk study and site work, prepare a Landscape and Visual ‘Analysis’ report to include the following:

• The landscape context of the land between the village and Trowbridge and in particular that within the potential ‘Hilperton Landscape Gap’ – looking at physical influences; influences of human activity; and Aesthetic and Perceptual factors.

• Set out the landscape planning context including any relevant landscape-based planning policies / designations / guidelines etc.

• Set out the visual characteristics of the village and surrounding landscape focusing on the setting of the village and the degree of separation / coalescence between the village and Trowbridge.

• Undertake a narrative analysis of the issues and make recommendations on the need for and extent of the ‘Hilperton Landscape Gap’ in landscape setting terms.

The Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis was carried out from a range of publicly accessible land within the Study Area. The analysis was carried out at eye level and on foot and included a relevant selection of publicly accessible open space, roads and footpaths.

The site was visited on the 30th June 2017 and the weather was dry but overcast with good visibility. Representative photographs were taken using a standard 50mm lens at eye level.

Report Structure

The structure of the report is summarised below:

• Definition and purpose of a Landscape Gap: This section explains what Landscape Gaps are and why they are considered important in the planning and decision-making process in order for settlements to maintain their identity and a sense of separation from larger urban neighbours.

• Landscape Character: This section provides a summary of existing relevant landscape character assessments which have been reviewed and checked / assessed following site work to identify the key characteristics that apply to the Study Area; providing an assessment of its strength of character and landscape condition.

• Landscape Planning Context: This section includes a review of relevant landscape-based planning policy from national policy context through to the local planning framework; identifying the key landscape planning issues and constraints in respect of the Study Area.

• Landscape Analysis: This section provides a review of the landscape resource of the Study Area in more detail to identify its key constituent elements including physical influences (eg vegetation), influences of human activity (eg heritage assets) and aesthetic and perceptual factors (eg sense of place).

• Visual Analysis: This section identifies the visual characteristics of the Study Area with representative views which include looking at the setting of Hilperton / Hilperton Marsh and the degree of separation / coalescence between the village and Trowbridge.

• Recommendations: This section of the report makes recommendations for defining the extent of the proposed Hilperton Landscape Gap that is based on both the visual and landscape character analysis carried out, and taking into account any landscape-based / site allocation planning policies that are applicable to the Study Area.

• Summary & Conclusions: This section pulls together the report’s findings in respect of the proposed Hilperton Landscape Gap.
1.2 LANDSCAPE GAP DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

Landscape Gaps are spatial planning tools designed to shape the pattern of settlements, they are not countryside protection or landscape designations. They generally command wide public support and have been used with success in previous strategic plans to influence the settlement pattern. Nationally, the most significant application of policy to maintain settlement separation and avoid coalescence is Green Belt Policy.

Previous National Guidance (in PPS’s and PPG’s) on gaps and green wedges has subsequently been revoked but the importance of maintaining physical separation between settlements and avoiding coalescence is still an important consideration for many communities. For example, maintaining visual separation and protecting the identities of villages was an important policy included within The Idmiston Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan (2015-2026) as follows:

Policy 1 - Village Separation
For the villages to remain as recognisably separate places, with their own identities, it is critical that these physical and visual breaks between our settlements are retained. Consequently, any development which prejudices the continued separation of our existing villages from each other, and from those in neighbouring parishes, will not be supported.

The importance of a Landscape Gap is therefore more concerned with its ‘setting’ function (visual and physical separation) rather than a consideration of intrinsic ‘landscape value’; thus, helping to preserve landscape areas which contribute to the setting, identity or backdrop of settlements.

The idea of a ‘meaningful gap’ is incorporated within the North Warks Borough Council draft Local Plan (August 2016). This forms part of North Warks Borough Council’s spatial strategy and seeks to prevent new development from significantly diminishing the extent of a Landscape Gap. Thus, small-scale changes are possible but a core area for protection should be maintained in order to prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain their identity.

A Landscape Gap should also be a contiguous, uninterrupted, integral whole to be a ‘meaningful gap’ and not broken or partially subdivided by significant development; thereby undermining its landscape setting function.

Landscape quality and amenity can also contribute towards determining which areas of a Landscape Gap are most sensitive and should also be considered when determining the specific area that constitutes the Landscape Gap.

It is recognised that the provision of significant green infrastructure such as Landscape Gaps offer important recreational, health and landscape benefits to local communities as well as potentially valuable habitat and biodiversity benefits.
FIG. 1 - STUDY AREA

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2.0 PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the report looks at the landscape character of the study area with reference to existing studies at a National, County and Regional level; and considers the character of the study area based on the site work undertaken. It then considers the planning context at both National (NPPF) and Regional (Wiltshire County Council Core Strategy) level.

2.2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.

The landscape character of the area has been analysed at a number of scales. Brief outlines are included here to bring out elements and features relevant to the Site and surrounding area.

2.3 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Natural England published an updated profile for the area in 2014. The Site is located in National Character Area Profile 117: Avon Vales. Whilst the National Character Area profiles provide some insight into the landscape around the Study Area, they cover large areas and only provide a broad overview. In summary, the NCA is described as follows:

In summary, the NCA is described as follows:
‘The Avon Vales form a low-lying, clay-dominated open landscape, with the higher ground of the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs National Character Area (NCA) to the south, Berkshire & Marlborough Downs NCA to the east, and the Cotswolds NCA to the west. In the south and north there is a gradual merging with the clay of the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour NCA and the Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA respectively’.

The key characteristics identified in the NCA and considered relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- An undulating clay vale with a mix of arable and pasture.
- Small and medium-sized fields with mostly hedgerow boundaries with few hedgerow trees, varying in shape from irregular piecemeal enclosure to rectilinear planned enclosure.
- Numerous low ridges with local views over towns and villages.
- Transport corridors along roads and watercourses, heavily influential on all development in the NCA.

2.4 WILTSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (COUNTY LEVEL)

Of more direct relevance to the Study Area is the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, December 2005). The purpose of this assessment is to document the current status of the Wiltshire landscape, furthering the understanding of the landscape resource available in the area and giving an indication of areas in need of enhancement and of conservation. This enables better-informed decisions to be made on the future management of the landscape and provides an objective basis for developing policies as well as enhancement and restoration projects or strategies.

The Study Area falls within Landscape Character Type 12: Open Clay Vale. Landscape Types have a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, and historical evolution. The Landscape Type has been further sub-divided into component Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

LCAs are described as discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the Landscape Type. Each LCA has a distinct and recognizable local identity.

The Site falls within LCA 12B: Avon Open Clay Vale and its key characteristics are described below:

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

The assessment describes the Landscape Character Area as follows:

Area 12B: Avon Open Clay Vale is an extended area following the course of the River Avon from Great Somerford in the north to Bradford on Avon in the south. As well as the Avon the area is characterised by the presence of other rivers, tributary streams, lakes, and, to the south, the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Avon Open Clay Vale is a level, open area with views to the higher ground of the Limestone Ridge to the east. Land is predominantly intensively managed permanent pasture with some arable and small isolated pockets of meadow (such as Sutton Lane Meadow SSSI).

Hedgerows, gapty or low flowed in places, enclose fields of varying size. There are sparse hedgerow trees plus willows lines (some pollarded) marking the waterways and poplar shelter belts. Sections of the area remain rural and tranquil despite major routes travelling through (the M4, A350, A342) plus railway lines in cuttings and embankments and the visual influence of modern large-scale development on the edges of Chippenham, Trowbridge and Melksham.

This urbanising influence is particularly prevalent to the south of the area while the northern section is more akin to area 12A with scattered settlement of small brick and stone built villages and farmsteads.

Evaluation

Positive landscape features of significance:
- Wide open skies and views to ridges and downs.
- Rich variety of rivers, tributaries, drainage channels and open water bodies, including scarce marl water habitats.
- Watercourses lined with riparian vegetation with prominent lines of willows (some pollarded).
- Hay meadows with unimproved grassland of ecological interest.
- Villages and farmsteads with vernacular mix of local stone and brick.
- Visible archaeology in Roman roads, pattern of medieval villages, long established grazing meadows, and the Kennet and Avon Canal corridor.
2.5 WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (REGIONAL LEVEL)

The West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment 2007 (Chris Blandford Associates) was produced on behalf of the old West Wiltshire District Council and provides a further level of detailed assessment at 1:25,000 scale.

The Study Area is situated within the Semington Open Clay Vale Landscape Character Area C2. The area stretches from the north-eastern edge of Trowbridge, eastwards (incorporating Semington) and northwards to the southern edges of Melksham and western edges of Bowerhill. The area is sub-divided by the River Avon floodplain.

Key characteristics of the LCA are as follows:
- Predominantly flat, sloping gradually upwards to the south of Bowerhill and at Hill Farm east of Hilperton
- Gently meandering course of Semington Brook, lined in places by mature vegetation
- Kennet & Avon Canal and disused railway corridor are distinctive corridor features
- A mixture of arable fields and pasture
- Urban fringe character apparent, adjacent to Trowbridge and Melksham / Bowerhill
- Several interconnecting main road corridors cross the area
- Settlement pattern comprising Semington village and a number of isolated farmsteads
- Strong sense of openness
- Sense of tranquillity disturbed by proximity to major road corridors.

The location the Semington Open Clay Vale Landscape Character Area C2 is shown in Figure 2.

Forces for change
- Agricultural intensification threatens the remaining small-scale field patterns and traditional pastoral landscape.
- Loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.
- Intensification in farming leading to drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation.
- Pressure for further expansion of settlement and new development threatening the character of the small villages and scattered farmsteads.
- The presence of major transport corridors particularly the trunk roads has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage.
- Increasing road use which will further diminish the rural tranquillity of the vale landscape.
- Pressure to upgrade roads through additional kerbing and signage to accommodate an increase in traffic volume.

Landscape Condition: This is generally judged as moderate. ‘The Open Clay Vales are an intensively managed type with large areas under arable cultivation. Although there are limited areas still managed as unimproved grassland, most of the meadows, a substantial part of the hedgerow network and riparian vegetation has been lost’.

Strength of character: ‘There are still some highly rural, tranquil areas within the Open Clay Vales which are dominated by the varied waterways with their lush vegetation, with small scattered villages and farmsteads of vernacular materials. However elsewhere in the type the influence of the busy transport corridors and the large urban areas is pervasive making the type as a whole moderate in strength of character’.

Inherent landscape sensitivities:
- Rural tranquillity.
- Hedgerow pattern.
- Water bodies and water ways of varied character and ecological value.
- Streamside willows and other riparian vegetation.
- Remnant hay meadows.
- Wide open views.
- Settlement pattern of nucleated villages with variety of vernacular building materials.

Broad management objectives considered relevant to the Study Area:
- Retain and manage the hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees.
- Promote appropriate management of arable land including retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields to encourage wildlife, particularly farmland birds.
- Retain and manage hay meadows.
- Introduce new tree planting along watercourses using typical riparian species such as alder and willow.
- Take opportunities to extend and enhance the varied wetland habitats (reedbeds, wet grassland and wet woodland) of the Cotswold Water Park through appropriate restoration of mineral workings.
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
LANDSCAPE & VISUAL SETTING ANALYSIS
PROPOSED LANDSCAPE GAP, HILPERTON

2.6 CHARACTER OF THE STUDY AREA

It is considered that the Study Area is generally typical of the Semington Open Clay Vale character area description above, however, the key characteristics specific to the Study Area are summarised below:

- Gently undulating lowland landscape that rises steadily from the 30m AOD in the north to the 60m AOD to the south.
- Mainly pastoral land use with some arable and a newly constructed road (Elizabeth Way) associated with high-impact infrastructure including drainage ponds.
- Variable and, in places, traditional field pattern of small-medium size with a network of hedgerows, some gappy and some intact and mature (seen especially in the northern and north-eastern part of the Study Area towards Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh).
- Infrequent mature trees species associated with hedgerows with more significant trees and vegetation associated with the edges of settlement and along Middle Lane byway.
- Mature 'parkland' character trees associated with the old Highfield Estate (now the Fieldways Hotel & Health Club) provide a backdrop of significant vegetation in the southern corner of the Study Area.
- Views vary from semi-secluded by hedgerows in the northern and north-eastern part of the Study Area (Hilperton Marsh) to more open to the west of the Study Area (west of Elizabeth Way); with views towards Trowbridge to the west, Hilperton including the church on elevated ground to the east, and longer distance views to the north-west (towards Bradford-on-Avon).
- An occasionally peaceful rural edge landscape associated with Hilperton Marsh and Hilperton (away from Elizabeth Way).
- Elizabeth Way is a newly-constructed inter-urban road (located between two roundabouts junctions associated with the A361 and Wylke Rd).

The Study Area is a well-defined ‘slice’ of countryside largely contained by existing settlements of Trowbridge to the west, and the villages of Hilperton Marsh and Hilperton to the north and east respectively. To the south, the Study Area is defined by mature trees and vegetation either side of the A361 junction with Elizabeth Way. Refer to Figure 4 Aerial View of Study Area.

By virtue of its context, the Study Area has characteristics that can be described as rural edge although the influence of the newly constructed Elizabeth Way and, in places, its close proximity to Trowbridge give rise to a more urban edge or peri-urban character depending on location and angle of view. For the purposes of this description, the Study Area has been divided into land east and west of Elizabeth Way as follows:

Area East of Elizabeth Way

To the east of Elizabeth Way, the landscape falls into two main areas. The northern half leading up to Hilperton Marsh has a traditional pattern of small-medium sized fields with mixed grassland, hedgerows and localized variations in topography associated with the brook. Here, views are often restricted by intervening vegetation and in some places by the nature of the gently rolling topography to create a more enclosed and intimate landscape.

The southern half includes larger arable and pasture fields, fewer hedgerows and a more elevated aspect. The southern area includes the field to the south of Middle Lane. Middle Lane (Bridleway) forms a strong green edge through the southern half of the area restricting views north and south leading to visual segregation here.

Parts of the northern half, away from the road corridor, have a strong rural edge character. The visual influence of Trowbridge in the southern half is more evident due to its elevated aspect. The edges of settlement are well vegetated and often form a well-defined green backdrop to the area with filtered or glimpsed views of residential properties.

The southern edge of the Study Area is defined by the hedgerow and trees along Trowbridge Rd.

Away from the road corridor zone, the road sits quite discreetly within the wider landscape seen from Hilperton Marsh and Hilperton.

In places, there is scope to gap up existing hedgerows and introduce some new hedgerows and tree planting to reinforce the strength of character within this part of the Study Area.

Area West of Elizabeth Way

The area to the west of Elizabeth Way follows a similar pattern to the above with smaller-medium sized pattern of fields to the north and larger arable and pasture fields to the south. Large willow trees associated with the small brook in the north-west part of the Study Area form a significant feature in the landscape and help to soften / screen views of the edge of Trowbridge beyond at this point, including the Canal Rd Industrial Estate buildings.

However, the closer proximity of the area to Trowbridge, in combination with the presence of the road corridor, creates a more urban edge feel than the area to the east of Elizabeth Way, with the edge of Trowbridge exerting more visual influence seen from some locations. Elevated views of the larger scale, commercial development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate are possible from the junction between Middle Lane and Elizabeth Way.

The edge of Trowbridge often forms a well-defined green backdrop to the area with filtered or glimpsed views of residential properties. As for the eastern area, Middle Lane (Bridleway) forms a strong green edge through the southern half of the Study Area, restricting views north and south to create visual segregation here.

The mature trees associated with Fieldways Hotel form a significant ‘parkland’ character backdrop to this area to the south.
2.6 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

The following photographs provide representative views of the landscape character of the area around the Study Area.

Elevated view from Middle Lane (Bridleway) looking west across the Study Area towards Trowbridge and distant downland beyond. Larger scale, commercial development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate can be clearly seen which contrast with the surrounding smaller scale development context.

View looking westwards along Middle Lane which forms a strong green edge running roughly north-east to south-west through the Study Area but bisected by Elizabeth Way.

Typical view of Elizabeth Way road corridor looking south.

Typical view of the eastern part of the Study Area looking north towards Hilperton Marsh. Here, the landscape is intimate and enclosed due to localized variations in topography combined with a pattern of small to medium sized fields with hedgerows and trees. The edges of settlements are often well vegetated.

View from the edge of Hilperton Marsh looking south across the Study Area (eastern side) towards Hilperton. St. Michaels Church which forms a local landmark is situated on elevated ground. The landscape is intimate and enclosed here due to the localized variations in topography combined with a pattern of small to medium sized fields with hedgerows and trees. The edges of settlements are often well vegetated.

View looking south across the Study Area towards Trowbridge from Hilperton Marsh. From this location, Elizabeth Way generally sits discreetly within the wider landscape. The edge of Trowbridge is often well vegetated.
2.6 CHARACTER OF THE STUDY AREA CONT’D

Summary
The land to the east of Elizabeth Way forms an important landscape setting for the village of Hilperton & Hilperton Marsh. It is clearly well used for both access and informal recreation. It includes an area of small-medium sized fields suggesting that they form part of a traditional field pattern and should be retained and reinforced. It includes the important local landmark of the listed St. Michael and All Angels Church prominent on the skyline along Middle Lane. Land to the west of Elizabeth Way is more influenced by the closer proximity of Trowbridge and the road corridor. The area south of Middle Lane, which forms a ‘green edge’ is strategically important in terms of a physical separation but is also sensitive due to the presence of heritage assets (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) and groups of significant ‘parkland character’ trees (refer to Fig. 6 Landscape Designations).

Overall, the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (WLCA) assesses the strength of character of this landscape to be moderate and in a moderate condition. It is considered that Study Area is largely consistent with this assessment.

2.7 PLANNING CONTEXT

NATIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT – THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK
National planning policy contains guidance on planning and related issues from a national perspective. From the 27th March 2012, this has primarily been set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) document.

The NPPF is a wide-ranging document which sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraphs 11 to 16) and core planning principles (paragraph 17) before detailing (in paragraphs 18 to 219) policies which, taken as a whole, constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

These policies are broken down into 3 main parts under the headings:
- Delivering Sustainable Development (which itself is divided into 13 sub-sections).
- Plan making
- Decision taking

Of particular relevance to the Study Area are policies in the following sections of the first part of this document:
NPPF Section 7 - Requiring good design
NPPF Section 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
NPPF Section 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Section 7, Paragraph 58 states that local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust policies which set out the quality of any new development which will be expected based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions among others should aim to ensure development:
- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation; and
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Section 11, Paragraph 109 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural and local environment through, among others protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY
The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted by Wiltshire Council in January 2015 and sets out the planning policy within the district up to 2026. A number of policies from the West Wiltshire District Plan 2004 and West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD 2009 have also been saved within the Core Strategy and remain relevant in so far as they accord with the NPPF. The main landscape policies from these documents relevant to the Study Area are as follows:
- Core Policy 29 sets out the Spatial Strategy for the Trowbridge Community Area (see below).
- Core Policy 51 requires any new development to preserve, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character, mitigating any negative effects through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by the relevant landscape character assessments.
- Core Policy 52 requires development to retain and enhance Wiltshire’s green infrastructure network, linking to the network, providing accessible open space in accordance with Wiltshire Open Space Standards and ensuring appropriate long-term management.
- Core Policy 57 requires development to be of a high standard of design, in particular retaining and enhancing existing important landscaping, responding to and retaining important views into and out of the site and ensuring public realm proposals create places of character.
- Saved Policy C40 requires trees of visual amenity value to be retained, especially those in Conservation Areas and those covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
- Saved Policy CR1 seeks to protect the public rights of way network from development and seek extensions and improvements where appropriate, as part of development proposals.
- Saved Policy CR3 seeks to develop a greenspace network around the urban areas within the district, encouraging development proposals to provide recreational areas and extend and enhance fragmented habitats.

The Strategy for the Trowbridge Area
Under the ‘Issues and Considerations’ section of the Core Strategy, Paragraph 5.150 states: ‘It is recognised that the villages surrounding Trowbridge, particularly Hilperton, Southwick, North Bradley and West Ashton, have separate and distinct identities as villages. Open countryside should be maintained to protect the character and identity of these villages as separate communities. The local communities may wish to consider this matter in more detail in any future community-led neighbourhood planning’.

Core Policy 29: Spatial Strategy: Trowbridge Community Area
This policy states that ‘an additional 950 dwellings will be developed at the town towards the end of the plan period subject to a further assessment of potential effects on protected bat species and their habitats to ensure that they are properly safeguarded’.

It goes on to state that ‘development proposals in the Trowbridge Community Area will need to demonstrate how the relevant issues and considerations listed in paragraph 5.150 will be addressed’.
2.7 PLANNING CONTEXT CONT’D

HILPERTON VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (2005)

The Hilperton Village Design Statement (VDS) was produced in 2005 and provides useful advice concerning the design of development and of the aspects of the locality that make the village a ‘unique and recognizable place’, with particular importance given to the ‘Hilperton Gap’ landscape area that lies between the settlement boundaries of Trowbridge and Hilperton.

The VDS describes the Gap as:
- An important area of open countryside, as it provides a barrier between the village and the eastern outskirts of Trowbridge.
- Providing attractive rural views across the Gap from the old village and to the church from Hilperton Marsh which contribute greatly to the village atmosphere and character of Hilperton.
- An important amenity area for informal recreation.

The VDS recommendations for the Gap include:
- The natural beauty of the landscape including flora, fauna features should be respected and where appropriate enhanced and protected.
- New development in open countryside should be avoided.
- New developments on the edge of the village should give high priority to landscape design.

HILPERTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN (DRAFT 2017-2026)

Since the VDS was created, a new relief road (Elizabeth Way) has been constructed through the Landscape Gap from the junction with Wyke Rd, Canal Rd and Horse Rd in the north to the A361 in the south.

In respect of Elizabeth Way, the draft Hilperton Neighbourhood Development Plan (HNDP) notes that the ‘road cuts across the Gap, where it bisects footpaths used by the villagers for recreation’.

In the ‘Baseline Information’, the draft HNDP states:
- Hilperton Gap is the area of agricultural land situated either side of the recently built road Elizabeth Way. Hilperton is inseparable from this setting – which emphasises its distinct rural identity and individuality as a village.
- This rural character is central to a desire to develop local employment from tourism. The Gap provides characteristically rural views in and out of the village and feels like a necessary area of transition – from rural to urban and vice versa.
- The fields in the Gap provide easy access to green space for the residents of north east Trowbridge, entirely comparable with Southwick Country Park that is provided for residents to the south west of the town.

The supporting draft HNDP Scoping Report identifies the following ‘Problems and Issues’:
- Development pressure on the Hilperton Gap.
- If the Gap were substantially built over, the nearest large open space would be very much further way. The healthy pursuit of walking would likely be much reduced, especially among seniors.
- Some hedgerows need re-planting and more trees could be planted also.
- Shortage of Open Space identified in the Wiltshire Open Space Study 2015.
- Perhaps the greatest challenge for Hilperton will be to grow sustainably and to continue to benefit from close links with Trowbridge but at the same time to preserve a separate and distinctly village identity.

Para. 5.10 of the draft HNDP states also states the following in respect of the importance of the Hilperton Gap to the setting of the village:
- ‘There is a clear sense here of being on a dividing line between rural and urban. Indeed, to a large extent Hilperton’s identity as a rural village comes from the presence of the Gap, separating it and emphasizing its difference from the urban sprawl of Trowbridge’.

Vision & Objectives for the Plan

Section 8.0 sets out the draft Vision for the Parish and in respect of the Hilperton Gap states the following:

The unique landscape setting of Hilperton – in particular the area known as the Hilperton Gap – will be preserved.

Under Section 9.0, the report sets out its draft Objectives and includes the following:

To maintain the separateness of Hilperton Village in terms of the landscape of the Hilperton Gap and the views in and out.

Section 10.0 sets out the HNDP draft policies in respect of the Hilperton Gap as follows:

Policy 1 - Landscape Setting

As demonstrated in the Village Design Statement, updated and expanded upon in the Scoping Report for this plan, the Hilperton Gap performs a number of important functions.

These are:
- As open countryside – of value in its own right and as protected by Wiltshire Council Core Policy 2.
- As a physical separator from Trowbridge, helping to define the separate, rural identity of Hilperton Village.
- As a green open space of value to informal recreation in an area with higher levels of Cardio-Vascular Disease and a shortage of such space in proportion to the growing population.
- As a provider of views enjoyed by the community – both to and from Hilperton.
- As a habitat.

Landscape Setting

The landscape setting of Hilperton village to the west (the area known locally as The ‘Hilperton Gap’, separating Hilperton from Trowbridge) will be preserved and if possible enhanced for both biodiversity and recreation.

Development will not normally be permitted in the ‘Gap’. - as defined on the map included here as Appendix 6 - except in accordance with Wiltshire Council Core Policy 44 or other polices of the Development Plan.

Any scheme coming forward as a result of the rural exemption granted by Core Policy 44 or other Development Plan policies must satisfy the following additional local criteria:
- The openness and landscape value of the Gap must not be significantly compromised.
- Existing facilities for informal recreation must be preserved and enhanced.
- The scheme must not impact negatively on the bats of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC and should result in overall enhancement of local habitat.
DRAFT WILTSHIRE HOUSING SITES ALLOCATION PLAN (JUNE 2017)

Since the draft HNDP was published, the Draft Wiltshire Housing Sites Allocation Plan (June 2017) has been issued for consultation and includes a list of preferred sites for housing allocation. One of these sites includes development on an area of land to the west of Elizabeth Way. A review of this proposal and its implications for the Landscape Gap has been carried out below.

Site Ref: Site 297 and 263 - Elizabeth Way

Development on land to the west of Elizabeth Way is allocated for development of up to 205 dwellings (Refer to Figure 3). The site would extend over a significant area of the Hilperton Gap contained by the edge of Trowbridge to the west and Elizabeth Way. It is proposed that Elizabeth Way would serve as access to the site.

The scale of such proposals would clearly have implications for the Landscape Gap and weaken the sense of separation between the village and Trowbridge especially within the southern area where the Landscape Gap is at its narrowest. Development on such a scale here could potentially undermine the integrity of the Landscape Gap and impact on the setting of the village.

The site allocation includes the small brook with significant trees in the north-west of the Landscape Gap and a section of the brook that crosses the Landscape Gap in a broadly east to west direction towards Trowbridge. This brook is a designated Flood Zone 3 (Environment Agency Flood Mapping).

The HSAP identifies that ‘mature and semi-mature hedgerows and trees are also a key feature in the landscape and provide habitat for protected and non-protected species. The existing natural features of the site are significant in the landscape and would be incorporated within the detailed layout. These features also provide wildlife corridors that link habitat features within the local area; in particular, ‘dark corridors’ for foraging bats. These elements should be protected and enhanced where possible by additional planting with native species’. It goes on to state that ‘an important measure will be the provision of landscaping between Elizabeth Way and new housing in order to attenuate noise and reduce the visual impact of this road’.

SUMMARY

It is clear that the Landscape Gap forms an important area of countryside that preserves a sense of separation and identity between Hilperton and Trowbridge. This has been identified in the Village Design Statement and carried through into the draft Hilperton Neighbourhood Development Plan. The importance of maintaining separate and distinct identities for surrounding villages including Hilperton is clearly identified in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy.
3.0 LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY WITHIN THE STUDY AREA (FIGS. 4, 5 & 6)

It is considered that the ‘Key elements’ that contribute to landscape character in the Study area are as follows:

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Soils**: The soils are shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone.

**Vegetation**: A network of hedgerows, some gappy and some intact and mature (seen especially in the central area and northern area towards Hilperton Marsh) containing mainly pasture grassland with some arable crops. There are a few mature tree specimens along the hedge lines / field boundaries and the brooks. More significant trees and vegetation is associated with the edges of settlement. There are significant ‘parkland’ character trees associated with the old Highfield Estate to the south of the Study Area and along Middle Lane. Refer to Figure 4.

**Habitats**:
- There are no SPA / SAC / LNR within the Study Area.
- The nearest LNR is at Green Lane Wood c.1.25km to the south-east of the Study Area.
- There are no areas of Ancient Woodland within the Study Area.

**Tree Preservation Orders**: There are only a handful of TPO trees in the Study Area which are located along Trowbridge Rd and the A361 to the south.

**Landform / topography**: The Study Area is a gently undulating lowland landscape that rises steadily from c.30m AOD in the north to c.60m AOD to the south. The highest point is at the Church of St Michael at 64m AOD. Refer to Figure 4.

**Drainage / water bodies**: There are a couple of brooks located in the northern half of the Study Area (spring fed). One brook crosses the Study Area in a broadly east to west direction towards Trowbridge. A smaller brook that connects into this one is located in the north-western corner of the Study Area. There is streamside vegetation along the brooks including hedgerows and willow trees. Refer to Figure 4.

**INFLUENCES OF HUMAN ACTIVITY**

**Heritage assets**: There are no Sites of Archaeological Importance / Scheduled Ancient Monuments / Registered Parks and Gardens or undesignated heritage assets within the Study Area.

Part of the Hilperton Village Conservation Area boundary adjoins the Study Area to the east, and there is a Conservation Area along the A361 (Hilperton Rd) that extends north-eastwards to meet the western edge of the Study Area and includes the Fieldways Hotel & Health Club.

Trowbridge General Cemetery which is a Grade II Registered Park & Garden is located off The Down to the south-west of the Study Area.

There are no Listed buildings within the Study Area although there are a significant number within the Hilperton Village Conservation area to the east of the Study Area, including the Church of St Michael and All Angels (Grade II). There are also a number of Listed Buildings close to the Study Area on the southern edge of Hilperton Marsh. The Fieldways Hotel & Health Club is a Grade II Listed Building located just to the south-west of the Study Area. The location of these is shown on Figure 6.

**Land use / management**: Primarily pastoral with some arable. The area also has an important recreational and leisure function.

**Landscape pattern**: Variable and, in places, traditional field pattern of small-medium size with a network of hedgerows, some gappy and some intact and mature seen especially in the northern half of the Study Area (towards Hilperton Marsh).

**Settlement pattern & character of settlement**: Hilperton village is a largely linear pattern of development along Church Street, Hill Street, Devizes Rd and Trowbridge Rd. The development of Hilperton Marsh to the north forms a cluster of residential development contained by Horse Rd, Marsh Rd and Hammond Way. It extends westwards, contained by Horse Rd and Marsh Rd, where it joins / merges with Trowbridge along Hammond Way.

To the south of Hilperton, linear residential development extends along Devizes Rd and within the area of land contained by Devizes Rd, Trowbridge Rd and the A361.

**Character of buildings / built form**: The historic core of the village along Church Street is a Conservation Area. The old village is located at the top of a gentle incline and has a distinct character from the rest of Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh with its mix of Bath Stone buildings and architectural features of interest including mullion windows and fenestration.

Development along Hill Street is a mixture of more modern development with a suburban character. Parts of the village though does have a rural edge feel especially along sections of Hill Street and Whaddon Lane.

At the junction with Horse Rd to the north of the Study Area at Hilperton Marsh, the character of development changes to one of planned residential development, comprising largely 2 storey detached and semi-detached properties and bungalows.

The settlement edge of Trowbridge effectively defines the Study Area to the south-west. It is largely residential and comprises a mix of styles and periods including modern bungalows and 1.5 to 2 storey development associated with Albert Rd, larger detached and semi-detached Georgian townhouses along Victoria Rd, and a Georgian terrace along Wyke Rd.

To the west of Wyke Rd, Canal Rd Industrial Estate introduces large-scale, commercial buildings (sheds) with significant access and parking infrastructure.

**Access / movement**: There are numerous public rights of way (PROW) within the Study Area and these are shown in Figure 5.

**Cultural elements (references to art & literature)**: No references are known.

**Community spaces**: There is an open space area in Hilperton at the Village Hall, south of Whaddon Lane. Although not designated open space, the Study Area is an important area for informal recreation and access.
3.0 LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY WITHIN THE STUDY AREA CONT’D (FIGS. 4, 5 & 6)

AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL FACTORS

Scale: The scale of the landscape created by field sizes / mature hedgerows and trees varies across the Study Area from small-medium scale. Mature trees / vegetation associated with the edges of settlement often form a backdrop to the Study Area to create a well contained landscape. The scale of village development is generally small and largely residential with the exception of St. Michaels Church which forms a local landmark situated on elevated ground.

Larger scale, commercial development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate can be seen from higher ground to the eastern and southern parts of the Study Area which contrasts with the surrounding smaller scale development context.

Complexity: The Study Area is quite a well-defined area with mature hedgerows and specimen trees that largely restrict views of adjoining urban elements and transport corridors. The Study Area is of moderate complexity, consisting of transport infrastructure elements (Elizabeth Way); urban elements (largely residential) and rural elements (including small to medium sized pasture fields, arable fields, hedgerows and some mature trees).

Degree of enclosure / openness: More enclosed to the northern part of the Study Area with a smaller and more complex field pattern with hedgerows and trees in combination with greater localized variations in topography (associated with the brook). The western side of Elizabeth Way tends to be more open with fewer hedgerows.

Extensive views to the west across Trowbridge and beyond are possible from the higher ground to the southern and eastern parts of the Study Area.

Overall tranquility: More tranquil to the north-eastern and eastern part of the Study Area (away from Elizabeth Way) where traffic noise is less apparent.

Wildness & remoteness: It is not a wild or remote landscape but one that is a product of centuries of intervention by man. It is located close to urban areas.

Sense of place: It is a fairly ordinary rural landscape with no specific sense of place such as that created by Oast houses in Kent etc. However, it does have some redeeming qualities described in Section 2.6 and illustrated in Section 4.

There are some distant views towards Bradford-on-Avon and surrounding landscape. St Michael’s church creates an attractive feature in the landscape.
**LANDSCAPE & VISUAL SETTING ANALYSIS**

**PROPOSED LANDSCAPE GAP, HILPERTON**

**FIG. 5 - PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK WITHIN THE STUDY AREA**

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KEY:
- Parish Council Boundary
- Extent of Study Area
- Bridleway with Reference
- Footpath with Reference

Indicates the extent of the Wiltshire Council preferred site allocation for proposed residential development (Sites 297 & 263).

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4.0 VISUAL ANALYSIS

Representative views are taken from publicly accessible areas within the Study Area. Some views have been included for the purposes of context. The location of viewpoints is shown on Fig.7.

The landscape of the Study Area is largely contained by settlement with Trowbridge to the west and south-west, Hilperton Marsh to the north and Hilperton to the east. The relatively short southern edge is the exception but is dominated by the new roundabout at the junction between Elizabeth Way and the A361. The A361 corridor to the south of the roundabout has a generous managed landscape of wide grass verges with woodland planting behind.

Visually, there is some distinct variation across the Study Area. This ranges from more open landscape with extensive views to a more intimate and enclosed landscape caused by localized variations in topography (especially associated with the brook corridors) combined with the pattern of small to medium sized fields with hedgerows and trees.

Views of the edges of settlements are often filtered / glimpsed through mature trees and vegetation.

There is generally a strong sense of separation and identity between Trowbridge and Hilperton / Hilperton Marsh. It is at its weakest at the north-western corner where Hilperton Marsh effectively meets Trowbridge (divided by Elizabeth Way). To the south, the landscape gap between Hilperton and Trowbridge is relatively short (some 400m) and is bisected by Elizabeth Way and its associated junction with the A361, however, there is little intervisibility between the edge of Trowbridge and Hilperton at this point due to the presence of numerous significant trees along the A361 (Hilperton Rd) and mature hedge along Trowbridge Rd so a sense of separation is still evident.

Overall, the landscape within the Study Area is a generally well-defined and coherent ‘slice’ of countryside that has numerous redeeming qualities that are clearly highly valued locally; helping to preserve a sense of identity and landscape setting for the village.

The newly constructed Elizabeth Way road corridor exerts a strong influence visually along the line of the road corridor. However, away from the corridor zone, the road sits quite discreetly within the wider landscape and the impact of visual fragmentation is reduced especially seen from the northern and eastern edge of the Study Area at Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

Photograph 01
View looking north-west from Middle Lane (Public Bridleway HILP33)

The view affords elevated and panoramic views across the Study Area towards Hilperton Marsh and distant views of the landscape beyond.

The edges of settlement are well vegetated. There is a large arable field adjoining Middle Lane here.

Overall, the landscape character is rural edge.

Photograph 02
View looking west from Middle Lane (Public Bridleway HILP33)

The view affords elevated and panoramic views across the Study Area across Trowbridge and distant views towards Bradford-upon-Avon and surrounding landscape. The edges of settlement are well vegetated.

Larger scale, commercial development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate can be seen which contrasts with the surrounding smaller scale development context.

Overall, the landscape character is rural edge.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**

Although some new planting has been carried out along the road corridor, there is scope to achieve much better integration of the road within its landscape setting. Larger scale, commercial development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate can be seen which contrasts with the surrounding smaller scale development context. The edge of Trowbridge exerts more visual influence from this more elevated position. Middle Lane (Bridleway) forms a strong green edge through the southern half of the Landscape Gap, restricting views north and south to create visual segregation here. The character here is urban edge.

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**

Beyond the road, the landscape south of Middle Lane has a ‘parkland’ character associated with the significant trees and landscape setting of Fieldways Hotel.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

Although the view is dominated by the road corridor, localized variations in topography on its eastern side help to contain the road; restricting visibility between the viewpoint and Hilperton at this location.

Photograph 05
View looking north / north-west from Middle Lane (Public Bridleway HILP33) at the Elizabeth Way crossing (west)

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

Although the view is dominated by the road corridor, localized variations in topography on its eastern side help to contain the road; restricting visibility between the viewpoint and Hilperton at this location although the local landmark of St. Michael’s Church and hedgerow along Middle Lane can be seen on the skyline.

Photograph 06
View looking east from footpath along western side of Elizabeth Way at intersection with Public Footpath HILPS
VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

View of the more complex landscape of small-medium sized fields in the northern part of the Study Area.

The vegetated edge of Hilperton Marsh creates a well-defined backdrop with filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties.

Beyond the influence of the road corridor, the landscape creates a rural edge setting to Hilperton Marsh.

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

The vegetated edge of Trowbridge creates a well-defined backdrop with filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties.

Trees and vegetation along Middle Lane create a strong green edge through the Study Area.

Beyond the influence of the road corridor, the landscape creates an urban edge setting.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

**Photograph 9**
View looking north-east from footpath along western side of Elizabeth Way at intersection with Public Footpath HILP8

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**
The more complex landscape of small-medium sized fields in the northern part of the Study Area can be seen with hedgerows and intervening vegetation. There are filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties. Beyond the influence of the road corridor, the landscape creates a rural edge setting to the village.

**Photograph 08b**
View looking south from footpath along western side of Elizabeth Way at intersection with Public Footpath HILP8

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**
The vegetated edges of settlement (Trowbridge and Hilperton Marsh) create a well-defined backdrop with filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties. Significant willow trees and vegetation along the brook restricts visibility of the larger scale development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate.

**Photograph 9**
View looking north-east from footpath along western side of Elizabeth Way at intersection with Public Footpath HILP8

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**
The more complex landscape of small-medium sized fields in the northern part of the Study Area can be seen with hedgerows and intervening vegetation. There are filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties along the edge of Hilperton Marsh.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY
The more complex landscape of small-medium sized fields with mixed grassland in the northern and north-eastern part of the Study Area can be seen with hedgerows and intervening vegetation.

Few buildings are evident except for the local landmark of St. Michael’s Church which can be seen on the skyline.

The landscape creates a distinctive rural edge character in this part of the Study Area.

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY
Mature hedgerows and the well vegetated village edge in combination with localized variations in topography create a fairly intimate and enclosed landscape here.

Filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties along the edge of Hilperton Marsh are possible.

The landscape creates a distinctive rural edge character in this part of the Study Area.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

**Photograph 12**
View from Public Footpath HILP7 at southern edge of Hilperton Marsh looking south to south-east towards Hilperton

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**

The more complex landscape of small-medium sized fields with mixed grassland in the northern and north-eastern parts of the Study Area can be seen with hedgerows and intervening vegetation.

The gently undulating nature of the landscape is evident with parts of the old village (The Knap) & St. Michael’s Church visible on the skyline. Residential properties along the edge of Trowbridge are more evident from this more elevated position. Elizabeth Way sits quite discreetly in the landscape from this aspect.

The landscape creates a distinctive rural edge character here.

**Photograph 13**
View along Public Footpath HILP6 looking north-west towards Hilperton Marsh

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**

Mature hedgerows and the well vegetated village edge in combination with localized variations in topography creates an intimate and enclosed landscape here.

Filtered / glimpsed views of residential properties along the edge of Hilperton Marsh and the Canal Rd Industrial Estate are possible.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**

Mature hedgerows and intervening vegetation in combination with localized variations in topography creates an intimate and enclosed landscape.

The gently undulating nature of the landscape is evident with St. Michael’s Church clearly visible on the skyline.

The landscape creates a distinctive rural edge character here.

**Photograph 14**
View along Public Footpath HILP6 looking south-east towards Hilperton Marsh

**Photograph 15**
View along Public Footpath HILP6 looking north-west towards Hilperton Marsh

**VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY**

The view shows a complex pattern of small-medium sized fields with hedgerows, intervening vegetation and mixed grassland.

Views of the Canal Rd Industrial Estate are possible from this more elevated position. Elizabeth Way sits quite discreetly in the landscape from this aspect.

Distant views of the landscape to the north-west are possible.

The landscape creates a distinctive rural edge character here.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

Photograph 16
View looking south-east towards Hilperton from Public Footpath HILP6

Residential properties along edge of Hilperton
Parish Church of St Michael

View across a large arable field towards the old village including St. Michael’s Church and buildings associated with The Knap with mature trees.

Some of the traditional field pattern has been lost here.

Although less complex and diverse than the northern and north-eastern part of the Study Area, the landscape provides a rural edge setting for the village.

Photograph 17
View looking north-east along the A361 towards the new roundabout junction with Elizabeth Way

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

View along the A361 showing the mature trees along the Fieldways Hotel boundary on approach to the Study Area.

The mature trees associated with the Fieldways Hotel create a well-defined backdrop along the southern edge of the Study Area here; restricting intervisibility between the A361 road corridor and the Study Area.
4.1 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS (CONT)

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

Photograph 18
View looking north-west along Elizabeth Way from the junction with the A361

The landscape has a ‘parkland’ character here with mature tree specimens and groupings associated with the old Highfields Estate (now Fieldways Hotel) framing the corridor at this point.

VIEWPOINT COMMENTARY

Photograph 19
View looking south-east along Elizabeth Way from its junction with Wyke Rd, Canal Rd and Horse Rd

At this point, the urban edge of Hilperton Marsh and Trowbridge come together at the junction to define and contain the northern edge of the Study Area.
5.0 LANDSCAPE GAP RECOMMENDATIONS (FIG. 8)

The report makes recommendations for defining the extent of a Hilperton Landscape Gap that is based on the complex interaction between both the visual and landscape character analysis carried out. In some places, this is driven more by the visual influence such as the narrower section to the south of the Study Area and in other areas by the nature of the landscape itself e.g. the strong rural character in the northern and eastern parts of the area. Furthermore, it takes account of the preferred site allocation for new residential on land to the west of Elizabeth Way and the implications it would have on the extent of the existing Hilperton Landscape Gap.

The landscape performs many complex functions, of which providing a ‘gap’ between settlements, to prevent their coalescence and maintaining the identity and setting of individual settlements is an important one.

The Landscape Gap is also multi-functional and works on a number of levels including providing land for agriculture, green infrastructure, access, visual amenity and recreation. It is recognised that the provision of significant green infrastructure offers important recreational, health and landscape benefits to local communities as well as potentially valuable habitat and biodiversity benefits. The Hilperton Gap is an area that is much appreciated locally: https://en-gb.facebook.com/thehilpertongapwildlife.

It is important to note that the Parish Council would prefer the whole of the Hilperton Landscape Gap to be preserved.

However, with the site allocation to the west of Elizabeth Way included within the Draft Wiltshire HSAP, the Neighbourhood Development Plan needs to respond to this and ‘plan positively’ (neighbourhood plans need to be in general agreement with the development plan). Therefore, the recommendations propose a revised Landscape Gap boundary to run along the eastern edge of Elizabeth Way. This is designed to ensure that the most important area in terms of landscape quality and its importance as a setting for the village will be protected for many years to come.

The extent of the proposed Hilperton Landscape Gap is shown on Figure 8 and the rationale for the recommended extent of the Hilperton Landscape Gap is summarised below.

**Area East of Elizabeth Way**

The edges of Hilperton Marsh and Hilperton form the northern and eastern extent of the Landscape Gap.

The edges of settlement are well vegetated and often form a well-defined green backdrop to the area with filtered or glimpsed views of residential properties. The southern edge of the Landscape Gap is defined by the hedgerow and trees along Trowbridge Rd.

The landscape here provides a distinctive rural edge character and provides a strong sense of separation and identity between the settlement edges of Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh and that of Trowbridge. The field to the south of Middle Lane is strategically important to retain both for its separation and landscape setting function. The area includes St Michael and All Angels Church (Listed Building) on the western edge of Hilperton which can be seen on the skyline and forms an important landmark in the landscape.

Seen from the northern and eastern edges of the Landscape Gap, Elizabeth Way is less visually intrusive and sits quite discreetly in the landscape by virtue of more localized variations in topography.

This area clearly provides an important function for access with its numerous public rights of way and for informal recreation. In places, there is scope to gap up existing hedgerows and introduce some new hedgerows and tree planting to reinforce the strength of character within this part of the Landscape Gap.

**Area West of Elizabeth Way**

The edge of Trowbridge forms a well-defined edge to the Landscape Gap to the west. The edge of settlement is well vegetated and often forms a well-defined green backdrop to the area with filtered or glimpsed views of residential properties.

Large willow trees associated with the small brook in the north-west part of the Landscape Gap form a significant feature in the landscape and help to soften / screen views of the edge of Trowbridge beyond at this point, including the Canal Rd Industrial Estate sheds.

However, the closer proximity of the area to Trowbridge, in combination with the presence of the road corridor, creates a more urban edge than the area to the east of Elizabeth Way; with the edge of Trowbridge exerting more visual influence. Elevated views of the larger scale, commercial development associated with Canal Rd Industrial Estate are possible from the junction between Middle Lane and Elizabeth Way.

The land falls from Elizabeth Way towards Trowbridge and is at a lower level than that to the East of Elizabeth Way.

As for the eastern area, Middle Lane (Bridleway) forms a strong green edge through the southern half of the Landscape Gap, restricting views north and south to create visual segregation here.

The field to the south of Middle Lane is strategically important to retain both for its separation and landscape setting function. The mature trees associated with the Listed Fieldways Hotel form a significant ‘parkland’ character backdrop to this area to the south.

Summary

**Area to the East of Elizabeth Way:** In summary, it is considered that the area east of Elizabeth Way is important to preserve due to its importance as a rural edge setting for both Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh and to maintain a sense of separation between these settlements and the urbanizing influence of Trowbridge and the Elizabeth Way road corridor.

**Area to the West of Elizabeth Way:** It is considered that the area to the west of Elizabeth Way, still forms an important function in terms of providing physical separation between Trowbridge and the village. It is of lesser quality however and there are more obvious urban influences exerted by the edge of Trowbridge and the road corridor.

The area south of Middle Lane is considered to be sensitive to any development due to the narrowness of the Gap here and the proximity of Heritage Assets including Listed Buildings (eg St Michael and All Angels Church in Hilperton and Fieldways Hotel in the south-west corner of the Gap) and the Conservation Areas (Figure 6). As such, a ‘restricted zone’ has been identified to be in general agreement with the development plan. Therefore, the recommendations propose a revised Landscape Gap boundary to run along the eastern edge of Elizabeth Way.

It should be noted that any development would need to retain existing significant trees, hedgerows, watercourses. The existing brook is within a Flood Zone 3 and any development would need to be suitably offset. As identified in the Draft Wiltshire Housing Sites Allocation Plan (Draft June 2017), ‘these features provide wildlife corridors that link habitat features within the local area; in particular, ‘dark corridors’ for foraging bats which should be protected and enhanced where possible by additional planting with native species’.
5.0 LANDSCAPE GAP RECOMMENDATIONS CONT’D (FIG. 8)

The extensive network of public rights of way (footpaths/bridleway) would need to be included as an integral part of any development proposals to maintain connectivity between Trowbridge and Hilperton.

The retention of a suitable set back from Elizabeth Way would need to be maintained to provide effective landscape mitigation and the creation of an appropriate ‘layered’ landscape setting; allowing for the retention of existing landscape features and avoiding an abrupt urban edge.

Access to the site would need to be carefully considered and sited.

In summary, any development to the west of Elizabeth Way would need to be comprehensively considered in landscape and visual terms to minimise its impact on the area of land itself, and on the setting of the village and the revised Landscape Gap.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In visual terms, there is a feeling of separation between Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh and that of Trowbridge with the Hilperton Landscape Gap generally forming a coherent and well-defined landscape area. The edge of Hilperton in particular has a strong identity with the Listed Building of St Michael and All Angels Church forming an important local landmark within the landscape. The newly constructed Elizabeth Way does visually fragment the Gap along the road corridor zone into an east and west area. However, seen from the northern and eastern edges of the Gap, the road sits quite discreetly in the landscape.

In landscape terms, the character of the landscape is generally consistent with that included within the West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment with the exception of some parts of the Study Area which have been identified. Overall, the strength of character is judged to be moderate but is vulnerable to the urbanising influence of Trowbridge and new development. The condition of the landscape is judged to be moderate.

The Landscape Gap Recommendations plan (Figure 8) identifies the extent of the Wiltshire Council preferred site allocation within the existing Hilperton Landscape Gap to the west of Elizabeth Way. Figure 8 shows the extent of a revised Hilperton Landscape Gap that is required to respond in a ‘plan positive’ way to take this proposed site allocation into consideration despite the Parish Council’s wish to maintain the whole of the Gap. The revised Landscape Gap is proposed to follow the eastern edge of Elizabeth Way.

However, based on the analysis findings, it is considered that the revised Landscape Gap would ensure that a ‘meaningful’ landscape setting for Hilperton and Hilperton Marsh could be retained; maintaining separation and helping to preserve a sense of identity for the village in the long-term.

Development south of Middle Lane should be restricted to maintain a ‘necessary’ gap here. This area is considered strategically important both for its separation and landscape setting function as well as sensitivity due to the presence of the Listed Building and Conservation Area heritage assets.

As stated previously, it is the Parish Council’s preference to maintain the Hilperton Landscape Gap in its current form. Should the site allocation come forward for development, any proposals would need to be comprehensively considered in landscape and visual terms to minimise its impact on the setting of the village and on the Landscape Gap itself. A summary of these is outlined in Section 5.0.
LANDSCAPE & VISUAL SETTING ANALYSIS
PROPOSED LANDSCAPE GAP, HILPERTON

FIG. 8 - LANDSCAPE GAP RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY
- Parish Council Boundary
- Extent of proposed Hilperton Landscape Gap
- Indicates the extent of the Wiltshire Council preferred site allocation for proposed residential development (Sites 297 & 263)
- Restricted zone for proposed development to maintain a necessary Landscape Gap, minimise impact on Listed Building and Conservation Areas and retain the significant ‘parkland character’ trees within this area
- Recommendations for landscape enhancement / reinforcement within the Landscape Gap including reinstating native hedgerows and new copse structure (buffer) planting
- Existing public right of way routes to be integrated within any new development
- Existing brook and associated vegetation

(c) Getmapping plc 2017
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1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map.

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