

# **WHS Setting and AONB Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for Land Adjoining Odd Down**

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## **1. Introduction and definitions**

- 1.1. The sites area has a distinctly different western and eastern plateau landscape character separated by the wooded Sulis Manor. The two halves are assessed separately for clarity. Fields are identified by letter in accordance with Map OD 1 – Field Key
- 1.2. WHS Setting impact assessment uses relevant key aspects of significance(receptors) as developed in Bath WHS Setting SPD
- 1.3. AONB impact assessment uses relevant key aspects of significance (receptors) as set out in AONB Management Plan 2013-2018 – Special Qualities of Significance
- 1.4. Impact Assessment methodology is in principle as set out in the GLVIA 3rd Edition with one variation in the assessment of value of a receptor made for the WHS Setting receptors. It is taken as given that the WHS Setting is of international Importance and therefore receptors are of overall high value. However the WHS Setting SPD recognises that appropriate development is not precluded within the setting area and therefore guidance is given on assessing the value of particular aspects of significance receptors in the context of potential development sites. The gradings set out in the SPD are used here. There are no special modifications to the assessment of value set out in the AONB management plan and therefore the assessment of value for the AONB necessarily is as set out in the GLVIA 3rd Edition and is always given as high.
- 1.5. As recommended in the GLVIA 3rd Edition sensitivity, magnitude and significance effects are scored on a simple low, low to medium, medium, medium to high and high scale. All effects of development were negative (detrimental)in the context of the WHS Setting and AONB
- 1.6. To make the impact assessment more meaningful the site was assessed in relation to a hypothetical two storey housing development type of similar density to the existing Sulis Manor Estate in the north western sector of site. It is understood that there may be interest in higher density and possibly more than 2 storey buildings in some areas and comments are included in the assessment of sensitivity.

## 2. Baseline Site Description

- 2.1. The overall site area is an almost flat plateau sloping almost imperceptibly downwards to the south. It is roughly rectangular in shape bounded on the northern long side by the line of the Wansdyke and the main settlement edge of Odd Down; on the southern long side by the wooded plateau edge which then falls very steeply down to Combe Hay and South Stoke; to the west by Combe Hay Lane and Odd Down Park and Ride; to the east by Cross Keys junction, South Stoke Lane and in the south east the village of South Stoke.
- 2.2. Within the overall site area, the NW sector is already developed with St. Gregory's Secondary School in the far north west corner, Lew Hill Memorial sports ground and then the 1980s/90s Sulis Manor housing estate filling the rest of the sector. The remaining area divides into two distinct western and eastern sectors by the wooded Sulis Manor which has not been assessed in detail but which may have some possible potential for providing a link route between the eastern and western sectors see comments in Summary below. The Lew Hill Sports Ground has been assessed as part of the Western Sector as there may be some potential to move the existing sports use elsewhere on the plateau.
- 2.3. The smaller western sector is a more enclosed landscape than the larger and more open eastern sector. It comprises just three medium sized fields; the furthest to the west is triangular in shape and the largest field. It is visually separated from the other two fields by a tree filled hedgerow and is generally enclosed by trees and woodland with the exception of the south western corner which is open to views to and from the wider countryside. The remaining two fields are rectangular, separated from each other by a low hedge line thus forming one visual unit, itself contained by trees along the outer boundaries and also along the northern boundary of Sulis Manor housing estate.
- 2.4. The larger eastern sector has a very open feel generally even though planted tree belts are now sufficiently grown to provide some visual separation across the plateau. Fields are mostly large and rectangular growing arable and silage crops. There are some remnant dry stone walls acting as partial field boundaries. The northern boundary to the sector is generally fairly open to the edge of the existing Odd Down settlement especially the primary school.
- 2.5. The village of South Stoke is largely set at a lower level to the south east of the site and is also visually separated by significant woodland so that although close to the site boundaries very little is visible apart from occasional roofs along South Stoke Lane.
- 2.6. New permissive footpaths have been put in by the landowners, running along a number of field boundaries throughout the site in both eastern and western sectors and along both northern and southern long boundaries. There is also public access in all the larger tree belts along the southern boundary. There is no lawful public access within the fields themselves.

### **3. Summary - Combined WHS Setting and AONB Assessment**

3.1. Refer to Map OD 2 (WHS Setting Significance) and OD 3 (AONB Significance)

3.2. There are some slight differences in the negative significance scores for the WHS Setting and AONB Assessments. It is important to note that in combining significance scores, the highest negative score for either AONB or WHS has been selected. It is not appropriate to average out the scores since both WHS and AONB are of national or international importance but for different reasons although both pertain to the landscape and culture of the area.

3.3. There are a number of areas where built development would have an unacceptable impact on the WHS Setting and AONB combined which could not be successfully mitigated – Fields West 2; East 2 and 3; The southern halves (requires studies to be exact here) of Fields West 1 and East 4. The main access for any development in the eastern sector is likely to be from the Cross Keys corner and an access route through Field 2 would need to be very sensitively designed to enable the maintenance of an open down type landscape in views from Cross Keys.

3.4. Fields East 1, East 4 (north) and West 1 (north) have medium negative significance of effects of development. In this case mitigation may have the potential for reducing the negative effects.

3.5. There is some potential for developing housing on the Lew Hill Sports Ground is a suitable alternative site could be found for the sports use.

3.6. There is significant potential to enhance the value and understanding of the Wansdyke running through fields East 1 and 2.

3.7. Whilst the wooded Sulis Manor site has not been assessed as such, it does occupy an important central position on the site separating the western and eastern sectors. The woodland surrounding the property is of significant landscape and visual importance but there is some potential that a route could be formed through the wooded area without damage to any significant trees and that the property or its footprint could be re-developed as long as the overall height of development did not exceed the existing and that no significant trees were affected.

## 4. WHS Setting Assessment

Refer to Map OD 1 – Field Key

### 4.1 Eastern Sector

<b><i>Landscape Character Effects</i></b>	
<b>Relevant Key Aspects of Significance Assessed</b>	Compact form of city in a bowl and hidden from surrounding area
<b><i>Visual Effects</i></b>	
<b>Relevant Key Aspects of Significance Assessed</b>	Views to and from roads important in the Georgian period (Midford Road and Cross keys junction)
<b><i>Historical Association Effects</i></b>	
<b>Relevant Key Aspects of Significance Assessed</b>	Distinct character and quality of historic routes (Midford road and Cross keys junction)
<b>Sensitivity- Landscape Character, Visual Effects and Historical Association Effects Summarised</b> (value + susceptibility to change caused by development effects)	<p><i>WHS Setting Value:</i> Varies over site – Field East 1 Low to medium; Field East 4 (north) medium; Fields East 2, 3 &amp; East 4 (south) high</p> <p>The southern part of the plateau closer to its edge is important in maintaining the hidden nature of the city (Compact City aspect of OUV understanding) from the wider countryside to the south (particularly Field East 3 and East 4 (south) and possibly more of East 4). Development within a certain distance of the plateau edge would potentially be seen above the trees as roof lines or upper storeys depending on building heights, contours across the plateau and distance from plateau edge. No studies have been done to determine where development could extend to across the plateau and to what height. Hence this assessment is for guidance only until studies can be done and the score is given as high for Field East 3 and East 4 (south); medium for East 4 (north)</p> <p>The northern part of the plateau (Fields East 1, East 2) is already much affected by its visual links to and partial containment by, existing settlement. Hence it contributes less strongly to the maintenance of the OUV Compact City attribute and is given value low to medium for this aspect.</p> <p>Field East 2 in particular contributes to the understanding of the Georgian routes important to understanding of the OUVs. Field East 2 is adjacent to the north east corner of the site at Cross Keys junction where also Midford Road passes the site. John Leland in 1530 comments on the open high Down here as seen from Midford Road and although enclosed by the C18<sup>th</sup> it was still very open with few buildings apart from the new Cross Keys Coaching Inn at the junction. Field East 2 is assessed with a value of high for this attribute as the view across it is one of the few remaining open views across the “Down” from Midford Road and Cross Keys.</p> <p><i>Susceptibility-</i> To change caused by estate type development: Varies over site – Field East 1 Low; East 4 (north) Medium; East 2, 3 &amp; 4(south) High</p> <p>Assuming medium to high density 2 storey development then</p>

	<p>Field East 1 has low to medium susceptibility as it is already affected by adjacent development and is sufficiently distanced from the plateau edge and Cross Keys junction that development is unlikely to be detrimental to either maintaining the hidden city or reducing the open view too much. Increase in storey height could be detrimental to both and studies need to be done to clarify this.</p> <p>Development in Field East 4(northern half) would have no effect on the open views from Cross Keys and at 2 storeys should be hidden from views beyond the plateau with some possible mitigation necessary hence a score of medium. Development exceeding 2 storeys would raise susceptibility to high however in this location.</p> <p>Development of any kind in East 2 would be highly detrimental to the importance of maintaining open views from Cross Keys / Midford Road and hence the susceptibility is high.</p> <p>Development in East 4 (southern half) and East 3 would be highly detrimental to maintaining the hidden nature of the city. It should be noted that the new tree belts have a high proportion of Ash and also Oak both of which are at risk of disease. These tree belts should not be relied upon to provide screening. The susceptibility to damaging effects from development is scored as high for these fields.</p> <p><b>Overall Sensitivity:</b> Field East 1 Low to medium; East 4 (north) Medium; East 2, 3 &amp; 4(south) High</p>
<b>Magnitude of Effects</b>	<p>Field East 1 Low to medium; East 4 (north) Medium; East 2, 3 &amp; 4 (south) high</p> <p>In relation to the compact / hidden city receptor there is again a gradient north to south across the site. For Fields 1 &amp; 2 and assuming 2 storey development, whilst the geographical extent of potential development change is high, the scale / size of change is relatively low. For fields 3 &amp; 4 the geographical extent is high and cumulative and the scale / size of change is also potentially high given potential change from hidden to viewed from the wider countryside.</p> <p>In relation to the historical associations with the Cross keys junction / Midford Road receptor, maintenance of open landscape views is important and magnitude of effect both in terms of geographical extent and scale/size of change caused by development decreases with distance from the junction. Field E 2 scores high, Field E1 scores low to medium; field E3 and 4 score low.</p> <p>Overall the magnitude of effects for each field within the Eastern sector has been allocated the highest negative effect from each receptor. It is not appropriate in this situation to average out the scores as each receptor is individually important in terms of WHS setting</p>
<b>Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects</b>	<p>Refer to Map OD 2 – WHS Setting Significance Summary</p> <p>Field East 1 – low to medium negative; Field 2 – high negative; Field 3 – high negative; Field 4(north) – medium negative; Field 4 (south) – high negative</p>

## 4.2 Western Sector

<b>Landscape Character Effects</b>	
<b>Relevant Key Aspects of Significance Assessed</b>	Compact form of city in a bowl and hidden from surrounding area
<b>Sensitivity</b> (value + susceptibility to change caused by development effects)	<p><i>WHS Setting Value:</i> Fields West 1 – High south half; medium north half; Field West 2 – High; Lew Hill Sports Ground - low</p> <p>The assessment of value here (except for Lew Hill Sports Ground) is as for Eastern sector fields East 3 and East 4. Field West 2 is particularly vulnerable to views through to the wider countryside and hence loss of the hidden nature of the city as there is a significant gap in the mature tree cover at the plateau edge. Lew Hill Sports Ground is contained behind trees, by the school and by the Sulis manor Housing Estate. It relates strongly to this more developed part of the plateau, hence the low value</p> <p><i>Susceptibility</i> To change caused by 2 storey estate type development: Field West 1(north)- medium; Field West 1 (South)- High; Field West 2 – high; Lew Hill Sports Ground - low</p> <p>Development in Field West 1(northern half) at 2 storeys should be hidden from views beyond the plateau with some possible mitigation necessary hence a score of medium. Development exceeding 2 storeys would raise susceptibility to high however in this location.</p> <p>Development of any kind in Field West 2 and West 1 (southern half) would be highly detrimental to maintaining the hidden nature of the city. It should be noted that the new tree belts have a high proportion of Ash and also Oak both of which are at risk of disease. These tree belts should not be relied upon to provide screening. The susceptibility to damaging effects from development is scored as high for these fields.</p> <p>Development in Lew Hill sports Ground would relate well to the adjacent Sulis Manor housing estate assuming development of a similar nature. There would be no change in the nature of the compact city form unless development of significantly increased height was considered in which case there may be views out beyond the plateau to the south.</p> <p><b>Overall Sensitivity:</b> Field West 1 (north) – Medium; Fields West 1 (south) &amp; West 2 – High; Lew Hill Sports Ground - low</p>
<b>Magnitude of Effects</b>	<p>Field West 1 (north) – Medium; Fields West 1 (south) &amp; West 2 – High; Lew Hill Sports Ground - Low</p> <p>In relation to the compact / hidden city as receptor for fields West 1 (south) and West 2 the geographical extent is high and cumulative and the scale / size of change is also high given potential change from hidden to viewed from the wider countryside. For Field West (north) given the additional distance from plateau edge and accumulated tree cover the score is given as medium. Lew Hill Sports Ground is relatively small and contained within development and hence low magnitude given development of a similar nature to the existing housing.</p>
<b>Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects</b>	<p>Refer to Map OD 2 – WHS Setting Significance Summary</p> <p>Field West 1 (north) – Medium negative; Fields West 1 (south) &amp; West 2 – High negative; Lew Hill Sports Ground – low negative</p>

## 5. AONB Assessment

### 5.1 Eastern Sector

<p><b>Relevant Key Aspects of Significance</b></p>	<p>Tranquillity; Dry stone walls; Distinctive Settlements in Cotswold vernacular; Accessible landscape for quiet relaxation; Historical Associations</p>
<p><b>Sensitivity</b> (value + susceptibility to change caused by development effects)</p>	<p><i>Value:</i> High</p> <p><i>Susceptibility:</i> To change caused by 2 storey estate type development: Field East 1 – Low to medium; Field East 2 – Low to Medium from north to south; Field East 4 (north) Low to Medium; E3 &amp; East 4 (south) – High</p> <p>In relation to tranquillity as a receptor; Field East 1 has low tranquillity overall given its proximity to existing settlement on two sides already– hence light pollution, activity and noise. Additional development would increase the detriment but not significantly in the context of the whole sector; Field East 2 is affected by loss of tranquillity due to its proximity to settlement edge on its northern boundary and the Cross keys junction in the north east corner. This decreases north to south across the field, hence a score of low to medium with development; Field East 3 and the southern part of East 4 are distanced from settlement disturbance and are also important undeveloped areas maintaining protection from light pollution leaking out from the plateau top to the wider countryside below. Development would cause a significant loss of tranquillity over a potentially very wide area: the northern part of Field 4 is affected by loss of tranquillity due to proximity to settlement edge hence a score of medium with additional development.</p> <p>In relation to dry stone walls as receptors there are some remnants pieces in poor condition scattered through the sector along field boundaries. The presence of dry stone walls is indicative of the traditional Cotswold open plateau landscape of fields bounded by low dry stone walls. Due to their remnant nature here this traditional landscape pattern is less obvious and there is unlikely to be any detriment from development and even the possibility of some improvement through mitigation, hence low susceptibility.</p> <p>In relation to Distinctive settlements in Cotswold vernacular as a receptor; Field East 3 lies adjacent to the village of South Stoke, separated by wooded slopes. There is potential for significant detriment caused by lower quality, higher density development in the field. Hence a high score.</p> <p>In relation to accessibility for quiet recreation; currently a permissive footpath network has recently been created criss-crossing the sector along various field</p>

	<p>boundaries and through the new tree belts. This gives significant walking access over the sector with many open views, although limited to paths apart from within the woodland areas. Development over the sector would alter but not necessarily reduce the number of walking routes and is likely to alter the nature of views. There is potential for significant mitigatory measures to maintain or enhance the walking experience over the sector. The score is therefore medium throughout. In relation to the Wansdyke which runs close to the northern boundary; the existing route is invisible to the eye and carefully designed, open space and interpretation, could well improve the current situation. The score is therefore medium in the northern parts of Fields 1 and 2.</p> <p><b>Overall Sensitivity:</b> Field East 1 – Medium overall (medium to high in vicinity of Wansdyke); Field East 2 – medium to high (north to south across field); East 3 – High; East 4 - Medium to high (north to south across field)</p>
<p><b>Magnitude of Effects</b></p>	<p>There is a cumulative increase in magnitude of effects from north to south over the sector especially in relation to tranquillity and access; In the immediate proximity of the Wansdyke there are already strict regulations regarding development in its proximity and hence the magnitude of effect is not more than low to medium given good mitigation; In relation to the settlement of South Stoke the magnitude of effect is potentially high in field East 3 particularly in relation to scale and size.</p>
<p><b>Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects</b></p>	<p>Refer To Map OD3 – AONB Significance Summary  Field East 1 – Medium negative; Field East 2 (north) – Medium negative; Field East 2 (south) – High negative; Field East 3 – High negative; Field East 4 (north) – Medium negative; Field East 4 (south) High negative</p>

## 5.2 Western Sector

<b>Relevant Key Aspects of Significance</b>	Tranquillity; Accessible landscape for quiet relaxation.
<b>Sensitivity</b> (value + susceptibility to change caused by development effects)	<p><i>Value:</i> High  <i>Susceptibility:</i> To change caused by 2 storey estate type development: Field West 2 – high; Fields West 1 – low/medium to high north to south across fields  In relation to tranquillity as a receptor; Field West 2 and the southern part of West 1 are distanced from settlement disturbance and are also important undeveloped areas maintaining protection from light pollution leaking out from the plateau top to the wider countryside below (especially West 2). Development would cause a significant loss of tranquillity over a potentially very wide area to the south of the plateau: the northern part of Field 1 is affected by loss of tranquillity due to proximity to settlement edge hence a score of medium with additional development.  In relation to accessibility for quiet recreation the comments here are the same as those for the eastern sector. Hence the score is medium. The Lew Hill Sports ground differs from the rest of the sector in that it is very much contained within the developed north west part of the plateau and a such has low tranquillity; whilst it has a sports use it is not really contributing to a landscape for quiet recreation in the spirit of the AONB meaning. Hence it has low susceptibility to development effects</p> <p><b>Overall Sensitivity:</b> Field West 1 (north) – medium; Field West 1(south) – high; Field West 2 – High; Lew Hill Sports Ground – low to medium.</p>
<b>Magnitude of Effects</b>	<p>Field West 1 (north) – medium; Field West 1 (south) – high; Field West 2 – High; Lew Hill Sports Ground - low  There is a cumulative increase in magnitude of effects from north to south over the sector especially in relation to tranquillity and access and especially in field West 1 where there is particular exposure to the wider countryside to the south</p>
<b>Significance of Effects</b>	<p>Refer To Map OD3 – AONB Significance Summary  Field West 1 (north) – medium negative; Field West 1(south) – high negative; Field West 2 – High negative; Lew Hill Sports Ground – low to medium negative.</p>





