

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

White Consultants, in association with Steven Warnock, were appointed in March 2012 to undertake a landscape sensitivity study for 39 villages in Stratford-on-Avon District.

The brief states that the study is to *'assist the District Council to determine the most appropriate locations for development to be identified in the Local Development Framework, whether in the form of strategic sites allocated within the Core Strategy, or as other sites to be allocated in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document'*.

The focus is on land directly adjacent to, and within, villages which may realistically be considered for expansion of the settlement, defined by the character of the landscape and settlement edge. The SHLAA¹ study, which is identifying parcels for study in these settlements, is being carried out concurrently by others so the study areas in this study have been identified independently in conjunction with the client.

A county landscape character assessment using land description units [LDUs] has been undertaken by Warwickshire County Council and acts as context. The broad scale LDU sensitivity assessment has been completed around the relevant settlements as part of this study. The methodology used in the assessment is based on national guidance originally published by the former Countryside Agency in 2004. This guidance remains current although it is under review by Natural England.

Sensitivity is taken to mean the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development. It is defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way it is perceived and the nature of the development, in this case housing or commercial uses.

The areas around each settlement have been divided into land cover parcels (LCPs)/zones primarily based on character. Desk study information on each LCP/zone has been collated including historic landscape character and features, ecological features, landscape and relevant planning designations and constraints. A site assessment has then been made taking into account visual receptors (people who would be aware of changes to the land use) and then each zone has been assessed using a standard checklist. Each site report includes an overall analysis and grading of landscape sensitivity to housing and commercial development.

Overall, the study has found that there is some capacity for development adjacent to the study settlements when assessed from the perspective of landscape sensitivity, although most zones [around 85% for housing and 98% for commercial development] are considered areas of constraint with high or high/medium sensitivity. These areas have tended to be those of intrinsically higher value, those in open countryside not closely associated with a settlement, those acting as settings to Conservation Areas or listed buildings, those located in valley corridors, in floodplains or on steep or prominent slopes, or those forming gaps within or between settlements. There is also a need to protect, in particular, valley bottoms and maintain green fingers of open space penetrating into settlements.

The sensitivity of zones to commercial development is higher than to housing development because of its larger scale and height, its potential impact on sloping

¹ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Review

ground where terracing may be needed, and its potential effect on adjacent residential areas.

In terms of opportunities for housing development, there is low/medium landscape sensitivity in one small zone in Gaydon. There is medium landscape sensitivity in 45 zones in Bearley, Claverdon, Earlswood, Ettington [2], Fenny Compton, Great Alne, Halford, Hampton Lucy, Harbury, Ilmington [2], Lighthorne Heath [2], Long Compton [2], Long Itchington [3], Long Marston [3], Mappleborough Green, Moreton Morrell, Napton-on-the- Hill, Newbold-on-Stour [3], Oxhill [2], Pillerton Priors, Lower Quinton, Salford Priors [2], Snitterfield [2], Stockton, Upper/Middle Tysoe [2], Welford-on-Avon [4], Wilmcote and Wootton Wawen.

In terms of opportunities for commercial development, there is medium/low landscape sensitivity in one zone in Fenny Compton. There is medium landscape sensitivity in five zones in Bearley, Lighthorne Heath, Long Itchington, Mappleborough Green and Napton-on-the- Hill.