



# Strategic Site Options, Mid Devon

## Landscape and Visual Appraisal

On behalf of **Mid Devon District Council**

Project Ref: 31031 | Rev: FINAL | Date: September 2014

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Office Address: 10 Queen Square, Bristol, BS1 4NT  
T: +44 (0)117 928 1560 E: bristol@peterbrett.com



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	Name	Position	Signature	Date
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Various	Various		August 2014
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Nigel Evers	Director of Landscape		August 2014
<b>Approved by:</b>	Tony Russell	Partner		August 2014
<b>For and on behalf of Peter Brett Associates LLP</b>				

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Peter Brett Associates LLP was commissioned on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014 by Mid Devon District Council to undertake a landscape and visual appraisal of strategic site options, to support a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Local Plan Review.
- 1.1.2 The following sites were included in the Local Plan Review Options Consultation (January 2014) as options for strategic growth, and have been assessed in this report:
- Hartnoll Farm (Options Policy TIV2);
  - Junction 27 / land adjoining Willand (Options Policy J27);
  - East Cullompton (Options Policy CU11); and
  - North West Cullompton Urban Extension (Options Policy CU1), incorporating additional land at Growen Farm and Rull Lane.
- 1.1.3 For Junction 27 / land adjoining Willand, the brief required that the appraisal differentiates between the commercial and housing elements, so the effects of the commercial element alone are understood in addition to the effects of the combined parts.
- 1.1.4 The appraisal for North West Cullompton consists of an appraisal of the Growen Farm and Rull Lane areas only.
- 1.1.5 The reasons for allocating sites relate mainly to housing need. The locations are governed by sustainability objectives such as close access to services, facilities and infrastructure. Landscape and visual issues are amongst the factors to be considered for Mid Devon District Council to compare the sustainability of the option sites.
- 1.1.6 The appraisal is not an impact assessment and as a result does not attribute magnitude of change or significance of impact. The impact of development on a site depends on the nature and layout of the proposal, and that information is not available at this stage. Should specific proposals come forward for individual sites, Mid Devon District Council will then agree with the applicant the type of appraisal or assessment work required to allow them to determine the application.

## 1.2 Methodology

- 1.2.1 The appraisal comprises a desktop study, supplemented by site visits to the Option Sites and surroundings.
- 1.2.2 The desktop study included a data trawl in order to obtain background information about the sites and surrounding landscape context. This included matters relating to landscape planning policy and landscape character.
- 1.2.3 For each site, a Visual Envelope (VE) was produced, using specialist software, to understand the extent of visibility of the site, and as a guide to likely viewpoints within the landscape (**Figures L1-L4**). The VE was based on a bare earth model, so took account of topography but did not take account of any barriers such as existing buildings and woodlands or hedges. Target points selected were at existing ground level and at the extremes of the sites and/or the highest points of the landform. Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) were not produced. These are designed to show the extent of visibility of development, and in the absence of any specific proposals, might be misleading.

1.2.4 Not all possible viewpoints were visited, but using the VE, mapping and aerial photographs, likely areas were selected to locate typical viewpoints of the sites. The site visits were undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect and a Landscape Architect, in July, August and September 2014. The area surrounding each site was surveyed and photographed to assess the visibility of the site. Viewpoints were selected, which were either:

- Within the site, and demonstrate its existing character; or
- Within the surrounding area, from which the public has access, including footpaths, bridleways, roads and other public spaces.

1.2.5 The purpose of the fieldwork was to:

- Gain an understanding of the landscape character of the sites and their context;
- Determine the extent of visibility of the existing sites, and the potential visibility of any likely development on the site (the actual extent of which will be determined by landform, vegetation, and existing and proposed built development); and
- Carry out the landscape and visual appraisals for each site, to understand their capacity for the types of development set out.

## 1.3 Scope

### Breadth of Topic

1.3.1 This landscape and visual appraisal report considers:

- The features of the sites and their context;
- Landscape character, including the character of the site, and its relationship to its surroundings;
- Landscape-related planning designations;
- Views towards the sites; and
- Potential changes to landscape features, landscape character and views, arising as a result of development of the sites.

1.3.2 For each site, the following were considered:

- Site Location and Description;
- Designations;
- Landscape Related Planning Policy;
- Published Landscape Character;
- Key Characteristics;
- Agricultural Land Classification;
- Boundaries;
- Landform and Watercourses;

- Significant Vegetation;
  - Phase I Habitat Survey Classification;
  - Visibility;
  - Relationship to Existing and Proposed Development;
  - Positive Features;
  - Negative Features;
  - Sensitive Features and Characteristics;
  - Site Specific Appraisal;
  - Sensitivity to Residential Development;
  - Development Opportunities; and
  - Landscape Changes in the Absence of Development on the Site.
- 1.3.3 To provide information for the landscape and visual appraisal process, the following plans have been prepared for each site:
- A Visual Envelope Plan (**Figures L1-L4**);
  - A Landscape planning and character plan (**Figures L5-L8**);
  - A Landscape and visual analysis plan, including constraints and opportunities, using aerial photographs as base mapping (**Figures L9-L12**); and
  - Annotated photographic panoramas (**Appendix A**).
- 1.3.4 Supporting text consists of a report bringing together the results of the appraisal and:
- Considers the likely effects of development, and the capacity of the site to accommodate development;
  - Contains a simple statement on how the landscape will change in the absence of theoretical development that might arise from the allocation; and
  - Includes a brief cumulative assessment of the Option Sites in combination with other schemes.
- 1.3.5 The appraisal was informed by a data trawl and desktop assessment, establishing:
- The extent and location of the sites;
  - Landscape planning constraints;
  - Other relevant constraints that have a bearing on the appraisal, including the results of the Phase 1 Habitat Surveys undertaken for Mid Devon by Devon Biodiversity Records Centre in June 2014;
  - The character and sensitivity of the sites in published landscape character assessments; and

- Likely representative publicly accessible viewpoints, including particularly sensitive locations such as the Blackdown Hills AONB.

## Study Area

- 1.3.6 The spatial scope of this assessment was determined by the geographical spread of the area from where the existing sites can be seen, known as the Visual Envelope. However, views of any proposals may extend to greater distances than those of the site.
- 1.3.7 A limit of 5km was set for the initial study, beyond which our professional experience on other assessments for this type of development has shown it is difficult to discern landscape or visual effects.

## Sources of Baseline Information

- 1.3.8 The sources of baseline data are summarised in **Table 1.1** below:

Table 1.1: Data Sources

Baseline Topic	Data Source
Ancient Woodland	<a href="http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk">www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk</a> and English Heritage Register
Conservation Areas	<a href="http://www.middevon.gov.uk/maps">www.middevon.gov.uk/maps</a>
County Wildlife Site (2007 data)	<a href="http://www.middevon.gov.uk/maps">www.middevon.gov.uk/maps</a>
Listed Buildings	<a href="http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk">www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk</a> and English Heritage Register
Public Right of Way	<a href="http://gis.devon.gov.uk/basedata/viewer.asp?DCCService=footpath">http://gis.devon.gov.uk/basedata/viewer.asp?DCCService=footpath</a>
Register of Parks & Gardens of Historic Interest	<a href="http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk">www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk</a> and English Heritage Register
Scheduled Monuments	<a href="http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk">www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk</a> and English Heritage Register
Tree Preservation Order	Mid Devon District Council, 2014

- 1.3.9 Existing evidence includes (**Appendix B**):
- National Character Areas 2013 ([www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca));
  - Devon Landscape Character Assessment 2012 ([www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter](http://www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter));
  - Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment 2011 ([www.middevon.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.middevon.gov.uk/evidence));
  - Mid Devon Landscape Sensitivity Study 2013 ([www.middevon.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.middevon.gov.uk/evidence));

- Mid Devon Green Infrastructure Assessment 2013 ([www.middevon.gov.uk/gia](http://www.middevon.gov.uk/gia)); and
- Interim Sustainability Appraisal and Appendices ([www.middevon.gov.uk/localplanreview](http://www.middevon.gov.uk/localplanreview)).

1.3.10 Landscape character types as set out in studies such as the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment generally apply to a larger area than the much smaller sites being appraised in this report, which frequently consist of a few fields. As a result, the sites do not often display many of the characteristics of the type within which it is found.

## 1.4 1.4 Landscape Policy

1.4.1 Adopted Local Plan policies particularly relevant to all sites are:

- Policy COR 2 – Local Distinctiveness from the Core Strategy 2026, Adopted July 2007;
- DM29 – Protected landscapes; and
- DM30 – Other protected sites, from the Local Plan Part 3, October 2013.

1.4.2 Policy COR 2 requires development to “*sustain the distinctive quality, character and diversity of Mid Devon’s environmental assets*”. In particular, it requires:

- *“The preservation and enhancement of the distinctive qualities of Mid Devon’s natural landscape, supporting opportunities identified within landscape character areas. Within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or adjoining the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks, the primary objective will be to protect the special environmental qualities of that landscape and its setting.”*

1.4.3 It is explained that:

- *“The environmental qualities of the district are highly valued by the community and the preservation and enhancement of Mid Devon’s distinctive environmental assets is important to the achievement of sustainable development. Changes in land use, agricultural practices and new development are all threats to the quality of Mid Devon’s environment unless properly managed. New development will be located, designed and constructed in ways that reinforce local distinctiveness and provide positive impact on the environment and natural resources, with mitigation and compensation measures where harm cannot be avoided.”*

1.4.4 DM29 is as follows:

- *“Development proposals within or affecting the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Dartmoor National Park, Exmoor National Park and the North Devon Biosphere Reserve must demonstrate that:*
  - *Cultural heritage and the character, appearance, setting and other special qualities of the landscape will be conserved or, where possible, enhanced; and*
  - *Biodiversity will be conserved and enhanced where possible through improved linking of habitats, appropriate landscaping and habitat creation.*
- *Major developments within or adjoining the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Dartmoor or Exmoor National Parks will only be permitted in exceptional cases.”*

1.4.5 The Local Plan Review will replace the adopted policies described above. The options consultation document (January 2014) contained draft Policy S10:

- *Development will sustain the distinctive quality, character and diversity of Mid Devon's environmental assets and minimise the impact of development on climate change through:*
    - a) *High quality sustainable design which reinforces the character and distinctiveness of Mid Devon's historic built environment, mitigates and adapts to climate change and creates attractive places;*
    - b) *The efficient use and conservation of natural resources of land, water and energy;*
    - c) *Measures to reduce the risk of flooding to life and property, requiring sustainable drainage systems including provisions for future maintenance, guiding development to locations of lowest flood risk by applying a sequential test where appropriate, and avoiding an increase in flood risk elsewhere;*
    - d) *Renewable energy development in locations where there is an acceptable local impact, including visual, on nearby residents, landscape character and wildlife, balanced with the wider sustainability benefits of renewable energy;*
    - e) *The preservation and enhancement of the distinctive qualities of Mid Devon's natural landscape, supporting opportunities identified within landscape character areas. Within or adjoining the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks, the primary objective will be to protect the special environmental qualities of that landscape and its setting;*
    - f) *The protection and enhancement of designated sites of international, national and local biodiversity and geodiversity importance. On both designated and undesignated sites, development will support opportunities for protecting and enhancing species populations and linking habitats, and*
    - g) *The preservation and enhancement of Mid Devon's cultural and historic environment, and the protection of sites, buildings, areas and features of recognised national and local importance.*
- 1.4.6 The Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) was undertaken in December 2013. It was based on 28 catchment areas. Each catchment area was given a 'GI score' based on the provision of open space and landscape designations, as an indication of the level of green infrastructure within the catchment. These scores range from 2-13, with lower scores indicating a greater deficiency of GI. Relevant extracts from the GIA are included in each site appraisal below.

## 2 North West Cullompton: Rull Lane

### 2.1 Site Location and Description

- 2.1.1 The Option Site is located to the north of Cullompton, adjacent to areas already allocated for mixed use development to the east, and elevated land allocated for green infrastructure to the south.
- 2.1.2 The site comprises arable land to the south and grazing land to the north. There is no public access to the site.

### 2.2 Designations

- 2.2.1 The landscape planning context for the site is set out on **Figure L5: Landscape Planning and Character**.
- 2.2.2 Little Rull, a 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century listed cottage, is located 80m from the south-east corner of the site. There is also a listed building in Sutton Barton (200m north-west of the site), and the listed Paulsland Farmhouse 240m south-west of the site.
- 2.2.3 The site is not covered by any landscape designations.

### 2.3 Landscape Related Planning Policy

- 2.3.1 Overarching landscape policy in the adopted and emerging Local Plans is described in section 1.4. Appendix 2 of the Interim Sustainability Appraisal considers the North West Cullompton Preferred Option (Policy CU1), in which the site is located. It identifies the following relevant Sustainability Objectives, followed by a commentary which has been summarised for this appraisal:

A – Protection of the Natural Environment:

- *“There are a number of protected trees and hedgerows within the site, along field boundaries”;*
- *“The landscape is undulating, with the higher parts more sensitive to change and development”;* and
- *“More elevated parts of the site, (such as St Andrew’s Hill and Rull Hill are more sensitive to development because of their visibility in the landscape.”*

B – Protection and promotion of a quality built and historic environment:

- *“The site adjoins a roman fort on St Andrew’s Hill (a scheduled ancient monument). There are a number of listed buildings within the cemetery and farmyards adjoining the site.”*

I – Delivering the necessary infrastructure:

- *“The policy also contains provision for strategic scale green infrastructure to be delivered in tandem with the site.”*

- 2.3.2 The Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) gives a GI score of 6 for the Cullompton catchment area and identifies two Strategic Nature Areas – both designated as coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. County Wildlife Sites take up 29 hectares (above average in comparison to other catchments).

- 2.3.3 The GIA states that: “amounts of small-scale public open space and allotments are reasonably high compared to other catchments”, however “while the overall amount of GI is about average, the population density in the Cullompton catchment area is relatively high, so GI per head of population is low.”
- 2.3.4 It suggests that the low provision may be addressed by the development of the North West Cullompton urban extension, as the site allocation includes 28 hectares of GI, “including public parkland, open space, landscaping, potential Local Nature Reserve and an extension to the cemetery”. Specifically the GIA suggests that: “Some of the site may remain in active farming use, as food production is a recognised function of GI. The public open space element must include 0.7 hectares of equipped children’s play area, 2.8 hectares of sports pitches and 0.7 hectares of allotments.”
- 2.3.5 The inclusion of additional land such as Rull Lane and new evidence underlying the Local Plan Review may result in changes to the amount of GI required.

## 2.4 Published Landscape Character

- 2.4.1 The landscape character context for the site is set out on **Figure L5: Landscape Planning and Character**.
- 2.4.2 The site is within the National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands, and within the Devon Character Area: Culm Valley Lowlands. In the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment the site is within LCT 3B: Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes.
- 2.4.3 Key characteristics from the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment relevant to the site are set out below, with a commentary where relevant.

Table 2.1: Site Key Characteristics – North Cullompton, Rull Lane

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A gently rolling and strongly undulating landscape with low-lying land adjacent to the rivers in series of irregular rolling hills.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characterised by tightly rolling, medium to small scale landform. The landscape has generally been carved away by tributaries of the River Exe, Taw, Creedy and Culm to create smooth convex slopes with a uniformity of slope angle and scale of the resultant hills.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The drainage patterns within this landscape are defining characteristics key to both the resultant landform and vegetation patterns. The stream channels emerging from the valley heads are small in scale and are little more than field ditches that are seasonally wet.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hedgerows are well-managed and dense bounding regular and irregular shaped, medium to large-scale enclosures of pasture.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is primarily a pastoral fertile farmland, predominantly improved pasture with some arable. The more improved and intensively managed areas have undergone field amalgamation, disrupting the intimate scale of this landscape.</li> </ul>	Most of the site is in arable use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tightly clipped wide hedgerows unify the landscape creating distinct and harmonious patterns when</li> </ul>	

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
viewed from distant vantage points.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hedgerows enclosing fields and within open fields add interesting vertical rhythms and make a varied textured landscape.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a landscape with high degrees of variation in terms of the levels of visual containment. Open vistas and also framed views can be obtained from many routes. However, within the valleys the level of enclosure is high, and consequently there are very few open views within or out, due to the dense hedge network, extensive woodland and the incised form of the landform, creating intimate spaces.</li> </ul>	The site is a side slope to a shallow valley. Views are limited from the adjacent land and wider landscape.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are medium to large scale commercial and intensive farms with modern buildings and isolated farmsteads.</li> </ul>	Adjacent Rull Farm accords with the characteristics.

## 2.5 Agricultural Land Classification

2.5.1 The majority of the site has an Agricultural Land Classification of Grade 2, however, a small eastern section of the southern field is Grade 3a, and the two northern fields adjacent to Rull Leat are Grade 3b (**Appendix C**).

## 2.6 Boundaries

2.6.1 The northern boundary follows the course of a brook, which is vegetated along much of its length by native and semi-native trees and shrubs, giving the appearance of linear woodland, and providing separation from the gently rising land to the north.

2.6.2 The eastern boundary follows hedge lines containing the occasional tree, with grazing and arable land beyond.

2.6.3 The southern boundary follows Rull Lane, which leads to Rull Farm and Little Rull. This is bordered by hedges on shallow banks.

2.6.4 The western boundary follows a lane that leads to Sutton Barton, which is defined by a low hedge on a shallow bank, containing the occasional mature tree.

## 2.7 Landform and Watercourses

2.7.1 The site generally slopes down from the south to the north. There is a small hillock in the vicinity of Rull Farm with a high point of 86m AOD; this slopes down to the northern fields, which effectively form a level flood plain for the brook and another watercourse at about 60m AOD. The watercourses are only apparent in the landscape as a result of the hedges and trees along them.

## 2.8 Significant Vegetation

2.8.1 The site is subdivided into one large and four much smaller fields by a network of low, closely trimmed hedges, with a sparse pattern of hedgerows trees, which provide the only vertical features within much of the site. However, the watercourses in the northern part of the site are lined with more significant numbers of trees, especially along the northern boundary.

## 2.9 Phase I Habitat Survey Classification

2.9.1 A Phase I habitat survey for the site was undertaken by EAD Ecological Consultants in May 2014, on behalf of the site promoters. In summary, the survey states that:

- The site is a mosaic of poor semi-improved grassland, improved grassland and arable fields bordered by species-rich hedgerows;
- There are several mature and semi-mature trees within the hedgerows, and occasional field trees;
- A tributary of the River Culm runs along the northern boundary, which is bordered by a strip of semi-natural broadleaved woodland; and
- *“There are no over-riding ecological constraints to the development of the northern part of the site... No statutory or non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation value would be affected.”*

2.9.2 Habitats and species potentially present are:

- ‘Important’ hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- Reptiles;
- Nesting and foraging habitat for notable birds;
- Hazel dormouse;
- Badger setts;
- Foraging and roosting habitat for bats; and
- Potential habitat for otter along the river corridor.

2.9.3 The Phase I habitat survey map for the site is provided in **Appendix D**.

## 2.10 Visibility

2.10.1 There are no public footpaths in the vicinity of the site, so views are limited to local lanes (**Viewpoints N1 – N3**). The sunken nature of the adjoining lanes to the west and south limits local views to the vicinity of field gates (**Viewpoint N2**), whereas distance and intervening features prevent views from the north and east. A narrow belt of woodland on the western side of the lane to Sutton Barton and other roadside vegetation restricts views from the elevated western stretch of Beacon Lane, which lies to the west of the site. There are however views from field gates (**Viewpoint N3**) and further east along Beacon Lane (**Viewpoint N1**), where the site is clearly seen and the large southern arable field contrasts with the wooded nature of the fields to the north.

## 2.11 Relationship to Existing and Proposed Development

2.11.1 There is some intervisibility with the hamlet of Sutton Barton to the north-west, which is approximately 150m from the northern site boundary. There are also a couple of agricultural and residential buildings at Rull Farm adjoining the south-east corner of the site. Neither of these developments is of sufficient size or character to provide a developed context. They are small, clustered and discrete settlements in a rural setting, despite the presence of unsympathetic modern agricultural buildings.

2.11.2 Although mixed-use development is allocated to the east (Policy AL/CU/1-7 in the adopted Allocations and Infrastructure DPD and retained as a preferred option in the Local Plan review) with a shared boundary with the site, the large area of green infrastructure allocated to the south would separate the site from much of the existing and proposed development in the area. Development on land to the east would be an extension of a relatively narrow corridor of development extending northwards from Cullompton and on the east and north east facing side of the valley of the Spratford Stream.

## 2.12 Positive Features

2.12.1 The hedges and associated trees on the site boundaries and across the site help subdivide the site, although the more intricate network to the north, associated within the water courses, are more significant. There is also a positive relationship with Sutton Barton, where some properties look across the northern part of the site to the gently rising arable land.

## 2.13 Negative Features

2.13.1 The two large scale agricultural buildings on the site adjacent to Rull Lane, and on the highest part of the site, can be seen on the local skyline.

## 2.14 Sensitive Features and Characteristics

2.14.1 The more intricate pattern of hedges and trees in the northern part of the site, and its relationship to Sutton Burton, result in the northern part of the site being the most sensitive to development.

2.14.2 However the rest of the site has an open character and is relatively isolated from urban areas. This would largely be retained in the future as a result of the green infrastructure land, meaning that this area would also be sensitive to development, and would extend development into the countryside further than the proposal to the east.

## 2.15 Site Specific Appraisal

2.15.1 **Figure L9:** Landscape and Visual Analysis, shows opportunities and constraints for the site, key features and the distinct areas within the site.

2.15.2 There is a distinctive change in character from the northern third of the site, which is flatter and is subdivided into four fields by low hedgerows and trees (A), and the single, open field, sloping up to the south (B). Both parts of the site are visible from field gates and lanes adjacent to the site, with the northern half partly visible. This is also the case in more distant and elevated views, particularly from Beacon Lane, where the northern part of the site becomes more visible.

## 2.16 Sensitivity to Residential Development

2.16.1 In terms of visibility, development on the site is likely to be visible from the surrounding lanes, with the southern part on rising ground, and little existing mitigation owing to the relative weakness of the boundaries, especially to the west.

2.16.2 The southern part of the site is more open and as a result has less sensitive characteristics than the north, which has a more intricate pattern of field boundaries and is of a smaller scale, which makes it more likely to suffer damage.

2.16.3 Development of the land will extend Cullompton into the open countryside beyond Rull Hill which currently acts as a strong threshold in the landscape and which will largely separate the site from adjacent proposed development. The effect of the preferred option to the east will

depend on its design and how it relates to the site. For instance, if development is kept away from its western boundary (the site's eastern boundary) or the boundary is significantly planted so that development does not skyline in views, the effect on the site would be reduced. However, even given the potential for development to the east along the whole of the boundary, the change brought about by developing the site would extend development much further into open countryside and extend development from the Spratford Stream corridor.

2.16.4 Additionally development on the site will begin to link Cullompton to Sutton Barton.

## **2.17 Development Opportunities**

2.17.1 Although removal of the unsightly agricultural sheds would be a benefit to the southern field, this would be greatly outweighed by the adverse effects of development.

2.17.2 Development may provide the opportunity for increased hedgerow planting and management for both biodiversity and landscape benefits.

2.17.3 Opportunities for development are limited on the site, and should development proceed, it should be limited to the eastern part of the southern field, adjacent to the proposed development to its east. The northern four fields are not suitable for development.

## **2.18 Landscape Change in the Absence of Development on the Site**

2.18.1 The Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment identifies a number of future forces of change for the Landscape Type, many of which relate to changes in agricultural practices. Should the site not be developed, it is likely that it will continue in agricultural use. It might be subject to some diversification such as tourism, which is speculation. Hedgerows and trees are unlikely to be replaced if they are diseased or damaged, unless the farmer chooses to do so or public funding is available. It is assumed that the land will continue to be primarily agricultural rather than managed for biodiversity or landscape benefits.

## 3 North West Cullompton: Growen Farm

### 3.1 Site Location and Description

- 3.1.1 The site comprises two arable fields, and part of two grazed fields. It is situated to the north-west of Cullompton, north and west of areas allocated for mixed use and green infrastructure.
- 3.1.2 A bridleway crosses the site north-west to south-east, between the two arable fields. Public access is not possible on to the site beyond the bridleway.

### 3.2 Designations

- 3.2.1 The landscape planning context for the site is set out on **Figure L5: Landscape Planning and Character**.
- 3.2.2 The site is not covered by any landscape designations.
- 3.2.3 Listed buildings in the area surrounding the site include: Growen Farmhouse (350m north-west), Paulsland Farmhouse (400m north-east), Wells Park (550m west-north-west) and a chapel and remains within the cemetery (500m south-east).
- 3.2.4 There are two Roman forts and camps, which are a Scheduled Monument, on St Andrew's Hill, 300m south-east of the site.

### 3.3 Landscape Related Planning Policy

- 3.3.1 Overarching landscape policy within the adopted and emerging Local Plans is described in section 1.4. The interim Sustainability Appraisal sets out the following Objectives for the Growen Farm site (Policy CU2):

A – Protection of the Natural Environment:

- *“Developing the site would result in further expansion of Cullompton to the north west. The site is within a bowl, particularly the eastern part, and as a result landscape impact could be lower than the west if this element is developed. Some views from Rull Lane to the north and from the bridleway. Little other impact as not visible from Tiverton Road.”*

B – Protection and promotion of a quality built and historic environment:

- *“There is a listed building to the north of the site which could be affected by developing in this location.”*

- 3.3.2 The Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) gives a GI score of 6 for the Cullompton catchment area and identifies two Strategic Nature Areas – both designated as coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. County Wildlife Sites take up 29 hectares (above average in comparison to other catchments).
- 3.3.3 The GIA states that: *“amounts of small-scale public open space and allotments are reasonably high compared to other catchments”, however “while the overall amount of GI is about average, the population density in the Cullompton catchment area is relatively high, so GI per head of population is low.”*
- 3.3.4 It suggests that the low provision may be addressed by the development of the North West Cullompton urban extension, as the site allocation includes 28 hectares of GI, *“including public parkland, open space, landscaping, potential Local Nature Reserve and an extension to the*

*cemetery*". Specifically the GIA suggests that: "Some of the site may remain in active farming use, as food production is a recognised function of GI. The public open space element must include 0.7 hectares of equipped children's play area, 2.8 hectares of sports pitches and 0.7 hectares of allotments."

3.3.5 The inclusion of additional land such as Growen Farm and new evidence underlying the Local Plan Review may result in changes to the amount of GI required.

### 3.4 Published Landscape Character

3.4.1 The landscape character context for the site is set out on **Figure L5: Landscape Planning and Character**.

3.4.2 The site is within the National Character Area 14B: Devon Redlands, and within the Devon Character Area: Culm Valley Lowlands. In the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment the site is within LCT 3B: Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes.

3.4.3 Key characteristics are set out below.

Table 3.1: Site Key Characteristics – North Cullompton, Growen Farm

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A gently rolling and strongly undulating landscape with low-lying land adjacent to the rivers in series of irregular rolling hills.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characterised by tightly rolling, medium to small scale landform. The landscape has generally been carved away by tributaries of the River Exe, Taw, Creedy and Culm to create smooth convex slopes with a uniformity of slope angle and scale of the resultant hills.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The drainage patterns within this landscape are defining characteristics key to both the resultant landform and vegetation patterns. The stream channels emerging from the valley heads are small in scale and are little more than field ditches that are seasonally wet.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hedgerows are well-managed and dense bounding regular and irregular shaped, medium to large-scale enclosures of pasture.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is primarily a pastoral fertile farmland, predominantly improved pasture with some arable. The more improved and intensively managed areas have undergone field amalgamation, disrupting the intimate scale of this landscape.</li> </ul>	Most of the site is in arable use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tightly clipped wide hedgerows unify the landscape creating distinct and harmonious patterns when viewed from distant vantage points.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The rows enclosing fields and within open fields add interesting vertical rhythms and make a varied textured landscape.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a landscape with high degrees of variation in terms of the levels of visual containment. Open vistas and also framed views can be obtained from many routes. However, within the valleys the level of enclosure is high, and consequently there are very</li> </ul>	The site is part of a side slope to a shallow valley. Views of the site are limited to the adjacent bridleway.

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
few open views within or out, due to the dense hedge network, extensive woodland and the incised form of the landform, creating intimate spaces.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are medium to large scale commercial and intensive farms with modern buildings and isolated farmsteads.</li> </ul>	The site is part of a network of smaller, intricate fields north of Tiverton Road. There are larger fields to the north.

### 3.5 Agricultural Land Classification

The central field has an Agricultural Land Classification of Grade 2, with the western field partially Grade 2 and partially Grade 3a. The eastern field segments are Grade 3b (**Appendix C**).

### 3.6 Boundaries

3.6.1 The northern boundary consists of a hedgerow containing a number of mature trees bordering the western arable field and a low hedge running along the top of the spur along the eastern arable field. However, where it crosses two grazed fields, the boundary does not appear to have any physical demarcation – apart from where it follows a short length of a water course. Similarly, the eastern boundary has no demarcation on the ground, and follows a dogleg course across another grazed field. Part of the southern boundary follows a track and bridleway that links Tiverton Road in the south with Beacon Lane in the north, which is cut into the landform and lined with mature hedgerows. A low hedge marks the southern boundary of the western arable field.

### 3.7 Landform and Watercourses

3.7.1 The eastern parcels of grazed land are generally flat. They effectively form the valley floor with a pattern of small water courses, which run east and south, and then head west along the southern boundaries of the site. As a result, the arable fields are part of a small spur in the irregularly shaped bowl that lies west of Rull Hill, north and east of Tiverton Road and south of Beacon Lane. The site rises from about 63m AOD in its south-eastern corner, up to about 80m AOD in its north-western corner,

### 3.8 Significant Vegetation

3.8.1 The most significant vegetation on the site are the substantial hedgerows along the north of the western field, connecting it to the bridleway, and the short lengths of irregular hedges and hedgerows within the eastern part of the site, which are parts of a much larger pattern that run along the valley to the north.

### 3.9 Phase I Habitat Survey Classification

3.9.1 A Phase I habitat survey for the site was undertaken by Environmental Gain Ltd in March 2014, on behalf of the site promoters. In summary, the survey states that:

- The site overall is of moderate ecological value;
- The site consists of improved grassland, arable land and rush pasture;
- Within the site are native hedgerows, mature trees and an area of marshy grassland, which is designated as an Other Site of Wildlife Interest;

- Streams and dry ditches are present along the field boundaries;
- “*The site has good ecological connectivity with the wider landscape to the north and west via a hedgerow network, however connectivity is reduced to the south and east due to a residential estate.*”; and
- “Mitigation will be required for hedgerows, mature trees and the stream corridors to maintain connectivity between habitats”.

#### 3.9.2 Habitats and species potentially present are:

- Dormice;
- Nesting birds;
- Reptiles;
- Badgers;
- Several mature trees have some suitability for roosting bats; and
- Potential for the stream to support otters or water voles.

#### 3.9.3 The Phase I habitat survey map for the site is provided in **Appendix D**.

### 3.10 Visibility

3.10.1 The track that runs to the south and west of the site is a public right of way, part of a network that runs east along Goblin Lane, and across Rull Hill to the east. Dense vegetation along the bridleway and, the rolling landform of Rull Hill and the sunken nature of the track, limit views of the site. At the time of the site work, arable crops restricted the views south to the site from the field gates, but the trees along the southern boundary could be seen.

3.10.2 From the bridleway to the south-east known as Goblin Lane, there are glimpsed views towards the eastern end of the site, although intervening vegetation and landform, and the difficulty of obtaining the views means that they are not of significance (**Viewpoint N4**).

3.10.3 Because of the mature hedgerows, the only views from the bridleway between Tiverton Road and Beacon Lane are at the field gate at the northern boundary (**Viewpoint N5**), and as it climbs towards Beacon Lane.

3.10.4 Along the bridleway north of Growen Farm, there is a clear view from a field gate over the much more open fields north of the site (**Viewpoint N6**). Although the northern boundary of the site can be identified, the landform falls beyond it to the south and the surface of the field cannot be seen. However, the native hedgerows along the southern boundary can be seen. The flat, eastern part of the site is screened by intervening landform and vegetation. From further up the hill, there are glimpsed views above the hedgerows where the trees to the south of the site can be seen.

3.10.5 The western arable field is set one field depth back from Tiverton Road (also known as Little Toms) to its south. Dense hedgerows along Tiverton Road and the hedge along the southern boundary limit views.

### 3.11 Relationship to Existing and Proposed Development

3.11.1 The site is currently separated from Cullompton by landform, boundary vegetation and a field depth of at least 200m. Just to the north is Growen Cottage, and beyond that, Growen Farm,

isolated in the fields. As a result, there is no relationship in the landscape between the site and existing urban development. However, the land between the site and Tiverton Road (and Little Toms) is allocated for mixed use, although the generally substantial hedgerows provide strong separation between the site and the allocation.

### **3.12 Positive Features**

3.12.1 There are substantial hedgerows along the southern boundary of the land east of the bridleway, and along the eastern and northern boundaries of the land west of the bridleway, and within the eastern extremity of the site. They provide enclosure and scale to the local landscape.

### **3.13 Negative Features**

3.13.1 There are no negative features.

### **3.14 Sensitive Features and Characteristics**

3.14.1 The most sensitive features are the hedges and hedgerows owing to the effects that development may have on them, and the need to protect them.

3.14.2 Although not visited, the eastern part of the site appears to have a particularly sensitive character. It consists of a system of hedgerows giving enclosure on what appears to be a minor floodplain, leading to a longer feature that extends around Rull Hill.

### **3.15 Site Specific Appraisal**

3.15.1 **Figure L9:** Landscape and Visual Analysis shows opportunities and constraints for the site, key features and the distinct areas within the site.

3.15.2 The site divides readily into three distinct areas: the western field, the central field and the eastern field segments.

3.15.3 The western field is well screened on its boundaries by substantial hedgerows. Although those on the southern boundary are less robust, these are one field depth from Tiverton Road, with the intervening field allocated for mixed use development, so the context will change (A).

3.15.4 The central field rises gently to the hedge as a slight ridge, and is partly separated from the proposed development to the south by the strong hedgerows along the bridleway (B).

3.15.5 The eastern field segments are difficult to identify in the landscape because of the surrounding topography and vegetation pattern, but they are of a more intimate scale than other parts of the site (C).

### **3.16 Sensitivity to Residential Development**

3.16.1 The site is not widely visible; where it is visible, it is mostly from the bridleway as passes the site and climbs towards Beacon Lane, and from gateways along Beacon Lane.

3.16.2 Where the southern boundary of the central arable field (B) runs along the bridleway, the mature hedgerow trees form a strong boundary in the landscape and development would breach that boundary, extending development into open countryside. However, where the boundary extends beyond the bridleway, the hedge is much weaker and there is not such a strong boundary with the allocated land to the south and in views from the north, such that development on the allocation land would be partly visible. Development in the field would

breach the threshold, and introduce development into the landscape on a low ridge with only a weak hedge to provide an interface with open countryside.

- 3.16.3 On the grounds of its small-scale character, apparently arbitrary boundaries and being part of a more extensive landscape feature (floodplain / valley floor), the eastern segment of the site (C) is not suitable for development, despite its limited visibility.
- 3.16.4 The western field (A) is robustly separated from the landscape to the north and west by the strong hedgerows, and is more closely related to the land to the south, which is allocated for mixed use development.

### **3.17 Development Opportunities**

- 3.17.1 It is likely that the very limited views of the site from Goblin Lane to the south will be blocked or significantly altered with adjacent development.
- 3.17.2 The northern boundary of the central field would need considerable strengthening to successfully integrate development into the landscape, in particular in views from the north.
- 3.17.3 The eastern grazed fields should not be developed.
- 3.17.4 However, the western arable field, with its strong northern boundary would be seen as a logical extension to the allocation to the south.

### **3.18 Landscape Change in the Absence of Development on the Site**

- 3.18.1 The Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment identifies a number of future forces of change for the Landscape Type, many of which relate to changes in agricultural practices. Should the site not be developed, it is likely that will continue in agricultural use. It might be subject of some diversification, although the nature of such diversification cannot be predicted. Hedgerows and trees are unlikely to be replaced if they are diseased or damaged, unless the farmer chooses to do so or public funding is available. As a result, tree cover may decline. The land will continue to be primarily agricultural, rather than managed for biodiversity, or landscape benefits.
- 3.18.2 Of particular importance to the site are the networks of mature hedgerows that run from the eastern segment, along the bridleway and to the north of the western field. Other adjacent developments might manage and supplement these features, depending on land ownership and development options, as part of their mitigation.

## 4 East Cullompton

### 4.1 Site Location and Description

4.1.1 The site lies east of Cullompton and east of the settlement at Stoneyford, on land that is both arable and grazed; in the south-west corner there is an area of disused glasshouses and former nurseries. The A373 Honiton Road bisects the site, with the larger portion of the site lying to the north. There is residential and commercial development along the Honiton Road at the western edge of the site, and Kingsmill Industrial Estate lies adjacent to the north-western corner of the site. The M5 motorway separates the site and its setting to the east, from the centre of and much of Cullompton to the west.

### 4.2 Designations

4.2.1 The landscape planning context for the site is set out on **Figure L6: Landscape Planning and Character**.

4.2.2 There are listed buildings immediately north of the site at Moorhayes Farm. There is a County Wildlife Site in the south-west of the site, south of the residential development along Honiton Road.

4.2.3 The site is not covered by any landscape designations. The Blackdown Hills AONB lies about 2 km to the east of the site.

### 4.3 Landscape Related Planning Policy

4.3.1 Overarching landscape policy within the adopted and emerging Local Plans is described in section 1.4. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan Review considers the East Cullompton Option (Policy CU11). It identifies the following relevant Sustainability Objectives followed by a commentary which has been summarised for this appraisal.

4.3.2 Sustainability Objectives:

A – Protection of the Natural Environment:

- 1 ha unclassified wildlife site close to the western edge of the site;
- *“Criteria within the policy seek mitigation measures through environmental protection and enhancement and provision of 50 ha of strategic green infrastructure comprising a mix of public open space, sports pitches, allotments and natural habitats, a positive effect.”*; and
- Would need a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment if site is put through.

4.3.3 The Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) gives a GI score of 6 for the Cullompton catchment area and identifies two Strategic Nature Areas – both designated as coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. County Wildlife Sites take up 29 hectares (above average in comparison to other catchments).

4.3.4 The GIA states that: *“amounts of small-scale public open space and allotments are reasonably high compared to other catchments”,* however *“while the overall amount of GI is about average, the population density in the Cullompton catchment area is relatively high, so GI per head of population is low.”*

4.3.5 It suggests that the low provision may be addressed by the development of the North West Cullompton urban extension, as the site allocation includes 28 hectares of GI, *“including public*

*parkland, open space, landscaping, potential Local Nature Reserve and an extension to the cemetery”. Specifically the GIA suggests that: “Some of the site may remain in active farming use, as food production is a recognised function of GI. The public open space element must include 0.7 hectares of equipped children’s play area, 2.8 hectares of sports pitches and 0.7 hectares of allotments.”*

- 4.3.6 The inclusion of additional land at Northwest Cullompton and new evidence underlying the Local Plan Review may result in changes to the amount of GI required for that development, and any allocation of the East Cullompton site would include additional requirements for GI.

## 4.4 Published Landscape Character

- 4.4.1 The landscape character context for the site is set out on **Figure L6: Landscape Planning and Character**.
- 4.4.2 The site is within National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands, and within the Devon Character Area: Clyst Lowland Farmlands. In the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment, the site is within LCT 3E: Lowland Plains.
- 4.4.3 Key characteristics are set out below.

Table 4.1: Site Key Characteristics – East Cullompton

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gently rolling middle ground to lowland with smooth, rounded hilltops that have concave lower and convex upper slopes.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primarily managed as arable farmland with some areas of improved grassland.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An agrarian landscape with medium to large scale field patterns.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fields are divided by hedgerows and hedgebanks, with the hedges forming spines along the rolling hills, with rib-like hedges crossing the convex slopes down into the valleys. These hedges are distinctive in their regularity and simplicity.</li> </ul>	There is a varied pattern of hedges and hedgerows across the site. Running roughly north/south across the centre of the site is a significant length of hedgerow, as well as in the vicinity of the glass houses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hedgerow trees are infrequent within the type. Individual trees within amalgamated fields indicate the positions of lost hedges.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copses and discrete woodlands are characteristic. In some areas the fields are defined by hedgerow trees with isolated clumps of trees on hillsides or ridge lines.</li> </ul>	There are stands of trees associated with dwellings and glass houses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst there are a number of outlying, regularly distributed farms and villages, hamlets and small groups of houses, this is generally a sparsely populated area.</li> </ul>	There is also development to the west along Tiverton Road.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some orchards, once typical of the area, remain and there are small areas of market gardening.</li> </ul>	There is no significant evidence of orchards but there is former market gardening in and adjacent to the south-west corner.

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Views are highly variable. The landscape is semi-open with some long extensive views afforded from on top of hilltops. Where hedges are high views are mostly framed or confined with glimpses into and out only present from field gate openings.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Roads are straight or very gently winding in nature and characterised by narrow routes that are lined with traditional hedgebanks.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The landscape typically has short vistas terminated by a backdrop of curving hills with occasional long views from prominent locations, giving rise to a patchwork of irregular shaped fields with green pastures.</li> </ul>	

## 4.5 Agricultural Land Classification

- 4.5.1 The western half of the site has an Agricultural Land Classification of mainly 3a, with some areas of 3b. An area of Grade 2 land is present to the south of Week Farm (**Appendix C**). Mapping does not cover the eastern half of the site.

## 4.6 Boundaries

- 4.6.1 Most of the site boundaries are remote from roads or footpaths, with the exception of a short length (approximately 400m) along the northern side of Honiton Road, where it runs opposite some of the dwellings along the road.
- 4.6.2 The northern boundary follows a private access track in the vicinity of Moorhayes Farm, which is partly lined with hedges and hedgerows.
- 4.6.3 From the north, the eastern boundary follows a narrow belt of woodland, a length of hedge and then across an open field to the Honiton Road. South of the Honiton Road, the eastern boundary follows the western boundary of the grounds of a dwelling, then a length of hedgerow.
- 4.6.4 The southern boundary follows hedgerows to the north of agricultural and residential buildings known as Bathills and Aller Barton, where it doglegs and follows hedgerows above a small valley.
- 4.6.5 The western boundary follows hedges as far as an area of disused glass houses, where it then heads east, largely along the rear of gardens off Honiton Road, then crossing Honiton Road to return westwards along a low fence and hedge. It then heads northwards again, following a zigzag course through Week Farm, and along the tree lined course of the River Ken, between the fields and the Kingsmill Industrial Estate.

## 4.7 Landform and Watercourses

- 4.7.1 The overall topography of the site consists of a gently sloping landform, with a series of subtle spurs emanating from a high point of just above 70m AOD north of the Honiton Road, opposite Newland Farm. Those spurs drop away north-westwards to the River Ken along part of the western boundary and to the flatter land off site beyond Moorhayes Farm. The land continues to rise beyond the eastern boundary towards the escarpment of the Blackdown Hills.

4.7.2 North of Honiton Road, a shallow valley with a stream runs southwards south of Moorhayes becoming much deeper and narrower as it passes beneath the Honiton Road. South of the Honiton Road, the valley continues on to the River Culm, with a distinctive spur occurring above the watercourse in the vicinity of East Culme House, at just above 60 AOD.

4.7.3 There is a complex system of watercourses across the whole of the site. These largely follow field boundaries and tend to be represented by the more heavily vegetated boundaries. There is a pond in the vicinity of East Culme House, and a linear pond at Newland Farm.

## 4.8 Significant Vegetation

4.8.1 The most significant vegetation on the site is associated with buildings such as south of Newland Farm and near East Culme House, and the county wildlife site. There is a narrow strip of woodland along the north side of Honiton Road between Stoneyford and Newland Farm, and a small block of woodland in the fields near Stoneyford. A strong hedgerow runs north/south across the site, following the valley described above; the combined landform and vegetation divide the site.

4.8.2 Throughout the site north of Honiton Road is a scattering of field trees, which are likely to be remnants of a more intricate pattern of hedged field boundaries.

4.8.3 There is also a pattern of closely trimmed hedges across the site, generally with few hedgerow trees.

## 4.9 Phase I Habitat Survey Classification

4.9.1 The Phase I habitat survey for the site (Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, June 2014) states:

*“The site is relatively large and comprises a range of habitat types. Of the habitats present the hedgerows are considered to provide the greatest value for wildlife as they are mature, well connected and species-rich. Furthermore, the woodlands, whilst small are moderately species-rich, and are also well connected in the wider landscape through the hedgerow network. The hedgerows and woodlands add to the structural diversity of the area. If the site is subject to development it is recommended that the hedgerows and woodlands are retained where possible.”*

4.9.2 An Unconfirmed Wildlife Site is present in the south west of the site consisting of two large ponds surrounded by mature trees and an area of under managed species-poor semi-improved grassland. This was previously designated as a County Wildlife Site.

4.9.3 Key habitats and species present or potentially present within the site are listed in **Table 4.2:**

Table 4.2: Key Species – East Cullompton

UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species recorded on site	UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and protected species with potential to be supported by the site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hedgerows (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Otter (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Bat species (including pipistrelle species, brown long-eared and greater horseshoe bat)</li> <li>▪ Badger</li> <li>▪ Dormouse (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Hedgehog (UK BAP)</li> <li>▪ Amphibian species</li> <li>▪ Reptile species</li> <li>▪ Nesting birds</li> </ul>

4.9.4 The Phase I habitat survey map for the site is provided in **Appendix D**.

## 4.10 Visibility

- 4.10.1 There are no public rights of way across the site, apart from the Honiton Road which runs east to west across the site.
- 4.10.2 Visibility of the site from publicly accessible viewpoints is limited to Honiton Road and the surrounding lanes, which are at least one field depth from the site boundary (**Viewpoints E1 and E2**). These views are limited by topography, roadside vegetation and intervening hedgerows. In the vicinity of Stoneyford, existing development further limits views southwards.
- 4.10.3 Although there are direct views into the site from Honiton Road, these are limited to areas where there are field gates or no hedge, and then restricted by the rising ground and internal field boundaries (**Viewpoint E4**). From the surrounding lanes both north and south there is a complex network of intervening hedges and hedgerows that conceal the site; views tend to be obtained of the site boundaries by looking from field gates rather than continuous views when travelling along the lanes.
- 4.10.4 There is a footpath to the west of the site along the floor of the shallow Culm Valley, between the M5 and the site boundary. The site is about 5m above the footpath and beyond a hedge, so it is not visible (**Viewpoint E3**).
- 4.10.5 Viewpoints from the AONB are generally limited by intervening landform or hedgerows and by the largely wooded nature of the escarpment. Site work revealed very few views of the site from the AONB; where the site was visible, it was seen from the lower slopes of the escarpment at Blackbrook, some 5km to the east (**Viewpoint E5**). From that distance, the fields on the higher parts of the site are just visible.
- 4.10.6 From elevated viewpoints in the vicinity of North West Cullompton such as a gateway along Beacon Lane, nearly 3km away, the eastern parts of the site are just discernible (**Viewpoint N3**).

## 4.11 Relationship to Existing and Proposed Development

- 4.11.1 Although close to Kingsmill Industrial Estate and Stoneyford towards its western edge, much of the site is generally separated from existing development because of distance, topography and existing vegetation. The exception is in the south-western corner where there is development along the south of Honiton Road, adjacent to the site boundary, with recent housing at Culm Lea to the west of this, and disused glasshouses of the former Cummings Nursery beyond. There is a planning application for housing development on the site of the glasshouses (13/00859/MOUT).
- 4.11.2 The buildings at Week Farm straddle part of the western boundary, those of Newland Farm lie within the eastern part of the site, either side of Honiton Road. The buildings of Moorhayes Farm abut the northern boundary, and those of Aller Barton and Bathills abut the southern boundary. In the south-west corner, near East Culm House, there are glasshouses and buildings associated with horticulture.
- 4.11.3 The farm buildings are part of the normal pattern of development throughout the rural landscape. The development around Stoneyford, which is a mixture of residential, commercial and horticulture, with the industrial estate to the north, provides a developed context for the western part of the site, both when travelling along Honiton Road and in more distant views from the west. However, beyond the rather suburban ribbon of houses on the south of Honiton Road, at the eastern end of Stoneyford, there is a threshold into open countryside, with views across open countryside. Opposite the houses, the character of the site is very

much of open countryside, although views are limited because of topography. Further to the east and beyond the narrow belt of roadside woodland, development becomes more sporadic.

#### 4.12 Positive Features

- 4.12.1 Apart from the open rural nature of much of the site, positive features include the network of hedgerows and hedgerows trees across the site, and the generally enclosed and apparently remote character of much of the site.

#### 4.13 Negative Features

- 4.13.1 Negative features include the two runs of overhead power lines and their pylons, which enter the site in the north-west corner, with one run heading due south across the site and the other running in a roughly south-easterly direction.
- 4.13.2 There has been significant hedge removal north of the Honiton Road which has made those parts of the site seem bleak. The glasshouses and associated structures in the south-west are well contained and are on quite a modest scale compared with those to the north and off-site. These may progressively become derelict which would be detrimental to that part of the site, although planning permission has been granted for redevelopment of the site as housing.

#### 4.14 Sensitive Features and Characteristics

- 4.14.1 The network of hedgerows that follow some of the watercourses are distinctive and will need to be protected, as will the field trees throughout the site.
- 4.14.2 The eastern part of the site beyond Stoneyford has an open character and appears not to be influenced by development.
- 4.14.3 When using the Honiton Road travelling east, and there are views to the Blackdown Hills along the road corridor.

#### 4.15 Site Specific Appraisal

- 4.15.1 **Figure L10:** Landscape and Visual Analysis, shows opportunities and constraints for the site, key features and the distinct areas within the site.
- 4.15.2 The site breaks down into four distinctive areas. The area north of the Honiton Road rises gently in a south-easterly direction towards a shallow spur in the vicinity of Newland Farm. As a result, much of the area is out of sight from Honiton Road. It consists mostly of large fields with, especially to the west, many field trees and relicts of removed hedges.
- 4.15.3 It is divided into two by a strong vegetation belt and change of topography, as a result of the valley feature described above. The western section has smaller fields and more trees (A), whilst the eastern section (B) is dominated by one large field with a smaller network of fields to the north.
- 4.15.4 To the south of Honiton Road, the western area consists of a more intricate network of irregular fields, glass houses, the grounds of East Culme House and the wildlife site. These are situated on a small spur between the Culm Valley to the west, and its tributary to the south. It is very enclosed and difficult to locate when looking from the adjacent lanes (C).
- 4.15.5 The eastern area is more open than the western, but as it falls away to the south from Honiton Road, the roadside hedges tend to screen the site. The boundaries with the land to the south are generally weak (D).

## **4.16 Sensitivity to Residential Development**

- 4.16.1 The strong linear woodland along the watercourse running diagonally through the northern part of the site forms a strong threshold in the landscape, which coincides more or less with the end of development at Stoneyford, and the narrow woodland along the northern side of Honiton Road. There is a perception of open countryside beyond this threshold, both to the north and south, even if it is not possible to see very far into the site. The south west corner is very enclosed and closely related to development with little visibility into the area
- 4.16.2 In landscape and visual terms, the least sensitive part of the site is the south-west corner, owing to its partly developed context, its enclosed character and its limited visibility. The eastern part has fewer development opportunities as it is beyond a clear threshold in the landscape, the linear woodland along the watercourse, the woodland strip and the end of development on Honiton Road, and therefore has the strong impression of being in open countryside, even though much of it cannot be seen beyond the Honiton Road corridor.
- 4.16.3 To the west of the threshold, the site reads more as being part of the developed area, which would be reinforced by employment development between the Kingsmill Industrial Estate and the site.

## **4.17 Development Opportunities**

- 4.17.1 North of Honiton Road, development would be phased from west to east, starting at the point nearest to the Kingsmill Industrial Estate and Stoneyford, with an intermediate threshold at the linear woodland. Extension of development beyond that boundary might be possible in the longer term, but would need to be subject to a more detailed assessment to determine the effect on the wider landscape and visibility from the AONB.
- 4.17.2 To the south of Honiton Road, development is less constrained and would be undertaken across much of the site.
- 4.17.3 The interface between the development to the north and south and Honiton Road will have to be carefully designed to avoid development becoming dominant in views from the road.

## **4.18 Landscape Changes in the Absence of Development on the Site**

- 4.18.1 Potential future forces for change identified in the Mid Devon Character Assessment include an increased demand for food production leading to expansion of arable land, bigger fields (which has happened on the site) and loss of Devon banks. The other forces of change relate to different crops being grown and the need for farm diversification.

## 5 Junction 27/Land Adjoining Willand

### 5.1 Site Location and Description

5.1.1 The site comprises a strip of mostly agricultural land up to 900m wide between the M5 and the B3181, generally between Junction 27 of the M5 and Willand. Most existing development consists of clusters of agricultural buildings and associated dwellings. Along the A38 in the northern part of the site, there is a small business park north of the A38, and a small service area and hotel south of the A38, both very close to the junction.

### 5.2 Designations

5.2.1 The landscape planning context for the site is set out on **Figure L7: Landscape Planning and Character**.

5.2.2 The site is not covered by any designations.

5.2.3 There are three listed buildings along the edge of the site: Higher Houndaller Farmhouse (adjacent to the north-eastern corner), Leonard Moor Cottages (along the centre of the eastern boundary) and Braddon's Farmhouse (adjacent to the southern boundary). The historic parkland at Bridwell Park, Uffculme, is within 0.5km of the east of the site. The Blackdown Hills AONB lies approximately 5km east of the site.

### 5.3 Landscape Related Planning Policy

5.3.1 Overarching landscape policy within the adopted and emerging Local Plans is described in section 1.4. The site appears under the Villages Site Options in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan Review. It identifies the following relevant Sustainability Objectives, followed by a commentary which has been summarised for this appraisal.

5.3.2 Sustainability Objectives:

A – Protection of the Natural Environment:

- *“There are some important trees to the north of the site and in close proximity to a number of TPOs”;*
- *“Development of this scale would have a significant impact on existing landscape character, altering the rural quality of the entrance into Mid Devon from the M5 and the rural character around Willand and Sampford Peverell.”*

B – Protection and promotion of a quality built and historic environment:

- Slight negative effect on the setting of Willand and Sampford Peverell, and Sampford Peverell Conservation Area.

I – Delivering the necessary infrastructure:

- *“Development will also be expected to include environmental protection and enhancement including Strategic Green Infrastructure which delivers multiple environmental benefits.”*

5.3.3 In the Green Infrastructure Assessment, the Willand catchment area is given a GI score of 4, and identifies the following:

- Lower than average amount of overall GI;

- Few County Wildlife Sites and no SSSIs;
- High number of TPOs compared to the other catchment areas;
- Grand Western Canal in north-west of the area, which is a regional walking route, strategic accessible open space, County Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve;
- Cycle route between Willand, Tiverton Parkway and the canal;
- *“Access to strategic natural green space within the recommended distances is almost entirely lacking in this catchment area”;*
- However, the amount of small-scale public open space is high compared to other catchment areas;
- National registered Historic Park and Garden – Bridwell Park. Local registered Historic Park and Garden – Bradfield House.

## 5.4 Published Landscape Character

5.4.1 The landscape character context for the site is set out on **Figure L7: Landscape Planning and Character**.

5.4.2 The site is within National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands, and within the Devon Character Area: Culm Valley Lowlands. In the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment the site is within LCT 3E: Lowland Plains.

5.4.3 Key characteristics are set out below.

Table 5.1: Site Key Characteristics – Junction 27

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gently rolling middle ground to lowland with smooth, rounded hilltops that have concave lower and convex upper slopes.</li> <li>▪ Primarily managed as arable farmland with some areas of improved grassland.</li> <li>▪ An agrarian landscape with medium to large scale field patterns.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fields are divided by hedgerows and hedgebanks, with the hedges forming spines along the rolling hills, with rib-like hedges crossing the convex slopes down into the valleys. These hedges are distinctive in their regularity and simplicity.</li> <li>▪ Hedgerow trees are infrequent within the type. Individual trees within amalgamated fields indicate the positions of lost hedges.</li> </ul>	<p>There is a varied pattern of hedges and hedgerows across the site. Hedgerow trees are frequent.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copses and discrete woodlands are characteristic. In some areas the fields are defined by hedgerow trees with isolated clumps of trees on hillsides or ridge lines.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Whilst there are a number of outlying, regularly distributed farms and villages, hamlets and small groups of houses, this is generally a sparsely populated area.</li> </ul>	

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some orchards, once typical of the area, remain and there are small areas of market gardening.</li> </ul>	There is no significant evidence of orchards or market gardening.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Views are highly variable. The landscape is semi-open with some long extensive views afforded from on top of hilltops. Where hedges are high views are mostly framed or confined with glimpses into and out only present from field gate openings.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Roads are straight or very gently winding in nature and characterised by narrow routes that are lined with traditional hedgebanks.</li> </ul>	Most roads are straight on or near the site, except Muxbeare Lane along the southern boundary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The landscape typically has short vistas terminated by a backdrop of curving hills with occasional long views from prominent locations, giving rise to a patchwork of irregular shaped fields with green pastures.</li> </ul>	

## 5.5 Agricultural Land Classification

The northern section and the southern half of the site have an Agricultural Land Classification of mainly Grade 3a, with a strip of western fields adjacent to the M5 of Grade 3b. The central section of the site is site is Grade 3b (**Appendix C**).

## 5.6 Boundaries

- 5.6.1 Most of the site boundaries follow roads or lanes, although there are some parcels of land excluded from the site along field boundaries.
- 5.6.2 The narrow northern boundary follows an irregular field boundary between the M5 and Higher Houndaller Farm, which includes hedgerow trees.
- 5.6.3 The eastern boundary excludes Higher Houndaller Farm and follows the lane to the A38 at Waterloo Cross. It then runs around the northern, western and southern boundaries of the Waterloo Inn Caravan Park, excluding it from the site. The boundary then largely follows the B3181, with a varied pattern of relatively low hedges, and untrimmed, taller hedges and small copses, with many hedgerow trees. South of Mountstephen Farm, the boundary becomes more open, with no or very sparse hedges. Three further parcels of land are excluded from the eastern boundary, the most northerly of which extends almost across the full width of the site.
- 5.6.4 The southern boundary is very irregular, excluding the Halfway House public house and partly following the line of Muxbeare Lane as it heads north-west towards the M5, where the site includes land both sides of the lane.
- 5.6.5 The western boundary follows the motorway and the adjoining cycle path, which runs as far as the footbridge over the M5, with a field excluded to the east. Beyond the footbridge, the boundary continues to follow the motorway with the exception of the grounds of properties at Leonard House, skirting the junction and re-joining the northern boundary. Apart from sparse planting along the motorway edge, and a short length of hedgerows either side of the lane, the western boundary is open.

## 5.7 Landform and Watercourses

- 5.7.1 The site forms the south-eastern slope of the shallow valley of the Spratford Stream, and is separated from much of the valley floor by the motorway and the mainline railway. The valley side is indented with the small valleys of tributary watercourses.
- 5.7.2 The highest part of the northern section of the site is approximately 90m AOD adjacent to Higher Houndaller Farm. Towards the southern part of the site, between Pitt Farm and the B3181, the land rises towards a ridge at over 95m AOD. Adjacent to the motorway, the land is between 70m AOD and 75m AOD, whilst north of the A38 it is at about 80m AOD.

## 5.8 Significant Vegetation

- 5.8.1 Across much of the site, there is a complex pattern of relatively geometric but substantial hedges and hedgerows. Trees are found both within hedges and in the fields, probably originating from former field boundaries. There are also several blocks of woodland, some mixed coniferous and deciduous, which lie between the service area and Pitt Farm. The pattern of hedges along the straight lanes across the site and down the B3181, as well as the well vegetated boundaries across the site north of Pitt Farm, help to define its character.

## 5.9 Phase I Habitat Survey Classification

### Commercial Element

- 5.9.1 The Phase I habitat survey for the northern commercial element of the site (Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, June 2014) states:

*“This site covers a large area and features a variety of habitat types, including Biodiversity Action Plan habitats. The many mature trees found throughout are massively important for biodiversity and the hedgerows act as wildlife corridors*

*The hedgerows and woodlands / copses add to the structural diversity and wildlife potential of the site. If the site is developed upon it is recommended that the hedgerows and woodlands are retained where possible.*

*Fields 10, 11 and 12 comprise species rich semi-improved grassland and what may be partially degraded lowland meadow habitat. Field 10 in particular is very diverse with small patches of purple moor grass and rush pasture BAP habitat occurring.”*

- 5.9.2 Key habitats and species present or potentially present within the site are listed in **Table 5.2**:

Table 5.2: Key Species – Junction 27 Commercial Element

UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species recorded on site	UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and protected species with potential to be supported by the site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hedgerows (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)</li> <li>▪ Purple moor grass and rush pasture (UK and Devon BAP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bat species</li> <li>▪ Badger</li> <li>▪ Dormouse (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Barn Owl</li> <li>▪ Hedgehog (UK BAP)</li> <li>▪ Amphibian species</li> <li>▪ Reptile species</li> <li>▪ Nesting birds</li> </ul>

## Housing Element

- 5.9.3 The Phase I habitat survey for the southern housing element of the site (Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, June 2014) states:

*“This site covers a large area and features a variety of habitat types, including Biodiversity Action Plan habitats. The many mature trees found throughout are massively important for biodiversity and the hedgerows act as wildlife corridors.*

*The hedgerows and woodlands / copses add to the structural diversity and wildlife potential of the site. If the site is developed upon it is recommended that the hedgerows and woodlands are retained where possible. The hedgerow running along the road from Braddons Farmhouse to the B3181 junction is particularly species rich in places.*

*Field 24 is the most species rich field within the site boundary and retaining and managing this field would be beneficial for biodiversity purposes.”*

- 5.9.4 Key habitats and species present or potentially present within the site are listed in **Table 5.3**:

Table 5.3: Key Species – Junction 27 Housing Element

UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species recorded on site	UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and protected species with potential to be supported by the site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hedgerows (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bat species</li> <li>▪ Badger</li> <li>▪ Dormouse (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Barn Owl</li> <li>▪ Hedgehog (UK BAP)</li> <li>▪ Amphibian species</li> <li>▪ Reptile species</li> <li>▪ Nesting birds</li> </ul>

- 5.9.5 The Phase I habitat survey maps for the sites are provided in **Appendix D**.

## 5.10 Visibility

- 5.10.1 The site is bounded by major roads and partly by a cycle way, and is crossed by the A38, and two lanes, one of which is a footpath and one a permissive path, which provide viewing opportunities.
- 5.10.2 The location of the site on a north-west facing slope tends to limit views from the south and east, although there are viewing opportunities from the north and west. Vegetation on the site boundaries limits the views to and across the site.
- 5.10.3 Heading south along the M5, the northern part of the site is clearly visible when approaching Junction 27, in the vicinity of the accommodation bridge north of Higher Houndaller Farm, as the motorway emerges from its cutting and runs on a low embankment (**Viewpoint J1**). The relatively open, arable land is clearly visible on the gentle spur. The business park and service area, both within the site, are not visible from the motorway, and even when leaving at Junction 27, the business park is screened from view by the bunding surrounding it.
- 5.10.4 Beyond Junction 27, the motorway is in slight cutting which limits views. Approaching the bridge carrying the cycle path, there are open views to the site, interrupted only by the occasional clump of native or semi-native trees. Beyond the bridge, and adjacent to the cycle path, the views onto the site are completely open, except parallel to Pitt Farm, when for a short distance roadside vegetation reduces views to the site. However, where views are

available, they are limited to one or two field depths when significant on-site field boundary vegetation generally limits the extent of views beyond these boundaries to where there are gaps.

- 5.10.5 In the vicinity of Pitt Farm, the landform steepens into a more prominent spur, views of which are interrupted by tall hedgerows either side of Muxbeare Lane. The site boundary leaves the motorway to follow the lane, and there are clear views into the fields immediately beyond, which are then curtailed by skyline hedges and belts of trees. Beyond the hedges, the tops of lines of trees further into the site are visible, where the land becomes flatter adjacent to the B3181. Approaching Willand, intermittent views are available of the southern part of the site.
- 5.10.6 From the A38 heading east, the site is largely open to the road, with the business park to the north amongst trees blocking views, and the service area to the south beyond a low hedge blocking views further to the south. Around the vicinity of the business park there is semi-ornamental planting and a hedge along the roadside. This continues as an intermittent hedge and hedgerow beyond the business park entrance, which is sometimes low and allows views across the arable fields to High Houndaller Farm.
- 5.10.7 On the south, beyond the service area, there is an open field with a low hedge and post and rail fence, which allows views across the field, until they are blocked by the mature vegetation on the far side of the field. Further east as far as Waterloo Cross, the junction of the A38 and the B3181 the site is screened by the Waterloo Cross Caravan Park and the Waterloo Cross public house.
- 5.10.8 Along the B3181, heading south, views into the site vary according to the management of the roadside vegetation and the time of year. At the time of survey (summer), there were very few clear views on to the site owing to the growth of hedges, mature hedgerow trees and occasional woodland. Where views are available they are limited to a single field depth, owing to substantial boundary vegetation on the far boundary, combined with the slope towards the M5 corridor. However, beyond the entrance to Mountstephen Farm, wider views become available across the more open landscape, with the hills east of Tiverton forming the horizon some 5 or 6km away (**Viewpoint J3**). In places there are no roadside hedges. Approaching Willand, semi-mature and mature roadside planting screens views on to the site as far as Muxbeare Lane.
- 5.10.9 From the more elevated points of Sampford Peverell such as Higher Town, about 1.5 km from the site (**Viewpoint J5**), the southern part of the site is seen across the intermediate skyline, but much of the site is obscured by woodland. The more open areas approaching Willand are clearly visible.
- 5.10.10 Along Muxbeare Lane, the southern edge of the site recedes to exclude various properties and there are only intermittent and limited views of the site available. As the lane turns to the north, hedges and hedgerows lining it limit views to the occasional field gate, apart from where a short length of post and rail fencing allows views across the site to the next field boundary on the skyline. The lane turns eastwards to cross the site, and the cycle way continues north-west along the M5, from where there are generally open views across the site to the skyline.
- 5.10.11 The site is crossed by three lanes, the northernmost links the B3181 to the A38 near the service area. It is closed to traffic but is accessible by pedestrians. A further two are designated as a public footpath and a permissive path. All of these routes are limited by hedges and hedgerow trees, which were typically about 1.5 to 1.8m high at the time of survey. This vegetation largely restricts views across the fields to field gates, and then only to one field depth, as a result of the substantial vegetation along most boundaries within the fields.
- 5.10.12 The lane to Higher Houndaller Farm (**Viewpoint J2**) continues beyond the farm as a public footpath which then crosses the M5 on an accommodation bridge. There are clear views from the bridge towards the northern part of the site beyond the boundary hedge (**Viewpoint J1**).

- 5.10.13 To the east of the B3181 the land rises towards the edge of Uffculme about 1km away, but generally drops towards the River Culm. The combination of a strong pattern of hedges, hedgerows, woodland blocks and topography prevents views of the site, reinforced by the limited footpaths across the landscape which limits viewing opportunities to lanes.
- 5.10.14 Although there is extensive high ground to the north of the site, beyond the M5 and the A361, the strong hedgerow pattern along the lanes and across the fields limits the viewpoints. However, from the Grand Western Canal Country Park to the west of Sampford Peverell, there are views from the towpath towards the site, and in particular the more open southern part of the site (**Viewpoint J4**). The towpath is also a public footpath and part of the National Cycle Network (Route 3 – West Country Way). The views take in the full depth of the site from the B3181 down to the M5, although the extensive vegetation and more enclosed nature of the site from the A38 down to the area around Mountstephen Farm mean that many of the fields are not visible. Further south, the whole width of the site is visible.
- 5.10.15 Views from the AONB towards the site tend to be limited to those from higher ground because of the intricate pattern of vegetation and undulating topography at the foot of the escarpment. From Culmstock Beacon, over 5km from the site and about 700m inside the AONB, part of the site is just discernible with the naked eye. The southern part of the site can be discerned along the ridge carrying the B3181, as well as the industrial units on the B3181 north of Willand. Junction 27 is not visible owing to intervening land form.

## 5.11 Relationship to Existing and Proposed Development

- 5.11.1 Along the A38 from Junction 27 to Waterloo Cross, the context of the site is significantly developed, although less so to the north. The junction itself consists of extensive engineering with associated road surfaces, signage, lighting, columns and moving vehicles. The developed context is provided by the service area, Business Park, Caravan Park and the Waterloo Cross Public House, reinforced by the garden centre, just beyond the roundabout at Waterloo Cross.
- 5.11.2 Beyond the southern end of the site, employment development has extended north-eastwards from Willand to adjacent to the site boundary; there is also development consisting of a Public House, filling station and a car sales business.
- 5.11.3 The M5 corridor, along the western boundary of the site has a strong influence on that part of the site, providing almost continuous movement, noise and large scale engineering.
- 5.11.4 Across the site are several large clusters of farm buildings, including poultry sheds. Despite those features, the site does not appear developed when within it largely as a result of the pattern of woodland and hedgerows which limits views across the site.
- 5.11.5 Where there are views down the lanes to the hills beyond the M5, and where the M5 is not seen, the link to the more distant rural landscape emphasises the rural character of the site.

## 5.12 Positive Features

- 5.12.1 The pattern of hedges, hedgerows, mature trees and woodlands provide effective sub-division of the site south of the A38 at Pitt Farm and also provides the skyline in view from the M5 and B3181. There is also a sense of remoteness along the lanes, where not influenced by the M5.

## 5.13 Negative Features

- 5.13.1 The developed context of the junction, including the service area and the junction itself, provide an incongruous character to the rural landscape, but one that is common to motorway junctions. Although off site, the caravan park, public house and garden centre reinforce the developed character.

5.13.2 The M5 corridor reduces the tranquillity and remoteness of the western side of the site, although it is the principal location from which the site is viewed.

5.13.3 Although there are two large farm developments on the site, at Pitt Farm and Mountstephen Farm, the vegetated boundaries and woodlands limit their impact.

## 5.14 Sensitive Features and Characteristics

5.14.1 The robust pattern of boundary vegetation and the subdivision of the site, lead to a feeling of remoteness when away from the route corridors of the M5, the A38 and the B3181.

5.14.2 In contrast, users of those routes, although not particularly sensitive as receptors, will perceive the corridors as the experience of travelling through a rural landscape, except in the vicinity of Junction 27 on the A38. As a result, those corridors and their treatment are important receptors.

## 5.15 Site Specific Appraisal

5.15.1 **Figure L11:** Landscape and Visual Analysis, shows opportunities and constraints for the site, key features and the distinct areas within the site.

5.15.2 The site consists of five distinct character areas, from north to south as set out below:

- The northern parcel of land up to Higher Houndaller Farm is rolling arable landscape that extends to the A38 east of the business park (A);
- The Junction 27 development cluster takes in the motorway junction, the service area and the business park (there is a second development cluster at Waterloo Cross, which is off site) (B);
- South of the service area and the A38 and extending as far as Mountstephen House, is an area of enclosed fields, with limited views and robust field boundaries interspersed with woodland blocks (C);
- Further west and south, is an area of more open fields, with weaker boundaries and wider visibility across the site from both the M5 and the B3181(D); and
- At the southern tip of the site is an area of smaller fields associated with Muxbeare Lane, separated by hedges and adjacent to a scattering of dwellings (E).

## 5.16 Sensitivity to Development

5.16.1 The Local Plan Review options document (January 2014) shows the area to the north of the A38 and immediately to the south as an option for Commercial Development. Although the landscape pattern north of the A38 is relatively simple, with few hedges, the site is highly visible from both the M5 and the footpath to the north. Development may be seen on the skyline in these views and would extend the developed cluster out into open countryside.

5.16.2 South of the A38, visibility into the site is more limited, although the pattern of hedges and trees could be compromised by large scale development, compromising the rural character of the view from the M5.

5.16.3 The remainder of the site is identified for housing, the smaller scale of which is more readily accommodated into the field pattern and screened from the B3181. However, south of Mountstephen Farm, the landscape becomes more open and there is less landscape structure to integrate the development into the open landscape which is more widely visible. It would

also extend the development corridor up the M5 from Willand, changing the perception of a rural corridor for users of the motorway.

- 5.16.4 In more distant views, development would be visible, such as from the Sampford Peverell area, although the strong vegetation pattern again would potentially integrate the site into the landscape. From the part of the AONB visited for the study, the area around Junction 27 is not visible and so the potentially larger scale and more visible buildings for employment use would be screened by intervening landform. Although the area for housing could be seen along the ridge, it would be difficult to detect owing to the distance.

## **5.17 Development Opportunities**

- 5.17.1 Much of the site north of the A38 is not suitable for development as a result of its high visibility and separation from the junction. Development would be an unacceptable extension of development into open and locally prominent countryside. Development might be more appropriate along either side of the A38 where the road corridor has been compromised by existing development.
- 5.17.2 To the south of the A38, commercial development should not be permitted that would be visible from the M5, as the general perception from the motorway is that the area around the junction has not been developed. This would mean a corridor of undeveloped land as far as the first field boundary. A design would need to accommodate the most important hedgerows and trees, although this may compromise the development of the site for commercial use.
- 5.17.3 To the south, residential development could be accommodated as far as Mount Stephen Farm utilising the pattern of hedges, trees and woodlands for a landscape structure and mitigation. However, further south than this the more open character would mean that development could be damaging, unless a substantial programme of hedge, tree and woodland planting could be implemented. Even then it is likely that the development would be widely visible owing to the steeper slopes and wider visibility.
- 5.17.4 The smaller area of land near to Muxbeare Lane with its more intricate pattern of hedges could be developed with little wider impact, although retention of hedges could compromise development.
- 5.17.5 In all cases, a corridor of undeveloped land should remain along the M5.

## **5.18 Landscape Change in the Absence of Development on the Site**

- 5.18.1 Amongst the future forces for change identified in the Mid Devon Character Assessment are that there may be increased demand for food production leading to expansion of arable land, bigger fields (which has happened on the site) and loss of Devon banks. The other forces of change relate to different crops being grown and the need for farm diversification.

## 6 Hartnoll Farm

### 6.1 Site Location and Description

6.1.1 The site lies approximately 1.4km east of the current developed edge of Tiverton, south-east of the outlying development of Post Hill, south of Tiverton Golf Club and west of Halberton. The northern part of the site is largely grazed and currently used for the Mid Devon Show for one day each year; the southern part of the site is largely in arable use.

### 6.2 Designations

6.2.1 The landscape planning context for the site is set out on **Figure L8: Landscape Planning and Character**.

6.2.2 The Grand Western Canal Country Park lies on the southern and eastern boundaries and the Grand Western Canal conservation area follows the course of the canal to the south and east of the site.

6.2.3 There are three listed bridges over the canal adjacent to the site, and a listed railway bridge on West Manley Lane. The listed East Manley Farmhouse lies 170m south of the site, and Prowses Farmhouse 430m to the west.

### 6.3 Landscape Related Planning Policy

6.3.1 Overarching landscape policy within the adopted and emerging Local Plans is described in section 1.4. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan Review considers the site (Policy TIV2). It identifies the following Sustainability Objectives, followed by a commentary, which has been summarised for this appraisal.

6.3.2 Sustainability Objectives:

A – Protection of the Natural Environment:

- Site located in open countryside, consisting of fields bounded by mature hedgerows and trees throughout the site;
- Grand Western Canal Conservation Area to south and east of site, which is also a County Wildlife Site and a Local Nature Reserve;
- There is a need to protect canal from development, and set aside land within the site adjacent to the canal as green infrastructure; and
- *“Development of the site would have a potential significant visual impact”.*

H – Ensuring community health and wellbeing:

- *“The policy does not mention the provision of open space, sport or recreation”.*

6.3.3 The site falls in both the Tiverton and Halberton catchment areas for the Green Infrastructure Assessment, which gives a GI score of 11 and 9 for each area respectively. The following are identified:

- Grand Western Canal is an important feature for both catchment areas, being a regional walking and cycling route, with parts designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a County Wildlife Site;

- Within the Halberton catchment there is a relatively low level of GI elsewhere, with no other large-scale open space or accessible woodland;
- In contrast Tiverton is among the highest scoring catchments for GI, with high levels of small-scale public open space and play areas.

## 6.4 Published Landscape Character

- 6.4.1 The landscape character context for the site is set out on **Figure L8: Landscape Planning and Character**.
- 6.4.2 The site is within National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands, and within the Devon Character Area: Culm Valley Lowlands. In the Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment the site is within LCT 3E: Lowland Plains.
- 6.4.3 The key characteristics are set out below.

Table 6.1: Site Key Characteristics – Hartnoll Farm

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
▪ Gently rolling middle ground to lowland with smooth, rounded hilltops that have concave lower and convex upper slopes.	The site is on relatively low lying land.
▪ Primarily managed as arable farmland with some areas of improved grassland.	
▪ An agrarian landscape with medium to large scale field patterns.	
▪ Fields are divided by hedgerows and hedgebanks, with the hedges forming spines along the rolling hills, with rib-like hedges crossing the convex slopes down into the valleys. These hedges are distinctive in their regularity and simplicity.	
▪ Hedgerow trees are infrequent within the type. Individual trees within amalgamated fields indicate the positions of lost hedges.	There are a high number of hedgerow trees.
▪ Copses and discrete woodlands are characteristic. In some areas the fields are defined by hedgerow trees with isolated clumps of trees on hillsides or ridge lines.	
▪ Whilst there are a number of outlying, regularly distributed farms and villages, hamlets and small groups of houses, this is generally a sparsely populated area.	The site is near Post Hill.
▪ Some orchards, once typical of the area, remain and there are small areas of market gardening.	
▪ Views are highly variable. The landscape is semi-open with some long extensive views afforded from on top of hilltops. Where hedges are high views are mostly framed or confined with glimpses into and out only present from field gate openings.	
▪ Roads are straight or very gently winding in nature and characterised by narrow routes that are lined with traditional hedgebanks.	
▪ The landscape typically has short vistas terminated by a backdrop of curving hills with occasional long views from prominent locations, giving rise to a	

Relevant Key Characteristics	Notes
patchwork of irregular shaped fields with green pastures.	

## 6.5 Agricultural Land Classification

The site consists of Grade 3a land in the centre, surrounded mainly by Grade 2 land, with a small area of Grade 3b land to the south. However, a strip of fields along the east of the site have an Agricultural Land Classification of Grade 1 (**Appendix C**).

## 6.6 Boundaries

- 6.6.1 The site boundaries consist of the Grand Western Canal and roads.
- 6.6.2 The northern boundary is the Tiverton to Halberton Road, bordered by lengths of tall and short hedges along the road.
- 6.6.3 The eastern boundary follows a length of the lane known as Crownhill until it meets and follows the canal.
- 6.6.4 The southern boundary continues to follow the canal, as it curves westwards up to West Manley Lane. The canal is defined by a mixture of hedges and hedgerow trees.
- 6.6.5 The western boundary follows Manley Lane to re-join the Tiverton/Halberton Road, having followed the garden boundaries of a group of detached properties at the junction. Much of the western boundary is lined with hedges and hedgerow trees.

## 6.7 Landform and Watercourses

- 6.7.1 It was not possible to access the site, but Ordnance Survey mapping shows intermittent and fairly straight water courses leading from a pond down to the canal, which appears on aerial photography to be contained within a wide verge running across the fields.
- 6.7.2 The site rises from a low point at less than 85m AOD on Manley Lane on the floor of a shallow valley, to a high point of about 96m AOD near where Crownhill crosses the canal on the eastern boundary, and also about 95m AOD in the north-west corner near the buildings of Hartnoll Farm. The land continues to rise north of the site across the golf course, and to the north-west at Post Hill.

## 6.8 Significant Vegetation

- 6.8.1 Many of the hedges on the edges of the site and across the site have mature trees, which emphasises the field boundaries, and reinforces the sense of enclosure. A former railway runs east-west across the southern part of the site in a cutting, which for most of its length has become densely vegetated as linear woodland. The hedges and trees along the canal boundary are also significant.

## 6.9 Phase I Habitat Survey Classification

- 6.9.1 The Phase I habitat survey for site (Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, June 2014) states:

*“The site is of overall moderate wildlife value.*

*The site is large and comprises a range of habitat types. Of the habitats present the hedgerows are considered to provide the greatest value for wildlife as they are mature, well*

*connected and species-rich. Furthermore, the linear woodland and scrub along the dismantled railway, whilst small is moderately species-rich, and is also well connected in the wider landscape through the hedgerow network. The hedgerows and woodland add to the structural diversity of the area. If the site is subject to development it is recommended that the hedgerows and woodland are retained where possible.”*

- 6.9.2 An Unconfirmed Wildlife Site crosses the south of the site - Tiverton Branch Railway. Young broadleaved woodland and scrub are present in the disused railway cutting.
- 6.9.3 The Grand Western Canal County Wildlife Site and Country Park forms the southern and eastern boundary of the site.
- 6.9.4 Key habitats and species present or potentially present within the site are listed in **Table 6.2**:

Table 6.2: Key Species – Hartnoll Farm

UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species recorded on site	UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and protected species with potential to be supported by the site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hedgerows (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bat species (including common pipistrelle &amp; long-eared bats)</li> <li>▪ Dormouse (UK and Devon BAP)</li> <li>▪ Hedgehog (UK BAP)</li> <li>▪ Reptile species</li> <li>▪ Amphibian species</li> <li>▪ Nesting birds</li> <li>▪ Badger</li> </ul>

- 6.9.5 The Phase I habitat survey map for the site is provided in **Appendix D**.

## 6.10 Visibility

- 6.10.1 When leaving the Post Hill area heading east (**Viewpoint H3**), and when crossing the canal bridge from Halberton heading west (**Viewpoint H4**), the northern part of the site becomes clearly visible from these elevated viewpoints, although the pattern of hedges prevents views further south across the site.
- 6.10.2 In neither view is there a significant amount of development visible. Both of these views represent a threshold in the viewing experience of road users. Travelling east, the viewer emerges from the enclosed, elevated and developed area of Post Hill, into an open landscape represented by the site. Travelling west and having left Halberton, the viewer rises up onto the canal bridge and again the view opens up across the northern part of the site.
- 6.10.3 From the surrounding lanes and the canal (**Viewpoints H1 and H2**), the views are intermittent and limited by the internal field boundaries. However, the northern part of the site is clearly visible from elevated ground just before Crownhill crosses the canal.
- 6.10.4 In elevated views to the south, there are views from Warnicombe Lane, across the canal to the site on the valley floor (**Viewpoint H5**).

## 6.11 Relationship to Existing and Proposed Development

- 6.11.1 Although existing development close to the site is limited to Post Hill to the north-west, and Halberton beyond the canal to the east; land to the west of Manley Lane and north of Post Hill has been allocated for mixed use development, for which there is an adopted Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document and phasing strategy. At the junction of the

Tiverton/Halberton Road and Manley Lane, there is a cluster of dwellings, which link to Post Hill.

- 6.11.2 Within the site, Hartnoll Farm is a complex of buildings that have been developed as a business centre. On the Crownhill boundary is an agricultural building within the site with a similar building across the lane.

## 6.12 Positive Features

- 6.12.1 The Hartnoll Farm site, in common with much of the landscape in the area, has a strong pattern of hedges, although with a high proportion of hedgerow trees. The strong line of narrow woodland along the former railway partly separates the lower part of the site from the north, and as a result, the southern part forms a closer relationship with the canal. Because the site is mostly seen from the canal or Manley Lane rather than busy roads, the site seems distant from development, despite being close to Halberton and Post Hill. Contained by the canal, which is largely tree lined, the site provides separation between Post Hill and Halberton, and will continue to do so with development to the west.
- 6.12.2 The change in character at the thresholds in the landscape at Post Hill and Halberton canal bridge identifying the site as a clear and important gap between the two settlements.

## 6.13 Negative Features

- 6.13.1 The business centre at Hartnoll Farm is somewhat incongruous, but is fairly discrete within the landscape.

## 6.14 Sensitive Features and Characteristics

- 6.14.1 The relationship to the canal is important. The towpath runs between the canal and the southern site boundary. The site therefore provides the most important views from the towpath. In contrast, there are few open views from the towpath across the canal, and away from the site.
- 6.14.2 The hedges and trees on the boundaries and those across the site will be sensitive to development.
- 6.14.3 The site provides separation of Post Hill from the canal and Halberton beyond, with undeveloped and more open and level characteristics adjacent to the road and on the showground site. There is a clear change in character and a perception of having passed from one landscape into another.

## 6.15 Site Specific Appraisal

- 6.15.1 **Figure L12:** Landscape and Visual Analysis shows opportunities and constraints for the site, key features and the distinct areas within the site.

- 6.15.2 The site can be described as several character areas:

- The northern fields, adjacent to the Tiverton/Halberton Road, consist of several open fields with few hedgerow trees, which are used for the Mid Devon Show and as a result are permanent pasture (A);
- The business centre is the only substantial group of buildings on the site, and therefore is of a very different character (B);
- To the south are open arable fields that form a band of arable land just north of the former railway (C); and

- To the south of the mostly well vegetated former railway line is an area of arable land, which is partly separated from the north of the site and has a close visual relationship with the canal (D).

6.15.3 Overall, however, the site forms a large part of an important gap between Post Hill and ultimately the development that will surround it, and Halberton.

## **6.16 Sensitivity to Residential Development**

6.16.1 Residential development will break the boundary along the edge of Manley Lane and fundamentally change the character of the site, with impact on the setting of the canal and its relationship to the countryside. The development will be seen to extend Tiverton eastwards in views from high ground to the south. For users of Post Hill, development will also extend Tiverton in combination with allocations to the west.

## **6.17 Development Opportunities**

6.17.1 The provision of a buffer strip between the canal and the developed areas of the site will provide some setting for the canal. However, development will be damaging to the landscape in a way that cannot be mitigated, as it will reduce the gap in the landscape to as little as two fields, and breach an important threshold in the landscape.

6.17.2 Development would provide opportunities to manage the trees, hedges and the former railway and potentially extend the cycle path from Tiverton.

## **6.18 Landscape Change in the Absence of Development of the Site**

6.18.1 Amongst the future forces for change identified in the Mid Devon Character Assessment are that there may be increased demand for food production leading to expansion of arable land, bigger fields (which has happened on the site) and loss of Devon banks. The other forces of change relate to different crops being grown and the need for farm diversification.

## 7 Conclusions

- 7.1.1 In terms of landscape character, the differences between the sites are subtle demonstrated by there being only two Landscape Character Types - LCT 3B and LCT 3E, between five sites. They all have similar patterns of vegetation; in as much as they all have networks of hedges, hedgerow trees and woodland to varying degrees, as well as agricultural land use of arable and pasture land. For instance, the land at Junction 27 contains more woodland than the others, whilst East Cullompton has relatively little woodland and a significant number of large fields.
- 7.1.2 Given contemporary masterplanning techniques, which lead to retention of the inherent landscape infrastructure of sites, all of the sites would be expected to largely retain their networks of hedges, woods and trees. Landscape proposals would supplement the existing structure to provide sustainable landscapes, filling gaps in the existing landscape structure or enhancing the vegetation pattern, and protecting and enhancing biodiversity. In all of the sites development would lead to fundamental change in the character of the landscape, which would cease to become essentially rural, and become to varying degrees, urban.
- 7.1.3 Having undertaken an appraisal of all of the sites, the fundamental differences arise through their relationship to existing and proposed development, their relationship to the surrounding landscape, and their visibility.
- 7.1.4 With regards to biodiversity, many of the habitats and features of value such as woodlands, hedgerows and trees, should be retained and enhanced as part of the landscape infrastructure of development of any of the sites, with relevant buffer zones for both arboricultural and biodiversity reasons, as well as to allow access for maintenance. They should also be subject to management plans, conditioned as part of any planning consent. As the Phase 1 habitat survey shows, there are also areas of grassland that are of some value, which might be a constraint to development and could be incorporated into areas of green infrastructure with limited public access. This is especially the case with the commercial part of Junction 27. The relative importance of those features will need to be assessed as part of a planning application, and will inform the development of the site.
- 7.1.5 The setting of listed buildings and structures is of importance in the planning process and the extent of those settings and the effect of development on them should be assessed by specialist consultants, again as part of a planning application.
- 7.1.6 All sites will need to be subject to more detailed landscape and visual appraisals or impact assessments as part of any planning applications, as well as the development of green infrastructure proposals for multi-functional landscapes that address landscape and visual issues, biodiversity, heritage including the setting of listed buildings and sustainable drainage systems. One of the objectives of the green infrastructure should be to provide integration of development into the Mid Devon landscape, and not screening, but by careful integration of the existing natural resources and new landscape design.

### North-West Cullompton

#### Rull Lane

- 7.1.7 This site is currently remote from development, and largely separate from proposed development, as a large area of proposed green infrastructure lies to the south. The eastern boundary adjoins an area of proposed development. The future context of the site will change to the east. The northern part, parcel A, is part of a shallow valley, whilst the larger part of the site, parcel B, slopes down to the eastern boundary and faces open countryside. The site is only locally visible from a limited area, but would require significant and substantial reinforcement of the western boundary to integrate it into the rural setting.

### **Growen Farm**

- 7.1.8 Growen Farm will be close to future development, although it is currently quite separate from Cullompton, and with the exception of land parcel A, more closely related to open countryside. However, there are relatively few publicly accessible viewpoints of the site, and although existing mature vegetation does provide some separation of parcel B from the proposed development to the south, the general context would be that development. This leads to the conclusion that parcels A and B could be developed, with parcel C as part of the future green infrastructure. Subject to reinforcement of existing boundaries, with the objective of integration rather than screening, parcel B could be extended northwards to the next field boundary.

### **East Cullompton**

- 7.1.9 This site is closely related to existing and proposed development at its western end, and quite separate from development as its eastern end. Part of a large area of gently undulating agricultural land, apart from where the Honiton Road passes through it, it is difficult to perceive the site in the surrounding landscape. Although visible from limited locations in the AONB to the east and high ground to the north-west of Cullompton, it is difficult to readily perceive the site owing to distance, vegetation and landform. As a result, phased development from the west is acceptable in parcels A and C as far as the strong boundary along the vegetated valley. Beyond the boundary, parcels B and D could be developed in the longer term.

### **Junction 27/Willand**

- 7.1.10 This site is only associated with existing development in the vicinity of Junction 27 (parcel B) where there is the service area and other development, and north of Willand (parcel E) where there is employment development at the edge of the village and the B3181. In terms of the relationship to the countryside, the site is largely contained by the M5 and B3181, and consists of a ridge which then slopes down to the M5. There are views from it and through it to the wider landscape, but its heavily vegetated nature, to the south and south of the A38, also separate it from the wider landscape.
- 7.1.11 A large part of the central part D is visible from the M5 and the north in the vicinity of Sampford Peverell, and therefore this existing landscape structure would have to be reinforced in these areas to provide integration.
- 7.1.12 Employment development would potentially be more damaging than residential owing to the larger scale buildings and infrastructure needed.

### **Hartnoll Farm**

- 7.1.13 This site is quite separate from existing development at Post Hill on higher ground to the west, and Halberton to the east beyond the canal. However, the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension development would come up to Manley Lane, the western boundary of the site. In terms of its relationship to the countryside, the site is closely related to the canal and country park, but also provides a clear gap between the proposed edge of Tiverton and the settlement of Halberton, with a distinct change of character. In terms of visibility, the site is visible from the canal, from the Post Hill / Halberton Road and from the hills to the south, although from limited viewpoints. From the road and from the south, it is clearly perceived as a threshold, and development would extend Tiverton to the east in a way that would compromise the role of the site within the views.

