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Land at Tidcombe Hall,
Tiverton

Landscape & Visual Impact Appraisal

30 November 2023

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Executive Summary

This Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Tapestry to accompany a planning application for a residential-led development at Tidcombe Hall in Tiverton, Devon

The site is located along Tidcombe Lane on the eastern edge of Tiverton. The site comprises Tidcombe Hall and a number of existing outbuildings - which will be converted - along with new houses set within the confines of the walled garden and on the adjacent land which falls within the TIV13 Local Plan allocation - a contingency allocation for residential development of 100 units within the Mid Devon Local Plan Review.

The site is not covered by any designated landscapes, but it is close to the Grand Western Canal - which is a designated Local Nature Reserve and County Wildlife Site - and it lies partially inside the Grand Western Canal Conservation Area. Tidcombe Hall is also considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The site is mostly situated within the 'Lowland Plains' landscape character area which is typified as an open, low lying, flat landscape.

The current site includes areas of arable fields and open grassland, with a mix of mature tree and hedgerow planting surrounding the site. The wider context of the site is open countryside on east and southern sides, with low density residential areas to the west and north, across the Canal, which runs along the northern boundary of part of the site, connecting Tiverton town centre to the west and leading out to Greenham in the north east.

The waterway is an important green corridor, and provides a series of important habitats for local wildlife. This is reflected in its status as both a country park and local nature reserve. The site is located on the western edge of Tiverton and sits on a north facing slope - the visual appraisal

has shown that this aspect limits views of the site from the south and it's relatively low-lying position also reduces the potential landscape and visual impacts from the north as it is screened by intermediate vegetation and buildings.

The mature trees and hedgerows which surround the site are typical of the local landscape character and will be preserved as far as possible as part of the new proposals. Large parts of the site will be retained as open space, and this will be coupled with new planting to provide a strong landscape setting for the proposed development.

The proposed development has been assessed from a number of key local and distant viewpoints, and the conclusion of this assessment is that it is actually a relatively discreet site, screened by topography and tree planting in the wider landscape. The quantum of development proposed does not detract from the picturesque wider landscape, and while there will be some localised impacts, overall it provides an opportunity to deliver an exemplary scheme that relates well to its wider landscape setting.

The design and access statement demonstrates through an illustrative scheme how proposed development can incorporate traditional materials seen in the town centre, which will help ensure continuity with the wider area and maintain a sense of place and character, and where the scheme is visible in the landscape it will be in keeping with existing townscape.

In conclusion, it is assessed that the site has the potential for a sensitive residential development as demonstrated in the illustrative masterplan. Careful placement of buildings and open spaces within the scheme would preserve existing views in and out of the site to the wider countryside and enhance the setting of Tidcombe Hall.

1.0 Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been produced to accompany a planning application for a residential-led development at Tidcombe Hall in Tiverton, Devon. The scheme is described as

“Outline application, with all matters reserved bar the main point of access and its associated works, for the conversion of Tidcombe Hall and outbuildings and the erection of dwellings to provide up to 100 dwellings in total, provision of community growing areas, public open space, associated infrastructure and ancillary works.”

It has been prepared by Tapestry Urbanism Ltd (‘Tapestry’), a practice which provides expert landscape, townscape and urban design advice. The assessment was led by Paul Reynolds CMLI, a Chartered Landscape Architect with 20+ Years of experience in the preparation of this type of assessment.

The report is split into eight chapters. It identifies and evaluates the existing landscape and visual context of the Site and its surroundings (Baseline Conditions), and then goes on to assesses the predicted landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. A detailed methodology is provided in the appendices.

As this is an outline application it will use the illustrative masterplan (see Figure 2.1) as a basis for the assessment, although specific issues that may arise if an alternative approach were to be taken will be highlighted where it is appropriate. Commentary and advice has been provided to the design team throughout the masterplanning stage as part of an iterative process. As a result, the illustrative scheme incorporates much of the early feedback on layout and landscape mitigation that was provided to the team.

Nevertheless, this report includes an assessment of the current illustrative proposals and makes suggestions for further improvements that could be considered through the next design stages and through the subsequent reserved matters application/s, either as integral mitigation or standalone measures that could be secured by condition or through the Section 106 process.

It should be noted that the assessment of visual impacts has been undertaken on-site, and the photography used in this report is intended for illustrative purposes only, and to support the written assessment. Viewpoints are those used and agreed for the previous application on the site (20/01174/MOUT) which was a larger scheme, but they were still considered appropriate for the assessment of the revised scheme.

1.1 The Site

Site Location

The Site is located on south-western edge of Tiverton, a town and civil parish in Devon. The town is primarily served by the A361, which runs to the north of the town, and it is commercial and administrative centre of the Mid Devon district. It offers a full range of services and amenities, and the site is located approximately a 30minute walk or 10min cycle ride from the town centre. More local amenities include Tidcombe Primary School, which is a 5minute walk from the site. Buses run along Tidcombe Lane, which forms part of the western edge of the site.

The site is an irregular shape, so the perimeters vary, but for the most part they are formed by adjacent field boundaries, save for a section on the northern edge that is bounded by the Grand Western Canal, and part of the eastern edge is formed by Little Tidcombe Farm. The southern boundary is formed by the rear of existing properties that front onto Warnicombe Lane.

A plan showing the site and local context can be seen in **Figure 1.1** adjacent.



Figure 1.1
Site and Local Context

Site Description & Context

The site covers an area of approximately 6.70ha. It comprises a mixture of agricultural and pasture fields, and land associated with the existing property at Tidcombe Hall including gardens and hard-standing. The wider area within which the site is located is predominantly open countryside to the east and south, and low density residential to the north and west.

The site sits partially within the Grand Western Canal Conservation Area. There are also eleven Grade II listed buildings within 1km of the site. **Figure 1.2** shows the site in relation to the conservation area, which overlaps the northern portion of the site. More details about the site and its context are included in the landscape baseline assessment.



Figure 1.2
Site and Conservation Area

Site History

The site's history is mostly linked to its ecclesiastical roots, with what is now Tidcombe Hall built on the site of the much older St Lawrence's Chapel - a building that probably dates from the early 15th Century. Tidcombe Hall itself is an early 19th Century house, and is shown as Tidcombe Rectory on some late C19 Ordnance Survey maps. It has been substantially altered in the 20th Century, and was de-listed in 1999.

Historic maps show how it was, until the latter part of the 20th Century, substantially removed from Tiverton itself, standing as a detached property with surroundings that included both agricultural land and more formal gardens / parkland associated with the dwelling itself - the latter generally being located to the north and east of the house.

The relationship with the canal is of relevance, as it is said that the distinctive arc in the alignment of the canal results from the presence of the property that is now Tidcombe Hall, and specific requirements to stay a certain distance away. The historic mapping also suggests that Tidcombe lane probably ran closer to the Hall than it does today, being realigned when the Canal was built.

A map showing the site in its historic context can be seen in **Figure 1.3**, right.



Figure 1.3
Historic Map c.1900

1.2 Method of Assessment

As a matter of best practice, the methodology used in this assessment follows approaches set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition), published by the Landscape Institute and the IEMA (2013) (GLVIA3). It also incorporates elements of guidance from a range of other documents, which are described in more detail in the full methodology that is appended to this report.

GLVIA3 states that its methodology is not prescriptive in that it does not provide a detailed universal methodology that can be followed in every situation (para 1.20); rather, the assessment should be tailored to the particular circumstances in each case with an approach that is appropriate and commensurate to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its potential impacts.

The principal objectives of this assessment are:

- To identify and classify the existing landscape likely to be affected by the construction and operation of the proposal and ancillary works;
- To identify the 'visual receptors' with views of the proposed development; and
- To assess the significance of effects on the prevailing landscape character and visual amenity, taking into account the measures proposed to mitigate any impacts identified.

The prediction and extent of effect cannot always be absolute. It is for each assessment to determine the assessment criteria and the significance thresholds, using informed and well-reasoned professional judgement supported by thorough justification for their selection, and explanation as to how the conclusions about significance for each effect assessed have been derived, as noted in GLVIA3

The landscape and visual assessment will be in six main parts. The first part will set out the **details of the scheme** to be assessed. This allows the assessor to understand what is being proposed, and to assess the susceptibility of the landscape and visual receptors to the proposed development. The scheme may also include elements of embedded mitigation that need to be included in the assessment.

Following this, the **landscape baseline assessment** will be undertaken. This stage describes, and evaluates the existing landscape resources using a number of different aspects of landscape, including character and value. At the end of the assessment, the sensitivity of each landscape receptor will be assessed. The next stage is to prepare the **visual baseline assessment** which includes the identification of a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) and the selection of a number of viewpoints for assessment.

While some viewpoints will be specific to a given receptor, for many they will be representative viewpoints. Where possible, the viewpoints will be agreed in advance with the local planning authority officers, but in all cases the reason for their choice will be set out. As with the landscape assessment, a baseline sensitivity assessment will be undertaken for each of the receptors.

The fourth part is to undertake the **landscape appraisal** itself. This consists of assessing the likely effects of the development at three indicative points in time - during construction, at completion (Year 1), and, as landscape mitigation tends to include significant planting, once that has had a chance to be well established (Year 15). The fifth part repeats this process for the **visual appraisal**, considering the likely effects on the identified visual receptors.

Finally, the sixth part of the assessment is to consider any cumulative effects that may arise as a result of other schemes that may be coming forward in the local area, and to set out any recommendations for additional mitigation (beyond that proposed as part of the scheme) that may be required to further reduce the landscape and visual impacts that have been identified.

A copy of the detailed methodology that has been used can be found in **Appendix A**.

2 Development Proposals

The proposed development is described as:

Outline application, with all matters reserved bar the main point of access and its associated works, for the conversion of Tidcombe Hall and outbuildings and the erection of dwellings to provide up to 100 dwellings in total, provision of community growing areas, public open space, associated infrastructure and ancillary works.

The illustrative proposals show that approximately 12 units would be created by the conversion of existing structures, including Tidcombe Hall itself, with approximately 8 additional units within the adjacent walled garden area. The balance of units would be located on land to the south east of the hall, within the contingency allocation area, on land that is currently a single agricultural field.

In addition to the development parcels, there will be landscape enhancements across the site, in particular on land to the south and east of Tidcombe Hall, which would be delivered as part of the scheme.

The illustrative layout can be seen in **Figure 2.1**, opposite.

While this is an outline application The proposed housing is anticipated to be a combination of detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings, with heights ranging from one to three storeys. The illustrative layout suggests that in many cases this could be arranged in a courtyard formation to mimic the existing arrangement of outbuildings at Tidcombe Hall, and on adjacent properties such as Little Tidcombe Farm. It is also proposed that buildings would be constructed from vernacular materials in keeping with the local area. Full details of the proposed design approach can be found in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

There are upgrades to the landscape proposed across the site, with a mixture of parkland, growing areas, and general amenity landscape areas proposed in the illustrative scheme. The proposed parkland area would be in the northeast corner of the site, sitting between the proposed development and the canal. It would be accessible to both new residents and the wider public. The growing space would comprise both an area of allotments and orchard planting, while the amenity landscape would include enhancement of the existing perimeter landscape planting.

Figure 2.1
Illustrative layout
prepared by Clifton Emery Design



Tidcombe Hall, Tiverton

Illustrative layout

- Application boundary
- ① Vehicular access from Tidcombe Lane
- ② Restored Tidcombe Hall and entrance space
- ③ High quality courtyard development - inc sympathetic conversion of existing outbuildings
- ④ Existing driveway - cycle/ pedestrian access
- ⑤ Community orchard/growing areas
- ⑥ Growing area and parking (including EV charging)
- ⑦ Existing landscape entrance retained and enhanced
- ⑧ Primary access route
- ⑨ Courtyard housing
- ⑩ Existing trees and hedgerows retained and enhanced
- ⑪ Public open space - Parkland landscape and enhanced Grand Western Canal corridor, made up of a mix of wildflower planting, native hedgerow planting and native scrub species (including marginal planting in areas for SUDs)
- ⑫ Structured residential development - enabling high quality living environments and public realm
- ⑬ Low density courtyard style development - transitional development edge
- ⑭ Landscape buffer planting enhancing wildlife corridors
- ⑮ Opportunities for orchard tree planting
- ⑯ Proposed bat roost building
- ⑰ 10m wide dark crossing point over access road to allow for bat movement - Low lux levels, to be specified by ecologist

Note:
Bat and bird boxes to be included throughout development in a range of places, including trees and built form. To be confirmed and located in accordance with Ecologist recommendation.



3 Legislation & Policy Context

3.1 Introduction

There are a number of designated features in the landscape and townscape surrounding the site, either directly or indirectly affecting the site. They include Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, a Listed Historic Park & Garden, Scheduled Monuments, Site of Special Scientific Interest, and Local Landscape planning designations.

These are illustrated in **Figure 3.1**

3.2 Conservation Areas

The northern part of the site sits within the Grand Western Canal Conservation area, which covers the entirety of the canal and some adjacent areas of land. In addition, the Tiverton Conservation Area lies just under 2km to the west of the site. Blundell's Conservation Area lies approximately 400m to the north of the site.

The Grand Western Canal Conservation Area

This Conservation Area was designated in 1994 and stretches for some 18km along the Canal from the canal basin near the centre of Tiverton at Canal Hill, to Lowdwells Lock in the northeast. At a number of locations, the conservation area expands beyond the canal and its towpath and one such area is at the site, where the conservation area enlarges to include

Tidcombe Hall and its immediate environs.

The conservation area does not have a published appraisal or management plan, however it is mostly contiguous with the boundary of the Grand Western Canal Country Park which does have a comprehensive management plan, including sections on conservation and heritage.

The conservation area has a physical, cultural and visual relationship to the site, and as such, the potential impact of the scheme on the Conservation Area is addressed in some detail. This assessment can be found in the standalone Historic Environment Assessment by AC Archaeology, while the potential impact on views to and from the Conservation Area is addressed later in this report.

Blundell's Conservation Area

Designated in 2014, and located approximately 400m north of the site, Blundell's Conservation Area is located on the eastern side of Tiverton to the south of the River Lowman and the A361 Devon Link Road and to the north of the Grand Western Canal. It has historic cultural ties to the town via Blundell's School and the old railway line. It has no specific physical, cultural or visual relationship to the site, but the management plan (September 2014) does identify a number of important views that add to

the character and feel of the Blundell's conservation area. These views are a mixture of long panoramic views and local views, and one of the local views identified broadly south towards the site along Tidcombe Lane from the junction with Blundell's Road - this view will be assessed as part of the visual assessment.

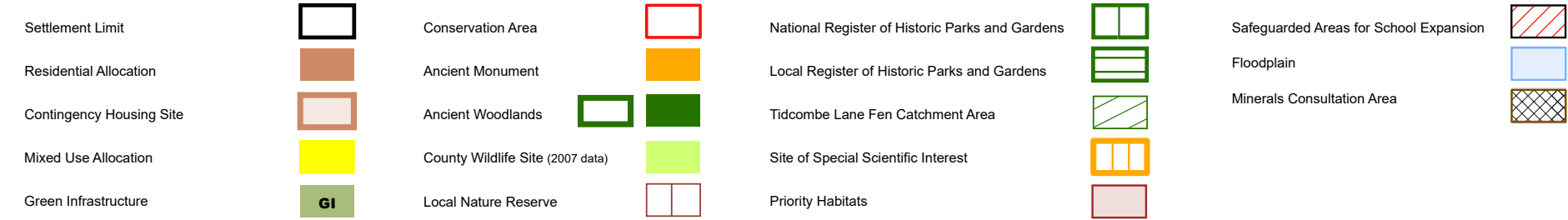
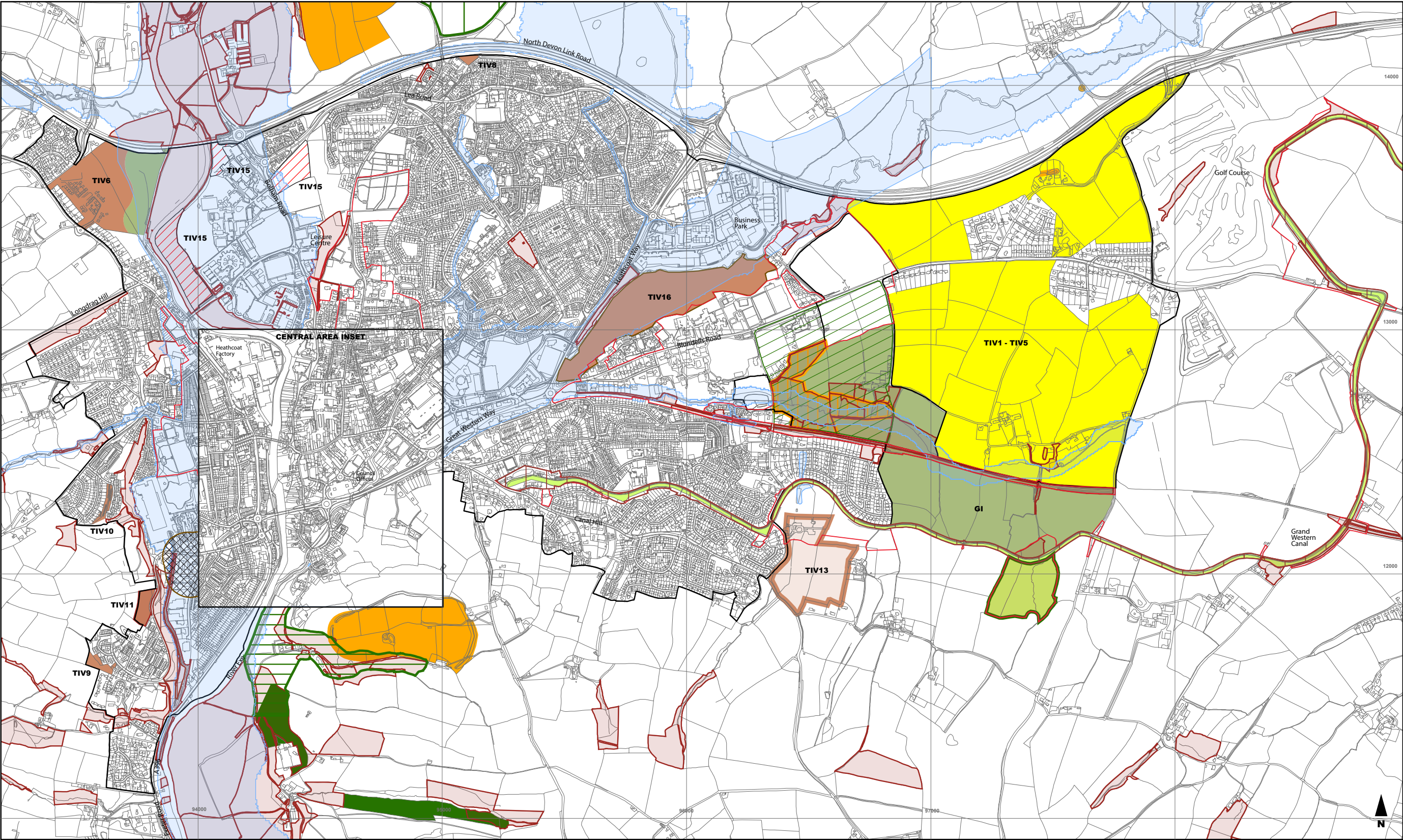
Tiverton Conservation Area

This Conservation Area was designated in February 1973 and was extended in July 1992 and again on 15 June 2005. Covering the historic core of the town, it is located approximately 1.5km north-west of the site at its closest point. It has no specific physical, cultural or visual relationship to the site, and while some of the conservation area falls within the zone of theoretical visibility, site visits have demonstrated that there is no intervisibility between the conservation area and the site.

3.3 Historic Parks & Gardens

There are no designated historic Parks or Gardens in close proximity to the site, however Knightshayes is a Victorian country house and garden located approximately 2.5km northwest of the site at its nearest point (the house is approximately 3.25km away). The gardens are Grade II* listed in the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, and the house is a Grade I listed building. Both the house and gardens are now

Figure 3.1
Mid Devon Local Plan Review 2013 - 2033
Adopted Policies Map



Mid Devon Local Plan Review 2013 - 2033

Adopted Policies Map

Tiverton

owned and managed by the National Trust. The site for the construction of Knightshayes was chosen because Sir John Heathcoat-Amory, who commissioned the building, could see his factory in the distance, nestled in the Exe valley below. As such, while physically remote from the proposed development site, and with no direct landscape impact, there is a visual connection between Knightshayes and the site which needs to be considered and assessed, especially considering the sensitivity of the building and its grounds.

Further details on the visual relationship between the site and Knightshayes can be found later in this report. Further details on the broader impacts that the scheme may have on the setting of the House, Park and Garden can be found in the Historic Environment Assessment by AC Archaeology.

3.4 Scheduled Monuments

There are no Scheduled Monuments in close proximity of the site, although Tiverton and Cranmore Castles hold this designation and sit approximately 2km from the site. It is thought that remains of to 16th Century St Lawrence's Chapel may also be present under present-day Tidcombe Hall.

3.5 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The closest SSSI to the site is Tidcombe Fen, which is located less than 1km to the north. The designation area contains a type of wetland habitat that is rare in Devon and scarcely seen nationally. There is only one other undisturbed example in the county, which includes examples of meadow vegetation and a wide diversity of plants and flora. The site occupies the shallow valleys of the Alsa Brook and one of its tributaries.

3.6 Local Nature Reserve

The Grand Western Canal which runs along the north of the site is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and supports a range of important habitats for local wildlife. It was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 2005, and is home to wide range of plants, mammals and insects, including otters and kingfishers.

3.7 Public Rights of Way

There are no Public Rights of Way (PROW) which traverse the site, although there is a footpath route which runs south then west from the southwest corner of the site, and also one that runs east to west along the Grand Western Canal towpath to the north of the site, on the opposite side of the canal. The towpath is also designated a recreational route, and a traffic-free cycle route.

3.8 Listed Buildings

There are two Grade II listed buildings or structures in close proximity of the site - Tidcombe Farm House, which while not within the application / site boundary, is adjacent to it. Also Tidcombe Bridge spans the Grand Western Canal adjacent to the Site. Tidcombe Hall was also at one time listed at Grade II, but was de-listed in 1999. It is still considered to be an asset of local heritage value.

Tidcombe Farmhouse is believed to be 16th Century, and is rendered in stone rubble, with an asbestos slate roof. A T-shaped building which has had various additions made over the years. The Farmhouse is Grade II listed and has a modest exterior appearance, but inside it retains important evidence of its earlier status. It is a two storey building with a late 20th century three light encasement in the old openings.

The Farmhouse is located amongst other farm buildings with which it has both a functional and visual relationship, and which provide an element of screening and setting. It has nonetheless been identified as a key receptor as part of the landscape assessment.

The Tidcombe Road Bridge is also Grade II listed and spans the Grand Western Canal. Located to the west of the site along Tidcombe Lane this is also an important receptor for the assessment. The bridge was constructed around 1810-14 a contemporary of the Great Western Canal. It is constructed from volcanic agglomerate ashlar, and includes an impressive elliptical arch. The bridge also has 2 opposing segmental arches on plan and with the walls slightly battered.

Over 1km from the site there are a number of other listed buildings or structures. It is not anticipated these will be affected by the development proposals and as such they have not been included as receptors in the landscape assessment. However it is important these heritage designated assets are appropriately assessed, and a more detailed assessment of the potential impacts on all heritage assets is included in the Historic Environment Report. Where appropriate, they may also be included as viewpoint locations in the visual appraisal.

4 Baseline Landscape and Visual Assessment

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the key features, character areas and local topography within and around the development site. It also considers the value placed upon the landscape proposed to be developed.

Based on the scale of the type and scale of development proposed, and taking into account the topography of the local area, a study area for this baseline landscape assessment was estimated at 1km for considering the impact of effects upon the landscape and townscape.

The site itself is an irregular shape, and includes areas of agricultural land as well as the house and grounds of Tidcombe Hall. The site is 6.70ha, and the wider area within which the sites is located is predominantly open countryside to the east and south, and low density residential to the north and west.

The site is bounded by a mixture of mature tree and hedge planting, while the site itself is predominantly open grassland with some arable fields. Tidcombe Hall is also located within the application boundary. There are a number of large trees on the site, and a tree survey in accordance with BS5837-2012 has been prepared.

More details on the existing trees on the site can be

found in the Arboricultural Assessment.

4.2 Topography & Geology

The site broadly sits on sloping ground, running from the higher land in the south, down towards the lowest parts along the canal in the north. The highest point is at approximately 115m AOD and the lowest is at approximately 94m AOD.

The TIV13 contingency allocation identifies that the south west corner of the site is particularly visible as it is higher ground. That part of the allocation is excluded from this application, but the visibility of the whole site will be tested through the visual appraisal. All of the proposed new housing sits at a lower height than the adjacent housing to the west.

Tiverton straddles what is known as the ‘Exe-Tees line’, a geological division between older rocks of the upper Carboniferous era and newer rocks of the Permian period. This division is reflected in the topography of the area with the Permian rocks forming the lower areas, whilst the older carboniferous rocks shape the much higher land. The Permian rocks have given rise to what is known locally as the Red Devon sandstones and soils.

A plan showing the local topography of the site and wider area can be found at **Figure 4.1**, adjacent.

4.3 Landscape Character

Landscape Character Assessment is a descriptive approach which seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up England. This approach recognises that the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just ‘special’ landscapes. The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation in order to make judgements to guide, for example, landscape management or development.

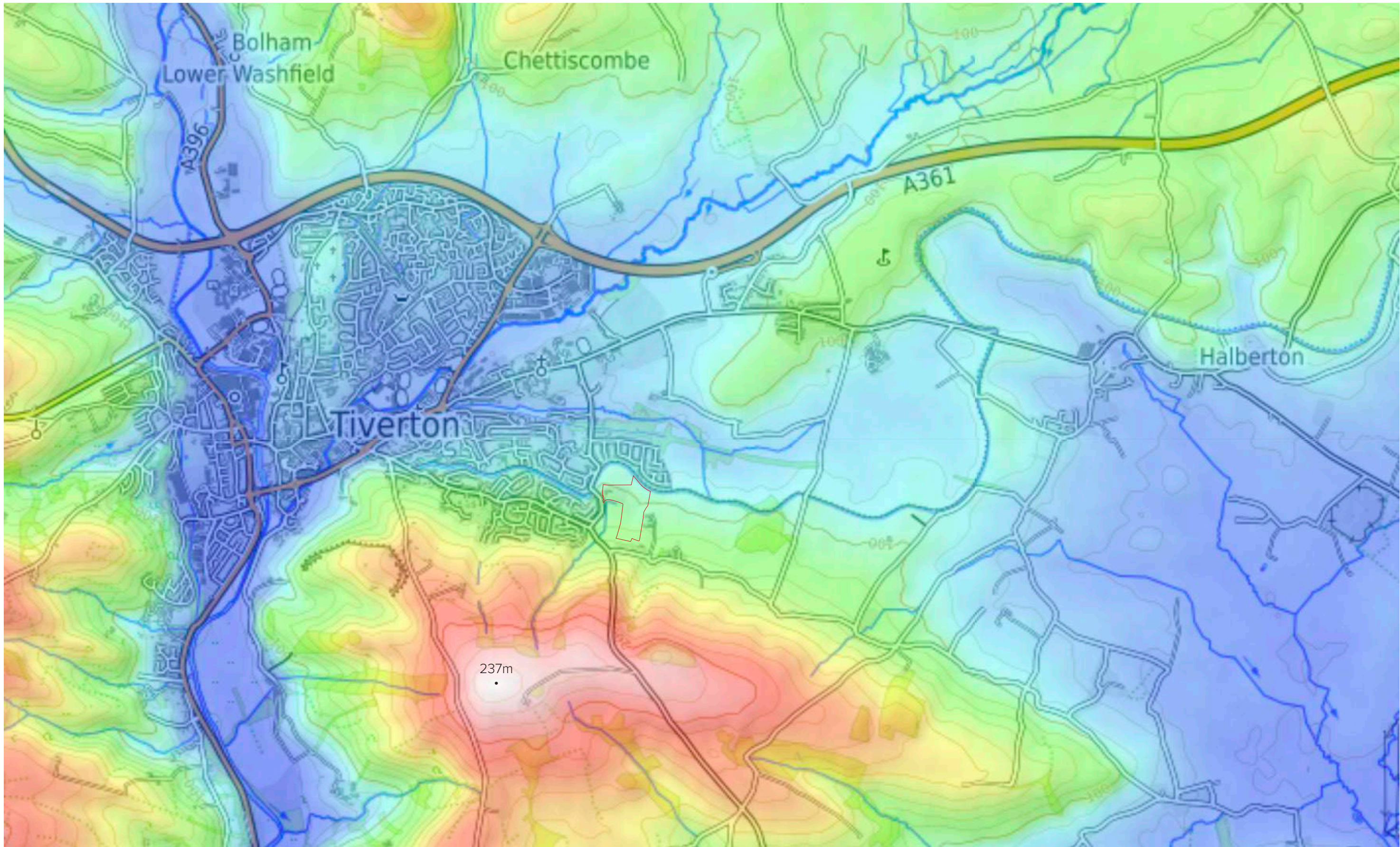
Landscape Character is assessed at different scales from national to local level, and as part of this assessment an assessment of the specific character of the site has also been undertaken. It should be noted that townscape is an intrinsic part of landscape, and the local townscape character has also been assessed.

National Level

Natural England have produced a countryside Character Map of England which includes broad-brush descriptions of the different character areas. The Site is within National Character Area (NCA) 148: Devon Redlands.

This NCA is described as a rolling, hilly landscape with characteristic deep red soils. The topography of the NCA is that of a relatively lowland core with land rising at the fringes, gives way to extensive and far-reaching views.

Figure 4.1
Local Topography



The rivers are characterised upstream by steep, wooded valley sides. Some of the valley woodlands are oak dominated and of high conservation value. In the upper valleys, particularly in summer, there is a very strong sense of enclosure created by the tall, thick hedgerows supporting many herbs and wild flowers, with small, lush meadows connected by attractive, fast-flowing streams.

The management plan for the NCA includes a number of Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO). These include objectives such as conserving and managing historic parklands, including the planting of trees that are sensitive to historic character. Encouraging appropriate management of ancient and veteran trees and the retention of deadwood.

County Level

Devon has a comprehensive suite of Landscape Character Assessments which describe Devon’s landscapes, and define a series of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Devon Character Areas (DCAs) within the County. Relevant excerpts from these maps can be seen in **Figure 4.2** and **Figure 4.3**.

Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are generic types of landscape which can occur in different places. They have similar characteristics wherever they occur, and are called by a descriptive name (e.g. Estuaries, Moorland

Edge Slopes, Settled Valleys). 52 different LCTs have been defined across Devon. Their descriptions highlight each LCTs’ key physical characteristics.

By contrast, Devon Character Areas (DCAs) are geographically unique areas, each with a distinctive ‘sense of place’. They are often formed of groups of LCTs, and are called by a descriptive place-based name (e.g. Taw-Torridge Estuary; East Dartmoor Moorland Fringes; Axe Valley). Their descriptions (within the Devon Landscape Assessment) emphasise local identity and visual and perceptual influences.

The site straddles the boundary between two DCAs. The majority of the site is within the Culm Valley Lowlands character area, while a small portion of the site along the southern edge falls within the Cullompton Rolling Farmland character area instead, mostly as it is the part on higher ground. In both cases, the site is on the edge of those character areas which largely extend to the east and south respectively. To the west of the site is the Exe Valley character area, which largely follows the urban edge of Tiverton as it passes the site. The site does exhibit some of the characteristics of the two DCAs in which it is situated, but the unique character that arises from the presence of the Hall and canal mean that it also exhibits characteristics which are not generally associated with those two DCAs.

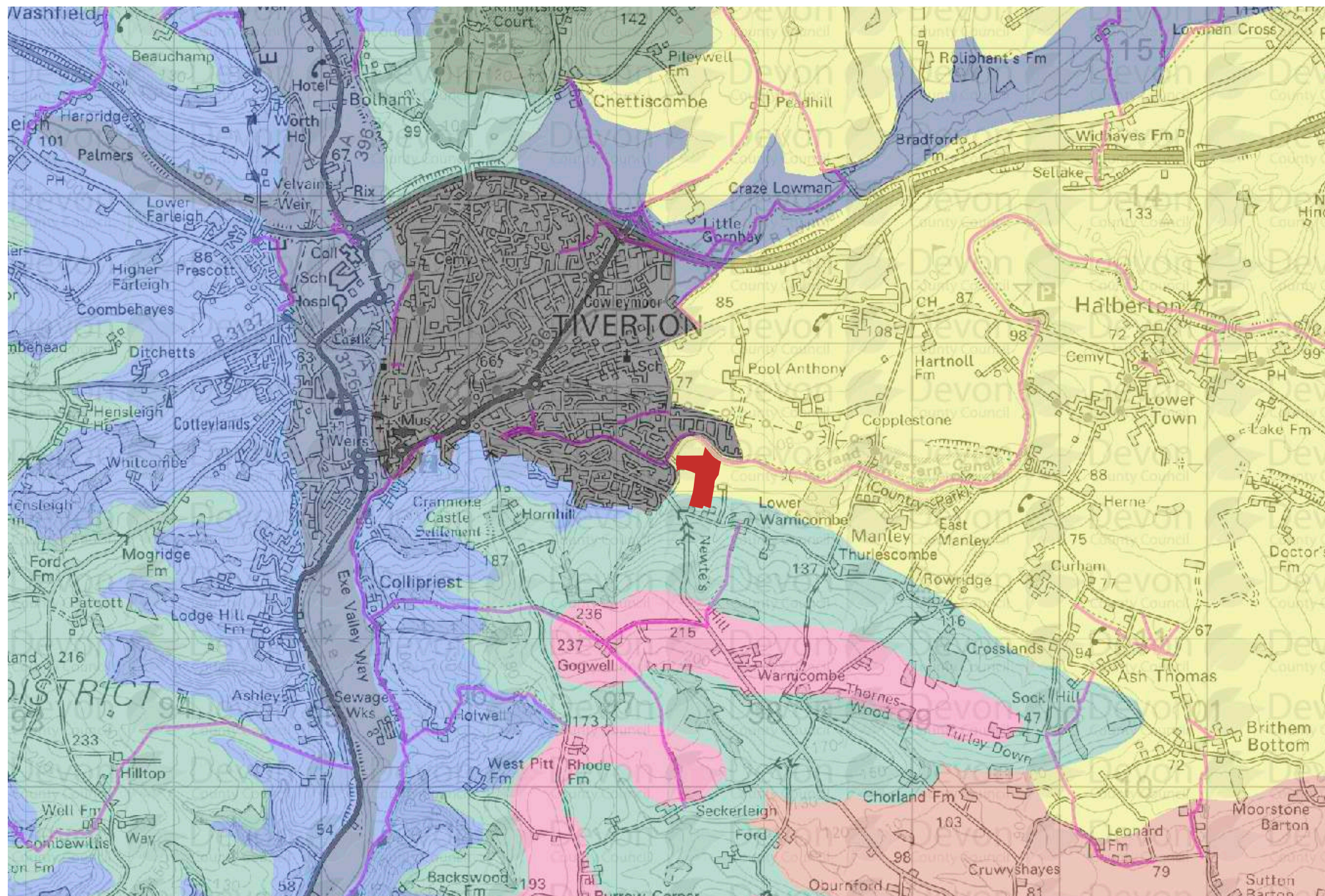
In terms of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) the Site is again straddling a boundary between two (the boundary is the same as for the DCAs). The northern portion of the site is in LCT 3E - Lowland Plains, while the southern portion is in LCT 3A - Upper farmed and wooded slopes.

These have similar characteristics, with the key difference being the elevation of the land, and the steepness of the land which is mostly less noticeable in the lowland plains area. Overall, the site can be said to conform with these character types, although the presence of the Hall and the unique character of it’s immediate setting is incongruous - and will be discussed in the next section.

Local Level

As the local level, the site has two distinct character areas. The Hall and its immediate surroundings retain some parkland structure, with mature trees including a landmark *Cedrus libanii*, along with other ‘domestic’ species. The walled garden to the east of the house has some orchard trees and other garden species and the site has remnants of a designed landscape, particularly to the drive and front of the house. Land to the north of the garden wall comprises a broad meadow also falling north with intermittent mature trees on with the canal side, and with some views from the canal towards the hall and the walled garden edge. The land to the south is more distinctively agricultural in character.

Figure 4.2
Devon Character Areas



Key

- LCT 1E: Wooded ridges and hilltops
- LCT 3A: Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes
- LCT 3E: Lowland plains
- LCT 7: Main cities and towns
- LCT 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- LCT 3G: River valley slopes and combs
- LCT 3B: Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes
- LCT 5A: Inland elevated undulating land



Townscape Character

Tiverton town centre lies to west of the site and is 15 miles north of Exeter. Tiverton is the largest of the market towns in Mid Devon and sits at the confluence of the Rivers Exe and Lowman. While there is evidence of human occupation dating back to the prehistoric and Roman times in the area, today settlement in the town generally spreads around the valley and adjoining hill top, with the town mostly having grown eastwards from its historic core, along the river valley bottoms, although in places it has also grown up the valley sides, such as to the immediate west of the site.

To the north of the site beyond the Grand Western Canal sits a large area of low density housing. These bungalow structures appear to be built circa 1970 and include large areas of amenity landscape between each plot. This low density typology continues to wrap around the site to the west, and along a proportion of Tidcombe Lane. The Mid Devon Town & Village Character Assessment from 2012 includes a detailed description of Tiverton’s Settlement Character. Tidcombe Hall is categorised as ‘Institutional’ while the residential areas to the west are 1960s-70s and to the north they are 1980s-90s.

Figure 4.3
Devon Landscape Types

4.4 Key Features

Within the site there are relatively few key features beyond Tidcombe Hall and Gardens, with the majority of the rest of the site being formed by open and unremarkable pasture and agricultural land. However, there are a number of mature trees within the application boundary, which were surveyed by Aspect Tree Consultancy, in accordance with BS5837:2012.

Of the trees surveyed, 13 have been identified as Category A specimens, 41 were Category B, 23 Category C, and 2 were identified as category U. Within this, 12 of the trees were identified as ‘Key Trees’. Generally the trees within the site are located towards the perimeter or along field boundaries. There are also two significant clusters within the grounds of Tidcombe Hall - one is to the north, on an area of land that was shown on historic maps as a water body, and one to the immediate southeast of the Hall itself. There are also some specimens within the former walled garden.

The illustrative masterplan and proposed landscape strategy seeks to use the existing trees within the site to help shape the development, and to provide both structure and screening to the layout of the new buildings.

More details on the trees within the site can be found in the standalone Tree Survey report.

4.5 Landscape Value

As the site is not covered by any national landscape designation (it is partially designated as a Conservation Area, a local heritage designation) it has also been assessed using the Landscape Institute guidance for assessing landscape value outside national designations. This guidance identifies nine aspects of value against which a landscape should be assessed to enable a value judgement to be made.

Natural Heritage

The site has limited natural heritage value, as the majority of the land is currently in low-value agricultural or pastoral use. There is a strip of land along the canal which is managed for ecological benefit, and the areas of trees within the site also increase the natural heritage value. Overall, it is assessed that it has **medium** Natural Heritage value.

Cultural Heritage

There are no designated listed buildings within the site, but there are some immediately adjacent. The site also sits partially within a conservation area, and there are remnants of landscape (such as the walled garden) which have cultural value. The field boundaries and relationship to the canal also lead to cultural heritage value. As a result, it is assessed as having **medium to high** cultural heritage value.

Associations

There are no known associations with well-known figures that relate to the site, with previous occupiers of the Hall not being of great significance. The site has some limited value from its association with the canal, and features such as Tidcombe Bridge which is valued. As such, the association value is assessed as **low to very low**.

Distinctiveness

The level of distinctiveness varies across the site. Part has a strong sense of identity derived from the relationship between Tidcombe Hall and its grounds, while the parcel to the south is less distinctive, with a general agricultural character. The site is not particularly identified in the local landscape character assessment, and sits across the boundary between two different character areas, which as is often the case, means that it includes some of the characteristics of each. Overall, the distinctiveness value is assessed as being **low to medium**.

Recreational

The site comprises entirely private land, with no public access or rights of way, which means it has no direct recreational value. However, there is an opportunity to have leisure use, especially with the indirect relationship to the canal (the canal tow-path runs on the other side of the canal). However, it is still assessed as having **low** recreational value at the moment.

Perceptual - Scenic

This topic relates to how the landscape appeals to the visual (primarily) sense, and considers the aesthetic character of the site. On the most part the site has some scenic value, comprising a mixture of fields and gardens with the canal running along the edge of the site. However, there are some detracting features, such as the adjacent farm buildings, the residential areas across the canal and to the west, and the rear edge of properties on the southern boundary. Overall it is considered to be of **medium** scenic value.

Perceptual - Wildness and Tranquillity

The site lies on the edge of the urban area of Tiverton, and has roads and residential uses in the immediate vicinity, so there are low levels of tranquillity apart from specific pockets within the site - for example inside the walled garden. There is also a reasonably high level of light pollution from the adjacent urban areas, and the land is not remote from other human activity, with a farm immediately adjacent. It is therefore assessed as having **very low** wildness and tranquillity value.

Functional

This final value topic focusses on the use of the land within the site, which is currently a mixture of residential, pasture and general agricultural land. The site is part of the wider green networks, although this is primarily focussed on the strip of land immediately adjacent to the canal which is managed for biodiversity, and the field

boundaries that have some value as wildlife corridors. The rest of the site is in uses which typically are low value in terms of nature conservation such as agriculture and pasture. There is no strong connection between the site and any designated landscapes in the local area. As a result, the overall assessment of functional value is **low**.

Considering all nine aspects of landscape value in the round, the site landscape value is assessed as being **Low to Medium**.

4.6 Landscape Receptors - Baseline Assessment

A number of landscape receptors have been identified through this baseline assessment, and each will now be assessed in turn, to ascertain the sensitivity of the receptor, in accordance with the methodology that can be found in Appendix A.

These receptors may be individual features or grouped landscape elements which combine to become an individual receptor. The methodology sets out how each receptor will be categorised into one of four landscape topics:

1. Landscape Character (LC)
2. Landscape Value (LV)
3. Landscape Features (LF)
4. Landscape Designations (LD)

| Landscape Character | | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| LC1 : County Level Landscape Character Area / Type (DCA) | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The site is located across two Devon Character Areas (DCA) - Culm Valley Lowlands and Cullompton Rolling Farmland. These are both part of the Devon Redlands NCA, with a key difference being the greater level of movement and activity in the Lowlands, while the Rolling Farmland tends to be more rural in character. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | The site is located on the edge of both character areas, close to their interface with the urban area of Tiverton which is within the Exe Valley character area. The site forms a small part of each character area. | Medium to Low |
| Susceptibility to Change | Housing development is a feature of the lowlands DCA, less so a feature of the farmland DCA, but this does have farmsteads and hamlets as a distinctive characteristic. As such, both have some capacity to accommodate development of the type proposed. | Medium to Low |
| Receptor Sensitivity | With a receptor value of Medium to Low and Medium to Low susceptibility to change, the sensitivity of the receptor is judged to be Low. | Low |

| Landscape Character | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| LC2 : Site Landscape Character Area | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The site comprises three different character areas - Tidcombe Hall and its associated grounds, the agricultural land to the south of the Hall, and the more pastoral landscape to the north of the Hall, leading to the canal. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | The Hall and grounds are also considered separately as an undesignated heritage asset, but in terms of landscape character, they have their own value, albeit that the quality has been degraded somewhat. The pastoral landscape to the north also has some value, and lies between the hall and the canal. The agricultural landscape to the south has very little character value. | High to Medium |
| Susceptibility to Change | All three areas will be highly susceptible to any introduction of new residential development, which will impact them at a localised level. The area around the Hall has the greatest ability to accept development, as does the area closest to Little Tidcombe Farm. | High to Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | With a receptor value of High to Medium and High to Medium susceptibility to change, the sensitivity of the receptor is judged to be High. | High |

| Landscape Character | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| LC3 : Local Townscape Character | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The site sits outside of the urban area of Tiverton, which is largely bounded by Tidcombe Lane and the Canal. However, beyond those man-made features there is clustered development, including Little Tidcombe Farm, Lower Warnicombe and Tidcombe Hall itself. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | The townscape of the area around the site is of low value, with buildings that have little architectural merit or value. Those closest to the canal turn their back onto it, and although the site has some value as it acts as a break to the townscape, this is limited. | Low |
| Susceptibility to Change | As there is no strong architectural style or vernacular character, the susceptibility to change is low, and the introduction of new residential development would not be incongruous within the existing townscape. | Low |
| Receptor Sensitivity | With a receptor value of Low and Low susceptibility to change, the sensitivity of the receptor is judged to be Very Low | Very Low |

| Landscape Value | | |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| LV1 : Site Landscape Value | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The site comprises a mixture of arable fields, pasture and land associated with Tidcombe Hall. There is no public access to any of the land. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | The detailed assessment considered the value of the land across a range of topics, with individual aspects varying between Very Low and High to Medium Value, but the average was medium to low. | Medium to Low |
| Susceptibility to Change | The site is a settled landscape, and there is likely to be a high to medium susceptibility to the introduction of residential development within that context. | High to Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | As set out in the detailed assessment, the average value is Medium to Low. With a High to Medium susceptibility, this results in a Medium sensitivity. | Medium |

| Landscape Value | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| LV2 : Setting Landscape Value | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The wider setting landscape is a mixture of valued areas, such as along the canal, and unvalued areas of nondescript inter and post war housing. There are a number of designated features within the wider landscape setting. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | The designated features in the wider landscape suggest that there will be a high value placed on the landscape, which may be tempered by some of the residential areas, but is still likely to be high to medium value overall. | High to Medium |
| Susceptibility to Change | The sensitivity of this wider landscape is generally intrinsic to where the designated assets are located and their immediate setting. There is some more susceptible areas along the canal, but generally the susceptibility to change is low. | Low |
| Receptor Sensitivity | With a receptor value of High to Medium and Low susceptibility to change, the sensitivity of the receptor is judged to be Medium | Medium |

| Landscape Features | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| LF1 : Tidcombe Hall and its setting | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | Tidcombe Hall is an C19 House and outbuildings, located on the site of an earlier building. Set within designed grounds, it is also within the GWC Conservation Area. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | An undesignated heritage asset, the building retains it's landscape setting and structure with distinctive features providing a strong sense of place, with features such as the entrance driveway, walled gardens, ornamental mature trees and landscape structure all clearly discernible. There are some detracting features. | High to Medium |
| Susceptibility to Change | The designed curtilage of the building, includes its trees and feature such as the walled garden. The approach is discrete from Tidcombe Lane affording privacy and enclosure to the house front, and views out towards the canal. As a designed layout, it is particularly susceptible to insensitive development, but can accommodate sensitive insertions. | High to Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | With a receptor value of High to Medium and High to Medium susceptibility to change, the sensitivity of the receptor is judged to be High to Medium. | High to Medium |

| Landscape Features | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| LF2 : Topography, Geology & Soils | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The site has a gently sloping terrain, with the highest ground to the south and the lowest in the north along the canal. There is no landform or geology of note within the site or immediate surrounds, and soil quality will be variable as a result of the existing patterns of use. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | There are no special qualities to the site in terms of this topic, although there are some areas around Tidcombe Hall where the topography may be of elevated value, as is the contribution it makes to the views from the Hall northwards towards the canal. | Medium to Low |
| Susceptibility to Change | This topic is always more highly susceptible to development as it will necessarily involve the loss of soils and also changes to topography to accommodate level development platforms. | High to Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | The Topography, Geology and Soils receptor is judged to have a medium sensitivity. | Medium |

| Landscape Features | | |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| LF3 : Blue Infrastructure | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | There are limited water resources on the site, although the canal forms the northern boundary. There is however an area which was traditionally a water feature (based on historic maps) and there is a strong relationship between the site and canal in terms of drainage, with a ditch running from the walled garden to the canal. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | These water bodies have a value as part of the local blue infrastructure network, although they have no special relationship to the site. | High to Medium |
| Susceptibility to Change | The blue infrastructure has a medium susceptibility as it has some capacity to accommodate some residential development as long as measures are designed in to work with the existing blue infrastructure as part of the proposals. The canal is outside of the red line area. | Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | While the value is graded as high to medium, this is resulting mostly from the presence of the canal which is off-site. As such it is considered that the overall sensitivity for the blue infrastructure on site is medium. | Medium |

| Landscape Features | | |
|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| LF4 : Trees & Vegetation | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | This receptor covers the existing vegetation on the site which is mainly a combination of trees, hedgerows and pasture. Some of the trees are ornamental and associated with the domestic use of Tidcombe Hall. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | All vegetation is considered to be of high value, as it provides habitat for wildlife and enhances the biodiversity of the site. There are no particular invasive species that have been identified which would result in a lowering of this score. | High |
| Susceptibility to Change | The vegetation can accommodate the introduction of sensitive development of the type proposed, although there may be some loss for the creation of access points through hedgerows. As development can be introduced without harming the majority of vegetation (some pasture land is likely to be lost) it is assessed as Medium. | Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | In combination the value and susceptibility give an overall sensitivity of High for the existing trees and vegetation. | High |

| Landscape Designations | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| LD1 : Grand Western Canal Conservation Area (CA) | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The Grand Western Canal CA runs along the canal, and for it's most part it follows the line of the water. Tidcombe Hall is one location where the boundary grows and includes land beyond the canal, incorporating fields to the north and east of Tidcombe Hall, as well as the hall itself. As such, approximately half of the red line area is within the CA boundary. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | As a locally designated heritage asset, the CA has a high to medium value, and although only part of the site is within the CA, it is considered that this is an appropriate grading. | High to Medium |
| Susceptibility to Change | The CA is susceptible to change from development located within it, and in particularly between the Hall and the Canal, which is the main feature of the CA. There is no management plan in place, so it is not possible to know if there are other specific features that would increase the susceptibility above medium, but as only some limited parts of the CA have susceptibility, a medium rating overall is considered fair. | Medium |
| Receptor Sensitivity | The high to medium value coupled with a medium susceptibility gives an overall sensitivity of medium. | Medium |

| Landscape Designations | | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| LD2 : Grand Western Canal Local Nature Reserve (LNR) | | |
| Category | Assessment | Grading |
| Receptor Description | The canal is also designated as a Local Nature Reserve, although unlike the CA, this designation follows the canal boundary tightly and does not deviate into adjacent land. From representations made to the previous planning application on the site, it is known that there is a 3metre strip on the south side of the canal that is also managed for biodiversity. | N/A |
| Receptor Value | Although it is a local designation, the LNR is considered to be a high value receptor due to its role and function as an ecological resource for the site and local area. It is also valued by local people as a landscape resource. | High |
| Susceptibility to Change | The susceptibility of the asset if generally high, however it is very localised, and the red line of the site sits to the south of the LNR asset. As such while there is susceptibility to the type of development proposed, it is very localised to the edge of the site, and as such should be considered medium to low overall. | Medium to Low |
| Receptor Sensitivity | A high value receptor with medium to low susceptibility results in an overall grading of medium sensitivity. | Medium |