



## **Peripheral landscape study – Milborne Port**

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## **1) Background to the study:**

1.1. The forthcoming South Somerset Local Development Framework (LDF) will be required to allocate new development sites for both housing and employment for the period 2006-2026, with the focus of major growth placed upon Yeovil, thereafter the district's major towns and rural centres. As part of the process of finding suitable sites for development, a landscape study is commissioned to assess the capacity of the settlement fringe to accommodate new development in a landscape-sympathetic manner. The study addresses 13 settlements within the district, and will complement other evidence-based work that will contribute to the LDF process.

1.2 PPS 7 commends the approach to the identification of countryside character developed by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and suggests that it can assist in accommodating necessary change due to development without sacrifice of local character and distinctiveness. National landscape guidelines similarly advise that visual impact can be determined as being significant when judged against the context and sensitivity of the landscape, and where there is an incompatibility of scale and character between a proposal and the attributes of the receiving landscape: Consequently this landscape study seeks to evaluate both the landscape character and visual sensitivity of each settlement, to enable an assessment of their capacity to absorb additional development, and an indication of potential growth areas (areas of highest capacity).

1.3 Each assessment will establish and refine a study area for each settlement in 3-stages;

i) Using the settlement centre as fulcrum, a circle is drawn to include and contain the furthestmost spread of development, to thus define an area within a radius encompassing all growth associated with that settlement. This central focus is for the purpose of seeking settlement growth in close proximity to the town's commercial centre.

ii) Where pertinent, a second line is drawn beyond the town boundary, at a set distance from the current edge (the distance proportional to settlement size) to allow potential for a coherent urban extension alongside the town's current extent.

iii) Finally, these lines are adjusted to coincide with established and credible landscape boundaries to thus establish the study area. Adjacent villages in close proximity may be included within the study, to enable their separate identity to be considered in relationship to the main settlement.

### **Structure of the report.**

1.4 A general description of the settlement acts as a preface to a character study of both the settlement and its surround. The sensitivity of the local landscape's character is then assessed, particularly in relationship to development form, alongside an appraisal of the visibility of each site, and its visual sensitivity. The potential of each study area's capacity to absorb an impact of built form and associated development is then evaluated using these character and visual profiles, with constraints factored into a capacity matrix, to arrive at an indication of potential development sites.

1.5 This study considers Milborne Port.

## **2) The settlement**

2.1 Milborne Port lays within and alongside a shallow valley formed by a headwater tributary of the River Yeo within the gentle folds of the East Somerset Hills. It is located some 12km east of Yeovil, and is served by the A30 trunk road, which passes through the village core. It was formerly a royal Saxon borough, with its own pre-Domesday market and mint, and a minster of Saxon origins. The village thrived on market trade throughout the middle ages, whilst cloth weaving became the prime industry with an increasing emphasis on sailcloth from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and gloving from the mid-19<sup>th</sup>. Residential development in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was motivated by conflicting political aspirations, which lead to the building of “Newtown” to the west of the village, whilst in the last 50 years Milborne Port has seen steady growth to the north of the A30, and now has a population approaching 3000 residents.

2.2 The village has grown primarily to the north and northwest from its compact Saxon core, though its centre and main commercial area remain concentrated around the High Street (A30). Residential growth initially spread from this core to the side of the River Gascoigne valley, and along East Street in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with the separate development of Newtown to the west. The past 60 years has seen moderate growth between the roads that converge toward the core from the north, to form two moderately-scaled areas of housing to either side of the central valley. The former cloth and gloving employment areas are now dedicated for residential development, hence the commercial area aside, there are few employment areas within the village.

2.3 The immediate landscape setting of the village is the valley centred upon the River Gascoigne, as defined by the broad crown of Vartenham Hill’s eastward falling dip-slope to the west of the parish, and the wooded escarpment of East Hill to the east. To the south, a continuation of that escarpment sweeps through Crendle, Hanover and Goat Hills to provide enclosure to the valley, which is characterised by the open parkland and mixed woodlands originally associated with Ven House. To the north, the setting is less defined, but broadly coincides with the elevated ground associated with Combe, Broad and Stout Hills that lay in close proximity to the main London – Exeter rail line, to thus place the village in a hill-encircled vale.

### **Identification of the study area**

2.4 Based upon the methodology outlined in para 1.3, the extent of the Milborne Port study area is broadly defined by a line that follows the head of East Hill before crossing the valley from Crendle Hill Court to the south of Venn Farm to join the Goat Hill road coincident with the southernmost point of Ven Park’s Avenue. It then follows the county boundary northwest by Crackmore Wood to its rail crossing, whereafter following the rail line toward Milborne Wick. It then heads across the valley above Kingsbury Regis, following field boundaries east to rejoin East Hill by Old Bowden Way, to complete the limit of the study area, as indicated on figure 1 – context.

### 3) Landscape Character

#### The national context:

3.1 Landscape character assessment is an approach that aids recognition and understanding of the differences between landscapes, and states what constitutes local distinctiveness. In 1996, the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) undertook a national study of the character of England's landscape, to enable definition and description of the range and diversity of the English landscape, and its categorisation into 'character areas'. This study was published as a national map, with accompanying regional volumes that describe the resultant areas in detail. Volume 8: South West England, places Milborne Port within *character area 140 - Yeovil Scarplands*.. The key characteristics of these areas as noted by the assessment are:

- i) *A very varied landscape of hills, wide valley bottoms, ridgetops and combes united by scarps of Jurassic limestone.*
- ii) *Mainly a remote rural area, with villages and high church towers.*
- iii) *A wide variety of local building materials including predominantly Ham Hill stone.*
- iv) *Small manor houses and large mansions with landscape parks.*
- v) *Varied land use: arable on the better low-lying land, woodland on the steep ridges and deep combes.*

3.2 The full descriptive text of the Yeovil Scarplands character areas is available on the Natural England website,

[http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/south\\_west/yeovil\\_scarplands.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/south_west/yeovil_scarplands.asp)

Typical of Milborne Port and its surrounding landscape are the following extracts:

*Much of the higher ground has sparse hedge and tree cover with an open, ridgetop, almost downland character. Within the valleys there is a strong character of enclosure and remoteness.*

*Between the scarps and ridges, the clay vales are mostly gently rolling landscapes of medium-size fields with a dominant field pattern extending up and over the rising ground. There are also areas with a strongly rectilinear pattern, which are mostly arable, and others where hedges are low or non-existent and trees largely absent.*

*An intricate network of winding lanes and holloways frames the landscape, contrasting with the straight roads and rectilinear field pattern on the downlands and valley bottoms. They link the numerous villages and hamlets, which are rarely more than two miles apart, while the farmsteads are generally to be found on the spring lines of the sheltered lower slopes and minor valleys. There are also much grander landscapes found around the mansions built from the Elizabethan period onwards such as Montacute, Barrington Court and (Ven) House.*

*Although the area has many settlements, the villages and hamlets tend to lie in the valleys. The farmsteads are generally on the valley sides, so that some views across the downland and ridges give the impression of a sparsely settled land. The most favoured sites, near the streams and rivers, are the locations for towns like Sherborne and Milborne Port, which*

*grew from Saxon burghs to become market towns but still remain small and rural. Settlements are linked by narrow lanes, and the area is cut across by major roads which tend to follow ridgelines or valley bottoms. Smaller lanes and trackways lead from the settlements in the valleys up onto the higher ground.*

*The land is primarily in agricultural use with a mixture of arable, dairying and stock rearing. A very wide range of crops is grown and there are remnant orchards, commonly with poplar shelterbelts. Grassland, however, is the principal land cover, with a range from lush, improved pastures in the valley bottoms to steep hillside pastures. The latter in places run to scrub and many are of nature-conservation interest.*

### **The local context:**

3.3 A historic landscape characterisation study was undertaken by Somerset County Council Heritage team, completed in 2001. This study differentiates between unenclosed, anciently enclosed, and recently enclosed land, and notes ancient woodland sites and historic parkland. The historic character plan for the Milborne Port area indicates much of the village surround to be ‘recently enclosed land’ (undertaken during the 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries) along with the parklands associated with Ven House to south and east. This plan is included at appendix 2, and where pertinent, informs the landscape sensitivity appraisal, section 4.0.

3.4 SSDC undertook a detailed assessment of district-wide character entitled ‘The Landscape of South Somerset’ in 1993. This study places Milborne Port within visual character region (VCR) ‘**Escarments, Ridges and vales east of Yeovil**’. Each VCR is sub-divided into landscape character areas (LCA’s) and the following LCA’s cover the Milborne Port area;

- i) Downland, Combes and Holloways, to the west, and;
- ii) Wooded ridges and clay vales to the east.

3.5 The ‘**Downland, Combes and Holloways**’ LCA covers the majority of the study area, inclusive of the village, and broadly comprises the low hillsides that fall gently toward south-flowing streams that eventually drain to the River Yeo. The assessment identifies and describes the wider area thus;

*These landforms are part of the hill country, which fringes the great central plain (character region 7) and extends from the Dorset borderland north-east to Castle Cary and Bruton.*

*These hills are formed from the Middle and Upper Lias family of rocks overlain with Inferior Oolite limestones. The rocks from the Upper Lias are the familiar Yeovil sands and these, where exposed, give the characteristic landforms and land cover of combe and holloway. The limestones cap the Yeovil Sands and fall away in a shallow eastward dip-slope, which is largely treeless and hedgeless presenting large fields with broad sweeping vistas of ripening cereals.*

*Where the slopes are steepest and soils are thin there are swards of flower-rich calcareous grassland and many of the hills continue to be sheep grazed thus maintaining this botanical interest. These largely treeless hills come close to the equivalent of the Dorset Downs and ‘display graceful feminine contours’ (Newman 1986). In places grazing has relaxed*

*sufficiently to allow scrub to develop, and breaks of slope, particularly at lynchets or boundaries, have thick cloaks of bracken and gorse.*

3.6 The 'Wooded ridges and clay vales' covers the land to the east of the village, which extends toward the Blackmore Vale. This larger area is identified and described by the assessment as follows;

*This character zone is an amalgam of the Fullers Earth Clay vales and ridges and the Forest Marble/Cornbrash ridge. The landforms have more coherence in the south between Milborne Port and Maperton. North of this point the contours become very contorted due to considerable faulting of the underlying rocks.*

*The Fullers Earth give rise to low profile land-forms. A low ridge of Fullers Earth rocks cradles Milborne Port. This limestone ridge is remarkable for its wildlife habitat with herb-rich grassland containing stemless thistle and pyramidal orchard alongside semi-natural ancient woodland at Hanover Wood, Crendle Hill Wood and Everlanes Covert. This feature peters out near Stowell in the Fullers Earth clay vale, which is distinguished by smaller pastoral fields, often waterlogged with marshy reed and sedge filled ditches. Willow trees line the watercourses. Hedges are species-rich and elm is regenerating well.*

*The main physical element in this character zone is the Forest Marble ridge which can be followed from the south to the north. The ridge is a west facing escarpment with a long gently inclined slope terminated by the Cornbrash limestone itself forming an east-facing shallow scarp. This broad ridge is quite heavily wooded compared with the countryside to the west.*

*There are some fine semi-natural ancient woodlands associated with the soils of these geological formations, notably ... Hanover Wood (a Site of Special Scientific Interest). Hedges are of excellent quality containing spindle, wayfaring tree, clematis and many old oaks. Elm is a significant returning component. Verges are extremely floristic with agrimony, hypericum and meadow cranesbill particularly eye-catching. Drainage is eastwards and the streams occupy their own heavily-wooded confining valleys. Fields are irregular shaped and pastoral and there is an ancient feel to the countryside. Grassland sites are amongst the habitats most threatened by 'improvement' but survivors can be found in this area. There are ... calcareous grasslands on the limestone ridges. The best examples of this are the Fullers Earth rock north of Milborne Port and the oolitic rocks around Milborne Wick.*

3.7 To better facilitate the subsequent sensitivity evaluation, the area is subdivided to reflect local variation in landscape character, as follows;

- i) **Vartenham Hill and dipslope**, which describes the gently falling farmland that lays to the west of the village;
- ii) **River valley**, which identifies the immediate valley associated with the River Gascoyne, both above and within the village;
- iii) **Kingsbury vale**, which is the gentle vale that lays to the east of Kingsbury Regis;
- iv) **Southern parkland**, which covers the historic parkand garden associated with Ven house, plus adjacent estate land, and;

- v) **East Hill**, which is the steep escarpment and hilltop that cradles Milborne Port to the east of the village.

3.8 The resultant 5 local landscape character areas noted above are indicated on figure 2 – landscape sensitivity.

#### 4) Landscape sensitivity

4.1 Landscape sensitivity can be gauged from an assessment of landscape character in respect of how intact and well expressed its character is, along with its condition and time-depth. Negative factors to influence a sensitivity assessment will include detractors to local character. As this project is reviewing the likely impact of urban development upon its rural fringe, the prospect of new build relative to its context will be the prime consideration in this sensitivity appraisal, as will the extent of remoteness from urban form. Looking at each local landscape area in turn, the outcome of this stage of the study will be to grade areas of Milborne Port periphery as possessing either high, moderate or low landscape sensitivity to development. The resultant areas are indicated on figure 2 – landscape sensitivity.

4.2 The previous chapter noted that two landscape character areas are identified as falling within the study area. The larger area is that of the 'Downland, Combes and Holloways' which is subdivided according to local variation in landscape type. Taking these sub-divisions in turn (as identified para 3.7) the first local character area to be considered is that of Vartenham Hill and its associated dipslope.

##### **Vartenham Hill and dipslope (character area A)**

4.3 Vartenham Hill is an open shoulder of land that extends north from Crackmore Wood to contain the village on its west side. The hill's west face is a pasture escarpment with sporadic scrub cover on the steepest slopes that look away from Milborne Port and has no correspondence with the village. From the open head of the hill, a gentle dip slope falls east toward the River Gascoigne valley, which is overlain by a rectilinear enclosure pattern that is broadly orientated on an NNE-SSE axis corresponding to the head of Vartenham Hill. The field boundaries are expressed by enclosure hedgerows in most part, and it is notable that whilst the majority of the fields are mid-large scale, a series of small pastures are also enclosed within the larger fieldscape, primarily concentrated to the south of Newtown, and contained between Furlong Lane, Combe Hill and Manor Road to the north of the village. Newtown lays somewhat separate from the village, to the west of Gainsborough, and obtrudes into the open landscape, yet is contained by the rectilinear field pattern. Mature planting around its edges softens the impact of its built form upon the wider landscape.

4.4 The rural landscape of this character area is generally open, as is typical of the local 'download' landscape. With this openness maintained and the hedgerow pattern of recent enclosure relatively intact, the majority of this area is graded **high** sensitivity. Exceptions occur to the west of Newtown; where some hedgerow removal has taken place, and to its north where hedges are close-cropped and treeless. Fields to the east of Coombe Hill Farm are large scale, and a similar close-cropping of hedges and a lack of landscape features has eroded the local character to a degree. These areas are thus graded as being of **moderate** sensitivity, along with the tight matrix of pastures to the north of Manor Road's housing, where adjacent development has eroded the hedgerow pattern. One final area of rough pasture to the south of Court Road is graded **low** sensitivity as it is enclosed by urban housing on 3 sides and has lost its internal hedgerows.

### **Gascoigne river valley (character area B).**

4.3 The River Gascoigne runs south through the village core and much of this local area is characterised by an intricate pattern of housing and narrow village lanes. To the north of Manor Farm, the valley appears sunken below the general level of the topography, and there is a strong sense of enclosure resultant from the indented landform. To the south of the village, as demarcated by the A30 road, the valley is less enclosed as the higher land falls away and the river is delineated by willows. Both areas are characterised by pasture and hedgerow containment and present an intricate enclosed character that provides some variety to Milborne Port's wider, open surround. The area is thus graded **high** sensitivity.

### **Kingsbury Vale (character area C)**

4.6 The Kingsbury Vale is a shallow valley that is formed around a south-flowing tributary stream of the River Gascoigne, laying between the high ground that coincides with Station Road north to Kingsbury Farm, and the steep escarpment of East Hill. As with the Vartenham Hill dip slope, the field pattern reflects recent enclosure, presenting a rectilinear pattern that is broadly orientated on Wheathill Lane as its ENE axis. These field boundaries are particularly well-expressed below East Hill and east of Kingsbury Farm by robust hedgerows, inclusive of specimen trees, and with the pattern intact, these areas are graded **high** sensitivity. The remaining fields lay in a single concentration against the village edge and extend north from Wheathill Lane to Henning Way housing's east edge, other than the single field by Bazzleways, which is contained both by housing and mature tree lines. This area is open and has a close relationship with urban form and is indented by both the village playing fields and cemetery. With their defining hedgerows cut short and the general openness allowing urban character to pervade beyond the urban edge, this group of fields is consequently graded **moderate** sensitivity.

### **Southern Parkland (character area D)**

4.7 This local character area lays to the south and southeast of the village, and encompasses the farmer parkland associated with Ven House along with estate land and wooded shelterbelts in the vicinity of Bowling Green. The area is cradled by wood-covered hills, and is primarily open pasture other than relic plantings associated with the historic park and garden. Hedgerows are not present within the parkland, and the contrast between the park's open sweep of grassland, and the heavily wooded escarpment that frame the park, is striking. Whilst the formal gardens and adjacent plantations of the Ven House grounds faithfully preserve the ethos of the historic site, it is evident that the wider parkland has lost a number of its designed features, most notably the double avenue of specimen elm running northeast toward East Hill; specimen tree groups; and larger plantations. Whilst the parkland is not in pristine condition through much of the area, there is sufficient evidence of the former woody structure, and open grassland, to present the parkland character, thus the majority of this area is graded **high** sensitivity. There are three exceptions: The first is the group of fields that meet at Canon Court Farm, where large agricultural buildings, post and wire field divisions and concrete roadways have eroded parkland character; second, in the fields between the Ven House frontage and the village southeast edge, where the loss of avenue trees and

tree groups has created an open featureless vantage between Ven House and the village contrary to the historic layout; and finally, the land in immediate proximity to Venn Farm, where agricultural buildings and storage areas are an incongruous built element within the wider parkland setting. These areas are graded **moderate** sensitivity.

#### **East Hill (character area E)**

4.8 This area lays to the east of the village, and is the escarpment that both contains and overlooks Milborne Port. For much of its length, this escarpment is covered by ancient semi-natural woodland, which contributes strongly to the setting of the settlement. Where the escarpment is open, its cover is permanent pasture with an intensive wild flora. Consequently this whole area is graded **high** sensitivity.

## 5) Visual sensitivity

5.1 This section identifies the location and extent of the visual envelope that contains Milborne Port, and the nature of those landscape elements that visually buffer the town from an external perception. It then reviews first the intervening land between the town's edge and its immediate envelope; and second the land outside this envelope; to assess its visual relationship with Milborne Port, and prime sensitive receptors, along with identifying valued views and vantage points, and visual detractors. From this a measure of visual sensitivity to development will be graded low, moderate or high. The resultant sensitivity areas are indicated on figure 3 – visual sensitivity.

### Visual envelope and containment

5.2 It has been noted the village lays within a hill-encircled vale. This elevated containment runs from Stout Hill in the north, following an escarpment that runs south through East and Crendle Hills before sweeping southwest along Hanover and Goathill's wooded hilltops toward Sherborne Park. To the west, the high ground associated with Highmores and Vartenham Hills provide a similar containment, whilst high ground at the head of the Wick road completes the link to provide a rim of elevated ground that closes out most lines of view toward the village.

5.3 Occasional individual long views can be gained from high ground in the vicinity of Toomer Hill some 3 km to the east, and Southern Hill, Poyntington, 1.5 km to the west, that glimpse the elevated west edge of Newtown that lays above and somewhat disassociated from the main village concentration. These vantage points are few, and have only a partial sight of the village edge as expressed by Newtown's edge, due either to intervening landform, woodland cover, and the low trajectory line of view. As there is negligible perception of the settlement, and the few vantage points are minor public rights of way, they are discounted as having any substantive bearing on this sensitivity assessment.

5.4 Thus the settlement's visual envelope – which defines its zone of visual influence – can thus be relatively tightly drawn to the settlement's close surrounds, broadly following along the head of the encircling hills as described in para 5.2 above.

### Visual profile of Milborne Port's immediate edge

5.5 Within the confines of both study area, and the settlement's visual envelope, the main open areas of Milborne Port's periphery can be identified as;

- i) land to the north of the A30 (Crackmore) and west of Gainsborough/Combe Hill;
- ii) fields between Coombe Hill and Station Road;
- iii) land between Station Road and Wheathill Lane;
- iv) the area contained between Wheathill Lane and Ven House and Gardens, and;
- v) land between Ven House and Gardens and the A30 (Crackmore)

Area (i)

5.6 Land to the north of Crackmore is visually contained from the south by the mature shelterbelts that align the A30. From the village edge, the land rises gently to the low shoulder of Vartenham Hill, which provides a backdrop to the village as viewed from East Hill (photo 2), and contains its growth. This hilltop and associated high ground is graded as **high** sensitivity as its head contains and obscures development form as viewed from public vantage points to the west. Closer to the village edge, fields to either side of Newtown - which after 150 years is yet viewed as having a degree of detachment from the main residential areas of Milborne Port - are graded as **moderate** sensitivity, for whilst the village edge is clearly defined by the Gainsborough/Combe Hill road and associated hedgelines (photo 9) these edge areas do not share the prominent visual profile as that of the hilltop to the west.

Area (ii)

5.7 Between Combe Hill and the course of the River Gascoigne, the land falls gently to the east, before rising steeply to a low finger of land that extends along Station Road north from Kingsbury Regis, separating the Gascoigne valley from the lesser vale to its east. The higher ground above Wick Road has some prominence when viewed from the east (photo 5) and the open fields are also notable for providing a substantial contrast of landcover and scale to that of the settlement's roofscape. This elevated open land is thus graded **high** sensitivity, as is the Station Road approach to the village, whose edge is obscured in most part from wider vantage by the woody presence surrounding Kingsbury House.

5.8 Closer to the village edge a series of small paddocks lay to the north of Manor Road's housing enclosed on 3 sides by residential plots. Despite this built containment, the scale of the field group is sufficiently large to maintain an agricultural profile, and given the site's skyline location relative to the village edge (photo 6) this area is graded **moderate** sensitivity, as is open land to the east of the Wick Road, which whilst possessing a visual profile that is locally contained, and lays against the village edge, is strongly rural in its expression (photo 7). Finally, two areas are graded **low** sensitivity; land laying in the Gascoigne valley by Manor Farm, which abuts the settlement edge and is barely perceptible to external perception; and a small field to the south of Court Lane, which also has a low visual profile, and is already contained by housing to 3 sides (photo 8).

Area (iii)

5.9 The land that lays between Kingsbury Regis and East Hill, to the north of Wheathill Lane, is a narrow valley where the land falls away from the village edge prior to rising sharply to the head of the East Hill escarpment. This escarpment forms an attractive backdrop to the town, which is primarily wooded, and one of the defining characteristics of Milborne Port's setting. It is thus graded **high** sensitivity, along with those open fields to the north and east of the village, that are both at distance from its built edge, and with no clear intervisibility, to thus be seen as part of the wider countryside in views from East Hill (photos 3 and 5). Conversely, land alongside the village edge is at similar elevation, and has a clear visual correspondence with this edge. In closer proximity, these fields are graded

**moderate** sensitivity, other than a single pasture by 'Bazzelways' (photo 4) which is contained and integrated into village form by tree belts, and given its close relationship with adjacent built form, is graded **low** sensitivity.

#### Area (iv)

5.10 To the south of Wheathill Lane, the wooded hillsides fall swiftly from Crendle Hill to the open parkland that sweeps across the southeast quadrant of the village towards the wooded plantations that frame the setting of Ven House. These wooded 'bookends' both dominate and frame local vistas toward the village, and with the parkland to the fore in the village's east approach (A30) much of this area is graded **high** sensitivity. The only exception is that open land at the immediate village edge, where there is insufficient containment to prevent clear intervisibility between the built edge and the countryside, over a length of the village edge that clearly intrudes into the countryside, between East Street and the Wheathill Lane plant nursery (photo 2). This area is graded **moderate** sensitivity.

#### Area (v)

5.11 The swathe of land between Ven House and Crackmore Wood rises steadily west from the valley bottom as denoted by the course of the River Gascoigne. Crackmore Wood and the adjacent Highmore Hill provides both backdrop to and containment of the village to its west, and is prominent in local views (photo 2). This area is thus graded **high** sensitivity, as are the plantations that buffer the village from Ven House and its gardens, for their containment of the village from the wider countryside, and the southern extent of the former parkland, which is sufficiently detached from the village to be seen within the context of the wider countryside. Whilst land to the south of Canon Court Farm also has a fair degree of detachment from the village, it is an open area that has a limited visual profile, and is dominated by modern agricultural structures whose presence pervades across the open fields. The area is thus graded **moderate** sensitivity, along with a small group of fields framed by the hedgelines of Goathill Road and Goldings Lane to thus minimise its visual profile to an external perception (photo 10).

#### **Visual profile of land beyond Milborne Port's visual envelope.**

5.12 Finally, a narrow length of countryside lays outside the immediate visual envelope of the village, yet inside the study area. This comprises the outward face of both Vartenham and Highmore's Hills, which have no visual correspondence to the settlement, and lay within a wholly rural landscape, open to a broad visual perception. This area is consequently graded high sensitivity.

## 6) Value and Constraints

6.1 The study to date has already noted a number of landscape and historic areas of interest, and their intrinsic value will have already been weighted in the report. However, areas of wildlife value (and their margins) plus sites with specific cultural association or high recreational and amenity value are also considered, as are the topographical constraints of floodplain and slope, as factors that may limit potential - and thus a capacity - for development. These elements are indicated on figure 4; values and constraints.

6.2 There are a number of designated wildlife sites in close proximity to Milborne Port, primarily relating to the Fullers Earth escarpment to the east of the village. These include the East Hill CWS (county wildlife site) which is a species-rich unimproved calcareous grassland, and East Hill and Crendle Hill Woods, which are both ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland designated as a CWS. To the west of the town by Newtown, is Newtown Paddock, a small CWS of unimproved pasture, designated primarily for its butterfly interest, and Vartenham Hill CWS, which is a species-rich unimproved grassland.

6.3 The village is served by a series of rights of way and local lanes that radiate out from its core, and these are a well-used recreational resource. Those that link with East and Crendle Hills are particularly well used.

6.4 The River Gascoigne has associated areas prone to flooding (identified as flood zones 2 and 3 by the EA) that lay in immediate proximity to its course, whilst spreading in area to the southeast of the village, where the valley widens. Whilst only a partial constraint to development in the past, it is recognised that floodplain is regarded as an undesirable area for development, and without associated attenuation and balancing features being built into any development, its form, extent and type will be constrained by flood risk.

6.5 A small portion of residential Milborne Port has been built over rising ground, and in areas of marked slope, an adverse visual impact of building mass is clear. It is also accepted that building over steep slopes is contrary to sustainability objectives, for the increased energy and resources expended in detailed cut and fill works; additional import and use of construction materials; and the difficulty of achieving appropriate urban densities, are all negative factors. Visually, building mass over rising ground is difficult to mitigate, and can be an adverse and dominant element in the townscape. Hence slopes in excess of 15° are indicated as placing a constraint on development form, and will be factored into the capacity equation – though in the main, the steepest slopes are removed from the settlement's edge.

## 7) Landscape Capacity of Urban Periphery

7.1 In sections 4 and 5 of this report, both landscape character and visual sensitivities have been assessed, graded and mapped (figures 2 and 3). A landscape's capacity to accommodate built development will be the direct converse of the overall sensitivity judgement (a matrix representation of both character and visual sensitivities, see appendix 1) unless specific landscape values or development constraints are significant enough to reduce capacity one grade lower. The capacity plan for Milborne Port resulting from application of the matrix is indicated on figure 5 – landscape capacity.

7.2 The resultant plan indicates the study area divided into 5 broad categorisations of landscape capacity to accommodate built development, graded high; moderate-high; medium; moderate-low; and low, coloured red; orange; yellow; green and blue respectively. As the aim of this study is to identify land that has the capacity to be developed without too adverse an impact upon the landscape resource, it follows that those areas categorised as high and moderate-high capacity, and in a credible relationship with the village, should be investigated as potential development sites.

7.3 Two areas of land with potential for development can thus be identified on the landscape capacity plan, being:

- i) to the south of Court Lane, between Higher Kingsbury and Wick Road's residential areas, and;
- ii) to the west of Bazzleways, north of Wheathill Lane.

7.4 **Area (i)** indicates two fields that are contained on 3 sides by established residential areas. The open boundary abuts Court Lane to the north, with open fields beyond the lane that are defined and contained by mature hedgerows. With this clear correspondence with adjacent residential form, further housing growth would appear to be the most appropriate form of development in this location.

7.5 A single field contained by Station Road and Wheathill Lane, and characterised by housing development around Bazzleways House (**Area ii**) is indicated with a capacity for development. As with the previous area, the current village edge alongside this field is primarily characterised by housing, consequently further development of a residential character is noted as being appropriate in this location. A distinctive feature of this site are the bounding mature tree lines, which would be retained to provide a mature setting to any future development.

## 8) Outline Proposals

8.1 Two potential areas of development have been identified by the landscape capacity plan, and their potential uses outlined in the previous section, paras 7.3 - 7.5. This final section of the report provides further guidance on the form of development acceptable in landscape terms, any necessary mitigation, and an indication of the potential extent of development.

8.2 To the south of Court Lane, an area in the region of 1.5ha is indicated as appropriate for development, with housing the preferred option for the site. Whilst the area is contained on 3 sides by residential form, it is also noted that the land falls unevenly across the site, and that adjacent housing is built at a modest density, thereby suggesting that housing densities should not rise above 35dph. Commensurate open space will contribute to site amenity and is unlikely to rise above 0.14ha, as based upon the figures set out in LP policy CR2. Road access would be from Court Lane, whose north-side hedgerow would provide some visual buffering from the wider countryside.

8.3 In the vicinity of Bazzleways, an area approaching 3ha is suggested as an infill plot for housing on the east side of the village. With the land relatively flat, and well-contained visually, build densities approaching 40dph are feasible in this area. It has been noted that the site is fringed by mature specimen trees, which characterise this part of the village, and these should be retained. To accommodate the retention of these trees, sufficient open space within the housing layout should be allocated alongside the trees, which is likely to be above local plan standards. An area circa 0.60ha is advised as a minimum amenity open space provision, located by the tree belts, leaving 2.4ha maximum available for housing.

8.4 In summary, the following are put forward:

- |     |                 |   |   |
|-----|-----------------|---|---|
| i)  | S of Court Lane | - | 1.36ha residential allocation (@ 35dph)<br>0.14ha amenity open space                    |
| ii) | By Bazzleways   | - | 2.40ha residential (@ 40dph)<br>0.60ha open space and structural<br>landscape provision |

8.5 The capacity study indicates that Milborne Port has limited scope for landscape-sympathetic growth. The above sites are proposed to maximise that available scope, and offer a potential total of 3.76ha of residential land, which if built at the densities suggested above, equates to a net total in the region of 140 houses. Arising from this capacity study, it is clear that the resultant growth areas lay in close relationship with the settlement, and avoid land of high landscape sensitivity. Such location thus offers a potential for planned development that does not adversely impact upon either the immediate setting of the village or its wider landscape context, consistent with this assessments prime objectives.

Robert Archer  
7 October 2008

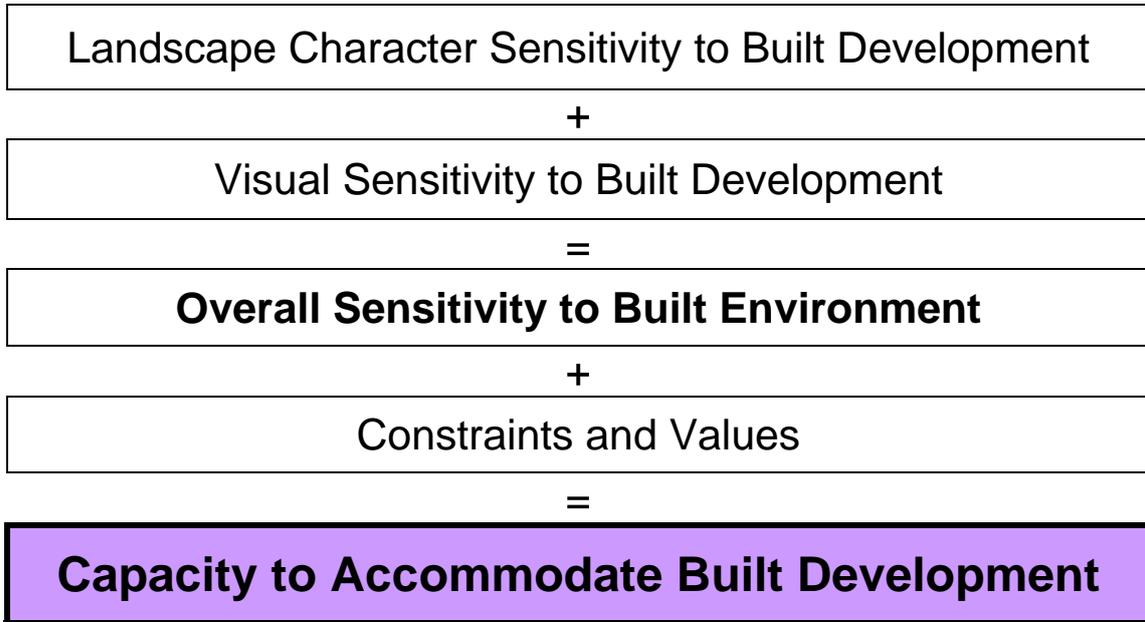


## **Peripheral landscape study – Milborne Port**

### **Appendix 1 - landscape capacity matrix**

### Landscape Capacity Matrix:

A landscape's capacity to accommodate built development will be the direct converse of the overall sensitivity judgement (a matrix representation of both character and visual sensitivities) unless specific landscape values or development constraints are significant enough to reduce capacity one grade lower.



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY	Low	Moderate	Moderate High	High Capacity
	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate Capacity	Moderate High
	High	Low Capacity	Moderate Low	Moderate
		High	Moderate	Low
		VISUAL SENSITIVITY		

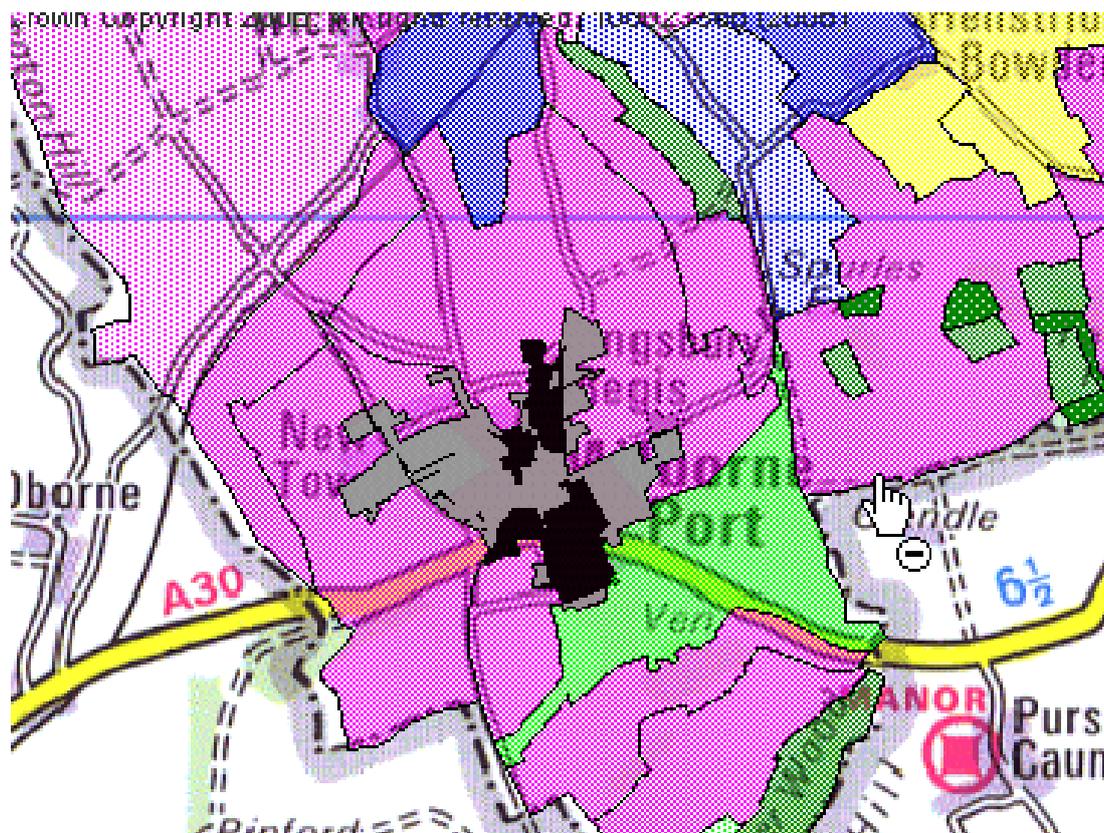
**Landscape Capacity Matrix**

**Peripheral landscape study – Milborne Port**

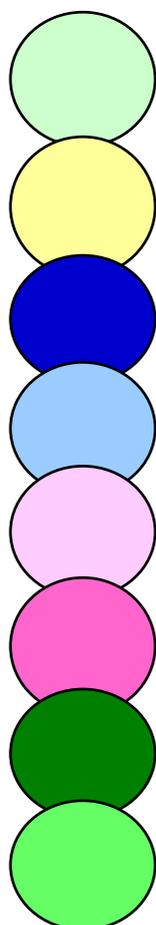
**Appendix 2 - historic landscape character**

## Historic landscape characterisation – Milborne Port

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### key:



Unenclosed pasture

Anciently Enclosed Land pre-17th century. General field size, 6-12ha. Between 25% and 50% boundary loss since 1905.

Anciently Enclosed Land modified 17th to 19th century. General field size, 6-12ha. Less than 25% boundary loss since 1905.

Anciently Enclosed Land modified 19th to 21st century. General field size, 6-12ha. More than 50% boundary loss since 1905.

Recently Enclosed Land 17th to 18th century. General field size 6-12ha. Between 25% and 50% boundary loss since 1905.

Recently Enclosed Land 18th to 21st century. General field size, 3-6ha. Less than 25% boundary loss since 1905.

Replanted ancient woodland (as defined by English Nature).

Historic Parkland

**Peripheral landscape study – Milborne Port**

**Appendix 3 - photos**



Photo 1: From East Hill, looking at the village core in its wider landscape context, and indicating the relationship of village form with Ven House.



Photo 2: from East hill, looking at the nucleus of the village around the A30, with East Street and Wheathill Lane's housing projecting forward



Photo 3: Looking toward the east edge of the village, with the fields between Wheathill Lane and the village recreation ground that indent the village edge by Bazzleways.



Photo 4: The field immediately west of Bazzleways, north of Wheathill Lane, that offers a potential infill site.



Photo 5: From East hill, looking west toward Kingsbury Regis on the right-side mid ground, and Newtown's housing that climbs toward the Vartenham Hill skyline by the village's west edge.



Photot 6: Looking west from the rear of Manor road, toward the single line of housing along Combe Hill, which is viewed as skyline from the village edge.



Photo 7: From the side of the Wick road, looking southeast over the Gascoigne valley, toward housing threaded alongside Station Road.



Photo 8: Looking south toward the village centre, over the grass field that lays to the south of Court Lane and offers a potential 'infill' plot.



Photo 9: From the childrens play area to the south of Newtown, looking toward the mature west edge of the village by Gainsborough.



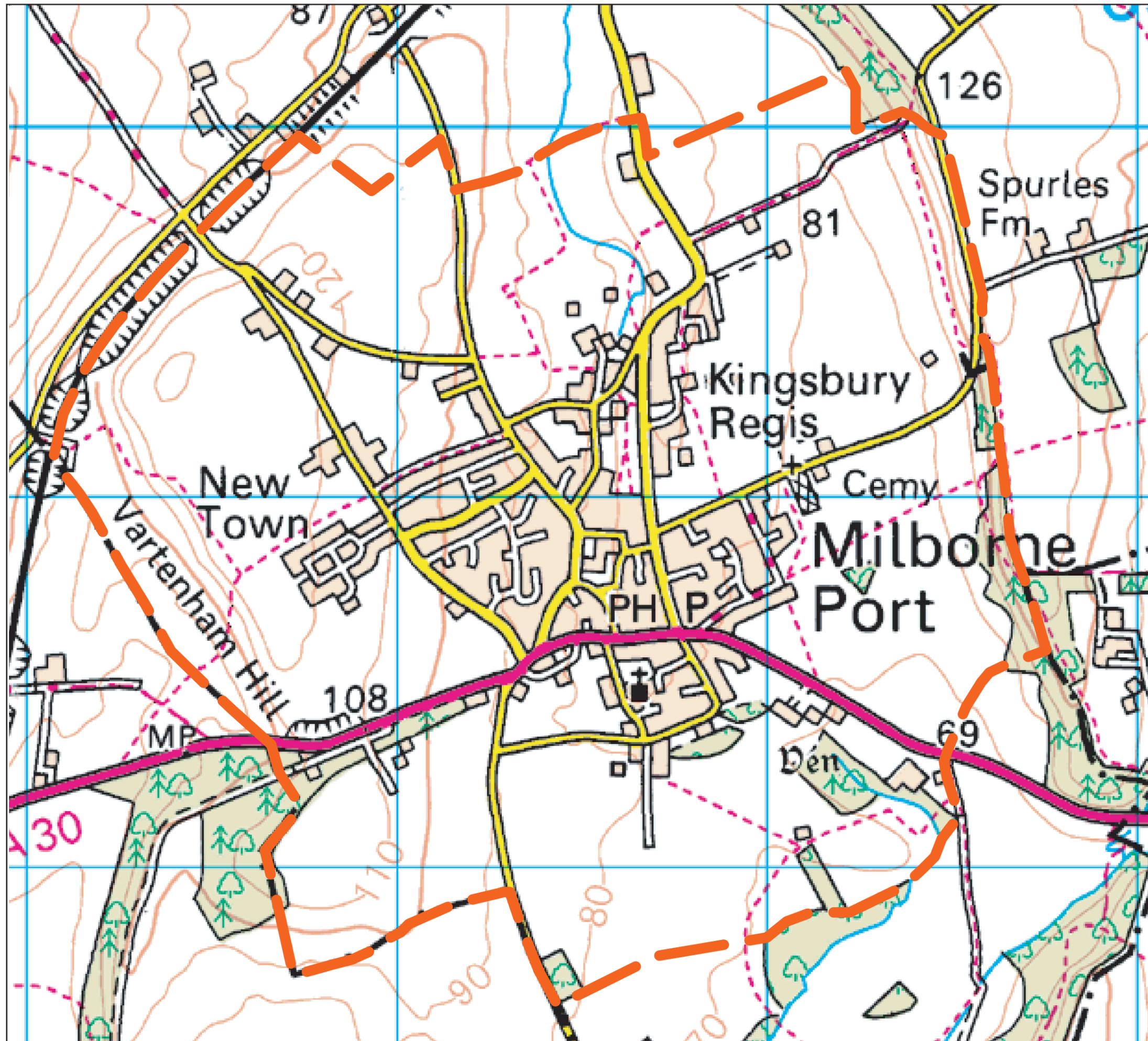
Photo10: Looking ENE toward the parish church and the established south edge of the village, from the junction of Goldings Lane and Goathill road.

**Peripheral landscape study – Milborne Port**

**Appendix 4 - plans**

Figure 1 -  
Context

# Milborne Port



scale 1:10,000 @ A3



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# Figure 2 - Landscape Sensitivity Milborne Port

 Local Landscape Character Areas

- A - Vartenham Hill & Dipslope
- B - River Valley
- C - Kingsbury Vale
- D - Southern Parkland
- E - East Hill

 Local Plan allocations & development sites

 Area of low landscape sensitivity

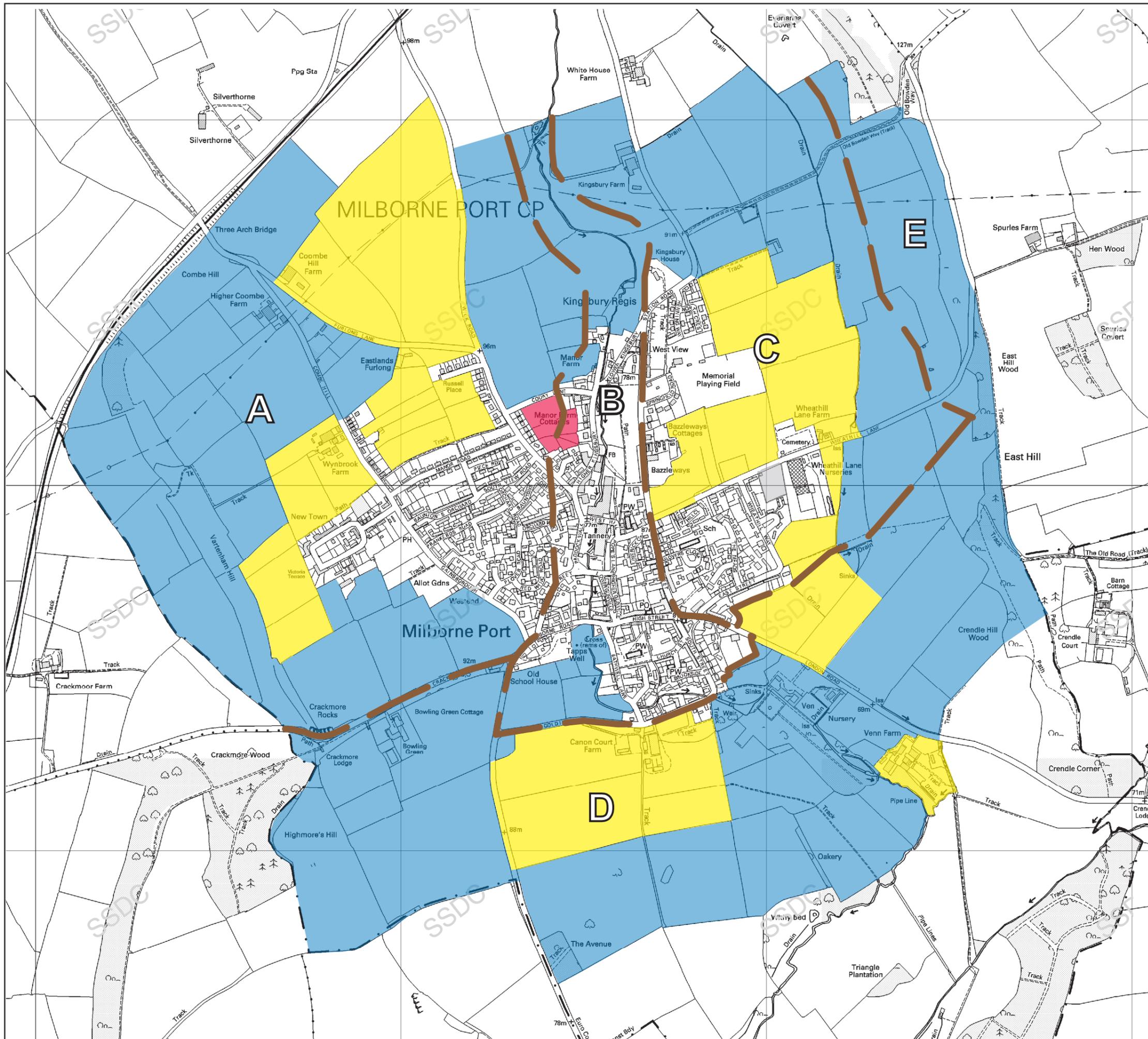
 Area of moderate landscape sensitivity

 Area of high landscape sensitivity

scale 1:10,000 @ A3

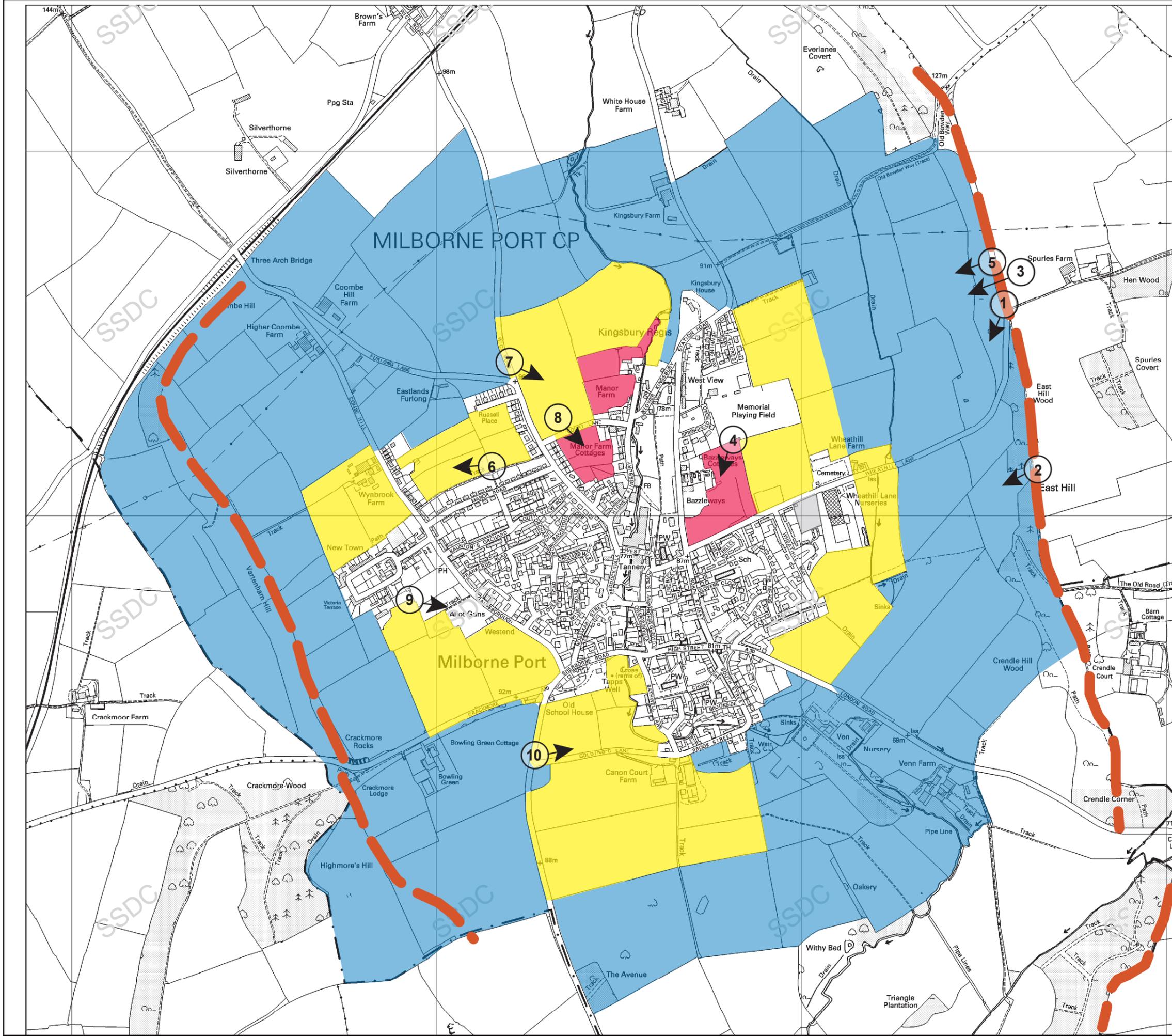


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# Figure 3 - Visual Sensitivity Milborne Port

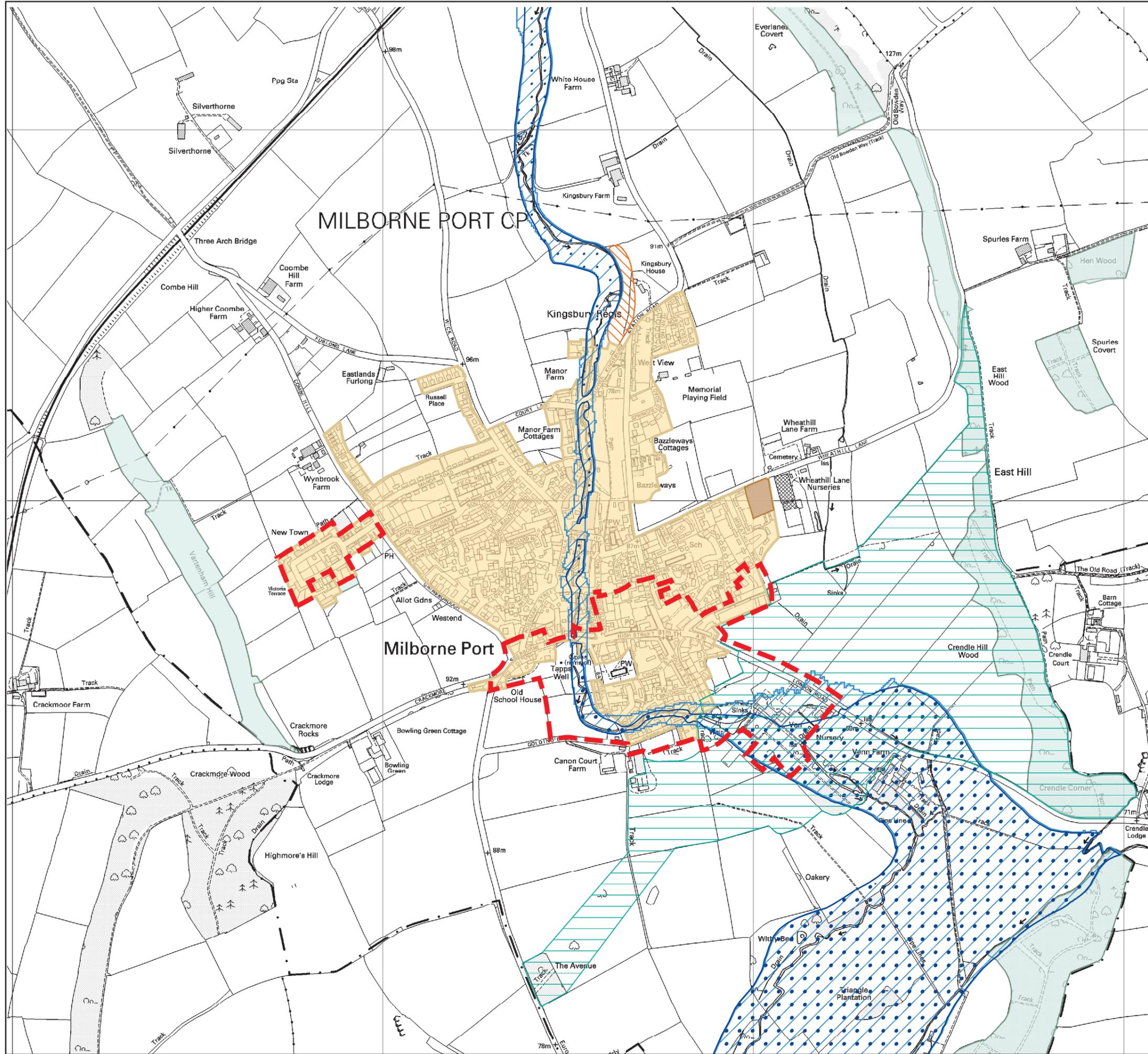
-  Prime line of Visual Containment
-  Photo Vantage Points
-  Local Plan housing allocations
-  Area of low visual sensitivity
-  Area of moderate visual sensitivity
-  Area of high visual sensitivity



scale 1:10,000 @ A3

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# Figure 4 - Value & Constraints Milborne Port



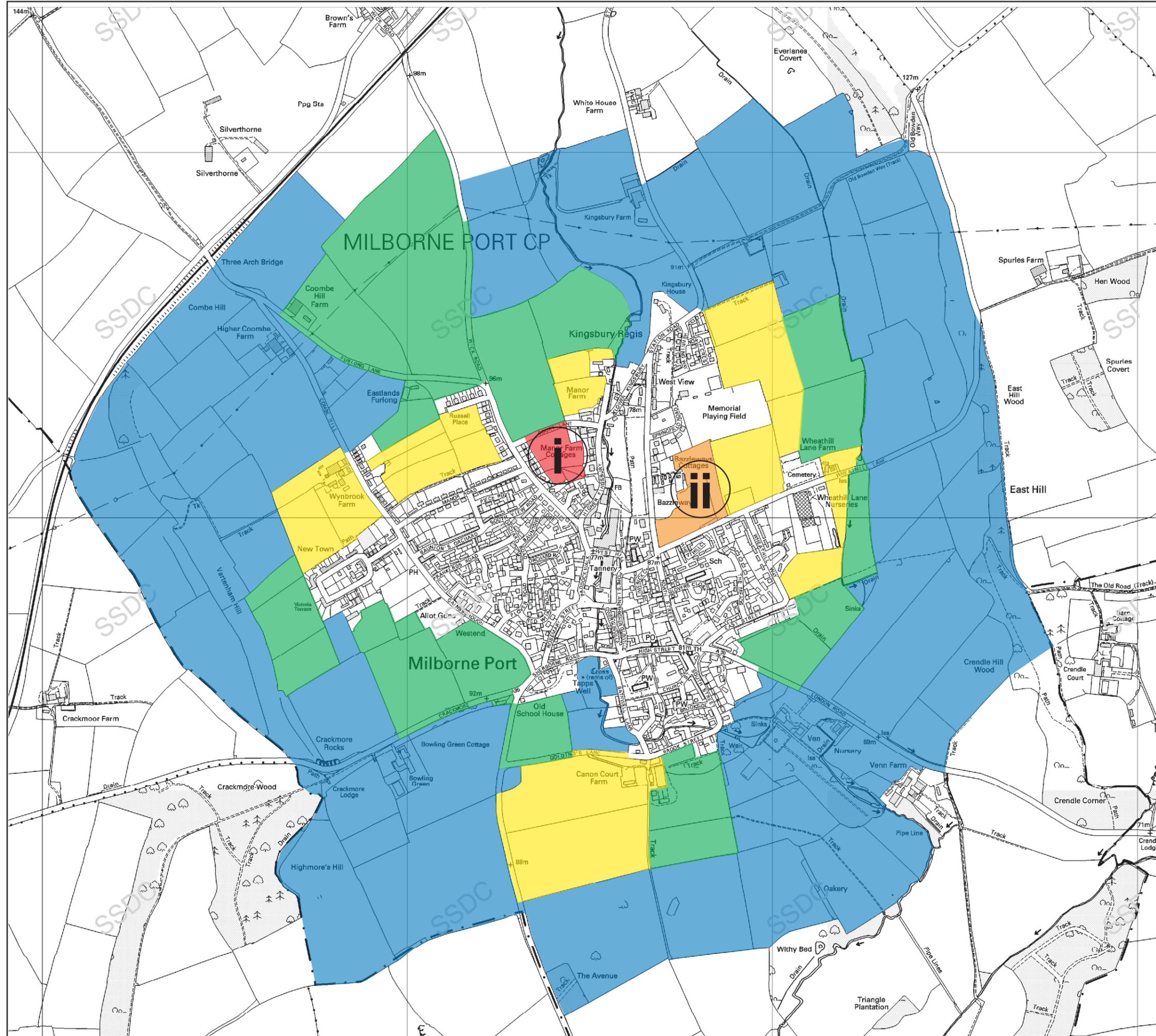
-  Development Area
-  Local Wildlife Sites
-  Conservation Area
-  Development Allocations
-  Historic Parks & Gardens
-  Flood Zone 2
-  Flood Zone 3
- (The above categories as defined in the South Somerset Local Plan)
-  Areas of pronounced slope

scale 1:10,000 @ A3



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# Figure 5 - Landscape Capacity Milborne Port



- Landscape with a high capacity to accommodate built development
- Landscape with a moderate-high capacity to accommodate built development
- Landscape with a moderate capacity to accommodate built development
- Landscape with a moderate-low capacity to accommodate built development
- Landscape with a low capacity to accommodate built development
- Potential development areas

scale 1:10,000 @ A3



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