



## Peripheral landscape study – South Petherton

Conservation and Design Unit  
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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 South Petherton.

## **2) The settlement**

2.1 South Petherton lays to the immediate north of the A303 road corridor, 1.5km west of the road's crossing of the River Parrett, amongst the shallow folds of low limestone hills, some 12km west of Yeovil. It is a large village (or small town) with evidence of Romano-British settlement to the northeast of the Saxon core, which is concentrated upon the parish church, in the valley associated with the North Mill brook. A market was established in the twelfth century, with farming the main occupation throughout the middle ages, later supplemented by a local gloving industry and the manufacture of bricks and tiles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The village has undergone steady growth since the mid-twentieth century, and now has a population approaching 3200 residents.

2.2 The village has grown in all directions from its Saxon core, though its centre and main commercial area remains concentrated on St James Street. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, residential growth spread initially along the local lane network extending out from the village centre, whilst the past 60 years has seen the infill of land between these lanes, in the form of moderately-scaled housing estates. The main employment area lays circa 2 km distant from the village, at Lopenhead.

2.3 The immediate landscape setting of South Petherton's historic core lays within the valley formed by the North Mill brook, but its shallow sides has not constrained growth, which has spread onto the higher land associated with Combe and Pitway Hills, to west and east respectively. To the south, the major road alignment and associated earthworks of the A303 draws an emphatic stop to the southern extent of the village, whilst to the north, the village extent is not so clearly defined, with ribbon development scattered along Drove Road, whilst remaining contained within the valley setting.

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

2.4 Based upon the methodology outlined in para 1.3, the extent of the South Petherton study area is broadly defined by a line that runs west along the A303 from its junction with Bridge Way, to the Hayes End roundabout, extending further west by Watergore to follow the alignment of Moordown Lane. The boundary then heads across country to Ben Cross, extending north to cross the Compton Road by Corner Farm, thereafter heading toward Pinsom Hill, before turning east to cross the North Mill Brook by South Somerset Fruit Farm to follow Barcroft Lane toward the foot of Pitway Hill. The study area is completed by a line passing through the grounds of Joylers Mill, running southeast along field boundaries to join Hams Lane, to the point it reaches the A303 to complete the limit of the study area, which is 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 South Petherton 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 area 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) The following extracts are typical of the South Petherton area and its surrounding landscape:

*Rivers like the Parrett and Yeo drain from the higher ground of the Scarplands cutting an intricate pattern of irregular hills and valleys, which open out to the moorland basins.*

*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. Here, as in the land around Ilminster, open fields survived until very recently and the landscape has been very open in character since well before the late Middle-Ages. Streamside willow pollards and alder provide the principal vegetation and streamside pasture survives, threading through many of the vales.*

*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 ridges give the impression of a sparsely settled land. The most favoured sites, near the streams and rivers, are the locations for towns, which grew from Saxon burghs to become market towns but still remain small and rural. There are small hamlets and villages and the use of local stone in the older buildings is a unifying feature within the area. Some of the settlements*

*have substantial and often dominant churches, which serve to emphasise the significance of the stone.*

*The land is primarily in agricultural use with a mixture of arable, dairying and stock rearing. Arable predominates on the good, fertile soils like the Yeovil Sands around South Petherton. 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 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 character plan for the South Petherton area is included at appendix 2, and indicates much of the village periphery to be anciently enclosed land, with modification in the 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Where pertinent, it informs the landscape sensitivity appraisal, section 4.0.

3.4 SSDC undertook a detailed assessment of district-wide character, 'The Landscape of South Somerset' in 1993. This study places South Petherton and its wider surrounds within visual character region (VCR) of '**Ham Hill plateau, Yeovil Sands, Escarpments and valleys**'. Each VCR is sub-divided into landscape character areas (LCAs) and the '**Yeovil Sands Low Hill Country**' LCA is identified as covering the South Petherton study area. The assessment identifies and describes the landscape character area thus;

*The area is densely populated with numerous villages and hamlets. Villages on the Upper and Middle Lias are usually no more than 2 or 3 miles apart, separated by intensely cultivated land. The easily worked soils of the Yeovil Sands have been highly valued and the landscape that has emerged is due to centuries of human endeavour.*

*The landform is a long dip-slope terminating at Barrington, Shepton Beauchamp and Stocklinch, with a shallow scarp formed from the Junction Bed rocks. This represents some of the most fertile farmland in South Somerset. The landscape features are the numerous holloways thickly lined with old hazel, oak, ash and maple coppice. In summer these become long, cool, sun-dappled green corridors, the haunt of speckled wood butterflies and the location of immense badger setts. Otherwise the landscape is relieved by only a few trees and hedges, located mostly near the watercourses.*

*The agricultural land-use around Shepton Beauchamp, South Petherton and Merriott must be amongst the most diverse in Britain. Fields of maize, wheat, rape, flax, peas, potatoes, cabbages, beet and roses can be found alongside huge cider orchards filled with sheep. Woodland is scarce and confined to the scarp slopes near Barrington Court, Whitelackington and at Drayton. The skyline at Over Stratton is dominated by orchard shelterbelts of Lombardy Poplar and willows. The lack of hedges in this area is in part due to agricultural improvement but Havinden (1981) puts it down to the extraordinary lack of influence of the enclosure movement. Despite this lack of traditional hedge pattern there is*

*considerable interest in the diversity of productive land and in the changing colours and textures of each maturing crop.*

3.5 The LCA is sub-divided to reflect local variation in landscape character, to better facilitate the subsequent sensitivity evaluation, as follows;

- i) **Western low hills**, which refers to the rising ground to the west of the village, toward which the Compton Road and Careys Hollow run;
- ii) **Internal valley**, being the shallow valley associated with the North Mill Brook, within which the core of the village lays;
- iii) **Eastern plateau and dip slope**, which identifies the land that falls gently southeast from Stoodham, across which Pitway runs, and;
- iv) **Outer hillsides**, which face away from the village, falling northeast toward the Parrett valley.

3.6 The resultant 4 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 South Petherton's 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 identified the study area as falling within the '**Yeovil Sands Low Hill Country**' landscape character area. This character area is subdivided according to local variation in landscape type. Taking these subdivisions in turn (as identified para 3.5) the first local character area to be considered is that of the '*western low hills*'.

##### **The western low hills (character area A)**

4.1 As noted in the local character study, the low limestone hills are intensively farmed land and whilst much of the irregular field pattern that typifies this anciently enclosed land remains intact, there is little vertical definition of these boundaries: Hedgerows have either been removed, leaving earth banks to delineate the fields, or at best are cut low. This has resulted in an open landscape, into which the village has spread along the outlying lane network, forming fingers of development along Compton Road and Carey's Hollow. This general openness, combined with the spread of development in ribbon form, allows the presence of built form to pervade well beyond its boundaries, hence combined with the indifferent condition of landscape components in this quarter, the sensitivity of the fields that extend out from the village margins are graded **moderate** throughout its edge. An exception is the two small fields that lay between Carey's Hollow and Whitefield Lane, which are graded **low** sensitivity due to effectively being drawn into the village by the presence of built form to their 3 sides, and in being part-defined by coniferous hedging. Conversely, land in the vicinity and to the north of Ben Cross, is sufficiently remote from the village; typical of the farmed Yeovil Scarplands; and possesses a relatively intact landscape pattern, to be graded **high** sensitivity.

##### **The internal valley (character area B)**

4.2 This is the local landscape area within which South Petherton originated, and the greater part of the village yet resides within this valley, which is at its most pronounced between the steep slopes of Combe Hill and Stoodham to the north, whilst opening to a broader, shallow vale to the south of the village, between South and West Streets. This results in two subtly different character areas:

4.3 To the north of the village there is a gradual transition to the countryside, with ribbon development along Drove Road interspersed with small field frontages, extending beyond North Street and the village edge. The North Mill Brook runs

parallel with this development finger and is clearly delineated by backside willows, which merge at the settlements edge with heavily planted large gardens to further blur the distinction between village and countryside. Rising to the northwest side of this valley are the Mere lynchets, tiered levels of medieval origin that are cut into the hillside below Stoodham, which are overlain with permanent pasture and edged with mature hedge lines. With its distinctive character, this localised edge is graded **high** sensitivity, yet elsewhere this village edge is graded **moderate** for it abuts a landscape that has been the subject of hedgerow removal and the loss of small orchards, whose continued presence would ordinarily characterise village edges in this part of the district. Immediately by Palmer Street Farm, a single field is graded **low** sensitivity, having been absorbed into the village edge on three sides whilst lacking any strength of rural expression. Conversely, farmland that lays removed from the village edge running north of Combe Bottom is graded **high** sensitivity, for the landscape pattern is intact and well expressed by the hedgerow pattern, inclusive of occasional specimen trees, and is sufficiently distant from the village edge to lay beyond a sense of urban character.

4.4 South of the village the valley is more open in character, deriving not only from its shallow sides, but also due to limited tree cover. Whilst the pattern is generally intact, some removal of hedgerows and small orchards toward South Street, and the general poor condition of the hedgerows, has resulted in a grading of **moderate** sensitivity, dropping to **low** immediately to the rear of Lamprey's Lane and West Street where the built form of adjacent housing is the dominant characteristic. Conversely, the fields to the south of Morland Farm are irregular in size and scale, and well-expressed by robust hedgerows that are inclusive of specimen trees. With this anciently enclosed pattern being little changed and well expressed, this area is graded **high** sensitivity. Finally, a series of small fields running parallel with West Street on its northwest side, are graded **moderate** for whilst the pattern is intact in most part, it is disrupted by adjacent village form, which impacts upon the boundaries, thus allowing urban character to pervade beyond its edge.

#### **Eastern plateau and dip slope (character area C)**

4.5 The third local area is a long gentle dip-slope that falls southeast from a small plateau in the vicinity of Stoodham. The field pattern reflects recent enclosure, presenting a rectilinear pattern that is broadly orientated on the Fosse Way/Parrett Valley axis, corresponding to the fall of the land. These field boundaries are particularly well expressed to the north of Pitway, where hedgerows are robust, inclusive of specimen trees, and in places running in green lane form. Hence other than a single field by Pitway, where housing has disrupted the field boundary (and subsequently informed a 'moderate' grading) the remainder of the plateau is assessed to be **high** sensitivity.

4.6 Primarily in arable cultivation, the character of the fields below Pitway is of a more open landscape, for some hedgerows have been removed, whilst others are close-cropped. There are few native specimen trees within this part of the study area, yet trees are present in the vicinity of the recreation ground, and more notably to the south of Bridge Way, where lines of poplar and *leylandii* are an incongruous landscape element, made all the more evident due to historic hedge removal in this

area. However, whilst this has brought a major change to the historic landscape character of the land between Bridge Way and Hayes End, the edge of the village is generally well contained by strong hedgelines, and as a consequence this part of the study area is graded **moderate** sensitivity. Further east, in the vicinity and southeast of Hams Field, the field pattern has remained intact and well-expressed, and whilst the land is generally open, this open character is typical of the farmed Yeovil Scarplands in this general vicinity. Double hedgerows define Hamsfield Lane, and there is little sense of South Petherton's presence. Consequently, this area is graded **high** sensitivity. Conversely, two fields between Hams field and Pitway are bound on three sides by built form to be effectively taken into the town's curtilage, whilst hedges are in the most part gappy, in poor condition, and maintained at low level to thus allow built character to pervade throughout the area. They are thus graded **low** sensitivity.

#### **Outer hillsides (Character area D)**

4.7 This area lays primarily to the northeast of the town and looks out over the Parrett Vale, to which the land falls. The land here is a farmed mix of pasture and arable, and the field scale is generally smaller than those overlaying the dipslope to the west. The field boundaries are well hedged though specimen trees are few, increasing in numbers toward the north of Stoodham. An established orchard to the east of the hospital adds to the diversity of the hillsides, and with a singular line of housing and the low profile of the hospital at the head of Pitway Hill being the only sense of the village to the west, the general area is graded **high** sensitivity, other than the single field below the hospital, where the buffer boundary is gappy, and historic hedgerow removal has occurred to partially erode the field pattern, to thus inform a grading of **moderate** sensitivity.

## 5) Visual sensitivity

5.1 This section identifies the location and extent of the visual envelope that contains South Petherton, 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 South Petherton and 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 The character area assessment notes that whilst originating within a valley setting, South Petherton's growth has spread onto its adjacent low hillsides, toward Combe Hill to the west, and along Pitway to the east, to the extent that the village's outer face - as expressed by the hospital site and adjacent housing - now overlooks the Parrett vale. With this manifestation of built form onto higher ground, there is limited visual containment of South Petherton's built extent, with no emphatic landscape feature present to completely close out lines of view toward it. Thus long views toward the village - as it is currently expressed by its extent of built form - can be gained from a number of external vantage points, as follows;

a) The most notable area of public vantage is that of Ham Hill, some 4 km. to the east, from where a number of clear lines of view toward South Petherton from paths and viewpoints within the country park are attained, with the car park by the Stoke- and Norton-sub-Hamdon road junction, and the war memorial being the major vantage points. From here, the full spread of the village can be seen (photo1) with the housing on its east side between Hayes End and Stoodham to the fore, of which the residential areas associated with Pitway, and recent development at Stoodham, are the most prominent areas of development visible. The large open fields below and including Hams Field, are a substantial contrast to built form, and help to maintain a balance of scale between the village and its rural surround. These open fields at the east edge of the village are thus graded **high** sensitivity.

b) A similar yet lower prospect can be gained from the footpath over Cripple Hill above Bower Hinton, some 2km. distant, which looks toward the east side of South Petherton. However, from this location, the village edge is partially obscured by intervening tree groups (photo 2) most notably the large orchard and adjoining shelterbelt in the vicinity of the hospital. It is also clear that the fields falling from the village toward the Parrett Vale are clearly divorced from the core of the village, and are a separate landscape unit. These fields are thus graded **high** sensitivity.

c) There are few viewpoints that look toward the village through the northern quadrant, for whilst there are public vantage points in the vicinity of West Lambrook and at Burrow Hill that have a partial sight of the village edge, their low trajectory, combined with the intervening high ground of Combe and Stoodham hills, and lines of woody vegetation, result in a negligible perception of the settlement

form. The most visible element is the recent housing on elevated ground at Stoodham, which is seen in a profile that has no visible relationship to the village context.

d) From Combe Hill, a low crown of land extends across Careys Hollow south toward Lopenhead, to return east running to the south and parallel with the Fosse Way. This high land forms a primary visual envelope to the village's west and south side that is only overlooked from the head of the Windwhistle ridge, some 8 km to the southwest. From this distance, what can be seen of the village is of such minimal incident within the wider panorama, and does not draw the eye, that it is discounted as having a bearing on this sensitivity assessment.

5.3 The town's wider visual envelope - which defines its ZVI (zone of visual influence) can thus be drawn well beyond the study area to the east, to include the head and west face of Ham Hill, and elevated land by Bower Hinton, to describe a relatively local ZVI that views the village presenting a linear east-facing spread of development that has no visible concentration on the village core, other than implied by sight of the church tower. The envelope is less extensive, diffuse, and more difficult to ascertain to the north of the village, from where little built form is visible, though it can be noted to extend to Burrowhill. From west and south, as noted above, the ZVI is contained to local hillsides, and supplemented by plantations and shelterbelts to place the whole of the study area between Careys Hollow and Hayes End roundabout within the village ZVI. South Petherton's visual envelope is thus closely drawn to its south and west sides.

5.4 Whilst the village's zone of visual influence is most widely drawn to the east, it is also noted that the combination of topography and woody landscape features at the east edge of the village provide a level of both visual containment and definition of the settlement's setting. This combination of high ground and vegetation has significance in obstructing views from lower ground within the Parrett vale, thus a line that follows the head of the outward facing hills is defined as a line of local visual containment. It is acknowledged that this line is disrupted by the hospital and adjacent housing, however, this built outlier of the village is not viewed in the context of the village core, and is small-scale when set against the extent of the hillsides, hence for the purposes of this study it is identified as a secondary visual envelope.

### **Visual profile of South Petherton's immediate edge**

5.5 Within the lines of both the primary and secondary visual envelopes, the main open areas of South Petherton's periphery can be identified as:

- i) Land to either side of Stoodham lane;
- ii) The fields between Pitway and Hayes End;
- iii) The area contained by West street, South street, and the A303;
- iv) Land between Combe Hill and West street, and;
- v) The valley between Stoodham and Combe Hill.

Area (i)

5.6 Land to either side of Stoodham lane is the most elevated part of the study area's east side, and in low-trajectory views toward the village from the northeast quadrant, its skyline intervenes between viewer and settlement. From the higher vantage points of Cripple and Ham Hills, the fields covering the head of the hill are notable for providing a substantial contrast of landcover and scale to that of the outline of recent housing at the village edge, whose light brickwork and tall elevations are an unsympathetic addition to the village edge. In helping to maintain a positive balance of scale of rural surround over the form of the village edge, and in acting to obscure low-trajectory views, this area is graded **high** sensitivity, other than a small pocket of land to the northwest of Pitway, which lays in the 'shadow' of adjacent development to external view, and is thus graded **moderate** sensitivity.

Area (ii)

5.7 A substantial area of farmland runs up to the edge of the village, and is part contained between its extending residential 'arms' of Pitway and Hayes End. Much of this land is already noted (para 5.2) as being of **high** sensitivity, being those fields extending from Hams field, east toward the Parrett Vale, and south toward the A303. Their particular value lays in their overt scale comparable to the adjacent village edge, to thus create a favourable balance of rural land over development form. Exceptions occur; a) between Bridge Way, to the south of the recreation field, and the school playing fields by Hayes End (photo 5) where land lays in the 'shadow' of adjacent poplar/conifer mixed plantations, and thus has a low visual profile, and; b) between the Hospital and Lightgate Lane (photo 4) where the ground is similarly obscured from wider vantage, this time by development form to 3 sides, and a robust external hedge. Both areas are accordingly graded **moderate** sensitivity, as they lay adjacent the village edge, and have a low visual profile, though the individual field immediately against Pitway's development edge is graded **low** as it is dominated by building form, viewed close against an urban backdrop, and has a minor visual profile.

Area (iii)

5.8 The quadrant of land to the south of the village, contained between the A303 and West Street, is primarily open farmland that narrows as it runs north toward the village core, stopping close to the church against an established residential edge (photo 6). This area of the village is contained within the settlement's visual envelope, and is not open to wider external perception, thus its visual profile is both localised and minor. Consequently, the greater part of this quadrant is graded **moderate** sensitivity, falling to **low** where immediately against the housing edges of Lampreys and Hele Lanes, and South Street, to thus be viewed against a developed backdrop. Conversely, rising ground between the A303 and Coles Lane is graded **high** where immediately abutting the A303, as it is an extension of the raised topography forming the visual envelope, to thus provide a degree of containment of the village, whilst its remaining free from built form ensures visual impact does not project beyond current containment. Land to the south of the A303 is also graded high due to its clear detachment from the village, and rural expression.

#### Area (iv)

5.9 The farmland to the west of the village becomes more elevated as it leaves the settlement's west edge, rising gently toward the crown of the low hills that separate South Petherton from Shepton Beauchamp. Becoming visible to the wider view, and thus having a raised visual profile, this land also has a sense of remoteness from the village edge deriving from its elevation, and relationship to the wider rural surround. It is thus graded **high** sensitivity. Land in closer correspondence with the village edge is graded **moderate**, for it retains a level of visibility to wider vantage, and its continued rural cover counters any comprehensive spread of development onto higher ground, yet there is a clear correspondence with the village edge, as seen below Whitefield Lane (photo 8). Small paddocks that lay immediately against the village edge, and are contained by built form over the greater part of their boundaries - as to either side of 'Sharia' off Whitefield Lane - have a reduced visual profile to wider perception, and are thus considered to be **low** sensitivity.

#### Area (v)

5.10 Combe Hill and adjacent land of similar contour has a degree of detachment from the village edge and is perceptible to wider view. Forming part of the village envelope, this land is thus assessed as **high** sensitivity. Land between Compton Road and Palmer Street (photo 10) enjoys a degree of detachment from the village core, but by laying within the visual envelope with little public perception, has a local visual profile. Consequently this ground is graded **moderate** sensitivity, other than a single field to the rear of Palmer Street Farm, where containment on 3 sides by housing, and the site's minimal degree of visual exposure inform a **low** sensitivity assessment. The base of the North Mill Brook valley has a similar low visual profile, due to its relative seclusion within a contained valley, but has the advantage of a mature well-wooded edge (photo 3) which buffers perception of the village core, and allows a gentle transition to the wider countryside. Traversed by the Parrett Trail, this area is graded **moderate** sensitivity, rising to **high** where the valley opens to the wider countryside to the north, thus moving into wider public perception; a clearly rural context; and a general location that is visually divorced from the village,

#### **Visual profile of land beyond South Petherton's immediate visual envelope**

5.11 Finally, two small areas of land lay within the study area, yet outside the immediate visual envelope of the town. The first are the outward facing hills by the Parrett vale, which are already noted as being high sensitivity (para 5.2). The second area lays to the west of Combe Hill, as such being physically and visually divorced from the village, and open to a broad visual perception. It is also graded **high** sensitivity.

## 6) Value and Constraints

6.1 The study to date has already noted a number of landscape and historic features 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 no designated wildlife sites in close proximity to South Petherton, although the interest of the double hedge lines of the numerous green lanes around the village are noted for their value as wildlife corridors, whilst the strip lynchets below Stoodham are permanent pasture, which cover compounds their archaeological interest. The conservation area extends beyond the village curtilage in two instances, to incorporate a small range of traditional farm buildings by Hele Lane to the south, and land associated with both King Ina's Palace and Studers Mill to the north.

6.3 The Parrett trail regional footpath links to and through the village from south to north, whilst the many green lanes that encircle the town are a well-used recreational resource. It is noted that the paths acting as links to the green lanes are also intensively walked.

6.4 The North Mill Brook, a headwater tributary of the River Parrett, has associated areas prone to flooding in immediate proximity (identified as flood zones 2/3 by the EA) particularly below (to the north of) the village. 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 area of residential South Petherton 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 – such areas will primarily include steeper land on the hillsides to the north of the town.

## 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 South Petherton 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 town, should be investigated as potential development sites.

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

- i) to the south of Pitway, between the Hospital, and the current SSLP Lightgate Lane residential allocation, and;
- ii) south of the town centre, between Lampreys Lane and South Street.

7.4 **Area (i)** indicates two fields that are contained on three sides by residential areas, in the form of the Lightgate Lane SSLP allocation (accessed from St Michaels Gardens) to the southwest; Pitway to the northwest; and the hospital and adjacent housing to the northeast. To the southeast, the fields are contained by a native hedgerow. The land lays relatively flat and in clear correspondence with residential form. Hence further residential growth would appear to be the most appropriate form of development in this location.

7.5 To the south of the town centre, in an area contained on two sides by Lampreys Lane's housing to the northwest and the residential areas of Hele Lane and South Street to the east, three fields plus the field corner of a fourth (**area ii**) are indicated with a capacity for development. As with the previous area, the current village edge alongside these fields is characterised by housing form, part of which lays within the village's Conservation Area. Consequently further development of a residential character is noted as being appropriate in this location.

7.6 Finally, four individual field locations are indicated as having a capacity for development, to the south of Cole's Lane; north of Palmer Street Farm; and to either side of Whitfield Lane. However, the Cole's Lane and Palmer Street sites have no access, and all four sites are too small scale to offer strategic development potential. Hence these areas are acknowledged as having limited potential, but discounted from further investigation within this study.

## 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 7.4 - 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 southeast of Pitway, an area in the region of 4 ha 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 site lies toward the head of the eastern dip-slope, which has some prominence when viewed from raised vantage points to the east, such as from Ham Hill. Hence some restraint on building heights should be exercised, which would suggest that housing densities would not rise beyond an average of 40 dph. Commensurate open space associated with an allocation here could be divided between a formal recreation provision attached to the Lightgate Lane recreation ground less than 100 metres distant to the southwest, and informal amenity space circa 0.35 ha on site. This could be allied to a buffer zone at the farmland interface, to ensure retention of the field hedgerow that currently acts as a visual buffer at the area's southeast edge.

8.3 South of the village centre and lying between Lampreys Lane and South Street, an area circa 7 hectares is suggested as having scope for providing a southward extension of the village. Housing development is the preferred option and the low trajectory of the land and its relatively limited visual profile allows a range of densities to be utilised, to correspond with the grain of the adjacent village centre. With the land having a gentle gradient, there is capacity for both formal recreational space and informal amenity areas to be incorporated, approaching an area of 1.4 ha. which could be sited to enhance both the village conservation area and the outward facing edge.

8.4 In summary, the following areas are put forward:

- i) SE of Pitway - 3.65 ha residential (average 40dph)  
0.35 ha open space and structural landscape provision
- ii) W of South Street - 5.60 ha residential (average 40 dph)  
1.40 ha recreation/open space and structural landscape provision

8.5 The capacity study indicates that South Petherton has some scope for landscape - sympathetic growth. The above sites are thus proposed to maximise that available scope, and offer a potential total of 9.25 ha of residential land, which if built at an average of 40 dwellings per hectare, equates to a total of 370 houses. By South Petherton's standards, the aggregated areas are substantial and will offer some choice of potential development options in the forthcoming plan period, which neither adversely impact upon the immediate setting of the town, nor its wider landscape context, consistent with this assessments prime objectives.

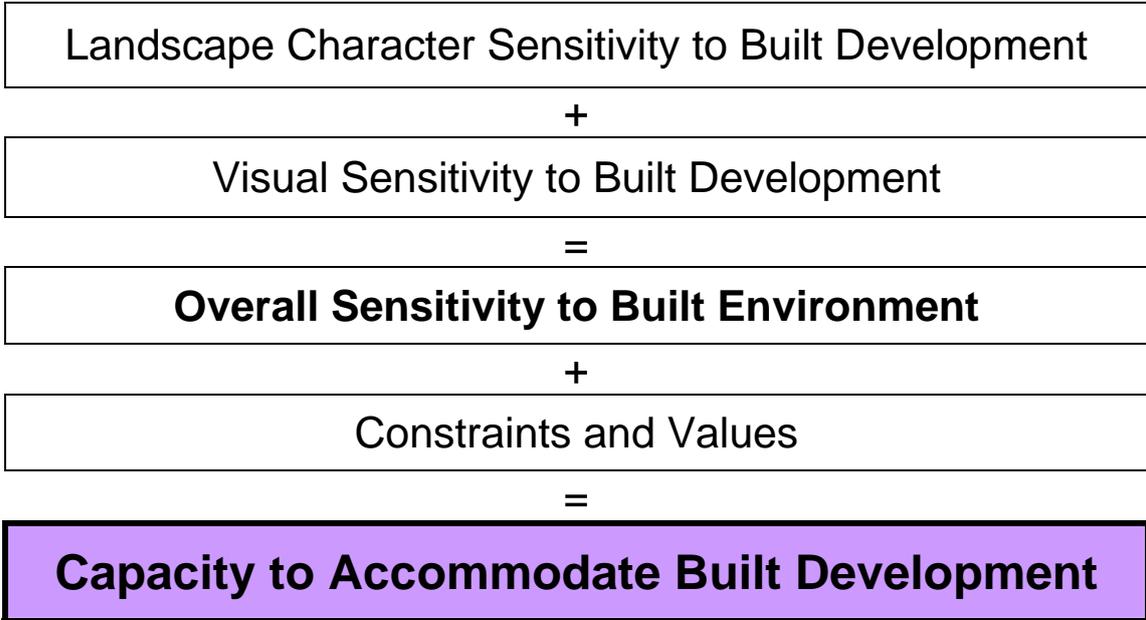


## **Peripheral landscape study – South Petherton**

### **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		

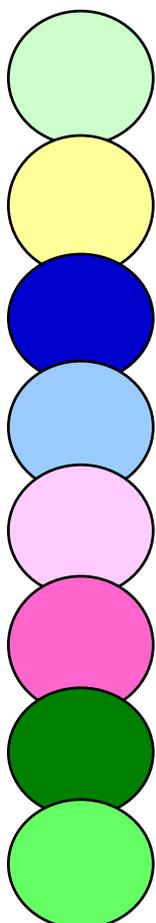
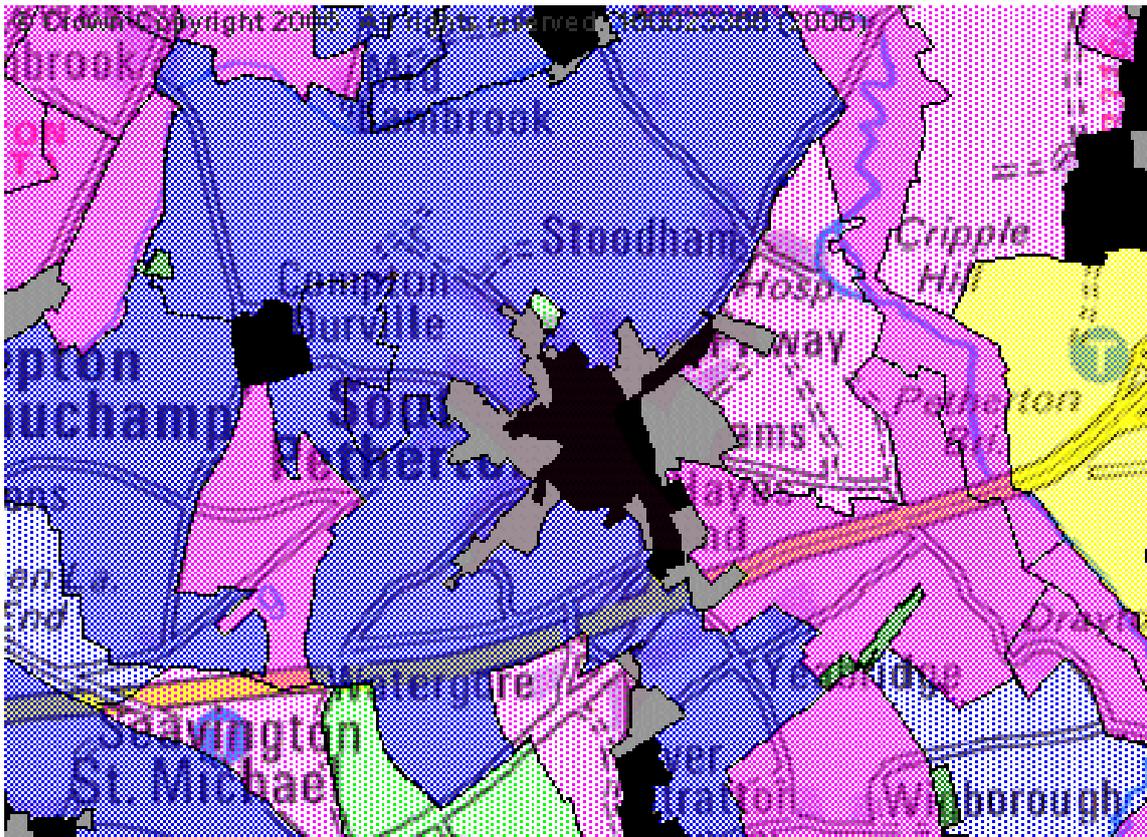
### Landscape Capacity Matrix

**Peripheral landscape study – South Petherton**

**Appendix 2 - historic landscape character**

## Historic landscape characterisation – South Petherton

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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 – South Petherton**  
**Appendix 3 - photos**



Photo 1: From Ham Hill, looking west toward South Petherton, which is denoted by the spread of housing alongside farmland in the middle distance. New housing by Stoodham particularly catches the eye, to the right hand side.



Photo 2: Looking west toward South Petherton from Cripple Hill, Bower Hinton: It is primarily housing above the internal valley that is apparent to view, spread across the low plateau to the east of the village core



Photo 3: From the west edge of Stoodham, looking southwest over the internal valley, with the rooflines of the church and chapel denoting the location of the village centre, obscured by tree presence at the village edge.



Photo 4: Looking west from the hospital, toward the new housing site behind St Michaels Gardens, with the building works recently commenced. The intervening field is surrounded by built form on 3 sides.



Photo 5: Looking west from the side of Bridge Way, along the line of the footpath toward Hayes End, where building form is buffered by adjacent hedges.



Photo 6: From the south edge of the village above Hele, looking toward the village centre as denoted by the church tower.



Photo 7: Looking northwest from the rear of South Street, across the internal valley toward ribbon development along West street, with the rising land above Ben Cross forming the local skyline.



Photo 8: Land between Whitefield Lane and West Street, looking toward the village centre from the public footpath west of 'Sharia,' at the village edge.



Photo 9: Looking east toward the village centre as denoted by the church tower, from the south side of Carey's Hollow.



Photo 10: Land to the northwest of Palmer Street, as viewed from the PROW off Combe Hill. Recent housing by Stoodham is conspicuous on the opposite side of the valley, whilst the village centre lays below the trajectory of view.

**Peripheral landscape study – South Petherton**  
**Appendix 4 - plans**



Figure 1 -  
Context

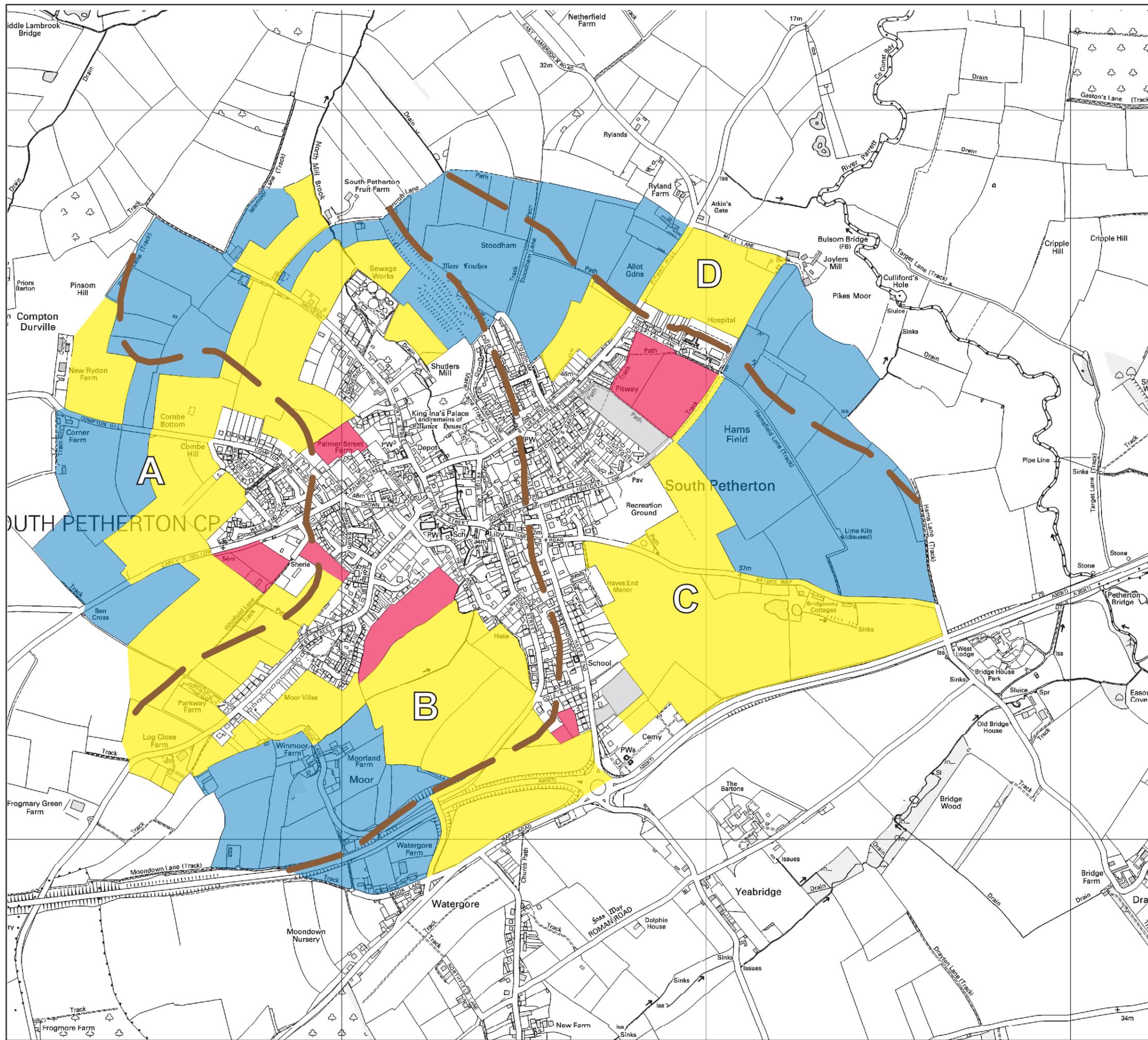
South  
Petherton



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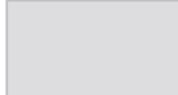
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# Figure 2 - Landscape Sensitivity South Petherton



 Local Landscape Character Areas

- A - Western Low Hills
- B - Internal valley
- C - Eastern Plateau & dip slope
- D - Outer hillsides

 Local Plan allocations & development sites

 Area of low landscape sensitivity

 Area of moderate landscape sensitivity

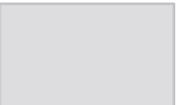
 Area of high landscape sensitivity

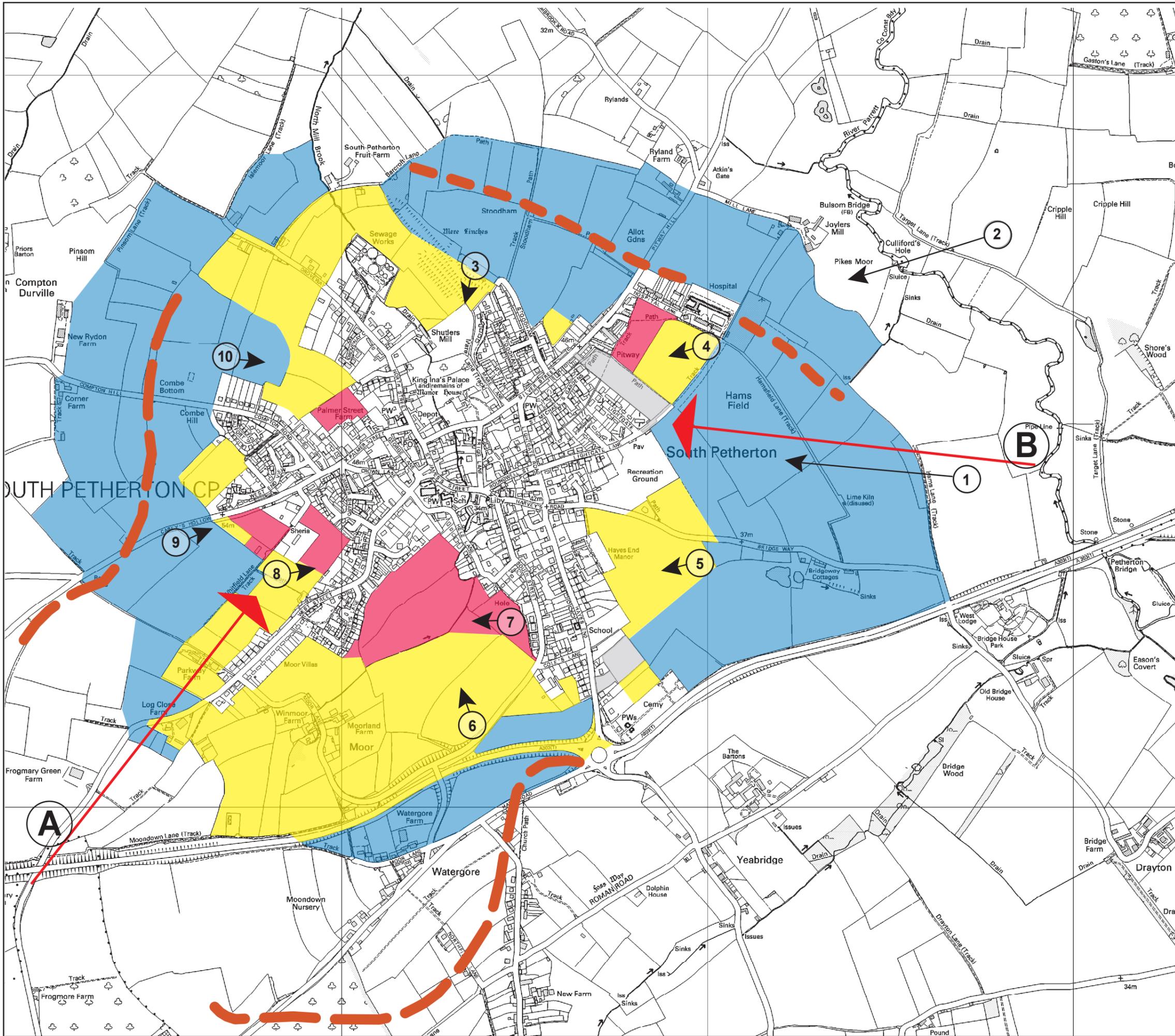


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# Figure 3 - Visual Sensitivity South Petherton

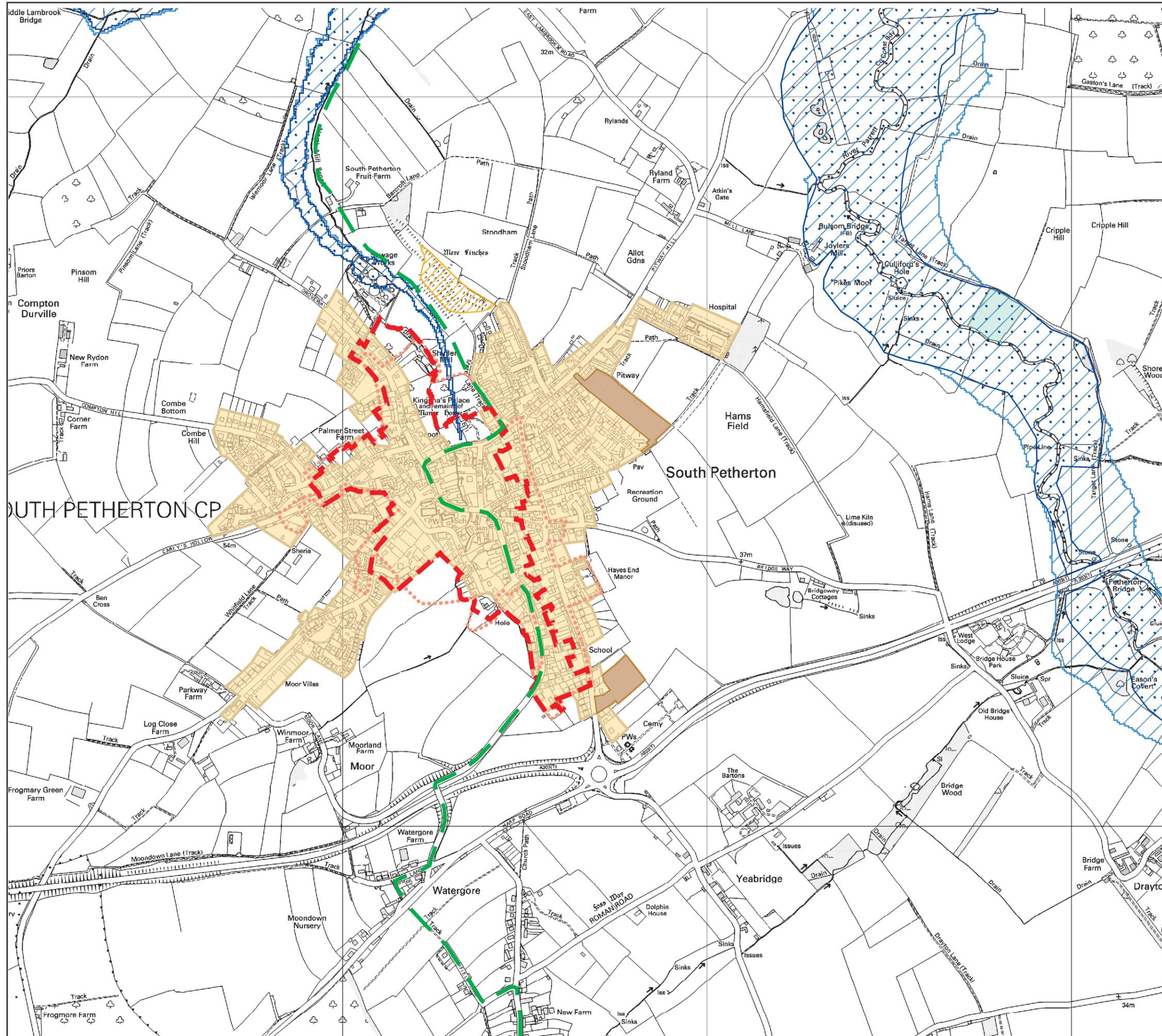
-  Prime line of Visual Containment
-  Secondary line of Visual Containment
-  Long distance views from:  
A - Windwhistle Hill  
B - Ham Hill
-  Line of distant photo viewpoint
-  Photo Vantage Points
-  Local Plan built allocation
-  Area of low visual sensitivity
-  Area of moderate visual sensitivity
-  Area of high visual sensitivity

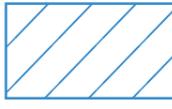


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# Figure 4 - Value & Constraints South Petherton



-  Development Area
  -  Local Wildlife Sites
  -  Conservation Area
  -  Area of High Archaeological Potential
  -  Development Allocation
  -  Flood Zone 2
  -  Flood Zone 3
- (The above categories as defined in the South Somerset Local Plan)

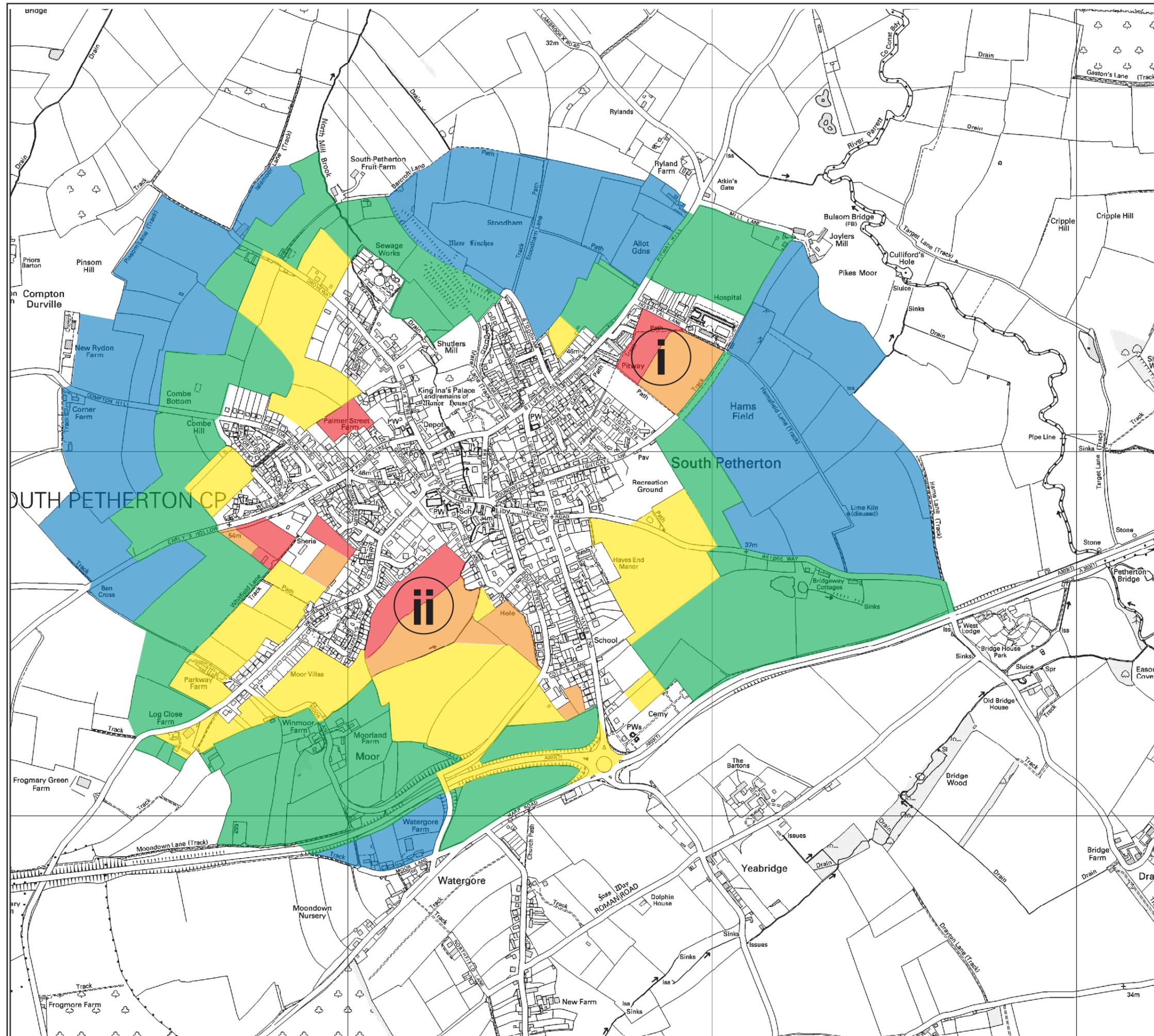
-  Recreational Routes and Areas
-  Slopes in excess of 15°

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# Figure 5 - Landscape Capacity South Petherton



- 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
- i - ii Potential development areas

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