



Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil

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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, which will complement other evidence-based work that is to contribute to the LDF process. This study considers Yeovil.

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 Yeovil and its margins, to enable an assessment of its capacity to absorb additional development, and an indication of potential growth areas (areas of highest capacity).

1.3 The assessment will establish and refine a study area for Yeovil 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 the town. This central focus is for the purpose of seeking settlement growth in close proximity to the town's commercial core;

ii) A second line is drawn beyond the town boundary at a minimum of 1km. distance from the current edge, to allow potential for a coherent urban extension alongside the town's current extent, and;

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 will be included within the study, to enable their separate identity to be considered in relationship to the main settlement, as will be areas between Yeovil and the A303 corridor, to acknowledge strategic transport objectives.

Structure of the report.

1.4 A general description of the settlement acts as a preface to a character study of both Yeovil, 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 the settlement and its surrounds, and its visual sensitivity. The potential of the 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.

2) The settlement

2.1 Yeovil is sited in the south of the county against the Dorset border, and is the main urban centre within South Somerset district. It is a historic town with evidence of pre-Roman settlement, steady medieval growth, and a local economy based on cloth and leather manufacture (with gloving a speciality) that promoted modest expansion into the 19th century. Increased growth came with the 20th century, with aerospace and its associated engineering becoming the town's main industry, and rapid housing development over the last 40 years has now taken the population of Yeovil beyond 42,000 inhabitants.

2.2 The town centre lays inside the intersection and 'inner ring' of the A37 – a former Roman alignment – and A30 trunk roads, which provide direct links to the regional road network. The main commercial core of the town is concentrated around the Borough and Middle Street, whilst the substantial Westlands complex and adjoining estates, plus the large building structures in the NW quadrant by Houndstone express the town's main employment areas. Yeovil's residential growth has spread primarily north and west, absorbing the small hamlets of Preston Plucknett and Alvington, now extending to the edge of Lufton hamlet to the west and Brimsmore to the north. However, growth to the southeast has been contained in most part by a combination of the Yeo's flood-plain; incised hillsides; historic homes and estates; and the administrative county boundary between Somerset and Dorset.

2.3 The town lays on a shallow dipslope to the west of the River Yeo, at the point where the river breaks through the limestone escarpments on its course towards the open plain to the north. The immediate landscape setting of the town is the headwater valley associated with the Dodham brook – a tributary of the Yeo – and the immediate downstream length of the Yeo below their confluence. The hills defining this valley 'cradle' the town, defined to the south by the escarpments of Babylon and Summerhouse Hills, which extend west along West Coker and Camp roads toward Odcombe, whilst a parallel escarpment to the north defines the town's northward extent and valley setting. To the east, the River Yeo marks the extent of the town whilst the Dorset Hills extending north of Babylon Hill contain its setting. To the west, the town lays within the higher ground of the Yeo (Dodham brook) watershed, other than by Lufton where recent employment growth has extended the town northwest beyond the Yeo's catchment area, toward Montacute.

Identification of the study area

2.4 Based upon the methodology outlined in para 1.3, the Yeovil study area is broadly defined by the edge of the vale to the north, to include the settlements of Tintinhull, Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil Marsh and Mudford. The line of the parish boundaries of Dorset villages, Over Compton and Bradford Abbas, linking southwest across field boundaries to Clifton Wood and the A37 Dorchester Road marks the east extent, whilst the line of the ridge connecting Hyde Farm (by Sutton Bingham reservoir) to Coker Hill marks the southern extent. East Chinnock Hill, the villages of Odcombe, Montacute, and Stoke sub Hamdon, to the line of the A303 demarcate the westward limit, to complete 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 Yeovil within character area 140 - Yeovil Scarplands. Its key characteristics 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,

www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/south_west/yeovil_scarplands.asp

Typical of Yeovil, and its surrounding land and villages, are the following extracts:

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

... 'There are also much grander landscapes found around the mansions built from the Elizabethan period such as ... Montacute House. The surrounding parklands of lime, oak and beech are conspicuous features, especially when ... the adjacent tree cover is not extensive'.

The character area is underlain mainly by Jurassic rocks ... the limestones and sandstones tend to form a series of scarps which trend east-west but are much broken by faults in the south around Yeovil.'

... 'villages and hamlets tend to lie in the valleys. The most favoured sites, near the streams and rivers, are the locations for towns ... Yeovil is the principal town and the only one to have expanded significantly from its riverside origins onto the surrounding hills'. ... 'even when ... there is some urban influence, the stone buildings and the sunken holloways which characterise the area are still apparent'.

Of the many materials used for building, Ham Hill Stone is the celebrated stone of the major country houses like Brympton D'Evercy and Montacute. Mansion houses are particularly

thick on the ground south and west of Yeovil but there are many smaller houses in local stone well-sited in small parks.

... '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'.

The rural charm of the area has been widely celebrated ... the strongest literary association is with East Coker, home of T S Eliot's ancestors. He is buried in the village church, which was the motif of the second of his Four Quartets.

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 Yeovil area indicates the full range of such areas, and is included at appendix 2. 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 indicates Yeovil and its wider surrounds as extending over 3 visual character regions (VCRs) namely;

- A) Ham Hill Plateau, Yeovil Sands Escarpments and Valleys;**
- B) Ridges and Vales, South and West of Yeovil, and;**
- C) Central plain, Moors and river basins.**

This number of VCRs is an indication of the diverse character of the landscape in the area surrounding the settlement. Each VCR is sub-divided into landscape character areas (LCAs) and the following LCAs cover the Yeovil study area;

1. ***Yeovil Sands dipslopes and escarpments;***
2. ***Northern escarpments, dipslopes and foothills;***
3. ***Hamstone hills and valleys;***
(all within the 'Ham Hill plateau, Yeovil Sands escarpments and valleys' VCR)
4. ***Ridges and Vales south and west of Yeovil*** (as the VCR) and;
5. ***Clay vales, rivers and floodplains*** (within the 'Central plain, Moors and river basins' VCR).

3.5 The ***Yeovil Sands dipslopes and escarpments*** LCA, whose extent is described and mapped in the '93 assessment, includes Yeovil, Brympton and Barwick parishes, plus land to the north of East and West Coker; It is broadly described thus;

This topographical unit embraces the built up area of Yeovil as far south as Barwick and Stoford and west to Odcombe and East Chinnock. The town lies on a distinctive landform feature - a dipslope with a southwards inclination providing Yeovil with many hills to climb. To the south the dipslope is abruptly terminated by a low but attractive wooded escarpment, through which holloways and goyles such as Ninesprings are cut. This Yeovil Sands

escarpment runs west as far as Odcombe and Stoke -sub-Hamdon and eastwards into Dorset and north to South Cadbury.

The escarpment has not proved to be an obstacle to development, which spills over along West Coker Road onto another dipslope whose profile can be seen from Pincushion corner at East Coker. South flowing streams have created shallow valleys into this dipslope and there are some very impressive, atmospheric holloways between East Coker and East Chinnock.

*“Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
..... TS Eliot, “East Coker”*

Designed landscapes are particularly important to the character of Yeovil. Aldon Park, Barwick Park and Newton Surmaville have provided a rich legacy of specimen trees and avenues much loved by Yeovilians.

This character area covers the majority of the study area. Hence to facilitate the subsequent sensitivity evaluation, the area is sub-divided thus:

- a) The **Dodham brook/Middle Yeo valley** (to include the dipslope over which the town lays and its southern escarpment);
- b) The **Coker dip slope**, running south of the town from the head of the southern escarpment;
- c) **Incised Valleys**, above and below Barwick, where the Yeo and its tributaries deeply dissect the landform, and;
- d) **Bradford Abbas dip slope**, which lays primarily in Dorset but displays a similar character to the Coker dip-slope.

3.6 The '**Northern escarpments and foothills**' LCA – which relates to the rural land north and northwest of Yeovil, to include Chilthorne Domer, and parts of Odcombe, Yeovil Without, Mudford, Trent and Over Compton parishes, is described by the assessment as follows:

Approached from the Vale of Ilchester to the north, the escarpment is an important land mark identifying the location of Yeovil. In places buildings are silhouetted on the ridge; in others woodland and trees provide an important screen. Gradients are not severe and cultivation or improved pasture reaches high up the slope. Lanes and roads spill over into the plain below cutting deep holloways characteristic of the more sandy rock formations. Watercourses have also cut deep tree-filled ravines of which Longcroft Wood is the best example.

To the west, the landscape is rolling mixed farmland. Hedges, usually of elm, are generally intact but kept low. Remaining hedge trees are few, usually ash and suffering die-back. The most significant landscape features are the alder and willow-lined streams such as Ball's Water and Welham Brook; the latter having some fine willow pollards and traditional waterside buttercup meadows.

This description notes the scarp to be at its most pronounced at Yeovil's immediate north edge, lessening to the west where the headwaters of Balls Water drain its

dipslope. The east end of the scarp above Mudford is similarly of lesser gradient, and more open in character, hence in detailed evaluation (section 4) this LCA is considered in 4 distinct sub-divisions, namely;

- a) **Yeovil north escarpment** which extends west from the Mudford road to Chilthorne Domer, prior to dividing either side of Chilthorne Domer village;
- b) **Balls Water headwaters**, which lay between Lufton and Windmill Hills, and includes the head of the Welham Brook catchment;
- c) **Tintinhull dipslopes and valleys**, covering land falling south and west from the northern escarpment, and;
- d) **Upper Mudford and Over Compton escarpments**, being the escarpments falling north from Yeovil's northeast edge and the adjacent Dorset hilltops.

3.7 The '**Ham Hill Stone hills and valleys**' LCA lays at the southwest edge of the study area, and describes the area above the hamstone villages to the south of the A3038 Cartgate link:

This is an impressive dissected plateau where the Yeovil Sands are 'protected' from erosion by the harder Hamstone capping. The northern edge of this plateau is really an extension of the Ninesprings escarpment in Yeovil, but here it becomes a much higher and dramatic feature emphasised by high-forest woodland at Hedgecock near Montacute.

The fairly level plateau top supports arable crops, but the internal valleys are a different world with scrubby bracken-covered sheep pasture and woodland providing a much loved hill country walking area centred on Ham Hill Country Park.

In detailed evaluation (section 4) this LCA is considered in 2 locally distinct sub-divisions, namely;

- a) The **Hamstone plateau**, covering the head of the hills between Ham Hill and Odcombe, and;
- b) The **Hamstone escarpment**, which are the steep hillsides above Stoke sub Hamdon and Montacute, and for the purposes of this assessment, include their northern foothills.

3.8 Land to the southwest of Yeovil falls within a separate character zone, **Ridges and Vales south and west of Yeovil**, which includes East and West Coker villages, and is described thus;

The contrast between this area and the Yeovil Sands scenery is very marked. This is limestone and clay vale country where there is a traditional and aesthetically pleasing balance between the basic elements of lowland English landscape- thick winding hedges, many hedgerow oaks, tree-lined brooks, copses and larger blocks of broadleaved woodland

This landscape is much loved by its parishioners and well described:

"The landscape...is governed by three long ridges - rather like fingers - which stretch from east to west across the parish with shallow valleys in between. The result is a generally open area with magnificent extensive views from the higher ground. There are streams in the valleys, where the land is mainly pastoral, the small to medium-sized fields being bounded by hedges. The narrow lanes are also lined by tall, dense hedgerows. Generally,

*the environment is invigorating and always interesting.”
Hardington Parish Council (1991)*

The most pleasing aspect of this zone is the way the hedge-pattern accentuates the land-form by rising up and over each ridge.

3.9 Finally, at the north edge of the study area, and at the toe of the ‘northern escarpment’ is the ‘central plain’ character zone, within which the ‘**clay vales, rivers and floodplains**’ character area is identified. This area includes the low-lying land associated with Mudford, Yeovil Without, and Chilthorne Domer, and also extends into Dorset by Trent, and is described thus;

The Vale of Ilchester is a broad area of mixed farming with arable mainly located on the slightly drier clay ridges or islands. Hedges are generally kept low and hedgerow trees are fairly infrequent.

The River Yeo is a very attractive, ecologically sound river, particularly in its Mudford - Ilchester stretch. It is alder and willow-lined with many lily-covered pools and thick stands of reed

3.10 The resultant local 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. 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 Yeovil'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 five local landscape character areas as falling within the study area. The largest of these is the “**Yeovil Sands, dipslopes and escarpments**” which is subdivided according to local variation in landscape type. Taking these sub-divisions in turn (as noted para 3.5) the first sub-zone to be considered is that of the *Dodham Brook/Middle Yeo Valley*, and it is this valley within which Yeovil lays, with the surrounding hills defining both the character area, and the town's setting:

Dodham Brook/Middle Yeo Valley (character area 1a)

4.3 Yeovil demonstrates a number of characteristics identified as typical by the national character study, in that is it is settled in a river valley, and despite its expansive growth, still enjoys a degree of enclosure from the bounding hills. The town's built form is by far the dominant element of this character area, and its extent is currently well defined in most part; to the north by the ridge of the northern escarpment; to the east by the Yeo's floodplain; to the south by the steep slopes of the southern escarpment (other than where residential development has 'spilt' south of the West Coker Road); and west (the Bunford employment allocation aside) by the line of the A3088 road. Within this 'Yeovil' sub-zone, there are 5 peripheral open areas that lay beyond the built edge, namely;

- a) the Yeo floodplain and adjacent Dorset escarpment;
- b) Summerhouse and Ninesprings hillsides;
- c) land around Brympton d'Evercy
- d) land between Lower Odcombe and the Cartgate link, and;
- e) the head of the northern escarpment between Lufton and Vagg Hills.

4.4 The Yeo floodplain demonstrates markedly different characteristics in its length from the Newton road, to the point where it opens to the Ilchester Vale above Mudford. South of Newton Road, it is shielded from urban form by the intervening slopes of Wyndham Hill, which provides emphatic separation from the town. With plentiful planting in the vicinity and the parkland-type management of the adjacent golf course blending comfortably south to the parkland of the Newton Surmaville estate, this area is graded **high** sensitivity, other than where in close proximity to the Sherborne Road, where building presence reduces the sensitivity level to **moderate**, primarily where recent development has occurred over the lower slopes of Babylon Hill.

To the north of Sherborne Road, a large open field is surrounded by built form for much of its perimeter, with insufficient landscape features present to buffer the urban presence, and is thus graded **low** sensitivity. Further to the north, Yeovil's urban edge is better defined by the course of both the rail embankment, and the River Yeo with its bank side tree lines providing a buffer element, complemented by the plantings and open space of Yeovil Country Park. These features provide some sense of separation from the built form of the town to that of the agricultural land on the Dorset side of the river. This Dorset land comprises large arable fields, interspersed with smaller pastures where combes fall toward the Yeo. Hedges are trimmed, and with the urban presence of Yeovil in close proximity, along with its association of sound and movement, this area is graded **moderate** sensitivity, other than the combes, which have a sense of enclosure and stronger vegetation presence, and are graded **high**.

4.5 Much of the Summerhouse and Ninesprings hillsides fall within the sympathetically managed Yeovil Country Park, and it is only two small pockets of grazing land below Summerhouse hilltop that falls outside the urban edge yet within this local zone. Whilst forming part of the woodland and meadow bloc matrix that typify this length of the southern escarpment, the close proximity of the town, and in particular the ski slope, which is viewed as a negative landscape element, plus the lack of management applied to the scrub inform a grading of **moderate** sensitivity.

4.6 'Land around Brympton d'Evercy' (i.e. the headwaters of the Dodham brook) is the area broadly contained by Rex Road and the A3088 to the north, and Camp Road to the south. Much of this land once formed part of the Brympton d'Evercy Estate, which is characterised by park- and farm-land, interspersed by woodland blocks and plantations sited over both falling ground and within the historic park and garden of Brympton d'Evercy House. Field scale is varied, with larger arable blocks broken by smaller pasture fields that mainly correspond to poorly-drained areas and marked topographical change. Most hedgerows are intact and managed, with little change to field sizes since tithe map records. The wider estate heritage is distinctively characterised by specimen oaks in both the park and farmed land. Hence given the time-depth; condition; and distance from the urban edge; compounded by the central historic park and garden, the majority of this area is graded **high** sensitivity. The exception is the east edge, where a reduced tree presence; the close proximity of the A3088 with its associated noise and movement; and the impending arrival of large-scale employment buildings associated with the Bunford allocation, inform a **moderate** sensitivity rating, plus an enlarged field at variance with the pattern of the surrounding land, which has resulted from boundary removal, to the SW side of the estate.

4.7 Whilst not strictly within the Dodham brook catchment, land between Lower Odcombe and the Cartgate Link forms a low plateau marking the watershed of the river catchments of the Yeo and Parrett. It is similar in character to land to the south of Rex Road, though it is noted that the hedges by High Leaze Farm are close cropped, with few specimen trees remaining. Given the additional close proximity of urban form, this specific area is graded **moderate** sensitivity, the remainder **high**.

4.8 There are two small areas of peripheral land within the fifth sub-zone (the head of the northern escarpment) by Lufton hamlet, and outside the Thorne Lane

key site allocation. The latter area will be well buffered by 12ha. of community woodland, and its small-scale field matrix provides a surround of long standing to Thorne Coffin's conservation area. Its pattern is intact and well managed, and thus is graded **high** sensitivity, other than where non-rural building form is a local dominant, as by the small Vagg Hill employment site, where sensitivity is consequently graded **moderate**. Land extending alongside Thorne lane, by Lufton's employment edge, is similarly graded moderate sensitivity, primarily due to the overbearing scale of adjacent employment structures, but also noting the general poor condition of the field hedgerows dividing these fields.

Coker dipslope (character area 1b)

4.9 The second sub-division of the 'Yeovil Sands dipslopes and escarpments' local character area, is the *Coker dipslope*. This is land that falls gently south from the head of Yeovil's southern escarpment, and it is predominantly rural in character, other than where residential form has spread south from the escarpment head, notably in the area off Nash Lane, and primarily to the south of West Coker Road. Much of this area is open, with a varied, irregular field pattern that is lined by mixed hedges, and encloses farmland that is primarily in arable production, or improved grassland. Pasture is apparent adjacent stream corridors, or within the smaller fields at village edges. The field-scale is intricate by the village edges of West and North Coker, and by Nash hamlet, whilst areas of relic parkland remain intact by North Coker and West Coker Hall. Specimen trees abound within these parks, and by the mature edge of the villages, and are also a feature of the stream corridors, and old hedge boundaries. A number of locally distinctive holloways criss-cross the area, cut deep into the Yeovil Sands and lined by mixed hedgerows, inclusive of mature oaks.

Urban Yeovil is well contained for much of its edge, hence no land is graded as low sensitivity. Conversely, much of this landscape is well maintained, and expresses the distinctive characteristics noted by both the national and local studies. Where urban presence is not pervasive, the larger part of this sub-zone is thus graded **high** sensitivity. There are then two peripheral area that do not make this grade: First are those fields to the sides of 'Inglemount' off the West Coker Road, where boundaries have been removed, or hedges degraded by poor management, and suburban style homes intrude into the field pattern, yet lay outside the urban edge. These negative elements thus determine a '**moderate**' grading. The second and larger area, is a bloc of land to the south of the 'Lower Wraxhill' residential area, to both sides of the East Coker road, and by the Dorchester Road as far south as Keyford, and east toward Barwick. This area is also graded moderate for similar reasons; extensive hedgerow removal; lack of tree presence; sporadic groups of non-traditional houses; and detracting urban elements such as prominence of the housing edge; and the lighting associated with the residential edge, rugby club ground, and the A37 road corridor, whose influence pervades beyond its immediate location due to the loss of landscape fabric.

Dissected scarp and dip-slope by Barwick (character area 1c)

4.10 The third sub-division is an area of *dissected scarp and dip-slope in the vicinity of Barwick*, where the Yeo and its tributaries (Coker Stream and Stoford Brook) incise the landform. This area is a particularly rich historic environment, with

the parks and gardens associated with Newton Surmaville, Barwick, Clifton Maybank and Aldon estates a source of many mature specimen trees and avenues, and parkland, which are distinctive elements. Where the rivers have incised through the Yeovil Sands, deeply-cut valleys have resulted, clothed in woodland and scrub, with small pockets of pasture interspersed, which are particularly dramatic by Newton Surmaville. Below Yeovil Junction, the topography is less emphatic, and the 3 rivers run in shallow valleys, separated by higher fingers of land running south, with the land traditionally farmed. There is barely any sense of urban Yeovil in this quadrant, which is contained by the height and woodland cover of the southern escarpment. Hence due to this historic context; the richly-nuanced topography; high woodland and mature tree cover; plus the strong sense of separation from urban Yeovil, the area is graded **high** sensitivity, other than for fields adjacent sections of the village edge where non-traditional house and building forms have been unsympathetically grafted onto the settlements of Barwick and Stoford, and are thus graded **moderate**.

Bradford Abbas dipslope (character area 1d)

4.11 The fourth sub-division, the *Bradford Abbas dipslope*, has a southerly aspect, and despite its physical proximity to Yeovil, is separated by the height and elevation of the southern escarpment and has no visual relationship with the town. The upper slopes above the village are relatively open, primarily in arable cultivation, but well defined by mature hedges, and occasionally broken by narrow, well-wooded goyles. Below Bradford Abbas, the dip-slope merges gently into the wider Upper Yeo Vale which is predominantly pastoral, and characterised by smaller tree-lined pastures. Whilst understated in character, the rural nature of the area is well expressed and with its sense of separateness from urban Yeovil, the majority of the area is thus graded '**high**' sensitivity. Exceptions occur to the south of the A30, where the golf course plantings are an incongruous feature within the context of the open head of the hilltops, and in enlarged fields above the village, which have lost landscape features to boundary removal, and are now open to built form immediately adjacent. Both areas are graded **medium** sensitivity.

4.12 The second LCA to fringe Yeovil is the ***Northern escarpments and foothills*** which, for the purpose of this assessment, is sub-divided into 4 zones, namely Yeovil North escarpment; Balls Water headwaters; Tintinhull dipslopes and valleys; and Upper Mudford and Over Compton escarpment.

Yeovil North escarpment (character area 2a)

4.13 The *Yeovil North escarpment* provides a stop to the town's northward extent, and is a defining characteristic of the town's rural edge. There is minimal urban expression here, and little of Yeovil's presence perceptible below the scarp head, which faces away from the town, looking outward across the central plain, and linking with the open rural character of the Yeo Vale. This rolling 'outer face' with its tapestry of irregular mid-scale fields interspersed with deep goyles – some wooded – and mixed farming pattern is well expressed and little changed, and thus graded **high** sensitivity. There are exceptions by the immediate urban edge of the town, where field boundaries and hedgerow trees have been removed, or in the incongruous plantings of poplar lines that have occurred, as below Brimsmore. The

A37 road corridor is also an intrusive element, particularly where the open character of the fields enables the noise and movement associated with the road, and its related elements of signage and lighting, to intrude into the wider landscape. These areas are thus graded **moderate**, as is the presence of sporadic building form unrelated to a traditional village nucleus around Yeovil Marsh.

4.14 The escarpment divides and is less pronounced to the West of Vagg Hill, where it folds around and encloses Thorne Coffin hamlet. Toward Lufton Hill the field pattern is in greater evidence, due to a loss of tree cover, and unsympathetic management of hedgerow cover. This latter part of the escarpment, along with the mixed plantings and highway corridor components noted below Brimsmore, have little of the diversity of landscape elements of the greater part of the scarp, and are thus graded **moderate** sensitivity, whilst the remainder is graded **high**.

Ball's Water Headwaters (character area 2b)

4.15 The *headwaters of Ball's Water* lay between Windmill Hill, and the northern escarpment by Thorne Coffin, and drain southwards from Chilthorne Domer. The stream and feeder brooks are evident from associated alder and willow stands, and the pattern of drainage has determined fields of irregular size and scale, that are predominantly hedge-lined. Whilst the character of this area is understated, it is intact and free from urban form and is thus graded '**high**' sensitivity. Isolated pockets of incongruous development-scale disrupt this character, as do fields enlarged through hedge removal, and with the consequent loss of hedgerow trees, these occur as out-scaled islands within the sub-zone, thus are graded '**moderate**'.

Tintinhull dipslopes and valleys (character area 2c)

4.16 The *Tintinhull dip slopes and valleys* local character area extends west from Windmill Hill to encompass land to the south of Tintinhull village, and that contained by the line of the A303 trunk road. The area drains gently southwest toward the Welham brook and the low folds of the topography are overlain by a rectilinear field pattern that corresponds to the general NNE-SSW axis of both Windmill Hill and Welham brook's headwater streams. The land is primarily arable, the fields expressed by robust hedgerows and specimen hedgerow trees, with the watercourses particularly well wooded, along with local green lanes. Where this pattern is intact and in good condition and with little urban or highway influence, the general area is graded **high** sensitivity. Exceptions occur in the vicinity of Perrens Hill Farm, where numerous field boundaries have been removed to change the small field pattern to two large fields with just occasional specimen oaks retained where hedgerows once ran; and on land to the north of Stoke sub Hamdon and East Stoke and toward the A303 where field amalgamation has come about through tree and hedgerow removal, to break up the rectilinear pattern that once characterised the area. Such pockets of open farmland are thus graded **moderate** sensitivity.

Mudford and Over Compton escarpment (character area 2d)

4.17 The *Mudford and Over Compton escarpment* is more rolling, less dramatic and incised than the main Yeovil North escarpment. It forms a shoulder of land that

is dissected by the Yeo's immediate corridor, but generally falls NE from Yeovil, and NW from the Dorset villages, toward the Yeo valley. Residential development is apparent at the head of the Mudford scarp, and adjoining fields are either sub-divided and managed for horses, or have been enlarged for agriculture. There is little tree presence on the upper escarpment, thus this area is graded '**moderate**' sensitivity. The mid and lower escarpment has greater diversity of field scale and is in mixed agricultural use, as is the escarpment and lower valley sides associated with the Dorset villages of Over Compton and Trent. Hedgerows remain intact, and relic orchards are apparent around the 'lost' settlement of Up Mudford, and by Nether Compton. There is little evidence of urban expression in these areas, and they are thus graded '**high**' sensitivity, other than land by the immediate edge of Mudford village, which is graded moderate.

4.18 The third LCA to fringe Yeovil is the ***Ham Hill Stone hills and valleys***, ***which*** for the purpose of this assessment is divided into 2 zones, namely the Hamstone Plateau; and the Hamstone escarpment and foothills.

Hamstone Plateau (character area 3a)

4.19 The *Hamstone plateau* local character area lays along the edge of the study area, stretching from the head of Ham Hill and extending east to Odcombe village core. It includes the northernmost portion of the open plateau, above the north-facing incised wooded escarpment, and is typical of the wider character area. As the landscape within this area is intact, well-expressed, and free from urban form, it is consequently graded '**high**' sensitivity.

Hamstone escarpment and foothills (character area 3b)

4.20 From the Hamstone plateau, the escarpment falls steeply toward the settlements that are threaded along its northern toe. Much of this escarpment face is well wooded, interspersed with rough grassland paddocks and scrub, bound by thick unkempt hedgerows and little changed by agricultural practice. Hence the escarpment is graded **high** sensitivity, as are many of its foothills. The undulating land at the escarpment toe is populated by the historic settlements of Montacute, East Stoke and Stoke sub Hamdon, with the historic park and garden associated with Montacute House a particularly distinctive area, as expressed by its mature tree avenues and specimens and pasture cover, whilst East Stoke is well represented by small paddocks and remnant orchards. Exceptions to the general high quality of the landscape occur in isolated packets by Montacute's west edge, where urban and highway form impacts upon local character and where field enlargement has led to loss of landscape features below Odcombe and to the north of East Stoke/Stanchester. Such areas are graded **moderate** sensitivity.

Ridges and vales South and West of Yeovil (character area 4)

4.21 The fourth local character area, Ridges and vales South and West of Yeovil, extends into the study area from the Coker ridge, falling NNE to include the villages of West and East Coker at its toe. The small and intricate scale of the field pattern; mixed agricultural use between thick hedges; plentiful hedgerow and specimen trees, copses and plantations; and deep narrow lanes are remarked upon in the

character descriptions and observed to be intact and well expressed within the study area. Parkland above Coker Court, merging into larger woodland blocs and hedgerow trees along the eastward ridge bestow a particular sense of shelter to East Coker, whilst the Coker Brook is characterised by adjacent pasture and willow lines. Other than by a poorly related residential estate at the east end of West Coker, the whole of this area is graded **'high'** sensitivity.

Clay vales, rivers and flood plains (character area 5)

4.22 Finally, the northernmost sector of the study area falls into the 'clay vales, rivers and flood plains' character area, described in the local descriptions as an area of mixed farming, with arable predominant above the level of the watercourses, with field boundaries delineated by low-managed hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. This description understates the general attractiveness of this gently rolling farmland, and east of Green Moor there is a greater tree presence in both hedgerows and field copses and a mixed farming pattern through which deep-sided hedge-lined lanes meander. There is no urban expression to erode this deeply rural character. Thus this area, along with land of comparable character west of Trent, is graded **'high'** sensitivity. There are two exceptions, the main area being the farmland that extends to the north of Yeovil Marsh where field enlargement, and the straightening of the local watercourse has led to a loss of specimen trees and hedgerows. Similar 'agricultural improvement' has occurred in the vicinity of Mudford and in the Yeo valley, hence these areas are graded **moderate** sensitivity.

5) Visual sensitivity

5.1 This section identifies the location and extent of the visual envelope that contains Yeovil, 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 envelope; and second, the land outside the town's immediate envelope; to assess its visual profile in relation to Yeovil and prime sensitive receptors, along with identifying valued 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.

Immediate visual envelope of Yeovil

5.2 The character area assessment clearly identifies the setting of Yeovil to be the valley contained between the northern and southern escarpments as drained by the Dodham Brook and the corresponding downstream length of the River Yeo into which the brook feeds. The heads of these escarpments broadly contain growth of the town to north and south, and the northward swing of the southern scarp into Dorset lays beyond and above Yeovil's built form to the east. There is no such clear topographical boundary to the town's setting to the west, yet the town is relatively well contained by a combination of woodland; mature field boundaries; and the A3088 road corridor; and in most part remains within the higher ground forming the watershed of the River's Yeo and Parrett.

5.3 It can be seen that the landscape features which define the setting of Yeovil broadly correspond to its immediate visual envelope: To the north, the envelope can be drawn along the scarp head from Lufton Hill in the west, to the parish boundary south of Up Mudford to the east. The nature of the envelope is primarily topographical, for the height of the scarp above land of lower elevation to the north excludes all public views toward the town from the north, and its steep slopes are both a constraint to development, and of a scale that draws the eye. As these slopes express a rural character, its contrast with urban form is sharply defined. There is no evidence of Yeovil as a large urban area as viewed from vantage points to the north, what little development there is on the scarp head is seen as small-scale and skyline only, subservient to the scale of the rural scarp face, and buffered in part by mature trees and folds in the landform (photos 1-3). The scarp face has long withstood development pressure, and is a major landscape feature with an extensive zone of visual influence, hence its sensitivity is graded as **high**. A single exception is a short stretch of land to the immediate north of the Lufton trading estate, where the head of the scarp has a limited visual profile, and is thus graded **moderate** sensitivity.

5.4 To the east, the head of the southern escarpment's extension into Dorset similarly shields views into the town. The envelope can be drawn from Babylon Hill, to run north toward Trent before falling to the Trent Brook. At this point, there is a break in the envelope where the Yeo valley flows north, thus there are partial oblique views toward the town's east edge from Trent and its environs. These are partially obscured by intervening tree lines, which offer a local diffuse envelope. The higher ground of the scarp head and its dip slope shoulder offers almost

complete containment as viewed from the east: By laying in Dorset, it has not been subject to Yeovil's development needs, and is expressed by rolling agricultural fields. This degree of visual containment thus provided, and the marked contrast with the urban form revealed once inside the envelope (most notably as seen from the Yeovil A30 approach off Babylon Hill) determines the scarp head and outward shoulder is graded as **high** sensitivity.

5.5 The head of the southern escarpment provides less emphatic visual containment. It is at its most effective between the A37 by Aldon, and Summerhouse Hill, where steep north-facing slopes have contained development to within its valley context, close to the town centre. Whilst the scarp is broken by the deep valleys incised by the Yeo at Newton Surmaville, and to a lesser degree by Ninesprings Valley, visual containment is supplemented by the secondary ridges that extend east from Constitution Hill, and it is this height of the landform relative to the southerly falling ground, and the strong presence of specimen and woodland trees, that makes up the visual envelope. The degree of containment offered by this elevated land, its strong rural expression in marked contrast with urban form (photo 4) and its broad visual influence as viewed from a number of public vantage points to the southeast, informs a **high** sensitivity rating.

Between the A37 by Aldon, and the junction of the A30 West Coker/Camp Road, development has spilled south of the escarpment head, effectively disrupting the town's immediate visual envelope. Whilst urban form here lays outside the setting of the town (photos 5-7) this length of the scarp head is noted as having value as a partial visual envelope, for this area of development is not viewed as being related to the main town, which effectively lays in the 'next' valley as viewed from the south. It is noted that the visual envelope to this southern quadrant of land - within which the urban 'spill' has occurred - runs along Coker ridge to Pincushion Corner, thereafter NE through Darvole to Barwick.

The final length of the southern escarpment to act as visual envelope to low trajectory views from the south runs from the A30 West Coker/Camp Road junction to (and beyond) Odcombe. This length of the scarp head defines the valley setting within which Yeovil lays, and contains all external view of Yeovil other than where the Coker ridge running parallel to the south rises above the 120 metre contour, and thus allows longer views above Camp Road toward recent development to the north of Yeovil, again in the 'next' valley (photos 8-9). Hence whilst this length of the envelope has a limited sphere of visual influence, it effectively buffers views from public vantage points around West Coker village, and with its open and emphatic agricultural character a strong contrast to urban form, this length of the escarpment head is rated as '**high**' sensitivity.

5.6 Finally, to the west of Yeovil, the high ground extends beyond Odcombe and across the northeast face of the Ham Hill plateau to offer complete visual containment of the town as viewed from the wider countryside to the southwest. From this northeast edge of high ground, by Odcombe (photo 11) and above Montacute (photo 13) there are public vantage points that view Yeovil in its headwater valley context, and also perceive those landscape elements that act as a visual buffer to Yeovil's west edge as viewed from local vantage points on lower ground by Montacute and Lower Odcombe, namely the tree belts by Lufton Manor; the intervening hedges and specimen trees on the Yeo/Parrett watershed plateau; and the related low hills. Between them, these landscape elements provide a

diffuse visual buffer, and are viewed as supplementing the visual envelope at a lower elevation, and thus completes definition of the town's immediate visual envelope.

Visual profile of land within Yeovil's visual envelope

5.7 Within Yeovil's immediate visual envelope, expressed for circa 80% of its length by the surrounding escarpments, the built form of the town is the prime visual element, leaving (Westlands Airfield aside) two areas of land that are free from built form: First, land to the east of the River Yeo below Babylon Hill (and thus within Dorset) and second; land to the south and west of the A3088, the valley and hillsides around Brympton d'Evercy.

5.8 Babylon Hill and its associated north-south ridge, forms the town's immediate skyline as viewed from Penn and Wyndham Hills, highly valued public vantage points within Yeovil. From here, and other areas of south and east Yeovil, this escarpment head ties closely with the steep hillsides within the Country Park, and their contrasting blocks of woodland, scrub and pasture. Given the visual prominence, contrasting rural cover, and sense of separation from urban form, the scarp head is graded '**high**' sensitivity. Conversely, land in the valley bottom, which is adjacent urban form and with a limited visual profile is graded '**low**' sensitivity. Intermediate land over the lower-mid hillside, whose visual profile is limited to the river valley yet has no urban detractors adjacent, is thus graded '**moderate**'.

5.9 The land to the south and west of the A3088, whilst sharing the same valley setting as the town, expresses a strong agricultural character in contrast to Yeovil's built form. Critical to an assessment of the visual sensitivity of this area is the historic park and garden of Brympton d'Evercy: Due to its historic and cultural interest, Brympton d'Evercy is viewed as a sensitive receptor. Hence its visual setting will be similarly viewed as sensitive. No detailed study has been undertaken to 'map' the setting of either house or historic park, but it is noted that the house is set low in the valley, with its main aspect to the south, and with a strong N-S axis to the park. Consequently, land within the park, plus higher ground that forms both part of the main view from the house and terrace, and rises to form its containing skyline, is rated '**high**' sensitivity. The intervening ground between the house and the A3088 has previously been assessed in 2003 as part of the Yeovil Employment Study. General findings were that the lower the elevation of the valley, and the closer it lay to the urban edge, then due to limited vantage points, and the wider character of the valley being predominantly urban when viewed from south and west, the sensitivity of the immediate urban edge is accordingly rated '**low**' whilst the foot slopes of the bounding scarp, and low land nearer to the historic park is rated '**moderate**'.

5.10 Land to the north of Rex Road has little visual relationship with urban form, yet has a limited visual profile other than where glimpsed from high ground within Odcombe village (photo 12). It is thus graded '**moderate**' sensitivity, up to the point where the land gains greater prominence in its rise away from Yeovil and toward Odcombe, and has clear separation from the urban edge, where it is graded '**high**' sensitivity.

Visual profile of land outside Yeovil's visual envelope

5.11 Within the parameters of the study area, two substantial tracts of land are identified as lying outside Yeovil's urban setting, which are:

- i) To the north of the northern escarpment; running east from Stoke sub Hamdon, to include the farmland and hillsides around and above Montacute Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil Marsh and Mudford, to Trent and Over Compton in Dorset, and;
- ii) To the south of the southern escarpment; to include the enclosed valley containing West Coker village, and running east through the parishes and associated farmland of East Coker, Barwick and Bradford Abbas.

5.12 Ham Hill Country Park is considered a highly sensitive receptor and prime vantage point. From both its northern and easternmost points at the head of the plateau (photos 13 and 17) it looks toward Yeovil and the adjacent countryside to the northwest of the town. From here the value of the plantings around Lufton Manor and the prominence of Lufton Hill and the hillsides above Thorne Coffin are noted, in both containing the town and offering a clear rural contrast to the urban fabric beyond these features. With a high visual profile, the elevated ground is graded **high** sensitivity.

5.13 The gentle hillsides falling south from Tintinhull and west from Windmill Hill lay open to views from the head of Ham Hill, but have a lesser visual profile when viewed in a wider context, other than the low ridges of Perrens and Windmill Hills, and the escarpment at Tintinhull's northern edge, which stand above the general level of the land, and thus draw the eye in lower trajectory views. These latter areas are thus graded **high** sensitivity due to their broader prominence; the remainder are graded as **moderate** sensitivity.

5.14 Montacute House and its associated park and garden is similarly considered a highly sensitive receptor, and the extent of its historic park can be rated **high** sensitivity, due to its national public profile and intrinsic cultural interest. As with Brympton, no assessment has been made of its 'setting' but it is noted that an association of its own parkland plantings; Lufton Hill and corresponding high ground west of Lufton Manor; and intervening tree lines; all act as a visual buffer between Montacute House and Park, and the growing profile of Yeovil's employment buildings on the Lufton 2000 site. Thus this intervening ground is all graded **high** sensitivity.

5.15 The shallow valley drained by Ball's Water has a visual profile of its own, as it is broadly contained within low bounding hills to all sides. Whilst its rural expression is clear to the few close vantage points across the valley, there is limited inter-visibility involving sensitive receptors within this visual unit, other than long views over the valley from the head of St Michaels Hill tower (photo 15). The majority of views from sensitive sites align obliquely into the valley, as from Ham Hill and Montacute House, with many partially obscured by landform and vegetation; whilst from the national trail that runs along Kissmedown Lane (photo 18) enclosure deriving from the hedgerows limits sight of the shallow vale. Hence this general area is graded **moderate** sensitivity with the exception of land adjacent Montacute,

where the rising ground that contains the valley to both north and east of the park has some prominence as seen from the House and its surrounds, and is thus graded **'high'** sensitivity.

5.16 Land at Chilthorne Domer's east and west edge, and below Vagg Hill has both association with built form and a low visual profile with few sensitive public vantage points. Visually sheltered, this land is graded **'low'** sensitivity and this assessment of visual sensitivity similarly extends east into a broad corridor that is associated with the vehicular activity, lighting and highway signage of the A37; non-traditional building forms along this road; and the mixed forms, age and scales of development within Yeovil Marsh, which all project an element of urban expression, at variance with the wider rural context, and at low elevation thereby having a limited visual profile.

5.17 The head and upper slopes of the Northern escarpment are already graded **high** sensitivity (para 5.3) due to their prominence, and extensive zone of visual influence, whilst land immediate to Mudford village, due to the inorganic mix of house forms and ages; highway relative layout, and the limited visual profile of the lower village, is graded **'low'**. The remainder of the land, between the escarpments' upper slopes and the wider vale to the North, is graded **'moderate'** sensitivity. Whilst this general area does not share the high visual profile of the escarpment and thus has a reduced zone of visual influence, it has value in its strong rural expression and visual connectivity with the wider countryside.

5.18 The quadrant of land to the southeast of Yeovil is characterised by the surprisingly high numbers of historic parks and gardens, namely those of Newton Surmaville, Barwick, Aldon and Clifton Maybank. No detailed study has been made of the visual setting of these properties and their estates, but there will be a clear and high intrinsic value placed upon the land that lays either within the confines of the park as notified by English Heritage (where registered) or where noted to have a clear visual relationship with each site, as in the plateau around Aldon House (which also serves to contain views towards Yeovil from the south). Whilst Barwick and Newton Surmaville House have valley settings, their estates rise to the plateau and include part of the dissected scarp. Acknowledging that there is minimal visual relationship with Yeovil, the clear rural expression of much of this land and the value of the higher ground associated with these estates in containing and buffering Yeovil, this general area is accordingly graded **'high'** sensitivity.

5.19 The national character study of the 'Yeovil scarplands' has identified that the views across the hills and ridges are valuable in providing an impression of a sparsely settled land. Hence with open views and visibility a prime component of visual character, and noting the clear rural expression of its head and upper slopes and its degree of local prominence, the Coker ridge is graded as being **'high'** visual sensitivity.

5.20 The land that lays between the Coker Ridge and the Southern escarpment can broadly be viewed as a single visual unit (to be termed Coker Vale) contained to its east side by the low ridge that runs northeast from Pincushion Corner, through Darvole and Barwick to the singular hill by Yeovil Junction Station, where it links visually with the incised plateau above Barwick. This envelope contains most views

into this landscape, other than where the receptor is at a higher elevation than the containing envelope, to thus allow low-trajectory views in from higher land at greater distance to the south. Such is the situation in relation to the visual profile of the Southern escarpment's head, which can be viewed from Closworth; footpaths above Ryme Intrinseca and Yetminster, and from the A37 at the head of Dorset's North escarpment by Melbury. From both long view, and from within the Coker vale visual unit, it is apparent that the escarpment head defines and contains Yeovil's southern edge, other than where spill has occurred below West Coker Road. To either side of this urban area, the scarp head contains Yeovil and is graded '**high**' sensitivity. Where residential form is present, partial buffering is effected in places on the highest ground where paddocks, mature hedge lines and garden trees filter the urban profile. Such scarp head areas, primarily to the west of the A37 by Aldon, are similarly graded '**high**' sensitivity. Adjacent open land by the urban edge and clearly perceptible to longer view outside the Coker visual unit is graded '**moderate**' sensitivity.

5.21 The character assessment noted that hedgerow removal, elm dieback and closely cropped hedges have created an 'open' landscape between Yeovil's southern housing edge and the Coker villages to the south. It is also noted that the intervening fields between the town and these villages are dotted with individual and small housing groups, which are suburban in character and unrelated physically to any settlement. These elements are viewed as visual detractors, as are the lighting columns associated with both the A37 road corridor and the rugby club. Thus the general openness and lack of landscape containment allows detracting elements to intrude into the landscape, and with the general low level of views available across this landscape, and the small-scale of the landscape unit a further consideration, much of this area of land, from Inglemount in the west, across to Barwick in the east, is graded '**low**' sensitivity. It is acknowledged that there are public vantage points of local value associated with East Coker that look toward Yeovil's urban edge, which place a high value on the intervening ground, for its general expression of rural land-use and for enabling separation from the town, yet most of these views are low-trajectory and partially buffered by elements that can visually contain urban expression. Accepting also that much of the land to the south of the Coker stream lays outside the influence of urban detractors and exhibits a strong rural character, this intervening land is thus graded '**moderate**' sensitivity. This zone includes North Coker Park and Conservation Area, and the core of Nash hamlet, for their intrinsic visual interest.

5.22 West Coker and its margins lay toward the head of the Coker Stream, where the valley narrows and provides a setting for the village removed from inter-visibility with Yeovil, and with few urban detractors. Given the strong agricultural expression of the surrounding land and the many fine trees that both draw the eye and act as a foil to built form, yet noting the limited zone of visual influence attached to this valley, the valley is graded '**moderate**' visual sensitivity. The exception is the suburban adjunct to the east of the village, which with the recreation fields are of a non-rural expression and limited visual profile. Hence this land, along with land of similar character at Burton, is graded '**low**' sensitivity.

5.23 Finally, land to the south and southeast of Stoford, and in the vicinity of Bradford Abbas, lay outside Yeovil's visual envelope and, apart from the immediate

village edges, are clearly rural in expression and open to views along the expanse of the Yeo's headwater rivers and corridors. They are thus graded '**moderate**' sensitivity.

6) Value and Constraints

6.1 The study to date has already noted a number of features of landscape and historic value - such as the registered historic park and gardens in local proximity - and their high value has already been weighted in the previous sections of this report. However, in this section areas of wildlife value (and their margins) plus sites with specific cultural association or high recreational amenity value are also highlighted, as are the topographical constraints of floodplain and slope, as factors that may limit potential, and thus capacity, for development. These elements are indicated on figure 4 – values and constraints.

6.2 The settings of the registered historic parks and gardens are already noted, and factored into the assessment as far as it is possible to evaluate at this level. Additionally, there are a number of Conservation Areas associated with the surrounding villages and this will raise the sensitivity of these areas and their immediate margins. Nash Priory is a notable listed building and its immediate margins are thus similarly considered to be of higher value.

6.3 There are isolated pockets of woodland on both the northern escarpment (Vagg Copse) and on the southern escarpment (The Rookery and Dry Copse) that are designated for their ecological value at local level, i.e. County Wildlife Sites. Stretches also of the Coker Stream (and associated carr and wet grassland) both above West Coker and below East Coker) and the River Yeo are similarly designated, primarily for their species and vegetation interest, thus forming valuable aquatic corridors. Green Acres Farm, above Mudford village, is a designated county wildlife site, for its (neutral) grassland interest, whilst below Lufton Manor lays a wet woodland of local value. At Montacute and Barwick, the parks are designated for the ecological value of their veteran trees and associated pasture, and this value will also apply to the veteran trees found in other historic parks and gardens. Finally, the extensive woodlands covering the north face of the hamstone escarpment are designated county wildlife sites, whilst Ham Hill is similarly designated for its woodland, grassland and archaeological interest.

6.4 The Yeovil Country Park has considerable amenity value, and adjoining land to the south of Aldon is similarly held in high regard as a recreational asset, where permissive access is allowed. It is traversed in-part by the Monarchs Way, a national trail which continues across farmland south of Yeovil by East Coker, whilst issuing north of the town along Stone Lane, to Mudford Sock. The Leland Trail travels through the west of the study area, notably crossing Montacute Park, and over Hedgecock and Ham Hills, the latter being the district's prime country park, offering extensive walking, and elevated vantage. Both trails enjoy superb views to the north of the town, where they are elevated in most part, but stretches of the Monarchs Way to the south are limited by enclosing hedgerows. The distinctive holloways that are particularly concentrated south of the West Coker Road, offer superb walking, but little perception of the wider landscape, being cut several feet below the level of adjacent ground. Land above East Coker offers popular local walking, with a greater level of visibility.

6.5 Both the River Yeo, Coker Stream and Welhams Brook, plus associated headwater streams, have areas prone to flooding in immediate proximity (identified

as flood zones 2 and 3 by the EA) particularly the low-lying meadows alongside the Yeo between Mudford and Barwick, and the Coker Stream in the vicinity of Coker Moor. 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.

6.6 Much of residential Yeovil is built over rising ground, yet it is evident that areas of marked slope have been avoided in most part. Exceptions have created an adverse visual impact of building mass. 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 sustainability 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.

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 Yeovil 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 potential areas for development can thus be identified that lay within Yeovil's visual setting:

- A) To the west of the A3088, between Yeovil's edge and Brympton d'Evercy, and;
- B) below Babylon Hill, to the east of the River Yeo.

7.4 Area (A) indicates 9 fields immediately alongside the SSLP employment allocation, to the side of the A3088 road corridor, extending west to a field's distance from the east boundary of Brympton d'Evercy's HP&G (historic park and garden). In many respect, this is a logical extension of Yeovil's built form, being within the prime landscape and visual setting of the town and immediately alongside the major road network. However, it is also acknowledged that the location and extent of the HP&G, and its immediate setting, will pose a strong constraint and stop to the westward spread of Yeovil. The visual sensitivity of these fields is low, due to their low elevation and limited visual profile relative to their surrounds - particularly to the south side of the valley - whilst those on rising ground to the north abutt the urban character of the town's current edge by Alvington. Given the general sensitivity of this site relative to Brympton d'Evercy, a housing and recreational allocation would appear best suited for the greater part of its area, though it is acknowledged that the low-lying land adjacent to the current Bunford employment site could accommodate further employment form.

7.5 Area (B) indicates relatively flat land alongside the River Yeo, adjoining the lower, shallow slopes of Babylon Hill, as having a capacity for development. However, whilst within the visual setting of the town, this land lays in Dorset, thus the prospect of urban growth can only be realised with the agreement of the adjoining local authority (WDDC). With part of this area also within the flood plain, the area appears to offer limited potential in assisting the town's strategic growth, but is not discounted from further consideration.

7.6 From a landscape perspective, the impact of development growth is best accommodated if it can be contained within the natural setting of the town. However, it is clear in this instance that the land areas required for the town's future development are unlikely to be found within Yeovil's current landscape context, or its immediate visual envelope, if it is to avoid land of low and moderate-low landscape capacity. Consequently it is pertinent to review land that lays outside the town's immediate setting, which are graded moderate-high capacity: Two further potential areas for development are indicated on the landscape capacity plan, being:

- C) Land to the south of the West Coker Road/Lower Wraxhill residential area, extending south toward North Coker and east toward Key Farm and across the A37 toward Barwick, and;
- D) Land in close proximity and to the west of Yeovil Marsh, adjacent to the A37.

7.7 Area (C) indicates a substantial tract of land that incorporates circa 58 ha. which is assessed as having moderate-high capacity for development. This includes a parcel of 3 fields and small paddocks associated with individual dwellings to the south of 'Inglemount' and north of Burton, separated by the narrow valley to the north of Nash, from a larger potential development area that adjoins and runs south from the residential area of Lower Wraxhill Road, spanning between land to the east of Nash Lane, across to the A37 Dorchester Road (see figure 5). This land falls gently to the south and is cross-coursed by the local lane network that links Yeovil with the Coker villages, and the A37. A Roman villa site and the course of a headwater stream are noted as small-scale constraints. The adjacent urban land to the north is characterised by the residential areas associated with Nash Lane and the Beaconsfield, Lower Wraxhill and East Coker roads, which provide a clear urban edge on which to 'graft' an urban extension. However, it is noted that the capacity plan indicates land with less capacity for growth intervening between the town and the 'moderate-high' land identified above: For the purpose of achieving a cohesive development plan, there is value in including such higher graded areas within a development proposal, providing these sensitivities are acknowledged in the layout. The greater concern relating to development growth, is likely to be the containment and limit of 'encroachment' toward the Coker villages, hence a need for separation will be essential. Given these sensitivities, the most appropriate use of this land would appear to be residential combined with strategic recreational areas, whilst on the lower ground toward Key Farm, there would appear to be scope for employment structures, due to the area's lesser visual profile.

7.8 The above 3 sites have the potential to form clear urban extensions to Yeovil's current form. However, area (D) identified by the capacity plan, does not abutt the current periphery of the town, but is separated by the highly valued northern escarpment and relates to land adjacent to the A37 by Yeovil Marsh. Whilst this small area circa 18 ha. has attracted a moderate-high capacity rating, development would not ordinarily be viewed favourably, unless a strategic, expanded allocation is considered necessary to enable Yeovil to meet its employment and housing targets.

8) Outline Proposals

8.1 The capacity study has indicated general areas of land by Yeovil's periphery that have the potential to be developed without too adverse an impact upon the landscape resource. This final section looks at the two favoured options identified through the capacity evaluation, para's 7.4 and 7.7, and provides outline guidance on the form of development that may be acceptable in landscape terms; its potential extent; and any necessary mitigation that may be required to counter landscape impact. It also considers the options available should the sites initially put forward by this report not be feasible for other (non-landscape related) reasons, all of which are indicated, figure 6 – development options.

8.2 The RSS (Regional spatial strategy) Proposed Changes report (July 2008) proposes an urban extension of 5000 houses for Yeovil, plus 6400 to be provided within the urban fabric. At time of writing, broad assumptions indicate that approximately 1500-2000 dwellings of the 6400 urban target may need to be located on greenfield land outside Yeovil's existing urban area, in addition to the 5000 urban extension, in order to achieve the 11,400 dwelling total for Yeovil as set out in the Proposed Changes. These allocations will also need to provide commensurate land for employment, recreational, and community use. In terms of the land areas being sought, this broadly equates to;

a) A major urban extension circa 5,000 dwellings, with a requirement for:

- 100 ha residential land (@ 50 dph net density)
- 30 ha recreational land and open space provision
- 25 ha min. employment land
- <12 ha schools and community facilities
and strategic landscape provision.

b) A secondary greenfield development for 1500-2000 dwellings, requiring:

- 30-40 ha residential land (@ 50 dph)
- 9-12 ha recreational land
- <7.5 ha employment,
< 4 ha school and community land
and strategic landscape provision.

Areas with clear potential for development:

Option (i) – East of Brympton d'Evercy:

8.3 To the west of the A3088 between the Westlands and Lynx (West) roundabouts, and east of Brympton d'Evercy HP&G, an area circa 40 hectares is indicated as a potential development area, alongside land already allocated for a high-quality business park. Scope for an additional 4.2 ha of employment land within the fields to the immediate south of the current allocation appears feasible. Detailed attention would be necessary to ensure a suitable scale and height for the buildings relative to Brympton d'Evercy HP&G.

25 ha. of housing/community development would appear a possibility, and this includes some land graded as only having 'moderate' capacity for development, due to its low visual profile, and capacity for sympathetic visual buffering relative to the HP&G: This residential area would broadly lay in two blocks; the larger area of 18 ha to the northwest of the Bunford business park, and a further 7 ha to its southwest. A mix of densities is practicable throughout this area, but given the sensitivities relating to Brympton d'Evercy (primarily those of development height relative to the listed house; and the accommodation of landscape features associated with the Brympton estate) the potential densities are unlikely to exceed an average of 35 dph if they are to be context-responsive. The west edge of this housing would likely be the closest element of built form to Brympton House: To respect the setting of both house and park, it is envisaged that built form would lay no closer than 0.5 km to the House, with its west edge built at a low-density, and buffered by blocks of woodland planting and open space dedicated to neighbourhood play and informal recreation. Sports use to the north of this housing area, laying under the Westlands flight path, would be a pragmatic use of land that lays at higher elevation. Wider landscape treatment would require the retention of existing hedgelines at the outer face of the development, substantiated to thus act as buffers between the employment and residential land, as well as external receptors. The option of the intervening land between Brympton d'Evercy and the development site, along with the rising land to the south, being incorporated into an allocation as informal recreational land, to thus supplement the Yeovil Country Park, would be highly desirable, and an appropriate use of land relative to a historic park.

***Option (ii) –
Nash/Keyford***

8.4 To the south of the West Coker/Wraxhill/East Coker Roads, and to the west of Barwick, a series of linked fields aggregating to a total circa 180 ha. is indicated by the capacity plan as a potential development area, with at least a third of this area comprising land graded as having moderate-high capacity for growth. Residential use is suggested for much of the area, and this can be broadly broken into 3 blocks:

a) The first, below 'Inglemount' and west of Nash Lane (also including a single field to the north of the West Coker Road) is indicated primarily for residential land of approximately 25.0 ha. of medium-density range, where there is a clear relationship with the current urban edge. Landscape treatment would include the retention and buffering of the outer perimeter boundaries, particularly to the west and south. The potential of 7.0 ha. open ground between the new urban edge and Burton to the south being utilised in part for sport and informal recreation, offers an attractive buffer option that will ensure separation. Access in the form of a major new junction off the A30 to the west of the Yeovil Court Hotel, which may offer an opening into this land as well as the potential for a link through to the A37 Dorchester Road, could be designed and sited to avoid too adverse a landscape impact.

b) The major area identified for growth is that spanning from Nash Lane to the A37 above Key Farm, abutting developed Yeovil by Wraxhill and East Coker Roads. Land at highest elevation by the A37, and Plackets Lane (North) is relatively flat, and being adjacent the skyline has some sensitivity, thereby lending itself to a partial green-space use, such as school/community-space or informal recreation,

with a potential for strong planting presence consistent with local character. The greater area has potential for residential development approximating to 70 ha. in close proximity to Yeovil's edge, to ensure that it is legible as an urban extension. The associated open space can be devised within the layout to ensure separation from the Coker villages, primarily through a sports allocation, and retention of open fields and the North Coker parkland. A range of housing densities are appropriate in this quadrant, with some potential for high densities approaching 60 dph within the core of the allocation, yet with low densities circa 30 dph applied where the land has a higher visual profile; abuts the rural edge; and is in close proximity to adjacent village edges, to enable a comfortable correspondence with the wider landscape. Land of lower elevation to the north and west of Key Farm offers employment potential circa 25 ha. with the benefit of immediate access to the A37. Landscape treatment would include retention of the better hedgerows in associated open space, substantiated by woodland planting at those edges with a high visual profile, to buffer development mass where viewed from sensitive vantage points, and to better define the new urban edge. As with land by Nash, the outer face of this urban edge offers the potential for integration of recreational and open space land, along with scope for further structural planting, as part of a strategic landscape plan to provide containment of the development, and separation from adjacent villages.

c) The final block of land lays between the A37 and Barwick village, where there is capacity to provide 10 ha. of housing, and a 2.5 ha. buffer area of strategic landscape and open space between the proposed housing and the existing village, alongside the church, and by Coker Stream.

8.5 To date, the following areas (i and ii) are put forward as having potential for development;

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| i) East of Brympton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25.0 ha residential (approx. average of 35 dph) - 04.2 ha employment - 10.8 ha recreational/structural landscape |
| ii) Nash/Keyford | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 105.0 ha residential (density range 30-60 dph) - 25.0 ha. employment - 40.0 ha recreational/structural landscape - <12.00 ha school sites/community |

8.6 The 25 hectares of potential housing land at Brympton would yield 875 houses at a density of 35 dph, which is considered the maximum feasible given the close proximity of the designated HP&G.

At the Nash/Keyford site, an area of 105 ha. is identified with housing potential. It is already noted that this area has some potential for high densities, both within the core of a housing allocation, and in places where abutting the urban edge. Yet this site lays outside the main setting of the town, and is not perceived as being within an urban context. In its wider rural setting, where the land has a higher visual profile; abuts the open countryside; and is in close proximity to adjacent village edges (with their acknowledged sensitivities) there is a strong case for a reduction

in the housing densities, to thus enable a comfortable correspondence with the wider landscape.

Given site context and extent, a landscape-led urban layout would be unlikely to support housing mass exceeding 40 dph, implying a potential housing total of no more than 4200 houses within this site. However, cognisant of the RSS policy H2, which applies a density of 50 dph in planned urban extensions to SSCTs (strategically significant cities or towns), a total of 5250 houses could be indicated for an urban extension at Nash/Keyford. This latter figure may satisfy the numbers proposed by the recent RSS Proposed Changes (July 2008) for an urban extension of 5000 houses, yet the total numbers offered by both Nash/Keyford and Brympton remains short of the 7000 units max. housing total projected for Yeovil within the LDF period. It is thus expedient to consider if there are other options available as indicated by the capacity study.

Alternative development options

8.7 With a potential shortfall in meeting Yeovil's targets for growth, this study reviews further options, being;

a) Areas partially indicated by the capacity study:

- i) The inclusion of additional 'moderate' graded land within areas (i) and (ii);
- ii) land of 'moderate' capacity with good connectivity to both existing and potential urban areas;
- iii) land indicated with development potential to the east of the River Yeo in Dorset, and;

b) Other areas:

- iv) the potential of 'moderate' grade land by Yeovil Marsh for urban expansion,
- v) land of 'moderate' capacity to the north of Lufton, west of Thorne Coffin, and;
- vi) 'moderate' graded land toward the A303/Cartgate, as a satellite to the town.

Note that the potential of Westlands Airfield to provide land for urban development lays outside the scope of this study.

8.8 Both the Brympton and Nash Lane/Keyford site development suggestions (paras 8.3 and 8.4) have already assumed inclusion of some areas of land indicated as 'moderate' capacity, where such areas lay adjacent moderate-high land, and would thus enable delivery of a coherent package of development without undue adverse landscape impact. Whilst the capacity plan does indicate further land of 'moderate' grade toward 1) Brympton d'Evercy House, and 2) the villages of West and East Coker, this assessment views 1) a closer proximity with the HP&G, and 2) coalescence with the villages, as both undesirable in landscape terms, and likely to meet substantive resistance. The development proposals put forward above have already sought to strike a balance in including a small proportion of the 'moderate' rated land within the scope of a potential allocation, whilst utilising such land

primarily for open space/sport/ recreation and strategic landscape use, to act as a non-built buffer to ensure continued separation of the town from sensitive locations.

8.9 Elsewhere, 'moderate' graded land in close proximity to the urban edge is indicated;

- a) to the east of the River Yeo, and north of the Lyde Road allocation;
- b) between Thorne Lane and Thorne Coffin, and;
- c) by Lufton Manor.

a) Land to the east of the River Yeo – already indicated as having capacity for growth para 7.5 - and to north of the proposed Lyde Road key site (a current SSLP allocation) indicates an area approaching 170 ha with some potential for development. This area is sufficient to deliver a strategic allocation, and is considered further, option (iii) below.

b) An area approaching 20 ha running parallel to Thorne Lane, alongside the Lufton employment site, is indicated as having moderate capacity for growth. Whilst this moderate graded land abuts a length of the town's existing edge, there are a number of sensitivities attached to this area, in that;

- i) its extension west lays over the head of a low escarpment, thereby having a significant degree of prominence in local views from the west and north;
- ii) it would extend built form into a topographic area that is currently free of urban form (i.e; the valley associated with the Balls Water catchment); and;
- iii) it lays adjacent land of low and moderate-low capacity that reflects the value of both the Thorne Coffin conservation area, and the wider setting of Montacute House and its Historic Park.

With clear landscape capacity constraints, there is considered to be little scope available to expand on the 22 ha. indicated, and thus insufficient land for a strategic allocation that is context-sympathetic. However, at time of writing, early Highways evidence indicates development to the NW of the town may be favoured in transport terms, hence scope for development within this general area is explored later in this study (option v).

c) Land in the vicinity of Lufton hamlet is indicated as having small-scale potential for development. Whilst the site abuts the current edge of the town, and as such offers scope for sensitive infilling of the hamlet's built form, its extent of 12 ha is of insufficient scale to offer strategic development, whilst adjoining land is graded low and moderate-low capacity for growth, and with the Cartgate link corridor a major constraint, the potential for expansion of the area is limited. Thus the area is noted, but not pursued further by this study.

Alternative sites indicated by the landscape evidence

Option (iii)

Land to the east of Yeovil, extending north to Up Mudford

8.10 Land in Dorset (in Over Compton parish) to the north of the A30 below Babylon Hill has previously been noted (para 7.5) as having both 'moderate-high' and 'moderate' landscape capacity for development. The area also lays within the topographic setting of the town, as defined by its surrounding hills. The area indicated extends north from the Babylon Hill roundabout, as far as the course of

the Trent Brook, and links across the Yeo to the large fields that rise toward Primrose Lane. Whilst this latter area would represent a degree of northward 'urban spill' over the northern escarpment, this area does not have the sensitivity of the main escarpment to the west, as it is afforded some buffering by elevated land extending in a low finger along the Mudford road from the town's edge. It also has the advantage of being contiguous with the town, primarily related to the Great Lyde SSLP allocation.

8.11 This combined area does have a series of significant constraints: Whilst not landscape constraints, it is noted that the current highway infrastructure does not favour additional pressure on Sherborne Road, and that the lack of a second crossing of both river and rail-line is a major stumbling block to a practicable single allocation. The separation arising from the lack of a bridge link between the Dorset and Somerset site areas is exacerbated by both the width of floodplain associated with the River Yeo, and the rail-line corridor running alongside the river. Furthermore, gradient on the upper slopes of Babylon Hill is sufficiently steep to preclude development, whilst the road linking Over Compton and Trent demarcates a sensitive skyline between the immediate Yeo valley and the Dorset combes to the east, and thus has value in buffering views of Yeovil from the Compton villages and adjacent countryside, as such also precluding built development. With the constraint of these floodplain and skyline sensitivities, the potential area of land available for development on the Dorset side of the river amounts to no more than 50 ha for housing, and 10 ha employment land, the latter best located to extend to the north of the current Babylon Hill shopping warehouse area, at the fringe of the floodplain by the Compton road. Housing would lay to the east of the Compton road, with a north-south emphasis to the layout (as determined by the constraints of both the Yeo floodplain, and the steep gradients associated with the head of Babylon Hill) breaking to avoid the combe below Lower Farm, before continuing north parallel with the rail line, toward the Trent Brook. The visually sensitive land alongside the Trent-Over Compton road is best placed for recreational and open space use, and might need to be sufficient in area to provide for a combined allocation (with Mudford). The north and northeast boundaries of land within Dorset would also see the major concentration of structural landscape provision, to both define and contain the extent of urban growth, and ensure physical and visual separation of any urban extension from adjacent villages.

8.12 On the opposite side of the River Yeo, immediately alongside and to the north of the Great Lyde SSLP allocation, an area of land is indicated within Mudford parish, east of Primrose Lane, approaching 60 ha. with a moderate capacity for development. Whilst not the favoured landscape option for development, it is feasible that this area could supply a further 40 ha. of housing to be added to the Over Compton land to form a combined allocation, or as a separate secondary urban extension at the town's immediate edge. Such development would provide;

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| i) Over Compton + Mudford; | - | 90.0 ha residential |
| (combining both sites) | - | 10.0 ha employment |
| | - | >30.0 ha recreational/structural landscape |
| | - | <10.00 ha school sites/community. |

- ii) Mudford (alone) - 40.0 ha residential (density range 35-50 dph)
- >15.0 ha recreational/structural landscape
- <4.00 ha school/community space

8.13 This option has some landscape benefit, but is not the favoured option. A combined allocation has the capacity to provide up to 4500 houses, but this number falls short of the 6500-7000 housing projection, and thus still requires the development of further sites, which suggests that the Brympton and Nash/Keyford sites will still be required – in part - to make up the numbers. Transport, floodplain, communication and county administrative constraints may all conspire to prevent this larger area being delivered, and whilst the greater part of the area lays within the town's visual setting, the separation created by the Yeo's floodplain, the sensitivities attached to elevated land adjacent the Dorset villages, and the element of overspill outside the Dodham brook catchment that would result from growth within the Mudford parish, combine to place both options in this vicinity as a secondary preference to the Brympton and Nash/Keyford sites.

Potential site options not favoured by the landscape evidence

8.14 The study to date has come forward with two options for a major urban extension, and two further options for secondary urban expansion. However, it notes that one of the urban extension sites (Over Compton) is seriously compromised by administrative, transport and flooding constraints. Acknowledging also that strategic transport objectives and infrastructure constraints may favour other sites that are not indicated positively by this study, three further areas (options iv-vi) are considered for strategic development where either a fair proportion of 'moderate' graded land lays in close concentration, or moderately graded land has a degree of contiguity with the urban edge.

Option (iv)

Land to the north of Yeovil, in the vicinity of Yeovil Marsh

8.15 Land of approx 22 ha. in the vicinity of Yeovil Marsh is indicated as having a moderate-high capacity for development, and lays in relationship with a further 100 ha land that is graded as having moderate capacity for growth to the north. The great majority of this area is relatively flat and has few topographical constraints, and thus has the physical capacity to accommodate both housing and employment form, and to that extent a large allocation is possible. However, the complete detachment of this primarily rural area from the town does not enable built expression to read as an urban extension, but as a satellite settlement. Neither would development in this location be favoured in landscape terms, for whilst the land lays at a low elevation, it lacks definitive landscape containment, and would thus require extensive and substantial mitigation to provide a context for development, that equally mitigates landscape impact. Whilst a potential to provide a singular 'out of town' employment allocation may have some attraction if there is an overall shortfall of employment land, provision of commensurate landscape mitigation sufficient to enable employment form to be suitably accommodated in a rural setting is unlikely to be feasible in economic terms. Any form of development

quite clearly lays divorced from the town, and its topographic setting, and would introduce urban expression into a large rural area, wholly at variance with the character of the wider landscape of both the northern escarpment and central plain. Hence the options here are noted, but not developed further as they do not have landscape support.

Area (v)

Land to the north of Lufton, west of Thorne Coffin

8.16 An 20 ha area alongside Thorne Lane to the north of the Lufton employment site, has already been assessed for development potential, but discounted due to the sensitivities attached to the adjoining land (para 8.9b). Yet it is acknowledged that this 'moderate' area is contiguous with Yeovil over a 400 metre length of the trading estate's north edge, and has a connection with a further 60 ha of moderately graded land that stretches both west and north. Much of this land has a gentle gradient, and with few topographical constraints, has the physical capacity to accommodate both housing and employment form, and to that extent a large allocation is possible. It also has a capacity to link to the town's current north edge, and connect to Chilthorne Domer to the north, and so build a relationship with adjacent settlement and the highway network.

However, development in this location is not favoured in landscape terms, for the detachment of this predominantly rural area from the prime setting of the town does not enable built expression to read as a cohesive urban extension. Land on the south and east fringes also has a significant degree of prominence as viewed from valued public vantage points to the west and north, and the area includes sensitive land that reflects the value of both the Thorne Coffin Conservation Area, and the wider setting of Montacute House and its Historic Park. As the wider setting is clearly rural, with adjacent land graded as having a low landscape capacity for development, and mindful that there is land elsewhere with sufficient landscape capacity to provide a contiguous urban extension to Yeovil, this option is not advocated by this study.

Area (vi)

Land adjacent the A303 below Tintinhull

8.17 There is no land indicated in this vicinity as possessing a moderate-high capacity for growth. It is however, included as an option as it is anticipated there may be potential highways issues that could suggest a satellite site by the A303 to be a practicable option. The capacity report indicates a substantial area of 'moderate' graded land approaching 90 ha that lays adjacent both the A303 and the A3088 Cartgate link, to the south of Tintinhull. Whilst the greater part of this area is gently undulating, with few constraints - thus having the physical capacity to accommodate built form - clearly this is not a preferred site in landscape terms. Whilst settlement abounds the area - in the form of Stoke sub Hamdon to the south, Tintinhull to the north - these are not urban areas, but compact built areas of village scale, form and character, with their own distinctive identity. Nor is their any physical or visual link with Yeovil, from which this area lays separated by two low ridges and a distance circa 4 km. from the town's edge. As the wider setting is emphatically rural; adjacent land is graded as low landscape capacity; and there are recreational and conservation assets in close proximity on which substantive urban

form would negatively impact; then cognisant that there is sufficient land elsewhere that has the capacity to provide a contiguous urban extension to Yeovil, there is no landscape support for this option.

Summary

8.18 Development options arising from this landscape capacity study point toward two potential growth areas by Yeovil's periphery in the vicinity of 1) Brympton and 2) Nash/Keyford as areas that have the greatest capacity to be developed without too adverse an impact upon the landscape resource. A third site to the east of the town, linking Mudford with the Dorset parish of Over Compton, is offered either as a major development option, alternatively as a location with sufficient capacity to make up any potential shortfall in the housing figures sought by the RSS that areas 1 and 2 might not fulfil. Theoretical options that lay beyond the town's edge are noted, but discounted on landscape terms.

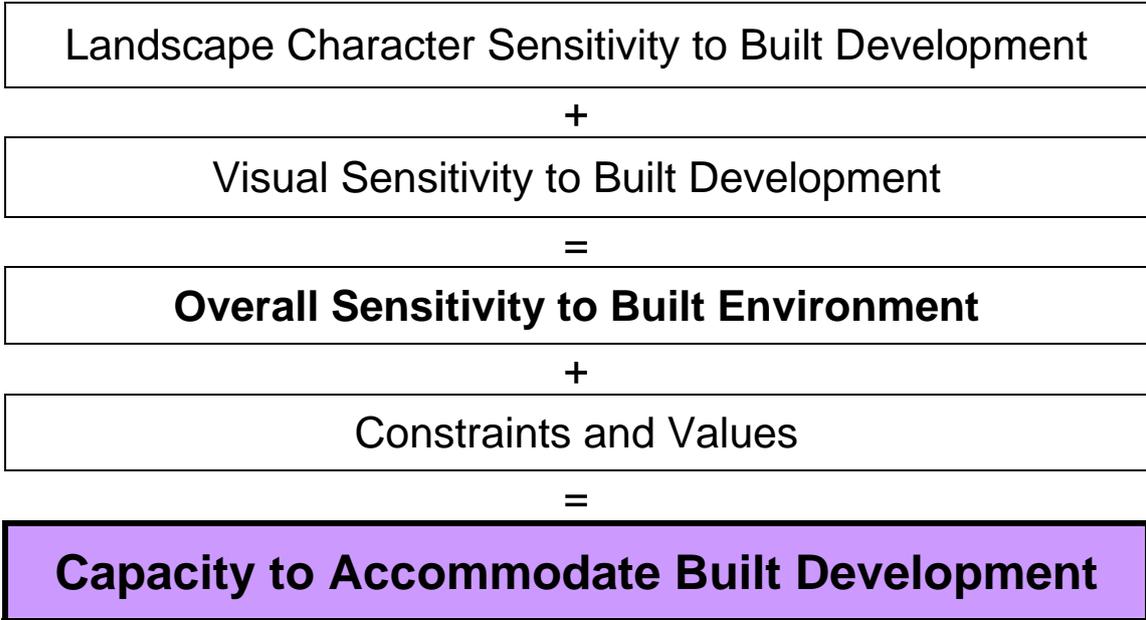
The preferred areas aggregate to a substantial land-take, and will offer some choice in determining the location and extent of potential development sites, and their sequencing within the LDF period 2006-2026. Arising from this study, it is clear that the proposed growth areas have a credible relationship with the town, and avoid land of high landscape sensitivity. Such location offers a potential for planned development that need not adversely impact upon either the immediate setting of the town or its wider landscape context, consistent with this assessment's prime objectives.

Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil

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		

Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil

Appendix 2 - historic landscape character

Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil

Appendix 3 - Photographs



Photo 1: Above Mudford Sock, looking SSW toward Yeovil's northern escarpment – there is barely any perception of Yeovil's built form, and the intervening landscape is deeply rural in character.



Photo 2: From the A359 above Mudford Cemetery looking SW toward Yeovil - the north escarpment is less pronounced, and development by Mudford Road and Stone Lane has a skyline profile without undue spill onto the northern slopes.



Photo 3: By the Monarchs Way national trail, Church Farm, Trent , looking WSW toward Yeovil - the escarpment has a reduced profile as viewed from this quarter, yet little of Yeovil's form beyond its head is visible, other than recent development by Primrose Lane.



Photo 4: Looking NW toward Constitution Hill from the Stoford – Clifton Maybank road. Urban Yeovil is completely obscured by its southern scarp head as viewed from this quarter.



Photo 5: From Stoford's southern edge looking WNW – the light columns associated with the rugby club and adjacent highway, along with housing to the south of Wraxhill Road are indicators of Yeovil's urban presence.



Photo 6: Within East Coker cemetery looking N – residential Yeovil south of the West Coker Road is apparent on the skyline, with the intervening fields occasionally broken by individual and small housing groups associated with the parish.



Photo 7: Looking NNE from Coker Court Park – Yeovil's edge is defined by its bounding large fields (to the south); woodland blocs at the head of Bunford Hollow; and the concentration of housing S of West Coker Road.



Photo 8: From Coker Ridge looking NE, Yeovil town centre is predominantly screened by its southern escarpment's woodland and plantations, but housing over the northern dip-slope is apparent.



Photo 9: From Coker Ridge looking N over West Coker village, the large scale and brightly clad forms of Yeovil's Houndstone and Lufton's employment buildings draw the eye.



Photo 10: Looking NNE toward Brympton d'Evercy from Camp Hill – the House is buffered from the scale and bright forms of Houndstone's employment buildings by agricultural fields and plantations.



Photo 11: From Odcombe village hall looking E down the Dodham Brook valley, Yeovil is viewed in the context of its valley setting.



Photo 12: Looking NE from Odcombe, Lufton's employment form is buffered and visually contained by planting around the Manor, and there is clear intervening ground between Yeovil and villages to the west.



Photo 13: From the east edge of Ham Hill Country Park above Montacute, the employment forms and brightly clad buildings of Lufton 2000 draw the eye toward the northwest edge of the town.



Photo 14: From St Michaels Hill, looking east over Montacute House and Park, and Lufton Hill, toward the employment area of Lufton 2000. Lufton Hill is the open ground in the middle distance.



Photo 15: Looking NE from St Michaels Hill toward Chilthorne Domer, over the valley associated with Balls Water. The wooded crown of Vaggs Hill marks the prominent edge of the north escarpment.



Photo 16: From St Michaels Hill looking north toward Tintinhull, in which there is no visual relationship with Yeovil.



Photo 17: Looking east toward Yeovil from Ham Hill, with much of the town obscured by Hedgecock Hill, other than the brightly clad buildings of Lufton's employment area.



Photo 18: Looking southeast from Kissmedown Lane, Windmill Hill, toward Yeovil's north edge as denoted by Lufton's trading estate along the Thorne Lane skyline.

Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil

Appendix 4 - Plans