

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT SITES, YEOVIL FRINGE

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION –

1: Background to the study.

1.1. A Yeovil employment land study (interim report – result of phase 1) undertaken by the council in the early months of 2003, found a need for additional employment land to be provided in a greenfield location, adjoining the developed edge of Yeovil.

1.2. The study identified five general locations that may have potential for development (see plan 5 of the above study) either as a strategic business park (for which a 12 hectare site is needed) or a general employment site (for which an area up to 5 hectare is required). These locations are;

- 1) land to the east of Mudford road (A359) – for general employment only,
- 2) land in the vicinity of ‘Keyford’, East Coker, to the west of the A37 – for business park and/or general employment,
- 3) land adjacent Camp road, and West Coker road (A30) – for general employment only,
- 4) land between Brympton d’Evercy and Lynx west trading estate, adjacent the A3088 – for business park and/or general employment, and;
- 5) land to the north of Lufton manor - for general employment only.

1.3 All the above areas lay outside development limits, and there has traditionally been a presumption against development in these locations due to perceived landscape sensitivity.

1.4 PPG 7 commends the approach to the identification of countryside character developed by the Countryside Agency, and suggests that it can assist in accommodating necessary change due to development without sacrifice of local character and distinctiveness. National guidelines similarly advise that visual impact can be determined as being significant when judged against the sensitivity of the viewing location, 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 profile of each of the 5 sites, to enable an assessment of their suitability or otherwise, as potential employment sites.

2: Structure of the report.

2.1. The location and general description of the five study areas act as a preface to an individual study of each site. Survey information of the study area’s landscape character is then compiled alongside an appraisal of the visibility of each site, and its visual sensitivity. The potential of each site’s ability to absorb an impact of built form and associated development is then evaluated against the character and visual profiles, to arrive at an assessment of the suitability of the site for employment development, in landscape terms.

Individual site appraisals -

A) MUDFORD ROAD (area 1)

1. landscape character

Context:

A1.1 The Mudford study area comprises three pasture fields at Yeovil's north edge. It abuts Lyde road over a field's length of its southern boundary, and an established area of housing and small paddocks associated with Primrose lane along its southeast edge. To the west it faces across the A359, Yeovil – Sparkford road onto the open farmland that folds around a headwater stream of the Oakley brook, draining from Yeovil's north edge, whilst to the north it overlooks open farmland that falls toward the valley of the River Yeo below Mudford.

A1.2 The site is within an altitude range that rises from an aod of 55.00 at its northern end, at the head of Combe Bottom, to a height circa 85.00 aod at its southernmost point, alongside Lyde road. Much of the site rises at a consistent gradient between these two points, circa 1 in 17, thus providing a northerly aspect.

Site character:

A1.3 The site comprises three small fields of permanent grassland, primarily used for grazing. The two fields closest to the Yeovil edge are fenced for horses, and with its post and rail fencing and close-cropped grass, are typical of the 'horsiculture' character often found at the urban fringe. All 3 fields are defined by flailed hedgerows, with few specimen trees, other than the roadside hedge to the Mudford road, which is unmanaged and includes a number of mature oaks, and the housing edge to the rear of the Primrose Lane properties, which is part fenced, part planted, with garden space beyond.

A1.4 The site adjoins the larger field pattern of the agricultural landscape to the north of Yeovil over the greater part of its boundary, which serves to emphasise the rural characteristic of the site's landcover. By virtue of its elevated location on the upper slope of the escarpment, its lack of enclosing features, and its close relationship with the pattern of the wider vale, the site is open in character, and juxtaposes visually with the 'sweep' of the scarp slope toward the Yeo vale.

A1.5 Along this section of Yeovil's northern edge, Lyde road, and the westward extension of its alignment along the Mudford road, forms a clear division in character between the housing that lays to the south of Lyde Road, and of the open countryside to the north. To the south of Lyde road, the housing has a strong urban character, projected by both its built-form and density of development, and in its clear relationship to the general setting of developed Yeovil. Yet the urban character of Yeovil impacts little upon the Mudford road site, which lays over land that falls north, away from the town's edge. Hence the urban character of Yeovil's edge ends at a clearly defined interface along Lyde road.

A1.6 To the southeast, sandwiched between town edge and open country, is Primrose Lane and its associated housing. This housing group is typical of older, peripheral development beyond the town's main curtilage, in being of generous plot size, with large mature gardens. This characteristic enables a gentle merger of the Primrose Lane housing into the wider countryside to the north, of which the Mudford road site is a component.

2. visual profile

A2.1 The visual profile of the site can be summarised as;

- The site is prominent, by virtue of its elevated position on the upper slopes of the north-facing escarpment, which ensures broad public perception of the study area.
- The site assumes greatest magnitude when viewed from the town's edge, the A359 approach from the Yeo valley, and the settlements immediately to the northeast of the site.
- Other than at its immediate urban edge, all of the main vantage points looking toward the site lay to its northern side.

- The area has few landscape components to draw the eye, rather it is its topographical location that endows it visual prominence, allied to the contrasting form of Yeovil's urban edge at intervals along its adjacent skyline
- Developed Yeovil exerts a strong urban influence when viewed at close proximity from the escarpment head, but from the vale is seen as a skyline feature only, subservient to the wider pattern of farmland spread across the escarpment face
- The character of the site is projected to most views by its open fields, thus it appears rural in character. In being contained to the ridge head, the built form of Yeovil's edge compromises this characteristic to a limited degree only.

A2.2 A zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been produced for the site (appendix 2) which identifies the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the visual envelope of the site is closely contained to the south by the town's edge, but is extensive to the north. It is clear that the elevated location of the site, toward the head of the outer facing scarp, will result in any development upon it being visible when viewed from the Yeo vale in this northern quadrant.

A2.3 The ZVI indicates a 1.5 metre radius, from which the site is clearly visible. From sensitive locations within this distance, i.e; the A359 approach to Yeovil, the settlement of Up Mudford and the edge of Mudford village, the development would be viewed as a prominent feature on the skyline, occupying a large proportion of the field of view, and appearing large in scale. When viewed from the housing at Yeovil's edge, it will intervene in views toward the countryside, and similarly appear large in scale. In both instances, a high visual impact would result from development when viewed from this close proximity.

A2.4 From between 1.5 and 3 km. distance, the site is moderately visible when viewed from sensitive locations within the visual envelope, such as parts of Trent, West Mudford, and the roads crossing the Yeo valley, most notably the A359. From these locations, employment development would appear as a clearly visible feature on the skyline, of large scale by comparison with adjacent housing, and standing slightly forward from Yeovil's edge, but would not dominate the field of view, as other landscape features attract the eye as the panorama widens. From these areas, development can be adjudged to result in a medium visual impact.

A2.5 The skyline location of this site ensures that it will continue to be perceived as a significant feature when viewed from further afield, though at distances in excess of 3 km. the apparent size of development would be much reduced, and it would recede into the wider panorama and generally not appear intrusive.

3. impact assessment

character impact

A3.1 It has been noted that this site's landcover displays rural characteristics, which juxtaposes with the rural pattern of the countryside to the north. It is elevated, and open in character. Whilst there is housing in close proximity, emphatic urban form lays to the south of Lyde road and its extension west along the Mudford road only. This road corridor provides separation from, and a strong interface between, urban form and its rural surround. This is little compromised by the presence of Primrose lane's housing, which is typical of older, low-density, peripheral development beyond the town edge.

A3.2 Development in this area would have a substantial visual impact, which is dealt with below. In terms of character impact, development presence would conflict with the open characteristic of this elevated shoulder of land, and the scale and profile of employment buildings would similarly be at variance with the domestic scale and profile of Primrose Lane. Consequently, there are landscape character grounds on which to resist employment development in this location.

visual profile

A.3 The study area has been noted as being elevated, and in a skyline location as viewed from an extensive tract of land to the northeast. It has also been noted that development would create both high and medium visual impacts as viewed by a number of sensitive local receptors. Similarly, as noted above, the scale and magnitude of employment buildings in this location would appear incongruous when set against the scale of adjacent built features.

A3.4 Development of the scale required, circa 5 hectares of land, would lead to a local aggregation of built form, which would be uncharacteristic in its surround, and substantially adding to the mass and elevational presence of built form. Development would cause built form to be brought forward to greater prominence at the head of the scarp than at present. Currently, a finely balanced perception of rural character prevailing over that of urban Yeovil is maintained, which betrays little of the presence of the town's urban form beyond the scarp head. Given this visual sensitivity, there is a need to preserve the head and outward slope of the scarp from further development, to ensure there is no incremental erosion of the current finely held balance.

4. conclusion

A4.1 The site is clearly prominent and widely visible to the northeast, and outside the main setting of Yeovil. Development within the study area would create a negative visual and landscape character impact, thus there is landscape justification for resisting employment development in this location.

B) KEYFORD/EAST COKER (area 3)

1. landscape character

context:

B1.1 The Keyford study area is primarily an area of open countryside situated at the southern edge of Yeovil. It is sited upon a shoulder of land that falls gently south from the plateau head, whose northern escarpment is the topographical feature that forms the southern edge of Yeovil's main setting and contains the town centre. To the northwest it is bounded by the East Coker road and its associated housing, whilst to the west and south it is generally defined by the stream corridor running south and east from the junction of East Coker road and Placket lane, by Pavyotts farm to Key bridge (the A 37 crossing). The boundary of this area is completed to the east by the line of the A 37, Dorchester – Yeovil road.

B1.2 The study area is within an altitude range that rises from an AOD of 45.00 at Key Bridge at its southern end, to a height of 85.00 at Turners barn lane to the north. Much of the site rises at a consistent gentle gradient between these two points, on average 1 in 35, thus providing a southerly aspect. The exception is where the land falls to the west to define the shallow stream corridor (Placket brook) that runs south from the urban edge to Pavyotts farm.

B1.3 Land-use of the area is primarily agricultural, and predominantly in arable cultivation, other than a grouping of small fields at the site's north end; aside Coker moor stream and by Placket brook; and to the east of the lane linking Pavyotts farm with Placket lane, which are pasture.

Character of site surround:

B1.4 The study area abuts an established area of Yeovil's suburban housing to the north-west, which lays at a similar raised elevation between the West and East Coker roads, and outside the town's natural 'cradle'. Elsewhere, it is little-related to the built form of the town, being surrounded by open land, predominantly of rural character: To the east the designed landscapes of Aldon and Barwick Parks provide a rich legacy of grassland and specimen trees. To the immediate southwest, the land is generally open in character and comprises a mix of arable and pasture mid-scale fields, within an ordered hedgerow pattern incorporating occasional hedgerow trees, threaded by narrow, part-sunken roads. A greater presence of parkland and domestic tree cover characterise the edges of North and East Coker further to the southwest, which are at a lower elevation than the study area. The study area is generally open to view from adjacent local settlements and communication routes, particularly East Coker and Barwick, which view the site across the low ground associated with Coker moor stream. This stream and its associated valley pasture, defines the southern surround of the study area, beyond which the land rises in folds toward the Dorset hills.

Site character:

B1.5 The site can be broadly divided into 3 individual landscape character sub-areas, to differentiate between the scale, topography, landcover and pattern of the landscape. These areas are detailed in a fuller study of the area – landscape assessment of Keyford area, September 2000 – but are summarised in the subsequent three paragraphs.

B1.6 The head of the site, referred to as the '*plateau head fields*' is characterised by a small-scale rectilinear pattern of arable and pasture fields, bounded by hedgerows that are predominantly unmanaged, gappy in part, but with a strong tree presence. The double-hedgerow form of a green lane defines the west edge of this character area, whose specimen trees, along with those of two small plantations, and the adjacent grounds of Keyford House, impart a strong sense of enclosure, and provide a sympathetic sylvan interface with the current urban edge.

B1.7 As the land gradually falls south and west away from the *plateau head fields*, the scale of the fields changes to mid-large, and dominated by arable production, with boundaries delineated by sporadic, gappy and partially managed hedgerows that run alongside the local lanes and tracks. These hedges have a high proportion of elm, and few specimen trees, yet still

retain some value as singular landscape components, usefully breaking the mass of arable ground that falls across this broad shoulder of land. The Keyford landscape assessment referred to this character area as *'open farmland'* and the dominant characteristic is that of the open expanse of the landform.

B1.8 In the southwest of the study area, the land folds into a narrow pasture valley containing the Placket brook. Its immediate stream corridor is aligned with woody vegetation, including a number of hybrid poplars regularly dotted alongside the stream above Pavyotts (a farm complex with a listed mill house and small field surround). To the east of Pavyotts, the valley associated with Coker Moor stream is little wider, with pasture landcover, sporadic thorn-dominated hedgerows, and irregular small-scale pastures, which differentiate its character from the wider arable bloc to the north. The Keyford landscape assessment referred to this character area as *'stream corridors'*.

B1.9 At the east edge of the site, the A37 road corridor is characterised by the presence of lighting columns, and a strong 'engineered' profile cut along the roman road alignment and the large scale of the roundabout and its associated earth profiling. This engineered character is less pervasive to the south of the roundabout, where an established hedgerow buffers the site from the road, and there is a reduced 'cut' profile and no overhead lighting.

2. visual profile

B2.1 A zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been produced for the site (appendix 3) which identifies the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the visual envelope of the site is closely contained to the north by both topography and the town's edge, but is extensive to the south. It is likely that the raised elevation of the site, at the head of Yeovil's southern dip-slope, would result in development being visible when seen from the surrounding countryside in this quadrant.

B2.2 The extent of site visibility is detailed in the landscape assessment of Keyford area, September 2000, which identified a containing line of high ground running east from Coker Hill, continuing above East Coker park and village, before dropping to Hyde Farm (above Pincushion Corner) from where a second lower ridge runs north-east toward Stoford, thereafter falling away toward the Yeo valley. This line demarcates the immediate 'visual envelope' of the site, but does not wholly contain views toward it, for where this southern ridge is lower, longer views toward the site can be gained: These are from Closworth immediately to the south of the site, running east through land above Ryme Intrinseca, to Knighton and Lillington hills near Sherborne. Further distant to the south, the head of the Dorset hills, from Toller Down east to High Stoy, look toward Yeovil, but at this greater distance (12 kilometres) the site is negligible against the foreground diversity of landscape pattern, and the expanse of its wider context.

B2.3 In summary, the visual profile of the site has been assessed as follows:

- Other than at its immediate urban edge, all of the main vantage points looking toward the site lay to its southern side.
- The Coker ridge, from Coker Hill along Isles Lane to Pincushion corner, thereafter northwest to Barwick, is the prime visual envelope within which there is greatest intervisibility.
- From wider vantage points, scale of panorama and intervening landscape greatly reduces any conspicuous scale of the site.
- The site assumes greatest magnitude when viewed from the environs of East Coker and Barwick, and is seen both from public paths, roads and some dwellings.
- Built-form adjacent Red House roundabout often initially draws the eye, but from most vantage points it is the large bloc of arable land which holds the eye, particularly where land falls toward the viewer. Neither is expressive of local landscape character.
- The large shoulder of arable land to the west of Tarratt Lane is the most prominent part of the site. Only where there is a local overview, does the large arable field below Placket

Lane have dominance of scale. Neither field has any form of woody vegetation to counter their sizeable scale.

- Tree surround of Keyford House and the small fields at the head of the site are characterised at distance as part of Yeovil's wooded parkland edge, and obscure most views toward and across this quarter of the site.
- The low elevation of the stream corridors and Pavyotts mill are obscured from view by rising ground to the south, and the woody vegetation cover of intervening ground to the west, and thus has little prominence.
- The character of the site is projected to most views by the open farmland and its (seemingly) woody backdrop and thus appears rural in character. Only from elevated vantage points does the built form of Yeovil compromise the site's context.
- Lack of hedgerow cover emphasises the visual prominence of the remaining hedges, and arable-land characteristic.

B2.4 The ZVI indicates a 2.5 metre radius, from which the site is clearly visible. There are a number of sensitive locations within this distance, i.e; the properties within Barwick, East and North Coker villages, areas of Barwick, Aldon and Coker Parks, the roads and footpaths linking these villages, and the A37 approach to Yeovil. From these areas, business park development would be viewed as a prominent feature on (or near to) the skyline, occupying a large proportion of the field of view, and it would appear both large and incongruous in scale when viewed against its surrounds. When seen from the housing at Yeovil's edge, specifically from dwellings to the west of East Coker Lane, development would intervene in views toward the countryside, occupy a skyline site, and similarly appear large in scale. In both instances, a high visual impact would result from development when viewed from this close proximity.

B2.5 From between 2.5 and 5 km. distance, the site is moderately visible when viewed from sensitive locations within the visual envelope, such as Coker Hill, Closworth and properties on the fringe of both Yetminster and Thornford, and the roads linking these settlements. From these locations, business park development would appear as a clearly visible feature on the skyline, of large scale by comparison with adjacent building form, and standing slightly forward from Yeovil's edge. However, whilst remaining prominent, development would be less dominant within the field of view when seen from this distance, as other landscape features attract the eye as panorama widens. Consequently, from these more distant areas, development can be adjudged to result in a medium visual impact.

B2.6 The skyline location of this site ensures that it will continue to be perceived as a significant feature when viewed from further afield, though at distances in excess of 5 km. the apparent size of development would be reduced, and it would recede into the wider panorama and generally not appear intrusive, nor unduly incongruous.

3. impact assessment

character impact

B3.1 The study area clearly demonstrates rural characteristics and juxtaposes with the wider rural pattern of the countryside to the south of Yeovil. It divides into three individual character areas: At the north end of the site i) the 'plateau head fields' are characterised by a small scale, intricate field pattern, with a strong presence of specimen trees, which endow the site with a strong sense of enclosure. This strongly contrasts with the most substantial area of the site, which is predominantly ii) 'open farmland', dominated by large fields in arable production, with few hedgerows or specimen trees. To the southwest and south, this arable bloc is fringed by iii) 'stream corridors', which are shallow valleys with linear woody presence and small-scale pasture surround.

B3.2 Whilst there is housing in close proximity to the northwest of the site (off East Coker road) there is a limited interface between this housing and the study area. There is however, a strong contrast between the urban form of the housing and the rural landcover demonstrated by the site to either side of this interface. It is also pertinent to recall that this area of Yeovil's

edge is topographically and visually divorced from the main setting of Yeovil, hence the study area itself has little relationship with the urban character of the town.

B3.3 The prospect of business park development upon the study area would result in differing character impacts according to its location: The small fields defined by hedgerows and specimen trees contribute strongly to the sense of enclosure of the plateau head fields. Its sylvan character links the site with the parkland associated with the historic parklands of Aldon and Barwick, and provides a sense of maturity to the urban edge, which itself is characterised by larger, leafy plots at the north end of the site. This enclosed, established and historic character enables a sympathetic merging with the edge of the town, and thus would be sensitive to change. It is also envisaged that the small scale of the field pattern and its woody surround would provide too great a constraint upon the large scale of roads and buildings necessary to enable business park development.

B3.4 The open farmland has no such constraining features. At its northwest edge (of the East Coker road) it lays alongside the established urban edge, and in this respect there would be a relationship with established built form. However, the scale of a business park development would be incongruous beside that of a domesticated area, and in being sited over ground that rises from the East Coker road, this incongruity would be exacerbated by the topographically dominant position of prospective business park development. Elsewhere within this area of open farmland, development would be poorly related to established built form. Only in the vicinity of the A37's Redhouse roundabout and its adjacent buildings would there be a relationship with a degree of development, but this location lays outside the established periphery of Yeovil, and as such would result in a block of development within a surround characterised by rural landscape features. This would be at variance, in landscape character terms.

B3.5 The site of the stream corridors is clearly divorced from the edge of Yeovil, and this sense of separation is exacerbated by its distance from other characteristics of urban development, such as the A37 corridor, and in its topographical containment. A form of business park development within this rural character area would be entirely incongruous, both in scale, and in relation to its surround.

Visual impact

B3.6 The study area has been identified as occupying an elevated shoulder of land, which becomes less prominent as it falls south from Yeovil's edge. It has also been assessed that the development would create both significantly high, and medium visual impacts as viewed from a number of sensitive local receptors to the south of the site. As noted above, the scale and magnitude of employment buildings would appear incongruous when set against both the scale of adjacent built features, and where removed from the town's periphery, the character of a rural surround.

B3.7 The visual appraisal found the area of the site with the highest visual profile when viewed from sensitive receptors to the south to be that of the 'open farmland', sited toward the head of a large shoulder of land, with few intervening features to act as screen or buffer. With this lack of cover, the high visual impact would be difficult to counter, and would provide justification for not pursuing this area of the site. There is a partial exception in land to the north of Plackett Lane, toward the Redhouse roundabout, which benefits from laying in the 'shadow' of the hedgerows alongside the lane, which provide some mitigation of impact. However, its distance from the town's edge (as noted para 3.4 above) would be difficult to reconcile.

B3.8 Both the stream corridor, and plateau head fields character areas benefit from a lesser visual profile. The former area is remote from both the A37 road corridor and the town's edge and can thus be discounted. At the plateau head, the small pasture fields are in an elevated position, and in relative proximity to the urban edge. Whilst their edge is highly visible, the hedgerow surround provides density sufficient to screen the built edge of Yeovil, and can consequently be viewed as offering some potential for visual mitigation of development

impact. There are however, landscape character constraints, and these are balanced against visual considerations below.

4. conclusion

B4.1 Adverse visual impacts will be difficult to minimise in a highly visible landscape. There will be particular difficulty where visual intrusion is clear to public view, and where the visual relationship of development with current built form would be poor. Consequently it is clear that the majority of this study area can be discounted from the search.

B4.2 Two areas of the site have emerged as having some potential for development: The assessment of the plateau head fields noted that whilst the edge of the area is highly visible, the fields themselves are visually shielded, and thus development form might be accommodated without undue visual impact. However, it should also be noted that the small scale of the fields may not be conducive to absorbing the footprint of employment development, and the woody surround may not allow the flexibility needed to develop this area as a business park. In addition, the sylvan character of the area links the site with the historic parklands of Aldon and Barwick, and provides a sense of maturity to the urban edge, which itself is characterised by larger, leafy house plots to the north edge of the site. This enclosed, well-established and historic character enables a sympathetic merging with the edge of the town, and thus would be sensitive to change. Given the likelihood that development of the site would necessarily result in the removal of some of the features which both shield the site from wider view and add to its distinctive character, the balance of the landscape evaluation is against its development for employment.

B4.3 The remaining site is a portion of land to the north of Placket Lane, adjacent the Redhouse roundabout: Whilst its development would be of a reduced visual impact, due to the partial cover endowed by the Lane's hedgerows, and its proximity to the presence of the A37 and adjacent buildings, the area is clearly separated from the established edge of Yeovil by some 0.5km, and surrounded by open land, predominantly of rural character. As it stands, the site is too divorced from Yeovil's urban form to be considered as suitable for development, unless there were to be some form of intervening development to link the site with the urban fabric, such as a key site proposal. Without this linkage, there is no wider development context for employment expansion, thus the site in isolation is unsuitable for business park development. Conversely, should a key site proposal come forward for the whole of the study area north of Plackett Lane, then this area would be a logical location for business park development.

C) WEST COKER ROAD (area 4)

1. landscape character

context:

C1.1 The West Coker road study area comprises a group of small fields at Yeovil's southwest edge, bisected by a series of roads that converge at a point between the White Post garage, and the Yeovil Court hotel. To the west and south the site merges with the wider field pattern of the countryside, which is predominantly that of small fields delineated by hedgerows that characterise the open land between the edge of Yeovil and the settlements of West and East Coker, and the hamlets of Nash, Burton and Holywell. To the east, the area abuts against a residential area that fronts onto the West Coker road and Helena Avenue. The majority of the study area is bounded to the north by Camp road (the road to Odcombe) and its eastern extension onto the A30, with an exception of a single field that lays opposite the West Coker road housing, to the north of the A30, and is contained by Bunford Hollow to the east, and a block of woodland that overlays a north facing escarpment on its northwest side. The escarpment generally acts as a limit to the northward extension of the study area.

C1.2 The site is within an altitude range that rises from an aod of 85.00 metres at its southernmost limit by Cullivers grave, to a height between 90-95.00 aod in the vicinity of Camp road, and its eastward extension onto the West Coker road. Much of the site rises at a gentle gradient between these two points, circa 1 in 40, thus providing a southerly aspect, but it should be noted that the head of the site, in the vicinity of Camp road, and West Coker road to the east of White post garage, is relatively level.

B1.3 Land-use of the area is primarily agricultural, and predominantly in arable cultivation, other than the grouping of small pasture fields around Feebarrow, to the south of the (Camp) road to Odcombe.

Site character:

C1.3 Topographically, the site lays at the head of Yeovil's southern escarpment (which defines the setting for the greater part of the town) and over the upper shoulder of the dip-slope that falls gently toward Coker Vale. As such, it lays outside the main topographical setting of Yeovil, and its pattern relates to the farmed pattern of the Vale.

C1.4 The site comprises a number of small-mid scale fields, in both pasture and arable land use, with many of these fields delineated by managed hedgerows and few specimen trees. This is a general characteristic of the area. The other main characteristic is that of the road corridors which bisect the study area, which bring a daytime presence of traffic movement and noise, and are delineated by hedgerows to either side (other than where development fronts the road). However, there are subtle variations on this arrangement throughout the study area, which for the purposes of assessment, can be subdivided into 3 sub-areas:

C1.5 Between Camp Road and the minor road to Hardington Mandeville (inclusive of the A30 approach to the White Post garage) the fields are irregular in size but underlined by a rectilinear small-scale pattern. Predominantly grass, they are bounded in most part by managed hedgerows. There are few trees within the site, which helps to give the area an open character. However, there are a number of fine specimen Oaks aligning Camp Road, which are a distinctive feature on the site's north edge, whilst the properties of Hillside and Inglemount also possess a number of specimen trees, which add to the sense of separation of the study area from the town. This element of separation, combined with the open character of this sector of the site and its southern aspect, assist in strengthening the relationship with the open fields of the agricultural land to the south and west. This is little evidence of the A30 outside its road corridor, which lays within a double-hedged, slightly sunken road profile.

C1.6 Between the minor road to Hardington and the housing of Helena Avenue, the study area comprises a single mid-scale irregular field with an east-west emphasis, which appears to have resulted in its present configuration from past hedgerow removal. The western half of the field has a hedgerow surround, linking into the wider farmland of the Coker Vale. To the east half

of the field, the adjacent residential properties fronting Helena Avenue and West Coker road define two of the field boundaries, and bring an urban characteristic to this part of the site. As there are few hedgerow trees or other landscape features to compete with this urban edge, its domestic character tends to prevail beyond its immediate curtilage, though it should be noted that this is the only indicator of developed Yeovil.

C1.7 East of the White Post garage, the A30 takes on the character of an urban road, with a stronger engineered profile, the presence of light standards, and adjoining development to the south. The road corridor and adjacent development separates the single field off Bunford Hollow from the remainder of the study area. Despite its location at the head of the escarpment, this field is enclosed in character, not only by the residential areas to south and east, but also by the woody roadside vegetation on these boundaries, and the woodland to the north. Whilst this enclosure visually separates the field from its adjoining length of urban surround, it also separates it from the remainder of the study area, and the character of the escarpment to the north and northwest, which is wooded, steep sloping and links with the wider countryside of the vale around the Dodham brook.

2. visual profile

C2.1 The visual profile of this site can be summarised as:

- The site is prominent, by virtue of its elevated position on the upper slopes and head of Yeovil's southern escarpment, which ensures broad public perception of the study area.
- The site assumes greatest magnitude when viewed from the town's edge, the A30 approach from West Coker, and from the high ground associated with the Coker ridge.
- Other than at its immediate urban edge, the main vantage points looking toward the site lay to its west and southern side.
- The area has few distinctive landscape components to draw the eye, rather it is its topographical location that endows it visual prominence, allied to the contrasting form of Yeovil's urban edge to the east.
- The character of the site is projected to most views by its open fields, thus it appears rural in character. The prime visual component of the site is the small-mid scale field pattern, with specimen trees by Camp road and the grounds of 'Hillside' and 'Inglemount'.
- The site is perceived as laying outside the main setting of Yeovil (which is concentrated to the north of the southern escarpment) and relates to the pattern and landcover of the Coker Vale and vale-sides to the south and west.
- Only by Helena Avenue, and the developed stretch of West Coker road is there a visual relationship with urban form.

C2.2 A ZVI (zone of visual influence) has been produced for the site (appendix 4) which identifies the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the visual envelope of the site is closely contained in most part to the north, by a mixture of woody cover, and by virtue of the site being set back from the escarpment's north face. To the south it is more extensive, contained by the high ground to both west and east of the Coker ridge. It is clear that the elevated location of the site at the head of Yeovil's southern escarpment, will result in any development being visible from a number of vantage points within the Coker Vale, and adjoining high ground.

C2.3 The ZVI indicates a 1.5 metre radius, from which the site is clearly visible. From sensitive locations within this distance, i.e; the A30 approach to Yeovil, and roads converging on the town from Odcombe and Hardington, and from the properties associated with Nash, Burton, Holywell and the Font Lane area of West Coker, general employment development would be viewed as a prominent feature on the skyline, occupy a large proportion of the field of view, and appear large in scale. When viewed from the housing at Yeovil's edge (looking south and west) development would intervene in views toward the countryside, and similarly appear large in scale. In both instances, a high visual impact would result from due to employment development when viewed from this close proximity.

C2.4 From between 1.5 and 3 km. distance, the site is moderately visible when viewed from sensitive locations within the visual envelope, such as from Odcombe, recreational routes on Coker Hill and above East Coker, and in-part from Alvington's southern edge. From these locations, employment development would appear as a clearly visible feature at the head of the southern escarpment, of large scale by comparison with West Coker road's housing, and standing slightly forward from Yeovil's edge. It would not however, dominate the field of view, as other landscape features attract the eye as the panorama widens. From these areas, development can be adjudged to result in a medium visual impact.

C2.5 Generally when viewed from the surrounding countryside, other than the two fields to either side of the developed length of the West Coker road, development over the remainder of the site would be seen within a rural context, separate from and obtruding beyond the built form of Yeovil's edge.

3. impact assessment

character impact

C3.1 It has been noted that the study area's landcover displays rural characteristics, which juxtaposes with the rural pattern of the agricultural landscape through Coker Vale and its associated vale-sides. It is elevated and open in character (with the partial exclusion of the field by Bunford Hollow). Urban residential form is in close proximity to the easternmost fields, but this is unrelated to the main concentration of developed Yeovil. The converging road network ensures the daytime characteristic of movement and traffic noise, but only displays an urban highway character once east of the White Post garage.

C3.2 Development throughout much of the study area would have a sizeable visual impact, which is dealt with below. In terms of character impact, a built form proposal of the scale associated with employment development, to the west or south of White Post garage, would bring an uncharacteristic bulk to the open shoulder of farmland, which would obtrude into open land, be unrelated to the town's edge, and generally at odds with the character of its rural surround. Consequently, development can be ruled out in this location.

C3.3 The field by Bunford Hollow, and land to the rear of Helena Close/West Coker road, is more closely related to the current urban edge. However, it is clear that the scale and profile of employment buildings in close proximity to an established residential area would be at odds with the domestic scale and profile of development in the area adjacent Helena Close, and thus it should be discounted. A similar argument can be forwarded for the field by Bunford Hollow, though it should be noted that the roads alongside are urban in character, and that the parcel of land does have some separation from the adjacent residential properties to south and east, due to roadside planting and hedgerow form. Visual concerns relating to this site are noted below.

visual impact

C3.4 The study area has been noted as elevated, on which development would be seen as a skyline feature when viewed from the numerous vantage points at lower elevation, and as prominent in relation to developed Yeovil when viewed from higher ground. In such a location, the scale and magnitude of employment buildings would appear incongruous when set against the scale of adjacent built features, and the small scale field pattern of the adjoining countryside. It has also been established that development would create both high and medium visual impacts as viewed from a number of sensitive local receptors.

C3.5 Development of the scale required, circa 5 hectares of land, would lead to a local aggregation of built form, which would be uncharacteristic in its surround. It has been noted that much of the area is generally open, with few specimen trees to counter development profile, thus in its position at the head of the scarp, development impact would be substantial. The exception is the field by Bunford Hollow, which benefits from some woody cover. However, this cover would be eroded by the need to establish road access into the site, and the visual contrast in scale between the adjacent domestic and possible employment buildings

would be revealed, thus exacerbating inherent character differences. It has also been noted that part of this site is seen as skyline from Alvington's edge, from where there is a finely-balanced perception of built form being subservient to the grading out of Yeovil's periphery into the wider countryside. This balance would also be eroded by employment development. Thus, whilst this single field has potential for development, the balance of this evaluation finds sufficient landscape grounds on which to resist employment development.

4. conclusion

C4.1 The greater part of the site is clearly prominent in the wider landscape, and visible to many public preceptors to the west and south. Its predominant rural character is projected by the pattern and landcover of the fieldscape, and it is located outside the main setting of Yeovil. The scale and magnitude of employment development, when set against the scale of adjacent built and natural features, would appear incongruous in this location, and it has been assessed that development within the study area would create a negative visual and landscape character impact. The single field by Bunford Hollow has some potential for development, but would not accommodate buildings of employment scale without negative visual impact. Consequently there is landscape justification for resisting employment development within this study area.

D) BRYMPTON (area 5)

1. landscape character

context:

D1.1 The Brympton study area is a tract of open countryside situated at the west edge of Yeovil, sited within the valley associated with the Dodham brook (which acts as the main setting for the town). It forms a part of the Brympton estate, bounded to the north and east by the A3088 road, whilst the boundary of Brympton d'Evercy's historic park forms the west edge of the study area. The boundary of the area is completed to the south by the field boundaries that run along the base of the adjacent escarpment (generally coinciding with the 55m. contour) to meet the A3088 opposite Sampsons wood. Land-use of the area is primarily agricultural, and predominantly in arable cultivation.

D1.2 The study area is drained by the headwaters of the Dodham brook, its lowest level being the point of the brook's exit from the site, circa 45.00 aod. The pattern of drainage is such that the centre of the study area (on which the brook is concentrated) is the floor of this part of the vale. From this central area, the land rises gently to the north, at an average gradient of 1 in 40, to the point where it meets the A3088 Cartgate link. The land rises at a lower gradient to the south, to the point of the escarpment toe whereafter its rise is more pronounced.

Character of site surround:

D1.3 The study area abuts an established area of Yeovil's suburban housing and part of the Lynx west trading estate to the east, whilst to its north the Alvington estate defines the northwest edge of urban Yeovil. Alvington is physically separated from the Brympton study area by the line of the A3088 and the newly created playing fields, that are a westward extension of the substantial open space of Westlands' airfield. To the south and west of the study area is open land of rural character, inclusive of the designed landscapes of Brympton d'Evercy's park and garden to the west, which provides a rich legacy of specimen trees. To the immediate southwest, the land rises toward the escarpment head that runs toward Odcombe. It is generally open in character, predominantly of arable mid-scale fields, within an ordered hedgerow pattern that incorporates mature hedgerow trees and blocks of woodland. All is contained by the town's natural 'cradle' of high ground.

Site character:

D1.4 The landscape character of the site is detailed in a fuller study of the area - a landscape assessment of the Brympton area, November 2000 – which found that the character of the site to be broadly consistent throughout, albeit with variation in specific areas (as summarised in the subsequent three paragraphs).

D1.5 The field pattern is irregular (though an underlying rectilinear grid can be discerned) and of small-mid scale, bounded by hedgerows which are uniformly managed, other than where woody vegetation demarcates the main watercourses. A distinctive feature of the site is the consistent presence of specimen oaks within field hedgerows, whose presence relates to the development of the Brympton estate. The fields are primarily in arable production. An urban presence of roads and built-form characterise part of the north and east boundaries, whilst Brympton d'Evercy house imparts an historic characteristic to the west.

D1.6 There are however, subtle differences that occur within the landscape of the site, the most notable of which are a stronger presence of specimen oaks in the northwest and southwest quarters, where field pattern is smaller, most hedgerows are managed, and land is rising from the site's centre. The fields between Broadleaze farm and the Dodham brook are low in elevation and relatively flat, whilst to the north of the Dodham brook the fields are relatively open, especially toward the Cartgate link's east end and the airfield, whose presence compounds this impression of openness in this quarter. The oak-dominated field boundary to the east of Broadleaze farm is a particularly distinctive feature, whilst a drainage channel to the south is edged with an uncharacteristic belt of poplars. The Dodham brook's main channel flows centrally through the site, its alignment demarcated by sporadic tree presence. In the valley bottom, low-lying fields, with their surround of unmanaged hedgerows and specimen

trees, give an impression of enclosure. To the south, the land rises toward the escarpment proper, and the southern boundary of the study area is characterised by the presence of two broad-leaved woodlands, which endow this sector with a rich sylvan character.

D1.7 At the site's east edge, the engineered alignment and grading of the A3088 forms an incongruous boundary, at variance with the underlying field pattern, and with little intervening cover. The employment buildings of the Lynx West trading estate are an emphatic statement of built form at this roadside, and this is a contrast to the rural character of the landcover within the study area.

2. visual profile

D2.1 A zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been produced for the site (appendix 4) which identifies the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the visual envelope of the site is closely contained to the south by the local topography and similarly so to the north and east by the built form of the town's edge. It is however, clear to view from the higher land to the west from which development of the study area would be likely to be visible.

D2.2 The extent of site visibility is detailed in the landscape assessment of Brympton area, November 2000, which identified a visual envelope following the escarpment head running west from the Bunford Hollow roundabout (the A30/A3088 junction) toward Odcombe, broadly following Camp road. From Odcombe, the scarp continues west toward Ham Hill, where the line of view toward the site falls below the level of raised intervening ground, which is broadly the road line from Odcombe to Houndstone corner, which is also the watershed of the Parrett and Yeo river catchments. Thus the immediate visual envelope can be defined for the Brympton site to the south and west. Theoretically, this envelope can be claimed to extend along the head of both Yeovil's escarpment 'bookends' until they are lost from sight of the site beyond Penn hill. However, given the low elevation of the Brympton site in relation to developed Yeovil, and the low trajectory of view across the town, other than from an area of housing toward the scarp head adjacent Yeovil's West Coker road (above Plantaganet Way) it is only from the communication routes, housing and employment sites at the town's west edge that a clear view into the study area can be gained. Elsewhere, intervening housing mass and vegetation obscures the view. Thus the visual envelope to north and east can generally be defined by the urban edge.

D2.3 In summary, the visual profile of the site has been assessed as follows:

- The escarpment head, from Bunford hollow roundabout to Odcombe, thereafter the northeast line of the Odcombe-Houndstone road represents the rural extent of the site's visual envelope, whilst development at the edge of the A3088 road completes the envelope on Yeovil's side.
- The tight visual envelope associated with this site ensures public perception is limited to local view only.
- The main public view of the site is gained both from the A3088, and from housing and employment land to the immediate north and west of the site.
- The area has few landscape components that draw the eye beyond specimen trees and the hedgerow pattern, and is understated in its character expression.
- The open character of Brympton's northern fields links with Westlands airfield to form a distinctive swathe of open space, with a marked east-west axis.
- Within the site, the hedge line of Oaks to the east of Broadleaze farm is a distinctive feature that particularly draws the eye, whilst the mixed-species plantation by the pond appears an incongruous feature.
- The rural character of the study area is compromised by the clear visual presence of Yeovil sharing the same general setting. The town's presence compromises the perception of rural character especially as viewed from the south and west.

- The A3088 and adjacent developments of Alvington, and the Lynx T.E. extend a strong urban influence into the site, exacerbated by the lack of woody vegetation to give visual separation.
- The general area of the valley floor is visually unobtrusive, often below the trajectory line of view, with tree presence obscuring clear views into the vale-base fields.
- The rise of the southern scarp, and spread of developed Yeovil across its northern dip slope are the most prominent features adjoining the Brympton site.

D2.4 The ZVI indicates that it is only from within a 2.5 metre radius, that the site is visible. There are a number of sensitive locations within this distance, i.e; properties on the east side of Odombe, areas of Brympton D'Evercy historic house and park, and a number of roads at Yeovil's edge. From these areas, business park development would be viewed as a large-scale feature in the vale base, occupying a large proportion of the field of view, and coalescing with the scale of the employment buildings of the Lynx West trading estate. When seen from the roads at Yeovil's edge, development would intervene in views toward the countryside, and similarly appear large in scale. In both instances, a high visual impact would result from development when viewed from this close proximity.

3. impact assessment

character impact

D3.1 The small-mid scale field pattern with its distinctive mature hedgerow oaks, and mapped evidence, indicate little change of farmed pattern over the past two centuries, though now the land is primarily in arable cultivation rather than pasture. Whilst there is no overt variation of this character within the site, there is sufficient variation of landform and woody cover to assist in the classification of certain areas: Most notable is the relative openness of the land over the northern area of the site, whilst a greater presence of planting, and low level of the land in the vale base endows it with a strong sense of enclosure. The engineered line of the A3088 road is a clear incongruity, running contrary to the site's field pattern, and this incongruity is emphasised by the presence of development facing out from Yeovil's edge across the road, where there is little intervening cover.

D3.2 There is a limited interface between the housing areas of Alvington and the site, being separated by the line of Cartgate link and its strong woody presence, which merges into the open space of the adjacent playing fields, and Westlands airfield to the east. This characteristic of open space has a strong east-west emphasis, and extends across the site on this axis. Development in this location would be contrary to this pattern, and with its degree of openness, difficult to contain visually.

D3.3 The pattern of the farmland may well have its origins in the 14th century, and is associated with the Brympton Estate. To the west of the site, the historic park merges imperceptibly with the study area to the north and south of the house, but there is a greater sense of separation of the site from the house itself, due to the low elevation of Brympton House within the vale, and a greater surround of tree cover. The specimen trees throughout this area are a unifying feature. The historic park and garden are sensitive to change, and business park development of the scale envisaged in close proximity to the park and garden would impact considerably on its setting. Thus this impact will form a constraint on development, and will determine a limit to how far west development could spread.

D3.4 To the east side of the site, the rural character of its landcover is compromised by the urban character of the A3088 road, and its adjacent development, which merges into the main settlement of the town. Development in this area would obtrude into open land, but this impact is countered in part by the low elevation of the vale base, and its woody surround. Whilst there would be an inevitable change in character within the study area, it cannot be disregarded that urban form is already established at the east edge, and it lays within the main setting of the town. However, development over the land rising southwest from the vale base can be discounted, for its development would be difficult to contain visually, and it has no relationship with the current edge of Yeovil.

visual impact

D3.5 The study area has been identified as occupying a position over the base and sides of the shallow vale associated with the Dodham brook, whose visibility is contained by its immediate topographical and urban surround. It has been assessed that the development would create a high visual impact as viewed from Odcombe, Brympton d'Evercy and the urban edge, albeit the site is seen within the context of Yeovil's main setting.

D3.6 The close surround of the study area's setting results in its rural character being compromised by the clear visual presence of Yeovil. Within the context of the site, it is the northern shoulder of arable land that is most prominent, increasingly so as the ground rises over the upper half of these fields. Visually, it is seen both in contrast with the A3088 and Alvington's built form to the north, and as an extension of Westlands east-west expanse of open space. It is clear to public perception, and whilst it lays within a relatively contained area i.e. its limited visual envelope, within this context it has a mid-high level of visibility, and is thus sensitive to development.

D3.7 Conversely, the vale base fields do not share the same extent of visibility. A greater presence of woody vegetation and the vale floor location enable few clear views into this site, other than from the adjacent A3088 roadside, which through lack of cover already enables an urban character to prevail at the edge of the site. Additionally, the tighter matrix of hedgerows and mature trees contain long views into, through, and within the site, and this assist in buffering views east through the site from Brympton d'Evercy. Consequently the visibility of this vale-base location is lower than its surrounds, only rising in prominence from the toe of the scarp (at the general elevation of Broadleaze Farm) and increasing in profile toward the head of the scarp which has higher prominence but lays outside this study area.

D3.8 Adverse visual impacts of disturbance will be difficult to minimise in a highly visible landscape. There will be particular difficulty where visual intrusion is clear to public view, and where the visual relationship of development with current built form would be poor. This particularly emphasises the sensitivity of the northern part of the site, which is open, clear to view, and clearly relates to the open-space character and east-west emphasis of Westlands grass airfield. Alternately, the vale base fields, and those adjoining fields to the south and west are less visible to public view, and whilst their east edge is an exception due to the view from the road, the clear visual proximity of the urban edge has to an extent 'de-sensitised' this edge.

4. conclusion

D4.1 The evaluation process has assessed much of the site as being unsuitable for development, due to its open character of the greater part of the site, where it would be difficult to contain development form visually, plus the adverse impact of development upon the setting of Brympton d'Evercy historic park and garden. However, a general area has been identified where development might occur with limited impact. This location is within the vale base fields, extending west from the current Lynx West TE, to the north of Broadleaze Farm.

D4.2 It could be questioned if the greater part of these vale-base fields could be suitable for development. However, such a proposal would take development far beyond the footprint of Yeovil's built form, and heavily impact upon the site's rural character once away from the A3088 road. Proximity to the historic house and garden at Brympton d'Evercy is also a major constraint, and it would be essential that a clear buffer between the area of the scheduled park and garden, and Yeovil's future edge be established, based on visual and landscape character considerations. Consequently, the extent of a firm proposal for development should be guided by;

a) a layout that relates to the adjacent footprint of built form, and conforms to the local landscape pattern;

- b) the areas of lower visual sensitivity, where some intervisibility exists between the current edge of developed Yeovil;
- c) where there is a comfortable relationship with adjacent built form and intrusion would be limited, and
- d) there is no adverse impact upon the setting of Brymton d'Evercy house and garden.

D4.3 With reference to the Brympton landscape appraisal, November 2000, it was noted that there is clear intervisibility between the housing at Yeovil's west edge (Yew Tree estate) across the A3088, to a line of fine specimen hedgerow oaks. Similarly, there is clear intervisibility across the two fields between the A3088 by the SSDC offices and Broadleaze Farm. To the northwest of the farm a field boundary partially acts as a visual stop, whilst to the south the land assumes greater sensitivity due to its higher level of visibility, which suggests the likely limit of development land is drawn to the north of the farm. This limit co-incides with the field boundaries that define and contain the vale-base.

D4.4 This resultant block of three fields is closely located by Yeovil's edge, which demarcate its east and north boundaries, thereby indicating a close relationship with the current pattern of built form. Their low level of visibility would ensure limited disturbance, and providing features of value are excluded from the developed area (such as the mature oak hedgerow) and their long-term management secured, then it can be stated that the 3 fields between Broadleaze Farm and the A3088 are best able to absorb development impact.

E) LUFTON (area 6)

1. landscape character

Context:

E1.1 The Lufton study area comprises a group of fields to the north of Lufton Manor, and the grounds of the manor. It is situated at the northwest corner of Yeovil's present built edge, and lays over the western end of Yeovil's northern escarpment. The manor grounds abut the present Lufton 2000 trading estate to the east, whilst to the south lays the LPDD key site allocation, currently pasture fields. Lufton lane defines the site's west boundary, separating it from Lufton hamlet and its intricate pattern of small pastures and orchards at its southern end, and the open farmland that falls toward the Welham brook's headwaters at the point it meets Thorne Lane. The northern limit is the linear hedgerow running parallel with Thorne lane, one fields distance to the north, which ends at the point where it reaches the lane to Thorne Coffin. The wider surround is that of mixed farmland, primarily in arable use, over undulating ground that lays between Chilthorne Domer, Montacute and Odcombe, whilst to the east is Yeovil.

E1.2 The site is within an altitude range that rises northward from an aod of 60.00 metres at the entrance to Lufton Manor, to a height circa 80.00 metres on the head of the shoulder of land immediately to the north of Thorne Lane. Much of the site rises at a gradient of 1 in 25 from the vicinity of Lufton, lessening to an average of 1 in 30 toward Thorne Lane, from which the land has a south-western aspect. The exception is the group of fields to the north of Thorne Lane, which overlay the head of the escarpment's shoulder, from which land falls northwards at a notable gradient, circa 1 in 10, toward open countryside.

E1.3 Land-use of the area is primarily agricultural, and predominantly in arable cultivation, other than the grounds immediate to Lufton Manor, which are utilised for educational purposes.

Site character:

E1.4 The site can be broadly divided into 2 individual landscape character sub-areas, to differentiate between the scale, topography, landcover and pattern of the landscape: There is a consistency of cover to the five fields to the north of Thorne Lane (referred to hereafter as the '*northern fields*') plus the single field contained by Thorne and Lufton lanes, which distinguish this part of the site from the remainder of the study area. These fields are characterised by being in arable use (albeit as grassland at time of survey) contained within a regular field pattern, alongside the east-west axis of Thorne Lane. The fields are bounded by trimmed hedgerows, with few specimen trees, a small linear copse by Thorne lane being a notable exception. The lack of tall woody cover, and its relatively elevated setting overlaying this shoulder of land at the escarpment head impart a sense of openness to this part of the study area. It merges with the wider agricultural pattern to north and west, whilst its boundary with Yeovil is an emphatic interface with Lufton's employment buildings, buffered by Thorne lane and its hedgerows, at the sub-area's east end.

E1.6 The remainder of the study area is concentrated upon Lufton Manor and the land around it. The manor is central to an area of grassland, surrounded by belts of mature trees, which provide a strong sense of enclosure, and separation from the edge of Yeovil to the east. There are a number of specimen parkland trees within the Manor's grounds, which assist in endowing a historic character when viewed from the hamlet. Subsidiary buildings to the rear of the manor are concentrated between the manor and the eastern tree belt, and do not impose on the general aspect to the west of the manor, which faces over grassland and specimen trees. Two additional pasture fields are sited between the manor's grounds and Thorne Lane, where again there is a strong sense of enclosure, due to the surrounding tree belts, and fine specimen oaks that align a number of the hedge lines delineating the pastures. To the east, the site abuts the Lufton 2000 trading estate, which is buffered by tree presence, but still imposes a characteristic of substantial built form.

2. visual profile

E2.1 The visual profile of this site can be summarised as:

- The greater part of the study area is prominent, by virtue of its elevated position on the upper slopes and shoulder of land to the west of Thorne Coffin, which ensures broad public perception of the study area. By comparison, the area around Lufton Manor is visually discreet.
- The site assumes greatest magnitude when viewed from the town's edge, the Tintinhull – Yeovil road, Thorne Coffin, Lufton hamlet, the edge of Odcombe and Chilthorne Domer, and from the high ground associated with the Coker ridge and Ham Hill.
- Other than at its immediate urban edge, the main vantage points looking toward the site lay to its west and northern sides.
- The woody surround to Lufton Manor, is seen as the prime visual component of the site. It acts as a visual buffer between Yeovil's edge, and the surround of open countryside
- The 'northern fields' area has few distinctive landscape components to draw the eye, rather it is its topographical location that endows it visual prominence, allied to the contrasting form of Yeovil's urban edge to the east, and the woody surround to Lufton Manor.
- The character of the 'northern fields' is projected to most views by its regular pattern, thus it appears rural in character. The prime visual component of the 'northern fields' is its regular field and hedgerow pattern, thus it is projected as rural in character.
- The site is perceived as being related to the western edge of Yeovil, but laying beyond the main setting of the town (which is concentrated between the north and southern escarpments, and contained at the western edge by the low watershed ridge separating the Parrett and Yeo river catchments).
- Only to the east of Lufton Manor, and by eastern length of Thorne Lane, is there a visual relationship with urban form, in the guise of employment buildings.

E2.2 A ZVI (zone of visual influence) has been produced for the site (appendix 6) which identifies the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the visual envelope of the site is closely contained by the built form of Yeovil's edge to the east. To the south and west it is more extensive, contained by the high ground of the Coker ridge, and running along the broad shoulder of land west from Odcombe toward Ham hill, whilst to the north it is delineated by Windmill hill, and the low limestone ridge between Chilthorne Domer and Tintinhull. It is clear that the elevated situation of much of the study area, would result in any development being visible from a number of public vantage points within the envelope.

E2.3 The ZVI indicates a 1.5 metre radius, from which the site is clearly visible. From sensitive locations within this distance, i.e; from the Tintinhull road approach to Yeovil, and dwellings associated that road, and from Lufton hamlet and Thorne Coffin, general employment development would be viewed as a prominent feature on the skyline, occupy a large proportion of the field of view, and appear large and incongruous in scale. When viewed from the housing at Yeovil's edge (Houndstone) development would intervene in views toward the countryside, and similarly appear large in scale. In both instances, a high visual impact would result from due to employment development when viewed from this close proximity.

E2.4 From between 1.5 and 3 km. distance, the site is moderately visible when viewed from sensitive locations within the visual envelope, such as from Odcombe, recreational routes on Coker and Ham Hill, and in-part from Montacute, and the grounds of Montacute House. From these locations, employment development would appear as a clearly visible feature on elevated ground, of large scale (though comparable to those of Lufton 2000, beyond) and standing slightly forward from Yeovil's edge. It would not however, dominate the field of view, as other landscape features attract the eye as the panorama widens. From these areas, development can be adjudged to result in a medium visual impact.

E2.5 Generally when viewed from the surrounding countryside, the 'northern fields' would be seen within a rural context, separate and distinct from, and obtruding beyond, the built form

of Yeovil's edge. Conversely, the specimen trees and shelterbelts adjacent Lufton Manor, appear as the town's western buffer, separating the built form of Lufton 2000 and Houndstone's housing, from the countryside surround.

3. impact assessment

character impact

E3.1 It has been noted that the site's landcover demonstrates rural characteristics, which juxtapose with the rural pattern of the agricultural landscape to both north and west. The northern part of the site is elevated and open in character, whilst Lufton Manor and its grounds enjoys a strong sense of enclosure, by virtue of its prime characteristic of the woody surround. The built form of Lufton 2000 employment site is in close proximity to the east, sharing in part the woody setting relating to Lufton Manor, but contrasting with the open land of the northern fields, where Thorne Lane marks an interface.

E3.2 In terms of character impact, it is clear that a characteristic of employment built form presently exists on this edge of Yeovil. Arguably, 'more of the same' might be accommodated without undue impact, providing it clearly relates to the current setting of both the town, and the adjacent employment site, and is visually discreet. Looking at the 'northern fields', it is apparent that employment development here would not share the character of the Lufton 2000 site's setting, which is visually contained by the topography of the town's northern shoulder, and the mature specimen oaks and drawn-up hedgerows. The 'northern fields' lay over a prominent shoulder of land, which is open and relatively featureless, and as such is at variance with the setting and character of current employment land, which would not lend itself to ease of integration within the landscape. Additionally, development presence would conflict with the open characteristic of this land.

E3.3 The Lufton Manor area does share a number of the characteristics of its wider surround, predominantly the sense of enclosure endowed by the mature tree presence, which embrace both the town's edge, Lufton hamlet, and the fields allocated for key site expansion. It has also been noted that these trees assist in buffering the current edge from the wider countryside. In this there is particular value. The setting of the Manor is almost wholly contained by tree belts, and the grassland to the fore of the manor endows a strong parkland characteristic. The main aspect of the manor is toward Lufton hamlet, to which it visually relates across Lufton Lane, whilst the service areas and educational buildings associated with the manor are discreetly accommodated to the 'rear' of the building. Development within this area would heavily impact upon the wooded parkland characteristic of the manor's site, to unsettle the balance of open space over development form, and erode its usefulness as a buffer to the town's edge. Thus development is not favoured.

E3.4 There remain two small fields within this study area, which lay between the manor's grounds, and Thorne Lane. Its surround of plantation, roadside specimen oaks and rising land to the north endow a sense of enclosure to the site, additionally Thorne lane along this length has a clear rural character. Like the surround to Lufton manor, it has benefit in buffering the current edge of Yeovil from its wider rural surround. At the point where the land opens to the wider countryside to the west, it is of particular benefit in enabling a sympathetic transition from urban form to open countryside. Employment development would erode this 'buffer' characteristic, and impact upon the rural character of the Lane, similarly the plantation surround associated with Lufton Manor. Additionally, given the small scale of these fields, the site would be sensitive to change, thus development-scale and its footprint would be difficult to accommodate.

visual impact

E3.5 The study area has been identified as occupying an elevated shoulder of land over its northern half, which loses prominence as it falls southwest, toward Lufton hamlet. It has also been assessed that development of the site would create both high and medium visual impacts as viewed from a number of sensitive local receptors to both north, south and west of Yeovil.

E3.6 The northern fields have been noted as the most prominent part of the site. From vantage points in close proximity to the north and west, development in this location would be seen as a skyline feature, and the scale and magnitude of employment buildings would appear incongruous when set against the open character and the small scale field pattern of the adjoining countryside. Additionally, it has been noted that the area is generally open, with few specimen trees to counter development profile, thus in its position at the head of this scarp, development impact would be substantial, and divorced from the current edge of town. In relation to Thorne Coffin, employment development would appear both incongruous in scale, and be of dominant magnitude, in being at a higher elevation than the hamlet, and as such would impact adversely upon its (conservation area) setting. Development profile would also be visible from areas of the grounds of Montacute House, and possibly from the house itself in winter. The fields cover the westward extension of the topographical shoulder of land that also contains the Thorne lane key site, and the visual sensitivity of this ridge, acknowledged in the LPI, is equally valid here. Thus there are clear landscape grounds for resisting development in this location.

C3.5 In relation to Lufton manor, development of the scale required within the manor grounds, circa 5 hectares of land, would lead to a local aggregation of built form, which would be uncharacteristic if sited within its parkland setting, and impact upon both the fine balance of open space that currently endows the manor with its setting, and the scale of the manor itself. The plantations that surround the manor currently provide an emphatic visual 'stop' to Yeovil, and as such can be regarded as a natural boundary against which to arrest and visually contain Yeovil's westward expansion. This boundary also marks the current limit of land allocated for employment. Development into the two fields north of this boundary (between Lufton manor and Thorne lane) would extend built-form west beyond this natural limit, outside its area of visual containment into land that has a higher visual profile as viewed from Montacute and Ham Hill, thus eroding the finely-balanced perception of built form being contained in the grading out of Yeovil's periphery into the wider countryside. Similarly, the scale and magnitude of employment buildings would appear incongruous in scale against the rural character and scale of adjacent Thorne lane. Consequently, employment development would impact negatively upon the landscape in this location, thus there are landscape grounds for resisting further development.

4. conclusion

C4.1 The greater part of the site is clearly prominent in the wider landscape, and visible to many public perceptors to the west and north. The predominant rural character of the northern fields is projected by their regular pattern and openness, whilst the remainder of the site is particularly valuable in providing a woody buffer to Yeovil's edge. Broadly, the site is located outside the main setting of Yeovil. The scale and magnitude of employment development, when set against the scale of Thorne Coffin's domestication and Lufton Manor, would appear incongruous in this location, and it has been assessed that development within the study area would create a negative visual and landscape character impact. The present edge buffer provided by the woody surround would also be substantially eroded. Consequently there is landscape justification for resisting employment development within this study area.

3: SUMMARY-

3.1 This study has undertaken a landscape evaluation of five greenfield areas on the margins of Yeovil, where sites of up to 17 hectares in total are sought for employment purposes. Development of any site at the urban edge is always a sensitive issue, and this is particularly so with the areas in question - the majority being on elevated land; beside many of the main arterial routes into Yeovil; adjacent residential areas; and in view of the surrounding villages.

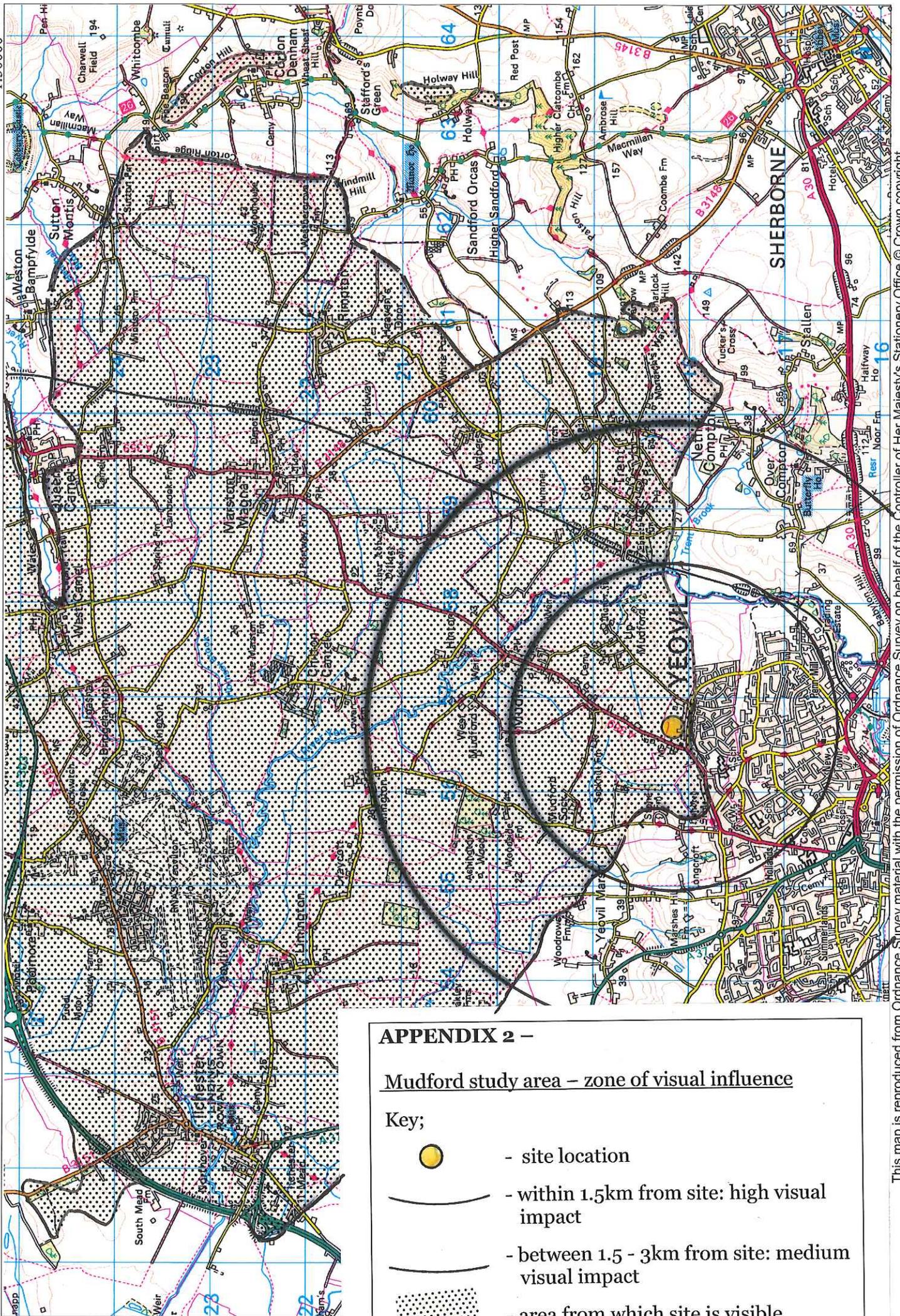
3.2 There will ordinarily be a presumption against greenfield development that adversely impacts upon local landscape character, and where opportunities for mitigation of visual impact are limited. However, impacts of development and land-use change can be minimised by directing them toward areas assessed as having a capacity to absorb development without undue landscape impact. This landscape study has evaluated both the landscape character and visual profile of each of the 5 sites, and their ability to absorb an impact of built form and its associated development. As an outcome to this study, it has concluded that in landscape terms;

- within the Mudford road and Lufton study areas, no land has been identified as being suitable for development as employment land.
- within the West Coker road study area, there is a single field between West Coker road and Bunford Hollow that offers some development potential. However, it is assessed that the site would not accommodate buildings of employment scale without adverse visual impact. Consequently, no land has been identified as being suitable for employment land development.
- within the Keyford area, there is no land available for employment or business park development that could be sympathetically integrated with Yeovil's urban form, as the site stands. However, should a key site proposal come forward for this area, which would provide both a context and framework for development, then a site could be accommodated within a larger proposal, providing suitable mitigation measures are an integral part of that proposal.
- within the Brympton study area, much of the site is evaluated as being unsuitable for employment development. However, a general area has been identified where business park development might occur with limited impact: This area comprises a group of three fields, located by Yeovil's edge, in close relationship with the current employment pattern of built form, and with a relatively low level of visibility. The extent of this possible development site is indicated on the plan, appendix 7

APPENDIX 1: VISUAL IMPACT TABLE

| Viewing Distance | Visual Effects | Degree of Visual Impact |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| 0-1.5 km, for 5ha. site 0-2.5 km, for 12 ha. site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development would be a prominent feature in the landscape. development would occupy a large proportion of the field of view and appear large in scale. | High Visual Impact |
| 1.5 – 2.5 km, for 5ha. site 2.5 -5 km, for 12 ha. site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development would appear as a clearly visible feature in the landscape. development would appear fairly large in scale, but would not dominate the field of view, as other landscape features attract the eye as panorama widens. | medium visual impact |
| 2.5-4 km, for 5ha. site 5-7.5 km, for 12 ha. site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development would still be a visible landscape feature but less distinct and noticeable. The apparent size of development would be much reduced and it would recede into the wider panorama and generally not appear intrusive. | low visual impact |
| 4 km+, for 5ha. site 7.5km+, for 12 ha. site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development would appear as a small feature which belongs to a distant landscape. development would be indistinct and only apparent in specific views or particular weather or lighting conditions. | minimal visual impact |

1:50000



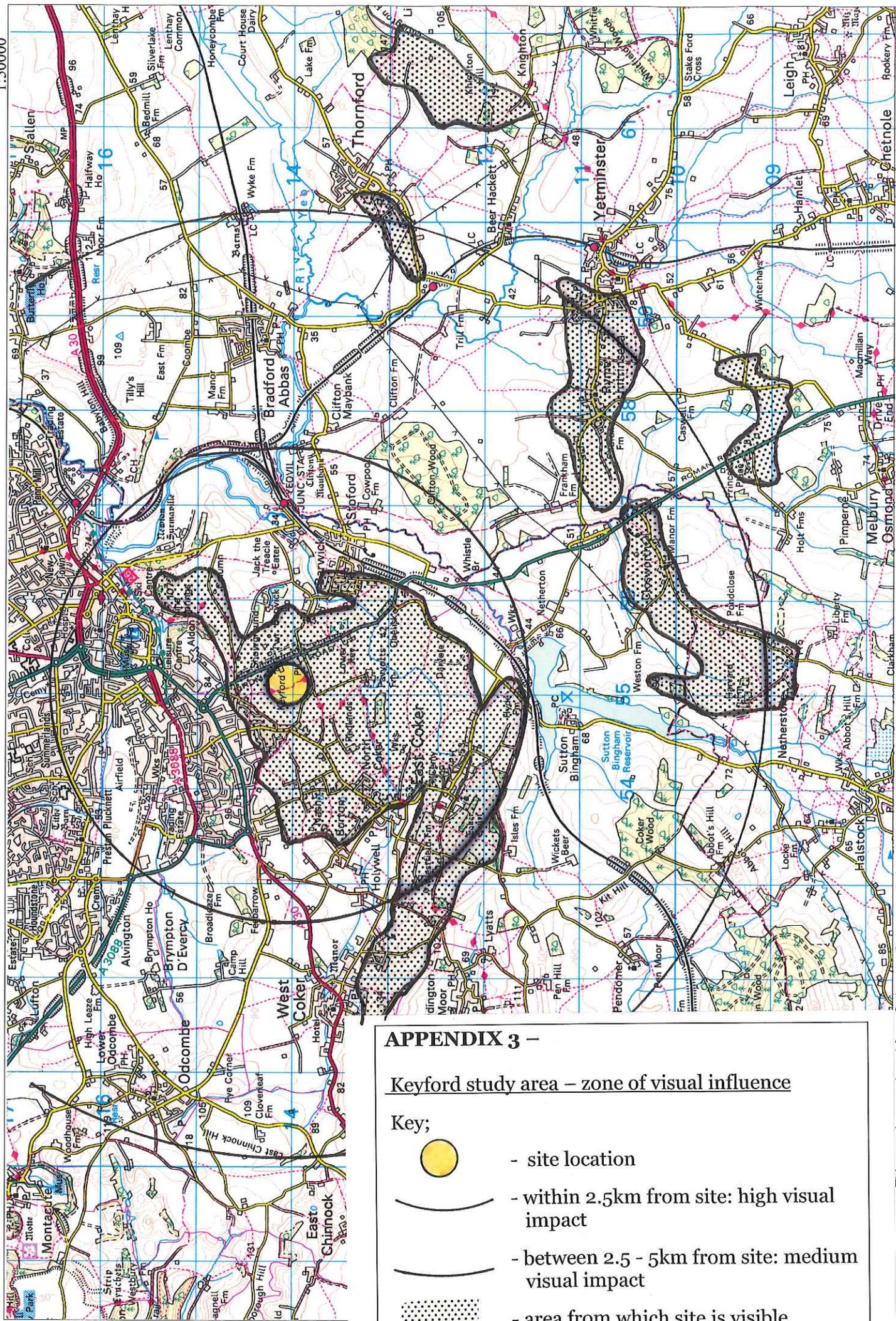
APPENDIX 2 -

Mudford study area - zone of visual influence

Key;

-  - site location
-  - within 1.5km from site: high visual impact
-  - between 1.5 - 3km from site: medium visual impact
-  - area from which site is visible

1:50000



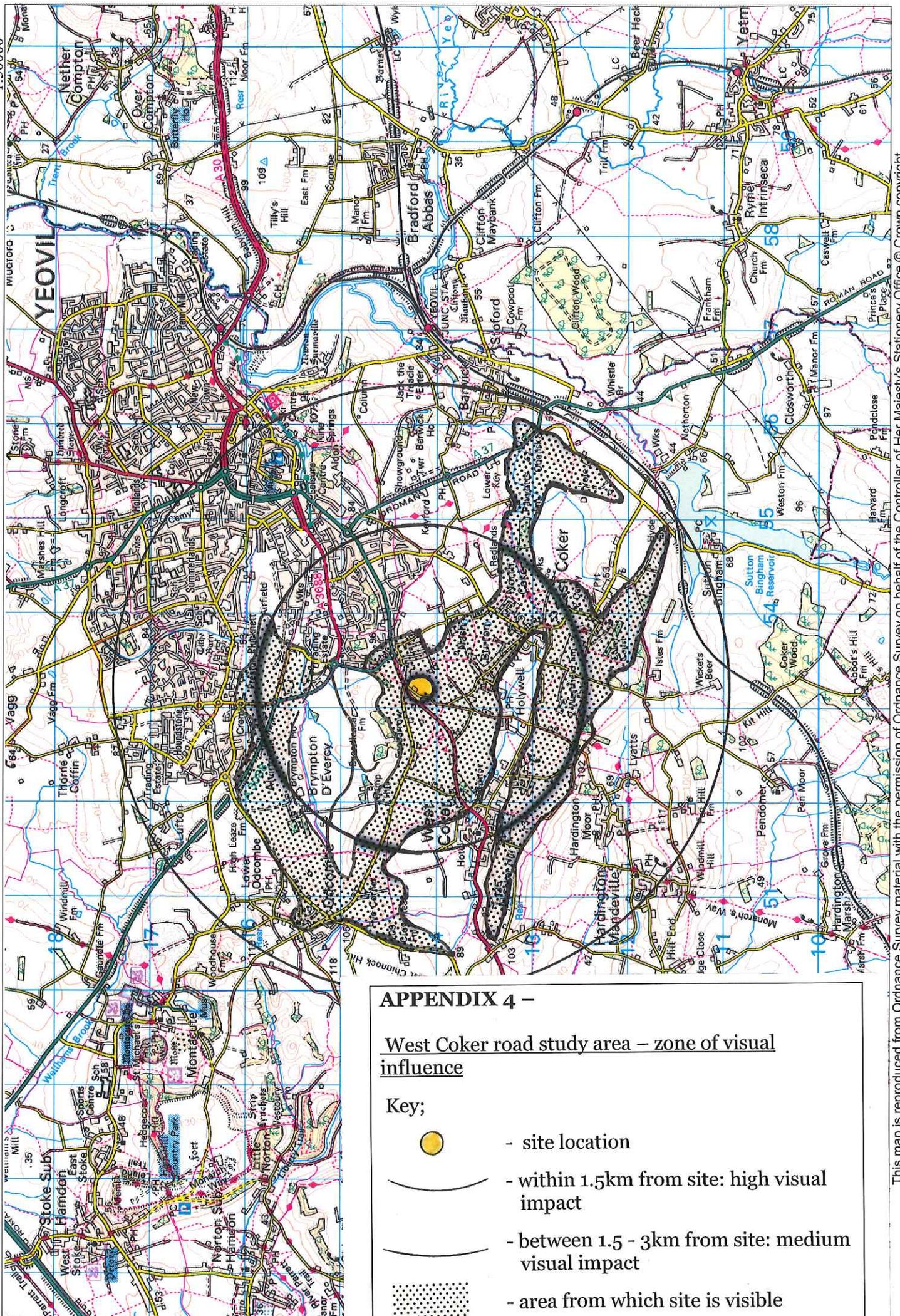
APPENDIX 3 -

Keyford study area – zone of visual influence

Key;

-  - site location
-  - within 2.5km from site: high visual impact
-  - between 2.5 - 5km from site: medium visual impact
-  - area from which site is visible

1:50000

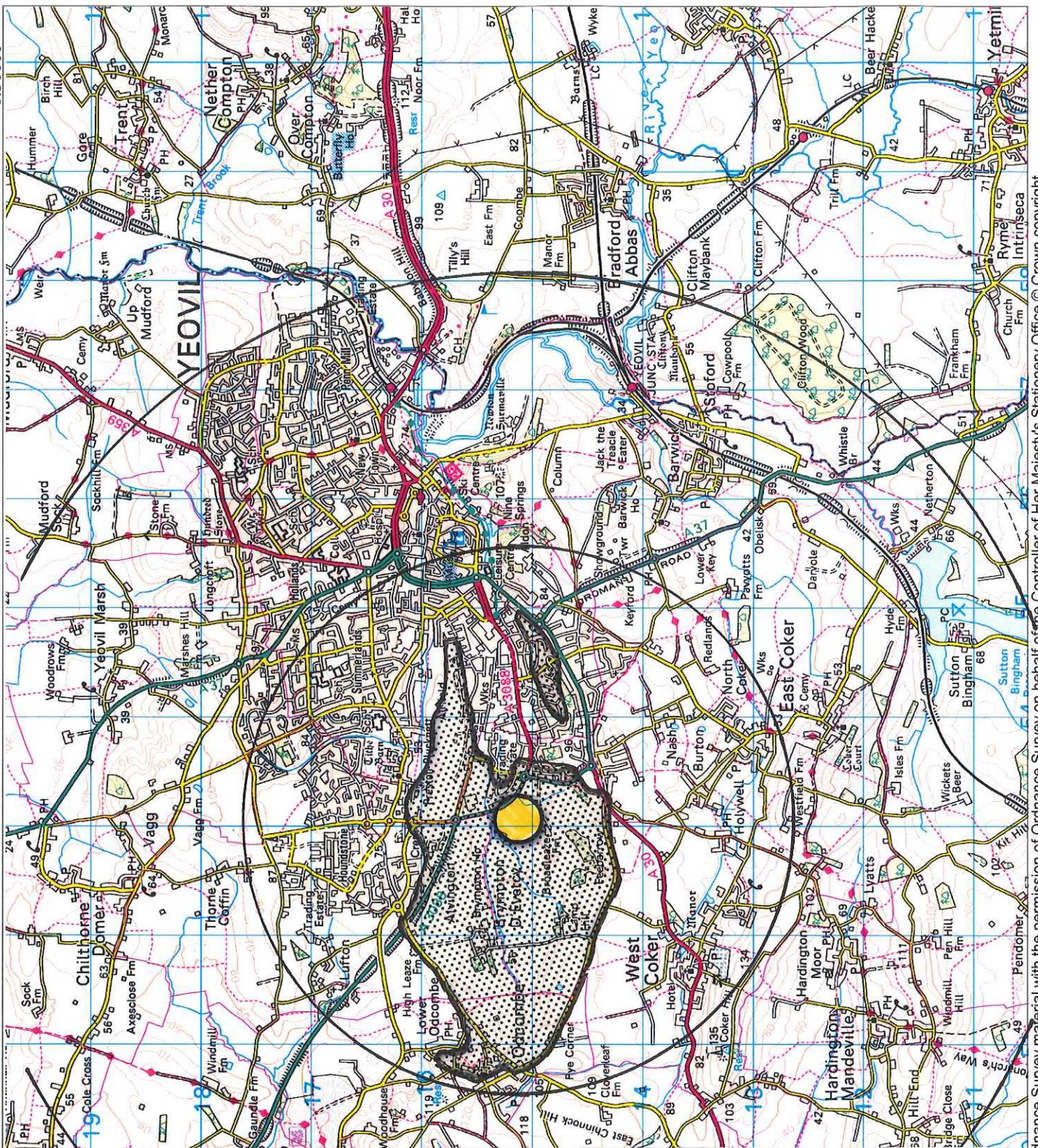


APPENDIX 4 -

West Coker road study area - zone of visual influence

Key;

-  - site location
-  - within 1.5km from site: high visual impact
-  - between 1.5 - 3km from site: medium visual impact
-  - area from which site is visible



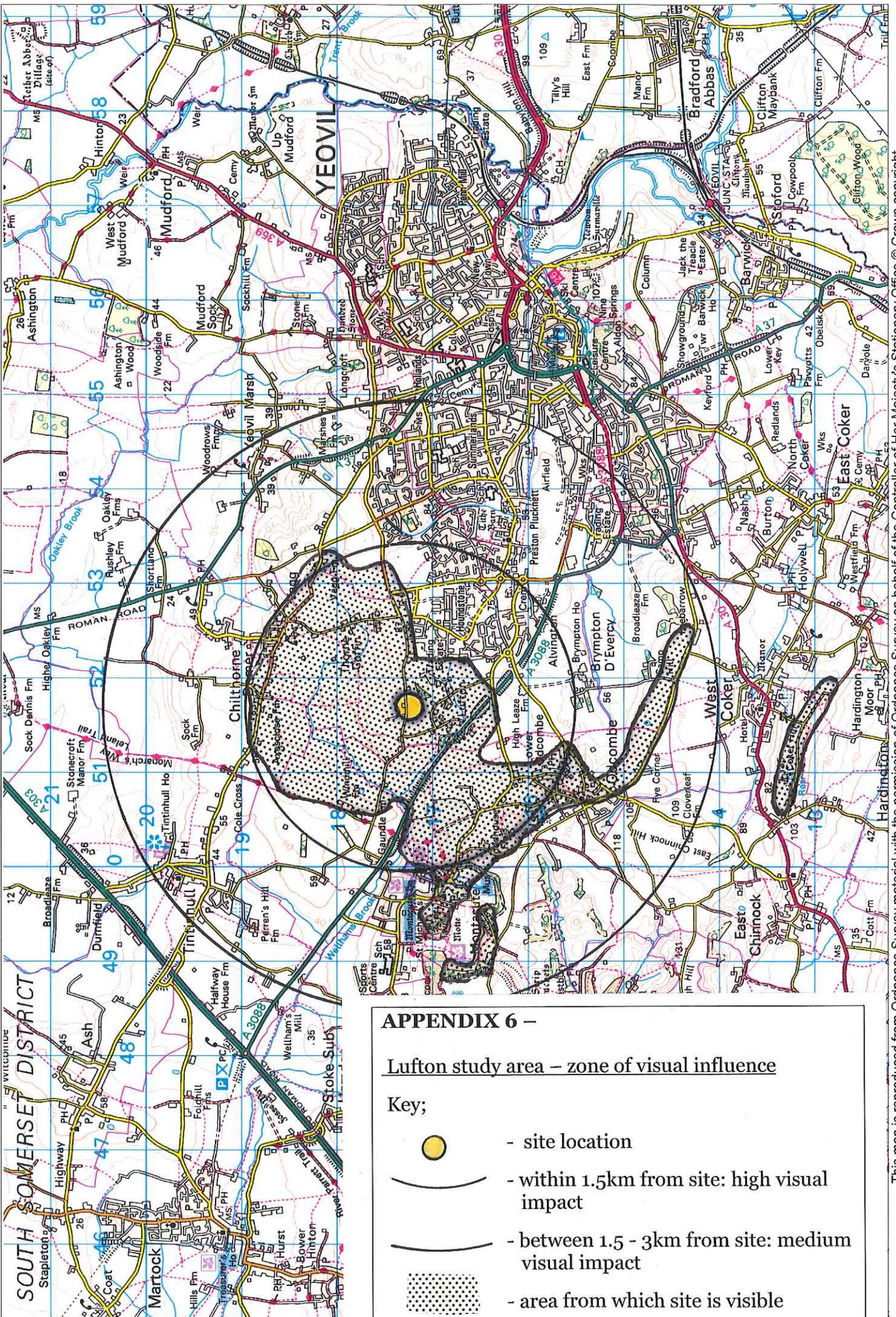
APPENDIX 5 –

Brympton study area – zone of visual influence

Key;

-  - site location
-  - within 2.5km from site: high visual impact
-  - between 2.5 - 5km from site: medium visual impact
-  - area from which site is visible

1:50000



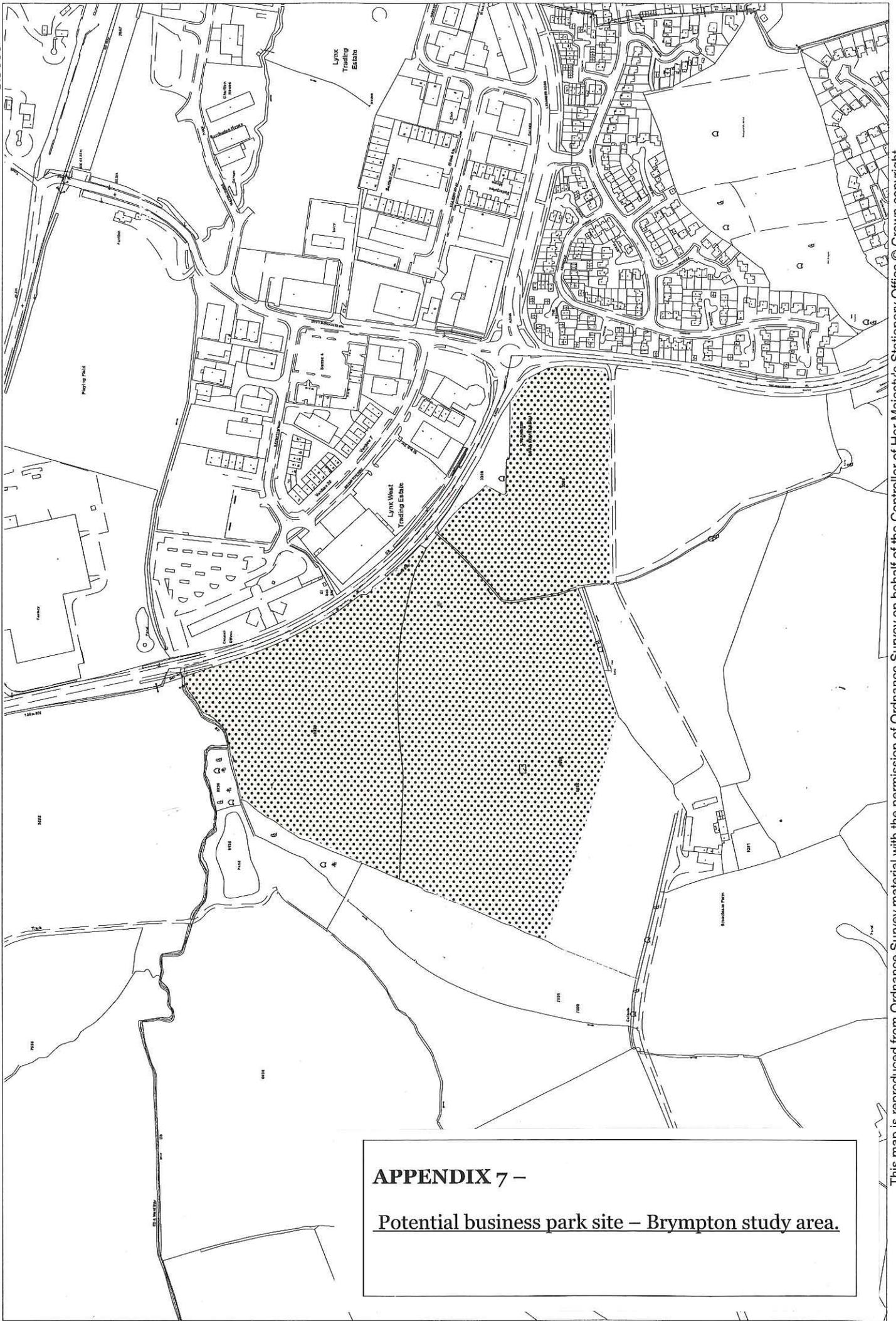
APPENDIX 6 -

Lufton study area - zone of visual influence

Key;

-  - site location
-  - within 1.5km from site: high visual impact
-  - between 1.5 - 3km from site: medium visual impact
-  - area from which site is visible

1:5000



APPENDIX 7 -

Potential business park site - Brympton study area.