

Historical Development

The historic maps illustrate how Axminster and its rural context have changed between 1898 and the present day. It is apparent from analysis that until the expansion of Axminster, the Site and context is largely unchanged.

Originally a cattle market town from 1210, Axminster formed around Market Square and Trinity Square. As seen in 1898, much of the immediate context of Axminster is arable farmland with clusters of woodland, as was the site.

The railway station was opened in 1860, offering direct services to Exeter and Yeovil, and attracting development to Axminster. Since the establishment of the railway station, Axminster's residential and commercial areas grew to the east and north. Following the line of the railway the River Axe flows north to south, the developments of Axminster have continued to expand from this eastern edge.

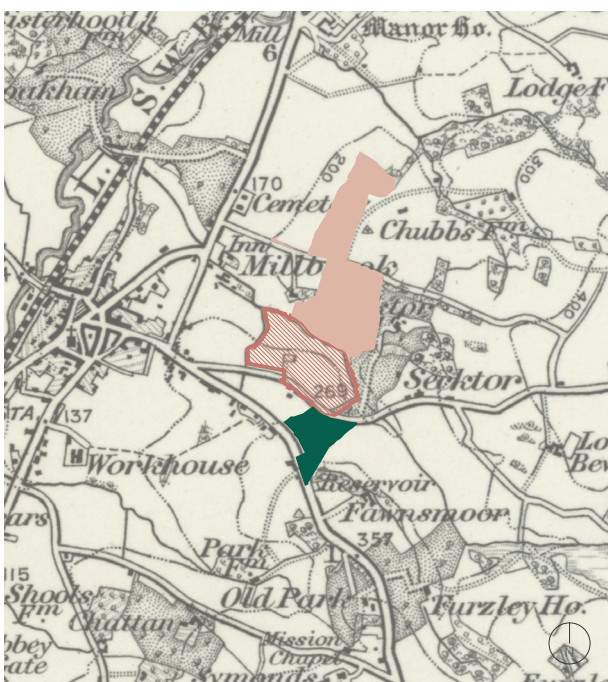
The town expanded from the historic core in a northern and eastern direction. It was from the 1950s that development expanded east along Lyme Road following the direction of Mill Brook Valley to the north.

Sector Hall, a Grade II listed Victorian house was built in 1838 and sits to the east of the Site. Sec Tor presents itself as a green buffer edge, for any development growing to the east.

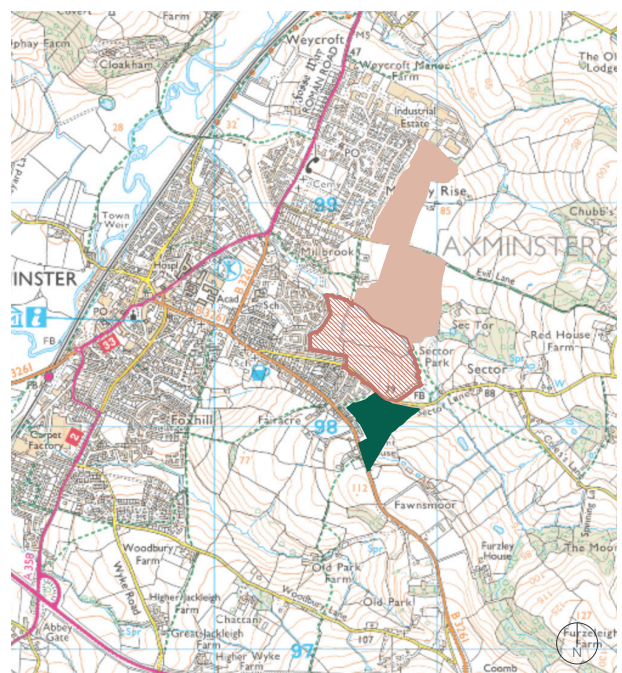
Where the River Axe is located along the north-south railway line it creates a defensible boundary. The constraint of the flood zone has encouraged development to expand north and east from the historic core of Axminster.

Mill Brook sits centrally to the site and travels along the northern edge of Axminster town. From 1960 this Brook created a valley setting and a divide between further development expanding north of Axminster and the existing development to the south.

The site has largely remained as open land, with a woodland to the north.



1898



2019

Surrounding Site Character

An analysis of the structure of surrounding settlements and urban design characteristics in Devon has been undertaken, to inform the design of the masterplan for the development at Axminster.

Given that the proposed development is moving beyond existing development boundaries into areas comprising of more rural characteristics, the proposals should draw design cues from townscape examples which have successfully integrated built form and landscape, creating a desirable place.

The surrounding areas which have been analysed are Chardstock, Membury, Musbury, Raymond's Hill and Uplyme. These village settlements within East Devon have distinctive townscape character types which reflect their patterns of growth and development. A summary of the key design features to inform the masterplan have been highlighted, as below:

- Settlement structure are most often based around a junction on a primary route passing through the town or village;
- Older buildings are most often concentrated along the edge of the route and settlements grow organically away from it;
- Highest density and continuous building form are concentrated around an historic core on a primary route with gradation of density and scale towards the edges;
- Historic buildings focus around a landmark building such as a local church;
- Non-residential uses are concentrated along a 'High Street';
- Topography informs the street pattern and building arrangement.



Winsham



Chardstock



Axminster



Membury



Musbury

Local Site Character

Axminster’s historic core is centred around Trinity Square and St. Mary’s Church.

The majority of buildings in the town centre are 19th century with a mix of uses, some buildings such as The George Inn date back to 1760. The historic core and conservation area is typical of many market towns and consist of highest density buildings in the centre with a tight urban grain and formal street pattern.














The towns expansion was mainly throughout the 20th century with the additions of various suburban housing estates comprising of largely mid to late 20th century.

Axminster Hospital and the Axe Valley Community College are located to the northern side of the town centre, mid to late 20th century housing is situated to the north and accessed from the A358 and Chard Road. These estates provide little contribution to local distinctiveness.

The approach into the town from the south is underwhelming, consisting of a retail park and superstore off West Street (B3261).

Early to mid 20th century housing is predominant in the areas accessed off Musbury Road and West Street.

There are occasional areas of pre-20th century housing located around Coombe Lane.

- KEY**
-  TCE nutrient mitigation land / public open space
 -  TCE development parcel
 -  Third party development parcel
 -  Pre 20th Century
 -  Early 20th Century (Pre-war)
 -  Mid 20th Century (Inter-war)
 -  Late 20th Century (Post war)
 -  Modern (1980-2015)
 -  Formal Recreation
 -  Woodland and Farm Land
 -  Industrial Estate
 -  Town Centre
 -  Study Area of Town Centre



Axminster historical character

Local Community Facilities
















Axminster demonstrates a traditional small town centre containing a range of retail and leisure uses. The town centre is and remains the primary shopping area, notwithstanding that further small retail development in the form of large supermarkets are located along some of the secondary routes running to the south of the town centre.

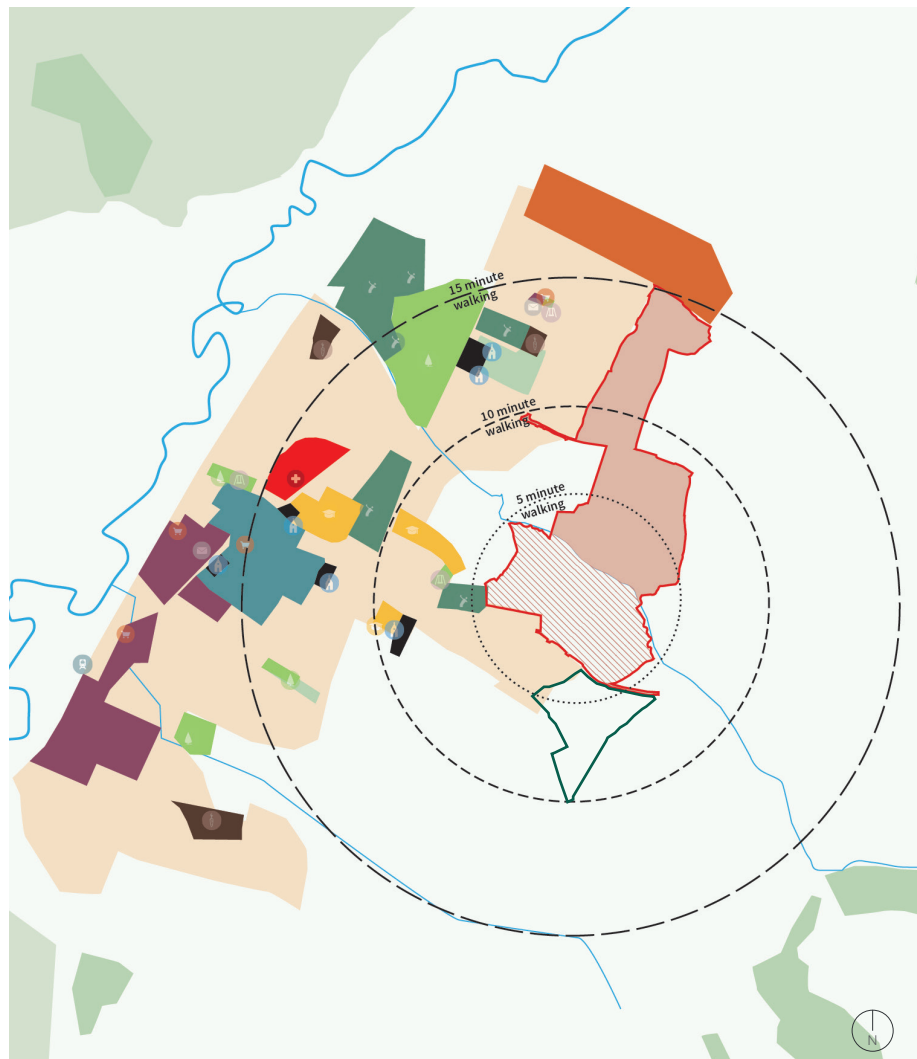
The proposed development site is within a comfortable and acceptable 10-15 minute walk from the town centre. It will be able to take advantage of the existing services, facilities and employment opportunities that are available within the town.

In relation to the existing surrounding local services and facilities the development proposals will:

- Take advantage of existing services, facilities and employment areas within Axminster.
- The Site is within a 10-15 minute walking distance which is comfortable and acceptable for the facilities.
- Axminster Town Centre will remain the primary shopping area reflecting its range of available services and facilities.
- There is potential to include a small community facility within the southern parcel (Café, leisure or information hub) which is local, community destination for residents and visitors along the Axe Valley.

Key

-  TCE nutrient mitigation land / public open space
-  TCE development parcel
-  Third party development parcel
-  Residential
-  Retail
-  Town centre
-  Industrial
-  Hospital
-  School
-  Open space
-  Leisure
-  Place of worship
-  Allotment
-  Woodland
-  AONB



Local services and facilities map with walking distances, in the surrounding area

Surrounding Density

Analysis of the different, layouts, characters, dwelling types and densities of a number of adjacent development areas has helped inform what may be appropriate for the proposed development.

Sector Lane edge;

- 20 DPH
- Predominantly semi-detached and detached homes





Upper Mead

- 47 DPH
- A mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached homes. Longer rows of terraces which front out onto the surrounding landscape
- Green corridors of hedgerows and trees run through the development parcels

Cridlake

- 30 DPH
- Mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced homes.
- Predominantly semi-detached and terraced houses with play and green areas surrounding

Key

-  TCE nutrient mitigation land / public open space
-  TCE development parcel
-  Third party development parcel
-  Density case study areas



Density plan of surrounding areas

Landscape Character

The topography of the proposed allocation site and its visibility within the wider landscape will influence the layout of roads and the arrangement of the development blocks on the site, seeking to reduce development impact on both the actual landform and views into and out of the site as little as possible. Development will best be located along the contours and may result in the need for bespoke house types where topography is steepest.

The development will create a new settlement edge and care will be needed in the design to prevent eastwards sprawl. The design will also need to respond to the sensitive views of the site.

Key wider landscape character considerations:

- The landscape remains productive whilst retaining its landscape structure of hedgerows, woodland and farms.
- Alternative uses should be found for redundant farm buildings, and land uses should take place within the existing field patterns.

Settlements thrive, and where they expand, this is done in a way which enhances their character and setting.

Wider Landscape Character

Devon has a comprehensive suite of Landscape Character Assessments, that describe Devon’s landscapes, and define a series of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Devon Character Areas (DCAs) within the County.

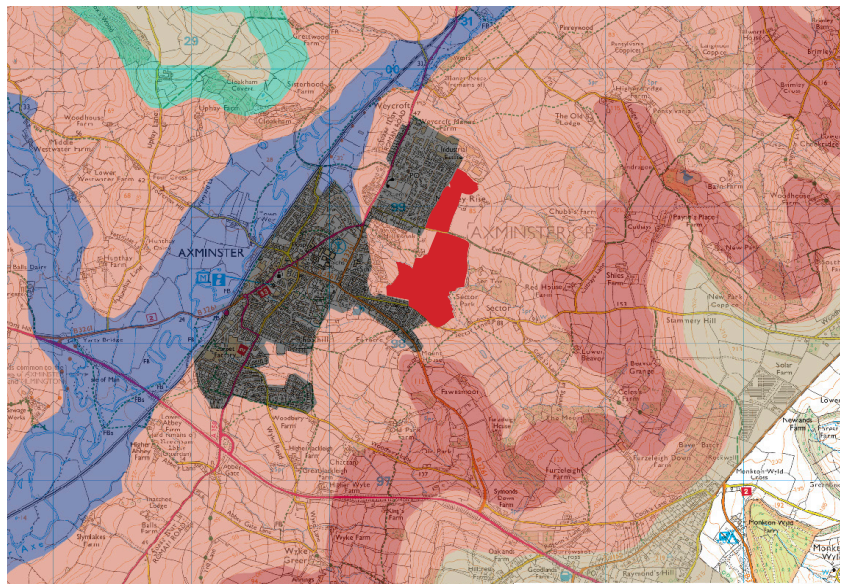
The site sits within **LCT 3B: Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes**. This is one of the most extensive LCTs and occurs on the lower slopes of the valley sides, and is generally a medium scale landscape, often with long views. It is predominantly agricultural, with pastoral and arable land uses. Patches of woodland, copses, and hedgerow trees give the landscape a well-treed character. It is a well-settled landscape, with farms, hamlets and villages.

What makes this landscape special?

- This extensive LCT which forms the setting for many settlements, and also contributes to many expansive views from higher ground.
- A productive, working but still attractive landscape containing numerous historic and archaeological features.
- A diversity of settlements, with building materials and settlement pattern reflecting local geology.

Key

- Overall Site
- 1A Open inland planned plateaux
- 2A Steep wooded scarp slopes
- 3A Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes
- 3B Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes
- 3C Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- 7 Main cities and towns



LCT Character Areas

Site Landscape Character

At a site specific scale, the site can be defined into four separate character areas;

- Arable;
- Valley Pasture;
- Large scale pasture, and
- Small scale pasture.

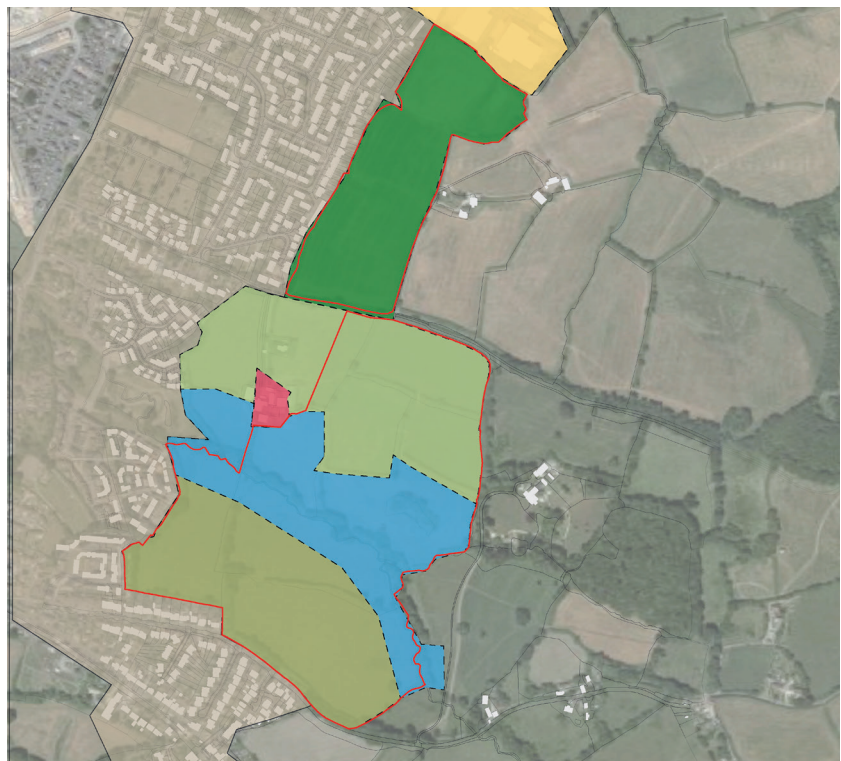
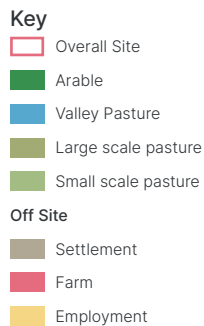
In addition, the parkland associated with Sector House has an influence on the eastern edge of the southern part of the site.

Key landscape features include Mill Brook, tree belts, copses and hedgerows, sunken lanes and the sloping land form.

Key Considerations

The development proposals will consider the following at site scale:

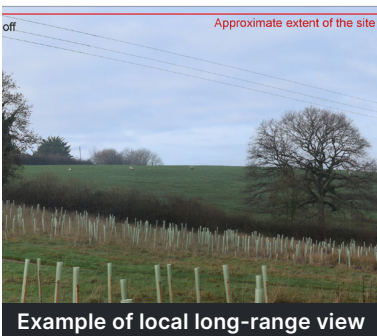
- The visual appearance of the development from elevated LCT views;
- Creation of distinctive entrance points to the new homes;
- Softening of settlement edge to integrate development into the wider landscape;
- Promote stronger habitat links across the site between woodland areas and hedgerows;
- Incorporate SUD's into the overall landscape layout;
- Enhance the PRoW routes to create circular trails and connections;
- Respect the character of Beavor and Evil lane and sensitively incorporate.



Site Character Areas

Visual Sensitivity

An assessment has been undertaken to understand the areas of visual sensitivity within and around the site. Wider long range and local viewpoints have been identified and assessed in combination with areas of higher and lower sensitivity. The assessment establishes the most appropriate locations for development and any potential impacts on views. This has shaped and informed the masterplan framework.



Example of local long-range view

Wider Viewpoints

These views are generally available from the higher ground within the edge of the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB's although intervening vegetation somewhat filters views and the site is barely discernible in views beyond 4km given the distance.

Some closer views are also possible from footpaths (Axminster 5&7) to the north of the site from elevated positions on the ridgeline.

From these locations, it is the northern parcel and the upper slopes of the southern parcel of the site which are most visible, identified by the settlement edge of Axminster.

Key considerations for the Masterplan

The most sensitive wider views are from within the three surrounding AONBs: Blackdown Hill AONB, East Devon AONB and Dorset AONB.

In all views from the higher ground, the site is visible as a small part of a wider panorama and is always seen in the context of the existing settlement edge of Axminster. New development should seek to maintain this relationship, and utilise new green infrastructure to soften edges and break up new built form.

Closer in, the general public using the public footpaths within the lower valley will potentially be impacted by new development in surrounding areas. New green infrastructure could be used to help screen built form and frame views along the river corridor.

The northern parcels of the site, although screened from the valley footpaths, are visible from Evil Lane and would also be the most prominent in wider views.

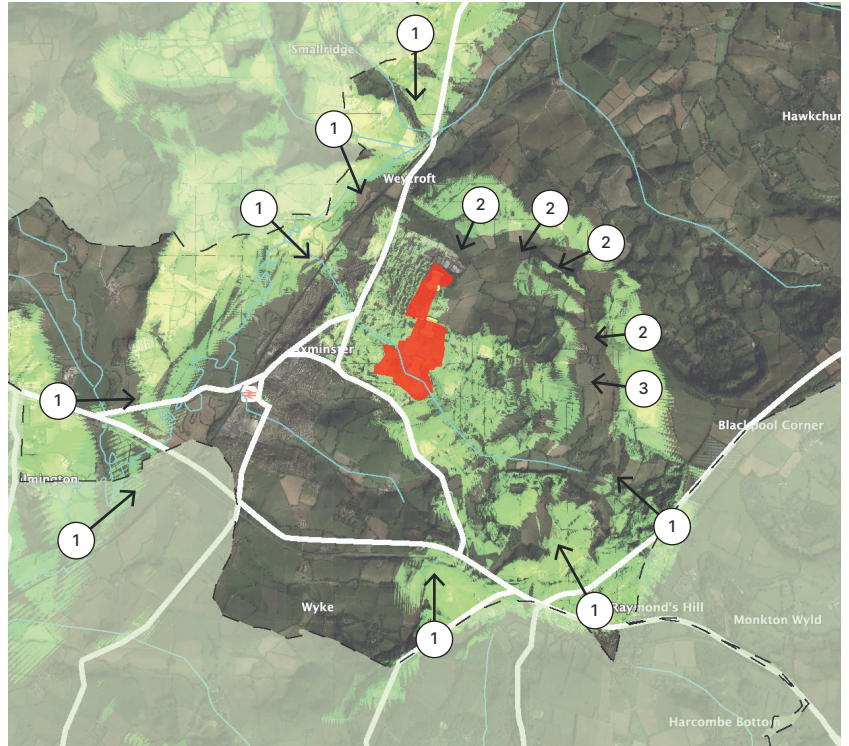
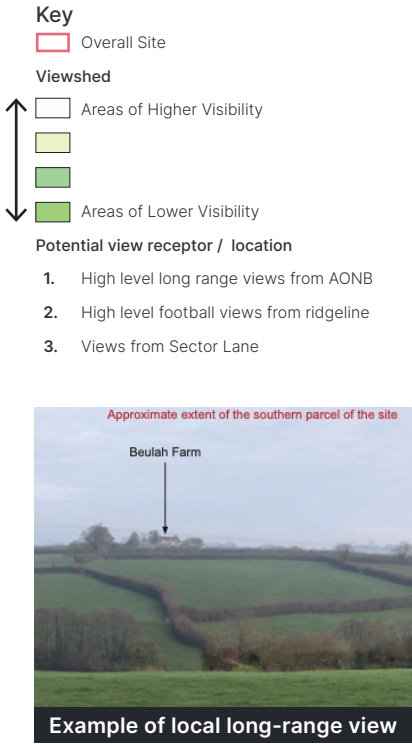
Nearby residents overlooking or abutting the site will potentially be impacted from development. Where possible, level change could be used to avoid blocking longer views from properties, or to maintain and enhance existing mature planting along boundaries that screen views in. This will also protect the character and appearance of adjacent streets and the entry points into the Town.

Local Viewpoints

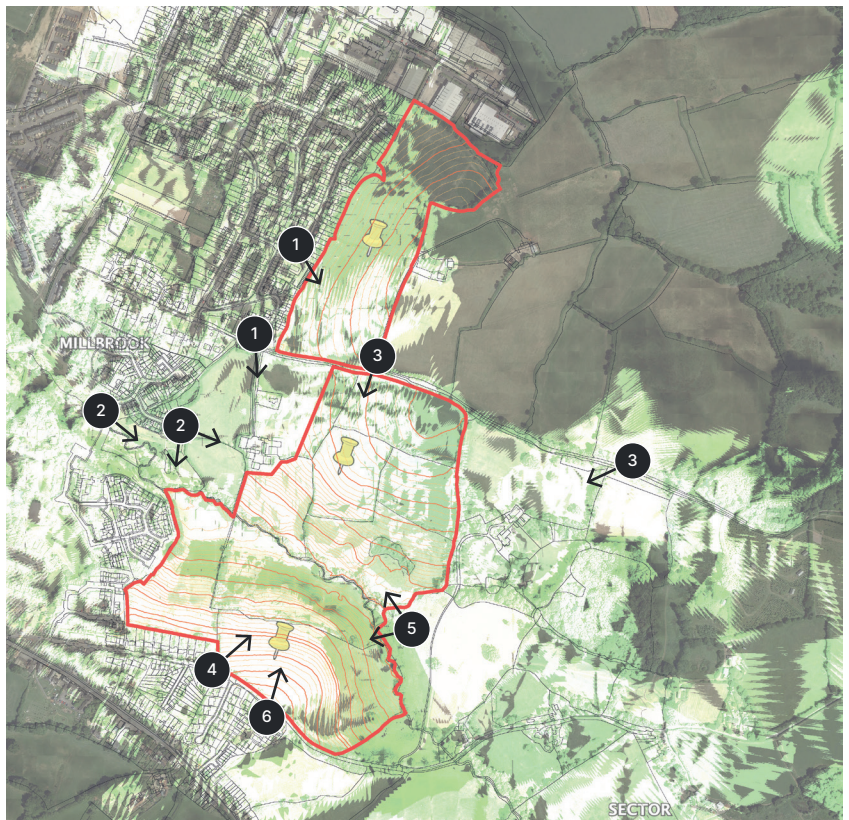
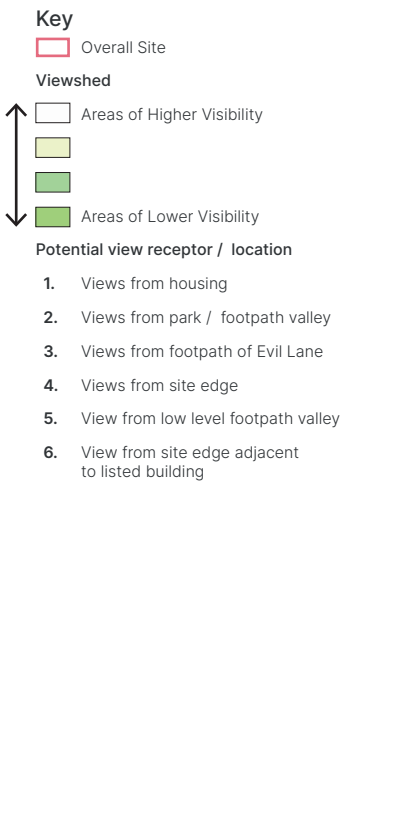
In close views, much of the site is visible from various locations both from the site boundaries and public footpaths located within the river corridor and on Evil Lane. The site is visible for many people within close proximity (within 500m of the site). This includes residents, road users and users of public rights of way and this is typical of a settlement edge location.



Example of local long-range view



Wider Viewpoints



Local Viewpoints

Landscape Capacity for Change

Landscape capacity is the extent to which a particular landscape type is able to accept a particular kind of change without significant effects on its character.

The plan opposite illustrates areas of landscape capacity across the site in terms of the capacity to accommodate new development, and the descriptions below explain the scale and nature for each capacity level. Best practice guidance has informed the landscape capacity for change plan.

Key Considerations

Medium/Low Capacity

A low amount of development can be accommodated only in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

The lower valley areas show some capacity for change, this is constrained by the locally valued landscape setting and its recreational value. Screened from the wider landscape, localised views through the valley are important.

Medium capacity

This area could accommodate some areas of new development, regard to the setting and form of existing settlement, the character and sensitivity of adjacent areas needs to be considered. The key landscape and visual characteristics must be retained and enhanced.

The small scale field network to the north of Mill Brook demonstrates potential to accommodate change, valued natural features and intact field boundary network should be protected, respecting the landscape setting.

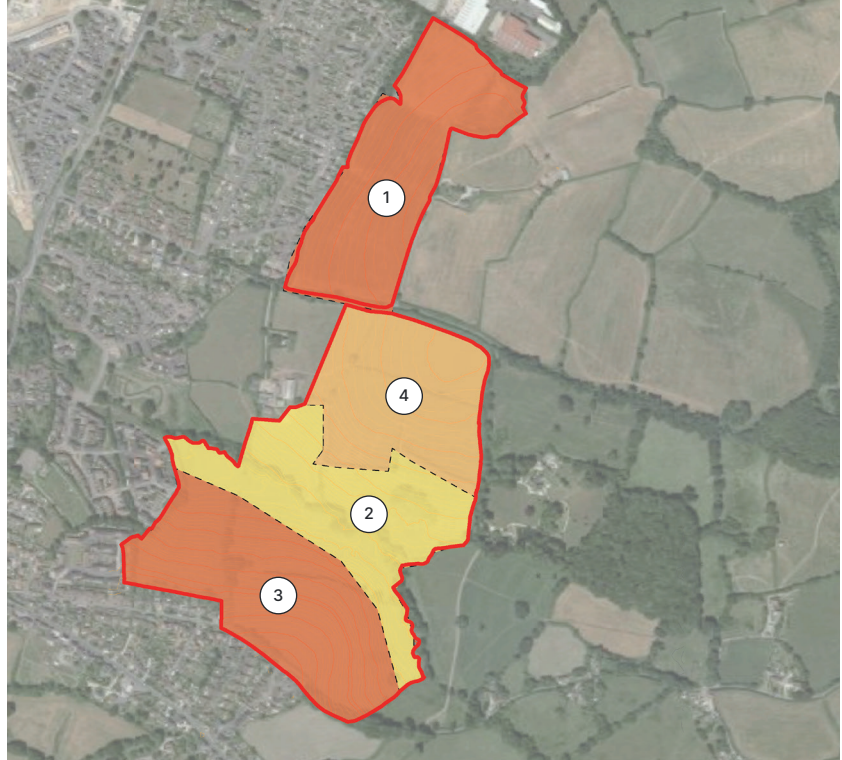
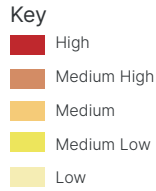
Views out from the settlement edge and lower valley footpaths into this area, combined with the sloping topography would be important considerations and require mitigation.

Medium/High capacity

Larger amounts of development can be accommodated, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement, character of adjacent areas. Protection of landscape and visual features may be required.

Both field areas to the edges of the Axminster settlement were recorded as having potential to accommodate development, demonstrating a less intact landscape structure and impacted by the urban edges of the Town.

Located on the upper slopes of the site, these spaces have a wider visual connection to the landscape, but are seen in conjunction with the existing settlement edge. New development could preserve the green appearance of the edges through sensitive design and new tree and hedgerows.



Landscape capacity for change

Site area	Stage 1: Visual sensitivity	Stage 3: landscape sensitivity	Stage 3: landscape character sensitivity	Stage 4: wider sensitivity	Stage 5: overall landscape sensitivity	Stage 6: landscape value	Stage 7: overall landscape capacity
1: Arable fields	Medium/ Low	Medium/ Low	Medium/ Low	Medium	Medium	Medium/ Low	Medium/ High
2: Valley Pasture	Medium/ Low	Medium/ High	Medium	High	Medium/ High	Medium	Medium / Low
3: Large Scale Pasture	Medium/ Low	Medium	Medium/ Low	Medium/ High	Medium	Medium/ Low	Medium/ High
4: Small Scale Pasture	Medium/ Low	Medium/ High	Medium	Medium/ High	Medium/ High	Medium/ Low	Medium

Site Considerations

Ecology

The landscape and ecological features on the site will help to shape the development, incorporating them where possible to ensure the development sensitively responds to its ecological and landscape setting.

The existing hedgerows, woodland and trees, which are predominantly category A and B, will need to be retained and will form natural green corridors for wildlife linking down to the Axe valley, as well as assisting with screening the development. The retention and enhancement of the existing waterbodies, particularly Millbrook, will similarly assist with preserving the natural assets of the site.

Drainage and Flooding

The drainage strategy for the site will need to work with the natural topography in order to reduce the need for pumping stations and large retaining walls around drainage ponds, etc.

The need for all development in Axminster to provide mitigation to ensure nutrient neutrality, together with the need to ensure there is no flooding risk to either new or existing residents, means that an exemplar Sustainable Urban Drainage System will need to be designed on the site. This will take the form of a series of attractive swale features through the development and along Millbrook, creating an attractive water edge along the watercourse. This will also enable the existing PROW to be retained along the valley floor.

Access and Movement

An all-vehicle access into the proposed site will be provided from the principal estate road servicing the proposed Persimmon development to the south. It is proposed that the access road within the Persimmon site will extend up to the Sector Lane highway boundary from Lyme Road. A permeable network of streets and spaces, which prioritises pedestrians and cyclists, through the development will filter off this main estate road. Pedestrian and cycle connections, where possible, will link through to the existing adjacent development areas creating easy and accessible 15 minute access to local services and amenities and the town centre.

Summary of key issues and design principles affecting the proposed development site:

- Residential development will need to be designed to retain the landform by following the topography and contours, maximising views across the valley,
- Layout and design to be informed by the retention of existing topography, landscape and ecological features (hedgerows, trees, etc) which provide a natural setting for development, limit visual impact and provide movement and open space corridors,
- Connections to be made with existing pedestrian routes and PROW through the valley to create a sustainable and easily accessible development,
- Site drainage solutions need to ensure the risk of flooding and pollution is reduced for both existing and new residents,
- Vehicular access will need to be taken from the principal estate road through the Persimmon site (LP_GH/ED/79) to the south .