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Proposed Residential Development
at Land at Chardstock
East Devon

Landscape
Advice
Note

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Prepared by	Checked by	Prepared for
Elizabeth Malone	Oliver Clark	Harry Cooper

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1.0 Overview

Project Overview

This Landscape Advice Note has been prepared by Boon Brown Ltd ("BoonBrown") on behalf of the applicant, Strongvox Ltd. assessing the suitability for proposed residential development on land at Chardstock, East Devon.

The Landscape Advice Note

This Landscape Advice Note sets out a high-level overview of the potential for proposed residential development on land at Chardstock, East Devon – informed by any sensitivities relating to the landscape character and context and outlining the principles behind the high-level design layout.

2.0 The Site

Site Location

The proposed development land is located within the south-eastern quarter of Chardstock, a village and civil parish located within East Devon. It is situated between the East Devon towns of Chard and Axminster. The village is surrounded by farmland and woodland and is located within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The development land is located off The Half Moon which bisects the village. The site is located adjacent to post-war housing and is a short distance away from St Andrew's CofE Primary Academy. Traffic from The Half Moon is both partly visible and audible from within the site and access to the site is off The Half Moon.

Site Description

The site is located within National Character Area 147: Blackdowns, which has the following key characteristics:

- Long, flat-topped Greensand ridges create distinctive landscape features offering far-reaching views. Narrow, steep-sided valleys with a strong sense of enclosure dissect the ridges and contrast with the broad, open valley of the River Axe with its flood plain.
- A landscape drained by small streams radiating out from the ridges into rivers with relatively short courses south to the sea. Springs emerge from the interface of the Greensand and clays.
- Densely-wooded, steep scarp slopes with both ancient oak woodland, carpeted in bluebells and primroses, and conifer plantations which extend onto the ridges. Across the valleys a strong hedgerow pattern with hedgerow trees and small broadleaved woodlands exists with carr woodland along some watercourses. The combination of these woodlands and their locations gives the perception that the area is relatively well wooded.
- A mainly pastoral landscape with small, irregular fields of medieval origin on the slopes and in the smaller valleys. Across the wider valleys and flood plains there is a transition to larger fields and the occurrence of some arable.
- Beech-topped hedgebanks many now grown out, characterise the Greensand plateaux, with wider historic banks in the upper farmed valleys and more species-diverse Devon hedgerows (for example, beech, sycamore, ash, hazel, blackthorn and gorse) with flower, fern and moss-rich banks on the lower slopes.
- An ancient dispersed settlement pattern with clustered hamlets and villages at road or river crossings, along springlines or at the mouth of rivers and estuaries. Farmsteads scattered throughout, nestled in dips or along springlines, with a noticeable occurrence of beech shelterbelts.
- Strong local vernacular reflecting the geology: cob and thatch, grey limestone buildings, sandstone buildings with slate roofs and redbrick detailing, Beer stone churches, and the locally distinctive chert (flint-like nodules) with red brick detailing and slate roofs.

The site is also located within the Regional Landscape Character Area - 8 Eastern Blackdown Ridge and the Local Landscape Character Type (LCT) 1A Open inland planned plateaux (East Devon and Blackdown Hills Landscape Character Assessment, 2019), which has the following key characteristics:

- High, open flat plateaux comprising a series of long, narrow ridge tops, sometimes undulating.

- Occasional copses and conifer plantations punctuate the open farmland. Boundary trees along roads and hedgerows mostly beech in north and oak/hazel further south around plateaux edges.
- Predominantly pastoral farming on heavy soils, with some arable. Regular, medium-large scale fields bounded by well-trimmed hedges on narrow earth banks.
- Semi-natural habitats include patches of heath, unimproved grassland and wide verges.
- Settlement generally comprises isolated farmsteads and clusters of buildings at crossroads. 20th century settlement associated with airfields.
- Long, straight roads in the centre of ridges, often lined with beech avenues, with narrower, winding roads towards the edges. Few public rights of way.

The proposed development site sits at approximately 120m AOD to the west and rises up to approximately 140m AOD in the east.

Chardstock has a Conservation Area and 85% of the parish is located within the Blackdown Hills AONB. The Conservation Area comprises largely unspoilt medieval and Victorian buildings and well-preserved, historical street settings. The Neighbourhood Plan highlights that conserving and valuing the built heritage of Chardstock is a very high priority. Although the proposed development site is not directly located within the AONB or the Conservation Area, the proposed development will have an impact upon the setting of both the AONB and the Conservation Area due to its proximity to these designations.

The proposed development site is comprised of three agricultural fields bound by mature native hedgerows and hedgerow trees. In addition, a relatively short expanse of formal leylandii hedging associated with a larger dwelling is located to the southwest of the proposed development site. There are long-distance views across to the steep ridgelines to the west (approximately 175 AOD). The site is on the edge of the LCT as it transitions to steeper scarp slopes.

The post-war housing to the southeast of Chardstock is not wholly in keeping with the historic quality and character associated with the central more historic portion of Chardstock's built heritage.

The Local Landscape and possible Landscape and Visual Impact

According to the National Historic Landscape Characterisation, the site is largely classified as Post Medieval enclosed agriculture. The native species hedgerows are managed through flailing and in places the hedgerow is partly defunct. Mature trees are located towards the outer edges of the site boundary and appropriate buffers will be required to ensure that the RPAs of these trees are protected.

According to Soilscape mapping, the site is comprised of freely-draining, slightly acid loamy soils of low fertility.

Environmental designations in proximity of the proposed development site, include: Storrige Hill County Wildlife Site (CWS) located approximately 0.29km to the northeast, Stowell Meadow SSSI located 2.41km to the northeast and the River Axe Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located 2.23km to the southeast.

There are numerous Listed Buildings located within the historic core of Chardstock and within Chardstock's Conservation Area. The closest of which are located 0.16m to the west of the proposed development site. The proposed development site is fairly visually enclosed from the historic core of the village and the only developments visible from within and outside of the development within Chardstock are the modern rendered post-war housing located along The Half Moon. From elevated positions these modern rendered properties would be more conspicuous than the traditional historic properties within the historic core which by nature of their materiality recede more gently into the landscape.

The Chardstock 30 Public Right of Way (PRoW) is located approximately 0.36km to the south of the proposed development site. The elevated ridgeline about the vicinity of Reads Hill Farm approximately 1.45km to the west

of the proposed development is apparent from within the proposed development site and therefore it is probable that there would be visibility from about the vicinity of this farmstead towards the proposed development site and from the network of PRoWs that run along the ridgeline, including Chardstock 23 PRoW and Chardstock 80 PRoW.

Landscape Advice Note Summary

As can be demonstrated by the preliminary desktop analysis of the proposed development land, the site's elevated location and the nature of the surrounding topography and elevated viewpoint locations within 2.5km of the site mean that the proposed site is sensitive to development, with potential direct views from a number of Public Rights of Way and elevated locations, particularly to the west of the proposed development. Furthermore, post-war housing adjacent to the proposed development site will be visually affected by the proposed development. Due to the proximity of the Conservation Area and Blackdown Hills AONB the proposed development will need to be sensitively designed so as not to impact negatively upon the setting of these designated areas.

Figure 6 demonstrates a high-level layout that outlines an area with potential capacity for development – the layout is strongly influenced by the existing landscape character of the historic core of Chardstock and the surrounding area and the retention of important landscape features, including those native hedgerows around the perimeter and within the proposed development site. There is opportunity to enhance the northern corner of the proposed development site through woodland buffer planting providing a degree of enhanced green connectivity in relation to the Storridge Hill CWS and extending the extent of tree cover associated with the village.

The most sensitive areas of the development site are to the north and west where the site would be most visually prominent within the landscape due to the elevated nature of these locations, and therefore these are the areas with the least capacity for development (see Figure 5). Within the area identified as having potential capacity for residential development – there would need to be further land set aside for planting to break up a massing effect over rising ground and to provide additional recreational facilities. The use of native tree species including hazel and oak and the strengthening of existing hedgerows through infilling gaps and incorporating hedgerow trees will serve to enhance the landscape character of the site, as well as the provision of Devon Hedgebanks as an alternative boundary treatment within the site.

In accordance with the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Design guide for houses (2012), it is recommended that the proposed development draws upon the local distinctiveness of the area and that new buildings are in keeping with the construction traditions of the area (including innovative, contemporary solutions where appropriate). The most characteristic construction material in the Blackdown Hills is chert, which is generally laid randomly rather than in courses. Beerstone from nearby quarries are most commonly used to provide defined features for chert buildings – for example window mullions, door jambs, chimney stacks and gate piers.

Cob is a building material made of local soils and cob tends to be a brown-red colour in the Blackdown Hills. Roofs were thatched and stone walls were generally built of rubblestone rather than cut stone, with stones laid randomly rather than in courses.

Brick, clay roof tiles and roofing slates became available upon the arrival of the railways. Buildings tend to be constructed in locations sheltered from south westerly winds, orientated towards the sun with steeply pitched roofs to shed rain. Traditional buildings in the Blackdown Hills tend to be only four to five metres deep.

Between the 1700-1900s, the 18th century Blackdown Hills symmetrical house built of chert with gable ends emerged – a highly distinctive form of home.

The following design principles are promoted within the Blackdown Hills AONB Design guide for houses (2012):

- Good detailing, appropriate materials and sensitive treatment of the spaces around buildings are essential elements in achieving a successful and sympathetic scheme.

- Locations for new buildings and development should follow the traditional settlement pattern and respect the integrity of historical settlement forms.
- Layouts for new development sites should reflect the road patterns and plot forms of the surrounding traditional settlement. It is important to create the same sense of enclosure, traditional proportions and massing of buildings.
- Building forms and materials should reflect the local traditions.
- Sensitive design of the spaces around buildings is essential to preserve local character. The most harmoniously designed building can look 'out of place' if it is not properly integrated into its setting.
- Contemporary design should draw on the qualities of landscape, historic features and buildings to reinforce local distinctiveness.

3.0 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1: Site Context

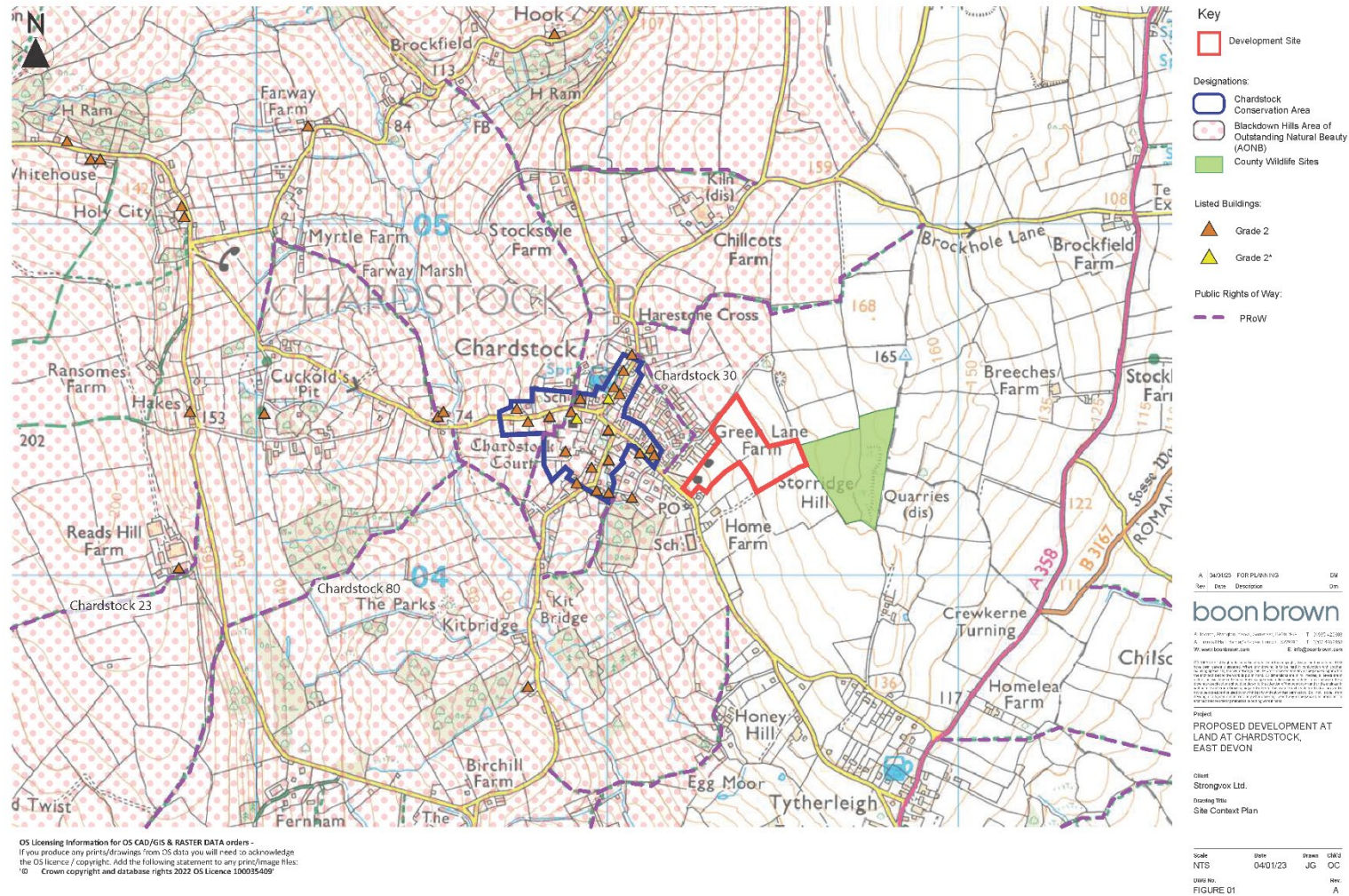


Figure 2: Panoramic photograph from the northwestern corner of the western field looking west towards post-war housing and the elevated ridgeline in the background of the view.



Figure 3: Panoramic photograph from the southern corner of the northern field looking north towards the native hedgerow planting bounding the field – views beyond this are limited by the nature of the topography.



Figure 4: Panoramic photograph from the within the eastern field looking west towards post-war housing and the elevated ridgeline in the background of the view.



Figure 5: Zoning Plan



Figure 6: Initial Concept Layout for potential residential development



boon brown

Motivo | Alvington | Yeovil | BA20 2FG

Tunstall Hall | Bernay's Grove | London | SW9 8DF



www.boonbrown.com