

The land to the north east breaches the defensible barrier of the town's bypass and develops up to the boundary of the AONB. Due to the open nature of this area, the landscape impact would be considerable and therefore undesirable. Parts of the sites to the south west are within the AONB but due to the topography of the area, the impact of development would be sheltered / screened by hills and woods. The overall impact of such development on the landscape is therefore less than development to the north east.

The land that forms the site to the north east drains directly into a small stream which flows through Blandford town centre and into the River Stour. If development was to take place on this site, it would need to ensure that runoff from the developed site does not increase flows in this stream due to the potential to increase the risk of flooding in Blandford. If possible development should aim to reduce the risk of flooding to areas downstream. Effective SuDS would need to be incorporated to ensure that this was the case. Development of the site to the south east would bring the town to the edge of the floodplain of the River Stour. This does expose part of the site to potential flooding from the Stour but development should avoid impact on and be confined to the areas outside of the floodplain. Again SuDS will need to be incorporated into the development to ensure that flooding downstream is not increased.

The biodiversity on any development site is reduced through the act of development and long established habitats are permanently lost. Development of the site to the north east will result in permanent loss of agricultural land including the associated impact on hedgerows and fields. However development to the south east may have a potential impact on the hunting grounds of the greater horseshoe bats living at Bryanston. In addition there are areas suitable for woodland habitat restoration in the areas to the south of the town as identified by the Southwest Nature Map.

Both of the options for the expansion of the town result in the permanent loss of productive agricultural land. The majority of the area to the south west is grade 4 agricultural land with a small amount of grade 3 land. The area to the north east is similar but also includes an area of grade 2 agricultural land which is of higher productive value. It is also important that development of a site does not result in pollution of neighbouring agricultural land or groundwater resources. Adequate measures need to be put in place to ensure this does not happen.

Development of large greenfield sites offers the opportunity to incorporate large scale renewable energy schemes such as sustainably fuelled district heating and power. This could be used to fuel flatted developments on the site but also neighbouring large heat users such as schools, the leisure centre and the hospital. Greater benefits could be achieved from this by developing the areas to the south west due to the proximity of the site to such heat loads.

One important aspect of sustainable development is reducing the impact of developments. An obvious impact of a residential development is the amount of travel that results once the new dwellings are occupied. By locating development close to the