

Vision 2030 Neighbourhood Plan: environment evidence base

A/ Landscape character and setting

The town of Bridport and the surrounding parishes of Allington, Bradpole, Bothenhampton & Walditch and Symondsbury, are characterised by a distinctive landscape and topology which provides a unique backdrop to the settlements. This relationship between built-up areas and largely undeveloped landscape is important. If it were to be eroded through inappropriate development which failed to respect its distinctive features, the character of the area would undoubtedly be degraded.

Key features include:

- The flat topped hills with their steep sides, which in many cases lie within or immediately adjacent to the greater Bridport built-up area e.g. Coneygar, Allington, Watton and Hyde hills; and
- The river valleys of the Brit, Asker and Simene, which flow through the built-up area and provide important green corridors, including the water meadows along the Asker (notably at Happy Island and Askers Meadow).

These features help lend the area an impression of being set within countryside and they provide a green backdrop. It is particularly notable that the settlement sits within the topography and does not, by and large, break its skyline. Seen from below, the hills present a green skyline, with development typically restricted to the lower slopes.

They also make it much easier for residents to access open and semi-natural green spaces. They are particularly popular with those seeking some exercise, walking their dog and so on, so contribute to health and wellbeing.

West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

This document from West Dorset District Council provides a systematic assessment of the main landscape features recognises and the way that settlements relate to them. These are features which are seen as worthwhile preserving. Landscape areas Chideock Hills (16), Brit Valley (17) and Powerstock Hills (18) are especially relevant in the document. They note the characteristic series of hills in the area, typically with steep wooded sides.

Photographic evidence

Three photographs have been taken and are presented here (overleaf) to give a basic illustration of the main landscape features described above.

Photo 1: View of Watton Hill from Jessops Avenue (Bridport)



Photo 2: View over Victoria Grove area (Bridport), with slope of Coneygar Hill to the far left and Allington Hill on the right



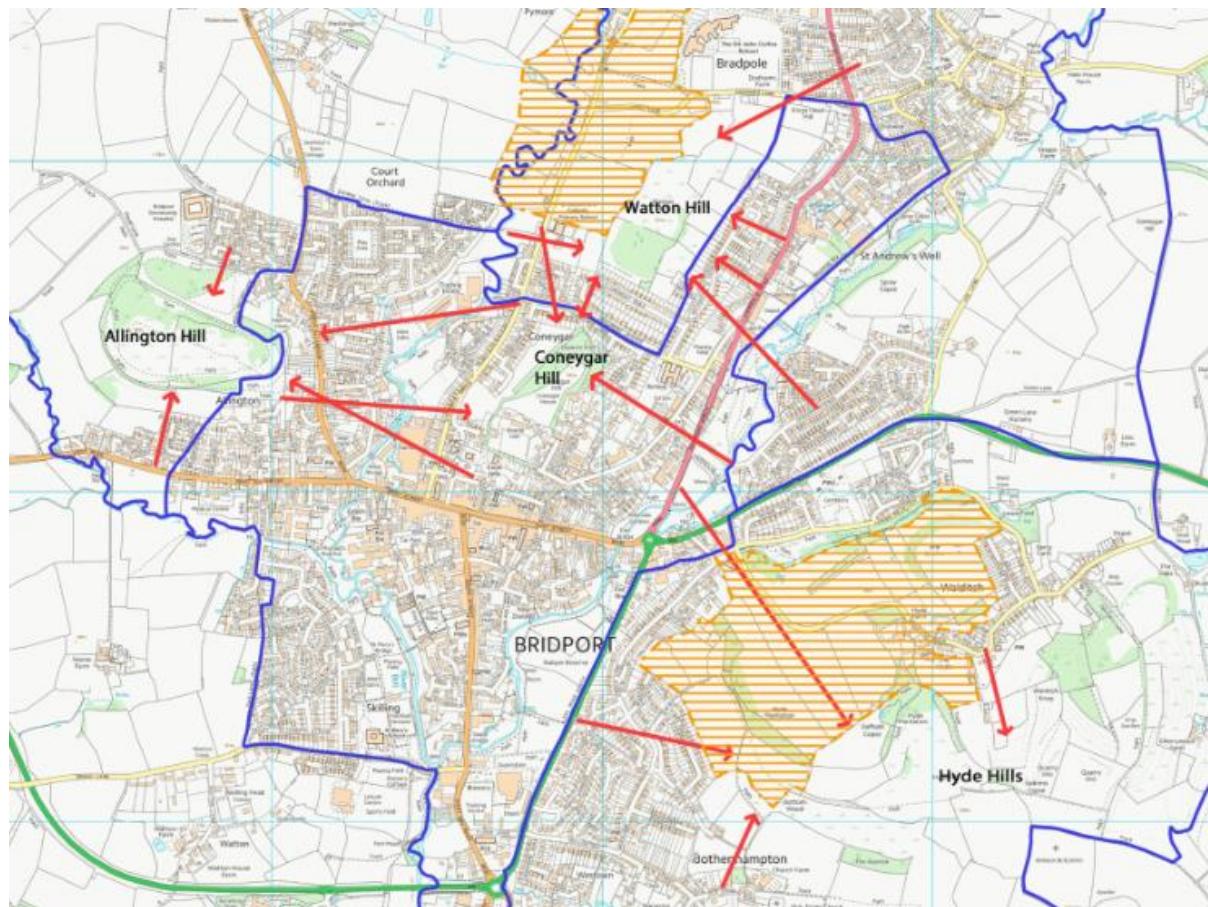
Photo 3: View from Park Road (Bridport) towards Watton Hill and Coneygar Hill, with Brit River valley in the middle distance



Views towards the hills

Local knowledge was used to walk the built-up area that today comprises the town. This was done in order to identify representative locations from where typical views could be had. From these viewpoints it is clearly possible to appreciate the setting of the town, with its distinctive hills that are characterised by undeveloped upper slopes and skylines.

The identified views have been marked on a map, using arrows to show the viewpoint (start of the arrow) and the hillside viewed (point of the arrow). It should be stressed that not every view has been marked, as this would have created a cluttered map as well as duplicating information. Rather the arrows shown are typical or representative, which nonetheless indicate how widespread such views are from within the built-up area.



B/ Local gaps between settlements

Whilst it is accepted that Bridport will grow, there is a risk that development happens in a pattern which causes it gradually to coalesce or join up with nearby small settlements. This is especially likely if the pattern of new development were to take the form of ribbon development alongside the road network. The risk is that, over time, places such as Symondsbury, Pymore and Walditch lose their countryside setting and are no longer distinct rural settlements.

The areas of countryside that lie between the greater Bridport built-up area and those settlements, irrespective of their landscape quality (though they are AONB), thus play a valuable role in preserving their distinctiveness, their identity and their rural character. They provide both a visual and a physical separation that is integral to the area's settlement pattern. They provide residents with a 'sense of place', that is less evident in areas of urban sprawl. It would not take a great deal of development in those gaps before they were eroded and it could easily come through incremental development.

Parish Plans and Village Design Statements

This point is recognised in a number of these documents. For example:

- Work on the Allington Parish Plan identified much support among residents for maintaining the rural or semi-rural character of the parish;
- The Bothenhampton Village Design Statement and Village Plan pays considerable regard to the natural setting of the parish;
- The Walditch Design Statement and Parish Plan, similarly, pays considerable regard to the natural setting of the area and highlights the views from nearby hills.

Photographic evidence

Four photographs have been taken and are presented here (overleaf) to give a basic illustration of the importance of local gaps between settlements described above.

Photo 4: View from near Walditch of green gap looking towards Bridport/Bothenhampton



Photo 5: View from Lower Walditch Lane in the green gap looking towards Walditch



Photo 6: View from near Bridport of green gap looking towards Pymore



Photo 7: View from south of Pymore of green gap looking towards Bridport



Looked at on a map there are arguably four such 'local gaps' of importance, which are those separating:

- Bridport and Pymore;
- Bradpole (Sir John Colfox School) and Pymore;
- Bothenhampton/Bridport and Walditch (e.g. Lower Walditch Lane area); and
- Bridport (West Allington) and Symondsbury.

These are shown indicatively (not accurately) on the following appended map. It could be said that there is a fifth important gap between Bridport (Skilling hill) and Higher Eype, though it is acknowledged this takes in the A35 trunk road.

Finally, it is noted that the Lodders Neighbourhood Plan (which has passed its examination) contains a policy (E1) which seeks to preserve the local gap between Lodders and Bradpole.

Environment & Heritage Working Group (BW)

Draft: 28th April 2016

Indicative map showing important local gaps between settlements

Numbering: 1 is Bothenhampton-Walditch; 2 is Bridport-Symondsbury; 3 is Bridport-Pymore; 4 is Pymore-Bradpole.

