

**Subject:** FW: Watton Gardens

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**From:** Paul Wyeth  
**Sent:** 28 July 2017 10:13  
**To:** Ann Collins  
**Cc:** Graham Cox  
**Subject:** Watton Gardens

Hello Ann,

I have visited the site and surrounds and have read Graham's response.

### **Site Sensitivity**

- The proposed site lies outside of the defined settlement boundary and within the Dorset AONB.
- The Dorset AONB landscape character assessment designates the site as being within the "Undulating River Character Area" rather than the urban settlement of Bridport.
- The settlement boundary adjacent to the site is well-defined and has a strong, linear form.
- Although located adjacent to the settlement boundary and on slightly flatter ground, the proposed site sits within a wider area of pasture and woodland on the steep-sided slopes of Watton Hill.
- In summary, the site has been assessed (in landscape and visual terms) as having high sensitivity to change.

### **Dorset AONB**

Strength of character

*This landscape is judged to have a **medium character**. The undulating, hilly landform and flat valley floor have been altered by development in parts with a loss of important landscape features around major settlements. Intrusive industrial, residential and tourist developments around the urban fringe weaken the surrounding rural character. Outside of the main settlements, the patterns of landscape elements are stronger although due to intensive farming practices, these have been lost in part.*

Condition

*Along the valley floor, some hedgerows and stone walls towards the coast have become fragmented with hedgerow trees in need of replacement. Only small patches of wet unimproved pastures have survived as large areas have been drained or turned to arable. Loss of water meadows is also an issue. Development often has a negative impact particularly around the urban fringe and in the more open and coastal areas. Poplar planting detracts from the surrounding landscape character. Overall landscape condition is judged to be **moderate and declining**.*

Relevant threats to character area:

- *There is also likely to be further pressure for new built development on the fringes of larger settlements, along the main roads as well as redevelopment of agricultural buildings to residential, amenity or industrial use.*

Relevant character area management guidelines:

- *Conserve the ancient pattern of small irregular pastoral fields and narrow lanes interspersed with irregular patches of woodland.*
- *Ensure conservation of low impact grassland.*

### **Comments**

In terms of visual impact, the proposed development sits against the existing settlement boundary on slightly sloping ground. The new property and gardens will be partially screened by existing housing to the immediate south and east. The magnitude of change to views is not anticipated to be significant.

In terms of landscape character, the proposed site sits within the Dorset AONB and outside of the defined settlement boundary. The defined settlement boundary is strong and linear in this area and the proposed development will breach this line. The setting of this precedent is likely to put development pressure on other parts of the surrounding fields. This is highlighted as a threat within the Dorset AONB landscape character assessment and the management guidelines of this character area states that these small pastoral fields should be conserved. The Dorset AONB has assessed this character area as *declining* and, therefore, additional weight should be given to the magnitude of change resulting from these proposals. With this in mind, I cannot support this proposal.

Paul

### **Paul Wyeth**

Specialist Services Manager for Dorset Council's Partnership

### **Dorset Council Partnership serving:**

North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

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