

Area North Committee – 25 September 2013

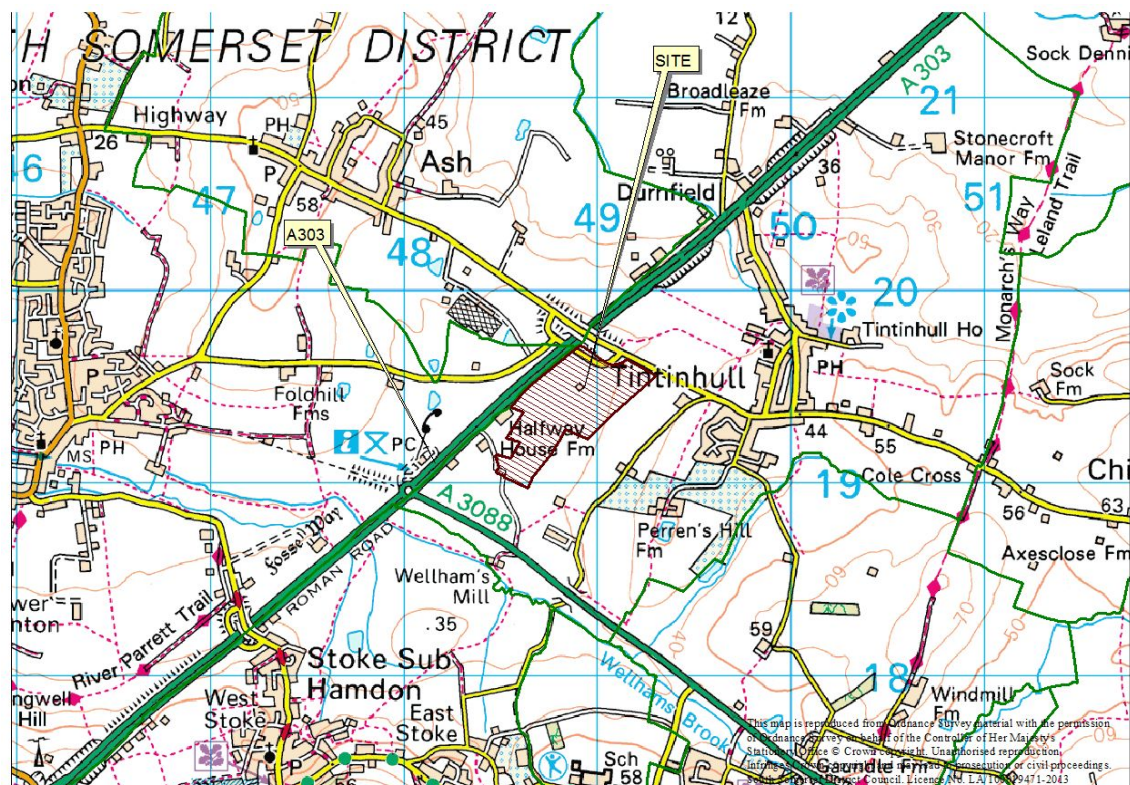
Officer Report On Planning Application: 13/02925/FUL

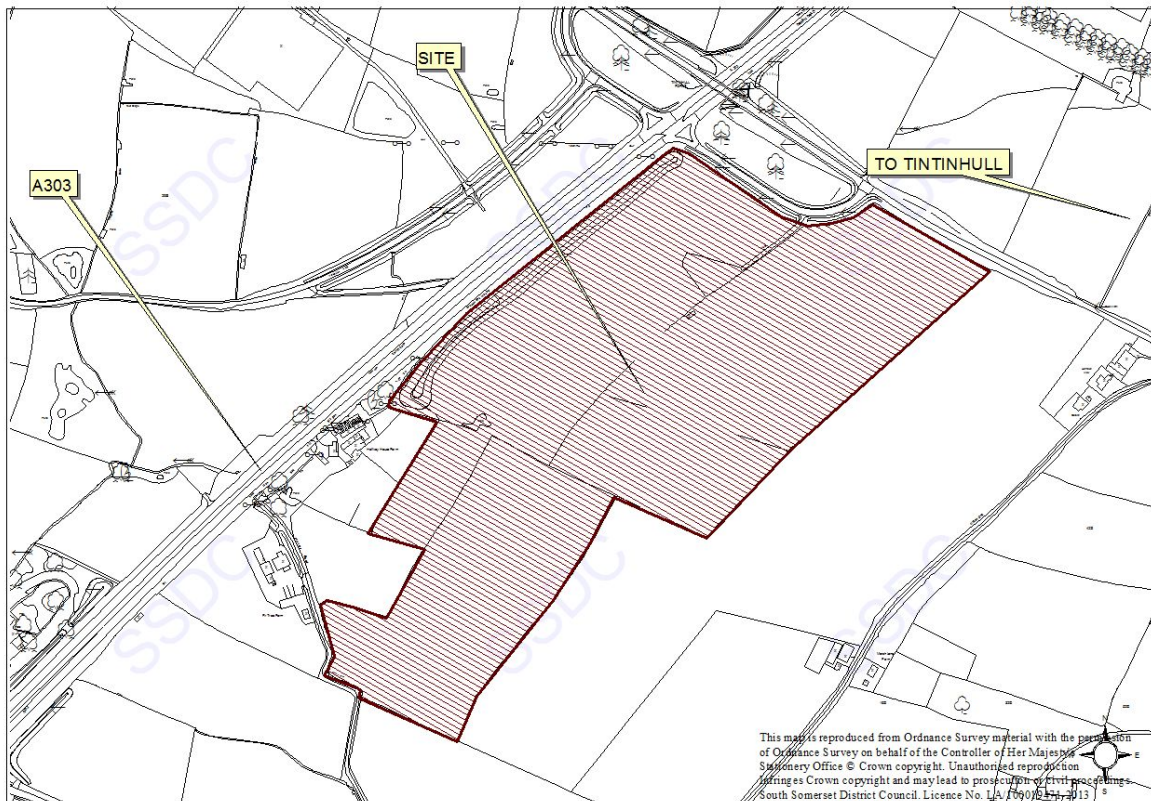
Proposal:	Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar array to provide 6 MW generation capacity together with inverter systems; transformer stations; sub-station; internal access track; landscaping; security fencing; associated access gate and removal of one Ash tree protected by Tree Preservation Order (Re-submission of previously withdrawn application) (GR:348938)
Site Address:	Land Adjacent A303 Tintinhull Forts, Tintinhull
Parish:	Tintinhull
ST MICHAELS Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr Jo Roundell Greene
Recommending Case Officer:	Lee Walton Tel: (01935) 462324 Email: lee.walton@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date:	17th October 2013
Applicant:	Luminosity Energy
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Mr Colin Virtue First Floor South Wing Equinox North Great Park Road Almondsbury. Bristol BS32 4QL
Application Type:	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This is a 'major major' application that is recommended for approval. Therefore in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation it is brought to Committee for consideration.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





This application seeks planning permission to erect a 6Mw solar farm on a site extending to 24.69 hectares to generate electricity energy to be supplied to the National Grid over a 25 year period. The site sits on agricultural land on the south side of the A303. There is an embankment planted with trees alongside the A303. The area of solar panelling is within 80m of the Halfway House (grade II listed building). The site is located within generally level ground. The proposal includes hedgerow planting and enhancement and includes areas, respectively, of open field and copse that seek to reduce further the visual impact of the site.

In detail the scheme includes:

- Installation of Photovoltaic (PV) modules laid out in arrays of rows running east to west. Each array will be mounted on a metal frame to be screwed 1 to 1.5m into the ground with the height of the installation limited to 2.2m above ground level. The distance between the rows of panels will be 8m (from centre point to centre point). There will be a total of 32,320 solar panels;
- 2m high security fence;
- Connection to the national grid is via a point south of the application site adjacent to the Cartgate link road;
- 7 Inverter cabins and transformers, the latter enclosed individually by security fencing. The cabins stand on concrete bases and measure 5.6m by 5.03m and are to be 3.5m high with flat roofs;
- Access utilises the existing field entrance point and runs centrally between the arrays.

The application is submitted with a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Ecological Assessment and Habitat Survey, Great Crested Newt Survey, Agricultural Assessment, Arboricultural Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Archaeological Assessment, Heritage Settings Assessment, Waste Audit Statement, Traffic Management Plan and Statement of Community Engagement.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

13/01409/FUL - Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar array to provide 8MW generation capacity together with inverter systems; transformer stations; sub-station; internal access track; landscaping; security fencing; associated access gate and removal of one Ash tree protected by Tree Preservation Order. Withdrawn following landscape and heritage concerns to resolve its scale and visual impacts.

12/03838/EIASS - Proposed Solar Farm. Environmental Impact Assessment not required. NOTE: It is not considered that the circumstances have changed, other than the number of solar arrays have been reduced. An EIA is not required.

06/03179/COU - Use of land for caravan storage facility. Siting of 1(no.) motor home as office/ residential use. Refused and appeal dismissed.

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 repeats the duty imposed under S54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires that decision must be made in accordance with relevant Development Plan Documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan comprises the South Somerset Local Plan (2006). The policies of most relevance to the proposal are:

EH8 - Historic Parks and Gardens
 ST3 - Development Areas
 ST5 - General Principles of Development
 ST6 - The Quality of Development
 EC1 - Protecting the Best Agricultural Land
 EC3 - Landscape Character
 EC7 - Networks of Natural Habitats
 EP3 - Light Pollution
 ME5 - Farm / Rural Diversification
 EH5 - Setting of Listed Buildings
 EH11 - Scheduled Monuments
 EH12 - Archaeology

National Planning Policy Framework:

Chapter 3 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy
 Chapter 4 - Promoting sustainable transport
 Chapter 7 - Requiring good design
 Chapter 10 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 Chapter 11- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 Chapter 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Other Guidance:

- Planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy (July 2013)
- SSDC Development Management Guidance Note: The development of large-scale Solar PV Arrays in South Somerset - Informal guidance.
- PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide
- Montacute Setting Study (February 2009) - National Trust

CONSULTATIONS

Tintinhull Parish Council:- 'Unanimously and strongly opposed to the planning application for this solar farm. All the planning violations (e.g. ST5, EC3 and EQ1) cited in our previous letter remain valid despite the attempts to reduce the visual impact. This cannot, of course, be achieved by the very nature of a solar farm needing to maximise the exposure to the sun. The solar arrays will still be wholly visible from a number of key vantage points, in particular Ham Hill and St Michaels Mount, let alone be on the doorstep of this historical village.

The collection of documents, particularly the L&VIA, attempt to play down the extensive visual impact on the surrounding rural and historical landscape and in our view are contrary to Appendix B, Table 1 (Landscape Sensitivity) which we assess as in the HIGH category, Table 3 (Magnitude of Impact) also assessed as HIGH and in particular, Table 5 (Definition of Significance of Landscape Effects) which is clearly a MAJOR ADVERSE EFFECT. We cannot contemplate a development of this scale as being anything less than being "at considerable variance with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape that cannot be mitigated for. It is likely to permanently degrade ... the integrity of valued characteristic features, elements and their setting and will cause a very high quality landscape of recognised value to be permanently changed and its quality diminished."

The statement in the Heritage Settings Assessment at para 4.46 (...result in slight detraction from the aesthetic properties of the wider agricultural landscape...) substantially under states the actual visual impact this park and its 2m high security fence would have on the rural views of the surrounding area.

It is also noted that:

- a. Para 2.25 of the Planning Statement does not reveal the failed application to use this land for a caravan storage facility. (Application no. 06/03179/COU dated 14 Sept 2006,) Permission was refused "because of its scale, nature and conspicuous setting and the likely detrimental impact on adjacent protected trees, would have an intrusive and harmful effect on the character of the landscape" and was therefore contrary to policies EC3, ST5 and ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006. (the reference at para 2.26 to the planning application for an extension to caravan storage was at Bearley Farm itself and is of no relevance to the site of the solar farm)
- b. there is still no through life management plan to maintain the land on which the solar panels would sit and the maintenance of the 6m wide buffer zone.
- c. public consultation was minimal and no further consultation has been attempted during the re-submission process.

With the tide turning against solar parks 'blighting the countryside', to quote the Liberal Democrat MP for Taunton; and the Minister for Energy and Climate Change himself warning that it must not be at any cost ...not if it rides roughshod over the views of local communities (let alone the National Trust and English Heritage), we respectfully request that this planning application be refused.'

Stoke Sub Hamdon Parish Council (adjoining parish) - 'The observations /objections are the same as for application no. 13/01409/FUL. The banks of solar panels are all south facing and at an angle of 25 degrees. These will be clearly visible from Ham Hill Country Park, and will, therefore, have a detrimental visual effect of excess light and 'industrialise' the views from the monument, St Michael's Mount and surrounding areas.'

Montacute Parish Council (adjoining parish) - 'The observations are the same as for the previous application 13/01409/FUL. It would affect visual amenity from St Michaels

Tower and Montacute House. There are also concerns about the disruption to traffic on the A303 if proposal goes ahead.'

Ash Parish Council (adjoining parish council) - state the proposal 'would be detrimental to rural amenities, would be an eyesore from Ham Hill Country Park and would reflect noise from the A303.'

Landscape Architect - considers that whilst there are some positives to be stated in relation to the low elevation of the array, and its relationship to the A303 carriageway and adjacent 'flyover' it is clear that the impact upon the historic environment remains significant. This impact is reduced to a degree by the reduction in scale of the array, and additional open space and planting within the site. The weighting is finely balanced, however, they are not persuaded that these impacts are so significantly adverse, as to provide an over-riding landscape case for refusal. NOTE: Full comments are attached at the back of this report.

English Heritage - The application should be determined in accordance with National and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your council's specialist conservation advice.

National Trust - maintains their objection. The Trust has serious concerns about the visual, landscape and heritage impacts. The Trust considers that the current proposal is too large in scale and has too high an impact on acknowledged sensitive viewpoints. The level of harm would not be outweighed by the renewable energy benefits of the proposed solar farm. NOTE: Full comments are attached at the back of this report.

Conservation Officer - considers that the mitigation measures help reduce the visual impact, although the longer views from the sensitive receptors of Ham Hill, and St Michael's Hill are not so easily mitigated, for on clear days the size of the proposal is sufficiently large-scale to draw the eye, to detract from the historic prospect. While the conservation officer considers the impact on the historic environment remains significant this is not to such a degree that the application is recommended for refusal. NOTE: Full comments are attached at the back of this report.

Ham Hill Countryside Team at SSDC - The solar park is clearly visible and due to the scale of the proposal would be a significant change to the current landscape view. The country park is a very heavily used recreational site. The view from (the war memorial) is stunning and greatly valued by all visitors. It is fair to say that the proposed solar farm would have a large visual impact from the most popular view point on site. As such a large new development would have quite a domineering impact on the panoramic views. NOTE: Full comments are attached at the back of this report.

Natural England - makes general comments including no objection based on the information available that it is unlikely to affect any statutorily protected sites or landscapes, and no effect on great crested newts.

Council's Ecologist - further surveys of great crested newt have concluded that it's unlikely to be present on the site and consequently no constraints nor mitigation are required for this. I have no further comments.

Somerset Wildlife - supports the recommendations made in the Ecological Assessment and Habitat Survey, and Great Crested Newt Survey.

Tree Officer - No objections to the proposal, subject to the implementation of suitable tree and hedgerow protection measures. If consent is granted I suggest a condition to

cover tree planting and protection of existing trees.

County Highways - No objections.

Highways Agency - No objections.

Ministry of Defence - No safeguarding objection.

County Archaeology - No comments.

Environment Agency - raise no objection, subject to conditioning works to be undertaken in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment.

Area Engineer - No comment. (OFFICER Note: In their response to the previously withdrawn application the engineer observed: The first thing we need to recognise is that we can't, as planning authority, require a developer to deal with an existing flooding problem; we can only require that he takes full account of it and doesn't make it any worse. We need to look at the development proposals and assess if they deal with this satisfactorily.

Rainfall landing on the panels will drain to the lower edge and then onto the ground where it will dissipate over the 3m gap between the rows of panels and under the next row of panels. The proposed gravel access track will serve to assist in the infiltration process and the introduction of swales will further add to this process.

The introduction of swales (broad drainage channels to collect surface run-off and maximise infiltration) is seen as a positive measure to reduce run-off from the site and could well improve things from the existing situation. Just to clarify the situation regarding the proposed swale near Halfway House Farm, what the two plans show is that, although the existing ditch draining away from the pond goes in a north westerly direction, the proposed swale to intercept run-off will be a separate channel running parallel with the ditch but in the opposite direction draining towards the pond. This is perfectly feasible as the ground level here is relatively flat.)

Climate Change Officer - No objections. If approved, this installation will provide just over 0.71% of South Somerset's total annual electrical requirement. The development has the potential to supply the equivalent of 8% of Yeovil's household electrical demand over the course of a year.

Environmental Health - No observations.

Police Architectural Liaison Officer - Generally solar parks are situated in a rural setting and isolated. This particular site is close to the A303 which would provide easy access and egress from the site. The crime generated due the high cost of precious metals is still very prevalent in the rural setting and the attraction to a solar park situated in an isolated position will add to this problem. Sites of this nature are seldom illuminated or guarded.

The provision of a welded metal fence around the site is welcome (Preferred minimum standard BS 1722) as a deterrent to casual intrusion however the fence lines are generally hidden by hedgerow, giving cover to the criminal. If this fencing is not supported by a 'Perimeter Intrusion Detection System (PIDS) and a CCTV system supported with infra-red for low light conditions it allows a motivated intruder to have ample opportunity to attack the site with little fear of discovery.

REPRESENTATIONS

10 neighbour objections have been received, concerned with:

- Drainage, surface water run-off, flood risk
- Too large - very prominent and it will be visible from Ham Hill, Montacute House and St Michaels Tower, which are important tourist destinations which bring in much needed funds into the local economy.
- Impacts on our landscape and our enjoyment of it
- Setting of Listed Building
- Visible from bridge over A303
- Close to the size of Tintinhull village
- Glare problems
- Potential loss of hedging and mature trees
- Removal of the one protected Ash tree on site
- Solar farms should be located only on brown field sites or industrial buildings
- Blight on open countryside, loss of visual amenity
- A blot on the otherwise unspoilt landscape
- Extremely large and would be a considerable 'eyesore'
- Effect on the March Lane Travellers site
- Loss of wildlife
- Impact on foot path
- Fencing represents an alien urbanisation
- Impact on archaeology
- Increased criminal activity as outlined by the Avon and Somerset Police response
- Incorrect use of prime agricultural land
- Orphaning of productive land
- Lacks a viable agricultural plan
- Distraction of traffic passing over the A303

CONSIDERATION

The Principle of Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local authorities should have a positive strategy to promote energy for renewable and low carbon sources, and design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts. The expectation should always be that an application should be approved if the impact is (or can be made) acceptable (para.98 of the NPPF). The recently published 'planning policy guidance for renewable and low carbon energy' (PPG) (July, 2013) states 'the need for renewable energy (does not) automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities' (para.5). It (para.8) also states that there are 'no hard and fast rules' for locating solar farms.

The NPPF (paragraph 112) and local plan policy EC1 consider the best and most versatile agricultural land. Objections from local residents are also concerned by the "industrialisation" of Grade 3 agricultural land. While it might be preferable for brown field sites to be considered before green field agricultural land there is no requirement for developers to consider brown field sites in the first instant or apply, notwithstanding SSDC's guidance, any sort of sequential test as to the optimum site from a land use or landscape point of view. Para.27 of the PPG states that: 'if a proposal does involve greenfield land that it allows for continued agricultural use and/ or encourages biodiversity improvements around the arrays.'

The proposal seeks the installation of PV panels in arrays supported on metal posts driven into the ground allowing the ground beneath to grass over and be used for low-level grazing. The land would remain available to agriculture. Further, any permission would be for a long-term but temporary basis for a period of 25-years. A condition can be imposed to require the site's restoration following cessation of its approved use should the site become redundant; and on this basis the principle of the use of this agricultural land for the purpose of a solar farm is considered acceptable. Accordingly the main considerations for this application relate to landscape character and visual amenity, the impact on heritage assets and their settings, drainage and flood risk, highway safety, and neighbour amenity.

Landscape character and visual amenity

While there is no designated AONB, the landscape is given further consideration under local plan policies EC3 and ST5 that accord with the NPPF and the need to safeguard the environment. These policies seek to ensure development respects the form, character and setting of the locality and avoids forms whose visual profiles would be out-of-keeping with, and uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape when viewed from publicly accessible vantage points.

The PPG states (para.26) that deployment of large scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment. Equally, para.28 (PPG) states that proposals for ground-mounted solar panels, pending effective screening and appropriate land topography, might have a zone of visual influence that could be zero. The balancing considerations include identifying impacts on landscape, direct and indirect effects, cumulative impacts and temporary and permanent impacts. In assessing the significance of impacts the sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource, and the magnitude or size of the predicted change (para. 42 of the PPG, July 2013) require further consideration. Para.41 (PPG) requires not only that key viewpoints are identified but that the people who experience the views and the nature of the views are also established.

Ham Hill country park includes the alignment of the Monarchs Way and enjoys general public access with views over the application site that is part of a much wider panorama. The country park attracts significant numbers of visitors with the great majority visiting the war memorial as a central focus for their visit. The view from this high point is stunning and greatly valued. Objectors consider the proposal would be a significant change. Further, the photomontages prepared by the applicant are alleged predominantly to have been taken on dull days in contrast to brighter occasions that would have a quite different impact. This is also observed in the Landscape Officer's response. Equally, objectors consider the plant screening, especially as viewed from the bridge over the A303 will take many years to fully develop with, therefore, no straightforward screening for years to come.

The Landscape Officer's response is generally favourable to the proposal, having offered pre-application advice following withdrawal of the previous application. Their comments give emphasis to government guidance that is supportive of the provision of renewable energy sources. The Council's Landscape Officer considers there would be views of the site but that the mitigating circumstances of planting and leaving part of the land unencumbered by the presence of solar arrays to a large extent would address concerns to the effect that the concern of a 'moderate impact' is reduced to slight. The landscape officer disagrees with the applicant's conclusion that the proposal is 'negligible' but given the relative flatness of the site and mostly distant views the proposal does not warrant refusal.

Impact on Heritage Assets and their Settings:

While the conservation manager considers the impact upon the historic environment remains significant, he also considers that the mitigating factors of additional planting and the presence of open land within the site has the effect of reducing the impact of the proposal. The National Trust remains concerned about the scale and views from and to St Michael's Mount, while the conservation manager also accepts that the longer views are not so easily mitigated. The view(s) from the War Memorial (and elsewhere within the Ham Hill Fort grounds) would overlook the solar farm, while it is argued that the surrounding landscape helps to preserve the hill fort in its appropriate heritage context.

Careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms within the setting of heritage assets that may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset(s). In this case, while the conservation manager concludes that it is clear that the impact upon the historic environment remains significant, this refers to the less substantial impact referred to in para.133 of the NPPF, rather than an outright refusal of substantial harm. The approach taken by para.135 (NPPF) (less substantial harm) requires a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss. Less substantial harm is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including mitigating factors. Distance plays a part, but so does the local context including factors such as topography, the local environment and nearby land uses (para.16 PPG). The conservation manager is of the opinion that while there is a significant impact upon the historic environment, this does not warrant refusal on heritage grounds.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The Council's Area Engineer in considering the neighbour objections remains of the opinion that the development does not exacerbate the current flood risk. This is the opinion of the Environment Agency who require a planning condition to ensure the details of the submitted Flood Risk Assessment are undertaken and maintained over the lifetime of the development.

Highway Safety

No highway objection is made to the use of the existing access point just off the feeder road onto and from the junction with the A303.

Neighbour Amenity:

The nearest neighbours are the occupants at Halfway House. It is considered that the proposal would not unacceptably harm the residential amenity of occupiers.

Neighbour and Parish Council concerns:

All responses have been fully considered and mostly referred to within the relevant sub-headings of this report. Other concerns otherwise not already referred to include the footpath crossing the site to Halfway House. This is referred to by objectors as having been used by customers of the London bus service stopping at Cartgate services. The District's Rights of Way Officer has verbally observed on the basis of the latest comments that the planning application can continue to be determined. Any evidence that the route has been used for more than 20 years can be dealt with separately by him.

The previously refused caravan storage facility was considered under the appropriate planning policies at the time, while the current application has the benefit of the NPPF and the support given to sustainable energy, albeit balancing all other planning concerns.

The alleged lack of public consultation by the applicant with the local community is noted, but this is not a reason to warrant refusal of an application.

The County Archaeologist does not require a condition for further investigation of the site.

Benefits:

There is strong national support for renewable energy schemes. The NPPF makes it clear that local authorities should adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to approve proposals should their impacts be acceptable.

The Council's Climate Change Mitigation Officer reports that the development has the potential to supply the equivalent of 8% of Yeovil's household electricity demand over for course of a year. Paragraph 98 of the NPPF indicates even small-scale projects should be recognised as providing a valuable contribution.

Other Matters:

There are no details provided for external lighting or CCTV facilities and while these when well managed are considered would not unreasonably intrude their control is desirable and a planning condition is proposed that withdraws permitted development rights.

Conclusion:

Core principles of planning, as set out in the NPPF include encouraging the use of renewable resources as well as recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the desirability of protecting the historic environment.

The proposal would make an important contribution to meeting renewable energy targets. Meanwhile the visual impact on landscape character, combined with the impact on nearby heritage assets gives rise to a level of harm. However, the location, its proximity to nearby heritage assets, the distances involved and the perceived level of overlooking are mitigating factors. Notwithstanding concerns that the site would be more dominant and exposed to view on brighter days, this has the potential for the proposal to come close to a refusal, but on balance the proposal is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant permission.

Justification

The solar farm, by reason of its size, scale, use of materials, the layout within the site and use made of planting, respects the character of the area and causes no demonstrable harm to rural character, visual amenity and the character and setting of heritage assets in accordance with the aims and objectives of policies EC3, ST5, EH5 and EH11 of the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted April 2006) and NPPF (2012), and Planning Policy Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (July 2013).

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

01. The installation of the photovoltaic arrays hereby permitted shall be installed before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: BS8130304_01 Rev P4, _02 Rev P4 and _03 Rev P2; ES10-0190-1.1; ALL-100; INV-001; and 1680-001 received 18 July 2013.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

03. Prior to the commencement of the development, associated site vegetation clearance, demolition of existing structures, ground-works, heavy machinery entering site or the on-site storage of materials, a scheme of tree & shrub planting, a tree protection plan and an arboricultural method statement relating to all retained trees on or adjoining the site, shall be prepared so as to conform with Paragraphs 5.5, 5.6, 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3 of British Standard 5837:2012 - Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. The tree planting scheme, the tree protection plan and the arboricultural method statement details shall then be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Council and shall include the following details:

- A scheme of new tree & shrub planting detailing the size, locations, species and timing of planting and;
- the installation specification and locations of protective fencing and ground protection measures clearly detailed upon a tree protection plan and;
- details of special tree protection and engineering measures for any required installations of built structures, below-ground services and hard surfacing within the root protection areas of retained trees and;
- a requirement for a pre-commencement site meeting to be held between the appointed building contractors, the appointed arboricultural consultant and the Council's Tree Officer;
- Upon approval by the Council, the measures specified within the agreed scheme of new tree planting, the tree protection plan and the arboricultural method statement shall be implemented in their entirety for the duration of the construction of the development, inclusive of landscaping measures.

Reason: To secure the planting of new trees and to preserve the health, structure and amenity value of existing trees in accordance with the objectives within Policy ST6 (The Quality of Development) of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006, those statutory duties as defined within the Town & Country Planning Act, 1990 (as amended) [1] and the Town & Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.

04. The solar panels and associated structures and equipment, hereby permitted, shall be for a limited period of 25 years from the date of this decision. At the end of this period or upon cessation of their use for generating electricity, whichever is the sooner all associated structures and equipment shall be fully removed from the application site and the site cleared. Within 3 months of clearance the land shall be restored to its former agricultural condition in accordance with a scheme of works to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the panels do not remain permanently on site to protect the amenity of the area in accordance with Policy ST5, EH8 and EC3 of the South Somerset Local Plan and Chapters 10 and of the NPPF.

05. Prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan for the site shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Particulars shall include:

- a) A site and vegetation management proposal;

- b) Confirmation of any proposal to grass-seed the land, and its intended management;
- c) A detailed planting plan, with implementation timed to correspond with the timing of the array's construction (the planting specification should include an element of semi-mature planting along the north edge of the field by the A303, to assist immediate screening);
- d) Bio-diversity improvements and land management, including implementation of recommendations 6.3.11, 7.1.3 and 7.1.4, and 7.1.6 to 7.1.9 (inclusive) of the Great Crested Newt Survey, and 6.2.3 to 6.2.7 (inclusive) of the Ecological Survey to be undertaken on site as part of the approved development.

All planting, seeding, turfing or earth moulding comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the land or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interests of nature conservation, landscape character and visual amenity further to policies EC3, ST5 and EC8 of the South Somerset Local Plan and the NPPF.

06. The development hereby permitted by this planning application shall only be undertaken in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment, including the following measures detailed within the Flood Risk Assessment:
1. All access routes are permeable;
 2. Swale features are installed prior to any other construction works associated with the proposed development;
 3. All surface water drainage features are maintained appropriately over the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure that increased surface water runoff from the proposed development is managed appropriately during the construction phase and the subsequent operation of the site.

07. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), there shall be no external lighting or closed circuit television cameras erected or otherwise installed on site unless details have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of landscape character and visual appearance further to policies EC3 and ST5 of the South Somerset Local Plan and the NPPF.

Informatives:

01. You are reminded of the comments made by the Environment Agency dated 6 September 2013 that are also available on the council's web-site under planning permission ref: 13/02925/FUL.

Conservation Consultation Response

To : Lee Walton
From : Adron Duckworth, Conservation Manager
Date : 3 Sept 2013

Application Ref : 13/02925 - land S of Tintinhull Forts, Tintinhull

Robert Archer's advice (16.8.13) addressed not only specific landscape impact alone but also historic environment impacts as well and thus constitutes a Conservation Team response to your consultation.

The historic environment issues are impacts upon

- i) Grade 2 listed Halfway House,
- ii) the setting of SAMs at St Michael's Hill and Ham Hill and
- iii) the affect upon the historic landscape shown in the Stuckley view of these hills dated 1723

Robert's advice is -

For point i) Sufficient mitigation is proposed to protect the setting of Halfway House. For point ii) As he says, *'longer views from the sensitive receptors of Ham Hill, and St Michael's Hill are not so easily mitigated, for on clear days the size of the proposal is sufficiently large-scale to draw the eye, to detract from the historic prospect. This issue has also been discussed with the applicant, and in addition to the mitigation noted above, an open area of land within the southern third of the array site is now incorporated, to break up potential massing effects in a location that was both open to, and closer to these receptors. This is effective to a degree, and whilst I consider the visual impact to remain adverse, I agree it to be lessened by this modified proposal.'*

For point iii) He says *'Whilst I do not agree the submitted heritage assessment that impact will be negligible, I no longer view it as 'major adverse' and agree that a moderate impact will reduce to slight with effective planting mitigation.'*

To summarise, Robert's response covers both historic environment as well as broader landscape issues: *' whilst there are some positives to be stated in relation to the low elevation of the array, and its relationship to the A303 carriageway and adjacent 'flyover' it is clear that the impact upon the historic environment remains significant.'*

Adron Duckworth Conservation Manager

Phone 01935 462 652

Email adron.duckworth@southsomerset.gov.uk

Dear Lee

Thank you for confirming the re submission of the Solar Farm application at Tintinhull Forts. After a further discussion with Friends of Ham Hill Community group the stance of both the countryside ranger team and Friends Group is as before.

The Countryside Team at SSDC own or have management responsibility for all the land at Ham Hill Country Park, and although we support the idea of sustainable energy we would ask that in this case careful consideration be given due to the size of the application at Tintinhull Forts.

I attach here an image taken from the war memorial on Ham Hill. The location of the solar park is clearly visible and due to the scale of the proposal would be a significant change to the current landscape view. The country park is a very heavily used recreational site, it includes 4 regional trails, multiple PRow and CROW Access land. Hundreds of thousands of visitors come to site each year and a great majority visit the war memorial as a central focus for their visit. The view from this high point is stunning and greatly valued by all visitors and indeed is one of the reasons that Hamdon Hill is the largest Iron Age hillfort in Europe (SAM 100) being in such a clear and defensible position. It is fair to say that the proposed solar farm would have a large visual impact from the most popular view point on site, as such a large new development would have quite a domineering impact on the panoramic views. I note Rob Archer's comments about SSDC's landscape criteria in its guidance notes for PV installations, particularly point 3, Visual Impact - the array should be sited to limit its visual profile, with minimal overlooking from sensitive public vantage points.

We have discussed the proposal with both the Friends of Ham Hill Community Group and the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group and both groups expressed concerns about the development and will submit their own comments.

I would ask that the importance of the view from Ham Hill being taken into careful consideration with this application, it is the reason many people visit us today, and the protection of the view helps to preserve the hillfort in its appropriate heritage context.

Regards
Katy

Katy Menday
Countryside Manager SSDC
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Follow us on Twitter @SSDCCountryside

Conservation Consultation Response - Landscape

TO: Lee Walton
FROM: Robert Archer
DATE: 16 August 2013

APPLICATION: 13/02925 - land S of Tintinhull Forts, Tintinhull

Lee, I have reviewed the resubmitted application and its associated documentation which seeks to construct a PV solar array on land circa 24.69ha to the south of the A303/Ash-Tintinhull road interchange, and circa 0.5km from Tintinhull village edge. I have previously visited the site, and am familiar with its wider landscape context. I also recollect discussions held with the applicant prior to the withdrawal of the previous application, and note the changes made to the layout as an outcome of those discussions.

Looking comparatively at the proposals, it is apparent that the scale of this revised layout remains substantial. However, the amendments to the layout indicate a positive response to the major landscape impacts, by (i) reducing the extent of the array immediately visible from the historic viewpoint adj Tintinhull Forts, and (ii) breaking up the mass of the array as viewed from Ham Hill and St Michaels Hill. I will comment further on these issues later.

(1) SSDC has published a guidance note relating to PV installations, to assist both developers and planners. In relation to siting, it advises that array proposals on 'greenfield' sites are preferably located to express a relationship with existing development presence.

It is noted that the major carriageway of the A303 that runs alongside the site's NW boundary, and the close proximity of the 'flyover' and its embankment, are significant engineered features, to which this proposal lays adjacent for part of its length. Whilst a relationship with other development form is tenuous, the close proximity of this major transport infrastructure provides a form of development anchor for part of the proposal. Its southward extension does not benefit from such a relationship, but is now reduced in scale, and shares the same general context as the main site area.

(2) With regard to potential landscape character impact, the application's L&VIA sets out the general landscape character of this area with reference to national studies, before assessing the impact of a potential array upon the immediate context. It considers the local landscape to be capable of absorbing an array, due to the strong tree and hedgerow structure, both surrounding the site, and providing a wider context for site assimilation.

The array is proposed to lay within four arable fields that are typical of the scale of the local fields that characterise this part of the lowland vale. These fields are primarily defined by managed hedgerows that broadly correspond to a rectilinear 'enclosure' pattern. The bounding hedgerows offer a degree of enclosure, with the A303 roadside field hedges particularly robust in containing the site, which goes some way toward enabling the site's assimilation into the wider landscape pattern. Also to advantage is the relatively flat topography of the valley floor, which enables the array to nestle in the base of the vale; and the close proximity of the A303 corridor, which as noted earlier, provides a form of development context. Hence in this respect, I would concur with the L&VIA, that the character of this local landscape appears capable of absorbing an array.

That is not to say that landscape character impacts are satisfied however. An array covering circa 80% of a 24.69 ha. site is clearly a substantial area, comparable in part only to the large open farmland to the SE, but in the main much larger than the surrounding fields, and over-scaled relative to adjacent holdings and paddocks. Its expression of panel forms within security fencing can be viewed as being 'industrial' in character. Such character is in most part at variance with this landscape setting, which has a predominant sense of rural character as expressed by the pattern and strength of the hedgerow network; tree lines, small villages and farmland.

(3) The historic environment, and heritage assets within it, are also significant factors in the assessment of this array. Laying alongside the A303 and inside the north extent of the array is Halfway Farm (listed). The setting of this farm building group is that of the historic Fosse Way (now in dualled form) to the northwest, whilst open farmland characterises its setting and outlook to east and south. Whilst the immediate paddocks adjacent Halfway Farm remain open, these in turn would be enclosed to NE and S by the array, although the new layout no longer fully encloses the site, and hedgerows intervene. Hence there will be an adverse impact upon the setting of the listed complex, though it is not noted as significant by the heritage assessment.

When assessing the previous application, I made reference to a setting study of the grade 1 listed historic park and garden (HP&G) of Montacute House. That study found (i) land extending W to the Fosse Way, and N to Tintinhull Forts lays within the wider setting of Montacute HP&G, and (ii) the view from Tintinhull Forts is recorded as the 'earliest historic view' of St Michaels Hill, famously based upon the antiquarian William Stuckley's sketch of 1723. The proposed array lays within the defined 'wider' setting, and intercedes in the foreground of the historic view, to significantly change the character of that view. We have discussed this view – which broadly corresponds to that seen from the flyover bridge - with the applicant, and raised issues of its sensitivity. As a consequence, this application removes PVs from the northern field – the foreground field as viewed from the bridge – and intends planting to screen the prospect of the remainder of the site. Whilst I do not agree the submitted heritage assessment that impact will be negligible, I no longer view it as 'major adverse' and agree that a moderate impact will reduce to slight with effective planting mitigation.

(4) The relatively flat topography of the site potentially enables the proposed array to nestle in the base of the vale, which will assist in reducing the number of low-level views into the site. The L&VIA notes that many of the closer views of the site are partial and low-trajectory, and often disrupted by intervening hedges to thus limit public prospect. The L&VIA also proposes mitigation, in the form of a new native-species hedge boundaries to break-up the mass of the array, and a raising of the hedge height, to thus reduce any potential visibility. It now also proposes to break up the mass of the array, by leaving an area unplanted within the site.

I agree these mitigation proposals to be both appropriate and necessary, to reduce the potential visual impact upon receptors at low elevation in close proximity of the site. However, longer views from the sensitive receptors of Ham Hill, and St Michael's Hill are not so easily mitigated, for on clear days the size of the proposal is sufficiently large-scale to draw the eye, to detract from the historic prospect. This issue has also been discussed with the applicant, and in addition to the mitigation noted above, an open area of land within the southern third of the array site is now incorporated, to break up potential massing effects in a location that was both open to, and closer to these receptors. This is effective to a degree, and whilst I consider the visual impact to remain adverse, I agree it to be lessened by this modified proposal.

(5) Cognisant of the number and location of PV array applications submitted to date within the district, in this instance it is clear that cumulative impact is not an issue with this application.

5) Turning to site detail, I note that the height of the array is stated as being 2.2m whilst a weldmesh fence surround of circa 2.0 m height is cited. No site levelling works are intended, and PV mounting is limited to a fixed racking system with its toes driven into the ground without need for concrete, and I view this as a positive approach. I have not seen a proposal for the field surface to be seeded as grassland, or its form of management, it may be such proposals lay within non-landscape documents, otherwise this is an omission. Neither is there a detailed landscape proposal, although the drawing BRS 4217-08 RevB indicates a landscape strategy with which I concur, hence could be used as a basis to a detailed scheme.

To summarise the landscape response, whilst there are some positives to be stated in relation to the low elevation of the array, and its relationship to the A303 carriageway and adjacent 'flyover' it is clear that the impact upon the historic environment remains significant. This impact is reduced to a degree by the reduction in scale of the array, and additional open space and planting within the site. I am also mindful that government guidance is heavily weighted in favour of renewables, yet the NPPF and our local policies also support the protection of the historic environment. So the weighting is finely balanced. Clearly, an array in this location will bring about change, and landscape and visual

impact will occur. To that end, local plan policies supporting the conservation and enhancement of landscape character in the face of landscape impact could be called upon to refuse this proposal. However, I am not persuaded that these impacts are so significantly adverse, as to provide an overriding landscape case for refusal.

Should you be inclined to recommend approval, could you first clarify;

- a) Detail of potential security measures;
- b) Method and location of grid connection, and;
- c) confirmation of any proposal to grass-seed the land, and its intended management;

and condition;

- d) a site and vegetation management proposal, and;
- e) a detailed planting plan, to be submitted for approval pre-commencement, with implementation timed to correspond with the timing of the array's construction. As discussed with the applicant, the planting spec should include an element of semi-mature planting along the north edge of the field by the A303, to assist immediate screening.

Finally, during the pre-app correspondence leading up to this re-submission, the applicant produced revised photomontage of the proposals as seen from sensitive viewing points, to assist evaluation. I have not seen these within this submission, could you please request their inclusion, to present to others the likely visual effects of this revised scheme.

Robert Archer
Landscape Architect

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e-mail: robert.archer@southsomerset.gov.uk

13/02925FUL

Dear Mr Walton

Thanks for your email.

In short, we're not intending to add to our detailed comments made in the last application.

We would request that the Council takes into account those previous concerns when assessing the current application.

Regards

Mark Funnell
Planning Adviser
National Trust, Eastleigh Court, Wiltshire
Tel 01985 843550
Mob 07818 402485



**National
Trust**

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Your ref: 13/01409/FUL
Our ref: MF/

20 May 2013

FAO Lee Walton
South Somerset District Council
Brympton Way
Yeovil
Somerset
BA20 2HT

S.SOM.DC
24 MAY 2013
POSTROOM

Dear Sir/Madam

**PROPOSED 8 MW SOLAR FARM
Land Adjacent A303 Tintinhull Forts, Tintinhull, Yeovil**

The National Trust owns Montacute House and St Michael's Hill to the south of the proposed development site, along with Tintinhull House and Gardens to the east. The Trust has a statutory duty under the National Trust Acts to promote the conservation of places of historic interest and natural beauty.

The Trust is also committed to the transition to more sustainable forms of energy generation, as both a producer and consumer in the energy system. However, whilst it supports a major increase in renewable energy generation, it also believes that each development proposal should be located, designed and on a scale that avoids compromising the special qualities of its locality.

In terms of the proposal at hand, the Trust has serious concerns about the visual, landscape and heritage impacts of the proposed development, in particular with regard to views from St Michael's Hill, and the view from Tintinhull Forts towards St Michael's Hill. This relates to the wider historic landscape setting of Montacute and St Michael's Hill, which was the subject of the *Montacute Setting Study (February 2009)* – see extracts attached.

The Setting Study sets out the conservation designations at Montacute (Figure 2) and the identified setting of Montacute (Figure 9). It states that: "The surrounding rural landscape of farmland, woodland and pasture contribute to the registered landscape", including "physically framing the designed landscape" (section 7.1). It considers that: "The wider setting is sensitive to larger scale changes in the character of the landscape" (section 6.4).

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In terms of specific sensitive viewpoints, the Setting Study notes that there are “many historic views and vistas”, and goes on to assess their significance and character, and issues and sensitivity. The view from St Michael’s Hill is covered in Figure 7 and under ‘Viewpoint 14’, whilst the view towards St Michael’s Hill from Tintinhull Forts is dealt with under ‘Viewpoint 1’.

View from St Michael’s Hill

Montacute Setting Study viewpoint 14 / Pegasus Environmental viewpoint 12

St Michael’s Hill comprises a conical hill with an eighteenth century lookout tower (grade II listed) and the remains of a motte and bailey castle (scheduled monument). It is accessed by public rights of way including two long distance footpaths – Monarch’s Way and Leland Trail – and provides panoramic views across the South Somerset countryside.

The Setting Study refers to the “key historic viewpoint” from the top of the lookout tower, and notes that the views are predominantly rural in character, with that to the north dominated by agricultural land. It states that: “The elevated nature of the views means that any development in the landscape could have an impact, although the scale of any impact should decline rapidly with increasing distance from the hill”.

The Pegasus landscape and visual impact assessment concludes that: “On a clear day, receptors may have distant views of the Development Site, partially screened by intervening vegetation”. It suggests that there would be a “minor change in the view”, and that the proposed landscaping would break up views to the site. It considers the sensitivity of this receptor to be “high”; rates the magnitude of impact as “low”; and the likely significance of effect as “moderate adverse”.

Based on a site visit to St Michael’s Hill, it is evident that there are views of the application site on partially cloudy days as well as “on a clear day”. The attached, annotated photographs illustrate the view towards the application site and its maximum horizontal extent in the landscape. The scale and extent of the proposed solar farm mean that it is likely to form a dominant new addition to the landscape scene when looking north and north east from the hill and its tower.

A viewer may for example take in the distant view towards Glastonbury Tor, and then pan westwards towards the Somerset coast. Aside from scattered houses, settlements and farm buildings, a noticeable feature in the landscape are the nursery buildings to the west of Tintinhull Forts (as annotated). However, the proposed solar farm, albeit lying low in the landscape, would take up a considerably greater horizontal extent.

It is this sheer scale that is of most concern. Even with existing and proposed landscaping to break up the views, the extent of the land covered by solar panels is still likely to be all too apparent – and indeed visually intrusive – from the perspective of visitors looking out from the hill. On this basis the magnitude of impact and likely significance of effect may well end up greater than the Pegasus report predicts.

View from Tintinhull Forts and Fosse Way

Montacute Setting Study viewpoint 1 / Pegasus viewpoint 6

Tintinhull Forts describes the juncture where the Roman road (Fosse Way) crosses that from Yeovil. Today, it is dominated by the A303 dual carriageway and the bridge over the dual carriageway that leads to Tintinhull village and also to the Trust's property Tintinhull House.

The Setting Study records this as the "earliest historic view" of St Michael's Hill. This is based on the antiquarian William Stukeley's drawing from this point towards "the distinctive landscape panorama formed by the three hills of St Michael's, Hedgecock and Ham". The Study comments that the "surrounding landscape is characterised by farmland, woodland and mature field boundary trees". It notes that this distinctive landform is still visible today, and that various possible alterations to the foreground view represent a particular threat.

The Pegasus assessment concludes as follows: "Receptors will have elevated, direct views of solar panels and associated infrastructure including inverters and a substation. The proposed development will introduce built infrastructure into views of a largely rural landscape with a number of urban elements, including the A303 which is a major element within the view. There is like to be a major change in the view, the proposed development is likely to become a dominant feature and cause a noticeable deterioration in views from this receptor. The sensitivity of this receptor is considered to be low. The magnitude of impact will be high. The likely significance of effect is therefore considered to be moderate adverse".

In response to the above, the A303 can be seen to represent a rather more modern – and larger scale – version of Fosse Way, but it is considered that the view there onwards is an entirely a rural view. The very dominant and industrial scale feature taking up a large extent of the foreground would be the proposed solar farm, complete with boundary security fencing. Given that this is the earliest historic view of St Michael's Hill, the sensitivity of this receptor is considered to be high, and the significance of effect major adverse.

In conclusion, whilst clearly the Somerset landscape can accommodate some degree of solar farm development, as stated earlier, this should be of the right scale and location. The Trust considers that the current proposal is too large in scale and has too high an impact on acknowledged sensitive viewpoints. The level of harm would not be outweighed by the renewable energy benefits of the proposed solar farm. Accordingly, the Trust objects to the proposed development.

Yours faithfully



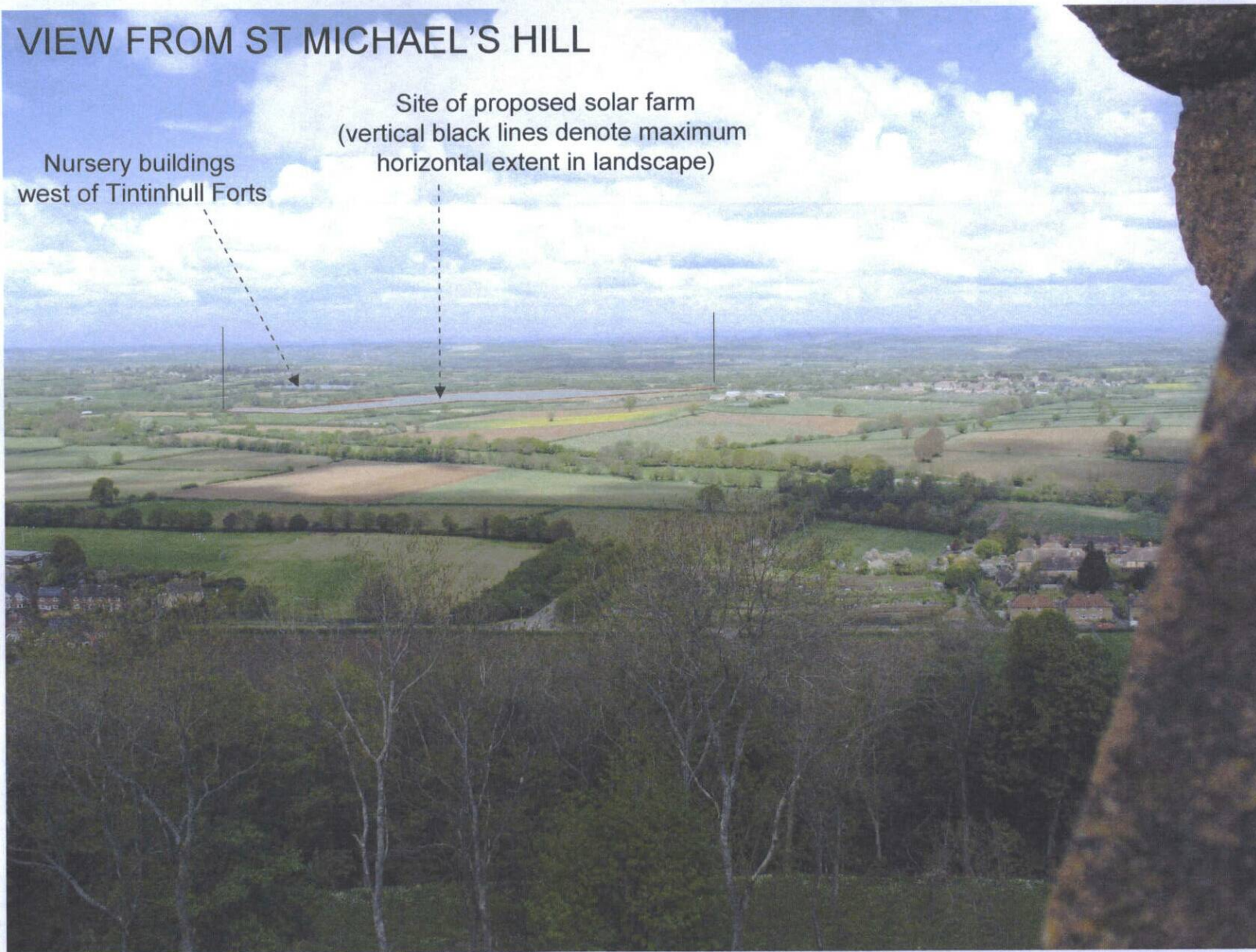
Mark Funnell BSc (Hons), MSc, PGDip, MRTPI
Planning Adviser

**Appendix A: Annotated photographs of the view from
St Michael's Hill (from top of tower)**

VIEW FROM ST MICHAEL'S HILL

Nursery buildings
west of Tintinhull Fords

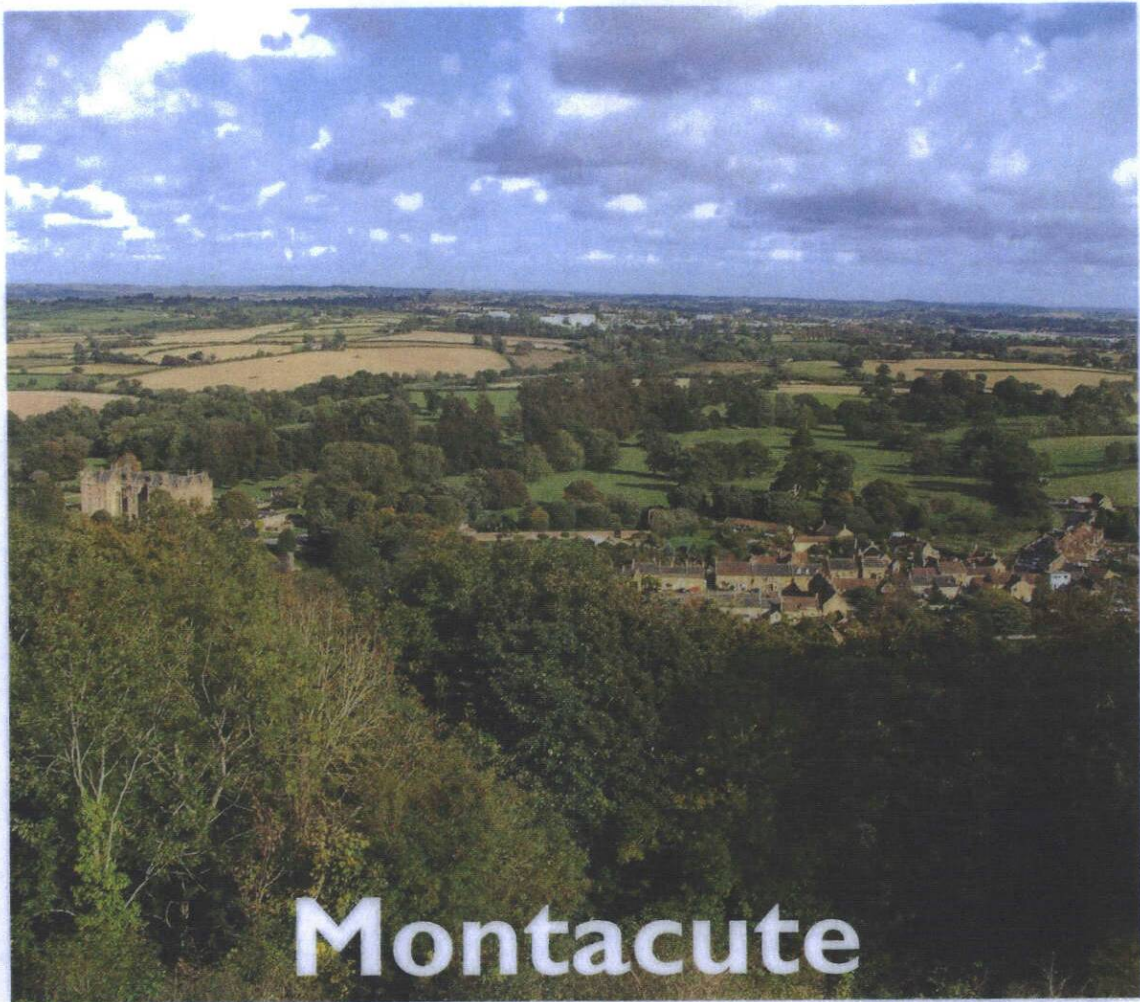
Site of proposed solar farm
(vertical black lines denote maximum
horizontal extent in landscape)



CLOSE-UP VIEW



Appendix B: Selected extracts from *Montacute Setting Study* (February 2009).



Montacute

Setting Study

February 2009



THE NATIONAL TRUST

NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNERS · LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS · ECOLOGISTS

6.0 THE SETTING

6.1 Identifying Setting

The ZVI addresses one of the three methods of identifying setting, based on English Heritage's *Conservation Principles*, that of visibility. This information now needs to be combined with an understanding of the context and function of the landscape surrounding Montacute to complete our identification of the setting.

The setting of Montacute's registered landscape plays an essential part in the significance and character of the park, house, St Michael's Hill and other designated structures and features. Unlike the visual envelope, setting is a subtler concept, to include the surrounding landscape that influences how Montacute's heritage is experienced and understood. Setting, therefore, is not just to do with visual amenity or what can and cannot be seen, but also relates to the cultural and functional relationships, past and present, of the historic site and its local landscape, and also how the historic landscape contributes to, and integrates with, the surrounding landscape character. Unlike the objective process in identification of the ZVI, identifying setting is more conditioned by subjective judgement, and the priorities or knowledge of a particular generation.

The setting of Montacute has been plotted in figure 8, distinguishing between the core setting and the wider setting. In figure 9, the outer line of each setting has been subdivided into sections and annotated with the main rationale for the boundary line.

6.2 Essential or Core Setting

English Heritage does not seek to plot or distinguish the *essential setting* of the registered historic parks in the way that Cadw do in Wales. However, Planning Policy Guidance 15 does intimate that the *essential* setting of a building would include grounds *laid out to complement its design or function.* The analogy could be extended to the setting of those designed grounds which are designated, as at Montacute, in their own right. Although the registered park would normally include all that area subject to conscious designed works, the *essential*, or *core*, *setting* could include areas which are needed to *complement its design or function*, and presumably, to

enable a present-day appreciation of this. At Montacute, areas of the core *setting* could include, therefore:

- the full extent of the Count of Mortain's medieval park, with an avenue riding and named *Park* in 1774
- a small area of farmland (*North Yonder Leaze* in 1774) with plantation clump severed from the park by construction of the railway
- the private field which forms the visible skyline of the main south-east avenue (see Viewpoint 9)
- the Priory, Abbey farm land, Foresters Gully and Bateman's Moor which include the medieval grounds of the castle but also the foreground view of St. Michaels Hill (Viewpoints 10,11) and the backdrop landscape to important outward views from the Montacute gardens (for example, Viewpoint 13)
- the view from Kissmedown Lane, above Windmill Farm, being the early approach route to Montacute, now the Leland Trail and Monarch's Way long distance footpath route (Viewpoint 18)
- the pastoral scarp slopes of Woodhouse Hill which also forms part of the essential backdrop to southward views from the gardens (see Viewpoint 26)
- the cultivated farmland forming the immediate backdrop to views (from the gardens and Long Gallery) north of the A3088, south of Moonlight Covert and Stoneshells Farm (see Viewpoint 6)
- Middle Street, Montacute, the key foreground to views of St. Michaels Hill (Viewpoint 12)

These areas lie within the core area plotted on figure 8, with summary justifications on figure 9.

6.4 Wider Setting

The setting defined by *Conservation Principles* is wider than this core setting, including:

- *The surroundings in which a place is experienced* which could be interpreted as the ZVI;
- *..its local context*, including elements which appear in the same view as the registered landscape;
- *present and past relationships* could include historic ownership boundaries but, in this case, the topographic and antiquarian viewpoint 1, and visual and economic links to Ham Hill quarries (viewpoint 30) are more directly relevant.

Depending on the nature of the historic landscape, some parts of its setting will be more sensitive than others, and therefore more or less able to accept change of a particular type or scale, without unacceptable adverse effects upon its character.





The setting boundary identified on figure 8 includes the areas of core setting (where the registered landscape is sensitive to changes in landscape management and land use, as well as built development); and the wider setting. The wider setting is sensitive to larger scale changes in the character of the landscape, as set out below.

However, an even wider area should be reviewed where large size or highly visible development is under consideration. Examples include tall developments (telecommunication masts, wind turbines and the like), large buildings, extensive nighttime lighting (trunk road service area, floodlit sports pitches etc.), and highly reflective features (such as glasshouses, and field-scale fabric 'cloche' systems).

In order to identify the wider visual setting of the Montacute registered landscape, thirty viewpoints into and out of the registered landscape were analysed to understand their significance, landscape character, the current issues affecting their quality and integrity, and their sensitivity to change. The findings of this analysis are illustrated in Viewpoint Sheets 1 to 30, attached to this report.

- The National Trust should make use of the information revealed in this study to inform its future property management, and consult with the local community at Montacute;
- Further development at the western edge of Yeovil should avoid any intrusion into the avenue viewline, and should be set at a level, or otherwise be permanently screened, to avoid adverse impact on the Montacute landscape.
- Proposals for development within or affecting the registered landscape or its setting should be accompanied by an appropriate assessment of impacts upon the significance of the site.
- This report should be shared with local stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of the setting, including the County Council as highway authority, local landowners, and the Parish Council.
- The National Trust should write to Somerset District Council to formally request that this study should be incorporated into their Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of the evidence base to inform their Core strategy policies for the Yeovil area.

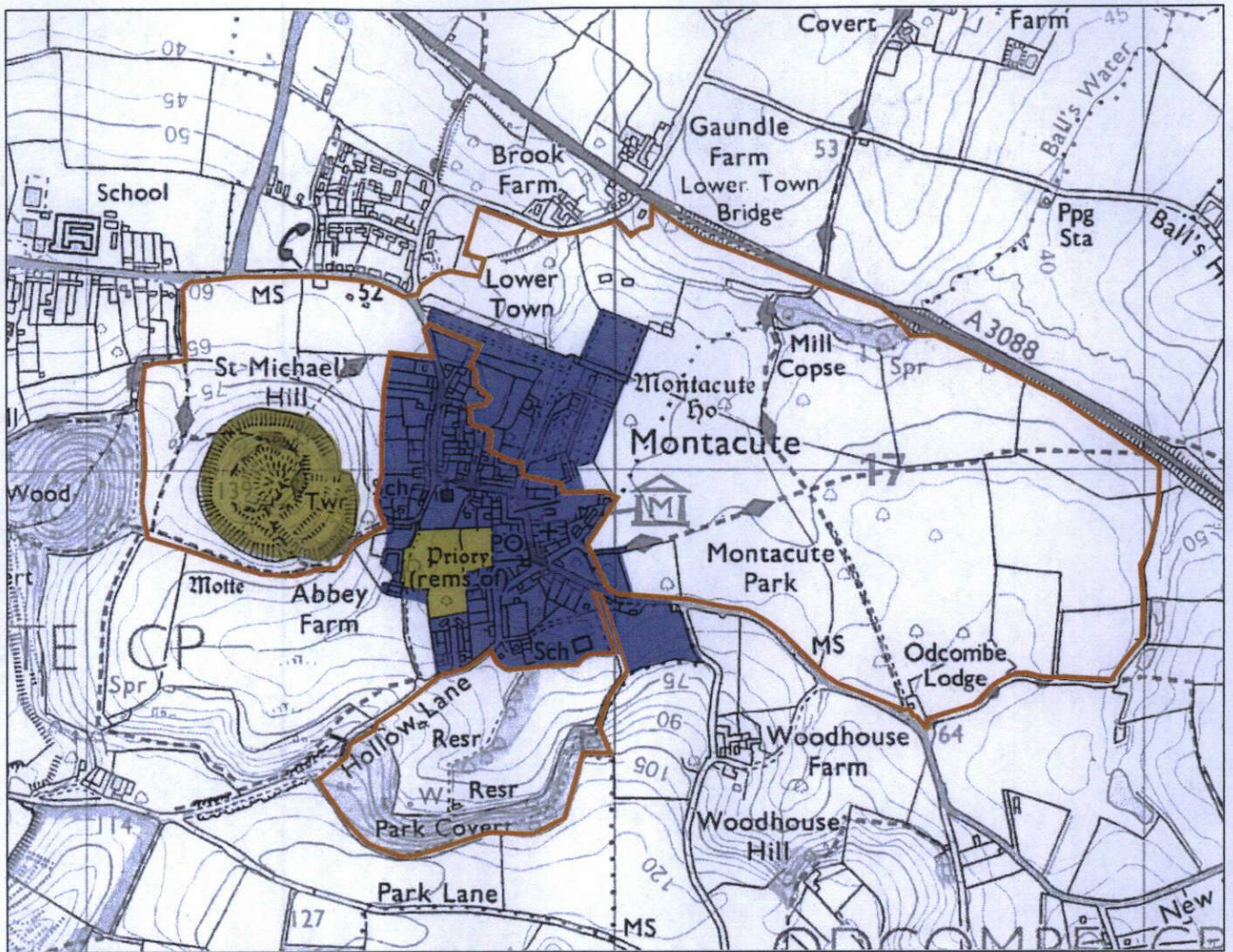
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-  National Trust property boundary
-  English Heritage Registered Landscape boundary
-  Long distance view and viewpoint numbers
-  Principal designed views and viewpoint numbers



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Montacute
Figure 1
Location Plan and Viewpoints



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0m 500m



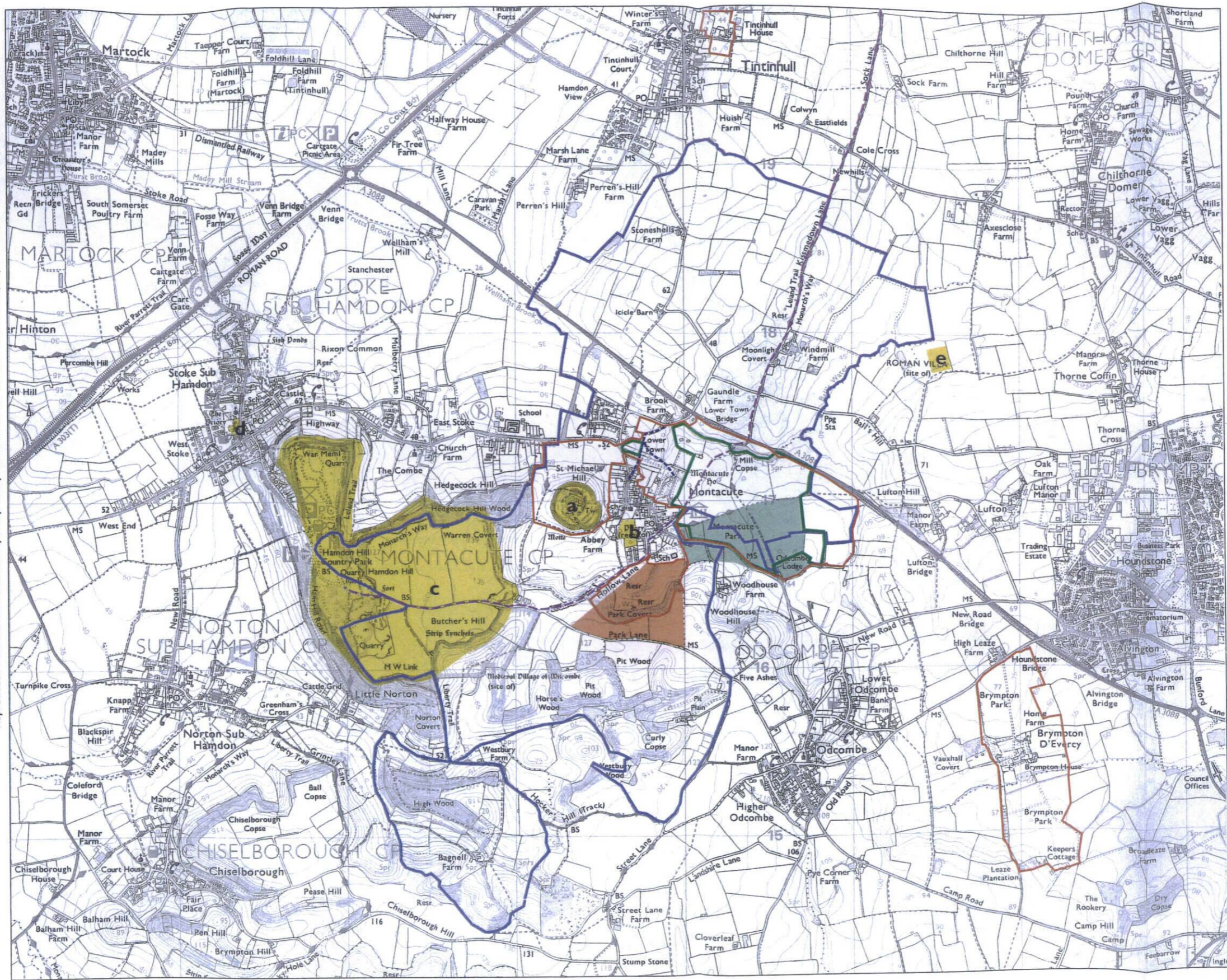
- English Heritage Registered Landscape boundary
- Conservation area
- Scheduled Ancient Monument









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Montacute

Figure 2
Conservation Designations

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-  Conjectured Roman road and medieval drove road, Ilchester to Ham Hill link
-  Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - a SM24014 Montacute Castle: a motte and bailey castle on St Michael's Hill
 - b SM 33723 Site of Cluniac priory
 - c SM 100 Hamdon Hill Camp
 - d SM 35309 Medieval secular college
 - e SM 348 Roman villa at Lufton
-  Medieval deer park
-  Late 16th and 17th century enclosure from open fields
-  Estate boundary from Donne's map of 1774
-  Line of entrance drive and public highway, 1825
-  Park boundary, 1904
-  English Heritage Registered Parks and Gardens

Source: Terrain Archaeology, Montacute Historic Landscape Assessment (2003)

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Montacute
Figure 3
Historic Landscape Context

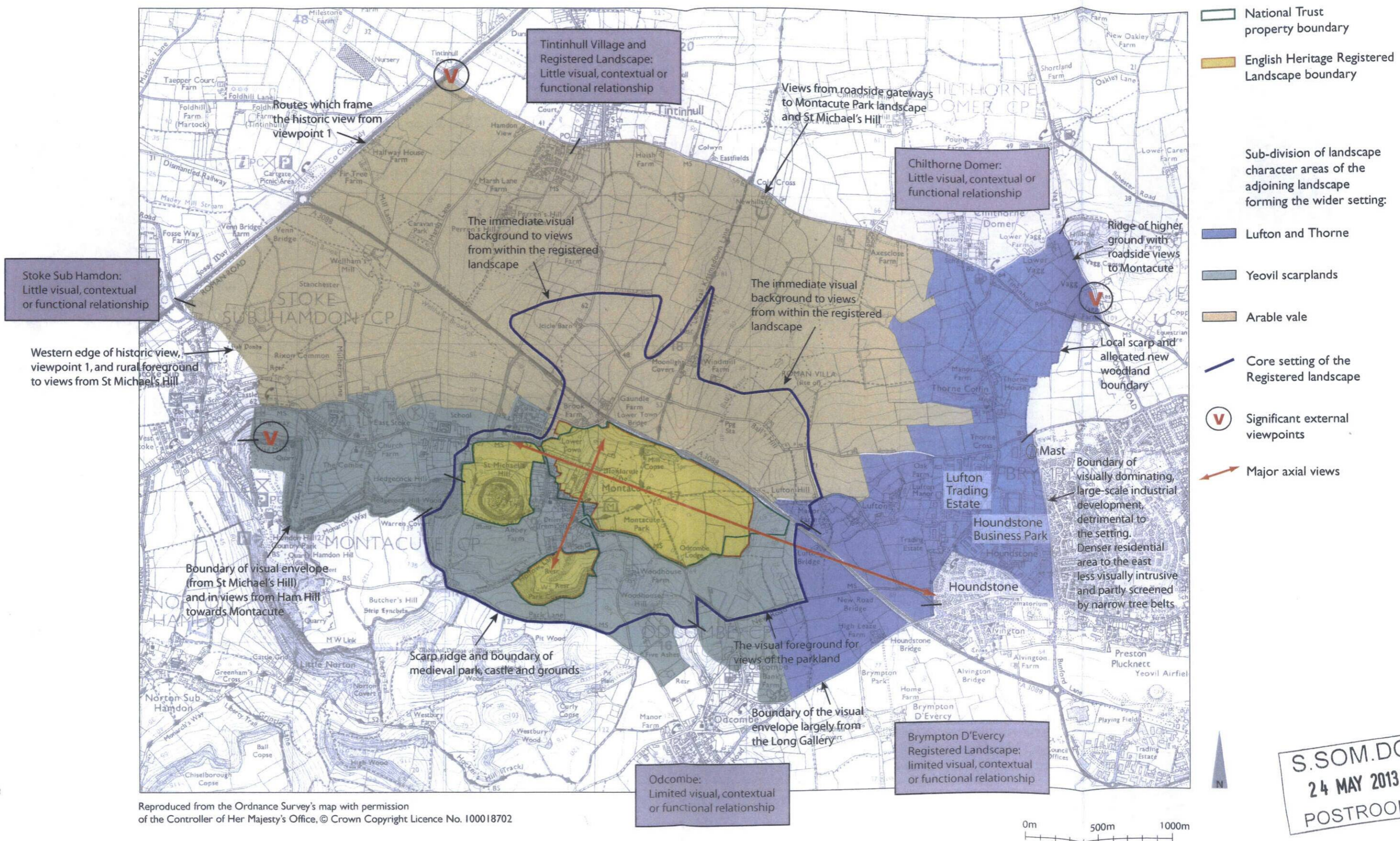


- Area visible from the St Michael's Hill Tower, 0.5m above ground level
- 7.5m high buildings would be visible from the Tower
- 10m high buildings would be visible from the Tower
- 12m high buildings would be visible from the Tower

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0m 500m 1000m

Montacute
Figure 7
 Zone of Visual Influence 2:
 from St Michael's Hill Tower



Montacute
Figure 9
Justification of the identified setting

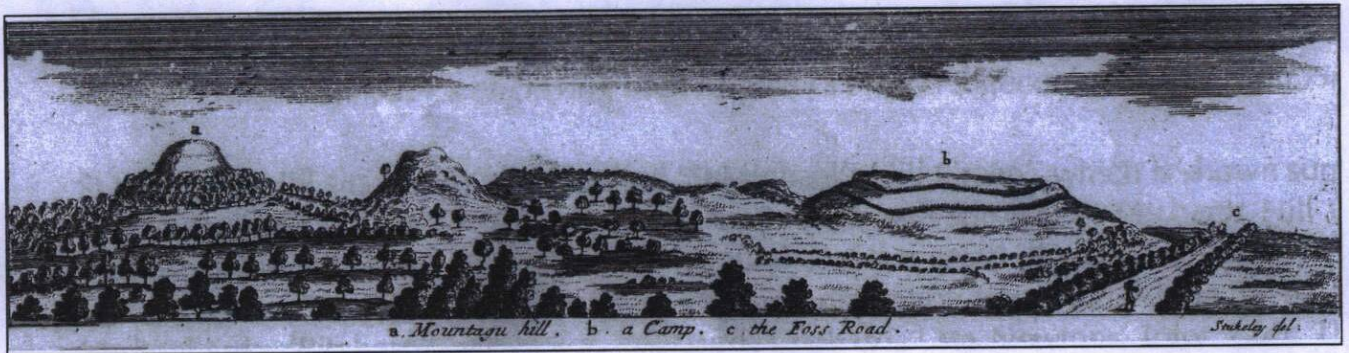
Viewpoint I *The Fosse Way*

Significance and Character

- Earliest historic view identified.
- Depicted by the antiquarian, William Stukeley, to illustrate ancient sites.
- Stukeley selected a distinctive landscape panorama formed by the three hills of St Michael's, Hedgecock and Ham, highlighting Ham Hill earthworks and the ancient Fosse Way. The surrounding landscape is characterised by farmland, woodland and mature field boundary trees.
- This distinctive landform is still visible today, although the hills are wooded, concealing earthworks. The surrounding landscape retains a similar character.

Issues and Sensitivity

- Foreground view altered by modern highway infrastructure.
- Potentially at risk from the development of a services area on the A303.
- Foreground view affected by vehicle store, distracting the eye from the quality of longer view.



A Prospect in Somersetshire 19 Aug. 1723, William Stukeley.



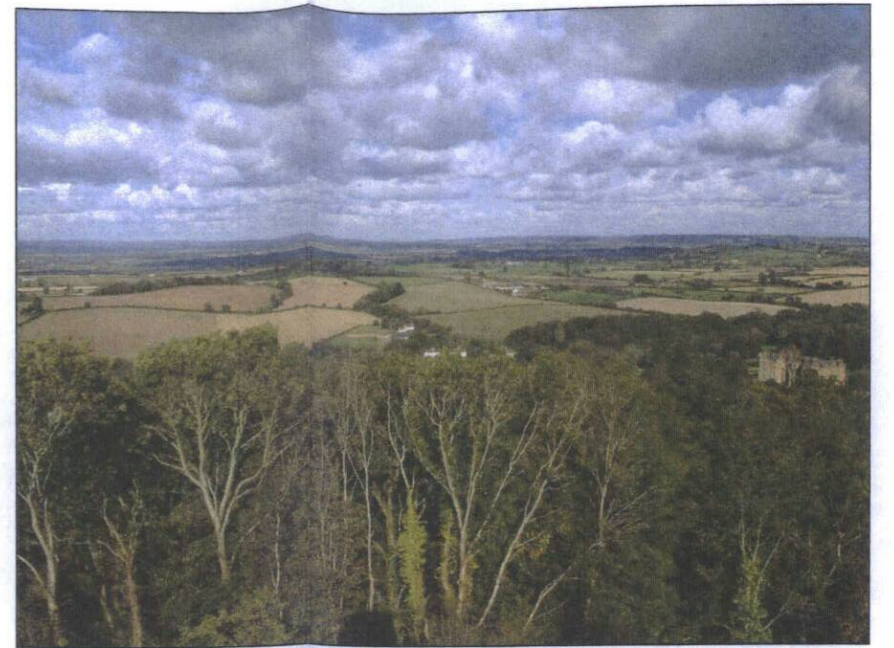
Viewpoint 14 *St Michael's Hill*

Significance and Character

- Key historic viewpoint, from the top of the tower, since its construction in 1760. Provides 360 degree views of the surrounding countryside, with the extent of view defined by the topography and the immediate canopies of the trees. Views are most extensive to the northwest, north and east. Distant visible landmarks include the Mendip Hills, Hinckley Point Power Station on the Bristol Channel, and Rampisham Transmitters Station in Dorset.
- Important to any understanding of the medieval castle and its role in the landscape.
- The views are predominantly rural in character, with some settlements, most visibly, Montacute, Stoke sub Hamdon, Martock, Tintinhull and the town of Yeovil, inter-dispersed with scattered farmsteads. The landscape to the north and east is dominated by the agricultural land in the vale, with wooded field boundaries and small blocks of woodland. Views to the east, south and west are characterised by grazed parkland, pasture and wooded scarp slopes.

Issues and Sensitivity

- Development of western Yeovil, in particular, the erection of industrial units and a mast in Lufton Trading Estate, has already had a negative visual impact on the views from St Michael's Hill to the east. The larger industrial buildings compete with Montacute House, village and the landscape park in the view.
- The elevated nature of the views means that any development in the landscape could have an impact, although the scale of any impact should decline rapidly with increasing distance from the hill. However, Rampisham exemplifies how high rise structures can still be visible even when 15 to 25 kilometres away.
- Views from St Michael's are sensitive to weather conditions and seasonal variations in tree cover.



Viewpoint 14 *St Michael's Hill*

