

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

**For Bourton Parish Council
Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base**



**A consideration of potential sites for a new
Village Hall and their likely visual impact**

Final Draft

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Parish Council logo



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1. Methodology

This is an initial study of the comparative impact of the three sites short-listed for the Village Hall development. It has informed the following criteria in Table 2 of the Site Assessment document:

- Visual impact of the site from the village and main road.
- Visual impact of the site on the AONB and surrounding countryside.

The study's other purpose was to consider if potential impact at any of the sites was so significant and unable to be effectively mitigated that the site should not be considered further for development.

Initial desktop work developed the baseline landscape character and the potential effects of the proposed development. The existing Village Design Statement has been used as evidence of what is important to the affected population. Key receptors where the possibility of visual impact occurring were determined to include the following locations and features:

- The AONB immediately bordering the parish of Bourton and particularly Rights of Way within it;
- Rights of Way in and around Bourton including local vantage points such as Silton Hill;
- Main Road, which each of the sites will take access from;
- West Bourton Road, particularly the bridge over the A303;
- Important views defined in the Village Design Statement 2011;
- Nearby residential roads including Woolcott Lane, Church Track, Breach Close, Millers Close, Badgers Close and *lane up to Village Hall*;
- Residential development adjacent to the sites;
- Community buildings and land in the vicinity of the sites, including proposed Local Green Spaces at the Cemetery and the New Cemetery as well as the Church.

None of the sites are visible from the A303, which runs mostly in cuttings past Bourton.

An initial survey checked which of these receptors could be impacted visually, and an assessment of the visual impact on these receptors was made, and graded as either 'minimal', 'noticeable' or 'considerable'. The analysis also checked for visual impact so significant and unable to be mitigated that the proposed site should be withdrawn from further consideration. The results of the survey and desktop work are set out in this study, and conclusions drawn from them.

The survey work was undertaken in October and November of 2015, the latter date in particular being at a time when deciduous trees had lost much of their leaf cover and screened less effectively.

2. Landscape setting of Bourton

Bourton is located within the National Character Area 133; Blackmore Vale and the Vale of Wardour. It is in the northern section of the character area, on the southern slopes of the Greensand terraces of the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Views to the south from many parts of Bourton look out over the lowland clay Blackmore Vale, and are framed by the southern reaches of the Cranbourne Chase AONB (CC AONB) and northern slopes of the Dorset AONB.

The Character Area is described as intensely rural, with an overall sense of remoteness, peace and tranquillity. Bourton is on the river Stour, which drains in a southerly direction down from the National Trust property at Stourhead. None of the sites considered in this comparative study are within 100m of the river however. Bourton and the surrounding countryside is typical of the Upper Greensand area in that it is well wooded, and field boundaries have well established hedgerows with many trees within them.

Bourton is, except for a tiny part of the parish, outside the CC AONB but it is bordered by the AONB to the north. Being located on the slopes below the AONB means that development in and around the village is still in a visually sensitive location. The AONB is mostly an area of chalk uplands, with the exception of the more densely wooded greensand hills area north of Bourton.

3. Village Hall Development Proposals and visual impact receptors

3.1 The proposed development

3.1.1 A single storey village hall with a floor area of approximately 625m² is proposed, with car parking for approximately 24 vehicles. This development to cover a maximum of 0.3Ha. Amenity land associated with the village hall of 1.5Ha is preferred, and a small enabling development of about 7 dwellings, two storey and maximum 4 bedroomed, 2/3 bedroomed preferred is proposed to also take up no more than 0.3Ha.

3.1.2 Besides visual impact, the proposed development will have environmental impacts from informal use of the amenity space particularly in summer, as well as occasional use of the space for events. The Village Hall will introduce extra vehicle movements, with night-time headlights and noise. Events in the Village Hall and general use will raise noise levels above those existing, as all the sites are currently greenfield. Social impacts of the development are likely to be mainly positive. Although other impacts besides visual impacts have not been formally considered here, they are likely to indirectly influence people's perception of negative impact. A hall that gives pleasure in the events it hosts is less likely to be seen as an intrusion, but repeated late night disturbance would cause resident assessment of a visible building to become more negative.

3.1.3 Indicative layouts have been received for each site, so that the visual impact of development on each site can be assessed. These initial layout proposals are shown below, along with a separate consideration for each site of the likely visual impact of the proposed development for each of the receptors listed above. The final section draws conclusions about the comparative visual impact on the landscape of the three sites and discusses possible mitigation.

3.2 Initial assessment of visual impact on Receptors

As stated above, certain potential receptors such as the A303 were quickly ruled out as there are few views of Bourton from this road which mostly runs in cuttings to the south of the village. A survey of the rights of way within the CC AONB to the north of Bourton revealed that none of the sites were visible from them, and indeed the village of Bourton is barely visible from the AONB due to the topography of the land (photo 2). Local vantage points to the south of Bourton are at a distance where the proposed development would have minimal impact on the view of the village (photo 1) Community facilities and Local Green Space sites in the village are not significantly impacted visually by any of the developments, and neither due to their 'sunken lane' nature are Kite's Nest or Long Lane, the historic packhorse route and right of way on the ridge above the village. It was generally noted that the wooded nature of the landscape with frequent mature trees within hedgerows and gardens often screened the sites from places where development would otherwise be visible.

Receptors where noticeable visual impact occurs with at least one of the sites:

- Rights of Way to the North of Bourton (FP N57/5 in particular just below Long Lane)
- Main Road
- Important Views (defined VDS 2011)
- Adjacent residential development

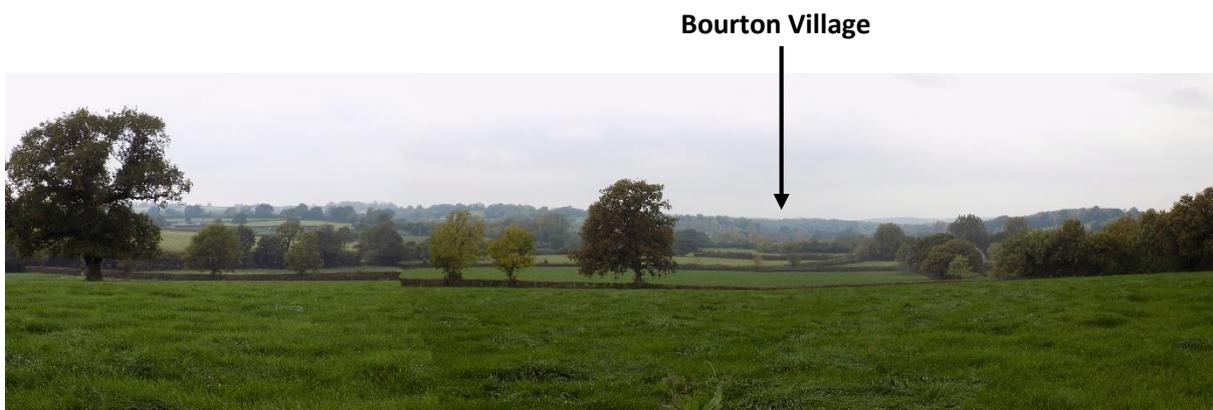


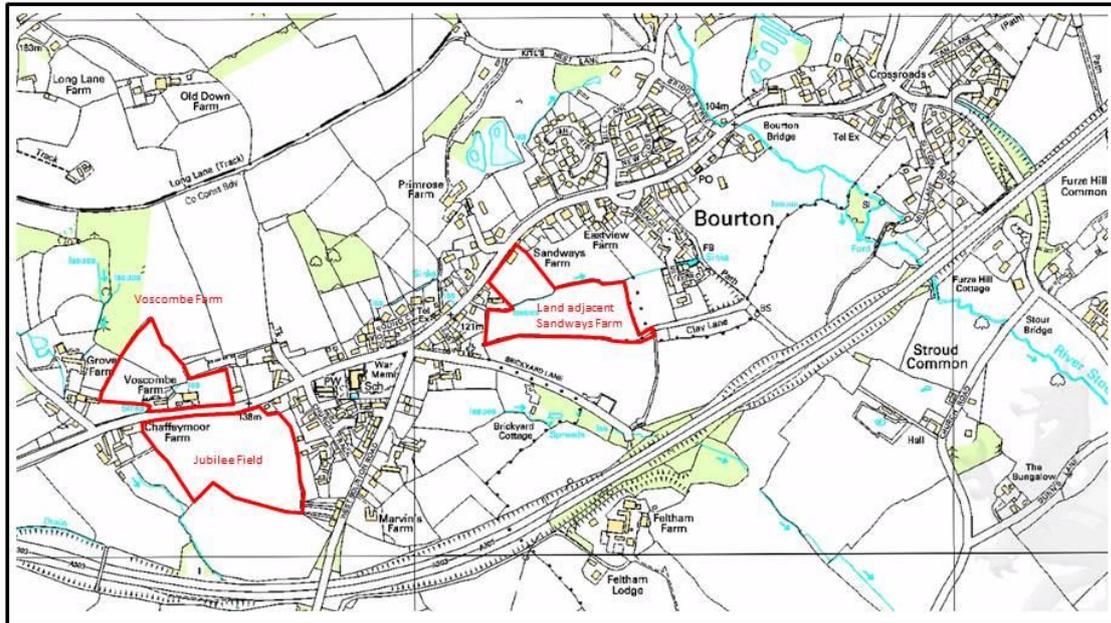
Photo 1: Panoramic shot from Silton Hill approx. 1 mile or more SE of all three sites.



Photo 2: View from Footpath in the AONB adjacent to Bourton parish boundary. Flag pole is on top of the church, no other part of the village or the sites visible.

4. The shortlisted sites and their potential visual impact

Bourton Neighbourhood Planning Group. Potential Village Hall Sites



4.1 Voscombe Farm Is situated on the north side of Main Road, at the western edge of the village. The proposed layout offered appears to have a mistake in that the site for the village hall is shown on an existing traditional stone cottage. Assuming that the proposal is for the hall to be built next to the cottage, the layout can still work, although the resulting amenity space becomes even smaller. Voscombe's location is the nearest to the AONB, on rising land and the highest of the three sites. However the high spot of the site is proposed for use only as amenity space, and a new village hall, although very visible from Main Road, will replace an unsightly corrugated iron agricultural building. The housing is proposed for a field lower than land to either site, and thus not visually prominent. It would however impact on the important view taken northwards from Main Road to the woodlands that lie to the north and frame the village, and be visible from Footpath N57/2.



Photo 3: Panoramic short of Voscombe site from Main Road looking North

Field Location for housing



Photo 4: Panoramic shot from field FP to south of Main Road

Table 1: Impact of Village Hall and housing development on Voscombe Site

Receptor	Minimal Impact	Noticeable Impact	Considerable Impact
FP5 north of Bourton, running parallel to Long Lane along the ridge;		✓	
Main road			✓ Some positive
Other Local Roads	✓		
Adjacent residential development (> 5 dwellings with noticeable visual impact)		✓	
Important Views: Ridge North of Bourton and views over Voscombe farm from Main road.		✓	
Footpath N57/2 to the west of Chaffey Moor Farm		✓	
Important Views: West Bourton Road bridge over A303	✓		

Proposed Layout not shown as provided on a confidential basis.

Mitigation of adverse visual impact: Design of Village Hall and housing should be in traditional materials and of a high standard to ensure it is as positive an addition to the landscape as possible. Housing should be set in a landscape planted with native trees to blend into its setting and roofing materials will be particularly important.

4.2 Jubilee Field Is situated on the south side of Main Road, at the western edge of the village. The indicative layout shows the Village Hall and housing fronting Main Road, with the car parking area arranged so that views across the site from Main road are not obscured. The field rises up to the point where development is proposed, so that it will be visually prominent from several locations within and around the village. It is also prominent from Main Road, a feature that is felt to have benefits in that the Village Hall is required to have a ‘presence’ in the village and not be hidden. Mitigation measures below detail ways in which the visual impact of the proposed development could be made acceptable.

Drawing No. 1357/1d

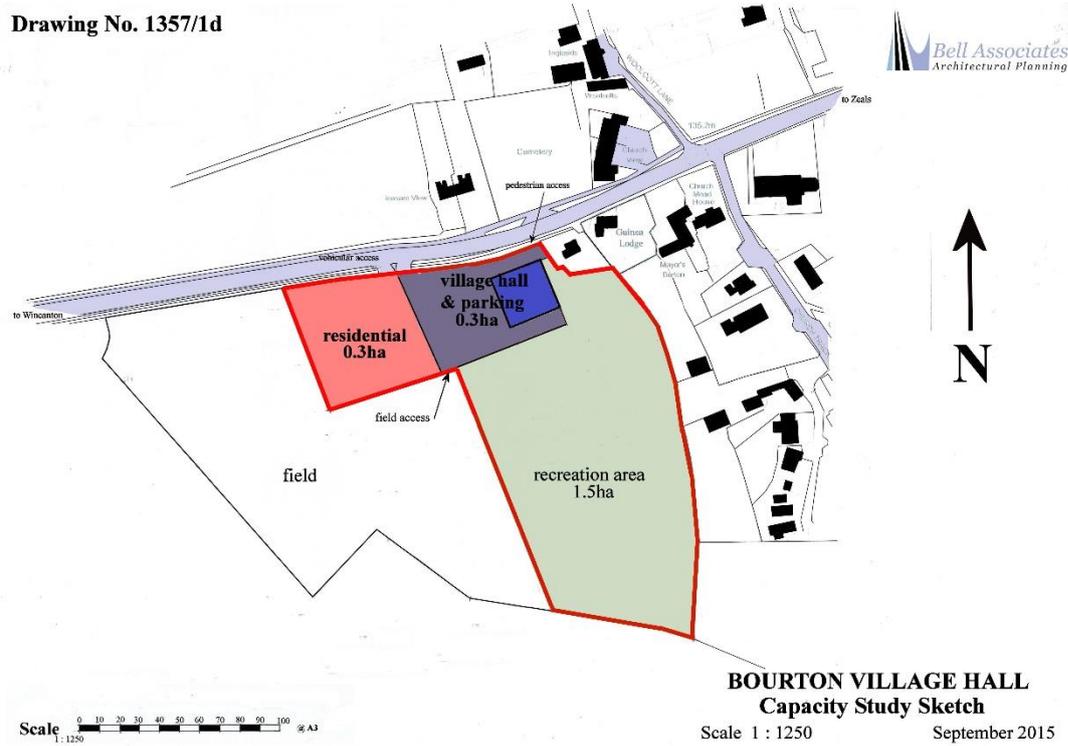


Figure 1: Proposed layout for Jubilee Field Site



Photo3: Important view west of the Village



Photo 4: Jubilee frontage to Main Road

Jubilee development

Voscombe Village Hall



Photo 5: View from FP N57/2 over Jubilee and Voscombe site

Jubilee Site



Photo 6: Glimpsed View of Jubilee site from FP N57/4



Photo 7: View towards Jubilee site from West Bourton road bridge over A303

Table 2: Impact of Village Hall and housing development on Jubilee Site

Receptor	Minimal Impact	Noticeable Impact	Considerable Impact
FPs N57/5 and N57/4 north of Bourton, running parallel to Long Lane along the ridge;		✓	
Main road		✓	
Other Local Roads	✓		
Adjacent residential development (> 5 dwellings with noticeable visual impact)		✓	
Important Views: Ridge North of Bourton and views over Jubilee Field from Main road.		✓	
Important Views: West Bourton Road bridge over A303		✓	
Important Views: Main Road beyond the village to the west of Chaffey Moor Hill		✓	
Footpath N57/2 to the west of Chaffey Moor Farm		✓	

Mitigation of adverse visual impact: The proposed site suffers from being a large open field that offers more views than the more wooded landscape of most of Bourton and its surroundings. Thus planting of native species trees to screen both the hall and residential will be essential. The car park area should also be well landscaped. Well designed buildings in traditional materials will be important for the residential development to blend into the landscape it would sit in. The Hall could be similar or an attractive modern design, either way the Main Road frontage of the site should retain the existing mature hedgerow and ideally augment this with further planting.

4.3 **The Land adjacent to Sandways Farm** site is more centrally located in the village, with a frontage to the south side of Main Road. The site slopes gently down to the south from Main Road, and there is residential development to either side, although to the east another field separates existing residential development from the amenity land associated with the Village Hall site. The layout provided is confidential, but in outline it provides for the Village Hall to be located on the frontage to Main Road, replacing an unattractive farm building. Some of the housing will be here as well, but set back in order to allow for views out over the valley to be retained. Other housing is provided lower down the site. The site is generally more hidden from view than the other sites.

Sandways Site Amenity land



Photo 8: Panoramic shot from FP N57/5 – Church is on the right

Table 3: Impact of Village Hall and housing development on Sandways Site

Receptor	Minimal Impact	Noticeable Impact	Considerable Impact
Footpaths north of Bourton, running parallel to Long Lane along the ridge;	✓		
Footpaths to south of site	✓		
Main road		✓	
Other Local Roads	✓		
Adjacent residential development (noticeable visual impact for < 10 dwellings)		✓	
Important Views: Ridge North of Bourton	✓		
Important Views: From Main Road over Sandways Farm 'Green Finger'		✓	

Mitigation of adverse visual impact: The layout of any development would need to preserve the important view taken through the site from Main Road, although this view is currently constrained by the hedgerow along the site frontage. The Hall is proposed to be located near a listed building, and will need to be designed in a way that respects that proximity.



Photo 9: Main Road frontage to Sandways site

5. Summary and comparison of the three potential sites and their visual impact.

None of the sites would have an unacceptable visual impact on either the village or the surrounding countryside, including the sensitive AONB setting. All of the sites should consider visual impact in the design and location of the buildings. To blend into the well-wooded environment of the village and surrounding countryside, tree-planting as part of any of the developments should be required landscaping. For the Jubilee site screening with tree-planting will be essential; this is the site with potentially the most visual impact on receptors (seven are considered to have noticeable impact).