



Peripheral landscape study – Martock

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1) Background to the study:

1.1. The forthcoming South Somerset Local Development Framework (LDF) will be required to allocate new development sites for both housing and employment for the period 2006-2026, with the focus of major growth placed upon Yeovil, thereafter the district's major towns and rural centres. As part of the process of finding suitable sites for development, a landscape study to assess the capacity of the settlement fringe to accommodate new development in a landscape-sympathetic manner, is commissioned. This will complement other evidence-based work that will contribute to the LDF process.

1.2 PPS 7 commends the approach to the identification of countryside character developed by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and suggests that it can assist in accommodating necessary change due to development without sacrifice of local character and distinctiveness. National landscape guidelines similarly advise that visual impact can be determined as being significant when judged against the context and sensitivity of the landscape, and where there is an incompatibility of scale and character between a proposal and the attributes of the receiving landscape: Consequently this landscape study seeks to evaluate both the landscape character and visual sensitivity of each of 13 selected settlements, to enable an assessment of their capacity to absorb additional development, and an indication of potential growth areas (areas of highest capacity).

1.3 Each assessment will establish and refine a study area for each settlement in 3-stages;

i) Using the settlement centre as fulcrum, a circle is drawn to include and contain the furthestmost spread of development, to thus define an area within a radius encompassing all growth associated with that settlement. This central focus is for the purpose of seeking settlement growth in close proximity to the town's commercial centre.

ii) Where pertinent, a second line is drawn beyond the town boundary, at a set distance from the current edge (the distance proportional to settlement size) to allow potential for a coherent urban extension alongside the town's current extent.

iii) Finally, these lines are adjusted to coincide with established and credible landscape boundaries to thus establish the study area. Adjacent villages in close proximity may be included within the study, to enable their separate identity to be considered in relationship to the main settlement.

Structure of the report.

1.4 A general description of the settlement acts as a preface to a character study of both the settlement and its surround. The sensitivity of the local landscape's character is then assessed, particularly in relationship to development form, alongside an appraisal of the visibility of each site, and its visual sensitivity. The potential of each study area's capacity to absorb an impact of built form and associated development is then evaluated using these character and visual profiles, with constraints factored into a capacity matrix, to arrive at an indication of potential development sites.

1.5 This study considers Martock.

2) The settlement

2.1 Martock is a small market town that lays at the southern fringe of the Somerset moors, situated close by the point at which the River Parrett leaves the outlying hills of the Yeovil Scarplands to cross the wider context of the moors. Yeovil lays some 11 km. to the southeast, and the A303 major road corridor passes circa 1.5 km. to the southeast of the town centre. It is a town of Saxon origins, settled around the church of All Saints to the north of the Mill Stream, and made prosperous through the middle ages by agriculture and cloth manufacture. The town has seen steady growth over the last hundred years, now having a population circa 4500 residents.

2.2 The parish of Martock is large and sprawling, with the original village now coalesced with the smaller settlements of Hurst and Bower Hinton to the south, to form a single ribbon of growth running south-north along the line of the B3165, extending from Ringwell Hill in the south, a distance circa 2.75km to Martock's north edge, below Stapleton Cross. The town's core is concentrated to the immediate north of its medieval market place, expanding from this core in the twentieth century with residential growth toward the disused rail line, and with a steady outward spread to either side of the main (B3165) street. Employment areas are now established at both the north and southern ends of the settlement, convenient for access to the major road network.

2.3 The immediate landscape setting of the settlement is a valley defined by a series of low hills both north and south of the village. To the north, a low shoulder of land rises from Stapleton Cross extending east to the village of Ash before swinging south toward Foldhill Farms, to broadly contain the village and its rural surround to the northeast. South of the village, Cripple, Halletts, Ringwell and Percombe Hills run west to east to link with Ham Hill's foothills around Stoke Sub Hamdon to form a raised rim of ground to thus create Martock's valley setting. To the east, the setting is less defined, with the village tapering out above the Madey Mill Stream, whilst land to the west of the settlement lays opens to the wider Parrett Vale.

Identification of the study area

2.4 Based upon the methodology outlined in para 1.3, the extent of the Martock study area is broadly defined by field boundaries some 0.5km parallel to the west of the settlement, which run north from Cripple Hill, Bower Hinton toward Coat's east edge, to join the Gawbridge – Tintinhull road west of Longloads Farm. It then follows the road east through Highway, before heading southeast cross-country, over Ash Lane toward Foldhill Farm, turning south to cross the Madey Mill Stream to Fosse Way Farm at the side of the A303 Stoke interchange. The line then heads southwest toward Bower Hinton, crossing the Stoke road by Venn Farm, to run over Ringwell Hill and rejoin Cripple Hill, to complete the limit of the study area, which is indicated on figure 1 – context.

3) Landscape Character

The national context:

3.1 Landscape character assessment is an approach that aids recognition and understanding of the differences between landscapes, and states what constitutes local distinctiveness. In 1996, the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) undertook a national study of the character of England's landscape, to enable definition and description of the range and diversity of the English landscape, and its categorisation into 'character areas'. This study was published as a national map, with accompanying regional volumes that describe the resultant areas in detail. Volume 8: South West England, places Martock within *character area 140 – Yeovil Scarplands*. The key characteristics of these areas as noted by the assessment are:

- i) *A very varied landscape of hills, wide valley bottoms, ridgetops and combes united by scarps of Jurassic limestone.*
- ii) *Mainly a remote rural area, with villages and high church towers.*
- iii) *A wide variety of local building materials including predominantly Ham Hill stone.*
- iv) *Small manor houses and large mansions with landscape parks.*
- v) *Varied land use: arable on the better low-lying land, woodland on the steep ridges and deep combes.*

3.2 The full descriptive text of the Yeovil Scarplands character area is available on the Natural England website, http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/south_west/yeovil_scarplands.asp
Typical of Martock and its surrounding landscape are the following extracts:

Rivers like the Parrett and Yeo drain from the higher ground of the Scarplands cutting an intricate pattern of irregular hills and valleys, which open out to the moorland basins.

Between the scarps and ridges, the clay vales are mostly gently rolling landscapes of medium-size fields with a dominant field pattern extending up and over the rising ground. There are also areas with a strongly rectilinear pattern, which are mostly arable, and others where hedges are low or non-existent and trees largely absent. Here, as in the land around Ilminster, open fields survived until very recently and the landscape has been very open in character since well before the late Middle-Ages. Streamside willow pollards and alder provide the principal vegetation and streamside pasture survives, threading through many of the vales.

Although the area has many settlements, the villages and hamlets tend to lie in the valleys. The farmsteads are generally on the valley sides, so that some views across the ridges give the impression of a sparsely settled land. The most favoured sites, near the streams and rivers, are the locations for towns, which grew from Saxon burghs to become market towns but still remain small and rural. There are small hamlets and villages and the use of local stone in the older buildings is a unifying feature within the area. Some of the settlements have substantial and often dominant churches, which serve to emphasise the significance of the stone.

The land is primarily in agricultural use with a mixture of arable, dairying and stock rearing. Arable predominates on the good, fertile soils like the Yeovil Sands around South Petherton. A very wide range of crops is grown and there are remnant orchards, commonly with poplar shelterbelts. Grassland, however, is the principal land cover, with a range from lush, improved pastures in the valley bottoms to steep hillside pastures.

The local context:

3.3 A historic landscape characterisation study was undertaken by Somerset County Council Heritage team, completed in 2001. This study differentiates between unenclosed, anciently enclosed, and recently enclosed land, and notes ancient woodland sites and historic parkland. The character plan for the Martock area indicates much of the surrounding land to be recently enclosed. It is included at appendix 2, and where pertinent informs the landscape sensitivity appraisal, section 4.0.

3.4 SSDC undertook a detailed assessment of district-wide character; 'The Landscape of South Somerset' in 1993. This study places Martock and its wider surrounds at the junction of 2 visual character regions (VCRs) namely; 1) Ham Hill plateau, Yeovil Sands escarpments and valleys, and; 2) Central plain, Moors and river basins. This is an indication of the subtle change in the character of the landscape in the area surrounding the settlement. Each VCR is sub-divided into landscape character areas (LCAs) and the following LCAs cover the Martock study area;

- i) **Silts and Marls Low Hill Country** (within the 'Central Plain, Moors and river basins' VCR)
- ii) **Northern escarpments, Dipslopes and Foothills** (within the 'Ham Hill plateau, Yeovil Sands escarpments and valleys' VCR) and;
- iii) **River corridor** (within both of the above VCRs).

3.5 The **Silts and Marls Low Hill Country** LCA, covers the majority of the town's area, along with the gently rising ground to the north and shallow vale to the east of the settlement. It is broadly described thus;

The land use is mixed with large areas of arable on the ridges and 'islands' giving way to permanent grassland in the river corridor floodplain and moors. This land use was established when villages such as Martock, Kingsbury and Tintihull expanded greatly, particularly in the 14th century. In the Domesday book Martock had only one entry but in succeeding centuries manorial records list no less than nine dependent settlements, Bower Hinton, Hurst, Newton, Coat, Stapleton, Ash, Witcombe, Milton and Long Load. This growth was based on the reclamation of land from the 'waste' - enlarging the open fields and increasing productivity.

This character zone is a continuation of the rolling arable landscape that lies between the Vale of Ilchester and the Yeovil sands hill country, encompassing the parishes of Ash, Martock, Long Load and Kingsbury Episcopi. It is a feature of low hills and weak escarpments fringing the moors and river corridors.

Fields and roadsides are confined by elm hedges of some age and many fields down to permanent grass are often yellow with spring buttercups. Hurst and Madey Mills stream are pleasantly lined with willow and alder. There are centres of arable production particularly south and west of Martock. Fields are large and some hedges weak and gappy with a few struggling trees.

To better facilitate the subsequent sensitivity evaluation, the LCA is sub-divided into two local character areas to reflect local variation in landscape character, as follows;

- i) **‘Shallow hillsides N and NE of Martock’**, covering the quadrant of land stretching from Coat, through Stapleton toward Ash and Foldhill Lane, and;
- ii) The **‘Hurst Brook Vale’**, laying between Foldhill lane, and Dimmocks Lane by Bower Hinton’s east edge, and covering the broad valley drained by the Hurst Brook and Madey Mill Stream.

3.6 The **Northern escarpments, dipslopes and foothills** LCA broadly covers the rising ground around Bower Hinton in the southern quadrant of the study area, which for the purposes of this assessment is re-titled **‘Bower Hinton low hills’**. The assessment identifies and describes the area thus;

Approached from the Vale of Ilchester to the north the escarpment is an important land mark identifying the location of Yeovil. In places buildings are silhouetted on the ridge; in others woodland and trees provide an important screen. Gradients are not severe and cultivation or improved pasture reaches high up the slope. Lanes and roads spill over into the plain below cutting deep holloways characteristic of the more sandy rock formations.

To the west, the landscape is rolling mixed farmland. Hedges, usually of elm are generally intact but kept low. Remaining hedge trees are few, usually ash and suffering die-back. The most significant landscape features are the alder and willow-lined streams such as Ball’s Water and Welham Brook; the latter having some fine willow pollards and traditional waterside buttercup meadows.

3.7 Encroaching into the study area, yet laying outside and to the west of the town, the **‘(Parrett) river corridor’** landscape character area is locally identified as the **‘Parrett vale’** for the purposes of this study. The district assessment describes the landscapes of the general river corridors thus;

The Rivers Yeo, Parrett and their tributaries make an important contribution to the diversity of the scenery as they cut through the Yeovil Sands. The Yeo occupies a gorge-like feature which was taken advantage of by the railway. The Parrett is a more juvenile river. Near its source at North Perrott, the river is a most natural water course, thickly coated with alders and willows and with most of its flood plain remaining as traditional grazing pasture.

3.8 The resultant 4 local landscape character areas noted above are indicated on figure 2 – landscape sensitivity.

4) Landscape sensitivity

4.1 Landscape sensitivity can be gauged from an assessment of landscape character in respect of how intact and well expressed its character is, along with its condition and time-depth. Negative factors to influence a sensitivity assessment will include detractors to local character. As this project is reviewing the likely impact of urban development upon its rural fringe, the prospect of new build relative to its context will be the prime consideration in this sensitivity appraisal, as will the extent of remoteness from urban form. Looking at each local landscape area in turn, the outcome of this stage of the study will be to grade areas of Martock's periphery as possessing either high, moderate or low landscape sensitivity to development. The resultant areas are indicated on figure 2 – landscape sensitivity.

4.2 The previous chapter identified three landscape character areas as falling within the study area. The northernmost of these is the 'Silts and Marls Low Hill Country', which is subdivided according to local variation in landscape type. Taking these sub-divisions in turn (as identified para 3.5) the first local character area to be considered is that of the low hillsides that cover the northeastern quadrant of the countryside around Martock.

The Shallow hillsides north and northeast of Martock (character area A)

4.3 Forming a low crescent through the northeast quadrant of Martock's surround, the low hills fall towards the edge of the settlement and thus provide its topographical setting. The area is characterised by a small – mid scale field pattern which is delineated by hedgerows that are composed of indigenous species, uniformly trimmed in most part, containing a mix of both pasture and arable crops. Specimen trees are notable for stating an emphatic presence in what is generally an open landscape, though towards Ash, tree cover does increase, in most part due to field corner plantings and a more relaxed hedgerow maintenance regime. Particularly striking are the green lanes, with their double row of hedges and specimen oak and ash trees. As the underlying pattern is generally intact and in good condition, the majority of this area is graded 'high' sensitivity. Exceptions occur to the north of Martock where the hedgerow pattern, whilst intact, is severely trimmed and devoid of decent specimen trees, thus allowing the character of the adjacent urban edge to pervade beyond its bounds: This is graded as 'moderate' sensitivity, along with a single large field by the disused rail-line, where hedgerow removal has changed the historic pattern. Immediately alongside the town's east edge, hedgerow containment has become eroded and gappy and orchard trees have been lost adjacent to the recreational area. With a lack of containment, the housing edge pervades as a dominant element into the adjacent fields, hence this area is graded 'low' sensitivity.

The Hurst Brook Vale (Character Area B)

4.4 This character area lays between Foldhill Lane on Martock's east side and extends south across a gentle vale towards the weak foothill escarpment that extends west from Stoke-sub-Hamdon to Bower Hinton. Central to the area are the parallel courses of the Hurst brook and Madey Mill stream, which are characterised by riverside tree lines and small pastures, typical of local character and thus graded

'high' sensitivity, other than below Madey Mills. Here both tree and hedgerow cover has been lost, though the area remains distinctly rural and retains pasture cover. The fields in this location are thus graded 'moderate' sensitivity.

4.5 To both north and south of the stream corridors, the field pattern is rectilinear and primarily laid out on a north-south axis. Much of this land is recently enclosed and the 18th century pattern is relatively intact. Specimen trees are notable by their sparsity and this is generally an open landscape, contained by the rising hills to north and south, and Martock's edge to the west. This open enclosure landscape is typical of the local character and thus is graded 'high' sensitivity over the greater part of the vale. There are exceptions, all of which are graded 'moderate'. These are the fields adjacent to Martock's southeast edge where, whilst the underlying historic pattern remains expressed, the area has seen the introduction of alien tree lines, such as the Lombardy poplars alongside the playing field edge; the loss of traditional orchards, as to the south of the Stoke Road; and degradation of both pasture and hedgerows through the use of land for horse grazing, as by Hurst's otherwise mature and well buffered edge.

Bower Hinton Low Hills (Character Area C)

4.6 This local character area is defined by the east-west shoulder of land formed by the linked heads of Cripple, Hallett's and Ringwell Hills, which form the southern edge of the study area; and its north facing hillsides, over which Bower Hinton is settled. Much of the land to the south, east and west is in arable production and in places hedgerows are noted as having been removed, along with individual orchards, though the underlying pattern remains expressed. These fields are thus graded 'moderate' sensitivity, other than a single open field by the village's east edge where lack of containment allows the scale of adjacent employment buildings to pervade beyond the settlement edge, and is thus graded 'low' sensitivity. Where the field pattern has remained intact; along with the presence of specimen trees and indigenous hedgerows; and no sense of urban character, the remaining fields are graded 'high' sensitivity, with the narrow pastures, thick hedgerows, relic orchards and mature oaks to the north of Gaston's Lane contributing to a particularly attractive pocket of local landscape, along with the green lanes that access the area.

Parrett Vale (character area D)

4.7 To the west of Martock and Hurst, the land is flat with very little change in gradient evident, and this forms the fringe of the Parrett Vale, whose open, rural landscape comes to a stop at the settlement's west edge. To the south of the road to South Petherton, the field pattern changes from small pastures which primarily reside by the settlement's edge, to larger open fields that are typical of the wider landscape pattern. Field boundaries are robust, both trimmed and drawn-up and the greater part of this area, extending north to the line of the Mill brook, is graded 'high' sensitivity as the landscape is primarily intact and has a clear rural expression. The few exceptions are primarily the small pastures adjacent to the settlement edge which have either been the subject of orchard removal or whose boundaries have suffered some erosion from adjacent urban presence. These areas are graded 'moderate' sensitivity.

4.8 To the north of the Mill Brook, it is evident that the past century has witnessed a fair degree of landscape change. Once characterised by a mix of traditional orchard and narrow pastures within a rectilinear field pattern that broadly corresponded to a north-south axis, many of these features are now lost to orchard and hedgerow removal. The pattern is retained to the north and west of Hill Farm and by the edge of Coat, reinforced by robust hedgerows and specimen trees, and those areas are graded 'high' sensitivity. Elsewhere, where traditional landscape features have been lost, the fields are graded 'moderate' sensitivity, other than where the urban edge has eroded the town/country interface, either by a substantive concentration of building mass or loss of boundary features. Such areas lay primarily between the school, running north along the town's west edge, to the Coat road and are graded 'low' sensitivity.

5) Visual sensitivity

5.1 This section identifies the location and extent of the visual envelope that contains Martock, and the nature of those landscape and topographical elements that visually buffer the town from an external perception. It then reviews first the intervening land between the town's edge and its immediate envelope; and second the land outside this envelope; to assess its visual relationship with Martock and prime sensitive receptors, along with identifying valued views and vantage points, and visual detractors. From this a measure of visual sensitivity to development will be graded low, moderate or high. The resultant sensitivity areas are indicated on figure 3 – visual sensitivity.

Visual envelope and containment

5.2 It is noted that Martock is settled at the edge of the Parrett Vale in the valley formed by the parallel brooks flowing east towards Madey Mills, bisecting Martock and Hurst. This secondary valley is surrounded by low hills to the north and northeast by Ash, and to the south above Bower Hinton. These hills provide the setting to the settlement and it is also noted that they provide the prime visual barrier to external view. To the north, this envelope is noted as extending from the line of the disused railway northeast of Coat, following the head of the low hills east through Stapleton to Ash, swinging south towards Foldhill Farms, from where the land falls away toward Cartgate, allowing long low-trajectory views from Tintinhull towards Bower Hinton, whose raised elevation and larger-scaled employment buildings draw the eye. Clearer views are gained from Ham Hill, which sees the whole of the settlement spread across the edge of the vale (photos 1 and 2). Whilst the north-south spread of the settlement is clearly evident, it is notable that; i) tree pockets combine to buffer much of the settlement from the rear of East Street, south to Bower Hinton's trading estate, and; ii) the substantive core of the town extends north from the market place to the town's employment site at its north edge.

5.3 West of Ham Hill the raised shoulder of land linking the hills to the south of Bower Hinton form the settlement's southern visual envelope, stretching from the A303's cutting of Percombe Hill west to the point that Cripple Hill descends towards the River Parrett. Between this latter point and Coat to the north, there is no topographical element to contain views towards Martock that lays in close proximity to the town. Long views are available from high ground north of South Petherton, and from Burrow Hill some 8 km to the west but these see little of the town other than rooftop incident. From the majority of lower elevation vantage points to the west, the combination of low-trajectory vantage, with the recession of hedge and tree lines that intercede in views towards the town's west edge, provides diffuse screening of the town, with no sense of its full extent evident. However, as with the prime visual envelope, it is noted that the main extent of this diffuse screening lays outside the study area, thus the only land within the study area yet outside the towns' visual envelope, is that of land falling south from the Bower Hinton ridge line, which can be noted here as 'high' sensitivity due to its local prominence, and in forming part of the settlement's rural buffer, devoid of urban form as viewed from outside the settlement.

Visual Sensitivity Of Land At Martock's Edge

5.4 Consideration of the visual character of Martock's periphery can be broken into 4 zones, which broadly coincide with the four local character areas discussed in Section 3. These are identified thus;

- i) Land to the northeast of the disused rail-line;
- ii) The area between the eastward line of the disused railway and the line of the Parrett Trail east of Bower Hinton;
- iii) The Bower Hinton hillsides, and;
- iv) The westward Vale between Bower Hinton and Coat.

Area (i)

5.5 It is earlier noted that to the north and northeast of Martock all land falls gently towards the town and there is clear inter-visibility between external vantage points within the study area and Martock's edge. However the edge of town has a varying degree of prominence, depending upon the distance from public vantage points and the nature of intermediate elements. From the Coat Road and from Stapleton Cross, views are only available from field gateways off the public road, from which the town's edge is clearly visible despite intervening hedge lines (photos 11 and 12). Whilst this open land has value in separating the town from the wider countryside, it has a low visual profile and is thus graded 'moderate' sensitivity, other than the fields alongside the B3165 which have a wider public perception, and separate Stapleton Cross and Martock. These fields are graded 'high' sensitivity.

5.6 Northeast of Martock, there are few public vantage points towards the town, other than from field gateways off Ash Lane and rights of way that run toward it (photos 9 and 10). Here it can be noted that land against Martock's immediate edge cannot be easily discerned, due to the intervening lines of hedgerow and tree cover that separate viewer from edge. These fields are thus graded 'low' sensitivity. Conversely, land on the upper hillsides towards Ash and Foldhill Lane, are noted as being clearly rural in their visual expression, of a higher visual profile, and clearly divorced from the urban edge. Such land extends from Highway across to Ash Lane, across Foldhill Lane to the disused rail-line and is thus graded 'high' sensitivity. The intervening ground, which is divorced from the urban edge, yet of low visual profile, is graded 'moderate' sensitivity.

Area (ii)

5.7 It was earlier noted that in views from Ham Hill, much of Martock's edge below East Street, and by Hurst, is well buffered by adjacent mature trees and hedgerows. Such areas of buffering that lay outside the urban edge is thus graded 'high' sensitivity. The fields to the southeast of the town are mid – large scale and open. This degree of openness allows a potential for visual intrusion, for there are few landscape features to counter the presence of built form extending towards the A303 and Stoke sub Hamdon. Conversely, this open land is also seen (photo 1) as having value in separating Martock from settlements to the southeast and in providing a strong contrast with the intricacy of urban form. Land to the southeast of the town is thus graded 'high' sensitivity where clearly tying with the wider rural context, and 'moderate' where in closer proximity to the town and offering only a

small extent of visual containment. Small fields towards the urban edge, which have a low visual profile and are either buffered from external perception (as to the west of the Stoke Road poultry farm) or do not contribute to the settlement's visual containment (as by Dimmocks Lane) are graded 'low' sensitivity.

Area (iii)

5.8 The southward extent of the study area coincides with the hilltops that form the town's visual envelope, and this low shoulder of land both projects a strong rural expression, and draws the eye from both north and south, with the magnificent specimen oaks on Halletts Hill a distinctive feature. Similarly, the hillsides at the edge of Bower Hinton are prominent to wider view from both the east (photos 2 and 8) and west, where their raised profile above the general level of the Parrett Vale and the contribution of the specimen trees, mature hedgerows and orchards, which buffer the settlement from external perception to the west, inform a 'high' sensitivity grading throughout the area.

Area (iv)

5.9 For much of its length from Bower Hinton to the South Petherton road, the mature double hedgerows that form the green corridor of Broad Lane act to buffer the settlement from an external perception. This buffering quality also clearly separates land to the west, which is clearly part of the wider rural pattern and with no clear visual relationship to the town, from land with a minimal visual profile that lays alongside the mature edge of the village. Along the length of Broad Lane that hosts the Parrett Trail, the lane and the rural land to the west is thus graded 'high' sensitivity, whilst the visually enclosed land between the lane and the hamlet is graded 'low' sensitivity. Below South Petherton road, the green lane's hedgerows are cut short, enabling inter-visibility between the town and approaching roads. The fields immediately alongside the village edge, which have a low visual profile and present a degree of urban character, are thus graded 'low' sensitivity, whilst fields away from this edge are graded 'moderate'.

5.10 Between the South Petherton road and the course of the former rail-line towards Coat, the majority of Martock's immediate periphery is removed from wider public perception, being served only by local footpaths, and the lane that links Martock with Coat. Alongside this low visual profile, it is also noted that the edge of town is poorly contained in visual terms, with a strong development presence set against poorly articulated boundaries. Thus the fields at the town's west edge are all graded 'low' sensitivity, other than that adjacent the church, where a mature edge and strong tree presence buffers village form (photo 7) and local paths congregate to thus enable a greater level of public perception. This field is thus graded 'moderate' sensitivity. Conversely, to the west of this quadrant, the fields project a clear rural character, unrelated to urban form, and are clearly part of the town's wider rural surround. Additionally, to either side of the Coat road, they provide clear separation of Martock from Coat, to thus help preserve Coat's separate rural identity. These fields are thus graded 'high' sensitivity, whilst the area that lays between this area and those fields at Martock's immediate edge, are graded 'moderate', being low visual profile, yet removed from the urban edge and enjoying a degree of visual buffering from the town boundaries.

6) Value and Constraints

6.1 The study to date has already noted a number of landscape and historic features of value, and their intrinsic value will have already been weighted in the report. However, areas of wildlife value (and their margins) plus sites with specific cultural association or high recreational and amenity value are also considered, as are the topographical constraints of floodplain and slope, as factors that may limit potential - and thus a capacity - for development. These elements are indicated on figure 4; values and constraints.

6.2 There are no designated wildlife sites in close proximity to Martock, though areas of semi-improved grassland by the local streams, and the many thick hedges that align both the local droves and the disused rail-line, along with a number of relic orchards, are noted for their wildlife value.

6.3 The Parrett Trail regional long distance path passes east-west through Bower Hinton, linking the River Parrett with Ham Hill, whilst the many green lanes that encircle the town are a well-used recreational resource, along with the rights of way that act as links to the green lanes.

6.4 The historic core of Martock, Bower Hinton and Hurst are designated Conservation Areas, along with the centre of the hamlet of Coat, which is separate from Martock yet forms part of its parish. Where designated areas abut open land in historic association, a higher value is placed on such adjacent open land.

6.5 The River Parrett and its tributaries that separate Martock and Hurst have associated areas prone to flooding in proximity to the town, (identified as flood zone 2 by the EA) particularly along the Hurst brook/Madey Mill stream valley. Whilst only a partial constraint to development in the past, it is recognised that floodplain is regarded as an undesirable area for development, and without associated attenuation and balancing features being built into any development, its form, extent and type will be constrained by flood risk.

6.6 It is accepted that building over steep slopes is contrary to sustainability objectives, for the increased energy and resources expended in detailed cut and fill works; additional import and use of construction materials; and the difficulty of achieving appropriate urban densities, are all negative factors. Visually, building mass over rising ground is difficult to mitigate, and can be an adverse and dominant element in the townscape. Hence slopes in excess of 15° are noted as placing a constraint on development form, and will be factored into the capacity equation – whilst there appear to be few such areas within the study area, the hillsides around Bower Hinton are noted for a degree of visual prominence.

7) Landscape Capacity of Urban Periphery

7.1 In sections 4 and 5 of this report, both landscape character and visual sensitivities have been assessed, graded and mapped (figures 2 and 3). A landscape's capacity to accommodate built development will be the direct converse of the overall sensitivity judgement (a matrix representation of both character and visual sensitivities, see appendix 1) unless specific landscape values or development constraints are significant enough to reduce capacity one grade lower. The capacity plan for Martock resulting from application of the matrix is indicated on figure 5 – landscape capacity.

7.2 The resultant plan indicates the study area divided into 5 broad categorisations of landscape capacity to accommodate built development, graded high; moderate-high; medium; moderate-low; and low, coloured red; orange; yellow; green and blue respectively. As the aim of this study is to identify land that has the capacity to be developed without too adverse an impact upon the landscape resource, it follows that those areas categorised as high and moderate-high capacity, and in a credible relationship with the town, should be investigated as potential development sites.

7.3 Three potential areas for development can thus be identified on the landscape capacity plan being;

- i) land to either side of the disused rail-line NW of the town, by Martock trading estate;
- ii) land to the immediate west edge of Martock's residential area, laying between the primary school and the Coat road, and;
- iii) land to the east of Martock (part of the key site allocation within the 1998 Deposit Draft SSLP).

7.4 **Area (i)** indicates two small fields that lay to either side of the disused rail line, at Martock's northwest edge. They abut the Coat brook to the north, beyond which lay open fields, similarly so to the west. Martock's main employment buildings are set alongside their east boundary, whilst a shorter southern boundary separates these fields from the Newtown residential area. The field boundaries are denoted by trimmed hedgerows, and the aspect of the ground is generally open, countered only by taller scrub alongside the rail line. With employment buildings in close proximity, a potential for further employment development would seem appropriate here, providing the sensitivities of the proximity of Coat and the low skyline to the north are respected.

7.5 Four fields (**area ii**) are indicated laying alongside Martock's immediate west edge, stretching south from the Coat road, to a strong hedgerow boundary that extends west into open countryside from the side of the village school. These fields are contained by residential form to north and east, whilst robust hedgerows mark their west and southern boundaries, with open fields beyond. The site has a low visual profile, and with housing a consistent presence along the current urban edge, residential development would appear to be the most appropriate form of development in this location, though the landscape has the capacity to accommodate some low-scale employment form also.

7.6 **Area (iii)** indicates four pasture fields alongside the town's northeast edge, within the general location identified as a key site for development in SSDC's 1998 Deposit Draft development plan (which occupied a larger area). The fields are well hedged, with a low visual profile, and lay against housing development to west and south, open fields to north and east, and contain a small recreational space that obtrudes into the area that serves the existing residential area. As housing again characterises the built edge, further residential development would appear to be the most appropriate growth option here. The potential to resurrect the former key site proposal, within which this study indicates land of moderate – low capacity for development, is not discounted, but reviewed further in the following section.

7.7 Finally, there are four individual fields at different locations around the settlement's periphery, which are indicated on the capacity plan as having a moderate-high capacity for development. However, the plots lack a credible relationship with the general housing pattern in close proximity, and are of insufficient scale to offer a strategic development option. The areas are thus noted as having limited potential, and discounted from further investigation here.

8) Outline Proposals

8.1 Three potential areas of development have been identified by the landscape capacity plan, and their potential uses outlined in the previous section, paras 7.3 - 7.5. This final section of the report provides further guidance on the form of development acceptable in landscape terms, any necessary mitigation, and an indication of the potential extent of development.

8.2 To the west side of Martock's employment estate, an area circa 2.70 ha is indicated for an expansion of the town's employment land (area i). Whilst well-defined by the local field pattern, the site is relatively open, and some landscape treatment would be needed to provide visual buffering from both Coat to the west and where the site may be seen as skyline, from lower vantage points to the south. An area of 0.2 ha set aside for structural landscape treatment allows the remaining 2.50 ha to be utilised for employment form.

8.3 The four fields alongside the town's current west edge (area ii) approximate to an area of 8.25 ha. There is potential for small-scale employment structures in this location, should need determine, though housing would appear the likelier option given adjoining residential form. With compact urban form characterising the current urban edge, and with the site's general low visual profile, housing densities in the range of 40 – 50 dph would appear feasible here. Commensurate recreational and open space to the current local plan standards would determine 1.50 ha set aside for playing fields and informal open space whilst structural landscape provision, primarily related to the site's west and south boundaries, would broadly equate to 0.75 ha, leaving 6.00 ha available for housing development.

8.4 Alongside Martock's northeast edge, an area circa 6.5 ha is indicated as having a capacity for residential development (area iii). In being contained against the current housing edge, and similar to area (ii) in having a low visual profile, densities of 40-50 would again appear feasible in this context. Commensurate recreational and open space provision would equate to 1.15ha, with a further 0.75 ha set aside for structural landscape provision, primarily concentrated on treatment of the site's outer edge. This would leave an area of 4.60ha to dedicate to residential development.

8.5 The option of revisiting the key site is not advocated by this landscape study, as the former key site contains land of moderate – low capacity for development, as assessed by this study. However, should the key site area be proposed by others, then an option to explore would be to utilise the more sensitive land for a strategic recreation and open space allocation for the town's use. Of an overall area circa 16ha, the more sensitively graded land covers 3.90ha, which would provide sufficient recreational space for both growth areas (ii) and (iii). With an allowance of 1.10ha structural landscape provision, to deal with boundary and internal treatment, 11ha is made available for housing development, at the densities noted para 5.4, other than at the site's southern end, where the sensitivities associated with land that is rising gently, would determine moderate densities, circa 35-45 dph.

8.6 In summary, the following areas are put forward as having potential for development by this study:

- (i) By the rail line - 2.50 ha employment
0.20 ha structural landscape provision
- (ii) W of Martock - 6.00 ha residential (>50 dph)
1.50 recreational and open space
0.75 ha structural landscape provision
- (iii) E of Martock - 4.60 ha residential (>50 dph)
1.15 ha recreational + open space
0.75 ha structural landscape provision

8.7 The option of revisiting the key site allocation of SSDC's 1998 deposit draft plan may be favoured by other parties, although it is not the proposal arising from this study. However, if developed as suggested in para 8.5, the potential land available for development is then increased as follows.

- (i) By the rail line - 2.50 ha employment
0.20 ha structural landscape provision
- (ii-a) W of Martock - 6.75 ha residential (>50 dph)
1.50 ha structural landscape and open space
- (iii-a) E of Martock - 11.00 ha residential (40 – 45 dph)
3.90 ha strategic recreational and open space
1.10 ha structural landscape provision

8.8 The capacity study indicates that Martock has scope for landscape – sympathetic growth with the above sites as summarised para 8.6, offering a potential total of 10.60 ha residential land, which if built out at an average of 45 dwellings per hectare, equates to a minimum of 475 houses. The study also provides an initial indication of 2.50 ha being available for employment. However, should the option of revisiting the 1998 deposit draft plan's key site allocation be favoured, then there is a potential 20.25 ha available to be split between residential and employment use as potential need dictates. Should areas (ii-a) and (iii-a) be required for residential development, then there is an upper potential for 770 houses to be allocated toward Martock's future growth, as may be determined by a wider appraisal of the town's needs.

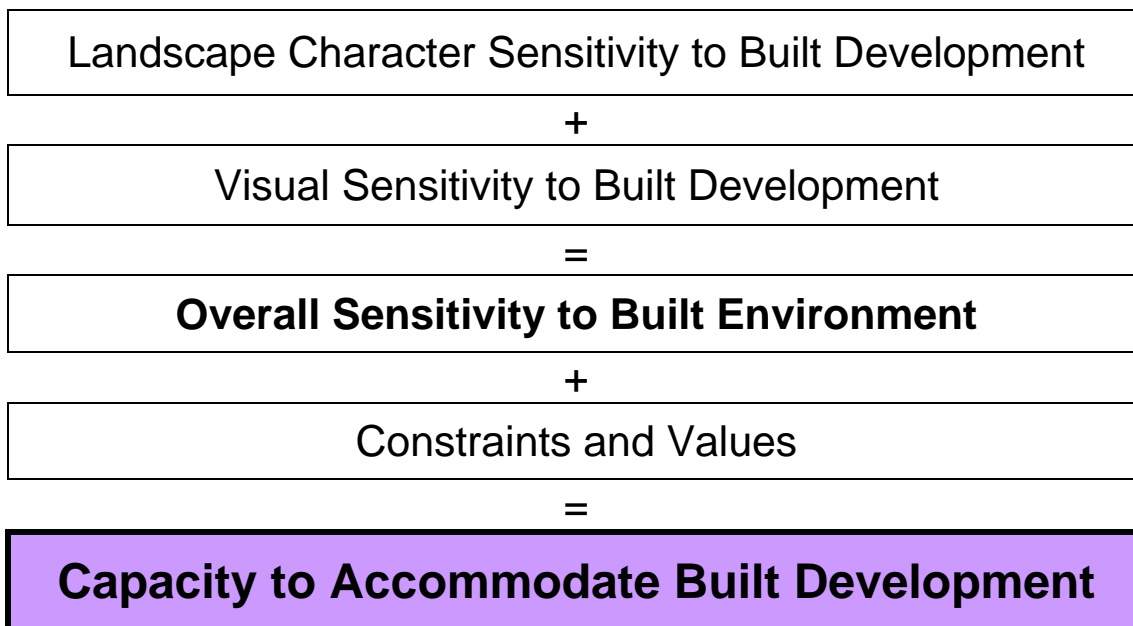
From this capacity study, potential growth areas are indicated that lay within the town's prime setting, in clear relationship with the town's built form, and avoiding land of high landscape sensitivity. Such location thus offers the scope for planned development that does not adversely impact upon the wider setting of Martock, or its landscape context, consistent with the prime objectives of this study.

Robert Archer
4 July 2008

Peripheral landscape study – Martock
Appendix 1 - landscape capacity matrix

Landscape Capacity Matrix:

A landscape's capacity to accommodate built development will be the direct converse of the overall sensitivity judgement (a matrix representation of both character and visual sensitivities) unless specific landscape values or development constraints are significant enough to reduce capacity one grade lower.



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY	Low	Moderate	Moderate High	High Capacity
	Moderate	Moderate Low	Moderate Capacity	Moderate High
	High	Low Capacity	Moderate Low	Moderate
		High	Moderate	Low
		VISUAL SENSITIVITY		

Landscape Capacity Matrix

Peripheral landscape study – Martock

Appendix 3 - photos



Photo 1: From Ham Hill, looking NNW over Stoke sub Hamdon in the foreground toward Martock, with the open fields emphasising separation.



Photo 2: From Ham Hill, looking NW over Stoke sub Hamdon toward Bower Hinton in the middle distance, where the scale of the employment buildings draw the eye.



Photo 3: Looking N from the Stoke Road across the Hurst brook valley, with East Street's housing partially buffered by planting, and Madey Mills in the middle ground.



photo 4: East of Bower Hinton, looking over the playing fields (as denoted by the poplar line) toward Martock's eastward extent that runs alongside the former rail-line.



photo 5: Looking north over Bower Hinton's employment allocation toward Martock in its valley location (with the church tower central).



photo 6: looking east from Broad Lane, toward the allotment gardens on Hurst's west side, with little evidence of the housing beyond.



photo 7: Looking east toward Martock Church, where the town's edge is well buffered, from the right of way crossing farmland to the N of Mill Brook.



photo 8: Looking south from Foldhill Lane toward Bower Hinton, with the specimen oaks on Halletts Hill a prominent skyline feature.



photo 9: Looking west from Ash Lane over Martock's east edge, with the light roofs of the trading estate off the Stapleton road evident.



photo 10: Looking west from Foldhill Lane over the residential core of Martock, with the open fields of the Parrett vale beyond.



photo 11: Looking toward Martock's northwest edge with its mix of employment buildings and residential form, viewed from the east edge of Coat.

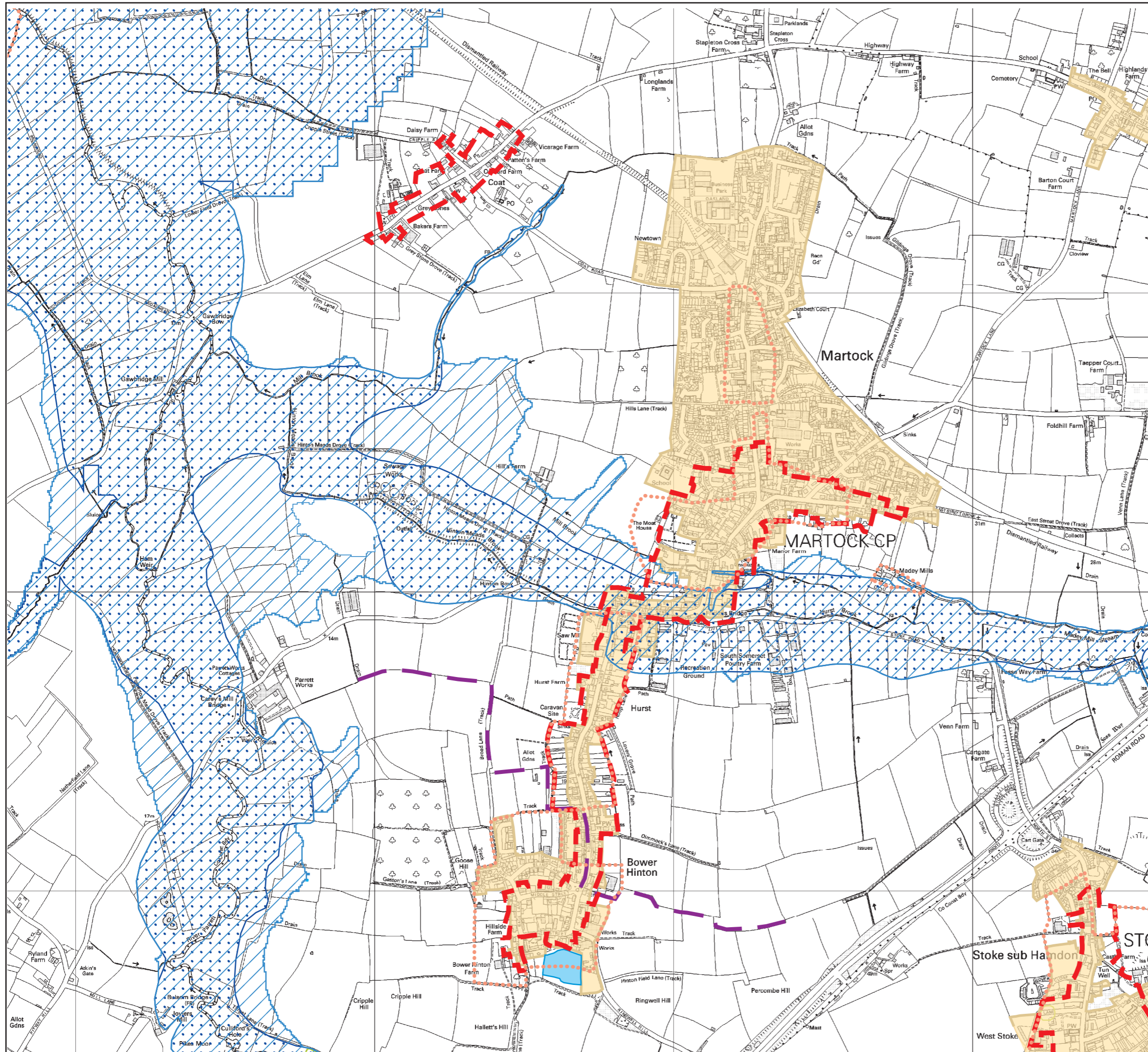






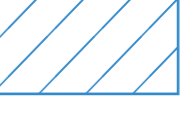
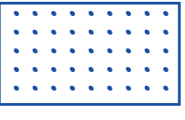

Photo 12: Martock's north edge runs alongside the Coat Brook, as viewed from Stapleton Cross.

Peripheral landscape study – Martock

Appendix 4 - plans

Figure 4 - Value & Constraints Martock







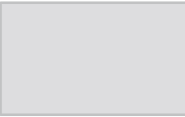



-  Development Area
-  Conservation Area
-  Area of High Archaeological Potential
-  Employment Allocations
-  Flood Zone 2
-  Flood Zone 3
- (The above categories as defined in the South Somerset Local Plan)
-  Route of the Parrett Trail

not to scale



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Figure 3 - Visual Sensitivity Martock

-  Prime line of Visual Containment
-  Photo Vantage Points
-  Lines of photo vantage outside study area
-  Long distance views of Martock from:
1 & 2 - Ham Hill
3 - South Petherton
4 - Burrow Hill
5 - Tintinhull
-  Local Plan built allocation
-  Area of low visual sensitivity
-  Area of moderate visual sensitivity
-  Area of high visual sensitivity

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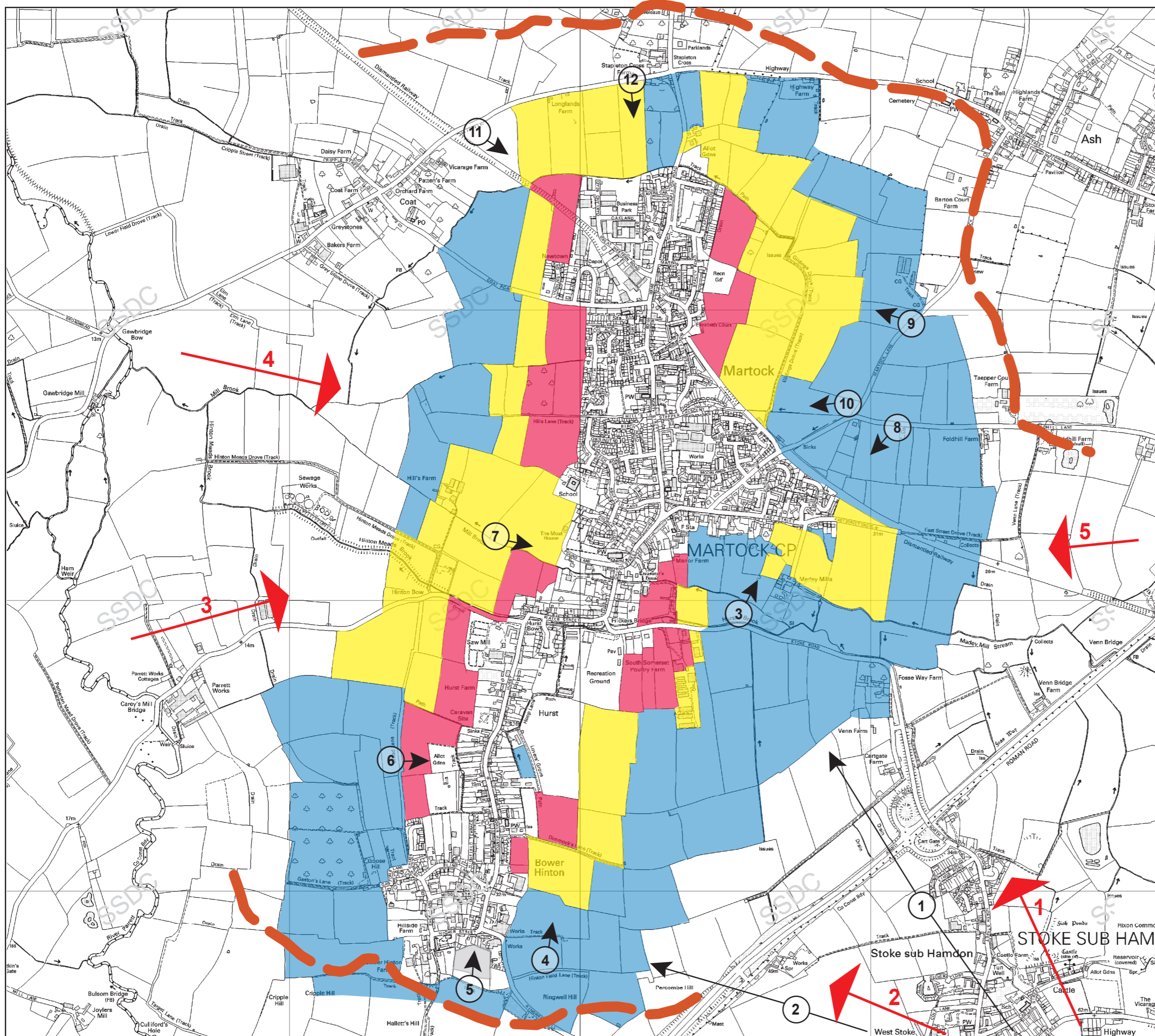
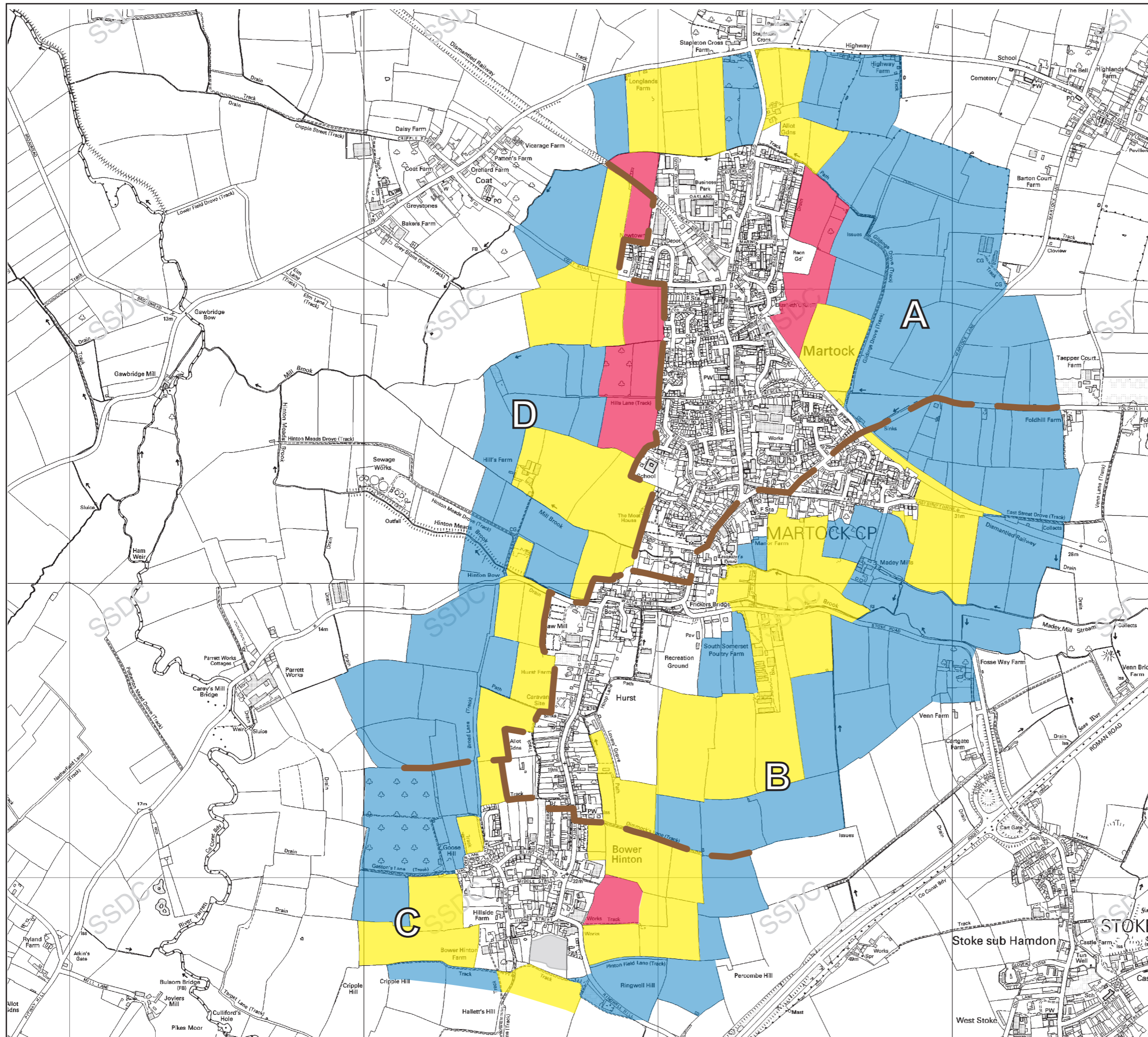

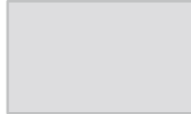






Figure 2 - Landscape Sensitivity Martock



 Local Landscape Character Areas

- A - Shallow hillsides North & North East of Martock
- B - The Hurst Brook Vale
- C - Bower Hinton Low Hills
- D - Parrett Vale

-  Local Plan allocations & development sites
-  Area of low landscape sensitivity
-  Area of moderate landscape sensitivity
-  Area of high landscape sensitivity


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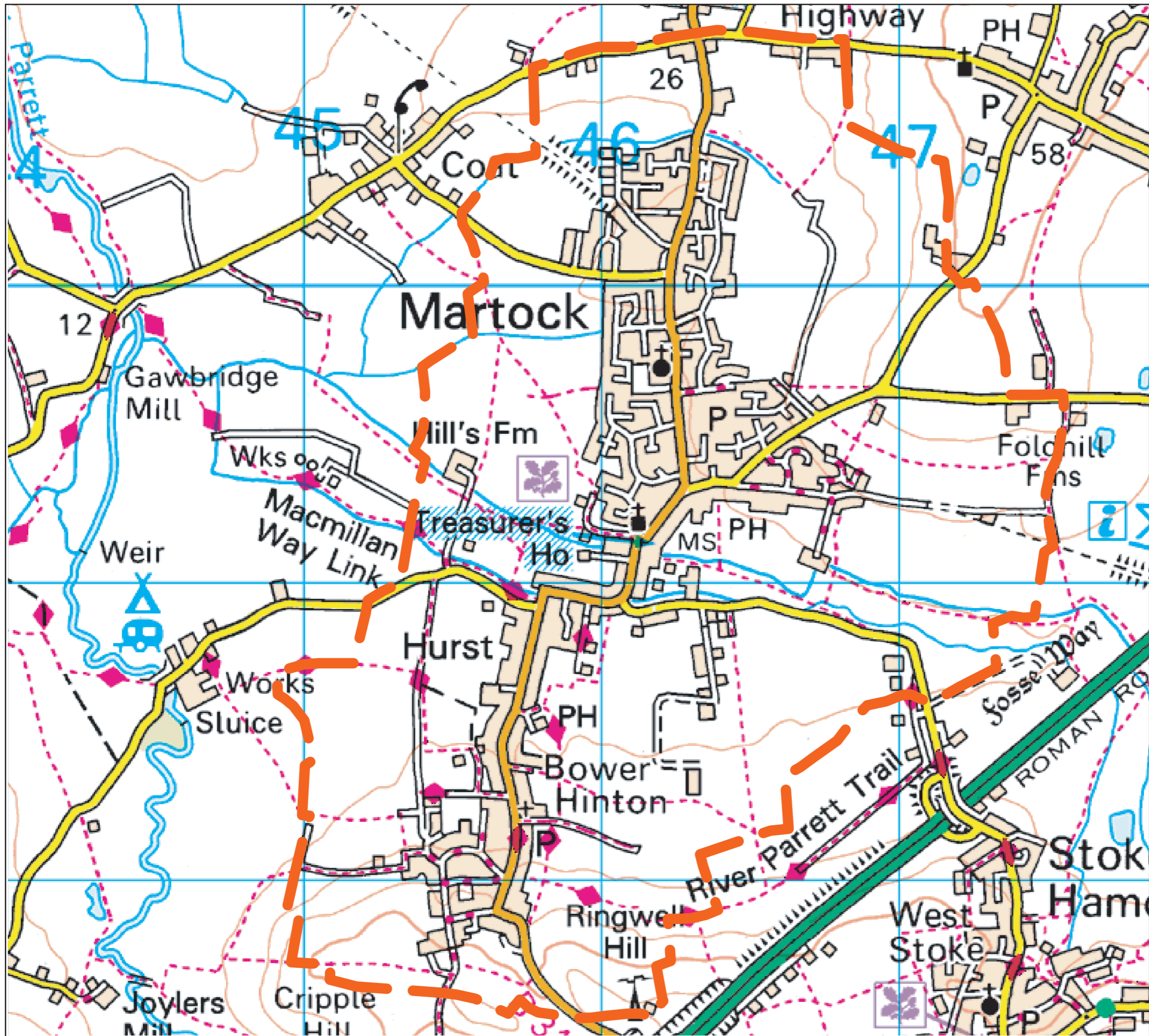



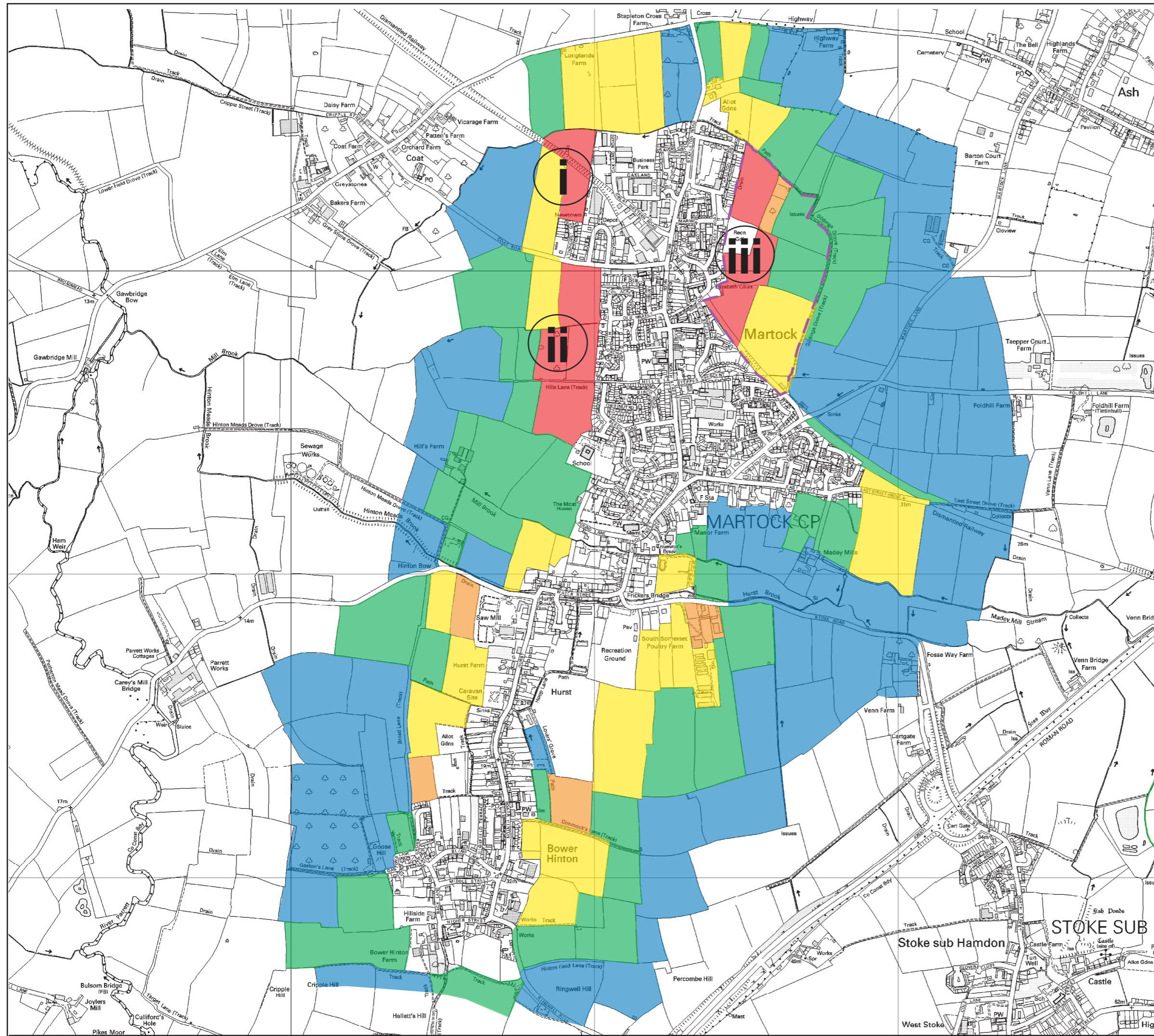
Figure 1 -
Context
Martock








 Study Area

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Figure 5 - Landscape Capacity Martock



-  Landscape with a high capacity to accommodate built development
-  Landscape with a moderate - high capacity to accommodate built development
-  Landscape with a moderate capacity to accommodate built development
-  Landscape with a moderate - low capacity to accommodate built development
-  Landscape with a low capacity to accommodate built development
-  Potential development areas
-  Fields within the South Somerset Local Plan Deposit Draft 1998

not to scale



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