Taunton Deane Green Wedge Assessment June 2015

Introduction
Green Wedges have been protected through policy in Taunton Deane since the East Taunton local Plan publication of 1991. The policy wording has changed little during that time. Currently the policy states that:

Key policy objectives of Green Wedges are to:

- Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighborhoods;
- Maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents;
- Bring the countryside into the heart of town;
- Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play;
- Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat;
- Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity; and
- Provide a positive approach to land use.

However during that time there have been a number of appeals and Local Plan Inquiries that have directly challenged the Council’s approach and designation. Aware of that the Council’s Strategic Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel of 16th November 2006 resolved that:

a) Green Wedges be considered as integrated environmental and social resources (and their Local Designation status should be retained). This would ensure protection was afforded to the wide range of attributes that contributed to, and made up, the open spaces.

b) An assessment be undertaken of existing Green Wedge boundaries and a consistent approach be applied to justify definitive lines that would withstand public inquiry scrutiny.

c) The individual function of Green Wedge areas within the Taunton Deane Local Plan be identified and stated and that the appropriate policy be separated in two:- i Rural buffers and strategic gaps; and ii Green wedges.

The following report has undertaken the green wedge assessment but has not assessed rural buffers or strategic gaps.

This report will describe the methodology used, assess and map individual green wedges and their functions and where changes are proposed to the existing Local Plan boundaries justify those changes through reasoned argument.

Methodology
In order to undertake the green wedge assessment the following sources have been used:

- Borough Wide Landscape Character Assessment 2011
- Taunton Urban Fringe Capacity Study 2005
- Earlier updated assessment from the 2004 Local Plan Inquiry
• Aerial photographs – TDBC 2001 and Google maps
• OS maps

In addition, site visits have been carried out to assess:
• Vegetation cover;
• Topography;
• Distance across existing and proposed green wedges;
• Urban edge character;
• Intervisibility; and
• Intravisibility

The assessment has been carried out in accordance with the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ Third Edition, 2013

Analysis of the survey information has been used to refine boundaries to existing green wedges and define new green wedge boundaries. Where changes are proposed to boundaries a short explanation has been provided.

Two new GW at East Wellington - Cades to Jurston and Comeytrowe are required to provide a positive approach to land use planning as part of the development of the Local Plan.

INDIVIDUAL GREEN WEDGE ASSESSMENTS

Individual green wedge assessments have been carried out for the existing five green wedges and the two new green wedges of Comeytrowe and East Wellington – between Cades and Jurston. They are:

1  East Taunton
2  Vivary and Cotlake Hill
3  Silk Mills
4  Staplegrove
5  Comeytrowe
6  West Wellington and Rockwell green
7  East Wellington - Cades to Jurston

Each assessment has looked at the landscape character, historic features, topography and drainage, nature conservation, carried out a visual assessment and landscape analysis. Proposed changes to boundaries of existing green wedges have been identified and justification provided.
1 EAST TAUNTON -BATHPOOL & MONKTON HEATHFIELD
GREEN WEDGE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Location and Wider Setting of the Green Wedge

The green wedge is located to the north-east of Taunton in an area of mainly agricultural land between the largely residential land of Priorswood, Bathpool and Monkton Heathfield. The underlying landscape character of the areas has been described in the Borough wide Landscape Character Assessment as ‘Farmed and Settled Low Vale’ and ‘River Flood Plain’, see appendix A

Main features of the east Taunton, Bathpool and Monkton Heathfield green wedge

The area is typical of the ‘Low Vale’ and ‘River Flood Plain’, see appendixes Bi and B ii landscape character. The area is low lying with mixed agriculture isolated farmsteads and medium sized fields bounded by predominantly elm hedgerows.

Field patterns and hedgerows

Hedgerow loss since the 1840's has been considerable due principally to changing agricultural practices. Average field size within the area is about 2 to 4 hectares. This compares with about 1 to 2 hectares from the 1840's. Within the River Flood Plain area the fields are generally smaller, with straighter edges and often only occur as drainage ditches as are typical on the Somerset Levels and Moors.

The dominant hedgerow species is elm although this has only occurred as elm suckers since the 1970's when the mature elm trees died and were felled as a result of Dutch elm disease. Other common hedgerow species included hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly with standard trees of oak and ash.

Agriculture and land use

Predominantly mixed use arable and pasture land.

Tree, woodland and orchard cover

Within the area there is no significant woodland cover although there are small copses and larger groups of hedgerow trees. The dominant trees of the area are ash, oak, poplar and willow.

Orchards are an important feature of the area although the main area of remaining orchard today is around Tanpitt’s Farm. The farm still produces cider commercially.

Nature conservation value

The main features of wildlife interest are the River Tone, watercourses,
ponds, the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and remaining hedgerows. The area also includes an area of amenity interest managed by the Borough Council and known as the Children’s Wood and Hankridge Local Nature Reserve. The area is managed for its ecological and amenity value. The farmed land is ‘improved’ with limited ecological value.

Drainage

The drainage pattern within the landscape is principally draining from higher ground to the north to the lower lying River Tone to the south with the River Tone flowing in a west to east direction. The Bridgwater to Taunton Canal lies just to the north of the River Tone and also flows in a west to east direction.

The course of the River Tone was considerably engineered during the 1970's to reduce flooding within Taunton and now follows a much straighter course than its original meandering and braided course.

Transport

The area of assessment contains several major transport routes including the main rail line link, the main access route to Taunton from the M5 Motorway (Toneway) and the A38 Bridgwater Road. These are major features within the local landscape.

Visual Assessment

The main views into the proposed Green Wedge are from:
- Toneway, Creechbarrow Hill and Lane Estate Open Space to the south;
- Bridgwater Road (A38);
- A3259, Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and the main railway line running through the middle; and
- Some areas of higher ground to the north; and
- M5 Motorway.

The main views out of the area are towards:
- the Quantock Hills to the north;
- Creech Barrow Hill and the distant Blackdown Hills to the south; and
- The built up areas of north Taunton to the west and Monkton Heathfield to the east.

Buildings and Historic Character

Within the green wedge there are several important Listed farm buildings, namely: Maidenbrook Farm, Pyrland Farm, Rowford House, Nerrols Farm, Old Ham Wharf Farm and Rex Hill Farmhouse. Cheddon Fitzpaine church tower is a landmark feature from some areas of the Green Wedge. The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, built in 1827, is one of the major industrial heritage features of the area as well as being an important wildlife corridor. Creech Castle is a landmark building.

Building Materials
The traditional building materials of the area, as used in the local farm buildings, are Welsh slate, clay tiles and thatch for roofing and bricks, rubble and render and stone as the main building materials.

**Intrusive Features**

The main intrusive features of the area are:

- the Toneway, Bridgwater Road and the A3259 which are intrusive because of the noise of traffic and its movement as seen across the landscape between gaps in hedgerows, especially during the winter, and from higher ground.
- the intermittent movement and noise of trains travelling along the main rail line;
- the visual intrusion of the high voltage power lines that run north-east to south-west across the area;
- the residential areas of housing to the east and west of the area.
- The Waste and recycling Centre

**Enhancement and Management of the proposed Green Wedge**

Management of hedgerows, particularly elm dominated hedgerows, on a regular basis will help to maintain them for their health and as a screen to the movement of cars along the busier roads. There is little than can be done to reduce the noise of traffic but psychologically having the vehicles screened helps to reduce their impact. Where possible trees should be left to mature every 20 – 25 metres within the hedgerows as this will also help to soften the visual impact of traffic and housing.

Small blocks of woodland and copses would help to soften the visual impact of existing and new housing and would help to break up the longer views across the site from Creechbarrow Hill and the higher ground to the north.

**Landscape Analysis**

The central feature of this green wedge is the river Tone and its close environs stretching from the town centre as far as the M5 motorway. However, there is also a significant northern branch which provides separation between Priorswood and Maidenbrook to the west and Yallands Hill to the east.

The river corridor is narrow and hemmed in to an extent by the railway to the north and Toneway to the south but does offer an attractive pedestrian and cycle corridor for commuters and general enjoyment and is part of the Council’s Green Infrastructure route in and out of town. Further enhancement of the area through tree and hedgerow planting is not practical because of flood control measures but the existing vegetation has yet to fully mature so there is still potential for greater tree coverage within the existing stock.

Where the green wedge extends north there are several pinch points where,
because of topography, the area needs substantial planting to avoid a feeling of coalescence such as at Maidenbrook and Yallands along the A3259. Establishment of a community woodland within this area would help to create a greater feeling of separation.

To the north of the A3259 the topography in the central area of the green wedge is mounded and provides good visual separation between edges of the green wedge and future development sites. Significant landscape buffers to ‘urban edge’ grading will be essential if the new development is to respect the function of the green wedge.

Proposed changes

Additions
A1 it is proposed to extend the green wedge westwards along the River Tone to Firepool Weir as it provides a key link into the heart of Taunton from the east.
A2 Creechbarrow Hill is currently designated as a special landscape feature but could equally be designated within the green wedge.
A3 the playing field near to Maidenbrook Farm is adjacent to the existing green wedge boundary. It provides additional green space in a narrow part of the wedge and is therefore considered worthy of inclusion.
A4 the small triangle of land adjacent to the Allen’s Brook to the south of the A3259 is proposed to carry the eastern relief road link. However, it could provide some additional green space at a critically narrow part of the green wedge.

Deletions
B1 this area has been designated for housing in the Core Strategy and can therefore no longer be considered as green wedge.
B2 this area has been designated for housing in the Core Strategy and can therefore no longer be considered as green wedge.
B3 this area has been designated for employment land in the Core Strategy and can therefore no longer be considered as green wedge.
Location and Wider Setting of the Green wedge

The area lies due south of the centre of Taunton between the built up residential areas of Blackbrook to the east and Sherford and Trull to the west. The underlying landscape character of the area has been described in the Borough wide Landscape Character Assessment as Taunton Deane Farmed and Settled Low Vale, and Farmed and Settled High Vale see appendix A

Main Features

The dominant feature of the green wedge is the Special Landscape Feature of Cotlake Hill. The hill rises to a height of approximately 70 metres. The area is currently bordered to the east by the Blackbrook and Stockwell Stream and is bordered to the west by the foot of the Trull ridgeline and the Sherford Stream.

The limit of the Green Wedge to the north is bounded by Vivary Park and to the south by the M5 Motorway which runs north-east to south-west.

Field Patterns and Hedgerows

The hedgerows are predominantly elm, hazel, hawthorn and holly typical of the Settled and Farmed Low Vale within the Deane. The hedgerow losses during the last 160 years, as indicated on the 1840 Tithe Maps of the area, have been significant. This is probably due to changing farming practices and the use of larger machinery. The field sizes vary throughout the Green Wedge depending on land use from small fields of pasture to medium to large fields of arable.

Agriculture and Land Use

Agriculture of the area is mixed although it is predominantly arable with some mixed vegetable growing as well. The quality of the land varies between grade 2 to the north to grade 3b and 4 to the south

Trees, Woodland and Orchard Cover

The main tree cover is along the streams to both the east and west of the wedge. There is little woodland cover but there are occasional copses such as at the highest part of Cotlake Hill. There is some commercial orchard to the south of Amberd Lane and other pockets of remnant orchard in the south western part of the wedge.

Nature Conservation Interest

The main wildlife interest of the area is along the streams and hedgerows. Several bats use the area and dormice are present in hedgerows.

Drainage

The streams run north towards the River Tone on either side of the higher ground of Cotlake Hill.
**Transport**

There are only minor roads accessing the Green Wedge. They run east from Trull but do not link through to the Blackbrook / killams area. The East Deane way runs north south through the wedge.

**Visual Assessment**

The main views into the area are from:
- The M5 Motorway;
- Amberd and Poundisford Lanes; and
- The open spaces of Vivary Park and Killams
- There are more distant views, especially of Cotlake Hill from: Chestnut Drive, the Quantocks and the Blackdown Hills.

The main views out from the Green Wedge are from:
- Cotlake Hill where there are fine views across the Green Wedge and beyond to Taunton, The Blackdowns and Trull.

**Historic Features**

The main historic feature within the wedge is Vivary Park which contains several Listed structures.

The Park Pale of Pondisford Park, a registered Park and Garden, lies to the south west of the wedge adjacent to the M5 motorway

**Building and Historic Character**

There are several listed buildings within the wedge mainly within the south west quarter of the area including several farms and a country house.

**Local Building Materials**

The local building materials include chert, render and red brick with roofs of predominantly slate but with some thatch and tile.

**Intrusive Features**

The main intrusive features are the M5 Motorway which is both noisy and visually busy from the southern parts of the wedge and the general built up areas around the perimeter of the area.

**Enhancement and Management of the Green Wedge**

The hedgerows within the central part of the green wedge contain predominantly low hedges with little tree cover. Allowing trees to grow up and mature within the hedgerows at 25 –30 metre spacing would give the area a more intimate enclosed feel.
The M5 Motorway could be better screened with trees and linear woodland planting.

**Landscape analysis**

The Vivary and Cotlake Hill Green wedge stretching from Taunton Town Centre, at its narrowest point, to the M5 motorway in the south, at its widest point, consists of mainly agricultural land. It contains Cotlake hill Special landscape feature, a prominent landscape feature in the local area.

There is no vehicular access across the wedge effectively separating the Trull area from the Killams/Blackbrook Area.

**Proposed changes**

**Deletions**

B1 Land to the north of Amberd Lane – this area has been granted planning permission for housing.

B2 Land at Killams – this area has been granted planning permission for housing.
3 SILK MILLS GREEN WEDGE’ LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Location and Wider Setting of the Green Wedge

The proposed ‘Green Wedge’ extends into Taunton from the west, with Norton Fitzwarren and Staplegrove areas to the north and Bishops Hull to the south. The underlying landscape character of the area has been described in the Borough wide Landscape Character Assessment as ‘River Floodplain’, see appendix A

Main Features

The dominant features of the Green Wedge are the River Tone which flows through the centre of it; the railway track that bounds it to the north; Silk Mills Road which cuts through it running north and south; the industrial units to the north of the railway track; the SCAT buildings to the south and the Special Landscape Feature of Stonegallows Ridge at Netherclay to the south west of the wedge. There are several Local Nature Reserves located within the wedge

Field Patterns and Hedgerows

The hedgerows are predominantly elm, hawthorn and hazel but are generally in poor condition. The fields are generally large with significant hedgerow loss since the Tithe Maps of the 1840's.

Agriculture and Land Use

The agriculture of the area is mixed with summer pasture and arable. The land is predominantly grade 2 except to the south of the river where the land is grade 3a and 3b. A park and Ride Facility is located within the wedge

Trees, Woodland and Orchard Cover

The main tree cover is along the banks of the River Tone where willow and alder dominate. There is a small block of woodland towards French Weir and the Local Nature Reserve of Netherclay Community Woodland to the north of the river at Bishops Hull. Otherwise the only tree cover is trees within the hedgerows.

Nature Conservation Interest

The main conservation interest within the wedge is along the River Tone, its tributaries and the hedgerows. The River Tone is a designated Local Wildlife Site and is important for Daubenton bats.

Drainage

This is a low lying area dominated by the River Tone which runs west to east. There are smaller tributaries and ditches that feed into the river from both the south and north.
Transport

The main transport routes are the busy Silk Mills Road which runs north and south and the main line railway which runs east and west. The area is well served by public footpaths including a section of the West Deane Way

Visual Assessment

The main views into the area are from:
• Silk Mills Road and Park and Ride site;
• The railway track; and
• Public footpaths that cross the wedge.

The main views out of the wedge are from public footpaths towards:
• Warehouses to the north of the railway track;
• The Park and Ride;
• Built up residential areas to the south;
• Norton Hillfort;
• The Stonegallows Ridge at Netherclay; and
• Open countryside to the west.

Historic Features

The remains of the Grand Western Canal cross the site running east and west. There are occasional artefacts, such as remains of culverts, but generally the canal’s former route is shown by changes in ground level.

Buildings and Historic Character

There are only two listed buildings within the wedge. They are Roughmoor House and Bridge House in Bishops Hull.

Building Materials

Both the above listed buildings are rendered with slate roofs and brick stacks

Intrusive Features

The main intrusive features of the area are:
• The warehouses to the north of the railway track;
• The park and ride site;
• The railway traffic;
• The traffic passing along the Silk Mills Road; and
• The electricity pylons that traverse the area.

Enhancement and Management of the Green Wedge

The following management and enhancement works would help to reinforce the underlying character of the Green Wedge and help to soften some of the more
visually intrusive features.
· Management of the existing hedgerows with trees singled to encourage them to mature.
· Screen planting along the southern part of the railway track to soften the impact of the warehouse units to the north of the railway track and the railway traffic.
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Landscape analysis

This large green wedge to the west of Taunton consists of an area of floodplain with the River Tone being an important landscape and visual resource. There is a feeling of a sense of place due to the surrounding urban area and views to landmark buildings on the skyline. Tree cover along the River and the new community woodland near Bishops Hull and the community orchard at Frieze Hill provide a sense of semi enclosure in this open flat area.

Land use is varied and there is a strong sense of a landscape in transition

**Proposed changes**

**Extensions**

A1 Weirfield Green – the area is a Local Nature Reserve and follows the line of the old Grand Western Canal which provides significant amenity to the local area.

A2 Castle School – Small area of open space to the north of Castle School which is close to the Longrun Meadow.

**Deletions**

B1 Railway Sidings - given the distance across the GW this area is not required to avoid coalescence and if the area were developed in the future a much better landscape edge could be provided.

B2 Somerset College approach drive – given the distance across the GW this area is not required to avoid coalescence.

B3 Shutewater – given the distance across the GW this area is not required to avoid coalescence and if the area were developed in the future a much better landscape edge could be provided.
Location and Wider Setting of the Green Wedge

The proposed Green Wedge lies in an area between the north eastern part of Taunton and to the south of Staplegrove Village. The underlying landscape character of the area has been described in the Borough wide Landscape Character Assessment as ‘Farmed and Settled Low Vale’, see appendix A.

Main Features

The main features of the proposed Green Wedge is the very gently undulating pastural landscape and sports recreational area defined by the surrounding housing and rear gardens. A number of the gardens contain large growing broadleaf and conifer trees which give the area a semi parkland setting.

Field Patterns and Hedgerows

The dominant species within the hedgerows are elm, hazel and hawthorn typical of the ‘Low Vale’ landscape character. There are some mature trees within the hedgerows but they do not give much enclosure within the area itself.

Agriculture and Land Use

The agricultural land is predominantly grade 2 with a small amount of grade 3b. As well as the pasture and playing fields there is also an area of allotments.

Trees, Woodland and Orchard Cover

There is little tree or woodland cover within the Green Wedge itself, although the area is generally surrounded by parkland type broadleaf and conifer trees with some woodland planting to the north east and a small copse on Corksrew Lane.

Nature Conservation Interest

The area has potential for bats, including lesser horseshoe, as well as potential for Great Crested newts. Badgers are known to forage within the wedge and use it as a route to other areas. The hedgerows provide some cover for wildlife and act as corridors across the wedge.

Drainage

Although not having a prominent visual presence, the Mill Lease Stream runs north to south across the eastern end of the Green Wedge and there is a pond along the south western boundary of the site.

Transport

Corksrew lane runs in an east–west direction through the wedge. The only other road provides access to the sports pavilions. The West Deane Way recreational route passes through the western section of the wedge.
Visual Assessment

The main views into the area are from:
- the Staplegrove Road to the west;
- the two public footpaths that cross the wedge running north and south; and
- Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane that run along the northern edge of the wedge.

The main views out from the area are of:
- the surrounding houses and their back gardens; and
- the village and church of Staplegrove.
- The Quantock hills

Historic Features

There are no visible historic features within the wedge although there is a site of Archaeological Interest to the west of the wedge.

Buildings and Historic Character

There are three listed buildings just outside the proposed Green Wedge. They are: The Church of St.John and Kibby's Farm to the North West and 222 Staplegrove Road to the south west. They contain roughcast render over cob and rubble and Blue Lias rubble walls and slate and clay tile roofs.

Building Materials

The more general building materials of the area are brick with slate and tile roofs.

Intrusive Features

Floodlighting in connection with Taunton Vale Sports Club on the skyline
There are glimpses of pylons to the north of the wedge

Enhancement and Management of the Green Wedge

Within the field hedgerows there is scope for growing on trees and managing dying elms within the hedgerows. There would be scope within the surrounding private gardens to encourage larger growing broadleaf and conifer trees to reinforce the existing tree character of the area.

Landscape analysis

This green wedge plays an important role in extending the countryside into the town and providing a break in the urban form. There is a sense of containment afforded by the development to the east, west and south. Geographically the wedge provides a strong sense of separation between the village of Staplegrove with its conservation area and the north west of Taunton.
Proposed changes

Additions
A1 - Taunton School – playing field
Area of playing field to the south-east of the sports centre.
A2 - Play area near church
Small play area and open space to the north of the GW near to Staplegrove church.
A3 – Northern extension to the area in line with potential future development.
5. COMEYTROWE GREEN WEDGE ASSESSMENT

Location and Wider Setting of the Green Wedge
The GW is located to the south west of Taunton along the line of Galmington stream running from south west to north east of the area.

Main Features
The area is typical of the ‘Farmed and Settled Low Vale’, see appendix A. The area is generally low lying along the course of the stream with small hamlets and farmsteads with medium sized fields bounded by mainly elm hedgerows.

Field patterns and hedgerows
The dominant hedgerow species is elm although this has only occurred as elm suckers since the 1970’s when the mature elm trees died and were felled as a result of Dutch elm disease. Other common hedgerow species included hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly with standard trees of oak and ash.

Agriculture and land use
Predominantly mixed use arable and pasture land.

Trees, Woodland and orchard cover
Within the area there is no significant woodland cover although there are several significant copses on higher ground which are visually prominent. The stream is well treed and stands out as a strong landscape feature.

Nature Conservation Value
Galmington Stream, a tributary of the River Tone which runs south to north through the wedge, is designated as a Local Wildlife site. The stream is the main conservation interest on site as it supports a wide range of flora and fauna including water vole, otters and foraging bats, including the rare barbastelle bat. The hedgerow network is well connected and includes a number of important hedgerows that are important for dormice.
Several trees along the stream have potential for roosting bats
The small industrial site has potential for roosting bats and reptiles.
The Green Wedge lies to the immediate SW of South Taunton Streams Local Nature Reserve.

Drainage
The catchment area of the Galmington Stream is in a dished shape running south-west to south-east.

Transport
There are no major roads. The M5 that runs to the south of the area beyond the study area. Close by there are country lanes well bounded by hedgerows and banks.

Visual Assessment
The main views into the area are from the higher ground, residential properties running along the western side of the Trull Road and the higher ground of Stonegallows and Comeytrowe Lane.
There are clear views across the wedge to the urban edge with Queens College
forming a prominent landmark building. The main views out of the area are to the Blackdown Hills to the south.

**Historic Features**
There are no major historic features within the area, although two areas of ridge and furrow are shown on historic aerial photographs.

**Buildings and Historic Character**
There are two listed building within the site, The Lawn, a 17th century house and White Lodge, its 18th century enlargement. Comeytrowe Manor and Gate piers are located to the immediate north of the Green wedge. Trull Conservation area is located to the east of the Green wedge.

**Building Materials**
There are few buildings located within the green wedge. The more general building materials close by are brick render or chert with slate and tile roofs. The main disused abattoir is brick whilst smaller adjoining buildings are modern prefabricated materials with metal roofs.

**Intrusive Features**
The main intrusive features are the raw edges of the urban areas of Comeytrowe, Trull and the higher ground of Stonegallows. The redundant abattoir is a detracting feature within the stream corridor.

**Enhancement and management of the Green Wedge**
Allowing more trees to grow to maturity within the existing hedgerows would give a more intimate and enclosed character to the area. Management of the existing woodland and copses will help maintain them as features into the future. The river corridor tree management is important to maintain the existing tree lined corridor snaking through the lower parts of the green wedge.

**Landscape Analysis**
The Galmington Stream is formed within a shallow ‘v’ shaped corridor running through the area with smaller tributaries feeding into it. The area has a number of public rights of way and small lanes running parallel to and crossing the stream which mean the area is easily accessible. The area is generally unspoilt rural countryside and other than the redundant abattoir there are few detracting features.
Location and Wider Setting of the Green Wedge

The proposed ‘Green Wedge’ runs north to south between the western boundary of Wellington and the eastern and southern boundaries of Rockwell Green. The underlying landscape character of the area has been described in the Borough wide Landscape Character Assessment ‘Farmed and Settled High Vale’, see appendix A.

Main Features
The area is typical of the ‘Farmed and Settled High Vale’. It is undulating, and includes relatively high land on Foxdown Hill/The Cleve towards the south of the wedge and Linden Hill in the north, (both designated Special Landscape Features), together with the gently undulating, low lying, flood plain of the Westford Stream, with well treed stream side edges. The central part of the wedge, between the Basins area and the A38, is domed, rising away from the Westford Stream bordering Rockwell Green before falling gently eastwards towards the Sports Centre and low lying playing fields of Courtfields School.

Field patterns and hedgerows
The hedgerows are predominantly elm, hazel, holly and hawthorn typical of the Vale of Taunton with remnants of mature oak and ash maiden trees scattered throughout the area. The fields are middle sized.

Agriculture and land use
Predominantly mixed use arable and pasture. Other uses include playing fields (like those of Courtfields School), Wellington Park, the Basins amenity area for informal recreation (containing ponds for angling), and allotment gardens. There are some large country houses such as the Cleve Hotel, Foxdown House and Linden House, with smaller associated properties nearby. In addition to the main Westford Stream there are waterways controlled by sluice gates, associated with early industrial woollen mill of the Fox Brothers factory at Tonedale.

Trees, Woodland and orchard cover
There is significant tree cover along the banks of the Westford Stream and other watercourses, especially in the central area near the Basins, visible over a considerable distance and protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Most of the woodland is deciduous but there are tall pine trees immediately east of the Basins. There are particularly dense trees either side of the track from the Basins to Linden House, with the overhead canopies meeting in a tunnel effect. These are also protected by TPO, as are notable groups of trees either side of the Cleve Hotel.

Nature Conservation Value
The main features of wildlife interest are the watercourses which are designated Local Wildlife Sites, particularly the Westford Stream and the Wellington Basins where there are two sizeable ponds. The Basins area is a designated Local Wildlife Site, and a Local Nature Reserve. It includes the woodland and unimproved meadows of the Westford Stream flood plain and a similar narrow field immediately south of the Sports Centre.
The area has potential for Great Crested Newts

Drainage

The Westford Stream flood plain is generally flat, contained to the North West by the railway. There is higher land beyond, rising up towards Linden House. The Westford Stream generally flows in a south west to north east direction.

Transport

The Exeter-Bristol main line railway crosses the north part of the green wedge. The wedge is subdivided by Exeter Road, an “A” road linking Wellington and Rockwell Green. The wedge extends as far south as the Wellington Relief Road, part of the A38 which runs from Taunton to Wellington and continues south westwards towards Devon.

Visual Assessment

The main views into the green wedge are:-

From the A38 public footpath there are panoramic views to the north.
Rockwell Green Lane panoramic views to the east.
Views from the railway looking both north and south.
Railway Bridge near Westford looking east and north east.
Lane from Tonedale looking south and south west.

1. Looking NNW from Exeter Road, near the Youth Centre and Courtfields School. This view includes fields bounded by tall trees to the east, with the wooded area of the Basins to the north. The chimney of Tonedale Mill is a distinctive feature, with the Brendon Hills in the distance.

2. Looking south west across the northern pond at the Basins, from its east bank, towards the field beyond, with an attractive backdrop of trees along the Westford Stream.

3. Looking south from the track to Linden House, in the clearing, north of the railway line. The view includes a foreground field, backed by woodland, with the water towers and church spires of Rockwell Green visible beyond, and the Blackdown Hills, with Wellington Monument in the distance.

4. Looking NNE from the public footpath alongside the Westford Stream near Oaken Ground children’s play area, Rockwell Green. This view includes the tree lined stream in the foreground, the flood plain, flanked by trees to the west with higher land to the east, and a back drop of the woodland in the Basins area in the distance.

Historic Features

Wellington Park, on the eastern extremity of the wedge, is on the register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. II*, compiled by Historic England and therefore of national historic interest.

Buildings and Historic Character

While the wedge only contains one listed building (Nowers Farmhouse, grade 2 listed, early/mid 19th century), there are a number of large imposing buildings such as Linden House and The Cleve Hotel, which are Victorian in character.
Building Materials
Red brick and slate roofs, typical of Wellington, are seen in the terraced housing at Riverside visible from the track to Linden House.

Nowers Farm house is colour washed, with a hipped slate roof, and tall brick stacks.

Intrusive Features
There are relatively few intrusive features which detract from long distance views across the wedge, from roads.

The Green Wedge is bounded to the north by power lines and pylons. The sports Centre building is very rectangular and does not sit easily in the landscape. The Council houses to the south east of Rockwell Green are poorly screened. The railway track and its traffic is noisy and a little intrusive within the local landscape.

However, one example is the intrusion of overhead wires deterring from a view looking SSE from the road leading to the cemetery, south of the Exeter Road. The view looks through a gap between housing, west of the cemetery, across undulating fields towards the Blackdown Hills, but is marred by the telegraph wires in the foreground.

Within the vicinity of the Basins, which is more enclosed by trees, there are intrusions on short distance views looking out of the wedge, caused by the visibility of the large sports centre building, partly painted in red, and the unattractive ski lodge. This is especially apparent looking NWW from the footpath between the ponds, and looking SSW from the east bank of the northern pond.

Enhancement and management of the Green Wedge

Encourage hedgerow management and the growing on of hedgerow trees to replace the more ancient ones.

Encourage parkland tree management with new tree planting at the Cleve Hotel

Landscape analysis

The wedge of undulating land effectively separates Rockwell Green from Wellington. It contains two Special landscape Features. Linden hill and Foxdown Hill

Proposed changes

Extensions
A1 area just to west of cemetery
This is an anomaly from the previous boundary as it provides good views of open countryside and the Blackdown Hills to the south of Hilly Head road.

Deletions
B1 Tonedale House – this area has already been excluded through a planning permission.
B2 Wellington Park and nearby playing fields – the land is publicly owned but is well outside the area needed to avoid coalescence across the rising ground between it and Rockwell Green. The western limit along the stream is well screened with trees.
B3 Popes Lane, Rockwell Green – this part of the wedge is particularly wide and the land contributes little to the function of avoidance of coalescence.
B4 Mantle Street doctors – the line has been redrawn to exclude the doctors surgery and car parking.
Location and Wider Setting of the Green Wedge
The area lies to the east of the built up areas of Wellington running in a north to south direction between the A38 to the south and the Taunton Road to the north. A local tributary of the River Tone runs south to north through the area.

Main Features
The area is typical of the Farmed and Settled High Vale. The area is low lying with mixed agriculture, isolated farmsteads and medium sized fields bounded by predominantly elm hedgerows and mature Oak and Ash trees. The area is bound by residential housing to the west on slightly higher ground and employment land to the east on slightly higher ground.

Field patterns and hedgerows
The field pattern is historic with most of the hedges being located on low banks and being classed as important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Hedgerow species include ash oak with some sycamore alder poplar and willow. The trees are particularly distinctive along the watercourses.

Agriculture and land use
Predominantly mixed use arable and pasture land, with area of new broadleaf planting.

Trees, Woodland and orchard cover
Good stream and hedgerow trees but otherwise no mature woodland or orchard cover. Several of the hedgerow trees are protected with Tree preservation Orders. The property called the Elms to the west of the wedge contains a distinctive pair of Wellingtonia trees.

Nature Conservation Value
The species rich hedgerows with mature trees are the main habitat interest in the wedge, although there are several sections of stream present and a pond. Dormice are the most significant species on site and their presence has instigated the new broadleaf tree planting on site. The area supports a diverse assemblage of bats including greater and lesser horseshoe, barbastelle and nathusius pipistrelle. Cades Farm Ponds Local wildlife Site, designated for its Great crested newt interest, lies within the Green wedge.

Drainage
The principal stream runs north through the site whilst a minor watercourse in the north of the wedge runs east west.

Transport
Very limited access to the area other than Jurston Lane. The A38 bounds the southern part of the area and the Taunton Road the northern part of the area. Junction 26 of the M5 motorway is located to the south of the wedge.
**Visual Assessment**

Main views into the area are from the Taunton Road to the north, the A38 to the south, Jurston Lane that cuts through the site in a north-south direction and a number of public rights of way. Houses on slightly higher ground to the west of the area have views across the green wedge.

The main views out of the area are to the Blackdown Hills in the south and the Quantock Hills to the north-east.

**Historic Features**

The site is agricultural hinterland to Wellington, first recorded by name in the 10th century.

Jurston Lane, a sunken track set between high hedges, probably of medieval origin is present on site.

**Buildings and Historic Character**

There is one listed building on site, Jurston Farm a grade II listed farmhouse

**Building Materials**

Suburban development on the eastern side of the town is conventional 20th century in character.

The local vernacular is brick or render with mainly slate tiles with limited use of clay tiles

Materials used for the nearby Westpark Industrial Estate are mainly metal cladding.

**Intrusive Features**

The area is made up of relatively unspoilt countryside with one isolated farmstead.

The only intrusive features are the housing to the west which are poorly edged with low hedging.

**Enhancement and management of the Green Wedge**

Allowing more trees to grow to maturity within the existing hedgerows would give a more intimate and enclosed character to the area. Management of the existing woodland and copses will help maintain them as features into the future. The river corridor tree management is important to maintain the existing tree lined corridor snaking through the lower parts of the green wedge.

**Landscape Analysis**

The Wedge between urban edge of Wellington and the Westpark Industrial area is confined by A38 bypass to the south and Taunton Road to the north.

The site comprises of gently undulating ground. The highest point is to the SW corner of the wedge close to the property called Elms, with land falling to north and east.

The historic field pattern with associated trees and hedgerows, narrow winding lane and watercourse all contribute to the character of the locality.

Rural features of the wedge exist with neighboring urban influences.

Parts of the wedge have been planted with young broadleaf trees that will grow on to form a community woodland in association with the new housing to the east of the wedge.
Proposed Changes

Additions A1: Denote on the map an alignment which reflects recent Jurston Farm planning application

GREEN WEDGE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The green wedge assessment has been carried out in accordance with the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ Third Edition, 2013. Individual assessment have been carried out on seven areas, five existing and two new* at East Taunton, Vivary and Cotlake Hill, Silk Mills, Staplegrove, Comeytrowe*, West Wellington and Rockwell Green and East Wellington - Cades to Jurston*.

Analysis of the survey information has been used to refine boundaries to existing green wedges and define new green wedge boundaries. Where changes are proposed to boundaries a short explanation has been provided.
APPENDIX A  Landscape types
Landscape Type 1: Farmed and Settled Low Vale

Landscape Type Summary

A wide, flat to gently undulating vale landscape defined by an underlying Keuper Marl geology - giving rise to loamy soils. The fertile soils allow for a very productive agricultural landscape – arable, pasture, orchards and market gardening are all characteristic. There is a strong connection to the river, its many tributary streams and brooks that offer adjoining landscape interest and lend character in the form of well-wooded corridors and water-loving tree species. The vale landscape type is very clearly shaped by the hand of humans with urban areas and major transport corridors (road and rail) creating a marked contrast to the agricultural landscape and resulting in areas with a strong urban-fringe character. Villages, hamlets, scattered farms and individual dwellings are typical across this landscape type.

Character Areas

There is one large character area belonging to the landscape type of the ‘Farmed and Settled Low Vale’. This area – the Taunton Deane Farmed and Settled Low Clay Vale - defines a significant proportion of the central part of the Borough. The Low Vale is surrounded to the north, south and west by the higher ground of the Farmed and Settled High Vale but to the east the land very gradually descends – flattening out and merging with the lower lying landscape of the Clay and Peat Moors. The Vale is interspersed by the main watercourse and numerous tributaries making up the landscape of the River Tone Floodplain.

Character Area 1A: Taunton Deane Farmed and Settled Low Vale

Key Characteristics

- A low-lying vale landscape centred around the River Tone and the County town of Taunton extending to up to the northern boundary of
Wellington.

- A flat to gently undulating terrain with an elevation ranging from (15m-50m AOD) - the landscape generally being lower and flatter to the east, rising and becoming more undulating in the west.

- Principally underlain by a solid surface geology of Keuper Marls (of the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group), giving rise to well-drained coarse and loamy soils (Grades 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land).

- Strong sense of being with a vale or wide, shallow bowl-like landform – with the surrounding Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB offering visual and physical containment.

- Mixed agricultural land use system – dairying, stock rearing, cereals and fruit cropping (orchards).

- Strong hedgerow network (with striking hedgerow trees – mainly oak) defining a field system that is both of ancient and recent enclosure.

- Limited woodland cover – woodland generally restricted to occasional small copses on areas of higher ground.

- A number of villages, hamlets and dispersed farms connected by a network of roads and winding rural lanes.

- Notable rural-urban fringe character around the main towns of Taunton and Wellington.

- Varied building age and vernacular – in the north red sandstone is prevalent but in the south, blue lias is more common. Painted stone and clay tiles are common throughout.

- A number of hills that make an important contribution to the wider landscape e.g. Knowle Hill, Norton Camp Hill, Rag Hill and the Bradford on Tone cliffs are designated as Special Landscape Features.

- The A38 and M5 motorway have a visual and aural influence on many parts of the vale.
4. Landscape Type 2: River Floodplain

Landscape Type Summary

This is a low-lying, flat floodplain landscape centred on the river and its tributary watercourses. This landscape type is underlain by drift Alluvium and river terrace deposits and has traditionally been defined by a land use of pasture but in more recent times, arable cropping has extended onto the floodplain. The floodplain watercourses can be picked out by water-loving tree species and well-wooded banks that define the edges of the water.

Character Areas

There is one landscape character area classified as River Floodplain landscape type. This character area corresponds to the low-lying landscape surrounding the River Tone and is distinguished by its flat, lowland alluvial/river terrace floodplain that supports pasture and some arable farming. The character area covers a significant amount of the Borough – incorporating the floodplains of smaller tributary streams that feed into the main watercourse of the River Tone. There is a strong physical and visual relationship with the surrounding Farmed and Settled Low Vale.

Character Area 2A: The Tone River Floodplain

Key Characteristics

- A low-lying, typically flat floodplain landform generally occurring between 5 and 50m AOD.
- Defined by the tributaries and main watercourse of the River Tone.
- Surface geology predominantly defined by Alluvium and River Terrace Deposits.
- Land use characterised by permanent pasture (with some cropping in places).
- Field enclosure pattern varying from ancient (modified 17th to 19th century) to modern (18th to 21st century). Hedgerows typically divide
the fields.

• Very limited settlement within the rural areas (mainly individual farmsteads) but where the River Tone meets Wellington and Taunton, there is a very clear urban influence.

• Man-made infrastructure associated with transport and services – Great Western and West Somerset Railways, as well as prominent pylons carrying overhead cables.

• Riverbank and stream banks flanked by well-wooded margins containing species typical of a wet landscape – willow, poplar and alder.
Landscape Type 3: Farmed and Settled High Vale

Landscape Type

Key Characteristics

- **A transitional landscape** defining the landscape between the Low Vale and the areas of distinctive higher ground e.g. Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB.

- **Undulating terrain** formed where **tributary streams have carved shallow depressions**.

- **Varied underlying geology**, reflected in the building stones of the different character areas.

- **Elevation** generally occurring between **50m AOD and 150m AOD**.

- Rich agricultural landscape of **arable cropping and pasture** (dairying and stock rearing).

- **Varied field size and shape**.

- Overly **rural landscape in places** with **other areas having an urban fringe character** (along major transport corridors and close to main settlements).
3. Proposed Green Wedge: Silk Mills

Date: 10/06/2015  Scale: 1:10000

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5. Proposed New Green Wedge: Coneytrowe

Date: 10/06/2015  Scale: 1:10000
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7. Proposed Green Wedge: Wellington East
Date: 10/06/2015  Scale 1: 10000
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**GREEN WEDGE KEY**

- •••••••••••• • New Green Wedge boundary
- - - - - - - - Previous Green Wedge boundary
- Green Wedge
- New Green Wedge
- Excluded Green Wedge