

**Appendix N**  
*Landscape  
character  
assessment*



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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT: 1.Bells Field

**Date:** 28/11/16

**Conditions:** bright and sunny, few leaves on trees

**Surveyed by** MS and SC Cox for Coleford Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

**Topography & situation:** the field is located toward the top of the ridge surrounding the bowl within which Coleford town centre is situated. It is accessed from the signed holiday route toward Parkend, and is a key local green space, which links into the Green Ring 1 which separates Coleford from Coalway. (See Character Assessment overview map.) The former mining settlement of Coalway Lane End is part of the Eastern Arc. The main access point on Lords Hill is the only green space abutting the road on the northern side. Based on consultation received and Character Assessment evidence, the conservation of the green areas which separate the surrounding settlements from the main town is an important and valued policy in the NDP. From the Field, the surrounding limestone ridgeline to the north is very evident, with sweeping views over 150° (Photos 1 & 2).



1. Looking north from the Field to show the limestone ridge and the importance of the Green Ring (agricultural and leisure land use) separating surrounding settlements from Coleford Town.



2. View over the valley west and north showing the edge of Coleford Town in the bowl, then fields toward the Pikehouse, Berry Hill on the ridge.



3. View over the Field, north and east, showing all green. The slope rises irregularly to the rear corner. Along and outside the left boundary is the existing right of way toward Broadwell in the Eastern Arc.



4. View from north-east showing the slope on Bells Field and Coleford Town in the bowl. Highmeadow Woods brushes the horizon in the left background (south-west).

The Field itself is sloping, the highest corner in the north-east, with the steepest descent toward the middle of the field, then more gently down to the western boundary (photos 3 & 4).



## **Main Landscape Elements**

The AONB woodlands on the skyline to the west of Berry Hill Pike are clearly visible (photo 5), and the green agricultural fields (mainly grazing) show up well from the Poolway area right round to Bakers Hill (photo 6). Along the top, the Pikehouse and Lower Lane can be seen (photo 7). The buildings around the top of the ridge are of varied age, all two storeys or less. (Application P1482/14/OUT for 180 houses along the A4136 at Lower Lane would be prominent if given planning permission. This is still with the Secretary of State, past due date for decision May 2016.) The edge of Coleford town at Bells Place backs onto the Field, and Poolway/ Gloucester Rd to Bakers Hill are in near view to the north-west. The town centre can be glimpsed through the trees, unlikely to be true in summer with leaf cover.



*5. Right background shows the AONB within the Coleford NDP area to the north, and extending into Berry Hill, Christchurch and Edge End NDP in West Dean parish. The trees in view are mainly deciduous, managed and maintained by the Forestry Commission. The autumn colours are valued by locals and act as a tourist attraction.*



*6. From the northern boundary looking toward housing in Poolway, off Gloucester Rd in the town, with Bakers Hill off to the right. Note the agricultural use below the trees separating the housing (and Coleford) from the surrounding settlements and forming part of the Green Ring.*

Below the ridgeline, the open appearance of the farmland comprises mainly grassland grazing in hedged and fenced fairly rectangular, large fields. Some of the boundaries are spaced with deciduous shrubs and some deciduous trees (photos 1,2,8). The AONB woodland which is the largest forest area in sight is mainly deciduous, with a mix of species (beech, birch, chestnut, and oak are notable). Earlier in the autumn, the leaves give a meld of colours, for which Dean is known. In photo 5 at the horizon there is some darker green of Forestry Commission coniferous plantation. This AONB area is an important entry to the Forest Holidays complex on the edge of the parish, via the A4136 Monmouth- Gloucester route (and the way to Symonds Yat Rock – the neck of the Wye incised meander). (See photo 12 for view from A4136.)

Toward Tufthorn and Milkwall to the south, there are houses and some industrial areas, but most of that is obscured by trees on Bells Golf Course to the south of Lords Hill (photo 7).



*7. From the north-east corner looking south, toward Tufthorn and Milkwall. Apart from the white house on the boundary, the houses and some industrial areas are not very apparent even without full leaf on the trees.*



*8. From the south-east, at the existing access off Lords Hill, showing open views and the green eastern boundary. Note the evidence of wild boar rooting out the foreground; also the red bin provided as dog walking is a key use.*

No obvious hydrology can be seen from the Field or looking toward it from the A4136: the streams which have their confluence in the centre of town are mostly below the level of the views. They have formed the Coleford bowl, but are evident by Forest Hills to the north; Whitecliff to the south; Thurstan's Rise to the west **NOT** to the east by Bells Field. Off Lords Hill is an entry to the culverted stream down into the town centre. At the base of Lords Hill is a manhole which has risen on a number of occasions with intense rain, causing surface water flooding by the main traffic lights at Market Place.

On the southern edge of the Field is Lords Hill, a two lane highway, once class B (Photo 9). There is a public right of way from Broadwell along, but outside, the northern edge of the Field and into Coleford via Bells Place (photos 3,6). The informal path across the field is used by people to cross into Lords Hill and thence Coalway Road, but it is not a ROW (photo 8). On Lords Hill is a retaining wall of local stone (photo9).

According to GCC there was a tramway crossing the Field roughly from south-west to north-east, but this has not yet been fully investigated.

On the eastern edge is a transformer, and another pole (photo 10) and a gas pipe is marked at the existing entrance and at the north-east corner ie across the field (photo 11).



*9 Lords Hill (which becomes Coalway Rd nearby) is about 1.5m lower, thus the retaining local stone wall.*



*10. Transformer and telegraph pole on the eastern boundary next to Seven Oaks (Orchard Trust).*





*11 Gas marker in the north-east corner*



*12. Bells Field is centre middleground, viewed from Lower Lane over Forest Hills Golf Course, Poolway, Gloucester Rd and to the right Bells Place.*

### **Visual qualities:**

The only key point from which the Field can be seen is Lower Lane, by Berry Hill Pike (photo 12).

There is a dominant pattern of green ring around and within the Field: this is largescale, textured and open with hedging. The adjacent fields are used for grazing too. The views are sweeping, which is significant for many users of the Field who live down in the bowl below. The housing to the west is two storey, relatively modern, suburban semis and detached, but with large back gardens and some mature trees bordering the Field (Photo 5).

### **Overall impression**

This significantly situated Field has been bought by the Town Council for community and leisure use. It has been included in the Coleford Local Green Space Strategy. That will maintain its green status desired by Coleford residents. In the 1980s it was noted by a Planning Inspector as an important area to conserve the separation from Coalway. In NDP public consultation, the desire to maintain the separation of Coleford Town from surrounding settlements like Coalway was affirmed. The views are superb, giving a real feel for the way the town sits in its bowl. The old-established boundaries show a typical Forest style: part hedge, some shrub, single trees in the whole length. They also form part of a wildlife corridor crossing the valley. Indeed from photo 8 it appears wild boar have been in the Field.

Although Lords Hill/Coalway Rd is busy, with two schools in Coalway, and Bells Hotel and Golf Course opposite the existing entrance, the road noise diminishes swiftly as you walk over the field. The dominant wind direction from the south-west will cross the Field at its widest extent. Here, you can catch the wind with a kite, and run free. The appropriate design will serve all ages and allow access for all (a golden thread running through the NDP). This will be a community space all year round, also with potential for outdoor events to be created. It must conserve the viewpoint aspect to allow children to learn about the surrounding settlements and the green essence of Coleford in the Forest.

As playing fields for the old-established Bells Grammar School, and subsequently as a practice area for the Golf Club opposite which used the building later, the history here is about leisure, learning, and green space. Coleford Town Council's design which has been consulted upon in 2015 supports those themes.