

Westbury Sub Mendip Key Views (Neighbourhood Plan)

5 key views have been identified to illustrate the special features of Westbury-sub-Mendip from viewpoints with easy public access.

Viewpoints A – C follow the Mendip Hills ridge from the North-East of the Parish to the North-West, whilst View D overlooks the village, church and conservation area; View E provides views back across the village to the Mendip Hills scarp and gives access to the drove roads of Westbury Moor, much visited by birdwatchers.

The factors contributing to these key views represent multiple layers - the landscape views themselves, the geology that the landscape reflects, the history of land use (and of human impacts) within that landscape and the ecology arising from centuries of land use and more recent conservation.



Fig 10 Key views in Westbury-sub-Mendip

View A – from Westbury Beacon (ST 500 507, 272m OD), looking South down the Mendip Escarpment, over St. Lawrence Church towards Glastonbury Tor.

This illustrates one of the 'views out' from the protected National Landscape which contributes to its essential character. It is a view of a predominantly agricultural landscape marked by small fields, often bounded by hedges with occasional small patches of woodland. The spring line villages along the southern boundary of the hills are largely hidden by the lie of the land and at night the view is not dominated by lighting from housing or streets.



Fig 11 View A from Westbury Beacon

Westbury Beacon is a bell barrow; a burial site and scheduled monument which is over 3,000 years old and has an adjacent trig point at 269m OD. It provides spectacular panoramic views:

Looking to the west is Rodney Stoke Nature Reserve, with the Bristol Channel and coastlines of South Wales and North Devon in the distance. Panning left, looking down the South-facing escarpment of the Mendip Hills, over Westclose Hill, Broadhay and Westbury Moor the view stretches to the Polden Hills, with Exmoor visible in the distance on a clear day. Further to the left and due South, the view takes in the entire village of Westbury-sub-Mendip, the outlying knolls of Lodge Hill, Knowle Hill and across the Somerset Levels and Moors to the iconic Glastonbury Tor and South Somerset. Continuing left and looking south-east, the views look across Ebbor Gorge towards East Somerset and Wiltshire.

Nearby a small standing stone in the western boundary wall is believed to be Neolithic (>5,000 years old) and was later used as a parish boundary marker. The tin hut was used for radar testing during the Cold War period of the early 1960's and the nearby concrete structures are parts of the observation posts from the same period.

The site is part of the Mendip National Nature Reserve established in 2023. The substantial areas of gorse scrub and surface rock outcrops, overlain by acidic heathland, support a wide range of wildlife habitats. The thin soils warm quickly and suit many invertebrates, even in this exposed location.

Grazing of the reserve's limestone grassland promotes flowers, including bird's foot trefoil, horseshoe vetch, salad burnet, betony, scabious and early purple and greater butterfly orchids.

Butterflies found here include dingy and grizzled skippers, chalkhill blue, wall and small heath. Violets growing near the gorse attract fritillaries.

View B – From the South-western escarpment of Cook’s Field Nature Reserve (ST 512 496), including many points between 150 – 250m OD along the medieval “Coffin Route” footpath from Little Field Lane, Kites Croft to Deer Leap and Priddy, looking South-west.

This view is a ‘view out’ from the protected landscape but also includes part of the village of Westbury sub-Mendip. It shows how the built-up areas of the village are surrounded by fields and partially concealed by trees and hedges. There is no large block of building and the built up area of the parish does not extend significantly south of the A371



Fig 12 Views B from SW Escarpment Cook’s Field Nature Reserve

The 34 hectare site was purchased by Somerset Wildlife Trust in 2000 and is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

On the steep slopes where the soil is thinner, the unimproved limestone grassland of the Reserve supports flora including wild Thyme, common rock rose, small scabious and the unusual autumn lady's tresses. These in turn create an important site for chalkhill blue butterflies. Strip lynchets in the lower southern part of the reserve and dry-stone walls are a visible feature of the medieval and post-medieval field system, in part associated with the ruined Ramspit farmstead.

The hay meadows to the north are full of the semi-parasitic yellow rattle; also present are common knapweed and adder's tongue fern.

View C – From Deer Leap carpark (ST 519 413, 248m OD), looking West along the Mendip Hills plateau to the Bristol Channel and South across the Somerset Levels and Moors towards Glastonbury Tor.

This view, again a ‘view out’ from the National Landscape, illustrates the same features as views 1 and 2. The southern part of the parish is revealed as part of a continuous expanse of agricultural land with buildings largely confined to the spring line to the north. Additionally, the landscape nearer to the car park shows visible signs of the historic and archaeological heritage of the site.

The car park is very popular with visitors and walkers, both local residents and tourists, for its panoramic views and access to extensive footpaths along the Mendip escarpment, north across to Priddy and south-east to Ebbor Gorge National Nature Reserve. It provides easy access to Key View B and the open access areas of Cook’s Field and Lynchcombe Nature Reserves. The SWT counter at the carpark has been recording an average of 3,000 visitor trips each month.



The view south-west from the carpark looks into the 24 hectare site of the Lynchcombe Nature Reserve, purchased by Somerset Wildlife Trust in 1997. It features the medieval farmstead of Ramspit, which is thought to have been occupied from the late 10th Century until 1670.

To the West are strip lynchets on thin calcareous grasslands, rich in wild flowers, including salad burnet, mouse-ear hawkweed and field scabious. In summer, wild thyme, common rock rose and fairy flax, encourage bumblebees and butterflies, including marbled white, small copper, gatekeeper and dark green fritillary.

To the south, the grassland above the wooded combe, with deeper more neutral soil, supports selfheal, common bird's-foot trefoil and common knapweed.

A small stream emerges at Ramspit swallet to quickly disappear underground before occasionally re-surfacing about a kilometre further down the combe.

In summer, skylarks nest in the short turf of the flatter grassland on the ridge, whilst buzzards, kites and the occasional peregrine compete to catch the thermals rising up the south-facing slopes. In winter flocks of redwings and fieldfares feed on the hawthorn berries.

View D – From the public footpath on Broadhay Hill (ST 499 492, 101m OD), providing lower-level access to views looking south-west over St. Lawrence Church and across the Somerset Levels and Moors towards Glastonbury Tor.

This view illustrates the radial pattern of settlement in Westbury sub-Mendip that contributes significantly to its essential character. Buildings in the conservation area follow valleys with areas of farmland in between. To the south more modern development follows the road layout, again separated by agricultural land. Buildings are varied, no more than two storeys, and predominantly individual in character. Roof and walls are reddish brown or limestone grey.





The local popularity of this viewpoint is evidenced by the memorial bench with relatively easy access from the village square, via The Hollow or Broadway Lane.

It provides close views across the village conservation area, particularly of Old Ditch, the Square and Church, glimpsed through the abundant green tree canopy.

View E –From the public footpath by Lodge Hill (ST 493 481, 25m OD), looking north-east across St Lawrence Church towards the Mendip Hills South-facing escarpment.

This view again illustrates that village buildings predominately show pastel colours of roofs and walls, reflecting the reddish-brown of the underlying mudstone conglomerate and grey limestone, camouflaged by a dense green canopy of mature trees, with glimpsed views of the church tower, green wedges and the uncultivated limestone grassland of the nature reserves on the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills. Taken from the southern boundary of the built-up area it illustrates how the form of the settlement is folded into the hillside below the open slopes of the southern Mendip scarp.



Fig 13 Views E from Public Footpath Lodge Hill

