

Topic Paper 5



Biodiversity



Wiltshire Council

South Wiltshire Core Strategy

Topic Paper 5: Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

Please note: This topic paper has been updated since originally written to represent the most up to date information at the time of the proposed submission draft.

Executive summary

The quality and beauty of the South West region's environment is remarkably high and this district is no exception. The majority is countryside, and there are many features of regional, national and international importance. These include over 60 SSSIs; the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, the River Avon SAC (Special Area of Conservation), and the New Forestⁱ. Other features important to the environment include 68 Conservation Areas, 17 historic parks and gardens, and the World Heritage Site of Stonehenge.

The extent to which human activity can negatively impact upon the environment is well understood, and the protection and enhancement of the natural world are rightfully key principles of national planning policy.

As noted within the county's BAP (Biodiversity Action Planⁱⁱ), we know that in common with the UK as a whole, within Wiltshire there have been major reductions to the quantity and quality of many habitats, resulting in threats to various species, for instance farmland birds and woodland butterflies. The condition of many of south Wiltshire's SSSIs is unfavourable, particularly in grassland habitat types (more detailed figures are given below). In the past, pressures from economic growth, demographic change and housing development tended to impact negatively upon the natural environment: the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan notes development of the built environment as one of the major factors impacting upon biodiversity. More widely, there are concerns over the overall "health" of the countryside at a landscape level: the AONB Management Plan for instance identifies a number of areas in the district where the overall landscape condition is declining.

It is recognised that the planning and development process can play a beneficial role if it is carefully and sensitively designed and integrated into its environment. Authorities have a regulatory or restrictive role to play for instance through Habitat's Regulations Assessment, which is a requirement of the European Habitats Directive, and is used to assess the impacts of plans affecting internationally designated sites. South Wiltshire has a number of European designated sites and HRA is integral to the Core Strategy and should be read in conjunction with this Topic Paper. From this process a number of challenges have been identified that need to be mitigated against, including the integrity of the River Avon SAC specifically associated with water levels as a result of abstraction and water quality associated with phosphate levels. In addition there are also concerns over the recreational impact upon the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar and specifically the protection of the Stone Curlew at Porton Down. Rather than providing this in detail within this Topic Paper, this is explained within the Habitat's Regulations Assessment and with respect to water issues within both the HRA and a separate Topic Paper 18– Water.

At the same time there is scope for positive and proactive work, for instance through the creation or enhancement of Green Infrastructure, or through the designation of new Local Nature Reserves.

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment is important for its own sake, but doing so is also vital for people through the fundamental things we rely on including food, water, and air. Our quality of life is interwoven with the environment in other ways as well, through recreation, education, culture, and in other ways: a rich and diverse natural environment helps keep people healthy, and feel good. The health of the economy is also linked to the environment, for instance through agriculture and tourism.

Looking more widely, the evidence is overwhelming that people are changing the climate of the world. By the end of this century, if we take no action, we could potentially see a global temperature increase of over 5 degrees Celsius, and this could have catastrophic consequences upon habitats and species as well as the economy and society in general. We must act not only to mitigate the causes of climate change (through reducing the emission of greenhouse gases), but also to protect biodiversity against that change which is not avoided.

Through the LDF, the task of addressing all of these issues any such impacts will be a core objective and a challenging one.

National policy

PPS9 is the chief document setting out the Government's objectives for planning and biodiversity, and in brief it requires Local Planning Authorities to:

- Understand the environmental characteristics of their authority area.
- Consider how to maintain and enhance those characteristics.
- Take a strategic approach to conservation, enhancement and restoration
- Permit/promote biodiversity and geodiversity within new development.
- Avoid adverse impacts upon, or losses of, protected sites.
- Mitigate and compensate where losses or adverse impacts are unavoidable
- Promote benefits and gains: planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests.

Regional policy

The emergent Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), recognizing the quality of the environment and quantity of important sites and habitats, gives the natural environment and biodiversity a high profile. It seeks to protect and enhance the region's environment and natural resources through a number of means:

- Ensuring that development respects landscape and ecology;
- Reducing the impact of the economy, transport and development;
- Enhancing natural environments through development;
- Ensuring development reduces pollution and maintains tranquility;
- Enhancing local character and heritage, for instance through regeneration;
- Restoration, creation, improvement and management of habitats.

Priorities at a county level

In 2002 a Wiltshire-wide BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) was published by a partnership of organisations, setting out a framework for the conservation and enhancement of the county's habitats and species. This has now been updated by the 2008 Wiltshire BAP. The planning and development sector is still seen as having an important role to play in achieving its outcomes, and a range of actions were identified for Local Authorities to carry out, including:

- Using policy to protect important habitats, features and species, beyond those with statutory protection.
- Achieving a net gain for biodiversity through development
- Identifying "green networks" to facilitate the movement of wildlife through countryside and settlements
- Maintaining a strong base of information to base decisions on
- Monitoring the effect of policies and decisions on biodiversity.

The BAP also sets out issues and objectives for each of the key habitats in the county.

Changes in the new BAP will include the introduction of a new category of Post-industrial Sites, and the replacement of an action plan for "Urban Areas" with one for "The built environment".

Designations and sites in south Wiltshire

South Wiltshire has a number of nature conservation sites of international importance:

- River Avon SAC
- Salisbury Plain SAC, SPA
- Porton Down SPA
- New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site
- Prescombe Down SAC

- Chilmark Quarries SAC
- Great Yews SAC

There are also a number of sites, close to south Wiltshire's boundary that also need to be considered in plan making, full details are provided within the HRA.

Many habitats and species within the UK and south Wiltshire are now protected by European Law through the Habitats Directive this is an important piece of legislation which ensures that plans and programmes do not have a significant effect on a European protected sites and species.

There are also over 60 SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) in the district. SSSI is a national-level designation and sites should be given a high level of protection (permission should not normally be granted to proposals where there is a likely adverse effect on a SSSI).

There are also nearly 500 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in the district. Together with SSSIs, these comprise the best habitat in Wiltshire and are essential to ensure conservation of the critical core of Wiltshire's biodiversity and geodiversity. CWS are particularly important for the conservation of BAP habitats, and protecting them is important in planning for climate change.

There are also 8 Wiltshire Wildlife Trust nature reserves in the district. In addition to their value for nature conservation, these have an important educational role to play in raising public awareness and understanding of biodiversity.

Most of the western part of the district – almost half of the total – is designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and much of the remainder is under the county-level designation of "Special Landscape Area". The immediate countryside fringe to the city was designated under the "Landscape Setting of Salisbury and Wilton" under the 2003 Local Plan.

Key Issues and Questions

Major themes emerging

Later in this document the main policies and strategies in relation to the natural environment are set out. The key emerging themes are:

- *Climate change* (PPS1, 13ii)
Policies should recognise and respond to the potential impacts of climate change and address its causes.
- *Biodiversity & geodiversity* (PPS9, i-ii and elsewhere)
Based on sound evidence, plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, giving appropriate weight to designated sites and protected species.
- *Landscape* (PPS7, 21; CROW act duty; RSS policy ENV3) The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should be given great weight in planning policies in these areas. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations. Major developments should not take place in nationally designated areas, except in exceptional circumstances.
- *Managing the impact of development* (PPS9, 1 iv-vi, RSS policy SD3)
Development should respect landscape and ecological thresholds and should enhance the natural environment where possible, incorporating beneficial features.
- *Previously developed land and incorporating within new development* (PPS 9, 13-14)
Making best re-use of previously developed (“brownfield”) land reduces the amount of countryside (“greenfield”) land built on. Biodiversity should be incorporated and protected in and around new development. Healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people’s sense of well-being.
- *Strategic, holistic approach* (PPS9 1 iii, RSS policy SD3)
Policies should recognise the collective role of individual sites and habitats within the wider landscape and ecosystem.
- *The water environment and flooding* (PPS25; RSS policy RE6 & 6.2.16)
Policies should recognise the role of flood plains as a form of flood defence as well as being “green infrastructure” and providing important wildlife habitats and adding to landscape value. Policies should protect and enhance network of ground and surface water and associated ecosystems.
- *Sustainable Land Management and rural activity* (PPS7, RSS policy RE7, PPS9)
Policies should enable diversification and activity required for farming whilst mitigating impact on biodiversity. Policies should promote an integrated approach to land management, which reinforces and enhances the specific natural and cultural features of local areas.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Do you agree that climate change and global warming should be a top priority?
- How can the natural environment, biodiversity and landscape best be protected and enhanced in this district?
- How proactive should we be in implementing additional controls, over and above the statutory minimal requirements, that would further protect the natural environment?
- What role should the council, through the LDF, play in identifying, promoting and protecting locally important landscapes and sites for nature conservation?
- How can we ensure that the development that we have to plan for will not adversely impact upon the natural environment?
- What should our approach be to incorporating nature conservation and landscape measures into new development?
- How important a role do people in the district consider the natural environment as having to their quality of life?

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1. Issues facing south Wiltshire

- 1.1 The city of Salisbury is a strategically significant centreⁱⁱⁱ, acting as an important service centre for a wide hinterland, however the quality of its environment is high in comparison with many settlements of similar size, not least due to its outstanding downland setting in the valley of the river Avon where several tributaries converge. The Council attaches great importance to the preservation of the environment and wishes to conserve its diversity, character, and resources whilst promoting quality of life and economic wellbeing.
- 1.2 The first part of this section sets out sites, designations and issues associated with nature conservation, and the second part deals with those relating to landscape.

1.3 Nature conservation

- 1.4 There is a hierarchy of nature conservation designations which must be taken account of as the Local Development Framework evolves. In brief the main considerations in south Wiltshire are the following:

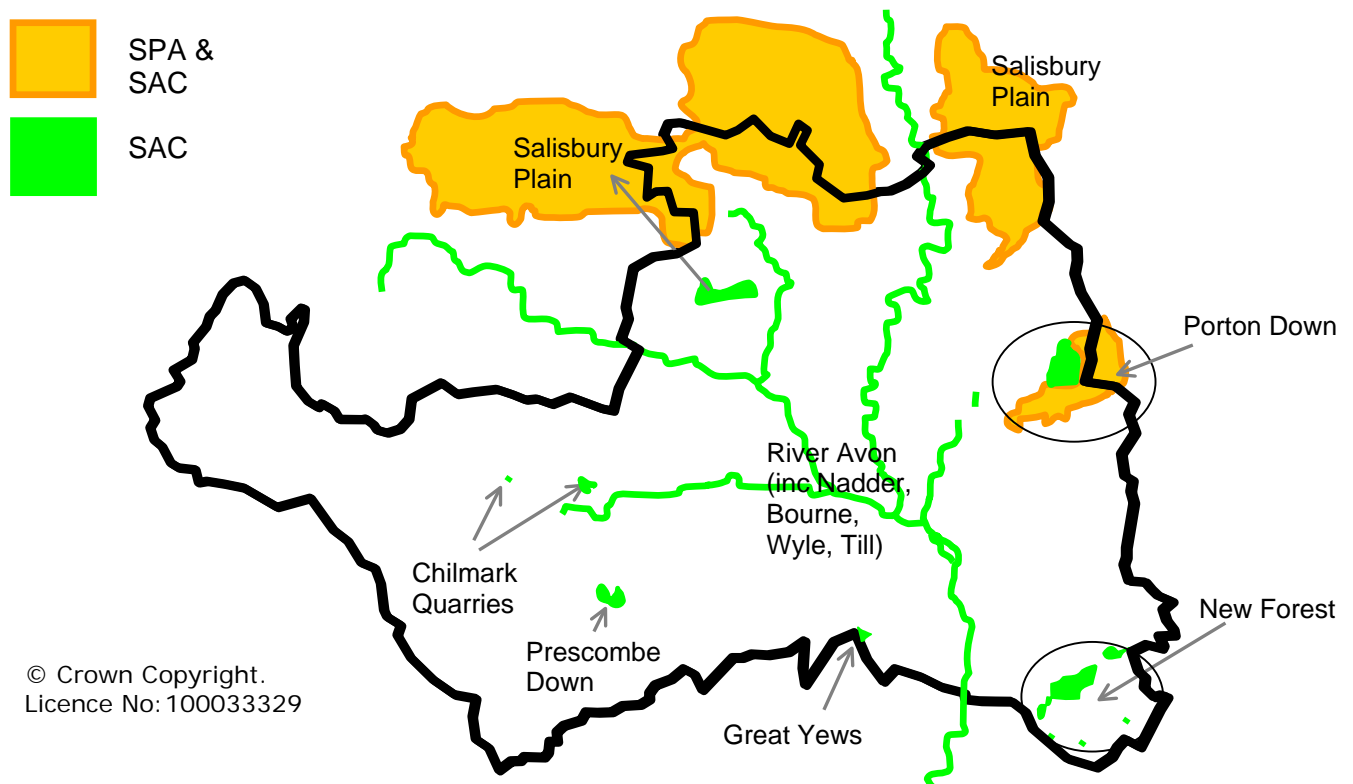
Table 1

Level	Types
European	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAC (Special Area of Conservation) • SPA (Special Protection Area) • Ramsar <p>These types are protected under European and UK law, and have the highest level of legal protection possible. It should be noted that SAC and SPA sites are designated under different legislation for different reasons. Although Ramsar are not designated under the Habitats Directive, they are afforded the same or similar protection.</p>
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) • NNRs (National Nature Reserves) <p>(All terrestrial SACs and SPAs in the UK are also SSSIs. All NNRs are also SSSIs.)</p>
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIGS (Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites)
County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Wildlife Sites • Protected Road Verges
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LNRs (Local Nature Reserves) <p>(Many LNRs are also SSSIs)</p>

1.5 International sites

1.6 South Wiltshire has several sites of international importance to biodiversity, many of which overlay one another. To the north of the area is the **Salisbury Plain**, which is a SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and SPA (Special Protection Area). The Plain is believed to be the largest surviving semi-natural dry grassland within the UK and the EU^{iv}. It is divided into three main sectors and also includes much of **Porton Down** itself designated as an SPA. The **River Avon SAC** covers the entire length of the River Avon, in addition to much of the rivers Nadder, Wyle, Till, and Bourne. In addition, **Prescombe Down**, **Chilmark Quarries**, and **Great Yews** near Coombe Bissett are designated as SACs. To the south east corner of south Wiltshire falls part of the New Forest, which is a SPA and Ramsar site, however it should be noted that this area now falls to the New Forest National Park Authority for Planning purposes, although is still important as the designated area sits adjacent to the plan area

MAP 1: INTERNATIONALLY DESIGNATED SITES IN SALISBURY DISTRICT



1.7 The international legislation requires under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment to be undertaken for plans and programmes. The requirement for Habitats Regulation Assessment to be undertaken for land use plans in the UK results from the ruling by the European Court of Justice in October 2005 that the UK's transposition of the Habitats Directive failed to correctly implement the Directive as the regulations only required HRA for projects, and not plans or programmes. Subsequently, the regulations have been revised and now require that proposed Regional Spatial Strategies and Development Plan Documents within the Local Development Framework to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

1.8 Habitat Regulations Assessments assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the objectives of European sites, and Local Planning Authorities must assess whether they are required, and carry them out. Alternative options should be examined if significant negative effects are identified. DPDs (Development Plan Documents) and SPDs (Supplementary Planning Documents) under the emerging LDF will require HRA, whose scope would vary

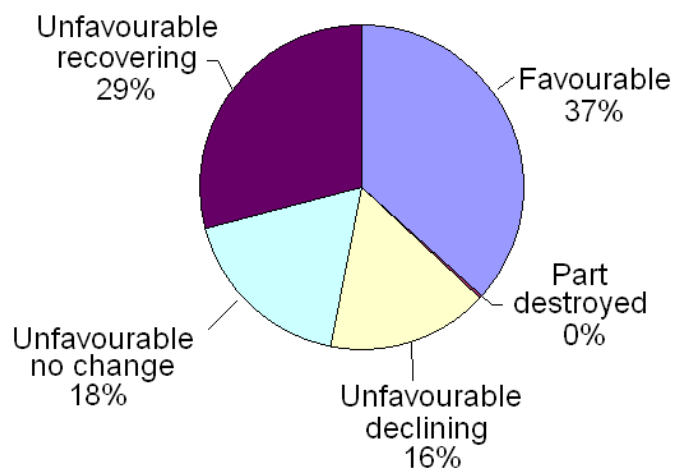
dependent on the circumstances. Full details of the international sites both within and outside of south Wiltshire's boundaries can be found within the Habitats Regulations Assessment accompanying the Core Strategy, including conservation objectives and reasons for designations, condition and vulnerability as well as explanation of any actions that have been taken in order to prevent the Core Strategy having any significant effect upon a European designated site.

- 1.9 Further work through the Habitats Regulations Assessment, which should be read in conjunction with the Core Strategy and this Topic Paper identifies that the level of development that has been directed towards south Wiltshire by the RSS could put pressure on several of the European designated sites, including the River Avon SAC, New Forest National Park, Salisbury Plain and Porton Down. The outcome of this work is all detailed within the Habitats Regulations Assessment, supported by Topic Paper 18.
- 1.10 PPS9 requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to identify these international sites on proposals maps and advises that they are referred to in Local Development Documents. However, given the high level of statutory protection afforded to them elsewhere, LPAs are not required to develop specific local policies on them, although it is an option that could be explored further, for instance in respect of the Avon (where there is already in existence a Planning Forum to look at the in-combination effects of different developments in different districts upon the river system as a whole).

1.11 National, regional and local sites (see map overleaf)

- 1.12 There are over 60 SSSIs within the district, divided into 316 units. Of these, only 115, or 36%, were classed at the latest round of assessment as being in "favourable" condition^v. Proportionally, this is the lowest out of the districts in Wiltshire, and well below the average figure for districts in the South West. Around 25% of the "unfavourable" units were declining, and one unit was classed as "part destroyed" (the only in Wiltshire), although more positively, 46% of the "unfavourable" units were recovering.

FIGURE 1: CONDITION OF SSSI UNITS IN SALISBURY DISTRICT, %



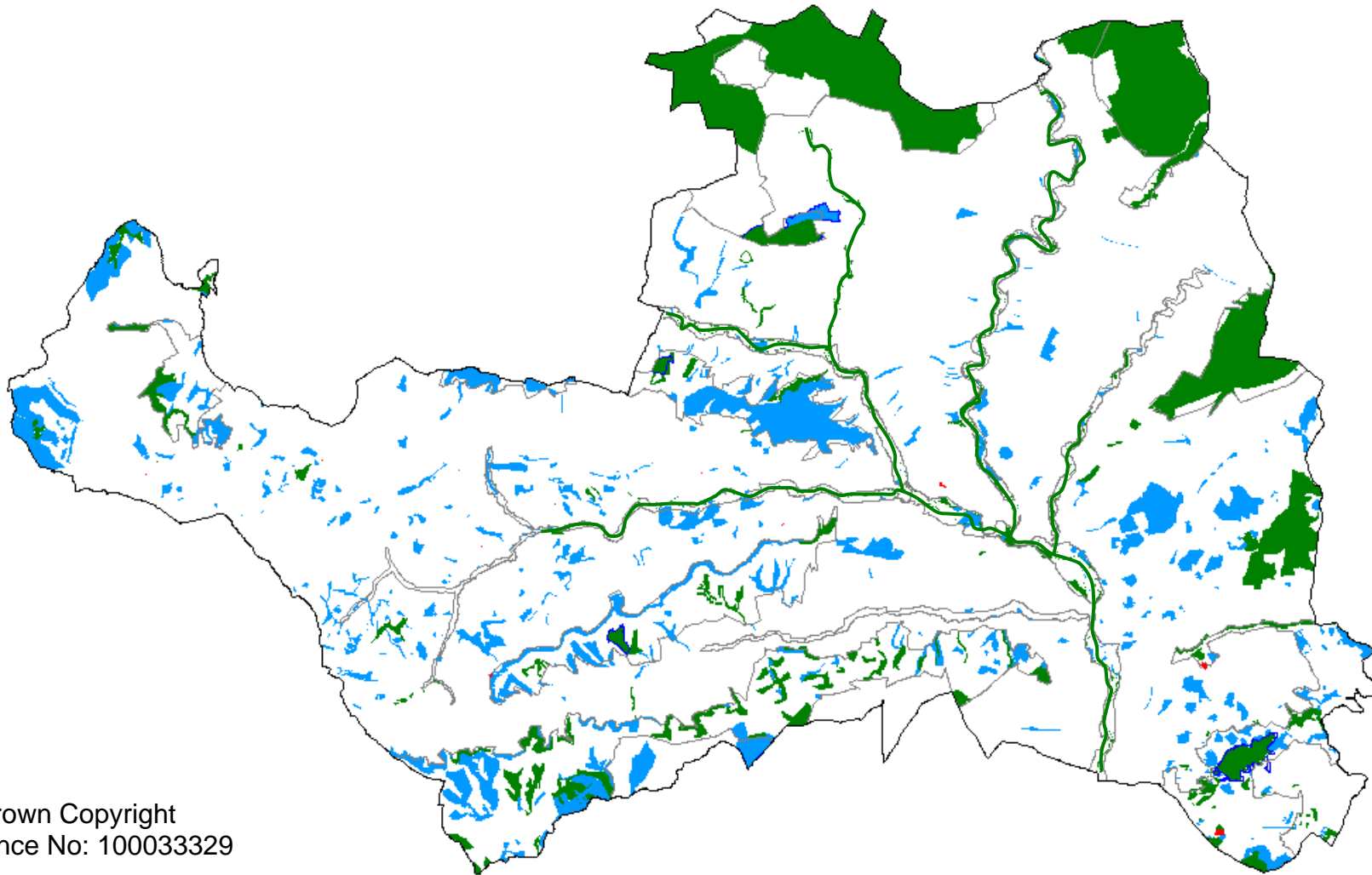
- 1.13 The greatest numbers of SSSI units in south Wiltshire are under three habitat types:

- calcareous grassland;
- broadleaved/mixed/yew woodland;
- neutral grassland.

- 1.14 The two grassland types have the greatest numbers and proportions of declining units. The "State of the Environment in the South West 2006" report^{vi} identified the key problems facing SSSIs in Wiltshire as woodland management, undergrazing of neutral and calcareous grassland, and diffuse pollution of rivers and streams.

- 1.15 A significant proportion of the land designated as SSSI 'overlays' with designations at an international level on Salisbury Plain and Porton Down, where the higher-level designation would have precedence. However there are many other SSSIs, distributed throughout the district, where this is the most important designation, and where under PPS9 the planning system should afford a high level of protection.
- 1.16 Local Planning Authorities are expected to develop appropriate policies for SSSIs that reflect their importance for biodiversity. Planning permission should not normally be granted where there is a likely adverse effect on an SSSI. Exceptions should be rare and subject to stringent tests that the importance of development outweighs its impacts, and conditions should be applied in mitigation.

MAP 2: NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL SITES IN SOUTH WILTSHIRE



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Areas of High Ecological Value



National Nature Reserves



RIGS



SSSIs



County Wildlife Sites

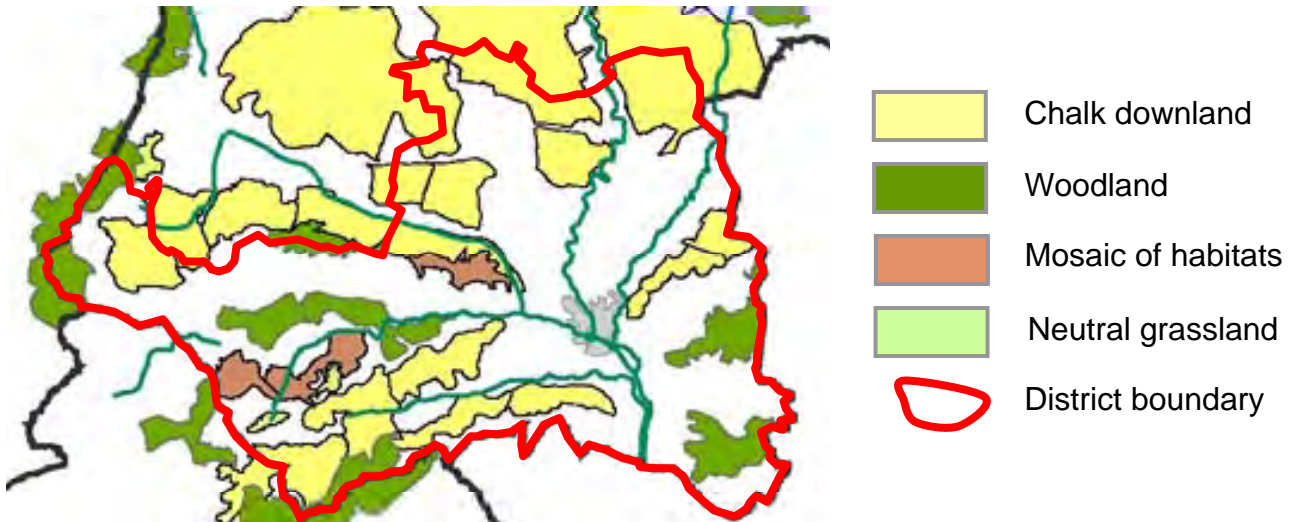


Habitats

1.17 South West Region

1.18 There are four higher-level habitat types in particular which the South West Regional Observatory has identified within south Wiltshire as being the “best areas to maintain and expand (through restoration and/or re-creation) terrestrial wildlife habitats at a landscape scale”.

MAP 3:



Source: South West Regional Observatory^{vii}

1.19 Wiltshire

1.20 The 2002 Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) contains a series of Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) each covering a Wiltshire priority habitat (there is also a Species Action Plan for bats). The HAPs included are:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| a) Woodland | e) Arable Farmland |
| b) Wood-Pasture, Parkland and Ancient Trees | f) Hedgerows |
| c) Rivers, Streams and Associated Habitats | g) Calcareous Grassland |
| d) Standing Open Water | h) Unimproved Neutral Grassland |
| | i) Urban Areas |

1.21 All of these habitats are represented within the district, with the grassland and woodland-related habitats representing the greatest area.

1.22 The BAP suggests Local Authorities do the following in relation to development (emphasis added):

- Include policies for the **protection and enhancement** of important habitats, features and species beyond those with statutory protection, in order to retain and enhance biodiversity
- Where practicable, achieve a **net gain for biodiversity** through development.
- Identify **green networks** within existing and proposed settlements to facilitate movement of wildlife, provide links to the countryside beyond and provide access to wildlife for local people.

- d) The '**polluter pays**' principle should be applied to developments which may cause environmental damage through pollution, in order to secure adequate mitigation or compensation for any losses.
- e) have **information** available upon which to base their decisions.
- f) **monitor the effects of their policies** and decisions on biodiversity.

1.23 A new BAP has now been published and changes are summarized below.

1.24 Revised 2008 Biodiversity Action Plan

1.25 The Wiltshire BAP 2008 contains 10 Habitat Action Plans, 1 Species Action Plan, and 1 Habitat Information Note:

- a) Woodland
- b) Wood-pasture, Parkland and Ancient Trees
- c) Ancient and/or Species-rich Hedgerows *NEW TITLE*
- d) Traditional Orchards *NEW HAP*
- e) Farmland Habitats *New TITLE*
- f) Calcareous Grassland
- g) Neutral Grassland
- h) Rivers, Streams and Associated Habitats
- i) Standing Open Water
- j) Built Environment *NEW TITLE*
- k) Bats Species Action Plan
- l) Habitat Information Note for Heathland *NEW*

1.26 The way in which species are dealt with by the Wiltshire BAP has also been revised, and a new species section included within the Plan. The up to date Wiltshire BAP can be viewed on <http://www.biodiversitywiltshire.org.uk/WiltshireBAP/Default.aspx>.

1.27 Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2008

1.28 The 2008 BAP reviews the HAP and SAP titles, Objectives targets and actions, SBAP Vision and individual HAP/SAP Visions.

1.29 Wiltshire BAP species, General Action Plan and Taking Action Plans forward. The BAP is a tool which summarizes and directs the activities of statutory, private and third sector organisations delivering biodiversity activity in Wiltshire. By pulling these actions into one plan, it creates a coherent plan of action which can be delivered through a partnership of organisations working together.

1.30 The revised BAP contains Habitat Action Plan for: Woodland; Wood-pasture, Parkland and Ancient Trees; Hedgerows; Calcareous Grassland; Neutral Grassland; Tradition Orchards; farmland Habitats; Built Environment; Standing Open Water: and Rivers, Streams and associated habitats. These are the most significant of the UK priority habitats within the county.

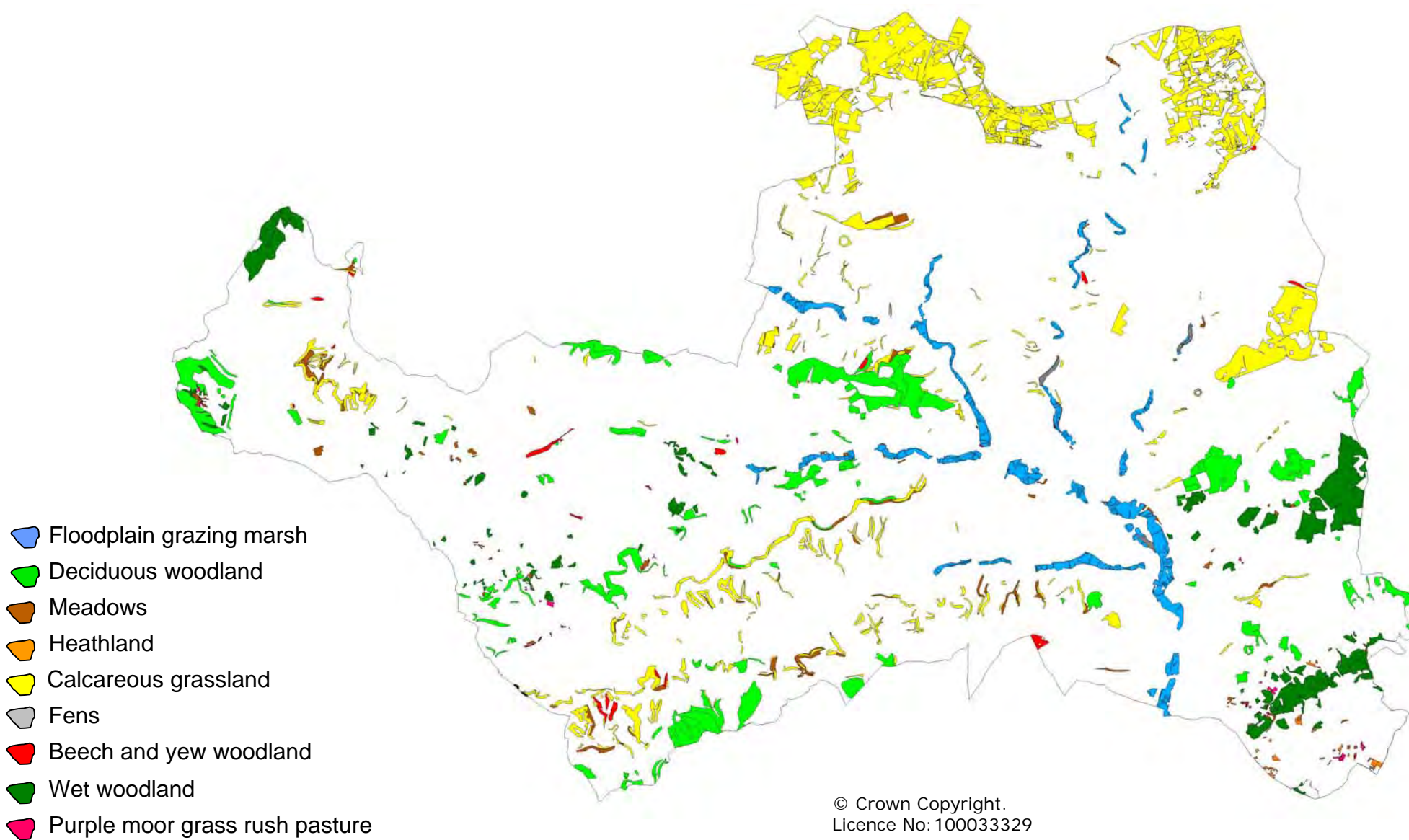
1.31 A bat species Action Plan forms part of the overall plan. A separate Action Plan has been included for bats as they utilize a wide range of habitats, and there are also some very specific issues relating to them.

1.32 Activities supporting a wide range of habitats and species have been grouped under a Generic Action Plan.

1.33 The species protected are detailed within section 3 of the BAP. There are now 260 priority species in Wiltshire.

<http://www.biodiversitywiltshire.org.uk/Default.aspx>

MAP 4 HABITATS IN SOUTH WILTSHIRE



1.34 Ancient woodland

1.35 PPS9 requires special consideration for ancient woodland due to its extremely high value for biodiversity, its historic value and the inability for it to be recreated once lost.

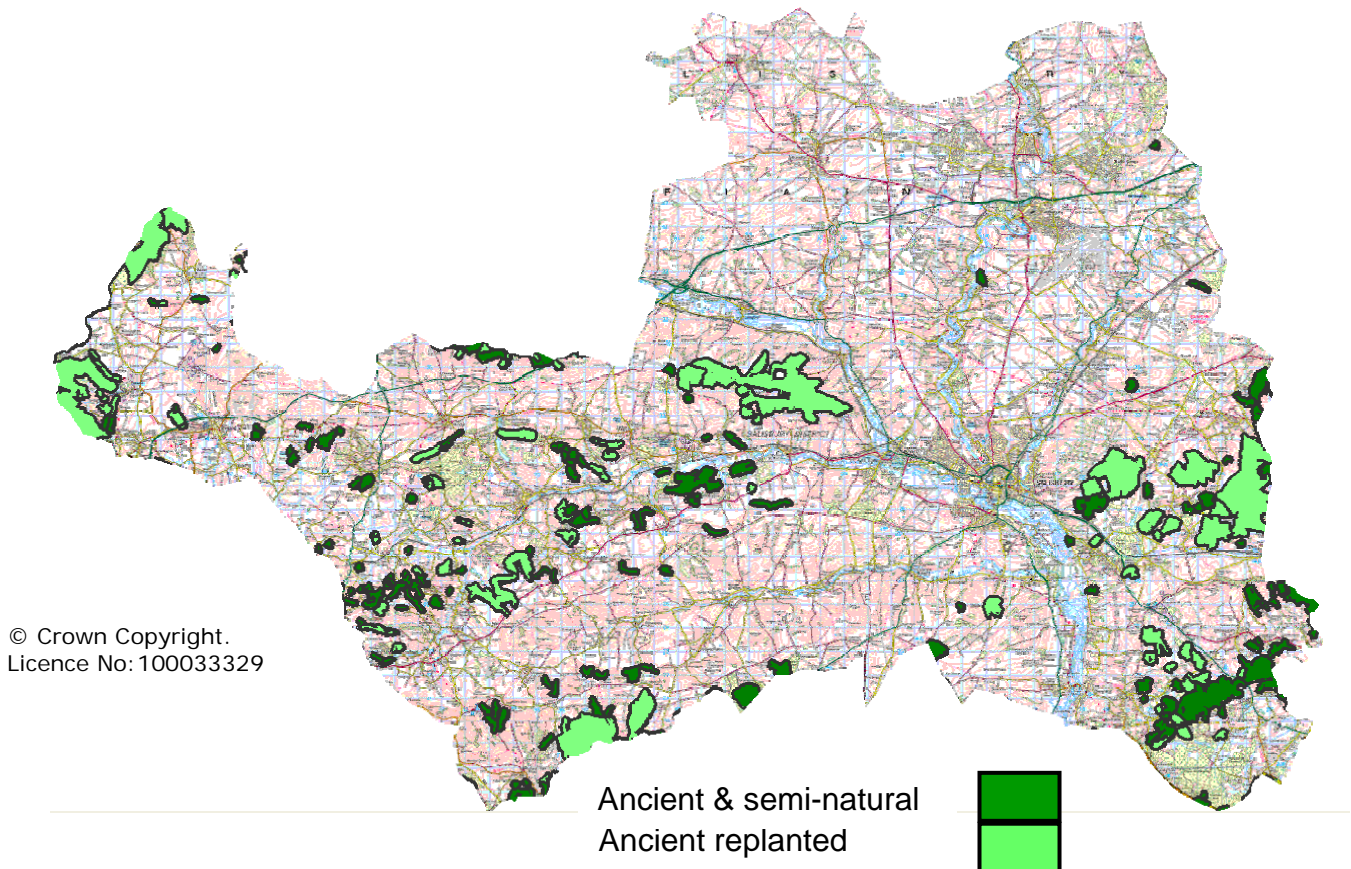
1.36 Ancient woodland is defined as sites that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600, and south Wiltshire has a significant quantity of ancient woodland, as the map below illustrates, primarily within the western and southeastern parts of south Wiltshire.

1.37 Planning policies should protect ancient woodlands against redevelopment and proposals resulting in their loss must be resisted unless there are very exceptional circumstances and other benefits result. The Forestry Commission in its policy document "Keepers of Time" equally recognises the wide range of social, economic and educational benefits that are intrinsic to forests.

1.38 Any ancient woodland sites that are not covered by the SSSI designation are automatically considered to be County Wildlife Sites unless and until a detailed survey shows them to be so degraded as to have lost their conservation value.

1.39 The map below indicates main sites of Ancient Woodland although excludes many smaller sites (smaller than 5 hectares) which make quite significant contributions to the cultural, wildlife and scenic aspects of the landscape, particularly in the AONB.

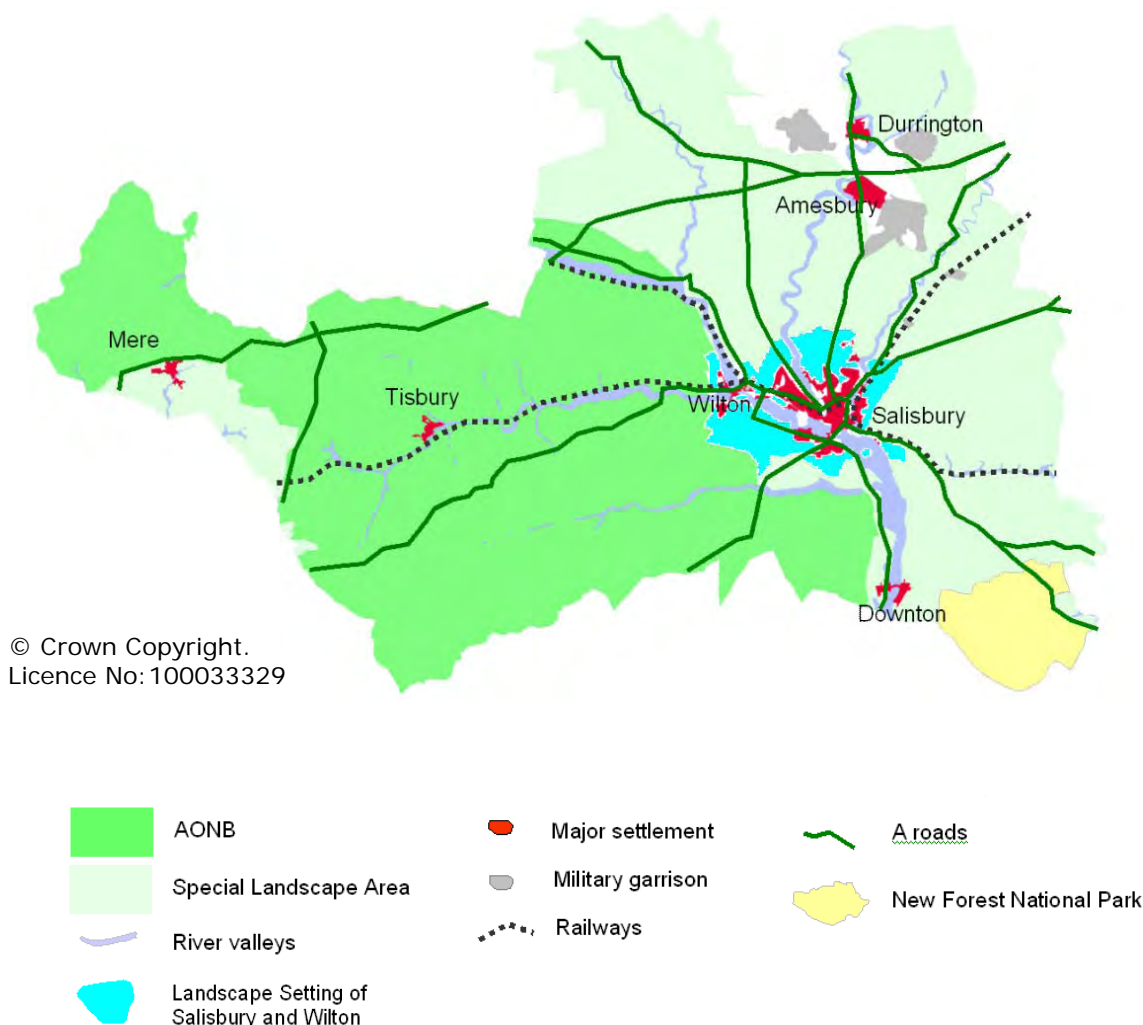
MAP 5: ANCIENT WOODLAND



1.40 Landscape

1.41 “Landscape” is a holistic concept that encompasses, amongst other things, wildlife, biodiversity, land use history, and the built and designed cultural environments.

MAP 6: KEY MAN-MADE FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS



1.42 Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

1.43 Almost half of south Wiltshire is designated under the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). At 380 square miles in total, is amongst the largest AONBs in the country. The extent of the AONB in south Wiltshire is shown in the map above. It runs from the extreme west of south Wiltshire passing just north of the Mere Area and across the whole depth of the housing market area to Wilton, parts of the Wylve Valley and almost as far as Downton.

1.44 The AONB was established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area, which straddles 4 counties and 7 district councils. “Natural beauty” includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage. In relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are equally important aspects of the nation's heritage and environmental capital. Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities to protect AONBs under the 2000 Countryside and rights of Way (CROW) act. More detail is provided within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan which is detailed later in this Topic Paper.

- 1.45 The 2003 Landscape Character Assessment^{viii} gives the following overview of the character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB:

The AONB is divided into its two areas by the fertile wooded Vale of Wardour. To the south is Cranborne Chase with its smooth rounded downs, steeply cut combes and dry valleys typical of a typical chalk landscape. The dip slope gently descends to the south-east where it meets the Dorset Heaths. To the north, the Wiltshire Downs are more elevated, the landform rising to a subtle ridge at Great Ridge/Groveley Wood. Both areas are fringed by impressive scarps, cresting above the adjoining greensand terraces.

Traditional downland pasture is now largely confined to steeper slopes while large rectangular fields emphasise the chalkland's open character. The chalkland valleys of the Wylve and Ebble support a larger proportion of permanent pasture, with many copses and hedgerows. In the northwest, the AONB's sandstone fringe of wooded ridges and valleys includes rich parklands such as Longleat and Stourhead.

The AONB is of great ecological importance. Its protected sites range from ancient downland, herb-rich fen and river meadow to scattered deciduous woodland which includes remnants of the ancient Cranborne Chase hunting forest and the former Royal Forests of Selwood and Gillingham. It is rich in prehistoric sites with many ancient monuments and field patterns on the downs, whilst the Vale of Wardour is dominated by large 18th and 19th century estates, parklands and associated villages.

This is a deeply rural area with scattered villages and narrow roads. There are no large settlements in the AONB but nearby country towns such as Salisbury, Shaftesbury and Warminster are growth areas. Although there are a few sites attracting a large number of visitors, such as Longleat, Stourhead and Centre Parcs, the AONB is not a developed tourist area as yet, although demand for caravan sites, holiday and second homes is increasing'.

- 1.46 The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan covers the period 2004-2009, and stemming from it there are a range of issues felt particularly acutely within the AONB, for instance tranquility, local distinctiveness, and light pollution, although these also affect other parts of the district.

1.47 Other landscape designations

- 1.48 Much of the remainder of south Wiltshire is currently under the county-level designation of "Special Landscape Areas", which were first defined in the adopted Wiltshire Landscape Local Plan (1986). These areas of countryside, although not considered to be of national importance as are AONBs, are nonetheless landscapes of high quality and are afforded considerable protection from the impact of development in the existing Local Plan and Wiltshire Structure Plan. PPS7 (paragraphs 24-25) set out the government's approach to local landscape designations, requiring rigorous assessment and justification. A Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates provides, looked at later in this Topic Paper forms part of the evidence for policy development on this.
- 1.49 The immediate countryside fringe to the city was designated under the "Landscape Setting of Salisbury and Wilton" under the 2003 Local Plan. This reflects the particularly fine bowl-shaped landscape settings of the two towns within chalk downland, and constrains development adjacent or close to the urban areas. It is not a green belt *per se*: it is subject to regular review as necessary to facilitate the allocation of development sites.
- 1.50 The New Forest extends into the former Salisbury District, although for planning purposes it is now under the authority of the recently established New Forest National Park. Nearly a millennium since its creation, The New Forest remains one of the largest areas of mainly unenclosed land in southern England. It is extremely significant in terms of biodiversity, landscape and historic value, as well as for recreation and other uses. In 1985 the "New Forest Heritage Area" was designated, and subsequently this was extended into the former Salisbury district. Policies under Local Plans in the New Forest act to conserve and protect it, and will do so until the adoption by the New Forest National Park Authority of LDF policies, which will supersede them.

1.60 Landscape character

1.61 *Joint Character Areas*

In 1996 the countryside of England was assessed and divided into 159 “Joint Character Areas” (JCAs) each sharing similar characteristics. The work was undertaken by the former Countryside Commission and English Nature and more information is available at http://p1.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/south_west/index.asp. These assessments take into account key landscape, natural and man-made features and provide insights into important issues affecting the countryside. South Wiltshire comprises parts of four JCAs, whose main characteristics are as follows:

1.62 Salisbury Plain & West Wiltshire Downs

- a) Open, rolling Chalk plateau dominated by large arable fields
- b) Scattered copses and shelterbelts.
- c) Woodland confined mainly to valleys and steep slopes.
- d) Unimproved chalk grassland of high nature conservation value.
- e) River valleys with common settlements and narrow floodplains, dominated by former flooded flood meadows and meandering rivers.
- f) Steep scarps with unimproved grassland and woodland.
- g) Abundant older buildings of cob, thatch, brick, Chilmark Stone, flint and clunch.
- h) Prehistoric ritual landscape with widespread earthworks and monuments prominent in
- i) Military structures, airfields, tracks and signs

1.63 Blackmore Vale & Vale of Wardour

- a) Complex mosaic of mixed farming: undulating, lush, clay vales fringed by Upper Greensand hills and scarps.
- b) Small, rectilinear pasture fields with hedgerow oak trees and many scattered small broadleaved woodlands.
- c) Many streams and waterside trees.
- d) Wooded Upper Greensand scarps and outliers with historic parks.
- e) Open arable Upper Greensand and dip slopes.
- f) Broken, low, limestone ridges with shallow valleys crossing the clayey Blackmoor Vale and steeper valleys around the margins of the area.
- g) Small villages and hamlets form nuclei within a patchwork of fields, hedges, woods and trees.
- h) Many villages at scarp foot, river crossing points and strategic sites.
- i) A wide variety of local building materials and techniques, including half timbering. Todber Freestone and Upper Greensand are widely used in the east.

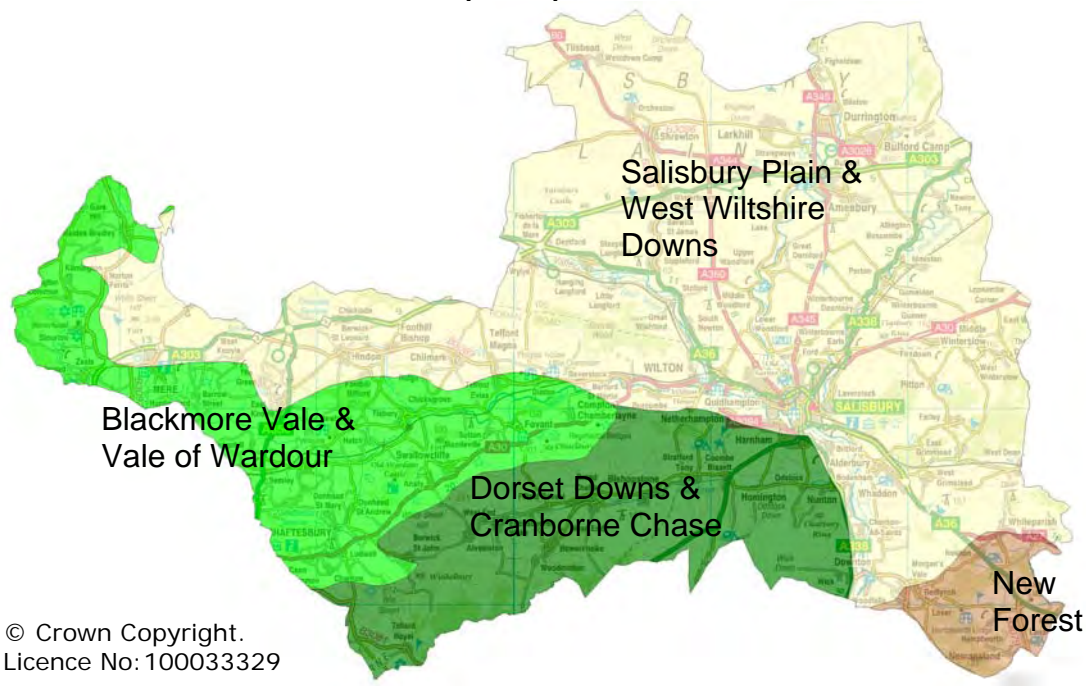
1.64 Dorset Downs & Cranborne Chase

- a) A rolling, chalk landscape with dramatic scarps and steep-sided, sheltered valleys.
- b) Scarp slopes with species-rich grassland, complex combes and valleys, spectacular views, prominent hillforts and other prehistoric features.
- c) Open, mainly arable, downland on the dip slope with isolated farmsteads and few trees.
- d) Very varied valleys with woodlands, hedged fields, flood meadows and villages in flint and thatch.
- e) Distinctive woodlands and deer parks of Cranborne Chase.

1.65 New Forest

- a) Mosaic of broadleaved and coniferous woodlands, unenclosed wood pasture, heath, grassland, and farmland. Grazing ponies and cattle
- b) Open and exposed plateaux and small valleys dominated by heath, with heather, gorse and grassland with scattered birch and pine. Bog vegetation in valley bottoms.
- c) Pockets of farmland and widely dispersed settlements with large isolated dwellings, bounded by high hedges, contained within the woodland.
- d) Wood-pasture of mature oak woodland, patches of bracken interspersed with glades and heavily grazed ‘lawns’, verges and commons.
- e) Large woodlands of mature broadleaves and an understorey of holly and bracken, contrasting with dark blocks of coniferous plantations.
- f) Fringe areas of farmland with villages. Small fields lined by full hedges, opening out to larger arable fields, with contrasts between the more intimate features of the Avon Valley, and the salt-marshes and shingle beaches on the southern coastal plain.

MAP 7: JOINT CHARACTER AREAS (JCAs) WITHIN SOUTH WILTSHIRE

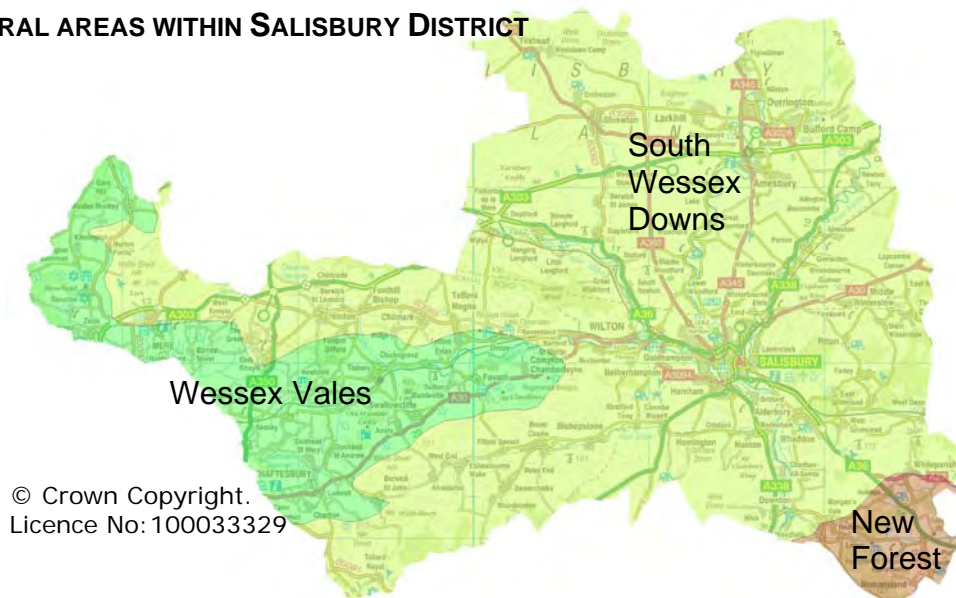


1.66 Each JCA faces issues and threats stemming from the changing nature of the countryside. Recurrent themes include scrub encroachment, lack of appropriate woodland management, expansion of roads, low flows in chalk streams, loss of hedgerows, damage through inappropriate land use, and lack of grazing. Whilst the planning system cannot necessarily tackle these issues directly in all cases there is certainly scope for a positive and proactive role in new LDF policies and for relevant partners to be supported.

1.67 *Natural Areas*

1.68 Natural Areas are unique sub-divisions identified by English Nature (now Natural England) on the basis of their physical, wildlife, land use and cultural attributes. They differ to JCAs in that they are broader in definition and focus more upon wildlife and natural features. They “provide a way of interpreting the ecological variations of the country in terms of natural features, illustrating the distinctions between one area and another”^x. Each Natural Area has a unique identity resulting from the interaction of wildlife, landforms, geology, land use and human impact. South Wiltshire comprises segments of three Natural Areas: Wessex Vales, South Wessex Downs, and the New Forest.

MAP 8: NATURAL AREAS WITHIN SALISBURY DISTRICT



1.69 A Landscape Character Assessment for Wiltshire^x was carried out in 2005 and identified 16 separate *landscape types* within the County, each with a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, biodiversity and historical evolution. The types present within south Wiltshire are:

- a) Wooded downland
- b) High chalk plain
- c) Chalk river valley
- d) Greensand terrace
- e) Wooded greensand hills
- f) Wooded clay vale
- g) Forest-heathland mosaic

1.70 The assessment concluded that around a third of the landscape of the county is in moderate condition with none in poor condition. Most of chalk uplands of the south of the county, and the limestone areas to the north west are in good condition.

1.71 The assessment is available from:
<http://www2.wiltshire.gov.uk/linear/environment-and-planning/wiltshire-landscape-character-assessment-final-report.htm>

1.72 Landscape Character and Settlement Settings Assessment

1.73 A Landscape Character Assessment, undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates for south Wiltshire has now been completed on a more concentrated level (1:25,000 scale) which identifies.

1.74 A landscape character assessment (LCA) was commissioned to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy and other development plan documents for south Wiltshire. This was undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates. As such the assessment needs to be carried out in a rigorous manner in order to provide robust evidence to justify any future policy decisions. This should ensure that the LDF meets the test of soundness at Inquiry and

meets with the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 7- Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

- 1.75 Two separate studies were undertaken a district wide landscape character assessment and a Settlement Settings Assessment looking in greater context of Salisbury, Wilton, Amesbury, Bulford, Durrington, Alderbury, Mere, Tisbury and Downton.

1.76 Landscape Character Assessment

1.77 The Assessment begins by setting out the planning policy context for this study, which includes Government Planning Policy Statements (PPS) concerning sustainable developments and sustainable development in rural areas, Regional Planning Strategy and existing local planning policy. The study describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today. It goes on to provide an overview of landscape character across the District as a whole in its national and county context. This provides the basis for the identification, mapping and description of discrete Landscape Character Units within the south Wiltshire.

1.78 This assessment has confirmed the diversity of Salisbury District's landscapes, identifying nine different types of landscape within only 1004 square kilometres. These are:

- a) Narrow Chalk River Valley
- b) Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes
- c) Broad Chalk River Valley Floor
- d) Chalk Downland
- e) Chalk Escarpments
- f) Forest Heath Mosaic
- g) Greensand Terrace
- h) Greensand Hills
- i) Rolling Clay Vale

1.79 This diversity is largely influenced by the varied geology of south Wiltshire (limestone, clay, greensand and chalk) and its topographic variety (rolling lowland, river valleys and floodplains, hills, terraces, escarpments and downland). This assessment also confirms that the historical settlement, development and use of the Salisbury District's landscape, and its ecological character, reflect this diversity. Within the context of this diversity of landscape types, the assessment has identified 25 areas of distinctive landscape character. These areas reflect distinct and recognizable patterns of different natural and cultural elements that combine to create a particular experience or 'sense of place.'

1.80 Conclusions

1.81 *Diversity of the District's Landscapes* - overall, the diversity and distinctiveness of the District's landscapes are considered to be a major environmental asset, making a significant contribution to the quality of life for Salisbury District's communities. Protecting landscape features and patterns that contribute to landscape diversity, including enhancing their quality, character and function where necessary, should be a key aim for planning and land management policy in Salisbury District.

1.82 *Condition and Sensitivities of the District's Landscapes* - the Assessment identifies, in broad terms, the current condition and sensitivities of each of the 25 landscape character areas. This information highlights the main issues affecting landscape character that need to be considered in decisions involving the development and use of land within a particular character area. Key issues in relation to development planning include:

- a) Built development
- b) Infrastructure
- c) Small-scale and incremental change
- d) Settlements in their landscape settings
- e) Recreation and tourism
- f) Climate change

- 1.83 Landscape Management Needs** - taking into account the current condition, sensitivities and changes affecting the character of each landscape character area, the Assessment also identifies guidance in the form of an overall strategy and set of objectives for managing landscape change. These reflect the specific needs of different character areas - ranging from protecting the highest quality and most sensitive landscapes from adverse changes, to promoting positive management actions to strengthen specific characteristics and features within landscapes of poor condition through environmental enhancement, design and restoration projects.
- 1.84 The Landscape Planning Policy Framework** - the focus of the current national and emerging regional planning policy framework in relation to the protection and enhancement of landscape can be summarised as:
- a) Sustainable development is the overarching objective and priority;
 - b) Landscape character, settlement character and local distinctiveness should be taken into consideration in development;
 - c) Landscape character should inform but not constrain development;
 - d) The countryside is to be protected for its own sake but development that supports the rural economy should be considered;
 - e) Core policies need to be clear, concise and criteria-based;
 - f) A strong evidence base is required to support policies and any Supplementary Planning Documents;
 - g) Local landscape designations and green wedges/strategic gaps, where these are to be retained, need justification based on a formal and robust assessment;
 - h) Design policy is an important means for achieving landscape character objectives.
- 1.85** The Assessment provides the evidence base required to support the Council's Local Development Framework in general, and to underpin the development of criteria-based policies in particular.
- 1.86 Synergy with Existing Landscape Character Assessments** - this 1:25,000 'district-scale' assessment of landscape character units has been undertaken to 'nest' within the framework provided by the 1:250,000 'national-scale' Character of England Map and the 1:50,000 'county-scale' assessment set out in the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment. This assessment also incorporates information from West Wiltshire District, New Forest District, Kennet District, Test Valley and the Salisbury Plain Landscape Character Assessments which share similar character area boundaries. This Assessment has sought to strongly reflect the relevant management strategies, objectives and guidelines defined in the existing County and AONB Landscape Character Assessment to ensure synergy between the documents wherever appropriate. Depending on the circumstances and scale of consideration, this assessment should be read in conjunction with the relevant assessment(s) to inform decision-making processes.
- 1.87 Relationship with Landscape Designations** - whilst recognising that large tracts of Salisbury District are covered by statutory protected landscapes (the AONB) and currently non-statutory local landscape designations (the five Special Landscape Areas), this study provides a seamless assessment of all of the District's landscapes irrespective of their quality or value.
- 1.88 Applications of the Landscape Character Assessment** - it is intended that this Landscape Character Assessment can be used by all those with an interest in landscape planning, design and management within the District. In line with the aims and objectives of the study, the principal application of this Landscape Character Assessment is in relation to the Council's development planning functions. Planners, developers, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and other professionals may also find the characterisation information and guidelines useful as a reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes. Other applications of the Landscape Character Assessments include its use by those involved in the targeting and delivery of environmental land management schemes - e.g. Environmental Stewardship advisers, landowners and managers. Local communities and other

stakeholders may also find the Study useful as a basis for guiding their responses to consultations by the planning authorities on plans, strategies and planning applications that may have significant implications for their local landscapes.

1.89 Settlement Settings Assessments

This Report presents the assessment of the key sensitivities and capacities of the landscape within the settings of the District's main settlements in relation to development and change.

1.90 For the purposes of the study, Salisbury District Council identified the following settlements for assessment (see **Figure 1.1**):

- a) Salisbury and Wilton
- b) Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington
- c) Alderbury
- d) Mere
- e) Tisbury
- f) Downton

1.91 Based on the Brief, the key objectives defined by CBA for the Settlement Setting Assessment are to:

- a) Provide a transparent, consistent and objective baseline assessment of the factors that contribute to the character of the settings
- b) Provide an analysis of the key landscape sensitivities/qualities that are desirable to safeguard within the setting of each settlement
- c) Provide capacity recommendations on how and where new development might best be accommodated within the setting of each settlement

1.92 The Settlement Settings Assessment provides a detailed assessment of each settlement both in map form and written commentary and makes recommendations for areas within distinctive and supportive landscapes. The detail of this should be viewed in the full report available on the council's website.

1.93 Both of these studies are available from:

1.94 <http://www.salisbury.gov.uk/planning/forward-planning/local-development-framework/strategic-landscape-assessment.htm>

2. National & Regional Policy Framework

2.1 National policy background

2.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- 2.2 [The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(CRoW Act 2000\)](#), which applies to England and Wales only, received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000, with the provisions it contains being brought into force in incremental steps over subsequent years. Containing five Parts and 16 Schedules, the Act provides for public access on foot to certain types of land, amends the law relating to public rights of way, increases protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation, and provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Act is compliant with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, requiring consultation where the rights of the individual may be affected by these measures.
- a) Access to the Countryside - The Act provides a new right of public access on foot to areas of open land comprising mountain, moor, heath, down, and registered common land, and contains provisions for extending the right to coastal land. The Act also provides safeguards which take into account the needs of landowners and occupiers, and of other interests, including wildlife.
 - b) Public Rights of Way and Road Traffic - The Act improves the rights of way legislation by encouraging the creation of new routes and clarifying uncertainties about existing rights. Of particular relevance to nature conservation, the Act introduces powers enabling the diversion of rights of way to protect SSSIs.
 - c) Nature Conservation and Wildlife Protection - The Act places a duty on Government Departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity and maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity. Schedule 9 of the Act changes the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, amending SSSI notification procedures and providing increased powers for the protection and management of SSSIs. The provisions extend powers for entering into management agreements, place a duty on public bodies to further the conservation and enhancement of SSSIs, and increase penalties on conviction where the provision are breached, with a new offence whereby third parties can be convicted for damaging SSSIs. To ensure compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998, appeal processes are introduced with regards to the notification, management and protection of SSSIs. Schedule 12 of the Act amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, strengthening the legal protection for threatened species. The provisions make certain offences 'arrestable', create a new offence of reckless disturbance, confer greater powers to police and wildlife inspectors for entering premises and obtaining wildlife tissue samples for DNA analysis, and enable heavier penalties on conviction of wildlife offences.
 - d) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - The Act clarifies the procedure and purpose of designating AONBs, and consolidates the provisions of previous legislation. It requires local authorities to produce management plans for each AONB, and enables the creation of Conservation Boards in order to assume responsibility for AONBs, particularly where the land designated crosses several local authority jurisdictions. The Act also requires all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs when performing their functions.

Available from: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000037_en_1

2.3 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

- 2.4 From 1st October 2006, all public sector bodies, from the police to the BBC, will have to consider biodiversity in the work they do. Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

2.5 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/pdf/ukpga_20060016_en.pdf

2.6 Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological conservation (PPS9)^{xi} is the chief document underpinning considerations for planning and development in the field of biodiversity and nature conservation. It requires Local Planning Authorities to act in a number of ways. In brief it requires Local Planning Authorities to:

- a) Understand the environmental characteristics of their authority area.
- b) Consider how to maintain and enhance those characteristics.
- c) Take a strategic approach to conservation, enhancement and restoration
- d) Permit/promote biodiversity and geodiversity within new development.
- e) Avoid adverse impacts upon, or losses of, protected sites.
- f) Mitigate and compensate where losses or adverse impacts are unavoidable
- g) Promote benefits and gains: planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests

2.7 In more detail this involves the following actions:

- a) **Developing the evidence base** Local Authorities should understand the environmental characteristics of their authority area, through obtaining or developing information resources that are both comprehensive and up-to-date.
- b) **Maintenance and enhancement** Having quantified and understood the natural assets of their areas, planning authorities should consider how best to maintain these, and what opportunities there are for restoration and enhancement.
- c) **Taking account of designations, species and features** When making decisions on policies and planning applications, planning authorities should give appropriate consideration to any designated sites that are affected, in order to protect biodiversity and geological interests.
- d) **Taking a strategic approach** Individual sites and habitats collectively contribute to natural networks that are “greater than the sum of their parts”. A strategic approach is required in order to capitalise on opportunities to build on and develop those links.
- e) **Biodiversity in new development** There are many potential opportunities to incorporate biodiversity and geodiversity within new development. Local authorities are expected to recognise this and include beneficial features to this end. This may include creating or protecting networks or corridors for nature, as well as potentially creating new reserves or sites.
- f) **Taking a protective approach** The aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests. Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm to those interests, local planning authorities will need to be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative sites that would result in less or no harm. In the absence of any such alternatives, local planning authorities should ensure that, before planning permission is granted, adequate mitigation measures are put in place. Where a planning decision would result in significant harm to biodiversity and geological interests which cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought. If that significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

2.8 Local authorities should take an integrated approach to planning for biodiversity and geodiversity when preparing local development documents. They should ensure that policies reflect, and are consistent with, national, regional and local biodiversity priorities and objectives (including those agreed by local biodiversity partnerships).

2.9 In particular, PPS9 requires LDFs to:

- a. indicate the location of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, making clear distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national, regional and locally designated sites; and
- b. identify any areas or sites for the restoration or creation of new priority habitats which contribute to regional targets, and support this restoration or creation through appropriate policies.

2.10 The types of sites to be considered include more detail is also provided below::

- International sites – SPAs, SACs, Ramsar sites
 - SSSIs
 - Regionally important Geological Sites (RIGS)
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - County Wildlife Sites
 - Local Sites
 - Ancient Woodlands
 - Networks of natural habitats
 - Previously developed land
 - Biodiversity within developments.
- a) **International sites:-** Identify these sites on proposals maps. Specific policies should not be needed, for international sites. Identifies that listed Ramsar sites, also as a matter of policy, should receive the same protection as designated SPAs and SACs.
- b) **SSSI's** Where a proposed development on land within or outside a SSSI is likely to have an adverse effect on an SSSI planning permission should not normally be granted.
- c) **Regional and Local sites** - Criteria based policies should be established in LDD's against which proposals for any development, on or affecting such a site will be judged. These policies should be distinguished from those applied to nationally important sites.
- d) **Ancient woodland and other important natural habitats** - Once lost ancient woodland cannot be recreated. LPAs should identify any areas of ancient woodland in their areas that do not have statutory protection and should not grant planning permission for any development that would result in its loss or deterioration unless the need for and benefits of the development outweigh the loss of woodland habitat. Aged or veteran trees are also particularly valuable for biodiversity.
- e) LPAs should conserve other important natural habitat types listed in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 section 74 list and identify opportunities to enhance and add to them.
- f) **Networks of Natural Habitats** - Networks provide a valuable resource. They can link sites of biodiversity importance and provide routes or stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species. LA's should aim to maintain networks by avoiding or repairing the fragmentation and such networks should be protected from development and possibly strengthened by or integrated within it.
- g) **Previously developed land:** Where sites have biodiversity or geological interest of recognised importance, LPAs should aim to retain this interest or incorporate it into any new development.
- h) **Biodiversity within developments-** LPAs should maximise such opportunities in and around developments, using planning obligations where appropriate.
- i) **Species protection** Other species have been identified as requiring conservation action as species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. LPAs should take measures to protect the habitats of these species from further decline through policies within the LDDs.

2.11 Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: A Good Practice Guide (2006)

2.12 Provides a list of the key elements of evidence base that is required.

- a) the broad bio-geographical, geological and geomorphological character of the area, creating its main landscapes types;
- b) key natural systems and processes within the area, including fluvial and coastal;
- c) the location and extent of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites;
- d) the distribution of UKBAP priority habitats and species as well as areas of irreplaceable natural habitat, such as ancient woodland or limestone pavement;• habitats where specific land management practices are required for their conservation;
- e) main landscape features which, due to their linear or continuous nature, are important for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchanges of plants and animals, including any

- potential for new habitat corridors to link any isolated sites that hold nature conservation value, and therefore improve species dispersal;
- f) areas with potential for habitat enhancement or restoration, including those necessary to help biodiversity adapt to climate change or which could assist with the habitats shifts and species migrations arising from climate change;
- g) an audit of green space within built areas and where new development is proposed;
- h) information on the presence of protected and priority species and areas where these are likely to occur;
- i) information on the biodiversity and geodiversity value of previously developed sites and the opportunities for incorporating this in developments; and • areas of geological value which would benefit from enhancement and management.

2.13 Identifies biodiversity and geological issues which might be covered in a LDF Core Strategy or other DPD policy as:

- a) recognition of environmental trends resulting from climate change and provision for natural systems, habitats and species to adjust to this;
- b) a strategic framework for the protection, restoration or creation of priority BAP habitats (and for Ancient Woodland and other habitats of recognised importance) and the protection and enhancement of the populations and habitats of priority BAP species;
- c) managing land use in step with naturally functioning processes and systems and aligning objectives for biodiversity and geological conservation with, for example, Shoreline Management Plans and River Basin Management Plans;
- d) maintaining, restoring or adding to networks of natural habitats and other landscape features essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species (incorporating this into a more broadly functioning 'green infrastructure');
- e) promoting sustainable design standards for the construction and management of development which includes features beneficial to biodiversity or geological conservation;
- f) identifying the role of a hierarchy of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites; • safeguarding the biodiversity value of previously developed land through planning decisions;
- g) promoting and supporting the enhancement and management of local geological sites through the planning process.

2.14 The Site Specific Allocations DPD may need to indicate areas of land designated for their biodiversity or geodiversity value and the nature of that designation, in order to clarify relationships with development allocations. Could also identify specific areas for the restoration and enhancement of biodiversity or geological conservation identify in the Core Strategy.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/historicenvironment/pps9/>

2.15 Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System

2.16 Identifies international legislation that the UK is bound by and details requirements, namely the EC Birds and Habitats Directives and the Ramsar Convention as well as the Conservation (Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994.

2.17 Identifies national legislation protecting nationally important wildlife as well as the conservation of habitats and species outside of designated sites and Conservation of species protected by law.

2.18 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/circularbiodiversity>

2.19 PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.20 This is of course relevant to nature conservation throughout the document as it sets out planning policy issues for the countryside where the majority of natural sites are

located. In particular, at paragraph 15 it sets out the principles of nature conservation being implemented alongside facilitating the development of other activities. Although strongly protected, the existence of nature designations does not necessarily require the imposition of an embargo on development.

2.21 PPS1: Sustainable Development

2.20 This sets out in broad terms the government's approach for the planning system as a whole:

- (i) sustainable development be pursued in an integrated manner, in line with the principles for sustainable development, promoting environmental, economic and social objectives together.
- (ii) Contributing to global sustainability: addressing causes and impacts of climate change.
- (iii) Adopting a spatial planning approach for sustainable development
- (iv) Prompting high quality inclusive design for the whole lifetime of developments.
- (v) Clear, comprehensive and inclusive access policies considering people's diverse needs.
- (vi) Community involvement within the planning system.

2.21 In terms of biodiversity there is a clear nexus between these objectives and those of protecting and enhancing biodiversity, particularly points (i)-(iii)

2.22 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and Regional Environmental Strategy (RES)

2.23 The emerging RSS is to supersede the county-level Structure Plan as the higher tier of the Development Plan for south Wiltshire. It highlights the particular importance and quality of the natural environment to the South West region and, in addition to seeking to protect it for its own sake, recognises the relationships with quality of life. The key policies within the RSS that are of relevance to this topic are:

SD3 The Environment and Natural Resources

"The region's environment and natural resources will be protected and enhanced by:

- Ensuring that development respects landscape and ecological thresholds of settlements
- Reducing the environmental impact of the economy, transport and development
- Positively planning to enhance natural environments through development, taking a holistic approach based on landscape or ecosystem scale planning
- Planning and design of development to reduce pollution and contamination and to maintain tranquility
- Positive planning and design to set development within and to enhance local character (including setting development within the landscape of the historic environment), and bringing historic buildings back into viable economic use and supporting regeneration
- Contributing to regional biodiversity targets through the restoration, creation, improvement and management of habitats"

ENV1 Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Historic Environment

"The quality, character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the natural and historic environment in the South West will be protected and enhanced, and developments which support their positive management will be encouraged. Where development and changes in land use are planned which would affect these assets, local authorities will first seek to avoid loss of or damage to the assets, then mitigate any unavoidable damage, and compensate for loss or damage through offsetting actions. Priority will be given to preserving and enhancing sites of international or national landscape, nature conservation, geological, archaeological or historic importance. Tools such as characterization and surveys will be used to enhance local sites, features and distinctiveness through

development, including the setting of settlements and buildings within the landscape and contributing to the regeneration and restoration of the area.”

ENV2 Landscape Character Areas

“The distinctive qualities and features of the South West’s landscape character areas will be sustained and enhanced by Local Planning Authorities undertaking assessments of landscape character at a strategic level and in partnership with adjoining authorities (where landscape character areas cross administrative boundaries) in order to identify priority areas for the maintenance, enhancement and/or restoration of that character and provide an appropriate policy framework in LDDs for each area.”

ENV3 Protected Landscapes

“In Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the 14 AONB in the region, the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage will be given priority over other considerations in the determination of development proposals. Development will only be provided for where it would:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park or AONB, or
- Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park, or
- Foster the social or economic well-being of the communities within the National Park or AONB, provided that such development is compatible with the pursuit of National Park or AONB purposes

Consideration will also be given to proposals which promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONBs. Particular care will be taken to ensure that no development is permitted outside the National Park or AONBs which would damage their natural beauty, character and special qualities or otherwise prejudice the achievement of National Park or AONB purposes.”

ENV4 Nature Conservation

“The distinctive habitats and species of the South West will be maintained and enhanced in line with national targets and the South West Regional Biodiversity Action Plan. Local authorities should use the Nature Map to help map local opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in LDDs, taking into account the local distribution of habitats and species, and protecting these sites and features from harmful development. Priority will be given to meeting targets for maintenance, restoration and recreation of priority habitats and species set out in Appendix 1, focusing on the Nature Map areas identified in Map 7.3. Proposals which provide opportunities for the beneficial management of these areas and habitats and species generally, should be supported, including linking habitats to create more functional units which are more resilient to climate change.”

GI1 – Green infrastructure

“Development of networks of Green Infrastructure (GI) will be required to enhance quality of life in the region and support the successful accommodation of change. GI networks will comprise multifunctional, accessible, connected assets, planned around existing environmental characteristics. This may take the form of protection, enhancement or extension of existing resources or the provision of new or replacement facilities.”

2.24 The Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the south west incorporating the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes – for public consultation July 2008

There are few changes to this section of the RSS proposed changes however the Secretary of state has amended the following paragraph to ENV1:

‘Any development that could have any negative effect on the integrity and conservation objectives of a N2K site would not be in accordance with the development plan. Further assessment of the implications for N2K sites is required at subsequent levels including LDDs, and any development that would be likely to have a significant effect on a N2K site, either alone or in combination, will be subject to assessment at the project application stage. Three locations are considered to be particularly vulnerable and require special protection –

Dorset Heath, River Avon (Hampshire) and Severn Estuary. Paragraph 4.1.16 identifies a number of other sites where further protection may be necessary depending on the impacts of new development proposed through LDDs or planning applications

2.25 The background information and policy on Green infrastructure has been amended quite substantially to:

2.26 Additional paragraphs:

The Habitats Regulations Assessment of the RSS identifies a number of international nature conservation sites which are particularly vulnerable to harm from recreational activities as a result of their proximity to urban areas or their attractiveness for recreation to local residents or tourists.

The relevant authorities will need to work jointly with Natural England to secure and implement appropriate and deliverable measures to avoid or mitigate adverse effects from recreation at these sites, such as the use of planning obligations to secure provision of alternative greenspace or improve habitat management. Providing new areas of appropriate greenspace (as set out in Policy GI1) is likely to mitigate potential adverse effects in many locations. However, management of activities and access to these sites may also be required. If following investigation of mitigation options by local authorities and partners, provision of appropriate greenspace and/or management measures is not possible, restriction may need to be put in place on the type, scale and/or location of development (e.g. through the implementation of 'no development' buffer zones) within LDDs in proximity to these sites. Particular sites at risk from recreational pressure are:

- Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar Site
- Salisbury Plain SAC
- The New Forest SAC

(Please note: these sites are those listed that may be relevant to south Wiltshire)

GI1 – Green infrastructure

Development of networks of Green Infrastructure (GI) will be required to enhance quality of life in the region and support the successful accommodation of change. GI networks will comprise multifunctional, accessible, connected assets, planned around existing environmental characteristics.

Plans, strategies proposals and schemes should aim to deliver wider spatial outcomes that incorporate environmental and socio-economic benefits by:

- Conserving and managing existing GI:
- Creating new GI
- Enhancing its functionality, quality and connectivity

GI is required as an integral part of development and should include the identification, development and management of new areas of open space, not just more intensive use of existing areas of open space. Local Authorities and partners will:

- Draw upon existing expertise and initiatives to take forward GI planning and identify priorities and partnerships for GI.
- Incorporate GI policies setting out broad locations for GI appropriate to the extent and distribution of development proposed, coordinated across administrative boundaries as appropriate.
- Integrate proposal to improve GI into delivery of new developments, particularly through area based regeneration initiatives and major development proposals.
- Ensure that a key aim of green infrastructure is the maintenance and improvement of biodiversity

- Protect the integrity of sites of international importance and provide new areas of appropriate greenspace where development would otherwise cause unacceptable recreational pressure on sites of international ecological importance
- Maximise the role of GI in mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Develop a GI plan with a delivery programme to support GI policies

2.27 Regional Environmental Strategy

2.28 **Our Environment Our Future**– The Regional Strategy for the South West Environment (2004-2014)

2.29 The Regional Environmental Strategy (RES)^{xii} identifies six main issues in the South West:

- Food, farming and forestry
- Tourism and leisure
- Spatial planning
- Transport
- Climate change
- Wiser use of natural resources

2.30 The first four of these are considered areas of opportunity to deliver environmental benefits, where existing pressures could ease whilst the latter two are considered more cross-cutting issues. Some of the major areas specifically identified as being problematic include habitat fragmentation, decline in birds, SSSI's in adverse condition, unmanaged woodland, water quality, and the loss of heathland and habitats due to development.

2.31 The strategy is also accompanied by an implementation plan.

http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=521&tt=swra

2.32 South West Biodiversity Implementation Plan^{xiii}

2.33 This was developed by the South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership to set out a framework of policy, priorities and actions to assist in a more joined up approach to biodiversity delivery. It identifies key programmes of work, both for those directly involved and for those who can enable these, under five specific sectors:

- Farming and Food
- Water and Wetlands
- Woodlands and Forestry
- Towns, Cities and Development
- Coastal and Marine Environment

2.34 Generic priorities under the document are as follows:

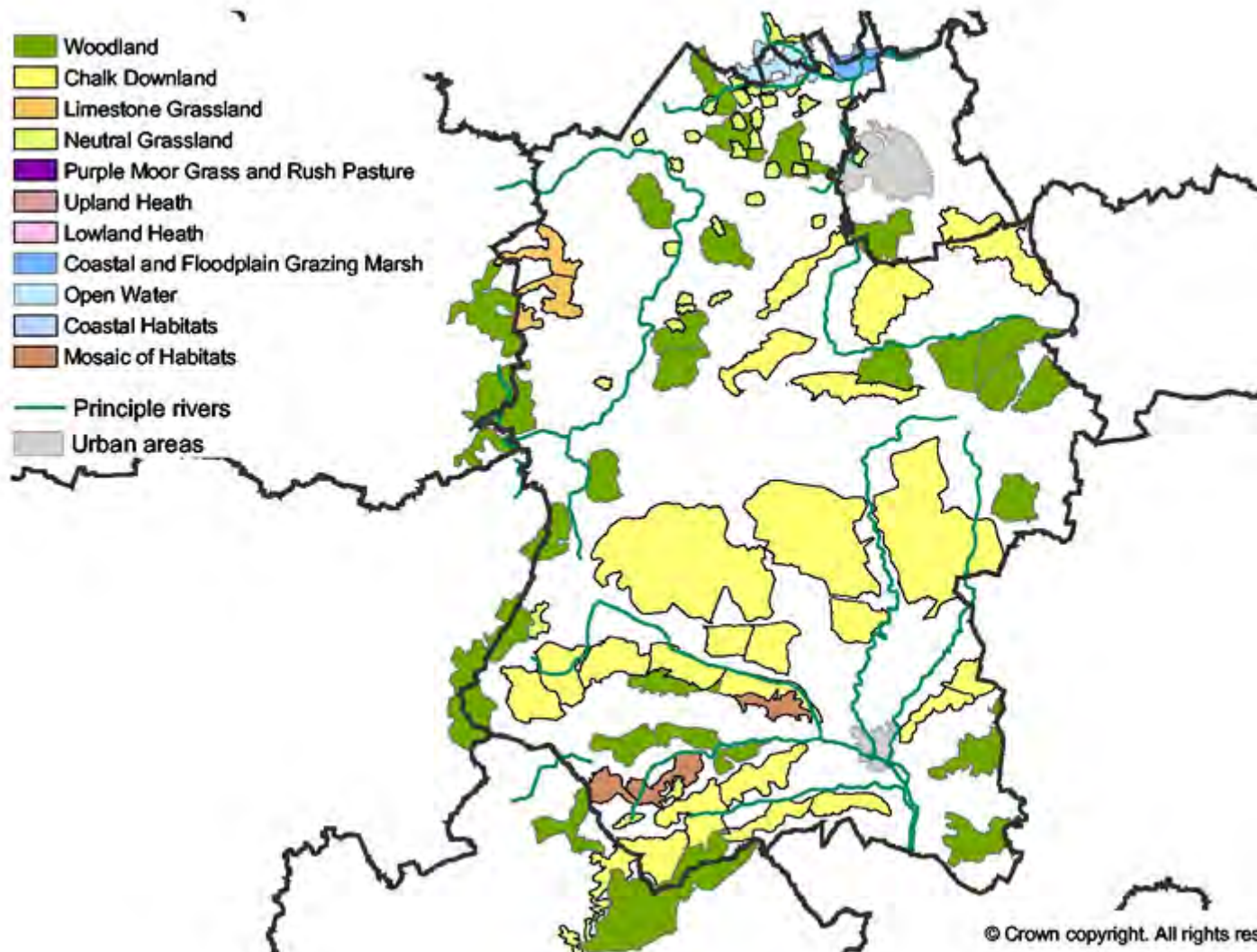
- Maintain and enhance biodiversity by:
 - sensitively managing existing habitats,
 - expanding and re-establishing links between fragmented sites and, where appropriate,
 - managing at a larger, functional scale (landscape, ecosystem or catchment).
- Develop integrated sustainable land management practices – that safeguard and enhance the region's biodiversity whilst also bringing benefits to society, the economy and environment.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity to the region's health, quality of life and economic productivity, and develop wider support and active engagement.
- Understand and manage the dynamic processes of change (e.g. climate change) and develop long-term sustainable approaches within the region that focus on the quality, extent and diversity of habitats.

<http://www.biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk/>

2.35 South West Nature Map and Planners Guide

2.36 The south west nature map, available from http://www.swenvo.org.uk/nature_map/Wiltshire_final.jpg has been prepared to give a clear strategic picture of our region's biodiversity for organisations operating at a regional level.

MAP 9



2.37 The South West Nature map is a broad scale, strategic vision for change which offers a spatially-based tool for identifying where biodiversity enhancement should be delivered in the future, using existing areas of wildlife value as a starting point. The map identifies at the landscape scale blocks of lands, known as 'Strategic Nature Areas' that represent the best areas to maintain and expand wildlife habitats through their management, restoration and/or re-creation. The map should be used to:

- Identify where most of the major biodiversity concentrations are found and where targets to maintain, restore and re-create wildlife might be best met
- Formulate sustainable choices for development e.g. through LDF's and the RSS
- Assist in targeting the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme
- Develop partnerships and projects for biodiversity in the region
- Provide a focus for projects that will help biodiversity to adapt to climate change.

3. Linking it together – what do other strategies say?

3.0 Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning

3.1 Joint statement from Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

3.2 This advocates a strong and ambitious approach: *“Plans and strategies should be more ambitious about what can be done to enhance and manage the environment, plan for future change (including that brought about by climate change) and bring positive change to rural areas.”* It recommends that planning authorities are proactive and act in a range of ways to deliver that positive change, including:

- a) Having a clear and understandable vision for the future in terms of environment and quality of life, achieving sustainable development.
- b) Building ambitious initiatives for conservation, enhancement and management of the environment into plans and delivery.
- c) Consulting widely and as early as possible, using initiatives such as parish plans.
- d) Ensuring consistency and links to other plans and strategies.
- e) Locating and design new development to avoid harmful effects whilst bringing new benefits that would not otherwise occur, and taking climate change into account.
- f) Considering areas particularly suitable or unsuitable for development.
- g) Identifying targets or thresholds or other indicators of development opportunity that would help to maximise environmental benefits
- h) Undertaking detailed landscape character and historic landscape characterisation assessments and set out appropriate policies and proposals for different character areas.

■
<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningtransportlocalgov/spatialplanning/default.aspx>

3.3 The State of the environment in the South West^{xiv}

3.4 This report, published by the Regional Observatory, identifies a range of environmental pressures affecting the region, which include:

- a) The region could potentially have the highest increase in sea level rise in Great Britain as a result of climate change.
- b) The region has the highest household electricity consumption rate in Great Britain.
- c) Annual population growth is above the English average.
- d) The region has the highest number of journeys made by car, the 2nd highest increase in traffic volume and some of the least accessible bus services in England.
- e) Total municipal waste continues to increase and now stands at its highest level yet.
- f) The increase in the number of passengers at the region’s airports is higher than the English average.
- g) If everyone lived like the average resident in the South West we would need three planets to support current lifestyles.

<http://www.swenvo.org.uk/environment/index.asp#biodiversity>

3.5 The Forestry Commission’s “Keepers of Time” document^{xv}

3.6 This is a statement of policy for England’s ancient and native woodland, which recognises their huge environmental, social and economic value. Key objectives include:

- a) Protecting existing woodland and achieving a net increase
- b) Increasing the positive role of woodland in quality of life
- c) Conserve and enhance rare, threatened or priority species associated with woodland.

3.7 The document notes that although direct loss of woodland is now less of a major concern than during the 20th century when large tracts were lost, this is only one of a number of threats, including bad management, overgrazing, invasive species, and pollution. More

pertinently in terms of the planning process, development on the boundaries of woodland can seriously disturb and threaten it.

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/keepersoftime>

3.8 The River Avon SAC conservation plan

3.9 This identifies the following key issues facing the SAC designation:

- Point-source Discharges
- Diffuse Pollution
- Abstraction
- Recreational Fisheries Management
- Managing Exploitation of Salmon Stocks
- Flood Defence and Land Drainage Activities
- Water-level Management
- Catchment Flood Risk Management
- Problem Species
- Development and Road Schemes
- Climate Change

<http://www.english-nature.org.uk/lifeinukrivers/publications/avon.pdf>

<http://www.english-nature.org.uk/lifeinukrivers/strategies/Avon/avon.html>

3.10 STREAM and the Living River Initiative

3.11 Strategic restoration and management of the River Avon SAC (STREAM)

Supported by the EC's LIFE-Nature programme. The project will undertake, amongst other work, between 2005 and 2009 – River restoration, linking rivers and valleys, monitoring physical and biological effect of restoration work.

3.12 The Living River project

3.13 Funded by the Heritage Lottery fund. Project aims to increase awareness and appreciation of the River Avon system, focusing on how its natural heritage is linked to the rich cultural heritage of the area. It will invest resources from a range of partners in long-lasting improvements to biodiversity and access of the heritage and will use innovative methods to engage audiences across the catchments and secure support for conservation. The project between 2006 and 2010 will complete the following programmes:

- a) Biodiversity restoration - at sites the public can access and enjoy
- b) Access and Interpretation - enhancing access to and information about the river with the local communities that live there
- c) Education and training - providing education events and resources and offering training opportunities to help people understand their relationship with the river system and take responsibility for it

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_west/ourwork/streamandthelivingriverinitiative.aspx

3.14 The Low Flows project

3.15 Information regarding the Low Flows project and water abstraction from the River Avon SAC can be found within Topic Paper 18 Water.

<http://www.wessexwater.co.uk/environment/twocol.aspx?id=496&linkidentifier=id&itemid=496>

3.16 Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan

3.17 The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan covers the period 2004-2009, and its key aims are as follows:

1. **Natural environment:** Conserve and enhance the landscape character, habitats, species and tranquility of the AONB, dealing with landscape, biodiversity, agriculture, forestry, natural resources and planning and development.
2. **Historic environment:** Conserve and enhance the historic, archaeological and cultural features within their distinctive landscape settings
3. **Built environment:** Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the built environment within its historic, cultural and landscape setting
4. **Roads, traffic and rights of way:** Promote the management of the impact of traffic on the AONB
5. **Rural economy:** Support the rural economy in ways that are sustainable, dealing with local economy and employment and recreation, tourism and access.
6. **Sustainable communities:** Support and influence innovative ways of maintaining and providing access to community facilities and services
7. **Awareness and understanding:** Increase levels of awareness and understanding of the AONB

3.18 Its Vision is:

3.19 From the past, present and still into the future, this nationally recognised landscape sustains an evocative character, that breathes a life of its own. Its characteristic, vibrant villages, deeply rural character and local sense of pride is tangible to all who live and visit here or just pass through.

3.20 Internationally important chalk rivers, diverse downland and vale landscapes are steeped in the evidence of human history yet provide varied and prosperous livelihoods. The quality of life in Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs is high and with policies and action to support the aspirations of those who live and work here.

3.21 The management plan then identifies a comprehensive management plan and how this will be monitored and evaluated.

http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/partnership/management_plan.asp

4. Priorities at community level.

4.1 2005-2009 Community Strategy

4.2 In 2002 the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance agreed its vision: “A safe and caring place, where it is easy to get about and where value for money services contribute to a high quality of life and environment with equality of opportunity for all”. The creation of sustainable settlements involves the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity and hence clearly conforms with this objective, although the specific priorities for focusing Alliance joint working do not directly relate to the topic of biodiversity.

4.3 Local Area Agreement

4.4 Wiltshire’s Local Area Agreement was signed in March 2007 and contains an environment “block”. One of the outcomes sought under this is to “*Protect, maintain and enhance the County’s biodiversity*”. The sub-outcomes are as follows:

- a) Ensure high quality biological information is readily available to aid decision-makers
- b) Better protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the planning process
- c) More rapid progress towards delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) actions and targets by focusing on the Wiltshire targets identified as Countdown 2010 priorities
- d) Ensure community engagement processes adequately incorporate biodiversity issues
- e) Improved condition of County Wildlife Sites (CWS)
- f) Increased number of landscape scale projects

4.5 Local Community Plans (Parish, Ward and Market Town Plans)

4.6 The quality of the environment is one of the greatest assets of this district and of its communities, and protecting and enhancing the environment – and quality of life more generally – is a recurrent theme in local community plans. Examples include planting more native trees, improving recycling, creating more efficient buildings, and enhancing community interest in, and access to, sites of environmental interest.

4.7 The Harnham Water Meadows Framework Management Plan

4.8 The Harnham Water Meadows lie between the City of Salisbury and West Harnham at the heart of the Salisbury Avon catchment by the junction of the Rivers Avon and Nadder. The ‘five rivers’ and their tributaries comprise some 284km of river channels in a catchment area of 1,700 km². These are some of the finest chalk rivers in England, rich in ecological and archaeological resources and in heritage landscapes. Natural England (NE) classifies much of this area as JCA132: ‘Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs’, a designation that specifically mentions management of watermeadows for biodiversity and landscape characteristics.

4.9 Biodiversity, especially of fish populations, is high yet only 4% of the River Avon system Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is in a ‘favourable condition’. Problems arise from poor water quality, low flows due to abstraction and low levels in channels, lack of management and drying of reed beds and fens and over-deepening and straightening of watercourses. Restoration of water levels through Water Level Management Plans administered by the Environment Agency (EA) in designated conservation areas is a government priority and there are currently investigations to address this problem.

4.10 Historic watermeadows are defined as grassland irrigation systems operated at the discretion of the farmer (or his ‘drowner’). The aim is to bring on the ‘early bite’ of grass, allowing for grazing up to one month earlier in spring and with the option of irrigating hay

crops later in the season. Those at Harnham are exemplars of the 'bedwork' variety of watermeadows, where water passes along the top of ridges constructed from alluvial deposits and trickles down the sides or 'panes' to parallel drains. Taken in its entirety, of hatches, watercourses, pipe drains, culverts, inverse siphons and aqueducts, the Harnham system is of great (and unusual) complexity. Traditional management continued into the post-WWII period, most likely ceasing altogether by the 1970s when there were changes in the impoundment of the two branches of the River Nadder. Subsequent over-abstraction has reduced river flows in the catchment and this together with removal of control structures, particularly weirs, has lowered river levels.

- 4.11 The Harnham Water Meadows Trust (HWMT) was formed in 1990 'to protect and preserve the Harnham Water meadows for the benefit of the public'.
- 4.12 The nature of issues identified within the management plan may be:
- a) Specific to a particular place or general to the meadows; for example, archaeological conservation and restoration is ubiquitous; plants, animals and habitats vary enormously in their degree of local
 - b) management required.
 - c) Continuing agricultural activity when visitor need and conservation imperatives may present problems at specific locations and times.
 - d) Where several issues present in one small area, identifying 'hot spots'. For example, clearance of channels will be required in a fashion that permits the preservation and re-colonisation of water
 - e) vole habitats.
 - f) Anticipation ahead of problems occurring, for example drainage over adjacent land, where there is no ownership or management by the Trust.
 - g) A list of jobs, in order of priority is developing for employed staff and volunteers.
 - h) A requirement for management records (grazing, cutting, drowning etc.).

<http://www.salisburywatermeadows.org.uk/waterframe.htm>

5. Learning from Experience

5.1 a) How do our existing policies perform ?

5.1 The direction of travel in terms of biodiversity appears to be mixed with continued decline in some areas. It is clear that a lot more could be done to protect and enhance the natural environment and although existing policy could be judged as satisfactory insofar as it goes, a more evidence-based, proactive and nuanced approach should be sought, taking a wider approach whereby opportunities for improvement are positively sought rather than merely passively protecting existing assets.

5.2 Equally it is recognised that monitoring is an important tool in meeting biodiversity objectives and the development of local indicators is encouraged under PPS9.

5.3 *Local Plan policies*

5.4 The following policies are the most important in the Local Plan in respect of the natural environment:

5.5 **The Rural Environment**

5.6 C1, C2, C3.

5.7 These policies set out strong overarching principles for the district as a whole and encompass many of the intentions behind other policies in this section. However it is arguable that C3 (which deals with public utility-related development) is not required as a specific policy with the principles being met under C1, C2, and C4/C5 dependent upon location (equally some small-scale developments for utilities are covered by Permitted Development rights).

5.8 **Landscape Conservation**

5.9 C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9

5.10 Generally these policies have provided a strong level of protection to landscapes in the district. However there is significant scope for improvement, for instance when replaced, policies C4 and C5 (both relating to the AONB) could be amalgamated for clarity and effectiveness. Under C6 (Special Landscape Area), there is relatively little that this policy covers (in principle and spatially) which is not already covered under policy C2. An improved understanding of landscape character across the district's non-AONB countryside is required. C7 (Landscape Setting of Salisbury and Wilton) could be seen as somewhat incoherent and unnecessary, with the countryside it relates to being covered by policy C2.

5.11 Policies C8 and C9 (relating to woodland, trees, hedges and planting) arguably duplicate other legislation to some degree and are somewhat difficult for the Local Planning Authority to control. High quality design and public realm in new development, implementation of good evidence-based local landscape policy, and policy at a national and regional level could act as successors to these policies.

5.12 **Nature conservation, rivers and river valleys**

5.13 C10, C11, C12, C13, C14, C15, C16, C17, C18

5.14 PPS9 now forms the basis for the successors to these policies, and is a more rigorous and proactive framework. Whilst the overall principles behind these Local

Plan policies were sound they have shortcomings in terms of implementation and clarity, for instance through lack of detail (C16, C17), and the lack of evidence and difficulties in monitoring.

5.15 Agriculture & farm diversification

5.16 C19, C20, C21

5.17 These policies have been relatively effective and broadly correspond with the principles of PPS7 on Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

5.18 Other

5.19 Developments With River Frontages R16

5.20 Avon Valley Project R19

2.21 R16 appears to be a policy that has never been used, whilst the Avon Valley Project has been completed and hence the policy is no longer applicable.

2.22 b) What are others doing to tackle similar problems ?

2.23 Best practice is evolving in this field however the emphasis is clearly set out by the national, regional, and local bodies is to 'mainstream' biodiversity into the planning and development sector with sets of rigorous and complementary policies to meet environmental, social and economic objectives. At the core strategy level, policies so far adopted by other Local Planning Authorities tend to be general and address the highest-level concerns and as such are relevant for comparison between districts that differ in their characteristics. Examples include:

- a) Supporting proposals which promote and encourage or protect and enhance the quality of natural resources including water, air, land and biodiversity (Hambleton adopted Core Strategy)
- b) Ensuring development results in provision for the protection and enhancement of native biodiversity; viewing opportunities to increase access to the countryside and enjoyment of biodiversity as integral aspects of new development (South Cambridgeshire adopted Core Strategy).
- c) Promoting development which would help to reduce consumption of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases (South Hams adopted Core Strategy).
- d) Protecting and enhancing habitats and features of regional and local importance for nature conservation; seeking opportunities to enhance the connectivity of biodiversity sites where possible (South Hams adopted Core Strategy).
- e) Safeguarding natural resources through limiting the use of greenfield sites, avoiding harming features of acknowledged importance and seeking new opportunities for enriching the city's biodiversity (Plymouth adopted Core Strategy).
- f) Safeguarding, enhancing, and promoting access to green spaces of strategic importance in terms of character, biodiversity, recreation and other benefits (Plymouth adopted Core Strategy).

6. Options

Based on the issues originally identified and the policy framework in place, this section draws together broad options for an approach to the main issues around natural environment and the LDF. Please note: This does not include the amendments as a result of consultation or updated evidence that have occurred.

Option No.	Nature of the Option	Key Drivers	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Viability of proceeding with the option ?	How will success be measured	Where is the option best pursued ?
OVERALL APPROACH							
6.1	PASSIVE/MINIMAL. Rely on statutory legislation, policies and other tools in respect of environment/landscape/biodiversity.	Housing market, economic development, private interests	Potentially easier to meet RSS housing targets more rapidly	Risk of permanently losing, degrading or adversely impacting upon international, national and locally-designated sites. Legal challenges over poor decisions	Very low	Non-environmental measures prioritised in terms of monitoring effectiveness.	General Development DPD
6.2	PROACTIVE - Reflect international, national, regional and local drivers through increasing the profile and priority of environmental/ biodiversity objectives in plan-making and development control.	PPS9, BAP, RSS	Biodiversity safeguarded and enhanced and new opportunities taken advantage of	Potential constraints over choice and speed of delivery of development.	Medium-high	Comprehensive monitoring of biodiversity, species, wildlife sites and landscape quality, quality of life.	Core strategy, site-specific allocations
6.3	INTERMEDIATE. Continue in the LDF the general moderate approach of the Local Plan.	Mixed	Existing biodiversity safeguarded.	Opportunities for enhancement not taken. Opportunities missed to capitalise on natural assets of the district.	Medium-low	Ad-hoc if continued as at present.	Core strategy, site-specific allocations

Option No.	Nature of the Option	Key Drivers	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Viability of proceeding with the option ?	How will success be measured	Where is the option best pursued ?
DESIGNATED SITES							
6.4	INTERNATIONAL SITES: Protection of integrity of SACs and SPAs a highest-level priority within plan-making and DC process. No specific policy required	International conventions, PPS, RSS, BAP	Biodiversity safeguarded.	Potential constraints over choice and speed of delivery of development.	High- no scope for any other approach	Biodiversity indicators.	No specific policy: PPS9 advises LPAs to take account of international designations but not to duplicate existing statutory protection through local policy.
6.5	NATIONAL SITES (e.g. SSSIs): Give a high degree of protection to these sites and only permit harmful development in very exceptional circumstances.	PPS, RSS	Biodiversity safeguarded.	Potential constraints over choice and speed of delivery of development.	High- no scope for any other approach	SSSI condition survey	Core strategy, site-specific allocations
6.6	COUNTY AND LOCAL SITES: Minimal policy protection	Housing market, economic development, private interests	Potentially easier to meet development pressures more rapidly	Potential wildlife losses. Opportunities for enhancement not taken.	Low- not in keeping with national planning objectives and not recognising the district's unique environmental quality.	Local indicators	Core strategy, site-specific allocations
6.7	COUNTY AND LOCAL SITES: proactive protection and enhancement going beyond minimal statutory requirements	RSS, BAP, PPS, LAA, recognising high quality of district's environment.	Positive biodiversity, landscape, educational and recreational outcomes	Potential constraints over choice and speed of delivery of development.	Medium-high	Local indicators	Core strategy, site-specific allocations

Option No.	Nature of the Option	Key Drivers	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Viability of proceeding with the option ?	How will success be measured	Where is the option best pursued ?
6.8	CREATE NEW LOCAL SITES: Designate new Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	PPS9, BAP, RSS	Positive biodiversity, landscape, educational and recreational outcomes	Financial costs, risk of diverting resources from existing higher-value sites	Medium-high	Biodiversity indicators, including new Local Indicators	Site-specific allocations, Area Action Plans
BIODIVERSITY AND NEW DEVELOPMENT							
6.5	PROACTIVE / POSITIVE: Give high priority to achieving biodiversity gains in new development, particularly in greenfield allocated sites. Set high level criteria for achieving this and refuse planning permission where it is not.	PPS9: creating networks of habitats to reduce fragmentation; RSS	Benefits to biodiversity, quality of life, education and recreation	Potential constraints over choice and speed of delivery of development. Potentially increasing total area of land required to accommodate any given quantity of housing.	Medium-high	Local environmental indicators	Core strategy, site-specific allocations
6.6	MARKET-DRIVEN: Allow for, but not proactively seek, the inclusion of biodiversity and nature-conscious features in development.	Housing market, economic development, private interests	Achieving high numbers of housing completions more rapidly.	Opportunities for meeting biodiversity objectives missed; negative environmental impacts augmented.	Low	Local environmental indicators	Core strategy, site-specific allocations
6.7	PLANNING GAIN: Through the development process, seek planning gain money to fund measures towards achieving biodiversity outcomes.	English Nature Research Report No 672 "Using a Planning Gain Supplement for nature conservation purposes"	Benefits to biodiversity, quality of life, education and recreation	Limits to total amount of money realistically achievable from developers through S106: potentially reducing money for other purposes, e.g. recreation, affordable housing?	Medium-high	Local indicators	Core strategy, site-specific allocations

Option No.	Nature of the Option	Key Drivers	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Viability of proceeding with the option ?	How will success be measured	Where is the option best pursued ?
6.8	"POLLUTER PAYS" PRINCIPLE: environmental costs should fall on those who impose them	DCLG, BAP	Deterrent to applications adversely affecting the environment; greater mitigation required where this is unavoidable.	Development more constrained.	High	Environmental indicators	Core strategy, general development DPD
LANDSCAPES							
6.9	AONB: Give great weight to landscape quality in allocation and control of development	PPS, RSS, AONB Management Plan.	Maintaining and enhancing the high-quality nationally-recognised landscape.	May place greater constraints upon meeting affordable housing and economic development objectives	High- little scope for any other approach	Landscape assessment	Core strategy, site-specific allocations
6.10	OTHER LANDSCAPES: define, protect and enhance landscape character utilising Joint Character Areas and local assessments to understand sensitivities, opportunities etc.	RSS policy ENV2	A more locally-nuanced approach recognising and promoting local characteristics.	Potentially greater degree of complexity in judging impact and appropriateness of developments.	Medium-high	Landscape assessment	Core strategy, SSAs

Option No.	Nature of the Option	Key Drivers	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Viability of proceeding with the option ?	How will success be measured	Where is the option best pursued ?
6.11	OTHER LANDSCAPES: utilise generic approach akin to Local Plan/Structure Plan "Special Landscape Areas", whereby landscape protected in fairly uniform manner.	Former County Structure Plan and District Local Plan (becoming defunct)	Greater degree of simplicity.	Reduced ability to judge the impact of development specifically within its context.	Medium-low	Landscape assessment	Core strategy, SSAs
CLIMATE CHANGE							
6.12	CLIMATE CHANGE: take account of climate change in new development and in the creation, protection and enhancement of natural habitats, and reduce "carbon footprint".	PPS1, PPS9 and elsewhere	Acting to reduce causes of, and to improve resilience against, climate change.	Potential constraints over choice and speed of delivery of development.	High- little scope for any other approach	Wide range of indicators	All documents

7.0. Initial consultation

7.1 Draft copies of this document circulated for comments to:

- Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Wiltshire County Council (ecologist)
- Natural England

7.2 Detailed comments, additions, clarifications and corrections were received from the first three organisations, and these have largely been accommodated wherever possible within the revised document.

8.0 Notes and references

ⁱ Although planning responsibilities for the National Park area have now been ceded to the National Park Authority, the New Forest Character Area extends beyond these boundaries. Also SDC is still responsible for some non-planning matters within its segment of the National Park.

ⁱⁱ In particular see page 2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Under the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) it is classed as one of 21 SSCTs (Strategically Significant Cities and Towns) within the South West.

^{iv} <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/SAC.asp?EUCode=UK0012683>

^v <http://www.english-nature.org.uk/special/sssi/report.cfm?category=R,RF>

^{vi} <http://www.swenvo.org.uk/environment/index.asp>

^{vii} http://www.swenvo.org.uk/nature_map/wiltshire.asp

^{viii} <http://www.ccwvdaonb.org.uk/landscape/lca.html>

^{ix} Natural England, "Natural areas and their role", <http://www.english-nature.gov.uk/science/natural/role.htm>

^x <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/landscape-character-assessment/wiltshires-landscape-character-assessment.htm>

^{xi} <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143832>

^{xii} <http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/Environment/ENV-strat-main.pdf>

^{xiii} http://www.swbiodiversity.org.uk/Regional/SWBIP_Final.pdf

^{xiv} http://www.swenvo.org.uk/publications/SOE_2006_FINAL.pdf

^{xv} <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/keepersoftime>

Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservatin: A Good Practice Guide (2006)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/historicenvironment/pps9/>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/circularbiodiversity>

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/pdf/ukpga_20060016_en.pdf