4.0 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF SALISBURY DISTRICT
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4.1 General

4.1.1 This section of the report describes the variations in the character of the Salisbury District Landscape. For the purposes of the District-wide assessment, emphasis is placed upon the definition, characterisation and evaluation of Landscape Character Areas at a scale of 1:25,000. Following a brief description of the overall Landscape Character Type, detailed 'profiles' for each of the Landscape Character Areas shown on Figure 4.1 are provided, structured as follows:

- Location and Boundaries
- Key Characteristics
- Summary of Visual Character
- Historic Environment
- Biodiversity
- Current Condition
- Inherent Landscape Sensitivities
- Key Landscape Changes
- Management Strategy and Objectives

4.1.2 As acknowledged by the Countryside Agency’s guidelines, landscape is a continuum and character does not in general change abruptly on the ground. More commonly, the character of the landscape will change gradually rather than suddenly, and therefore boundaries drawn between Landscape Character Types and Areas shown on Figure 4.1 should be considered to reflect zones of transition in many cases. In addition, the boundaries drawn around Landscape Character Types and Areas has been defined and mapped at a scale of 1:25,000, and the assessment is therefore only suitable for use at this scale. This should be taken into consideration when the assessment is being used to inform decision making in relation to development and land management proposals.
FIGURE 4.1
DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
TYPES AND AREAS

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4.2 NARROW CHALK RIVER VALLEY (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE A)

Key Characteristics

- Relatively narrow river corridors, which punctuate surrounding vast tracts of Chalk Downland;
- Intimate scale of the river corridor and immediate valley sides, contrasts within the surrounding open landscape;
- Narrow, valley floors, which support a variety of watermeadows, cress beds and damp pastures and also encompass relatively fast-flowing chalk rivers;
- Predominantly pastoral land along the valley floors, with small-scale fields, which often contrast with the medium to large-scale fields on adjacent Chalk Downland;
- Thick hedgerows and clumps of mature riparian woodland often line the river corridors, contributing to relatively strong sense of enclosure;
- Diverse mosaic of land cover and habitats includes meadows, fen and wet woodland on valley floor;
- Small settlements are often situated in conjunction with the valley floors – along the spring line, in contrast to the unsettled downs;
- Many long established villages, built of a rich variety of vernacular materials;
- Valley corridors are often used as communication and transport corridors, with major roads and railway lines along the valley sides;
- Predominantly rural landscapes, with pockets of tranquillity at distance from main road corridors.

Summary of Visual Character

River corridors within this Landscape Character Type tend to run north-south across the landscape, following the chalk dipslope and cutting into the underlying geology of Upper Chalk and encompass a series of spring-fed streams and rivers. In most places along the river corridor, the valley sides consist of Chalk Downland, which slopes downwards to join the valley floor. The rivers, which follow the gently meandering flat floodplains, are rich in plant and animal communities, and are lined with a patchwork of wetland habitats, including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens. Thick hedgerows and clumps of mature riparian woodland often line the river corridors, highlighting the corridors as landscape features and creating a sense of enclosure along the valley floor. River valleys have long been a focus for occupation, partly because of the range of resources they supply (for example, fish, fowl, rich alluvial deposits, and characteristic fast-flowing clear streams) and this is reflected in the range of archaeological sites and artefacts from the prehistoric period onwards. Historically, settlement was concentrated in the river valleys, close to the water supply. Building materials show a rich vernacular tradition with frequent red brick, sometimes combined in intricate chequerboard patterns with flint, chalk, render plus timber frame and weatherboard and thatch or clay tile roofs.

Character Areas

A1  Till Narrow Chalk River Valley
A2  Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley
A3  Bourne Narrow Chalk River Valley
A4  Lower Avon Chalk River Valley
A1. TILL NARROW CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Location and Boundaries

The Till Narrow Chalk River Valley is situated towards the north-east of Salisbury District and runs through adjacent areas of Chalk Downland (Landscape Character Type D). The B3083 road corridor follows the gently meandering course of the river corridor.

Key Characteristics

- Relatively narrow river corridor, encompassing the clear, fast-flowing chalk river Till, which is a key habitat running along the floodplain;
- River valley forms a tributary of the wider Wylye river corridor to the south;
- Sinuous belts of predominantly deciduous woodland lining the river corridor;
- Mature, single deciduous trees dotted within a patchwork of small pasture fields in close proximity to the river corridor;
- Sinuous, meandering river corridor, relatively narrow and enclosed;
- Dispersed and scattered settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads at the top of the valley slopes;
- Linear villages of Shrewton and Maddington at the northern end of the valley;
- Historic village of Winterbourne Stoke towards the centre of the area, where the busy A303 main road corridor crosses the valley and introduces a source of noise and movement;
- B3083 road corridor follows the gently meandering line of the valley;
- Historic water meadows on the floodplain exhibit traces of former land management and contribute to an interesting landscape pattern;
- Several tumuli dotted at the top of the river valley sides and edges of the Chalk Downland;
- Fore Down barrow on the north eastern slopes of the valley, between Shrewton and Winterbourne Stoke provides a visible archaeological landscape feature, which forms part of the wider Stonehenge landscape to the east;
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the valley.

Summary of Visual Character

The relatively narrow corridor of the Till river meanders through open chalk downland. Along the course of the river, sinuous belts of woodland line the corridor, providing a sense of enclosure. A small-scale patchwork of pasture fields also lines the floodplain, with mature single deciduous trees providing recognisable focal points and landscape features. In association with the river, historic water meadows contribute to a relatively small-scale and intimate landscape pattern. Settlement pattern is dispersed, consisting predominantly of a series of scattered farmsteads, often situated at the top of the valley slopes. In addition to this, the historic settlements of Shrewton, Maddington and Winterbourne Stoke, exhibit a combination of vernacular and more modern buildings. The traditional buildings are predominantly of stone. Even though there is a military presence in the surrounding Chalk Downland landscapes, this does not generally permeate into the river valley. The B3083 runs along the valley, following the course of the river. There is a generally strong sense of tranquillity throughout much of the character area, which is disturbed in proximity to settlements and the main A303 and B3083 road corridors.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The valleys have attracted settlement over the past 5000 years due to the presence of water. The lower slopes and combe bottoms provided fertile, well drained soils, and fields systems on the valley sides indicate the increasing organisation and intensity of cultivation in the later prehistoric
Location and boundaries of A1 Till Narrow Chalk River Valley landscape character area

The narrow course of the Till River Valley on its approach to Tilshead village
period. The strategic importance of the valley is evident in the series of Barrow cemeteries that flank its edges,

- The pattern of medieval settlements along the valley, largely surviving today, reflects the concerns, within the feudal system of land-tenure, that manorial estates had access to the full range of economic resources, from the pastures along the river and open fields around the valley sides to the common grazing land on the downs.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- An important factor in determining the location of settlement in the river valleys has been the presence of water. The level of the water table is believed to have fallen over the thousands of years since the last Ice Age, so that the bulk of the chalk downland is now dry. Human settlement reacted to this by focusing on the river valleys where water was more freely available;
- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, droves and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock;
- Earlier field systems are still evident in some areas, for example the strip lynchets below the deserted medieval village at Berwick St James.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- The arrangement of settlement in the valley is largely determined by the pattern that emerged in the medieval period, with villages strung out along both sides of the valley exploiting the varied resources on the valley floor and valley sides;
- Brick and flint are common building materials within the settlements. Stapleford for example contains stone and flint chequer boarding, red brick and black weatherboarding whilst thatch and slate are characteristic roofing materials;
- Four villages are granted Conservation Area status due to the architectural or historical interest: Stapleford, Berwick St James, Winterbourne Stoke and Orcheston.

**Biodiversity**

The spring fed streams and river in this area are rich in plant and animal communities, deriving, in part, from the high-quality of the base-rich water which is naturally clear and fast flowing. The river irrigates the valley floodplains to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens.

The River Till is a tributary of the River Wylye, itself part of the River Avon System SSSI. The ecological value of this area is reflected in parts of it having been designated as Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (part of the River Avon SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (River Till SSSI). These designations were awarded for the winterbourne chalk stream containing the internationally important habitat “floating vegetation of water crowfoot *Ranunculus* of plain and submountainous rivers”, with an associated area of reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea* swamp. These habitats support the internationally important fish species bullhead and salmon, and snail species Desmoulin’s whorl snail.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

The overall condition of the landscape is generally good, encompassing a series of riverside habitats, which are rich in biodiversity. Mature single deciduous trees further contribute to a relatively intact
landscape, however along the floodplain hedgerows are gappy in places. There are generally few visual detractors within this landscape. Overall, condition is considered to be good.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The relatively enclosed nature of the valley, with its intricate pattern sinuous woodland belts and small pasture fields, contributes to overall moderate to high sensitivity. Further inherent landscape sensitivities include dispersed, scattered settlement pattern, visible archaeological features and historic water meadows along the floodplain.

**Visual Sensitivity**

Along the valley floor, sense of enclosure is strong, as a result of intermittent sinuous belts of woodland. From the valley floor, views are generally contained to the valley corridor and lower valley sides. From the higher slopes, however, intervisibility with surrounding open Chalk Downland is strong, with open views from the valley across this larger-scale landscape. Overall visual sensitivity is considered to be moderate.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run off, potentially affecting the water quality of the river;
- Intensity and expansion of arable farming, which may result in a reduction in the ecological value of habitats and loss of archaeological features;
- Increased traffic on the A303 and B3083 threatens overall sense of tranquillity and rural nature of villages and surrounding landscape;
- Potential visually intrusive new modern agricultural or residential development along the valley sides;
- Loss of mature single deciduous trees and hedgerow boundaries, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management strategy for this Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the predominantly rural character and relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout, in addition to the intimate landscape pattern of the river corridor, mature landscape features and rich ecological habitats.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Identify, conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature – and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques;
- Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the trunk road corridors, and maintain a sense of landscape scale when planning new road junctions – junctions that are too large will disrupt visual unity along the valley;
- Conserve views across and along the valley corridor;
- Conserve the existing, predominantly scattered settlement pattern and avoid large developments that would be out of character with the existing layout;
- Conserve intact mature single deciduous trees and landscape features;
- Conserve and enhance existing vernacular buildings within villages and seek to ensure that any potential new development respects vernacular character;
- Conserve the setting of archaeological features and monuments;
• Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost, using species appropriate to local landscape character.
A2: UPPER AVON NARROW CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Location and Boundaries

The upper Avon Chalk River Valley flows northwards from Salisbury and is situated within the north of the District. The river valley meanders through adjacent Chalk Downland (Landscape Character Type D) and two minor roads corridors follow the path of the river.

Key Characteristics

- Narrow, strongly contained valley which cuts through adjacent Chalk Downland landscape and encompasses the upper section of the River Avon;
- Rich ecology throughout, both within the river and within wet woodlands and commercial poplar plantations, hanging valley side woodlands and water meadows along the corridor;
- Strong sense of enclosure and shelter within the valley, which contrasts with the predominantly open nature of surrounding Chalk Downland;
- Generally small-scale settlement pattern in southern half of the valley, with larger nucleated settlements of Durrington and Amesbury occupying the northern valley sides;
- Long history of settlement apparent, visible in the built form of Amesbury Abbey, Great Durnford and Little Durnford Manor houses;
- Belts of linear woodland along the valley sides further contribute to sense of enclosure;
- Predominantly rural landscape with a strong sense of tranquillity throughout, despite isolated visual and noise intrusion from the A345 road corridors;
- Intricate landscape pattern of small pastoral fields, woodland and scattered villages.

Summary of Visual Character

There is a strong sense of enclosure through the gently meandering course of this narrow river valley, due to the patches of linear woodland, which lines the valley sides, and the enclosing topography of adjacent rising Chalk Downland. As a result, landscape pattern within the valley is small-scale and intimate, consisting of a patchwork of small pastoral fields, woodlands and scattered villages. Within the northern half of the Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley, the relatively large, nucleated settlements of Durrington and Amesbury occupy much of the valley sides and overlook the river. The valley corridor had strong ecological interest, resulting from the combination of wet woodland, commercial poplar plantations, softer, predominantly deciduous – hanging valley side woodlands and water meadows. A network of predominantly intact hedgerows lines pastoral fields and minor road corridors. Historic settlement continuity is also strong, with the historic manors at Great Durnford and Little Durnford; and Amesbury Abbey providing recognisable historic landscape features. Even though there is a military presence in the surrounding Chalk Downland landscapes, this does not generally permeate into the river valley. This is a predominantly rural character area, with a generally strong sense of tranquillity throughout. Occasional noise and visual intrusion is apparent where the A303 road corridor crosses the northern half of the valley and also associated with the A345 road corridors and large settlement edges.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The Avon Valley has been a foci for settlement and activity since the prehistoric period. Although the majority of the major prehistoric monuments are to be found in the surrounding Character Areas, the valleys would have provided a source of water and food. This can be seen in the remains of an Iron Age univallate hillfort, known as Vespasian's Camp;
- It contains a number of historic buildings and parks and gardens which make a significant contribution to the cultural landscape. The historical development of estates has influenced land-
The vegetation-lined course of the Upper Avon River as it passes through Burrington
use across the area, whereby grazing land, arable and water-meadows were important components of traditional farming systems. Such estates include Heale House, an early 20th century gardens within a larger agricultural estate which is a grade II* Registered Park and Garden.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, droves and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock to and from the downs. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval and modern periods saw the inclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages. The large scale fields are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th/ early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Small riverside settlements with distinctive historic buildings follow the valley floor, complemented by the designed landscapes of old parkland. Due to their ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’, over 11 of these are designated as Conservation Areas.

**Biodiversity**

The spring fed streams and river in this area are rich in plant and animal communities, deriving, in part, from the high-quality of the base-rich water which is naturally clear and fast flowing. The river irrigates the valley floodplains to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens.

The ecological value of this area is reflected in parts of it having been designated as SAC (part of the River Avon SAC) and SSSI (part of the River Avon System SSSI and includes Lower Woodford Water Meadows SSSI). Notable amongst these SSSIs is the Lower Woodford Water Meadows SSSI, which is one of the last two actively managed water meadows in Wiltshire and retains the grassland communities typical of this type of management. SAC designation was awarded primarily for the presence of internationally rare/vulnerable species – populations of Atlantic salmon, bullhead, and brook and sea lamprey – and for its habitat value for flowing water vegetation and Desmoulin’s whorl snail.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

The overall condition of the Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley Landscape Character Area is considered to be good, as a result of the rich biodiversity within the river and adjacent riparian woodlands. The hedgerow network is predominantly intact, however in certain places boundary loss if visible. There is also a strong vernacular character within most of the small, generally well-kept villages.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

This Landscape Character Area has a strong pattern of small pastoral fields, small pockets of woodland and scattered, small-scale villages. Patches of wet woodlands and water meadows adjacent to the river corridor further enhance strength of character. In addition, there is a strong sense of
tranquillity throughout much of the area, coupled with a predominantly rural character throughout. As a result, the overall landscape character sensitivity of this area is considered to be moderate to high.

**Visual Sensitivity**

The relatively strong sense of enclosure and shelter within this narrow valley, which contrasts with adjacent Chalk Downland, contributes to a moderate to high visual sensitivity throughout. Views are generally constrained, north-south along the corridor by enclosing landform and linear woodland belts. In places, particularly from the higher valley sides, open and sometimes panoramic views can be gained across adjacent open Chalk Downland landscapes. In these locations, visual sensitivity is considered to be higher.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Agricultural intensification leading to a gradual drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- Nutrient pollution from riverside farmland plus road and urban run off affecting the high water quality within the Upper Avon River;
- Loss of hedgerow field boundaries in places, and poor management in other locations;
- Increased traffic pressure on the rural road network, leading to improvements including widening, kerbing and signage, leading to a more ‘urban’ character in places;
- Potential visually intrusive new modern agricultural or residential development along the valley sides;
- Modern residential development in more open locations, some close to the floodplain, have weakened the pattern of tight-knit villages in the past.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management strategy for the Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley should be to conserve the strong sense of tranquillity, predominantly rural character and intimate, small-scale landscape pattern throughout. This should include conservation and maintenance of key features, including wet woodlands, hanging valley side woodlands and historic vernacular buildings. There are also opportunities for restoration, replanting and management of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and waterside meadows.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of the network of lanes;
- Conserve the predominantly small-scale and tight-knit settlement pattern;
- Conserve views across and along the valley corridor;
- Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques;
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements;
- Protect the nature conservation value of the River Avon;
- Conserve the strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout.
A3: BOURNE NARROW CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Location and Boundaries

Bourne Narrow Chalk River Valley is situated within the northeast of Salisbury District and runs south-westwards from Cholderton, through Newton Tony and Porton towards Salisbury, where it meets the River Avon. The A338 main road corridor follows much of the course of the river and crosses it to the northwest of Winterbourne Gunner. To the north-east of Salisbury, the A30 also crosses the river.

Key Characteristics

- Gently meandering narrow valley following the course of the Bourne Chalk River;
- Relatively settled river valley, comprising a number of small villages on the valley sides and a more suburban character present as the valley flows into the northern fringes of Salisbury;
- Cuts through surrounding Chalk Downland, but has shallower valley sides than the Till, Upper and Lower Avon Landscape Character Areas;
- Strong patchwork of ecological riverside habitats, including water meadows and lines of willows along the river corridor, which are a recognisable landscape feature;
- Sense of tranquillity is relatively strong within the northern half of the valley, becoming more disturbed in proximity to Salisbury and the main A338 and A30 road corridors;
- Mixture of arable and pastoral, mostly small-scale fields on the valley sides, often delineated by hedgerows;
- Sense of openness along the valley corridor, with few enclosing woodland belts.

Summary of Visual Character

The Bourne Narrow Chalk River Valley Landscape Character Area encompasses the relatively narrow course of the River Bourne, which is lined in places with water meadows and willows, which provide instantly recognisable landscape features. There is a general sense of openness within several parts of the valley, as a result of few enclosing woodlands and relatively shallow valley sides. A strong settlement pattern of small-scale nucleated and linear villages including Porton, Gomeldon, Winterbourne Gunner and Winterbourne Dauntsey have developed along the valley sides. These villages contain a mixture of modern and more historic buildings. The valley corridor appears as a visible focus for settlement in comparison to the surrounding predominantly open and unsettled Chalk Downland landscape. Even though there is a military presence in the surrounding Chalk Downland landscapes, this does not generally permeate into the river valley. A patchwork of relatively small, irregular and regular pastoral and arable fields line the valley, delineated in places by mature hedgerows. Sense of tranquillity is strong in places, particularly in the northern half of the valley, but becomes more disturbed to the south by noise and visual intrusion associated with the A338 and A30 road corridors and Salisbury settlement edges. Despite this, the area has a generally rural character.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The Bourne Valley has been the foci of human activity since the prehistoric period, although there are few surviving monuments to testify to this, with the majority of settlement and land use evidence coming from the earlier medieval time;
- The pattern of medieval settlements along the valley, largely surviving today, reflects the concerns, within the feudal system of land-tenure, that manorial estates had access to the full range of economic resources, from the pastures along the river and open fields around the valley
Location and boundaries of A3 Bourne Narrow Chalk River Valley landscape character area

The narrow course of the Bourne River Valley. Lined with mature vegetation
sides to the common grazing land on the downs. A surviving remnant of this is Wilbury, an early 18th century Grade II Registered Park and Garden of formal layout and parkland.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, droves and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock to and from the downs. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval and modern periods saw the inclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages. The large scale fields are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th/ early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- The arrangement of settlement in the valley is largely determined by the pattern that emerged in the medieval period, with villages strung out along both sides of the valley exploiting the varied resources on the valley floor and valley sides. However, the contraction and expansion is also evident, none more so that with the remains of Gomledon deserted medieval village;
- Settlement is concentrated on the River and elsewhere within this landscape character area settlement is notably absent. Historic buildings within the area are generally of flint with brick coursing and dressing or cob, with thatch or slate roofs being common roofing materials. These attributes make a significant contribution to the cultural landscape of the area;
- Winterbournes, Porton, Newton Tony, Cholderton are all Conservation Areas within this Character Area

**Biodiversity**

The spring fed streams and river in this area are rich in plant and animal communities, deriving, in part, from the high-quality of the base-rich water which is naturally clear and fast flowing. The river irrigates the valley floodplains to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens.

Porton Meadows SSSI lies within this area. The site is an area of botanically rich unimproved neutral grassland lying on the floodplain of the River Bourne, which also includes small wooded areas and a stretch of the River Bourne.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

The overall condition of this Landscape Character Area is considered to be good, resulting from the strong patchwork of ecological habitat, including water meadows and riverside willows, the general high water quality and high biodiversity value of the River Bourne. Hedgerows are predominantly intact, but decline or hedgerow loss is visible in places.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

This small-scale, landscape has a strong character resulting from the patchwork of sensitive landscape features along the valley corridor, including remnants of water meadows and lines of willows. Sense of tranquillity is relatively strong within the northern half of the valley, becoming more disturbed in
proximity to Salisbury and the main A338 and A30 road corridors. Overall landscape character sensitivity is therefore considered to be moderate to high.

**Visual Sensitivity**

Within this valley there is a relatively strong sense of openness, due to the shallow nature of the valley sides. In places, patches of woodland limit views from the valley corridor to adjacent Chalk Downland landscapes, whilst in others, open views result in strong intervisibility. Visual sensitivity is therefore assessed moderate to high within this Landscape Character Area.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Increased traffic pressure on road network, resulting a gradual diminish in the predominantly rural character and sense of tranquillity;
- Loss of hedgerow field boundaries and poor management in certain locations;
- Increasing suburban character in the southern half of the valley, as a result of housing development at the north eastern fringes of Salisbury;
- Nutrient pollution from farmland adjacent to riverside, in addition to road and urban run off affecting the generally high water quality within the River Bourne;
- New residential development within; and at the edges of settlements, which could potentially lead to eventual coalescence of smaller settlements along the river corridor;
- Agricultural intensification, leading to gradual drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management strategy for the Bourne Narrow Chalk River Valley should be to conserve the predominantly rural character and associated relatively strong sense of tranquillity, particularly within the northern half of the valley. In addition, there is a need to conserve the strong settlement pattern of small-scale nucleated and linear villages; and the patchwork of water meadows, riverside willows and small-scale fields delineated in places by mature hedgerows.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Ensure that potential new built development along the valley, particularly at the northern fringes of Salisbury, respects historic settlement scale and pattern;
- Protect the nature conservation value of the River Bourne;
- Conserve views across and along the valley corridor;
- Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of road corridors and seek to ensure that any new signage or lighting along main road corridors does not detract from the visual character of the landscape;
- Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity, particularly within the northern half of the valley and associated predominantly rural character;
- Seek to screen, where possible the northern edges of Salisbury, using vegetation which is appropriate to local landscape character;
- Encourage conservation and management of the existing hedgerow network.
A4: LOWER AVON NARROW CHALK RIVER VALLEY

Location and Boundaries

The Lower Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley flows southwards from Salisbury towards Downton and is situated within the south of Salisbury District. The valley runs through adjacent Chalk Downland landscape to the east and west and also borders adjacent Forest Heath Mosaic (Landscape Character Type F) to the east. This valley also merges with the Broad Chalk River Valley Landscape Character Type (B) to the west.

Key Characteristics

- Relatively contained valley, encompassing the confluence of the Wylye, Nadder and Bourne and Ebble within the River Avon;
- Narrow meandering river channel, bordered by a wider landscape of navigation channels and numerous ditches adjacent to the Avon;
- Frequent copses and belts of mixed woodland along the river corridor, providing an intermediate sense of enclosure;
- Generally inaccessible river corridor, despite proximity to Salisbury, culminating in a very strong sense of tranquillity and strongly rural character throughout;
- Striking views towards Salisbury cathedral’s spire provide recognisable sense of place within this generally flat landscape;
- Small-scale patchwork of small pastoral fields, delineated by a network of lush hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and riverside trees such as willow and alder;
- Pockets of herb-rich grassland, which were once managed as water meadows;
- Relatively sparse settlement pattern, consisting of scattered farmsteads, small linear hamlets such as Bodenham and Charlton; and nucleated villages such as Downton and Wick;
- Settlements generally have a strong vernacular character of red brick and flint buildings, with thatched roods often as a feature;
- Historic halls and manor houses and associated parklands within the valley, including Longford Castle and Wilton House;

Summary of Visual Character

This narrow chalk river valley is wider than the Till, Bourne and Upper Avon valleys to the north of Salisbury because it encompasses the confluence of these river channels, which have merged to become the River Avon. Consequently, the gently meandering river corridor and numerous adjacent ditches and navigation channels dominate this landscape character area. Sense of openness varies throughout this predominantly flat landscape. In places, dramatic views towards Salisbury Cathedral (as celebrated within Constable’s famous painting of Salisbury Cathedral from the river) can be gained. From other locations, copses and linear belts of woodland limit views across and along the valley. Sense of tranquillity throughout the valley is strong, despite proximity to Salisbury to the north and The A338 and Witherington road corridors. A small-scale patchwork of pastoral fields, delineated by a rich network of lush hedgerows, line the river, which is generally inaccessible other than at Downton and Salisbury. Settlement pattern is sparse, consisting of a pattern of small farmsteads dotted within the valley, small linear hamlets and the larger nucleated villages of Wick and Downton to the south. Buildings exhibit many vernacular details and typical materials include red brick, thatch and flint. Historic halls and manor houses also provide recognisable landscape features, often with associated designed parklands.
Location and boundaries of A4 Lower Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley landscape character area

Frequent copses of mixed woodland along the river corridor provide an intermediate sense of enclosure
Human Influences

**Historic Environment**

- The rich pastures in the Wylye Valley would have attracted many small homesteads probably since the Early Neolithic period circa 4000BC. Bronze Age (3000 – 3500BC) fortifications which are further developed in the Iron Age are evident in the Valley. Occupation has continued throughout history although the most prominent remnants are those from the medieval period onwards;
- Longford Castle, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden 16th century park landscaped in 18th century, with 19th formal gardens is a surviving example of the concerns, within the feudal system of land-tenure, that manorial estates had access to the full range of economic resources, from the pastures along the river and open fields around the valley sides to the common grazing land on the downs.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, droves and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock to and from the downs. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval and modern periods saw the inclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages. The large scale fields are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th/ early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Settlement is concentrated on the River and elsewhere within this landscape character area settlement is notably absent. Evidence of rural diversification is present where converted farm buildings are being let for business;
- Red brick is a common building material especially in Downton and Bodenham, although flint and timber-framing with brick noggin is also visible in some structures;
- Due to there ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’, three towns or villages within this character area are designated as Conservation Areas: Salisbury, Bodenham and Downton

**Biodiversity**

The spring fed streams and river in this area are rich in plant and animal communities, deriving, in part, from the high-quality of the base-rich water which is naturally clear and fast flowing. The river irrigates the valley floodplains to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens.

The Lower Avon is part of the River Avon System SSSI, which is of national and international significance for rare/vulnerable species – populations of Atlantic salmon, bullhead and brook and sea lamprey – and for its habitat value for flowing water vegetation and Desmoulin’s whorl snail.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

Landscape within the Lower Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley is considered to be in generally good condition. An intact network of hedgerows delineated fields; and well maintained vernacular building
materials are evident throughout much of the area. There is, however, evidence of loss of historic water meadows, which are currently managed as herb-rich grassland.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

*Inherent Landscape Sensitivity*

Inherent landscape sensitivities within this area include the small-scale patchwork of pastoral fields, delineated by a network of lush hedgerows, pockets of herb-rich grassland (once managed as water meadows), frequent copses and belts of mixed woodland and riverside trees such as willow and alder. In addition, a strong vernacular settlement character and historic halls and manors, contribute sensitive cultural elements to overall character. The river corridor is generally inaccessible, and overall sense of tranquillity is therefore strong. As a result of the combination of above elements, this landscape character area is considered to have high landscape character sensitivity overall.

*Visual Sensitivity*

From several locations within this character area, striking, open views towards Salisbury cathedral’s spire can be gained. Open views north-south along the river corridor are also a feature of the visual character. In places, however, riverside trees and vegetation limit cross valley views. Related to this, sense of enclosure varies throughout the area. The visual sensitivity of views to the spire is considered to be high, whilst overall visual sensitivity is considered to be moderate to high.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Potential pressure for expansion of small hamlets and villages and the southern edges of Salisbury resulting in changing settlement pattern and character;
- Potential loss of mature hedgerow field boundaries and woodland belts and copses;
- Nutrient pollution from farmland adjacent to riverside, in addition to road and urban run-off affecting the high water quality within the River Avon;
- Agricultural intensification, leading to gradual drainage and improvement of herb-rich grassland and loss of willow and alder along the river corridor;
- Increased traffic pressure on roads running adjacent to valley, resulting in potential widening, new crossing points and erosion of sense of tranquillity and strong rural character;
- New development, which may block views to Salisbury Cathedral’s spire.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management strategy for the Lower Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley should be to conserve the strong landscape pattern of small-scale fields, mature hedgerows and riverside willows and poplars. In addition, conserve the small-scale historic settlement pattern and predominantly vernacular character of built form. There may be opportunities for reinstatement of water meadows.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve open views towards Salisbury Cathedral and other views across and along the valley;
- Conserve the strongly rural character and associated strong sense of tranquillity;
- Ensure that potential new development along the valley, particularly at the southern fringes of Salisbury and the village edges, respects the historic settlement scale, pattern and vernacular materials;
- Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of road corridors;
- Encourage conservation and management of the existing hedgerow network;
- Conserve the existing scattered settlement pattern and avoid large developments that would be out of character with the existing layout;
Conserve mature riverside willow and alder as landscape features;
Identify, conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen, marsh and swamp.
4.3 BROAD CHALK RIVER VALLEY SLOPES (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE B)

Key Characteristics

- Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys;
- Wide, extensive valley slopes;
- Where hedges exist, they are generally widely spaced; tight plantations are also a feature;
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation;
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period;
- A series of linear springline villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes;
- Underlain by chalk geology;
- Relatively large-scale landscape pattern of geometric fields, overlain with a pattern of small woodland clumps and isolated vernacular and modern buildings and settlements;
- General sense of openness on the Valley Slopes, in contrast to the more enclosed nature of the Valley Floor.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Type encompasses the valley sides, which enclose broad valleys that tend to follow weaknesses in the underlying chalk. The chalk valley sides are frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys and provide a relatively strong sense of enclosure to adjacent valley floor landscapes. The gentler, shallower valley slopes are generally under arable cultivation, whilst steeper slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland, small copses and plantations. Settlement pattern is generally scattered with a series of small linear springline villages, typically situated at the foot of the Valley Slopes, and other isolated buildings and farmsteads. Historic field boundaries and footpaths follow the lines of tracks, drives and hollow ways which took livestock to and from the adjacent Chalk Downland in the Medieval period.

Character Areas

B1 Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes
B2 Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes
B1: WYLYE BROAD CHALK RIVER VALLEY SLOPES
text

Location and Boundaries
This Landscape Character Area is situated towards the north of Salisbury District and falls partly within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Wylye Valley runs from west to east from Upton Lovell to Great Winsford, flowing into the District from West Wiltshire District to the north. To the north and south, the slopes are bordered by Chalk Downland.

Key Characteristics
- Steepest slopes have retained their semi-natural grassland or are clothed in ‘hanging’ woodland;
- Strongly enclosing chalk valley sides have been eroded by a series of tributaries to form dry tributary valleys;
- A series of springline villages, including Corton, Boyton, Stockton, Bapton and Little Langford; and manors lie t the foot of the valley slopes on the gravel river terraces where they are protected from flooding;
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the Downs in the Medieval period;
- The shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation, while the steeper valley sides have remained wooded or grazed by sheep;
- The extensive slopes rise from a relatively broad valley floor to meet adjacent Chalk Downland landscapes at the top of the slopes.

Summary of Visual Character
The Wylye Valley has carved a deep valley through the chalk so that it is enclosed by steep chalk slopes. To the north, the valley slopes, which have been eroded by a series of small, dry tributaries, rise comparatively gently. The southern slopes, which represent the eroded remains of an escarpment, are steeper and more convoluted. Many of the hilltops are rounded bluffs on the valley sides and are capped with small copses and plantations, which are characteristic in the chalk landscape. The steepest valley sides support unimproved chalk grassland and hanging woodland, whilst the less steep valley sides, have been exploited for the cultivation of arable crops or improved pasture. Despite the relatively large-scale landform of the valley slopes, this is a relatively intimate landscape with a semi-enclosed character, resulting from blocks of woodland. Sense of tranquillity is strong throughout much of the area, which has a predominantly rural character.

Human Influences

Historic Environment
- Although most of the evidence for prehistoric activity is to be found on the downs flanking the Wylye valley, the survival of Neolithic long barrows on the valley floor, as well as a number of Bronze Age round barrows, indicates that the valley was probably a favourable environment for early farming activity, one over which social groups sought to claim rights. The lower slopes and coombe bottoms provided fertile, well drained soils, and fields systems on the valley sides indicate the increasing organisation and intensity of cultivation in the later prehistoric period. The strategic importance of the valley is evident in the series of Iron Age hillforts that flank it on the edges of the downs. The subsequent pattern of medieval settlements along the valley, largely surviving today, reflects the concerns, within the feudal system of land-tenure, that manorial estates had access to the full range of economic resources, from the pastures along the river and open fields around the valley sides to the common grazing land on the downs;

31 Refer to Character Area 5A ‘Wylye River Valley’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of B1 Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes landscape character area

The enclosing chalk valley slopes form a strong backdrop to views
The dominant character of historic landscape is its medieval settlement pattern, with closely spaced settlements, some identified now only by manor houses, farms and contracted or deserted villages. These form part of a changed agricultural landscape, one improved in the post-medieval period, enclosed in the late 18th / early 19th century, and further rationalised in the 20th century. Channels of post-medieval water meadows are visible in the valley floor east of Steeple Langford. Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows are also features of the valley floor.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

In the medieval period the valley sides would have been the focus of open field cultivation and although these have been overlain by the regular straight-sides fields that followed late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure, the medieval system of sheep-and-corn agriculture largely determined by the layout of tracks, drouse and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs, created the bounds within which modern fields are still largely contained. Post-medieval agricultural improvements included the creation of water meadows, the channels of which are still visible components of the valley landscape, and watercress beds.

The large, geometric fields on the valley sides contrast with the small, sinuous and irregular fields that occupy the valley floor.

Historic Development of Settlement

The rich pastures in the Wylye Valley would have attracted many small homesteads probably since the Early Neolithic period circa 4000BC. Bronze Age (3000 – 3500BC) fortifications which are further developed in the Iron Age are evident in the Valley. Over the years small homesteads merged into settlements;

The arrangement of settlements in the Wylye valley is largely determined by the pattern that emerged in the medieval period, with villages strung out along both sides of the valley exploiting the varied resources on the valley floor, valley sides and adjacent downs. The presence of village earthworks, for instance at Little Langford and Hanging Landford, points to the varying degrees to which such settlements thrived, contracted or even disappeared during the medieval period;

There is a high density of villages along the valley. Parishes (each focused on a village) cut across the valley, taking in an area of watermeadow, valley sides and downland. Several of the villages are of a linear design, others are nucleated, but all are focused on small parish churches or manor houses – the spires of these churches are prominent element sin the landscape. Cottages, churches and larger houses are typically built of grey or honey-coloured stone, often with slate or thatch roofs. The shortage of building stone is reflected in the popular ‘chequerboard’ patterns of stone and knapped flint (the church of Little Langford illustrates this building style). Some more recent cottages are built of red bricks;

Although there has been some more recent development around existing settlements, man of these villages retain their distinctive character – the product of building styles, materials, size and layout.

Biodiversity

Ecologically important features of this area include several areas of species-rich unimproved chalk grassland, which are associated with the steeper slopes of the valley sides.

Remnant areas of unimproved chalk grassland remain along the steep valley slopes, including part of Edsbury Down (SSSI) and Wylye and Church Dean Downs (SSSI and NNR) and Steeple Langford Down (SSSI). These chalk grasslands support a diverse range of plant species, including several with restricted distribution in the UK, together with a rich associated invertebrate fauna. Such floristically diverse grasslands are a valuable remnant of a habitat which has been much reduced by agricultural intensification.
Within this area, woodland is restricted to small clumps and linear shelterbelts. It is mostly of relatively recent origin, and includes broadleaved, mixed and coniferous types.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

The natural form of the Valley Slopes is strong and has been little altered by humans. The built environment is generally in a good state of repair, but boundaries (hedgerows, fences and estate rails) are often in a declining state. The condition of semi-natural habitats, such as chalk grassland and scrub mosaics on the valley sides had declined over the years. Today very few areas of semi-natural habitat remain. Overall landscape condition is moderate.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

This Landscape Character Area is considered to have moderate sensitivity overall. This results from combination of the smooth and unenclosed grassland that is typical of the chalk scarps and slopes, which has been lost and replaced with arable fields; and their geometric boundaries which have a somewhat detracting and diluting influence on character.

Visual Sensitivity

On the shallow valley sides, and particularly the enclosing ridgetops, sensitivity is heightened by the strong sense of openness, elevation and large scale of the scale of the landscape. The intensive system of arable cultivation has, however, resulted in the loss of field boundaries. Overall visual sensitivity is therefore considered to be moderate to high.

Key Landscape Changes

- Conversion from chalk grassland to an arable land use has been one of the most significant changes affecting the landscape of the chalk river valleys – the arable fields and their geometric boundaries on the valley sides detracting from the smooth, unenclosed grasslands that are typical of the chalk scarps and slopes;
- The presence of major transport corridor, particularly the A36 trunk road, has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage;
- The A303 trunk road that crosses the valley on a viaduct and its junction with the A36 disrupts visual unity along the valley.

Management Strategy and Objectives

Specific management objectives are to:

- Consider opportunities for reversion from arable cropping back to chalk grassland on the valley sides (a possible area for agri-environment targeting);
- Encourage areas of fallow arable land within the arable matrix;
- Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the A36;
- Encourage use of native planting in any new landscape scheme associated with new development and consider removal of unsympathetic species, such as Leylandii screening hedges that stand out in the landscape;
- Conserve the pattern of tight knit villages, maintaining the physical and visual gap between them.

32 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
B2: EBBLE BROAD CHALK RIVER VALLEY SLOPES

Location and Boundaries

The Ebble River Valley is situated towards the centre of Salisbury District and falls entirely within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. This landscape Character Area surrounds and forms a visual cohesive unit with Ebble Chalk River Valley Floor (Landscape Character Area C2).

Key Characteristics

- Broad river valley chalk slopes, which have been deeply eroded by a series of re-entrant tributary valleys which are now dry; and coombes;
- The opposing valley slopes are quite close to each other, resulting from the narrowness of the valley floor, creating a sense of enclosure;
- Small areas of unimproved chalk grassland and rough pasture on steeper slopes;
- Valley slopes are dominated by intensive arable production, contained within a system of extensive field units which were enlarged during the 20th century;
- Many tumuli, a hillfort at Chiselbury and Ackling Dyke Roman Road between Old Sarum and Badbury Rings contribute to visible archaeology;
- Downland character typical on many of the Valley Slopes.

Summary of Visual Character

The broad, shallow slopes of the Ebble River Valley are cut by a series of dry tributary valleys, which create a gently undulating topography. Picturesque villages and hamlets are often located at the foot of the valley slopes. The visual connectivity to the landscapes of chalk downland is emphasised by the predominant arable land use contained within fields that are extensive in size, the previous pastoral land use having given way to arable crop production. Pasture is largely defined by improved ley and is intensively grazed. Some areas of rough pasture also survive but are largely limited to small grazing pockets on the floodplain or steepest valley sides. The Valley Slopes have a generally simple landscape pattern and there is generally a strong sense of openness throughout. Sense of tranquillity is also strong throughout much of the area.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The higher areas of the chalk dipslope and downs to the north of the River Ebble are similar in many respects to the areas of open chalk downland, with a range of surviving earthwork features of prehistoric date. The Neolithic long barrow on Whitesheet Hill is among the earliest components of a landscape which also includes numerous Bronze Age round barrows, field systems, the Chiselbury hillfort and extensive linear earthworks, cross-ridge dykes and enclosures. To the south of the river, in contrast, the majority of prehistoric features lie on the adjacent downs, above the more prominent scarp.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, droves and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock to and from the downs. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval

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33 Refer to Character Area 5B ‘Ebble River Valley’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of B2 Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes landscape character area

Several dry tributary valleys punctuate the slopes
and modern periods saw the creation of water meadows, as at Broad Chalk, and later cress beds, on the valley floor, in places still a visible component of the landscape. These periods also saw the inclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages, and the extension of arable farming onto the adjacent downs, as reflected in the siting of field barns at a distance from the river, in contrast to the valley bottom locations of most of the farms. The predominantly large scale fields on the northern dipslope are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- The Saxon and medieval settlement patterns, consisting of manors and villages spaced at close intervals along both sides of the river, survives to the present day. Some of the medieval settlements along the valley have shifted or been abandoned, a number having survived as earthworks, others being marked only by farmsteads. Other settlements have expanded, their original, in many cases linear layouts being still apparent in the present arrangement of property boundaries. The post-medieval and modern expansion of arable cultivation can be seen in the isolated location of a number of field barns and farmsteads in the combes and on the higher downland slopes;
- Settlement is concentrated on the River and elsewhere within this landscape character area settlement is notably absent. Evidence of rural diversification is present where converted farm buildings are being let for business;
- Brick and flint are common building materials within the settlements. Bowerchalke for example contains stone and flint chequer boarding, red brick, and black weatherboarding whilst thatch and slate are characteristic roofing materials. New development is occurring within the villages. Settlement edges are often defined by concrete roadside kerbs – changing the rural character.

**Biodiversity**

Although arable farmland supports some important arable weeds and farmland birds, the steeper slopes of the valley sides support the most important areas. This includes nine nationally important chalk grassland sites of Gallows Hill (SSSI), Homington and Combe Bisset Down (SSSI), Knapp and Barnett’s Down (SSSI), Throope Down (SSSI) and Prescombe Down (NNR).

Prescombe Down (NNR) represents botanically diverse chalk grassland, with dense clumps mixed calcareous scrub occurring at the northern end of the site. The site supports a number of notable plant species, including the national scarce dwarf sedge (*Carex humilis*) which dominates large parts of the short downland turf, and also a colony of the rare and endemic early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*). In addition to its floristic diversity Prescombe Down (NNR) also supports nearly twenty species of breeding butterfly, including the marsh fritillary butterfly (*Eurodryas aurinia*) a species listed under the Habitats Directive (Annex II), and UK BAP priority species.

Woodland, especially that of ancient semi-natural origin is a fairly uncommon feature of this character area, however the small broadleaved and coniferous shelterbelts that are present provide valuable nesting and feeding habitat for a range of farmland bird species.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

The natural landform of this landscape has retained its distinctive form and strong sense of intactness and continuity – the open, flat floodplain (within LCA S2) giving way to the gently sloping valley sides with its dry tributary valleys. Numerous tumuli, ancient earthworks as well as a section of a Roman road are surviving elements of the physical landscape. Due to the extent of arable farmland, much of the landscape is actively managed and in good condition. Signs of decline are evident at...
settlement edges due to poor maintenance of some farm outbuildings that evoke an untidy approach to settlements. Overall landscape condition is generally good.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

Overall, this Landscape Character Area is considered to have moderate landscape character sensitivity. This results from the generally diluted distinction between the former pastoral character of the valley floodplain and the arable character of the valley slopes, resulting in moderate overall strength of character.

**Visual Sensitivity**

The shallow slopes and contrasting deep chalk coombes are particularly sensitive to landscape change since their relatively open character and simple landscape pattern would be easily disrupted by inappropriate development or changing land uses and because the entire landscape is highly visible in views from the adjacent enclosing ridgetops. This visual relationship is particularly prevalent to the east of Broad Chalke. Overall visual sensitivity is therefore considered to be moderate to high.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Increasingly intensive farming practices, including the shift from spring-sown to Autumn sown crops, has resulted in a change in landscape character and decline in farmland birds in recent years;
- Modern development, which although respecting the use of local materials, is less sympathetic to traditional form, scale and layout of buildings and has affected some settlements in the Ebble valley;
- Decline in grazing pressure in recent years has resulted in scrub invasion on chalk grassland.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management strategy for the Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the remaining patches of semi-natural grassland and site and setting of archaeological monuments.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Encourage areas of fallow arable land within the arable matrix and conserve farmland features such as hedgerows, ponds and field margins to encourage arable weeds and farmland birds;
- Resist further dilution of traditional settlement character through establishment and use of building design guidance;
- Consider providing guidelines on characteristic planting on the edge of settlements to prevent harsh boundaries between rural and urban areas;
- Reinforce landscape features such as the beech avenue which rises from Broad Chalk to Knowlton Hill;
- Consider opportunities for reinstatement of chalk grassland, particularly on sites that lie adjacent to existing chalk grassland sites and ensure grazing pressure is managed to maintain a mosaic of grass and scrub habitats;
- Promote sustainable management of recreation.

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34 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
4.4 BROAD CHALK RIVER VALLEY FLOOR (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE C)

Key Characteristics

- The clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams are a key habitat;
- The relatively narrow floodplains support watermeadows, cress beds and damp pastures, culminating in a lush character;
- Generally flat valley floors;
- A series of mature trees and a network of mature hedgerows are also defining features;
- Course of the river valleys tend to follow lines of weakness in the underlying chalk;
- Valley floor corridor is often emphasised by the presence of willow and poplar lining the route of the river;
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees are a feature of the valley floor;
- Series of small settlements following the course of the river;
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads and railways;
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss;
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period;
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology;
- The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors;
- Generally sheltered character within the valley floor, which contrasts with a greater sense of openness on the Valley Slopes.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Type encompasses the predominantly flat floodplain of the relatively broad Chalk River Valleys which run from west to east across the landscape, usually along weaknesses in the chalk. The clear, fast-flowing chalk rivers at the heart of the landscape are key habitats and landscape features. The line of the valley floor is often emphasised by the presence of willows and poplars. Small woodland belts and scattered trees are also a feature of the valley floor. The valley floor contains transport corridors in the form of main roads and railways. Although there is generally a fairly strong sense of tranquillity throughout, noise and visual intrusion associated with these corridors causes localised disturbance. A series of small settlements often follow the course of the river, with historic landscape continuity visible in the form of isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor.

Character Areas

C1 Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Floor
C2 Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Floor
C1: WYLYE BROAD CHALK RIVER VALLEY FLOOR

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area is situated towards the north of Salisbury District and falls partly within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Wylye Valley Floor meanders from west to east across the landscape and is enclosed to the north and south by the Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes Landscape Character Area.

Key Characteristics

- Enclosed flat valley floor landscape with an intimate scale;
- Generally level valley floor, which contrasts with adjacent steeper valley sides;
- Mature trees along the valley floor provide considerable enclosure and restrict long views along the valley corridor;
- Lush character along the valley floor, comprising water meadows, cress beds and damp pastures;
- Pastures surrounded by straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure, with larger fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss;
- Major transport routes use the valley as an east-west corridor between Warminster (outside the District) and Salisbury and the rural landscape is interrupted by large volumes of traffic;
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.

Summary of Visual Character

This intimate valley floor landscape has a generally rural feel, with sheep and cattle grazing the floodplain, and irregular fields bound by intermittent hedgerows. The Langford Lakes, once exploited for gravel extraction, now provide areas of open water. The valley floor provides a corridor for movement, with the Salisbury-Warminster railway line and A36 trunk road running along the gravel terraces either side of the floodplain. Attractive linear or nucleated villages are scattered along these east-west routes (which sometimes spread into the adjacent Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes Landscape Character Area - B1). The ‘chequerboard’ buildings of stone and knapped flint are a distinctive feature. Despite the presence of busy road and rail corridors, sense of tranquillity is strong throughout much of this Landscape Character Area. Tree cover is a vital part of the landscape along the valley floor. Gentle rises in level are sometimes picked out and emphasised by small beech plantations. More significant, though are the lines of willows and poplars, which follow field boundaries, together with the past and present courses of the Wylye and its tributaries. These, in combination with the greens of the meadows and pastures, give the valley floor a pastoral, sheltered character, which contrasts with the more exposed open Downland landscape. The floodplain trees also play a valuable role in providing screening, thereby helping to maintain visual separation of the villages.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Although most of the evidence for prehistoric activity is to be found on the downs flanking the Wylye valley, the survival of Neolithic long barrows on the valley floor, as well as a number of Bronze Age round barrows, indicates that the valley was probably a favourable environment for early farming activity, one over which social groups sought to claim rights. The lower slopes and coombe bottoms provided fertile, well drained soils, and fields systems on the valley sides indicate the increasing organisation and intensity of cultivation in the later prehistoric period.

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35 Refer to Character Area 5A ‘Wylye River Valley’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of C1 Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Floor landscape character area

Channels of post-medieval water meadows are visible on the valley floor
The strategic importance of the valley is evident in the series of Iron Age hillforts that flank it on the edges of the downs. The subsequent pattern of medieval settlements along the valley, largely surviving today, reflects the concerns, within the feudal system of land-tenure, that manorial estates had access to the full range of economic resources, from the pastures along the river and open fields around the valley sides to the common grazing land on the downs;

- The dominant character of historic landscape is its medieval settlement pattern, with closely spaced settlements, some identified now only by manor houses, farms and contracted or deserted villages. These form part of a changed agricultural landscape, one improved in the post-medieval period, enclosed in the late 18th / early 19th century, and further rationalised in the 20th century. Channels of post-medieval water meadows are visible in the valley floor east of Steeple Langford. Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows are also features of the valley floor.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- An important factor in determining the location of settlement in the river valleys has been the presence of water. The level of the water table is believed to have fallen over the thousands of years since the last Ice Age, so that the bulk of the chalk downland is now dry. Human settlement reacted to this by focusing on the river valleys where water was more freely available;
- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and-corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, droves and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock to and from the downs. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval and modern periods saw the creation of water meadows, as at Broad Chalk, and later cress beds, on the valley floor, in places still a visible component of the landscape. These periods also saw the inclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages, and the extension of arable farming onto the adjacent downs, as reflected in the siting of field barns at a distance from the river, in contrast to the valley bottom locations of most of the farms. The predominantly large scale fields on the northern dip slope are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

Steeple Langford emerged at the meeting point of two important routes, one crossing the river Nadder, the other following the line of the valley. All Saint’s Church acts as a focal point to the village with the distinctive squat lead covered broach spire forming a significant local landmark in and beyond the village. Large houses and farmhouses are set off the road in generous grounds and enclosed with boundary walls in stone and cob. Smaller houses and the former mill, malthouse and local shop and post office are set on the roadside and strongly define the route through the village nod provide good enclosure in places. A particular feature of the Steeple Langford Conservation Area are the small group of estate type cottages (dated c1870-71) set in pairs to the main road (Although some have been significantly altered) as well as the good group of listed houses and cottages forming an informal terrace to the eastern end of Salisbury Road. Boundaries form a very important part of the character of the village and range from low stone walls to high cob walls and substantial hedges and trees

**Biodiversity**

The 10 mile stretch of the River Wyllye, which forms part of the internationally important River Avon System (SAC), is of high ecologically value. The northern tributaries of the River Avon, including the River Wyllye are clay influenced calcareous Rivers. They support an exceptional diversity of aquatic plants, including floating beds of water crowfoot and aquatic plant community, which is rare in chalk Rivers in Europe, and several notable species of fish (e.g. sea and brook lamprey, Atlantic salmon, and bullhead) and mollusc (e.g. Desmoulin’s whorl snail, large-mouthed valve snail and freshwater pea mussel).
The majority of the habitats associated with the River Valley Floor, such as damp pastures have been improved through drainage and reseeding, to enhance value of the land for grazing animals. The floodplains also support cress beds, water meadows and wet woodlands. The latter are mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow and alder along the immediate riverbanks.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

The natural form of the Valley Floor is strong, however the condition of several of the semi-natural habitats on the Valley Floor (wet meadow and riverine habitats) has declined over the years. Today very few areas of semi-natural habitat remain. For example, former extensive wet woodland is now mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow along the river and traditional water meadow management is no longer practiced. Leylandii is a familiar site along transport corridors. Overall landscape condition is moderate.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

The strongly enclosed nature of the valley floor, coupled with the strong field pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, denoting a lush character, contribute to a strong character. There is some visual coalescence between the valley floor and slopes, however overall landscape character sensitivity is considered to be moderate to high.

Visual Sensitivity

Along the valley floor, a series of enclosing elements, including riparian woodland, shelterbelts, mature hedgerows and tree lines of willow and poplar follow the course of the river. All serve to limit views and invoke a semi-enclosed character. Overall visual sensitivity along the valley floor is therefore considered to be moderate.

Key Landscape Changes

- Traditional watermeadow management is no longer practiced with watermeadows only occurring as remnant landscape features;
- Other valley pastures and meadows have been drained, enlarged and ploughed up for cereal crops;
- The condition of many of the hedges and other boundaries, such as iron railings an estate fences on the valley floor is now declining;
- There is evidence of past pressure for extraction of sharp sand and gravel on the floodplain of the valley floor;
- Loss of elm is on the of the key changes that has occurred in the 20th century. Some of the floodplain trees are becoming over-mature and will eventually die;
- Wet woodland is now mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow (salix spp.) and alder (Alnus glutinoso) along the immediate river banks;
- The presence of major transport corridor, particularly the A36 trunk road, has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage;
- Modern residential developments, in more open locations, some close to the floodplain, have weakened the pattern of tight knit villages in the past;
- Water abstraction, either from bore holes drilled into the chalk aquifer or directly from the water course, has resulted in a notable reduction in flow along the chalk rivers in the past with serious

36 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
implications for nature conservation, landscape character and activities such as game and course fishing.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for the Wylye Broad Chalk River Valley Floor Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the strong visual unity of the valley, the diversity of semi-natural habitats and the pattern of springline villages; and to restore features such as wet woodlands, meadows and boundary features.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost. In particular, the comparatively dense structure of willows, poplars and other moisture loving trees should be retained along field boundaries and the course of the river. Encourage maintenance of boundaries, particularly the estate railings that are typical of the Wylye Valley;
- Identify, conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature – an consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques (opportunity for Local Heritage Initiative Project);
- There should be a presumption against mineral extraction within the valley, but where it is unavoidable, sympathetic restoration plans and long term management are critical;
- Consider planting a new generation of floodplain trees to replace those that are becoming over-mature and to replace elms that were lost during the 20th century;
- Consider extending wet woodland on the valley floor;
- Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the A36;
- Encourage use of native planting in any new landscape scheme associated with new development and consider removal of unsympathetic species, such as Leylandii screening hedges that stand out in the landscape;
- Conserve the pattern of tight-knit villages, maintaining the physical and visual gap between them;
- Maintain a sense of landscape scale when planning new road junctions – junctions that are too large will become eyesores and disrupt visual unity along the valley;
- Consider publishing design guides as Supplementary Planning Guidance, outlining local designs, materials, layouts, village form etc. together with good practice in deigning details such as driveways, garages etc;
- The problem of reduced flows resulting from water abstraction is now recognised by the Environment Agency and steps are being taken to reduce the volume of water being abstracted in the upper catchment. Consider monitoring changes.
C2: EBBLE BROAD CHALK RIVER VALLEY FLOOR

Location and Boundaries

The Ebble River Valley is situated towards the centre of Salisbury District and falls entirely within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. This Landscape Character Area is surrounded to the north and south by Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes (Landscape Character Area B2).

Key Characteristics

- Narrow course of the fast-flowing Ebble;
- Rich patchwork of grassland on floodplain which is a key ecological habitat;
- Remnant water meadows and cress beds on the valley floor are a striking feature, daring from the post medieval and modern periods;
- Small remnant woodland blocks and belts occurring on the floodplain with willow and poplar following the course of the river;
- Linear hamlets and villages are sited on the valley bottom, spaced at close intervals along both sides of the river;
- Brick, flint, thatch and slate are common building materials and typify settlement character.

Summary of Visual Character

The course of the River Ebble follows a largely straight course along the relatively narrow floodplain, which forms part of the wider valley. Picturesque villages and hamlets are sited regularly along the length of the valley, often spreading into the adjacent Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes Landscape Character Area (B2). Pasture within the floodplain is largely defined by improved ley and is intensively grazed. Some areas of pasture also survive, but are largely limited to small pockets. Patches of riparian woodland provide a sense of enclosure on the floodplain. Water meadows are occasional features, but traditional water meadow management is generally no longer practiced. Landscape pattern within this area is quite intimate, resulting from the patchwork of valley floor habitats. There is also a semi-enclosed character along the valley floor as a result of the enclosing elements of riparian woodland, shelterbelts, mature hedgerows and tree lines of willow and poplar following the course of the river. There is a strong sense of tranquillity throughout, coupled with a predominantly rural character.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Although most of the evidence for prehistoric activity is to be found on the downs flanking the Wyllye valley, the survival of Neolithic long barrows on the valley floor, as well as a number of Bronze Age round barrows, indicates that the valley was probably a favourable environment for early farming activity, one over which social groups sought to claim rights. The lower slopes and coombe bottoms provided fertile, well drained soils, and fields systems on the valley sides indicate the increasing organisation and intensity of cultivation in the later prehistoric period. The strategic importance of the valley is evident in the series of Iron Age hillforts that flank it on the edges of the downs. The subsequent pattern of medieval settlements along the valley, largely surviving today, reflects the concerns, within the feudal system of land-tenure, that manorial estates had access to the full range of economic resources, from the pastures along the river and open fields around the valley sides to the common grazing land on the downs;
- The dominant character of historic landscape is its medieval settlement pattern, with closely spaced settlements, some identified now only by manor houses, farms and contracted or deserted

37 Refer to Character Area 5B ‘Ebble River Valley’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of C2 Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Floor landscape character area

The gently meandering course of the River Ebble within its floodplain
villages. These form part of a changed agricultural landscape, one improved in the post-medieval period, enclosed in the late 18th / early 19th century, and further rationalised in the 20th century. Channels of post-medieval water meadows are visible in the valley floor east of Steeple Langford. Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows are also features of the valley floor.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- In the medieval period the valley side would have been the focus of open field cultivation, between the valley floor meadows and the upland grazing, as a component of sheep-and corn agriculture. This system of mixed farming affected the arrangement of later enclosed fields, the layout tracks, drove and hollow-ways which survive to the present being influenced largely by the movement of livestock to and from the downs. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval and modern periods saw the creation of water meadows, as at Broad Chalk, and later cress beds, on the valley floor, in places still a visible component of the landscape. These periods also saw the inclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages, and the extension of arable farming onto the adjacent downs, as reflected in the siting of field barns at a distance from the river, in contrast to the valley bottom locations of most of the farms. The predominantly large scale fields on the northern dipslope are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th/ early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Settlement within the Ebble River Valley predominantly comprises linear villages and hamlets such as Combe Bissett, Stratford Tony, Bishopstone, Broadchalke and Ebbesborne Wake which occur regularly along the course of the river. Some of the settlements extend up and onto the shallow downland slopes;
- Brick and flint are common building materials within the settlements. Broadchalke for example contains stone and flint chequer boarding, red brick, and black weatherboarding whilst thatch and slate are characteristic roofing materials. New development is occurring within the villages. Settlement edges are often defined by concrete roadside kerbs – changing the rural character.

Biodiversity

Small areas of unimproved chalk grassland, rough pasture, cress beds (dating from the post-medieval and modern periods), as well as remnant water meadows, woodland blocks and belts can be found on the floodplains of this area, providing habitats for wildlife.

Woodland blocks and belts are predominantly willow and poplar and follow the course of the river.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

The natural landform of this landscape has retained its distinctive form and strong sense of intactness and continuity – the open, flat floodplain, giving way to the gently sloping valley sides, with its dry tributary valleys (within LCA B2). The condition of habitats along the floodplain varies. Today, very few areas of semi-natural habitat remain – former extensive wet woodland is now mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow along the river and traditional water meadow management is no longer practiced. The loss of features such as hedgerows and the poor/ inconsistent management of those that survive, gives an unkempt appearance to the landscape. Signs of decline are also evident at settlements edges due to poor maintenance of some farm outbuildings that evoke an untidy approach to settlements. Overall landscape condition is moderate.
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

The strength of character in the valley is variable, but is generally stronger towards its western extent. Farther east, where the valley landform is broader and shallower, the extension of arable land on to the valley floor has diluted the distinction between the former pastoral character of the floodplain and the arable character of the downland valley sides, which now visually coalesce. The strength of character at this location is thus assessed as moderate. Conversely, to the west, the strongly enclosed valleys, riparian woodlands and the strong field pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the lush and enclosed feel of the valley, and define a strong strength of character. Sensitivity thus varies from moderate to moderate-high.

Visual Sensitivity

Overall visual sensitivity within this Landscape Character Area is considered to be moderate to high, as a result of locally enclosing elements of riparian woodland, shelter belts, mature hedgerows and tree lines of willow and poplar following the course of the river. These all serve to limit views and invoke a semi-enclosed character.

Key Landscape Changes

- Water abstraction, either from bore holes drilled into the chalk aquifer or directly from the watercourse, has resulted in a notable reduction in the flow with serious implications for nature conservation, landscape and activities such as game and course fishing;
- Valley pastures and water meadows have been drained, enlarged and ploughed up in the past for cereal cropping, with the result that traditional meadow management has declined;
- Wet woodland is now mostly restricted to the willow (Salix spp.) and alder (Alnus glutinosa) aligning the course of the river.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for the Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Floor Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the dramatic character of the landform, the distinctive settlement pattern on the valley floor and to restore declining features such as wet woodlands, meadows, chalk grassland and boundary features.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Consider the reversion of some arable fields back to pasture on the floodplain and consider employing traditional water system management techniques (e.g. seasonal flooding practices) for nature conservation purposes;
- The problem of reduced flows resulting from water abstraction is now recognised by the Environment Agency and steps are being taken to reduce the volume of water being abstracted in the upper catchment;
- Conserve the pattern of linear villages on the valley floor, maintaining the physical and visual gap between them;
- Consider extending and thickening up areas of wet woodland on the valley floor;
- Consider providing guidelines on characteristic planting on the edge of settlements to prevent harsh boundaries between rural and urban areas.

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38 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
4.5 CHALK DOWNLAND (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE D)

Key Characteristics

- Large-scale landform of broad rolling hills dissected by a series of coombe river valleys and rounded upstanding ridges;
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, regular field units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.
- Remnant chalk grassland, ancient broadleaved woodland and Yew woodland are important habitats.
- Main roads cut across the undulating landscape linking settlements;
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views.
- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads, the occasional downland village, or Medieval hunting lodge and military camps;
- Large woods, shelterbelts, copses and clumps of woodland create a series of enclosed ‘rooms’ surrounded by trees in places;
- Military signage and posts along the numerous tracks that cross the area;
- Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments and Bronze Age Barrows and prehistoric to Romano-British earthworks and field systems;
- Strong sense of elevation.

Summary of Visual Character

Unlike the dramatic escarpments which are found along several of the boundaries of the chalk, and which represent the retreating faces of chalk strata, the Chalk Downs have a much more subdued landform of gently rolling spurs and dry valleys. In geological terms, the Chalk Downland comprises the dip-slope of the chalk; a gently inclined landform representing the original ‘chalk’ surface. These uninterrupted tolling hills and gentle slopes give a real sense of openness. The landscape is now predominantly under arable fields, but with areas of chalk grassland surviving. In places, the Downland is covered by a mosaic of woodland and grassland. The Chalk Downland Landscape Character Type is rich in areas of high ecological value and offers a range of habitats including extensive area of nationally rare chalk grassland. This landscape also has many sites of historic and archaeological importance. Partly due to military use of parts of this landscape, whole archaeological landscapes survive, largely undisrupted by any activity following the Roman period. Settlement pattern is sparse, limited to nucleated villages, military camps and isolated farmsteads. There are several freestanding military camps, which are often highly visible within the landscape, due to their large-scale and utilitarian construction. The military presence to the north of Salisbury District is also evident in the numerous signs and white topped posts clustered around the track junctions and areas within restricted access, such as the firing ranges.

Character Areas

D1. West Wiltshire Downs
D2. Tilshead
D3. Larkhill
D4. Boscombe Down
D5. Porton Down
D6. Downton
D7. Cranborne Chase
D8. Netherhampton
D1: WEST WILTSHIRE DOWNS CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

Occupying an extensive area within the eastern half of Salisbury District, the character area of the West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Downland (D1) extends from the village of Wilton in the east (sited on the edge of the AONB boundary) to Mere in the west. This Landscape Character Area is situated entirely within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Wylye Chalk River Valley lies to the north of the area, the north-west edge is defined by the distinctive West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment (LCA E1).

Key Characteristics

- A large-scale landscape of broad rolling hills and undulating land separated by dry river valleys;
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground;
- A series of wide, open spaces contrast with substantial areas of woodland which is often extensive remnants of hunting forests;
- Woodland also includes small rectilinear game copses or woods;
- Grovely Wood Royal forest, and Stockton Wood, reflecting clay-with-flint soils;
- Straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure, with large-scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss;
- Settlement pattern comprising small villages, dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads;
- Villages tend to be located on the south facing slopes where the landform offers increased shelter;
- Broad leaved copses and clumps (round stands) are eye catching features on the hilltops;
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, and Bronze Age round barrows are visible in this ancient landscape;
- Series of Iron Age hillforts and defended enclosures overlooking the Wylye Valley including the localised preserved prehistoric/Romano-British landscapes at Whitesheet Hill, Stockton Wood and Hamhill Ditches;
- Prehistoric/Romano-British landscape divisions such as Grim’s Ditch re-used as a parish boundary, and cross-ridge dykes;
- The Roman road between Old Sarum and the Mendips follows the top of the downs;
- Fast moving transport corridors, A303 and A350, running across and through the landform in cuttings and on embankments.

Summary of Visual Character

The character area defined as the West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Downland (D1) is a distinctive, large-scale landscape covering an extensive area. With a surface geology of Upper Chalk, the landscape is typically characteristic of the Chalk Downland Landscape Character Type, comprising a series of rolling hills and dry river valleys. Predominantly given over to arable farming, the intensive agricultural land use brings with it a simple land cover (vast tracts of arable production with few field boundaries). The landscape is not simple in terms of colour variation with the cultivation, growing, and harvesting of arable crops bringing much seasonal change.

Woodland, both large and small scale makes an important contribution to character – adding a sense of scale and distinctive visual interest. Although woodland interrupts some long distance views, there is a feeling of exposure and expanse across the entire landscape. This heightens the sense of remoteness as well as providing wide open views and the impression of being in an upland landscape. This is a

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39 Refer to Character Area 2A ‘West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of D1 West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Downland landscape character area

A large-scale landscape, with large-scale field pattern resulting from 20th century boundary loss
quality enjoyed by many walkers and riders using the extensive network of rights of way that cross the downs.

With the exception of small hamlets and a village in the south of this character area, settlement is largely absent and this adds to the sense of remoteness and simplicity although this is disturbed by the visible movement along the main transport corridors – the A303 and A350.

**Human Influences**

**Historic Environment**

- Although the West Wilshire Downs do not match the preserved ancient landscape of Salisbury Plain to the north or Cranborne Chase to the south, the localised preservation of a range of earthworks suggest that this area was exploited in similar ways. The combination, for instance, of Neolithic causewayed enclosure, Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age enclosed settlement and late prehistoric/Romano-British cross-ridge dykes on Whitesheet Hill (on the scarp interface with Character Area E1) points to a continuity of economic, social and strategic roles for the downs. A comparable group of features, including Iron Age and Romano-British settlement enclosure and associated field systems, Grim’s Ditch linear earthwork and the Roman Road from Old Sarum to the Mendips, are found around Stockton Wood. Elsewhere, other earthwork features, including areas of field system, appear largely isolated in a landscape dominated by the large scale fields characteristic of the recent amalgamation of late 18th/early 19th century enclosed fields.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- The landscape was largely cleared of woods as a result of prehistoric and Romano-British farming, although an area of woodland and modern plantation remain. The prehistoric field systems may have been re-used temporarily in the medieval period, and Grim’s Ditch certainly retained some significance, being incorporated in a historic land boundary and surviving as a modern parish boundary. However, during most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the downs were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land. From the late 18th cent there was some inclosure and burnbaking, a method of turf removal in preparation for short-lived or intermittent cultivation, evident in a number of bake field and place-mantes, and by c.1810 the downland was probably fully enclosed. The present pattern of large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is the product of 20th century agricultural intensification.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Settlement is generally dispersed, and concentrated within the valleys rather than the downlands. However, the major settlements within the area have long histories and certainly date back to at least the medieval period;
- The overall, character of Hindon is derived from its distinct wide regular linear form, punctuated by the church, an important building in the townscape. The High Street is almost entirely comprised of listed buildings dating mostly from the 18th century, but also earlier and later houses. A number of these are converted coaching inns and still have surviving elements of the former use. The High Street fronts a complex sequence of spaces, formerly burgage plots, particularly to the west, which contain separate houses, outbuildings, trees and spaces that individually and collectively significantly contribute to the character and appearance of the Hindon Conservation Area;
- Dinton has an irregular layout, interspersed with green spaces, loosely defining a variety of boundaries, including hedges and trees, and post-and-rail fences. However, the area’s cohesiveness is down to two key factors; an almost consistent scale throughout the village and the
use of the local Chilmark and Greensand stone for walls, boundary walls and stone slate roofs. In addition a number of houses have thatch roofs and these also make a very positive contribution towards the character of Dinton particularly when seen with the local stone.

**Biodiversity**

Although this area is dominated by arable agriculture, it has retained substantial ecological value, and supports a variety of habitat types, several examples of which are considered to be of national importance.

In total, four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) fall wholly or partly within the character area, one of which, namely Wylye and Church Dean Down is also designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR). The latter and Ebsbury Down SSSIs are relatively large sites and support the majority of the remaining unimproved chalk grassland in the character area. Among the outstanding ecological features of these sites include the third largest colony of the nationally rare tuberous thistle (*Cirsium tuberosum*) in the British Isles, which is found at Wylye and Church Dean Down (NNR), and a colony of the rare early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) found at Edsbury Down (SSSI).

Away from the northern boundary of the character area, there are only two small reserves with SSSI status. The first, Charnage Down Chalk Pit (SSSI) is designated for its geological importance. The second, Baverstock Juniper Bank (SSSI) supports small remnant areas of chalk grassland, but is most notable for its rich scrub communities containing sixteen woody species, and including a large colony of juniper (*Juniperus communis*) a declining and UK BAP priority species.

In addition to sites of national importance for nature conservation, the area also supports two significant blocks of ancient oak (*Quercus robur*) dominated woodland. These woodlands, namely Grovely Wood are associated with elevated plateaus where the chalk is capped by clay with flints. Although not considered to be of national importance, these woods are of substantial ecological value for a variety of flora and fauna.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

Although this landscape is actively farmed, the intensive farming methods mean that some landscape features have declined. For example, hedgerows are fragmented, gappy or overmanaged with post and wire fencing often acting as infill where hedgerow sections have been lost. However, the intensively farmed nature of the landscape also means that there are few areas of under-used or derelict land. This landscape is largely unsettled but where settlement occurs, visual unity is afforded by the consistent use of materials and good condition of the built environment. Overall landscape condition is moderate.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The ecological richness and surviving archaeological features are generally concentrated towards the northern and western extent of the character area. The strength of character is judged to be strong, deriving from the large-scale, smooth rolling landform and its strongly exposed character. The experiential qualities of the landscape are generally stronger in the north and west of the area, and broadly coincide with the more elevated, upland topography of the area. The absence of roads in the northern half of the area is distinctive and accentuates its sense of remoteness and lack of human

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40 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
presence. To the south however, the fast moving corridor of the A303 running across and through the landform in cuttings and on embankments partially reduces the sense of isolation. For these reasons, the character area is adjudged as highly sensitive in the north and west, and of moderate-high sensitivity in the south, where the more subdued landform and the presence of settlement marginally reduces sensitivity.

**Visual Sensitivity**

The rolling chalk downland has a denuded, exposed character and a vast, sweeping scale. Even relatively small elements in the landscape, such as hedgerows or isolated barns, are visible over long distances. The northern extent of this character area has been evaluated as highly sensitive principally on account of its upland characteristics and far-ranging inter-visibility. The south facing dipslope, by reason of its lower elevation and relationship to the head of the River Nadder tributary valleys, is slightly more enclosed and thus adjudged as having moderate-high sensitivity. Though it should be noted that this landform forms the landscape setting to the dispersed hamlets and villages nestled within its slopes.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Conversion from sheep grazing on unimproved grassland to intensive arable production is one of the most dramatic changes to have occurred across the AONB over the past three centuries;
- The past 20 years has seen a substantial increase in the number of game coverts grown by commercial shoots;
- New rectilinear woodland belt planting is visible which may, when mature, begin to reduce the distinctive open character of the landscape;
- There is pressure for development and facilities along transport corridors e.g. the A303 and A305;
- Development and shelterbelt planting along transport corridors alters views across the downs and diminishes the sense of openness for those travelling through the landscape;
- The loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with varied approaches to field boundary management affects the visual integrity of the landscape;
- Intensive farming practices including a shift from spring sown to autumn sown crops and more intensive grassland management has resulted in changes in the visual character of the landscape as well as a decline in farmland birds;
- Pressure for residential development is changing the character of the small nucleated villages and hamlets in places.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

Overall, management of this landscape should conserve the simple, open character of the landscape, long views, sense of scale and remoteness. Management should also seek to restore key features that have been lost or are declining such as areas of chalk grassland and the reinstatement of denuded hedgerows.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the open character of the downs and retain the simple land cover;
- Encourage restoration of chalk grassland particularly in areas that are connected to existing SSSI sites, notably in the northern part of the character area;
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds. This will include retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields plus management of hedgerows;
- Discourage unsympathetic ribbon development and associated planting (such as Leylandii hedges) along transport corridors in order to conserve open views and safeguard the character of the built environment;
- Manage the distinctive deciduous woodland clumps and consider a programme of replanting to maintain these as features;
- Ensure that the development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments, are in scale with the landscape and do not threaten the setting of important archaeological earthwork features.
D2: TILSHEAD CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

Tilshead Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area is situated within the north of Salisbury District, spreading northwards form the northern Valley Slopes of the River Wylde towards the village of Tilshead to the north. To the north, east and west, this landscape is bordered by Chalk Downland landscape. This Landscape Character Area forms part of Salisbury Plan, which continues to the north of the District boundary.41

Key Characteristics

- Very large-scale landscape, which generally has a strong sense of openness and exposure;
- Strong sense of elevation, with frequent panoramic views over surrounding Landscape Character Areas;
- Strong sense of continuity throughout this gently rolling landscape;
- The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland;
- Sparse settlement pattern consisting of small isolated farmsteads and small villages such as Tilshead and Chitterne;
- Archaeological earthworks and tumuli are a feature of much of this area;
- A network of rural roads crosses the landscape, which is predominantly rural in character;
- Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout much of the area, disturbed at times by military activities and traffic noise on the A303 road corridor to the south;
- Large-scale landscape pattern delineated by low hedgerows, which are often denuded or gappy;
- Woodland clumps, some ancient, juniper scrub and small plantations at various stages of growth are also scattered across the Chalk Downland within this area.

Summary of Visual Character

This gently rolling landscape has a strong sense of openness and exposure, which results from its generally elevated nature and lack of large areas of woodland or other enclosing elements. Landscape Character is dominated by an undulating landscape of rough grazed, chalk grassland. To the north and east of Chitterne, the chalk grassland is utilised for military training, where sense of tranquillity varies, dependent on the level of military activity. In places, small plantations provide a localised sense of enclosure. A small-scale pattern of isolated farmsteads and small villages pepper this predominantly rural landscape. The small villages of Chitterne and Tilshead contain a strong mixture of vernacular buildings, interspersed with development that is more modern. Sense of tranquillity is strong throughout much of the area, only disturbed by cars on the network of rural roads. To the south, however, the busy nature of the A303 main road corridor does introduce a strong visual and noise intrusion. In contrast to settlement pattern, landscape pattern throughout is large-scale, with relatively large, predominantly arable fields delineated by a series of low hedgerows.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The landscape of this area provides unique evidence from different period of changing human activities and land use over 5,000 years. Many individual monuments are typical of their period while other types are extremely rare and the very dense archaeological landscape comprises: Yarnbury Camp; Parsonage Down Camp Earthwork Enclosure and Associated Field System; Enclosure on Maddington Down; Winterbourne Stoke West Round Barrow Cemetery, The Coniger Enclosure and section of Linear Boundary Earthwork; Field system on Chitterne Down;

41 Refer to Landscape Character Assessment for the Army Training Estate – Salisbury Plain (Entec, May 2003)
Location and boundaries of D2 Tilshead Chalk Downland landscape character area

Very large-scale landscape, which generally has a strong sense of openness and exposure
Chapperton Down Prehistoric and Romano-British Landscape; White Barrow, a long barrow; Long Barrow and old Ditch Linear Earthwork, on Tilshead Down; Two boundary features to the North/North-east and west of Silver Barrow

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The prehistoric field systems of the Downs may have been re-used temporarily in the medieval period, and boundary ditches certainly retained some significance;
- During most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the downs were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land. From the late 18th cent there was some inclosure and burnbaking, a method of turf removal in preparation for short-lived or intermittent cultivation, evident in a number of bake field and place-mantes, and by c.1810 the downland was probably fully enclosed. The present pattern of large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is the product of 20th century agricultural intensification.

Historic Development of Settlement

- With the exception of the village of Tilshead, the majority of this Character Area is relatively sparsely populated, with individual farms scattered across the landscape.
- Brick and cob, with slate or thatched roofs are the most common building materials within Tilshead Conservation Area. In addition walls are a distinctive feature within the conservation area.

Biodiversity

Parts of this area are of high ecological value offering a range of habitats including nationally rare chalk grassland, a habitat that has seen an 80% decline over the last 50 years. The long established military land use has contributed to the presence of these ecologically important areas.

Salisbury plain is designated as a SSSI, SAC and SPA. The purchase of land for military use at the beginning of the 20th century has protected the area from intensive farming methods, allowing over 100 years of chalk grassland re-colonisation. Today the diverse range of calcareous soil types support a wide range of grassland communities including 13 species of nationally rare plants. The Plain is an important habitat for invertebrates, with 67 rare and scarce species recorded. It is also an internationally important site for birds, offering important breeding and wintering grounds for a number of species, including six listed in the Red Data Book.

Parsonage Down is designated as a SSSI, SAC and NNR and is again an area of botanically rich chalk grassland, situated to the west of Shrewton and outside of the MOD controlled land.

The more isolated areas of species rich calcareous grassland and Juniper scrub designated as SSSI, which support several plants of nationally restricted distribution include Yarnbury Castle SSSI and Steeple Langford Down SSSI.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

Most of the chalk grassland within MOD controlled areas (to the west of Tilshead) is generally in good condition, in addition to the clumps of woodland, which are generally well maintained. Chalk grassland is generally maintained through rotational grazing, with active clearance of invasive scrub. Outside MOD owned area, arable farmland is generally in moderate condition, with hedgerow and field boundary loss apparent.
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very large-scale landscape, which generally has a strong sense of openness and exposure;
- Strong sense of elevation, with frequent panoramic views over surrounding Landscape Character Areas;
- Strong sense of continuity throughout this gently rolling landscape;
- The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland;
- Sparse settlement pattern consisting of small isolated farmsteads and small villages such as Tilshead and Chitterne;
- Archaeological earthworks and tumuli are a feature of much of this area;
- A network of rural roads crosses the landscape, which is predominantly rural in character;
- Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout much of the area, disturbed at times by military activities and traffic noise on the A303 road corridor to the south;
- Large-scale landscape pattern delineated by low hedgerows, which are often denuded or gappy;
- Woodland clumps, some ancient, juniper scrub and small plantations at various stages of growth are also scattered across the Chalk Downland within this area.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Overall strength of character within this Landscape Character Area is considered to be strong, deriving from the large-scale, smooth rolling landform and its strongly exposed character. Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout much of the area (however, this varies dependent on the level of military activity). To the south, however, traffic noise on the A303 road corridor distorts this. Woodland clumps and remaining intact hedgerows are also sensitive landscape features. Overall, this area is considered to have high landscape character sensitivity, with sensitivity reduced to the south in closer proximity to the main road corridor.

Visual Sensitivity

This large-scale, sweeping landscape has an exposed and denuded character. Long distance, panoramic views across the landscape are key to the visual character of this landscape, with small landscape elements such as isolated farmsteads or gappy hedgerows forming focal points on the horizon. Intervisibility with surrounding areas of chalk downland is strong and generally seemless. As a result of these factors, and the rolling landform of ridges and slopes, overall visual sensitivity is considered to be high.

Key Landscape Changes

- Positive clearance of scrub encroachment and other land management within MOD owned areas;
- Changes in military activity potentially leading to alterations to the management of the calcareous grassland, Juniper scrub and woodland blocks;
- Past intensification of arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of biodiversity value amongst the chalk grassland, ploughing up of archaeological sites and loss of hedgerow field boundaries;
- Agricultural intensification has also resulted in amalgamation and enlargement of fields and the breakdown of traditional field boundaries;
- Potential future impact of tall structures such as communication masts, transmitters and wind turbines, that will be particularly intrusive on the generally open skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness;
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with military vehicles and non-military traffic on the busy A303 road corridor to the south;
- Scrub invasion and management of grazing levels.
Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for Tilshead Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the strong sense of openness and intact landscape features, including clumps of woodland and archaeological features. Ecological habitats, particularly the chalk grassland should also be conserved wherever possible and field boundaries restored using locally appropriate species.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Maintain open and dramatic views across the Chalk Downland;
- Seek active stock management and scrub removal wherever possible;
- Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development;
- Explore opportunities for extending areas of pasture around archaeological monuments in arable areas;
- Maintain the small-scale settlement pattern and ensure that any potential new development responds to existing built character and form;
- Consider opportunities for replanting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost;
- Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout;
- Continue positive landscape management of MOD landscapes.
D3: LARKHILL CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area stretches from the north of Salisbury District, southwards towards the city of Salisbury. It falls between the Till Narrow Chalk River Valley (LCA A1) to the west and Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley (LCA A2) to the east. To the north and south, this area is bordered by Chalk Downland Landscapes. This Landscape Character Area falls within the Salisbury Plain, which continues to the north of the District boundary.42

Key Characteristics

- Strong sense of continuity throughout this gently rolling landscape;
- A largely uninhabited landscape of unenclosed rough grassland, criss-crossed by army tracks;
- Numerous archaeological features visible within the landscape, including instantly recognisable landmarks, such as Stonehenge;
- Strong recognisable sense of place as a result of views across this landscape towards archaeological features;
- Very large-scale landscape, which generally has a strong sense of openness and exposure;
- Strong sense of elevation, with frequent panoramic views over surrounding Landscape Character Areas;
- The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland;
- Scattered settlement pattern, comprising small linear villages (such as Shrewton), hamlets (such as Winterbourne Stoke) and isolated farmsteads;
- The utilitarian form, materials and layout of military camps (such as Larkhill towards the north of the area), have a strong influence on the character of this landscape;
- A network of rural roads crosses the landscape, in addition to main road corridors of A303 and A345, which introduce noise and visual intrusion;
- Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout much of the area, however, this is disrupted by military activities and traffic noise on the A303 and A345 road corridors;
- Large-scale landscape pattern delineated by low hedgerows, which are often sometimes gappy, and regular shaped mixed woodland copses and shelter belts.

Summary of Visual Character

Larkhill and Winterbourne Landscape Character Area encompasses extensive areas of unenclosed and uninhabited chalk grassland and scrub, upon which, a layer of scattered mixed copses and plantations are visible features. The gently undulating, yet elevated topography of this area encompasses a series of dry valleys crossing the landscape, particularly in proximity to the village of Winterbourne Stoke. In places, these valleys are under arable cultivation. The associated ridgelines often facilitate dramatic views across this generally open landscape, towards landmarks and across adjacent Landscape Character Areas. Numerous paths and military tracks cross the landscape, the tranquillity of which varies with levels of military activity. Recognisable sense of place is very strong as a result of views towards the numerous archaeological landscape features, such as distinctive barrows (which are often sited on ridgelines) and the instantly recognisable landmark of Stonehenge. Landscape pattern is predominantly large-scale, punctuated by a smaller-scale settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets. The urban edges of Amesbury settlement to the east and the A303 road corridor are visual intrusions. Larkhill military camp, with its numerous large scale bulky barrack and administration buildings interspersed with grassed open space and enclosed by security fences, are also dominant landscape features within this area.

42 Refer to Landscape Character Assessment for the Army Training Estate – Salisbury Plan (Entec, May 2003)
Location and boundaries of D3 Larkhill Chalk Downland landscape character area

The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland
Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The landscape of this area provides unique evidence from different period of changing human activities and land use over 5,000 years. In particular, the unusually extensive survival of the densest and most varied complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in England are a visible part of the present day landscape, especially within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site.
- Many individual monuments are typical of their period while other types are extremely rare and the very dense archaeological landscape comprises ridge-top barrow grounds, henge sites, earthworks such as the Stonehenge Cursus, and evidence of early settlements and field patterns.
- The earliest ceremonial monuments within this area, date from the early and middle Neolithic (4000-3000BC), and include over a dozen burial mounds and a causewayed enclosure.
- During the Bronze Age (2500BC-1600BC) ceremonial monuments such as the Winterbourne Stoke Barrows dominated the landscape, although the focus soon moved to Stonehenge. The stone structures, which characterise this phase were erected in place of timber structures and were remodelled several times during the period.
- The farming activities which were practised within the area during the Iron Age (800BC-AD43) have left little evidence, but some monuments do remains such as hill fort.
- Salisbury Plain reverted to downland used for the grazing of large flocks of sheep during the medieval period, and this was certainly the case when antiquarians first ‘rediscovered’ Stonehenge in the 17th century.
- Arable agriculture progressively expanded during the 18th century however, it was the vast expanses of open grassland and the low land values which made the Plain suitable for acquisition for military training from 1897 onwards. Since then, the expansion and reconfiguration of military installations has been the most conspicuous use of the southern fringe of Salisbury Plain Training Area.
- Lake House, a c.3ha 20th century garden with formal and informal features, is a grade II Registered Park and Garden within the Character Area.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The landscape was largely cleared of woods as a result of prehistoric and Romano-British farming, although an area of woodland and modern plantation remain;
- During most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the downs were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land. From the late 18th century there was some inclosure and burnbaking, a method of turf removal in preparation for short-lived or intermittent cultivation, evident in a number of bake field and placemantes, and by c.1810 the downland was probably fully enclosed. The present pattern of large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is the product of 20th century agricultural intensification.
- Remnant historic field systems can be seen south of South Newton and north of Middle Woodford.

Historic Development of Settlement

- Settlement is concentrated in the valleys, with only farmsteads and small hamlets on the Down;
- Vernacular buildings are generally of chalk and flint, flint and brick bands, or flint and limestone, with tile roofs.
Biodiversity

Parts of this area are of high ecological value offering a range of habitats including nationally rare chalk grassland, a habitat that has seen an 80% decline over the last 50 years. The long established military land use has contributed to the presence of these ecologically important areas.

Salisbury plain is designated as a SSSI, SAC and SPA. The purchase of land for military use at the beginning of the 20th century has protected the area from intensive farming methods, allowing over 100 years of chalk grassland re-colonisation. Today the diverse range of calcareous soil types support a wide range of grassland communities including 13 species of nationally rare plants. The Plain is an important habitat for invertebrates, with 67 rare and scarce species recorded. It is also an internationally important site for birds, offering important breeding and wintering grounds for a number of species, including six listed in the Red Data Book.

Camp Down is an area designated as a SSSI due to its well-grazed botanically rich chalk grassland. The Downland is rich in plants characteristic of South Wiltshire chalk grasslands, including several species of nationally restricted distribution. The mosaic of grazed chalk grassland and scattered scrub provides conditions favourable to many bird and insect species.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

Most of the chalk grassland within the MOD controlled areas (to the north of Larkhill) is generally in good condition. Clumps of woodland within this area are generally well maintained. Outside MOD owned areas, arable farmland is generally in moderate condition, with hedges and field boundary loss apparent.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

This patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland includes several sensitive landscape elements, such as numerous archaeological features, mixed woodland copses and shelterbelts, which contribute to a diverse, yet large-scale landscape pattern. Overlying settlement pattern is small-scale and sense of tranquillity is strong throughout most of the area, at distance from the main A303 and A345 road corridors. Sense of tranquillity is, however, often disturbed by military training activities. Overall landscape character sensitivity is therefore considered to be moderate to high.

Visual Sensitivity

Sense of openness within this elevated landscape is strong, resulting in frequent wide panoramic views across open Chalk Downland. At the eastern and western edges of the area, views into the adjacent Till and Upper Avon river valleys are framed by riverside vegetation. Open views towards landmark features, such as Stonehenge and other archaeological monuments also contribute to the visual character of this area. Intervisibility with surrounding areas of chalk downland is strong and generally seemless. Overall visual sensitivity is considered to be high.

Key Landscape Changes

- Scrub invasion and management of grazing levels;
- Past intensification of arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of biodiversity value amongst the chalk grassland, ploughing up of archaeological sites and loss of hedgerow field boundaries;
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with military vehicles and non-military traffic on the busy A303 road corridor to the south, and Salisbury;
- Positive clearance of scrub encroachment and other land management within MOD owned areas;
- Potential future impact of tall structures such as communication masts, transmitters and wind turbines, that will be particularly intrusive on the generally open skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness;
- Potential damage to archaeological sites and the setting of archaeological monuments.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for Larkhill and Winterbourne Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the strong sense of openness and exposure throughout and intact landscape features, including clumps of woodland and archaeological features. Ecological habitats, particularly the chalk grassland, should also be conserved wherever possible and field boundaries restored using locally appropriate species.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Maintain open and dramatic views across the Chalk Downland towards landscape features and archaeological monuments, such as Stonehenge;
- Seek active stock management and scrub removal wherever possible;
- Maintain the small-scale settlement pattern and ensure that any potential new development responds to existing built character and form;
- Consider opportunities for replanting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost;
- Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout;
- Continue positive landscape management of MOD owned landscapes.
D4: BOSCOMBE DOWN CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

Boscombe Down Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area is situated within the north-east of Salisbury District, spreading northwards from the city of Salisbury towards Amesbury and Bulford Camp. To the east and west this area is bordered by the Upper Avon and Bourne Chalk River Valleys. This Landscape Character Area falls within the Salisbury Plain, which continues to the north-east of the District boundary.  

Key Characteristics

- The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland;
- Character dominated by military use to the north-east of Bulford, where the landscape is criss-crossed by military tracks and mixed woodland copses, which are a feature;
- In places, field boundaries are delineated by hedgerows which tend to be low and gappy;
- Relatively large-scale landscape pattern which is interspersed by the nucleated settlement of Amesbury and regular layout of Bulford Camp, introducing human elements to the landscape;
- Network of predominantly rural lanes criss-cross the landscape, in addition to the major A303 road corridor, which introduces a source of noise and visual intrusion;
- Open views in places into the valley corridors of the Upper Avon and Bourne;
- Sense of tranquillity quite strong throughout much of the area, but disturbed in place by noise and visual intrusion associated with the A303 road corridor, the settlement edges of Salisbury and Amesbury, and military activities;
- Relatively geometric landscape as a result of the numerous straight tracks and roads associated with military training areas;
- Gently rolling and fairly elevated landscape.

Summary of Visual Character

This patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland is dominated in a parts by the presence of Amesbury and Bulford Camp settlements, which impart a human character over the surrounding predominantly rural landscape. Sense of place is strong in certain locations, as a result of views into the adjacent narrow river corridors of the Upper Avon and Bourne Chalk River Valleys. Sense of openness is limited in places by relatively large copses and blocks of mixed woodland. In other locations, panoramic open views across surrounding areas of Chalk Downland contribute to the character of this landscape. This relatively large-scale geometric landscape is delineated by a series of hedgerows which are denuded and gappy in places. Settlement pattern is quite dominant within this landscape, particularly resulting from the influence of the geometric layout and utilitarian built form of Bulford Camp. Sense of tranquillity is strong within pockets of this landscape, but disturbed in other places by traffic on the A303 main road corridor, and activity associated with Amesbury and Bulford Camp. Bulford Camp and Boscombe Down are dominant within several views across the landscape. To the north of the area, sense of tranquillity is stronger and a predominantly rural character is apparent in combination with a scattered and small-scale settlement pattern.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Figheldean Down, Bulford Camp and Ogford Camp Prehistoric Landscapes dominate the historic elements of the landscape character area. Extant remains from all prehistoric periods are evident in the landscape in the form of barrows, boundary banks and ditches, hillforts;

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43 Refer to Landscape Character Assessment for the Army Training Estate – Salisbury Plain (Entec, May 2003)
Location and boundaries of D4 Boscombe Down Chalk Downland landscape character area

Gently rolling landscape, encompassing a patchwork of arable fields and grassland
Droveways and trackways are well represented in the Salisbury Plain Training Area, where they provide communications between individual settlements and link occupation areas with their fields. The trackways are frequently cut down below the level of the surrounding fields, while the related form of the holloway was often used to mark the boundary between neighbouring estates; The presence of medieval enclosures within the Plain and their relationship with extensive field systems and settlement complexes are of critical importance to understanding the character and development of downland agriculture; Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area is a rare, almost complete, surviving example of a World War I airfield and training depot station. It retains open spaces, tree lined roads and buildings of each phase of the airfield’s development, which evoke a past era of military landscape design. Of particular architectural interest are the three surviving Grade II* listed Hangars, the Grade II listed workshops to the south of (ARS) Hangar 3, the station headquarters, the Motor Transport Sheds and Yard, and the Machine Gun Range, all dated to the World War I period; the Air Ministry Boundary Markers and the Station Headquarters, from the RAF Expansion period; and the World War II Pillboxes.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The landscape was largely cleared of woods as a result of prehistoric and Romano-British farming, although areas of woodland and modern plantation remain;
- During most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the downs were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land. From the late 18th cent there was some inclosure and burnbaking, a method of turf removal in preparation for short-lived or intermittent cultivation, evident in a number of bake field and place-mantes, and by c.1810 the downland was probably fully enclosed. The present pattern of large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is the product of 20th century agricultural intensification.

Historic Development of Settlement

- Settlement within the Character Area is generally concentrated on the valleys, however the towns of Amesbury and Bulford Camp;
- Amesbury was the centre for a widespread royal estate during the Saxon period, and the abbey was founded in AD979. It is probable that the town itself grew up around these establishments but little is known of the way in which the surrounding landscape was utilised;
- Vernacular buildings are generally of flint, with brick, chalk or limestone dressings, with roofs of tile.

Biodiversity

Parts of this area are of high ecological value offering a range of habitats including nationally rare chalk grassland, a habitat that has seen an 80% decline over the last 50 years. The long established military land use has contributed to the presence of these ecologically important areas.

Salisbury Plain is designated as a SSSI, SAC and SPA. The purchase of land for military use at the beginning of the 20th century has protected the area from intensive farming methods, allowing over 100 years of chalk grassland re-colonisation. Today the diverse range of calcareous soil types support a wide range of grassland communities including 13 species of nationally rare plants. The Plain is an important habitat for invertebrates, with 67 rare and scarce species recorded. It is also an internationally important site for birds, offering important breeding and wintering grounds for a number of species, including six listed in the Red Data Book.
EVALUATION

Current Condition

Although this landscape is actively farmed, the intensive farming methods mean that some landscape features have declined. Hedgerows are often fragmented, gappy or over-managed, with post and wire fencing often acting as infill where hedgerow sections have been lost. The overall condition of this landscape is considered to be moderate.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

This Landscape Character Area is considered to have a relatively strong character, on account of the large-scale, generally smooth rolling landform and exposed character. Landscape sensitivities include the hedgerow network and strong sense of tranquillity throughout (except in proximity to the A303 road corridor and edges of Salisbury and Amesbury). Overall landscape character sensitivity is considered to be moderate to high.

Visual Sensitivity

This large-scale, sweeping landscape has an exposed and denuded character. Long distance, panoramic views across the landscape are key visual character, with small landscape elements such as isolated farmsteads or gappy hedgerows forming focal points on the horizon. Intervisibility with surrounding areas of chalk downland is strong and generally seamless. As a result of these factors, and the rolling landform of ridges and slopes, overall visual sensitivity is considered to be high.

Key Landscape Changes

- Conversion from sheep grazing on unimproved grassland to intensive arable production is one of the most dramatic changes to have occurred within the landscape over the past three centuries;
- There is pressure for development and facilities along the A303 transport corridor (such as the new services at Countess East); the loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with varied approaches to field boundary management, affects the visual integrity of the landscape;
- The loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with varied approaches to field boundary management, affects the visual integrity of the landscape;
- Pressure for residential development is changing the character of small nucleated villages and towns within the area;
- Potential future impact of tall structures, such as communication masts, transmitters and wind turbines, that will be particularly intrusive on open skylines and impact on the sense of remoteness (particularly within the north of the area);
- Changes in military activities, potentially leading to alterations to the management of the calcareous grassland and woodland blocks;
- Potential new development associated with Amesbury, Bulford Camp and Boscombe Down Management Strategy and objectives.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for Boscombe Down should be to conserve the patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland, and intact hedgerows, including clumps of woodland. Where possible, field boundaries should be restored using locally appropriate species.
Specific objectives are to:

- Conserve the network of remaining hedgerows and restore where possible, using locally appropriate species;
- Conserve open views into the Upper Avon and Bourne valleys;
- Seek active management and scrub removal whenever possible;
- Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout;
- Discourage unsympathetic ribbon development and associated planting (such as Leylandii hedges);
- Seek to screen visually harsh urban edges;
- Ensure that any potential new development responds to existing settlement scale and respects local vernacular building materials.
D5: PORTON DOWN CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area is situated towards the east of Salisbury District and extends from the urban edge of Salisbury in the west, towards Winterbourne Gunner and Larkhill in the east. To the south, this area abuts a mosaic of Forest and Heath, whilst the Bourne River Valley provides the northern boundary. This Landscape Character Area forms part of Salisbury Plain, which continues to the east of the District boundary.44

Key Characteristics

- Strong sense of openness throughout much of the area, only limited by occasional mixed woodland copses;
- Gently rolling landscape, which is dominated by largely uninhabited, unenclosed rough grassland, criss-crossed by military tracks;
- Landscape pattern is large-scale, with fields delineated in places by mature hedgerows;
- Small-scale settlement pattern of villages (including Winterbourne Gunner and Porton, which are associated with the Bourne River Valley to the northwest), hamlets and dispersed farmsteads;
- Numerous archaeological features, including Figsbury Ring hillfort to the south of Winterbourne Gunner, which contributes to recognisable sense of place;
- Military signage and way marking posts are visible features within the landscape;
- Perceived sense of tranquillity is disrupted by military training activities, the presence of the A303 road and railway corridors;
- Panoramic, open views across the landscape, with often seamless horizons;
- Open and framed views into the Bourne Valley to the north;
- Predominantly rural character throughout.

Summary of Visual Character

The gently rolling landscape within this area is covered by a patchwork of arable fields, unenclosed, rough, calcareous grassland and occasional woodland copses and belts. Sense of openness and elevation is strong throughout, and resulting panoramic open views can be gained across the downland, to adjacent landscape character areas, and particularly into the Bourne river valley to the north. This is a predominantly rural landscape. Military presence is signalled by signage and way marking posts. Sense of tranquillity is strong throughout much of the area, however this is disturbed to the south by noise and visual intrusion associated with the A303 road corridor and occasionally to the north, by the main railway lines. Perceived sense of tranquillity is also disturbed by military activities. Numerous archaeological features contribute to recognisable sense of place, with the largest – Figsbury Ring hillfort providing a recognisable landmark.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Firsdown has been in constant use since the prehistoric period and a quantity of Bronze Age barrows and enclosures are still visible within the landscape. The hillfort of Figsbury Ring, covering some 15.5 acres is typical of the prehistoric monuments which are dispersed over this character area;
- The Roman road between the A30 and Winterslow Corner, shows a continuation of use;

44 Refer to Landscape Character Assessment for the Army Training Estate – Salisbury Plain (Entec, May 2003)
Location and boundaries of D5 Porton Down Chalk Downland landscape character area

Strong sense of openness throughout much of the area, only limited by occasional mixed woodland copses
The presence of medieval enclosures within the Plain and their relationship with extensive field systems and settlement complexes are of critical importance to understanding the character and development of downland agriculture.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- During most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the downs were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land. From the late 18th cent there was some inclosure and burnbaking, a method of turf removal in preparation for short-lived or intermittent cultivation, evident in a number of bake field and place-mantes, and by c.1810 the downland was probably fully enclosed. The present pattern of large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is the product of 20th century agricultural intensification.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- There are remains in the landscape of almost continuous settlement from the Iron Age (and possibly earlier) to the present, although the existing settlement pattern dates mainly from the medieval period;
- Settlement is concentrated within the valleys, although Firsdown and other small villages have recently grown up south of the A30.

**Biodiversity**

Parts of this area are of high ecological value offering a range of habitats including nationally rare chalk grassland, a habitat that has seen an 80% decline over the last 50 years. The long established military land use has contributed to the presence of these ecologically important areas.

Salisbury plain is designated as a SSSI, SAC and SPA. The purchase of land for military use at the beginning of the 20th century has protected the area from intensive farming methods, allowing over 100 years of chalk grassland re-colonisation. Today the diverse range of calcareous soil types support a wide range of grassland communities including 13 species of nationally rare plants. The Plain is an important habitat for invertebrates, with 67 rare and scarce species recorded. It is also an internationally important site for birds, offering important breeding and wintering grounds for a number of species, including six listed in the Red Data Book.

Porton Down is an area designated as a SSSI, SAC and SPA. It is also a significant tract of ungrazed and uninterrupted calcareous grassland and includes nationally rare colonies and species. The Down also has several broadleaved, mixed and coniferous plantations and around 20% of the southern English population of Juniper scrub. The range of habitats supports a diverse range of species, some internationally important, including lichens, fungus, flies, snails, beetles, butterflies, deer and birds.

The more isolated areas of species rich calcareous grassland and Juniper scrub designated as SSSI, which support several nationally restricted plants and animal species include Figsbury Ring SSSI, Bracknell Croft SSSI and Cockey Down SSSI. An area of ancient woodland, Thorny Bushes is also present.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

Most of the chalk grassland within the MOD controlled areas (to the north of Larkhill) is generally in good condition. Clumps of woodland within this area are generally well maintained. Outside MOD
owned areas, arable farmland is generally in moderate condition, with hedges and field boundary loss apparent.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Inherent landscape sensitivities within this Landscape Character Area include mixed woodland copses, patches of calcareous grassland and numerous archaeological features. Sense of tranquillity is strong throughout much of the area (except in proximity to the main road and railway corridors), however this is disturbed at times by military activities. The relatively large-scale landscape pattern, interspersed with small settlements (often strongly associated with the river corridor to the north) further contributes to landscape character sensitivity, which is considered to be moderate to high overall.

Visual Sensitivity

Overall visual sensitivity throughout this Landscape Character Area is considered to be high, resulting from the strong sense of openness, panoramic views across the area, and views to adjacent Chalk Downland and River Valley landscapes.

Key Landscape Changes

- Scrub invasion and management of grazing levels;
- Past intensification of arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of biodiversity value amongst the chalk grassland, ploughing up of archaeological sites and loss of hedgerow field boundaries;
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with military vehicles and non-military traffic on the busy A303 road corridor to the south and the railway corridor;
- Positive clearance of scrub encroachment and other land management within MOD owned areas;
- Potential future impact of tall structures such as communication masts, transmitters and wind turbines, that will be particularly intrusive on the generally open skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness;
- Potential damage to archaeological sites and the setting of archaeological monuments, such as Figsbury Ring.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for Firsdown Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area, should be to conserve the patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland, and intact hedgerows, including mixed woodland copses. Where possible, field boundaries should be restored using locally appropriate species.

Specific objectives are to:

- Conserve the network of remaining hedgerows and restore where possible, using locally appropriate species;
- Conserve open views into the Bourne Valley and across adjacent Chalk Downland Landscape Character Areas;
- Seek active management and scrub removal whenever possible;
- Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout;
- Discourage unsympathetic ribbon development and associated planting (such as Leylandii hedges);
- Conserve vernacular buildings materials and styles within existing settlements and promote sympathetic use of local materials in potential new developments;
• Seek to screen visually harsh urban edges;
• Ensure that any potential new development responds to existing settlement scale and respects local vernacular building materials;
• Continue positive landscape management of MOD owned landscapes.
D6: DOWNTON CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

Downton Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area is situated within the south of Salisbury District, to the north of the New Forest National Park. To the west, this area borders the Lower Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA A4).

Key Characteristics

- Strongly rolling landform with gently domed hilltops, dry valleys and dramatic scarps eroded into rounded spurs and deep coombes;
- A combination of sinuous woodland blocks and copses contribute to sense of enclosure;
- Strong landscape pattern of large-scale open arable fields, small areas of chalk grassland, scrub and woodland (including ash, oak and yew, which is of high nature conservation value);
- Sparse settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, isolated houses and hamlets, linear villages, such as Landford and Newton;
- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout;
- Predominantly rural landscape which is interspersed by a series of rural lanes;
- Busy road corridors, such as the A36, introduce a source of noise and visual intrusion;
- Strong sense of enclosure to the south as a result of enclosing woodland associated with the northern extent of the New Forest.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Area encompasses a strong landscape pattern of large-scale, open arable fields, which are interspersed with sinuous woodland blocks and occasional copses, which provide intermittent sense of enclosure. Sense of place is relatively strong, resulting from views into the Lower Avon Valley to the west and towards more strongly wooded landscapes to the north and south, which provide a distant sense of enclosure. The A36 is a dominant landscape feature, which crosses the centre of the area and disturbs an otherwise strong sense of tranquillity. This is a predominantly rural landscape, crossed by an interconnected network of rural lanes. The sparse settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, small villages (such as Langford and Newton) and dispersed farmsteads, further contributes to this character.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The landscape was largely cleared of woods as a result of prehistoric and Romano-British farming, although areas of woodland and modern plantation remain within this Character Area;
- Unlike surrounding areas of down, the landscape is almost devoid of large prehistoric monuments, perhaps due to later farming. Relict field systems can be seen in the landscape, for example at Standlynch Down;
- Trafalgar House, a Grade II Registered 18th century landscape park and woodland, with mid-19th century formal garden beside house, is testament to the 18th century land use within the area

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- During most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the downs were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land. From the late 18th cent there was some inclosure and burnbaking, a method of turf removal in preparation for short-lived or intermittent cultivation, evident in a number of bake field
Strongly rolling landform with sinuous blocks of woodland and copses which contribute to sense of enclosure.
and place-mantles, and by c.1810 the downland was probably fully enclosed. The present pattern of large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is the product of 20th century agricultural intensification.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- There are remains in the landscape of almost continuous settlement from the Iron Age (and possibly earlier) to the present, although the existing settlement pattern dates mainly from the medieval period;
- Today settlement relates to villages along the major routeways across the landscape however, historically it would have been dominated by small farmsteads and hamlets.

**Biodiversity**

This area is characterised by intensive and widespread arable cultivation; however, it also supports a number of sites of nature conservation importance particularly woodland. On the downland these are frequently interconnected creating a wooded framework enclosing the mosaic of arable farmland. Woodland habitats consist of shelter-belts, wooded pasture, parkland, copses and ancient semi-natural woodland blocks (such as Cheyney’s Wood and Stodlands and Gatmore Copses). A number of the steep slopes of the dry valleys are also extensively wooded and sinuous woodland blocks run along the base of the scarp slopes. There are numerous remnants of ancient semi-natural woodland.

Remnants of floristically rich chalk grassland are an important habitat component within the landscape type surviving, in particular, on the scarp slopes and the steep valley sides. Examples include the Brickworth Down and Dean Hill SSSIs.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

Although this landscape is actively farmed, the intensive farming methods mean that some landscape features have declined. Hedgerows are often fragmented, gappy or over-managed, with post and wire fencing often acting as infill where hedgerow sections have been lost. Patches of woodland are generally in good condition and overall condition is considered to be moderate.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The strong landscape pattern of large-scale open arable fields, small areas of chalk grassland, scrub and woodland (including ash, oak and yew, which are of high nature conservation value) are sensitive elements within this Landscape Character Area. Related to this, the sparse settlement pattern and strong sense of tranquillity throughout much of the area, culminate in a moderate to high landscape character sensitivity overall.

**Visual Sensitivity**

The strongly rolling landform within this Landscape Character Area facilitates panoramic views across the Chalk Downland. To the west, open and framed views into the Lower Avon River Valley can be gained. Large woodland blocks within adjacent Landscape Character Areas to the north and south provide a sense of enclosure and containment within this area. Overall, visual sensitivity is considered to be moderate to high.
Key Landscape Changes

- Scrub invasion and management of grazing levels;
- Past intensification of arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of biodiversity value amongst the chalk grassland, ploughing up of archaeological sites and loss of hedgerow field boundaries;
- Potential future impact of tall structures such as communication masts, transmitters and wind turbines, that will be particularly intrusive on the generally open skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness;
- Loss of mature woodland copses;
- Introduction of large-scale development, which does not reflect existing settlement scale, pattern and materials and which may potentially block open views.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management strategy for Downton Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area should be to conserve the patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland, and intact hedgerows, including clumps of woodland. Where possible, field boundaries should be restored using locally appropriate species.

Specific objectives are to:

- Conserve the network of remaining hedgerows and restore where possible, using locally appropriate species;
- Conserve open views into the Lower Avon valley;
- Seek active management and scrub removal whenever possible;
- Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout;
- Discourage unsympathetic ribbon development and associated planting (such as Leylandii hedges);
- Seek to screen visually harsh urban edges;
- Ensure that any potential new development responds to existing settlement scale and respects local vernacular building materials;
- Conserve open views across this, and adjacent areas of Chalk Downland.
D7: CRANBORNE CHASE CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area is situated at the southern edge of Salisbury District and falls within the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. To the north, the landscape gives way to the southern slopes of the Ebble Valley (LCA C2), whilst to the west and south, a continuation of the Chalk Downland landscape is visible.

Key Characteristics

- An elevated downland, deeply eroded to create a dramatic series of coombe valleys and ridges;
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground;
- A mosaic of both pastoral and arable land uses with arable dominating to the south and east;
- Medieval Royal hunting grounds, defined by surviving park pale, with large areas of surviving managed woodland;
- Shelterbelts, copses, clumps and parkland trees, contribute to distinct estate and Parkland character, particularly around the Rushmore Estate;
- Beech avenues and beech hedgerows provide dramatic seasonal colour change;
- Chalk grassland and ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats;
- Neolithic long barrows and numerous Bronze Age round barrows, particularly concentrated around Tollard Royal;
- Surviving earthworks indicating late prehistoric to Romano-British settlements and field systems, cross-ridge dykes and linear earthworks, such Grim’s Ditch and Bokerley Dyke;
- Low density settlement pattern with few villages and dispersed farmsteads, with 19th century inclosure;
- Panoramic views from Win Green over adjacent escarpment and low-lying terrace and valley landscapes.

Summary of Visual Character

Cranborne Chase Chalk Downland is a diverse landscape, comprising a mixture of dramatic chalk valleys, ridges and plateaux, diverse woodland, copses, shelterbelts and parkland trees, in addition to small-scale villages which are scattered across the area. It is a landscape, which shows strong human influences, not only in the archaeological remains, but in the managed forests, woodlands, copses and avenues along with the parklands and gardens. Together these create a classical English landscape.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The landscape has a rich and varied landscape displaying features from the Neolithic to the modern era. The survival of a range of prehistoric and Romano-British burial, settlement, agricultural and territorial features is complemented by the specific character given to the landscape by the long-term presence of first Royal, and later private, hunting grounds. The creation of areas of parkland, and the pattern of straight-sided fields, represents fundamental changes in land ownership, in the 19th century, giving an added dimension to the landscape;
- The presence of burial monuments of early Neolithic date reflects the importance of the downland to early farming communities, an importance which grew as the structure of prehistoric society developed. This involved a change in focus from interests of the community to the status of the
Location and boundaries of D7 Cranborne Chase Chalk Downland landscape character area

An elevated downland, deeply eroded to create a dramatic series of coombe valleys and ridges
• individual. This change is evident in the construction of large ceremonial monuments on the open
downland, and the large numbers of early Bronze Age round barrows, particularly around Tollard
Royal;
• Social and economic changes continued into the later prehistoric period, with an increasing concern
to enclose land. This is evident in the development of field systems with associated open
settlements, enclosures, linear ditch and bank boundaries, cross-ridge dykes, and ultimately in
defended Iron Age hillforts. The continuity of downland settlement and agriculture in the Romano-
British period is evident in the Roman road. In the medieval period the character of the area was
dominated by its use as a Royal hunting ground, restricting the local communities rights of
habitation and agriculture, and still evident in the pattern of settlement and landuse;
• Rushmore Park a late 19th century park of 424ha incorporating a smaller 17th century enclosure and
a medieval deer park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

• Many of the late prehistoric earthwork boundaries, such as Grim’s Ditch, and the late Romano-
British defensive earthwork of Bokerley Dyke, are likely to have continued in use in later periods,
and in places these features have continued as property and administrative boundaries. The
overarching imposition of forest law in the Royal hunting grounds of the medieval period is evident
in the partial survival of the park pale of the Inner Bounds of the Chase. Continuing restrictions of
the private hunting grounds in the post-medieval and later periods are responsible for the survival
of large areas of unenclosed woodland, in marked contrast to the open downland areas to the south.
The Chase was disenfranchised in 1829, and the generally medium to large straight-sided fields
which are found around the areas of surviving woodland, including the areas of parkland such as
Rushmore Park, date mainly from this period.

Historic Development of Settlement

• There are remains in the landscape of almost continuous settlement from the Iron Age (and
possibly earlier) to the present, although the existing settlement pattern dates mainly from the
medieval period;
• Although the existence of the Royal forest imposed restrictions of landuse, the forest included the
villages of Tollard Royal (sited in the steep coombe bottom). Elsewhere, however, the Chase was
sparsely populated;
• Tollard Royal, traditionally at the heart of the Chase and site of the house where King John would
stay when he hunted there, lies in the southern part of Ashcombe Bottom at the point where the
valley depends. Red brick and flint and white render typify the character of buildings, which
thatch, clay and slate tiles common roofing materials. Estate railings define the approach to
Tollard Royal;
• Between villages lie dispersed hamlets, farms and lodges.

Biodiversity

This area is characterised by significant woodland cover. Areas of chalk grassland have also been
retained, including the extensive Rotherley Downs (SSSI) which comprises an area of floristically rich
chalk grassland, scrub and ancient woodland, and is particularly notable for supporting a colony of the
rare early gentian (Gentianella anglica). Chickengrove Bottom (SSSI), is an example of a small site,
and consists of an intimate mixture of chalk grassland, scrub and woodland and is particularly notable
for supporting a small colony of the rare tuberous thistle (Cirsium tuberosum) and dormouse
(Muscardinus avellanarius) a UK BAP priority species. Other nationally important chalk grassland
sites are partly found within the character area and are mostly associated with the edge of the Chalk
escarpment, which borders Cranborne Chase to the north. These include Knighton Downs and Wood,
Great Yews, Clearbury Down and Odstock Down SSSIs.
Ancient woodland blocks are commonplace throughout the character area, and include Great yews, Vernditch Chase, Moodys/Reddish Gores and Odstock and Monton Copses, Stonedown, Jagdens, Southwingreen, Water Gutter, Larmer Ground, Little Woods and Manwood Copses. Some of these sites have been affected by widespread replanting, and subsequently their ecological value has diminished.

Of the woodland sites Cranborne Chase (SSSI) itself comprises a large tract of ancient semi-natural woodland derived from ancient hunting forest and includes remnants of traditional coppice woodland and wood pasture. The site supports a number of woodland types but the majority consists of either ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*) dominated woodland, which occurs on freely drained soils or oak (*Quercus robur*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) woodland where heavy calcareous soils occur. The ground flora varies according to historical management and soil conditions, but is species-rich and includes many species indicative of ancient woodland. The site is also of high ecological interest for the range of lower plant species, including many bryophytes and lichens that are rare in the UK, and for a diverse invertebrate fauna.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

Overall the landscape is well managed with much of the area forming part of the Rushmore Estate. It has a visual integrity and the condition of ecological habitats (woodland, chalk grassland and scrub) is generally good, although some ancient woodland sites have been affected by re-planting. The built environment is generally in a good state of repair and as the Chase remained free from modern agricultural practices until the middle of the 19th century many historic features have remained intact. Overall, the current condition of the landscape is good.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The bold patchwork of arable farmland, open parkland and ancient woodland, combined with strongly undulating relief, forms a particularly diverse landscape with many contrasts of texture and form. The overall impression is one of well-balanced, harmonious rural scenery, where views are unpredictable and constantly changing; panoramas from high points, such as Win Green are particularly important in understanding the overall setting and form of the area in relation to its surroundings. The landscape of the enclosed chalk downland seems all the more diverse and sequeled because it contrasts so dramatically with the bleaker, exposed open chalk downland to the south. The chalk grassland and extensive ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats. Hundreds of years of management have left many traces, from ancient earthworks to medieval Royal hunting grounds, defined by surviving park pale, and the Rushmore Estate with the Larmer Tree Gardens. It all adds to the intrigue, mystery and rich variety of local interest, which characterise this landscape. On this basis, this area is considered to have high landscape character sensitivity.

**Visual Sensitivity**

The northern extent of the character area comprises elevated downland, deeply eroded to create a series of coombe valley and ridges with a distinctive ‘upland’ character. There are panoramic views from Win Green, a notable and much frequented viewpoint by visitors, overlooking the adjacent escarpment and low-lying terrace and valley landscape. The central and southern margins of this character area are generally more wooded, creating a series of enclosed spaces. The sense of enclosure is particularly heightened in and around Tollard Royal, where the combination of the incised

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46 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
topography, woodland and the extensive parkland landscapes associated with the Rushmore Estate all serve to limit views. However, despite the local variations in openness or enclosure, it is the overriding strength of visual character, principally derived from the area’s unique combination of dramatic landform and the survival of the Chase Woods, coupled with the good condition of its attributes, which make this landscape highly sensitive.

Key Landscape Changes

- Decline of hedgerows and estate boundaries is evident in the landscape.
- Some ancient woodland sites have been affected by widespread replanting in the past, their ecological value has diminished;
- Loss of traditional management techniques has led to decline in coppice woodland and wood pasture over many years;
- There has been some encroachment of arable cultivation onto chalk grassland and open downland in the past - this is particularly noticeable on the visible chalk bluffs and hillsides;
- The presence of planted individual and parkland trees associated with the Estates means that many trees will become mature at the same time.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management objective should be to conserve the distinctive classical English landscape created by the dramatic chalk valleys, ridges and plateaux, diverse woodland, copses, shelterbelts, avenues and parkland trees. In particular there is a need to re-invigorate woodland management within this area.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Restore hedgerows where gappy and fragmented and repair or replacement of estate boundaries where in decline;
- Encourage planting of native species to restore deciduous character and ecological diversity of re-planted woodlands. Beech may also be an appropriate species in this area, particularly planted as hedgerows and clumps;
- Conserve the parkland character by promoting a programme of tree planting to replace individual and parkland trees as they become over-mature and die;
- Encourage traditional management techniques and marketing of local wood products to restore the character of coppice woodland and wood pasture;
- Consider opportunities for reversion from arable to chalk grassland on hills and bluffs where highly visible;
- Conserve integrity of archaeological features and promote cultural value perhaps through interpretation for visitors.
D8: NETHERHAMPTON CHALK DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

Netherhampton Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area is situated to the south of Salisbury and is bordered by a number of different landscape types, including Chalk Downland, Chalk River Valley Floor and Slopes and Greensand Terrace.

Key Characteristics

- Relatively small area of Chalk Downland sandwiched between the Ebble River Valley, Salisbury Urban Area and the Wylye River Valley;
- Gently sloping topography, consisting of a series of low ridges and slopes;
- Patches of woodland such as Warren Down and Hunt’s Down create a localised sense of enclosure;
- Urban influence of the edges of Salisbury is strong, with strong intervisibility between the urban edge and surrounding landscape;
- Small linear settlement of Netherhampton and scattered farmsteads contribute to a dispersed and generally scattered settlement pattern;
- Sense of tranquillity is strong towards the southern edges of the area, becoming more greatly disturbed to the north, approaching the urban edges of Salisbury and Wilton;
- Corridor of the River Nadder is a recognisable landscape feature to the north of the area;
- The golf course at Wilton Park also imparts a human influence over the character of this landscape.

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the south-west of Salisbury, this Landscape Character Area is strongly influenced along its northern boundary by the settlement edges of Salisbury and Wilton, which impart a human influence over the landscape and introduce a source of noise and visual intrusion. From the north-eastern corner of the area, open views across Lower Avon river valley contribute to recognisable sense of place. Sense of enclosure varies throughout the landscape, dependent on proximity to patches of woodland. Overall sense of tranquillity is also varied depending on proximity to the urban edge and A354 road corridor.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The landscape has a rich and varied landscape displaying features from the Bronze Age to the modern era. The survival of a range of prehistoric burial mounds is complemented by the specific character given to the landscape by the later parkland landscapes illustrated at Wilton, a Grade I Registered 18th century landscape garden, with 19th century Italian garden; within park, woodland and agricultural land of c.300ha;
- Other significant archaeological sites within the landscape character area are the Woodbury ancient villages.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- There are remains in the landscape of almost continuous settlement from the Iron Age (and possibly earlier) to the present, although the existing settlement pattern dates mainly from the post-medieval period;
- With the exception of where boundaries have been removed for recreational purposes, i.e. Salisbury and West Wilts Golf Course, fields are generally dictated by the needs of Wilton.
Location and boundaries of D8 Netherhampton Chalk Downland landscape character area

Urban influence of the edges of Salisbury is strong
Historic Development of Settlement

- Due to its proximity, Salisbury dominates the settlement pattern. Otherwise, settlement is focused on Wilton or in small farmsteads and hamlets;
- Wilton, the ancient capital of Wessex, is a quintessential English market town, redolent with history spanning more than 2000 years. The town, which is now a Conservation Area, gave its name to Wiltshire and the famous Wilton Carpets, which are still made there today;
- Traditionally buildings in this area are of brick, timber-framed with brick noggins or brick laced flint, with thatched roof.

Biodiversity

This area is characterised by intensive and widespread arable cultivation; however, it also supports a number of sites of nature conservation importance particularly woodland. On the downland these are frequently interconnected creating a wooded framework enclosing the mosaic of arable farmland.

Remnants of floristically rich chalk grassland are an important habitat component within the landscape type, in particular, on the scarp slopes and the steep valley sides. This can be observed at Burcombe Down SSSI.

Parts of the River Avon System SSSI, of national and international significance for rare/vulnerable species – populations of Atlantic salmon, bullhead and brook and sea lamprey – and for its habitat value for flowing water vegetation and Desmoulin’s whorl snail, lie within the area. West Harnham Chalk Pit, a site of great stratigraphic importance in the Campanian of Wiltshire, is also located in the area.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

The blocks of mature woodland within this Landscape Character Area are generally in good condition, however field boundaries of hedgerows are gappy and declining in places, partly due to and intensification of agricultural practices.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Sensitive landscape elements within this Landscape Character Area include, patches of woodland, remnant pockets of calcareous grassland and the small-scale, dispersed settlement pattern. This area has a mixed strength of character, resulting from the varying combination of elements, some of which impart a human influence over the character of the area. Overall landscape character sensitivity is considered to be moderate.

Visual Sensitivity

Overall visual sensitivity within this Landscape Character Area is considered to be moderate as a result of the variable sense of enclosure, strong intervisiblity with Salisbury urban area and partly with the Lower Avon River Valley corridor.

Key Landscape Changes

- Decline of hedgerows and estate boundaries is evident in the landscape.
Some ancient woodland sites have been affected by widespread replanting in the past, their ecological value has diminished;
Loss of traditional management techniques has led to decline in coppice woodland and wood pasture over many years;
There has been some encroachment of arable cultivation onto chalk grassland and open downland in the past - this is particularly noticeable on the visible chalk bluffs and hillsides;
Expansion of the urban edges of Salisbury and Wilton and associated noise and visual intrusion.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management objective should be to conserve the existing patches of mature woodland and sense of openness where this is apparent. There is also a need to enhance and restore hedgerows where gappy.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Restore hedgerows where gappy and fragmented and repair or replacement of estate boundaries where in decline;
- Encourage planting of native species to restore deciduous character and ecological diversity of re-planted woodlands. Beech may also be an appropriate species in this area, particularly planted as hedgerows and clumps;
- Encourage traditional management techniques and marketing of local wood products to restore the character of coppice woodland and wood pasture;
- Consider opportunities for reversion from arable to chalk grassland on hills and bluffs where highly visible;
- Enhance urban edges of Salisbury and Wilton, where harsh, with using locally appropriate species.
4.6 CHALK ESCARPMENTS (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE E)

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic chalk escarpments eroded into rounded spurs and deep coombes;
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk giving rise to the predominantly calcareous soils;
- Areas of unimproved chalk grassland of international importance on steeper slopes;
- Field systems on the lower slopes, including strip lynchets close to medieval villages sited along the springline;
- Improved pasture and arable fields occupy the shallower, more accessible, slopes where straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure;
- Hanging woodland and sunken lanes are features of the steep, enclosing chalk coombes;
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscapes.

Summary of Visual Character

The escarpments, which often mark the transition between chalk and adjoining rocks, are amongst the most dramatic elements of the chalk landscape. Such escarpments are often formed where the layers of chalk have been compressed to form a fold, or where the chalk has been faulted, resulting in accelerated erosion along the line of weakness. The retreating chalk strata stand as steep escarpments, often towering over the older rocks, which are exposed at the base. The old chalk 'surface' remains behind the escarpment as a gently sloping, often highly eroded dipslope. These are large-scale landscapes where repeating patterns of rounded spurs and deep coombes cast strong shadows in strong sunlight. The scarps frequently support internationally important nature conservation sites and ancient field systems, some which are still dramatic features of the landscape today. Recreational opportunities are mainly limited to public footpaths, although the scarps contain large areas of `Open Country' as mapped (in draft) by the Countryside Agency.

Character Areas

E1 West Wiltshire
E2 Fovant and Chalke
E1: WEST WILTSHIRE CHALK ESCARPMENT

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area is situated towards the north of Salisbury District and is within the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. West Wiltshire Chalk Escarpment marks the northwestern edge of the West Wiltshire Chalk Downland at the point where the high chalk drops to the lowland of the Kilmington Greensand Terrace (LCA G1). It starts just south of the settlement of Sutton Veny (at the western extent of the Wylye River Valley), with the main body of the escarpment running in a convoluted south westerly direction to meet the AONB boundary just east of the town of Mere.

Key Characteristics

- Fragmented, eroded chalk escarpment broken by the course of the River Wylye marking the boundary between the Greensand Terrace landscape to the north and the Chalk Downland to the south;
- Sculpted, convoluted landform comprising deeply incised coombe valleys that create surprise views and dramatic shadows in strong sunlight;
- Dominated by a Lower and Middle Chalk surface geology giving rise to calcareous soils;
- Strong sense of continuity and consistency due to the absence of boundaries and the grazed, smooth nature of the grassland cover with scattered scrub;
- A pastoral landscape with sheep and cattle grazing the steep slopes;
- Extensive tracts of SSSI designated chalk grassland;
- Woodland swathes associated with the break of the slope, following the line of the contours and delineating the contrast between the escarpment and adjacent Chalk Downland landscape;
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, particularly on the outlying chalk outcrop north of the River Wylye;
- Later prehistoric/Romano-British landscape divisions incorporating long bank and ditch earthworks and associated cross-ridge dykes;
- Strip lynches near the medieval settlement at Mere.

Summary of Visual Character

The pronounced form of this Landscape Character Area above the Greensand Terrace gives it strong presence. This is a large-scale landscape – a vast chalk escarpment with associated outlying hills that stand proud of the Kilmington Greensand Terrace (LCA G1) landscape - providing a strong contrast in relief.

The escarpment, formed where layers of chalk have been compressed comprises a surface geology of Lower and Middle Chalk. These older chalk strata have been uncovered due to fluvial processes and high levels of erosion of the River Wylye (and its tributaries) whose course has followed fault lines to break through the chalk and thus interrupt the continuity of the landscape, creating a fragmented escarpment and a small series of chalk. The processes of riverine erosion over millions of years has led to deep incisions – forming coombe valleys.

The escarpment provides commanding long distance views over the neighbouring Kilmington Terrace (LCA G1) and conversely it can be viewed from long range. The magnitude of this landscape is seemingly exaggerated by the simplicity of its land cover. Predominantly comprising grassland, there is a sense of uniformity or consistency of character that adds to the experience of openness, expanse and remoteness and provides a strong sense of visual unity and intactness.

47 Refer to Character Area 1B ‘West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of E1 West Wiltshire Chalk Escarpments landscape character area

Sculpted, convoluted landform comprising deeply incised coombe valleys
Human Influences

Historic Environment

- While the Neolithic long barrows situated in this character area may have symbolised ancestral rights to territory for an early farming community, the form and content of the more numerous Bronze Age round barrows suggest an ideological representation of individual power and status. Both types were sited on the escarpment where they could be viewed both from the valley and coombe bottoms as well as from the downs. In the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods, the extensive lengths of linear ditch and bank earthwork which run along the scarp slope, indicated a more direct means of controlling territory. These earthworks provided both an effective territorial boundary and a barrier to the movement of stock and, potentially, people;
- Prehistoric field monuments including barrows, causeways, camps etc on the scarp interface with Character Area D1;
- Relict medieval field system survive in some parts of the Character Area.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- Areas of strip lynchets at Mere, and other field systems on the steep slope of the escarpment, may represent the expansion of arable farming onto marginal land at times of pressure on cultivable land, probably during the medieval period. The pillow mounds, usually situated on marginal land, as seen at the base of Whitesheet Hill, would have been used for the rearing of rabbits, an increasingly important component of the economy from the 13th century;
- The field boundaries, which are predominantly straight, despite the steep curbing escarpment, are generally 20th century in origin, the area having been open land prior to this date.

Historic Development of Settlement

- The steep topography of the chalk escarpment has prevented settlement on the scarp slope, although the proximity of strip lynchets to the village of Mere point to the likely relationship between the exploitation of this marginal land and adjacent centres of population in the medieval period;
- The absence of settlement along the escarpment is one of its most striking features of this landscape forming a strong contrast with surrounding areas.

Biodiversity

Whitesheet Hill SSSI, which is located in this character area, supports unimproved chalk grassland (over 100ha in size) and is notable for supporting botanically rich grassland communities. It is thus of high ecological value. Although dominated by chalk grassland, the site also contains smaller areas of scrub, mesotrophic grassland and open chalk face (from past quarrying activities), which provide a valuable range of habitats for a range of invertebrate species, many of which have restricted distribution in the UK.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The condition of this landscape character area is perceived to be good. The traditional land use (predominantly grazing) has survived and continues to characterise the slopes. The escarpment has retained significant ecological interest in its chalk grassland sites and shows good survival of historical features such as strip lynchets.
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Its experiential characteristics of remoteness, tranquillity, ruralness and generally its undeveloped character contribute to the sensitivity of this landscape. The relationship of its physical, ecological and historical characteristics, which are concentrated to the south of the character area and the outlying hills to the north of the River Wylye, creates a strong sense of place. The condition of this landscape character is perceived to be good and is considered to have high landscape character sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

The pronounced form of the escarpment and outlying hills rising above the Kilmington Greensand Terrace character area makes it very evident in the landscape. The availability of far ranging views over the neighbouring terrace from the escarpment, in the vicinity of Mere and Warminster, and conversely, the wide-scale visibility of the escarpment from the road and public rights of way network on the terrace, means that it can be viewed from long range by a large number of people. The experience of openness and the magnitude of landscape are exaggerated by the simplicity of its land cover, and all contribute to its strong sense of visual unity and intactness thus contributing to high visual sensitivity overall.

Key Landscape Changes

- Past change has seen encroachment of arable farming onto parts of the scarp slope, displacing pasture or unimproved chalk grassland;
- On the other hand, as land has become more marginal for agriculture, reduced grazing has resulted in the encroachment of scrub;
- Further scrub encroachment may threaten the quality of the remaining chalk grassland and change the smooth, open character of the scarp;
- Evidence of pressure for communication masts and other tall structures.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall objective is to conserve the overriding sense of openness, the smooth undeveloped ridge, and the simplicity of the scarp landform. Within this open, pasture dominated landscape there are significant opportunities to restore and link areas of chalk grassland.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage the broad hedges and bands of ancient woodland at the break of the slope which create the distinction and contrast with the adjacent Greensand Terrace;
- Limit further woodland planting within this area to maintain the smooth, open character of the scarp;
- Continue grazing management of grassland to limit scrub encroachment and maintain the distinctive, smooth landform and ecological richness of the chalk grassland;
- Seek opportunities to restore areas of chalk grassland with the intention of improving links to existing chalk grassland sites for increased ecological value. This is a key opportunity on the steepest slopes which are more marginal for agriculture;
- Promote the use of visually permeable boundaries such as post and wire fencing to demarcate field units in order to retain the sense of continuity and openness across the escarpment;

48 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
• Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in relation to the proposed Open Country designation. Ensure erosion of the scarp (due to visitor pressure) and the provision of associated facilities (such as parking) do not threaten the remote qualities of the landscape;
• Conserve the important archaeological features of the scarp landscape particularly in the light of potential increases in visitor numbers;
• Ensure that tall structures, such as communication masts and wind turbines do not create ‘visual clutter’ on the skyline of the scarp;
• Maintain the undeveloped character of the scarp and the contrast with the scarp foot villages;
• New development should retain the distinct nucleated form of the villages and should not extend onto the scarp slope.
E2: FOVANT AND CHALKE CHALK ESCARPMENTS

Location and Boundaries

This character area occupies a central location within Salisbury District and is situated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, comprising two roughly parallel sections. The Fovant escarpment rises steeply from and is bound along the full length of its northern edge by the lower lying Fovant Greensand Terrace (LCA 6A). The Chalke escarpment’s rises steeply from the Ebble River Valley, with the southern edge marking the transition to the Cranborne Chase Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area (D7).

Key Characteristics

- Two distinct escarpments (Fovant and Chalke) separated by and bounding the Ebble River Valley;
- Lower and Middle Chalk strata defining surface geological character and giving rise to calcareous, shallow and well drained soils;
- Dramatic landform - due to the sheer scale and elevated nature of the escarpment – looming over adjacent landscapes;
- A largely pastoral landscape comprising both unimproved and improved pasture but with introduction of arable cultivation associated with the upper and lower reaches of the scarp;
- Significant tracts of unimproved chalk grassland, with several statutory nature conservation sites falling wholly or partly within the character area;
- Wooded character in places with broadleaf (some of ancient origin), mixed and coniferous woodland occurring across the escarpment in distinctive patterns;
- Distinct distribution of Bronze Age burial monuments along the edges of the escarpments;
- Chalk hill figures, in particular the Fovant Badges, are highly visible landmark features;
- Panoramic views across the surrounding landscapes;
- Absence of settlement heightening a sense of isolation.

Summary of Visual Character

These two escarpments are dominant features in the landscape and make a substantial contribution to the character of the District as a whole. In part, their value is derived from their height, steepness and continuity together with the contrasts between open chalk grassland and the cultivated land on the Fovant Greensand Terrace (LCA G2). The escarpments are very visible - appearing as a range of stark hills dominating the more domestic landscapes of the Vale of Wardour, the skyline punctuated by the copses and woodland blocks along the crest. The scarp also provides the location for fine views over immediate surrounding landscapes, the Vale of Wardour (LCA I1) and towards the West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Downland (LCA D1).

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Field systems, including areas of strip lynchets, close to Fontmell Magna and Iwerne Minster, may represent the expansion of arable farming onto marginal land at times of pressure on cultivable land, probably during the medieval period. The field boundaries, which are predominantly straight despite the steep curving escarpment, are characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure.

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49 Refer to Character Area 1C ‘Fovant and Chalke Escarpment’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of E2 Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpments landscape character area

Panoramic views across surrounding landscapes, coupled with a sense of isolation

© Natural England
Field Patterns and Boundaries

- Areas of strip lynchets and other field systems on the steep slope of the escarpment, may represent the expansion of arable farming onto marginal land at times of pressure on cultivable land, probably during the medieval period;
- The field boundaries, which are predominantly straight, despite the steep curving escarpment, are generally 20th century in origin, the area having been open land prior to this date.

Historic Development of Settlement

- The topography of the escarpment means that settlements are located mainly at the foot of the scarp - being sited along the springline. The movement of livestock to and from the downland grazing is evident in the surviving parallel layout of tracks leading onto the downs. The proximity of the strip lynchets to the villages of Fontmell Magna and Iwerne Minster point to the likely relationship between the exploitation of this marginal land and adjacent centres of population, although only three of the eight medieval villages in the Iwerne valley have survived as villages.

Biodiversity

The Fovant and Chalke Escarpments are characterised by significant unimproved grassland cover, with a total of six statutory SSSI nature conservation sites falling wholly or partly within the character area. In addition, the scarp slopes support scattered woodland blocks, many of which are of ancient origin (e.g. Burcombe and Compton Ivers), and mostly comprise beech or oak dominated stands. These woodlands make a considerable contribution to the ecological value of the area.

The chalke escarpment supports the majority of the nationally important chalk grassland reserves, including Bowerchalke Down (SSSI), Win Green Down (SSSI), Winklebury Hill (SSSI) and Pincombe Down (SSSI). The first three of these sites are particularly notable for supporting colonies of the rare and UK BAP priority plant species, early gentian. The largest of these sites, Bowerchalke Down (SSSI), forms an extensive area of floristically rich chalk grassland and supports a number of restricted plant species, such as dwarf sedge and musk orchid, as well as a variety of butterfly and bird species.

Burcombe Down (SSSI), a 47ha site, is of particular note for the presence scattered juniper, a declining UK BAP priority species.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

The condition of the landscape is perceived to be moderate. There is evidence of erosion of the scarp face, perhaps as a result of surface water run-off, but also as a result of recreational pressures. For example, the condition of the Fovant Badges has suffered from natural weathering as well as visitor pressure. At the foot of the Fovant escarpment, the landform is scarred from previous quarrying activity – the exposed hollow of the chalk interrupting the smooth lines of the scarp face. Scrub invasion is evident across the escarpment.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

Overall strength of character is considered to be strong, as a result of the prominent and distinctive expression of landform, which makes it instantly recognisable from adjacent landscapes. The scarps are characterised by significant tracts of unimproved chalk grassland, which are sensitive features. Ancient woodland also makes a considerable contribution to its ecological value. Many visible historic components and the famous Hill Figures adorning the scarp slopes in the vicinity of Fovant are important cultural features, contributing to high landscape character sensitivity overall.

**Visual Sensitivity**

The two escarpments are very visible and dominant in the landscape and make a substantial contribution to the character of the landscape. Furthermore, they are exposed to view along the busy A30 and any changes on the scarp face would be easily seen and readily apparent. Panoramic views from the ridgetops provide a stunning overview of the surrounding landscapes and the escarpment itself is a dominant landscape feature in views throughout the Vale of Wardour. The visual sensitivity of this landscape is thus considered to be high.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Decline of hedgerows and estate boundaries is evident in the landscape;
- Some ancient woodland sites have been affected by widespread replanting in the past and their ecological value has diminished;
- Loss of traditional management techniques has led to decline in coppice woodland and wood pasture over many years;
- There has been some encroachment of arable cultivation onto chalk grassland and open downland in the past - this is particularly noticeable on the visible chalk bluffs and hillsides;
- The presence of planted individual and parkland trees associated with the Estates means that many trees will become mature at the same time.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management objective should be to conserve the uninterrupted landform, strong open skyline and the distinct mosaic patterning of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland and to seek opportunities to restore and enhance habitats and historic features.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the distinct pattern of deciduous woodland particularly at the break of the slope where the woodland creates the distinction with the adjacent Fovant Greensand Terrace (LCA G2). Appropriate management of the woodland resource is a priority;
- Further planting of small coniferous coverts should be discouraged;
- Promote sustainable management of recreational access to proposed areas of Open Country and viewpoints, and monitor erosion as a result of visitor pressure;
- Continue with the planned restoration of the Fovant Badges;
- Maintain a balanced scrub and chalk grassland mosaic and encourage grazing management to maintain the intactness and ecological integrity of the chalk grassland;
- Seek opportunities to diversify and restore other areas of chalk grassland with the intention of creating links to existing chalk grassland sites;
- This is a particular opportunity for areas on the steepest slopes which may be marginal for farming;
- Ensure that tall structure, such as communication masts and wind turbines do not create ‘visual clutter’ on the skyline of the scarp.
4.7 FOREST HEATH MOSAIC (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE F)

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform based on London and Reading Clay Formations and Bagshot Sand;
- A peaceful enclosed landscape of extensive woodland cover with intermittent views though to more open areas;
- Complex landscape comprising broadleaved and coniferous woodland, wood-pasture, heath, grassland and farmland offering a range of habitats;
- Pastoral and arable fields are bounded by full hedgerows and hedgerow trees;
- Substantial areas of woodlands of diverse and rich ecological value including ancient woodland, beech, high oak and wet woodland;
- Fragments of lowland bog and formerly extensive heath survive;
- Presence of mansions and historic parklands particularly former deer parks;
- A settled landscape with large villages, frequent small clusters of buildings along roads and a distinctive pattern of dense linear settlement fringing commons to the south;
- Buildings of red brick, tile and thatch;
- Shaded lanes, sometimes sunken, wind their way though the wooded areas, plus the busy A36 passes though the type.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character type encompasses gently undulating landform, which is peppered with a patchwork of broadleaved and coniferous woodland, wood-pasture, grassland and farmland. This is a mature and complex landscape, displaying an intricate network of full hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Settlement pattern consists of several large villages, which often have a strong vernacular character of red brick, thatch and tile and often fit harmoniously within the surrounding landscape. There is a predominantly rural character throughout, partly due to the network of shady rural lanes which cross the landscape. Sense of tranquillity is also strong throughout most of the area, except in proximity to the busy A36 road corridor. This landscape is closely linked in both landscape and visual characteristics to the New Forest landscape, which extends outside the Study Area to the south.51

Character Areas

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51 Refer to the New Forest Landscape Character Assessment, New Forest District Council (July 2000)
**F1: FARLEY FOREST HEATH MOSAIC**

**Location and Boundaries**

This Landscape Character Area is situated to the south-east of Salisbury, towards the south of Salisbury District. It is sandwiched between areas of Chalk Downland, to the north and south. The course of the Lower Avon river valley runs to the west of this area.

**Key Characteristics**

- Patchwork of woodland and medium-sized geometric fields;
- Although some areas of ancient woodland survive, the extensive areas of woodland are now predominantly 19th century and post-war plantations;
- Mature hedgerow network delineates fields, with field boundaries often containing hedge trees;
- Strong vernacular built character with red brick as the dominant material;
- Network of rural roads and shady sunken lanes wind through the area, connecting the villages and farmsteads;
- Strong sense of enclosure provided by large areas of woodland;
- Open panoramic views from the north of the area across adjacent open Chalk Downland landscape;
- A36 main road corridor and main railway line introduce a source of noise and visual intrusion;
- Scattered settlement pattern of small and larger villages, such as Middle Winterslow, alongside isolated farmsteads;
- Open views across the Lower Avon valley to the west and towards the city of Salisbury;
- Settlement edges of Salisbury and Alderbury impart a human influence over the western edge of this character area.

**Summary of Visual Character**

This Landscape Character area has a generally strong sense of enclosure, which is provided by large areas of woodland. Open views can, however, be gained across the Lower Avon Valley to the west and towards the city of Salisbury. Sense of tranquillity is relatively strong throughout and there is also an associated predominantly rural character, resulting from the network of rural lanes. The A36 road corridor, and railway line do, however introduce a source of noise and visual intrusion. In addition to areas of woodland, this area also exhibits areas of grass and remnant heathland.

**Human Influences**

**Historic Environment**

- Although the Winterslow Forest Heath does not match the preserved ancient landscape of Salisbury Plain to the north or Cranborne Chase to the south, the localised preservation of a range of earthworks suggest that this area was exploited in similar ways. Elsewhere, other earthwork features, including areas of field system, earthworks such as Grim’s Ditch, or the Roman villa at East Grimstead appear largely isolated in a landscape dominated by the large scale fields characteristic of the recent amalgamation of late 18th / early 19th century enclosed fields;
- Clarendon Palace is a medieval manor and hunting lodge established during 12th century as a Royal Palace, is another foci of the landscape. It was expanded during the early 13th century and comprised an irregular layout of buildings arranged around a courtyard. However, by the 18th century the surviving parts were being used as simple farm buildings. Many of the buildings survive as footings exposed during excavation, but the east end of the Great Hall remains to a height of 5m;
Location and boundaries of F1 Farley Forest Heath Mosaic landscape character area

Patchwork of woodland and medium-sized geometric fields
Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The landscape was largely cleared of woods as a result of prehistoric and Romano-British farming, although large areas of woodland and modern plantation remain. The prehistoric field systems may have been re-used temporarily in the medieval period. However, during most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the heaths were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land;
- Today large areas are occupied by woodland with the areas in between occupied by small inclosure fields.

Historic Development of Settlement

- Settlement within this character area is relatively dense compared to other areas of Salisbury, with villages concentrated around the intersections of roads;
- Due to there ‘special architectual or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’, four villages within this character area are designated as Conservation Areas: West Dean, Farley, Alderbury and Pitton;
- Brick, timber framing with brick and wattle and daub infilling, timber framing and weatherboarded are all common building materials within the Character Area and in addition some buildings e.g. West Dean Church, are of flint with limestone dressings.

Biodiversity

This area has a complex landscape with a variety of habitats, including large areas of ancient broadleaved and coniferous woodland (such as Treasurers Dean Wood, Nightwood Copse, Hazel Hill Wood and Tytherley Common), wood-pasture, heath, grassland and several ponds.

Bentley Wood SSSI is an area of important woodland. It is a large site of ancient wood but mostly replanted in the post war period predominantly with oak, beech, Norway spruce, Scots pine and Corsican pine, important for the very wide range of woodland butterfly species it supports.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

The overall condition of this Landscape Character Area is considered to be good, with varied woodlands including coppice and wood pasture interspersed and medium scale pastoral and arable fields enclosed by intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There are several traditional settlements of red brick and tile dwellings although changing patterns of settlement could be detrimental in joining together separate villages and breaking down the historic patterns of clustered red brick roadside cottages and dense linear settlements fringing the commons.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Sensitive landscape elements within this Landscape Character Area, include patches of dense woodlands, full hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Overall sense of tranquillity is strong throughout the area, which has a predominantly rural character. Traditional built vernacular character is also strong. Overall landscape character sensitivity is therefore considered to be good.
**Visual Sensitivity**

Views across this Landscape Character Area are often limited by woodland blocks and mature hedgerows, which provide a strong sense of enclosure. There is, however relatively strong intervisibility with adjacent areas of Chalk Downland and River Valleys. Overall visual sensitivity is therefore considered to be moderate.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- Agricultural intensification and introduction of arable rotation threatens the medieval field patterns and traditional pastoral landscape;
- Hedgerow trees are generally mature with few new trees to replace them;
- Decline in traditional woodland management leading to weakening in condition of ancient woodlands and particularly areas of wood pasture and coppice;
- Pressure for further linear expansion of settlement along the rural roads, and new development changing the traditional relationship of settlements with the commons;
- Pressure to upgrade roads through additional kerbing and signage to accommodate an increase in traffic volume.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The landscape strategy is to conserve the peaceful rural and enclosed nature of the area and its rich diversity of woodland, wood pasture, parkland, heathland and pastoral and arable farmland along with the settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, roadside cottages, villages and dwellings alongside commons linked by rural roads.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Retain and manage the medium scale pastoral fields with dense hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees;
- Promote appropriate management of arable land including retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields to encourage wildlife, particularly farmland birds;
- Conserve the remnant areas of heathland and peat bog, and take opportunities to extend and these habitats;
- Encourage sustainable woodland management of the varied woodlands using tradition techniques such as coppicing where appropriate to maintain the special historic character and ecological interest;
- Encourage new woodland edge planting of native deciduous broadleaved to reduce the visual and ecological impact of the coniferous plantations;
- Encourage management and restoration of the parklands that are characteristic of the area.;
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape;
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements.
F2: LANDFORD FOREST HEATH MOSAIC

Location and Boundaries

Landford Forest Heath Mosaic Landscape Character Area is situated at the southern edge of Salisbury District and continues outside the boundary of the Study Area, into the New Forest National Park to the south. To the north, the area is bordered by Chalk Downland Landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Predominantly rural landscape, with a strong sense of tranquillity throughout;
- Large areas of 19th century broadleaves and coniferous ancient woodland pepper the landscape;
- Patches of remnant heath, wood pasture and small irregular fields, bounded by thick hedgerows;
- Intermittent views to Chalk Downland to the north contribute to recognisable sense of place;
- Strong vernacular built character, with red brick, tile and thatch dominant;
- Thick, mature hedgerow network which contains frequent hedgerow trees;
- Shaded, sometimes sunken lanes cross the landscape, providing access and also forming recognisable landscape features;
- Richly wooded landscape of beech, high oak and wet woodland, which has diverse ecological value;
- Scattered settlement pattern of dispersed houses and farmsteads.

Summary of Visual Character

Intermittent views to Chalk Downland contribute to recognisable sense of place within this Landscape Character Area. There is a richly wooded character, encompassing several patches of beech, high oak and wet woodland, which provide a variable sense of enclosure. There is a predominantly rural character throughout, with associated strong sense of tranquillity. A network of rural lanes cross this landscape, which is delineated by a network of mature hedgerows, which contain frequent hedgerow trees. Settlement pattern is scattered, consisting of a series of dispersed houses and farmsteads.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Although the Whiteparish Forest Heath does not match the preserved ancient landscape of Salisbury Plain to the north or Cranborne Chase to the south, the localised preservation of a range of earthworks suggest that this area was exploited in similar ways. Earthwork features, including Risbury Hill round barrows and Castle Copse Camp illustrate the utilisation of the landscape throughout history;
- From WWII and throughout the Cold War years, Whiteparish existed in the shadow of a Royal Naval Armaments Depot, which was built into the far side of Dean Hill, and was closed in 2003.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The landscape was largely cleared of woods as a result of prehistoric and Romano-British farming, although large areas of woodland and modern plantation remain. The prehistoric field systems may have been re-used temporarily in the medieval period. However, during most of the medieval and post-medieval periods the heaths were used largely as unenclosed grazing land, an essential component of the predominant sheep-and-corn agriculture, although there may have been some small-scale and temporary encroachment of cultivation onto marginal land;
- Inclosure of this area took place around 1800 with the few remaining open fields being inclosed by 1804;
Location and boundaries of F2 Landford Forest Heath Mosaic landscape character area

Mature tree avenues are a landscape feature
Today large areas are occupied by woodland with the areas in between occupied by small inclosure fields.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Settlement within this Character Area is generally linear in form, following the roads which dissect the Character Area;
- Whiteparish Conservation Area contains a number of buildings in the traditional vernacular style. These being built of brick, cob or timber-framed with thatch or tile roofs.

**Biodiversity**

This area has a complex landscape with a variety of habitats, including large areas of ancient broadleaved and coniferous woodland (including Lowdens Copse and Whiteparish Common), woodland pasture, heath, grassland and several ponds. This abundance of habitats is reflected in parts of the area having been designated as SSSI and SAC.

Whiteparish Common comprises an extensive area of ancient semi-natural woodland designated as SAC, SSSI and County Wildlife Site. It is predominantly a beech wood with pedunculate oak and ash, but also exhibits a large number of other woodland types. It supports an exceptionally diverse woodland flora and some uncommon butterfly species.

Part of the New Forest SAC lies within the area. This SAC embraces the largest area of ‘unsown’ vegetation in lowland England and includes the representation on a large scale of habitat formations formerly common but now fragmented and rare in lowland western Europe. They include lowland heath, valley and seepage step mire, or fen, and ancient pasture woodland, including riparian and bog woodland. Nowhere else do these habitats occur in combination and on so large a scale, supporting a diverse range of nationally and internationally important plant and animal species.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

The overall condition of this Landscape Character Area is considered to be good, resulting from varied woodlands including coppice and wood pasture interspersed with medium scale pastoral and arable fields enclosed by intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There are many traditional settlements of red brick and tile dwellings although changing patterns of settlement could be detrimental in joining together separate villages and breaking down the historic patterns of clustered red brick roadside cottages and dense linear settlements fringing the commons.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The relatively intricate pattern of this landscape, results from a combination of sensitive elements, including mature woodland, intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees and traditional settlements displaying a range of vernacular materials including red brick. There is also a strong sense of tranquillity throughout most of the area. As a result, overall landscape character sensitivity is considered to be high.

**Visual Sensitivity**

Views within this Landscape Character Area are generally limited by patches of woodland and mature hedgerows. Towards the edge of the area, there is strong intervisibility with surrounding areas of Chalk Downland and River Valleys. Overall visual sensitivity is considered to be moderate.
Key Landscape Changes

- Agricultural intensification and introduction of arable rotation threatens the medieval field patterns and traditional pastoral landscape;
- Hedgerow trees are generally mature with few new trees to replace them;
- Decline in traditional woodland management leading to weakening in condition of ancient woodlands and particularly areas of wood pasture and coppice;
- Pressure for further linear expansion of settlement along the rural roads, and new development changing the traditional relationship of settlements with the commons;
- Pressure to upgrade roads through additional kerbing and signage to accommodate an increase in traffic volume.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The landscape strategy is to conserve the peaceful rural and enclosed nature of the area and its rich diversity of woodland, wood pasture, parkland, heathland and pastoral and arable farmland along with the settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, roadside cottages, villages and dwellings alongside commons linked by rural roads.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Retain and manage the medium scale pastoral fields with dense hedgerow network and nurture new hedgerow trees;
- Promote appropriate management of arable land including retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields to encourage wildlife, particularly farmland birds;
- Conserve the remnant areas of heathland and peat bog, and take opportunities to extend and these habitats;
- Encourage sustainable woodland management of the varied woodlands using tradition techniques such as coppicing where appropriate to maintain the special historic character and ecological interest;
- Encourage new woodland edge planting of native deciduous broadleaved to reduce the visual and ecological impact of the coniferous plantations;
- Encourage management and restoration of the parklands that are characteristic of the area.;
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape;
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements.
4.8 GREENSAND TERRACE (TYPE G)

Key Characteristics

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and hills rise;
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary inclosure;
- Large geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent Greensand Hills;
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value;
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing;
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment;
- Coniferous belts shelter dispersed farmsteads;
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks.

Summary of Visual Character

The Greensand Terrace Landscape Character Type corresponds to the level terraces that lie between the greensand hills and chalk escarpments. The geology has given rise to rich brown earths and these soils support arable crop production. The large rectangular arable fields which dominate the terrace landscapes are characteristic of Parliamentary inclosure of a probable late 18th/early 19th century date. Calcareous subsoils tend to be found on the edge of the landscape type, closer to the foot of the chalk escarpment and it is here that mixed woodland typically marks the transition and edge of the terrace. The wooded copses provide valuable nesting and feeding habitat for a range of typical farmland bird species, a declining bird group within the UK. Coniferous blocks, planted as game coverts, are typical features of the terrace landscape. Low density, scattered farmsteads characterise settlement and built character.

Character Areas

G1 Kilmington Terrace
G2 Fovant
G1: KILMINGTON TERRACE GREENSAND TERRACE

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area is situated within the northwest of Salisbury District and falls within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Bound along its entire western edge by the Pencelwood-Longleat Greensand Hills (LCA H1) and along its southern edge by the West Wiltshire Chalk Escarpment (LCA E1) the terrace is located neatly between the two elevated, landscapes on either side.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating and shelving terrace of Upper Greensand in the north-west of the District;
- The chalk escarpment to the south-east provides a dramatic backdrop to the terrace;
- Brown earths have a high agricultural value and support arable crop production;
- Medium to large scale field units reflect intensive farming of arable crops;
- Some smaller fields characterise remaining areas of (largely improved) pasture;
- Absence of tree cover contributing to the sense of openness;
- Presence of Bronze Age round barrows close to the River Wylye reflect the survival of remnant areas of pasture;
- Medieval settlements including the deserted medieval village at Yarnfield;
- Upper reaches of the River Wylye cross the Greensand terrace, following the line of two geological faults;
- Settlement is focussed around the River Wylye;
- Well served by transport routes with the main A350 and a number of secondary roads criss-crossing the terrace.

Summary of Visual Character

The Kilmington Greensand Terrace is an open, largely treeless landscape dominated by arable crop production. The character of this landscape is well defined by its relationship with the adjacent West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment (LCA E1) forming a prominent backdrop. This is a simple landscape, appearing uncluttered and offering few distinguishing features – the large scale regular field units reinforcing the sense of openness. Settlement is a key feature – with attractive nucleated settlements found towards the east of the area clustered along the upper Wylie valley.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- Although there is little direct evidence for Neolithic settlement there are likely to have been late Neolithic communities dispersed within the wider landscape. The location of Bronze Age round barrows, such as those beside the River Wylye west of Kingston Deverill, may indicate the continued importance of the river in a largely pastoral economy dependant to a large extent on the adjacent downland grazing.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The process of field enlargement is far progressed and extensive fields now create an unremitting arable landscape. Towards the northeast, fields are predominantly straight-sided and rectangular, although varying in size from small to large, and are characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century

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52 Refer to Character Area 6B ‘Kilmington Greensand Terrace’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of G1 Kilmington Greensand Terrace landscape character area

19th century broadleaved and coniferous woodland pepper the landscape
Parliamentary inclosure. Closer to settlements, fields reduce in size. Between the settlements of Kilmington and Maiden Bradley they are less regular in form, possibly indicating an earlier process of inclosure around the serried of relatively close-spaced farmsteads that are distributed across the terrace. The area is largely devoid of woodland which survives mainly at the edges of the terrace, on the adjacent chalk escarpment and greensand hills.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Settlement within this character area is focussed on the four settlements of Kilmington, Norton Feris, Maiden Bradley, Stourton and Kilminton Common. This pattern was established by the medieval period with settlements generally centred around the intersections of major routeways;
- The predominant vernacular building material is rubble stone, with tile roofs.

**Biodiversity**

The Kilmington Terrace is almost exclusively in arable cultivation and has retained little in the way of tree cover. Occasional shelterbelts, the majority of which comprise relatively recent broadleaved plantation, occur throughout the character area, but these are generally of small extent. The farmland landscape, scattered trees, remnant hedges and shelterbelts provide valuable habitat for a range of typical farmland bird species.

Long Knoll SSSI encompasses a number of botanically diverse grassland communities and supports several plant species, which are particularly associated with the western chalklands of Britain. Nationally, the extent of chalk grassland has greatly declined as a result of modern agricultural intensification; this site is one of the remaining herb-rich examples. Small areas of scattered scrub also occur.

Brimsdown Hill SSSI, is an extensive area of botanically rich calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland, with adjacent acidic types. It exhibits a close intermix of declining chalk habitats and contains uncommon plants including one or nationally restricted distribution.

**EVALUATION**

**Current Condition**

This character area has retained its landform features and its intensively farmed character means there are few areas of underused or derelict land. The extent of arable farming has led to the loss of biodiversity and cultural value. For example, there are few semi-natural habitats, many sections of hedgerow have been lost or replaced with post and wire fencing, and there is a general absence of prehistoric earthworks. Settlement, however, is in good condition and is integrated through the consistent use of stone, brick, clay tiles and thatch. Overall landscape condition is judged to be moderate.

**Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

**Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The strength of character of this landscape is considered to be moderate. This is a reflection of the intensity and expansion of arable farming, which has reduced both its ecological value and resulted in the loss of archaeological features. Overall, this landscape character area is considered to have moderate landscape character sensitivity.

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53 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
**Visual Sensitivity**

Although this is not an elevated landscape, the general absence of tree cover and the unremitting arable landscape, contribute to an overall sense of openness. Any form of change would cause a probable likelihood of visual intrusion, which would be difficult to mitigate without altering the intrinsic visual qualities of the landscape. This landscape is therefore considered to have moderate to high visual sensitivity overall.

**Key Landscape Changes**

- The previous loss (through field enlargement for arable farming) and continued decline of hedgerow boundaries in places has diluted the field pattern across the terrace;
- Overmaturity and non-replacement of old tree stock (evident within the hedgerows) has resulted in the loss of trees as landscape features;
- The intensity and expansion of arable farming has reduced ecological value and resulted in the loss of archaeological features;
- Loss of semi-natural woodland where the terrace meets the scarp, plus creation of new coniferous plantations on the terrace has resulted in a change in visual and ecological character.

**Management Strategy and Objectives**

The overall management strategy should conserve the open farmed character of the terrace with its distinct pattern of settlement and the contrast with the adjacent escarpment. Restoration of lost and/or declining features such as field boundaries and woodland will improve condition, quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value.

Specific management objective are to:

- Improve the condition and character of hedgerow boundaries by thickening and replanting where lost and denuded to increase the distinctiveness of the field pattern;
- Replace hedgerow trees where overmature and dying;
- Conserve the open character of the terrace and retain the concentrated character of the settlement by resisting linear growth along transport routes such as has occurred between Longbridge Deverill and Hill Deverill. Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure future development respects traditional settlement form;
- Encourage new native woodland planting at the base of the slopes to mark the transition between the arable terrace and pastoral escarpment;
- Consider opportunities for re-planting trees and woodland following the course of the River Wylye.
G2: FOVANT GREENSAND TERRACE

Location and Boundaries

Centrally located within Salisbury District and within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, this distinctive terrace forms a flat platform between the undulating Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Greensand Hills (LCA H3) to the north and the dramatic chalk Fovant and Chalke Escarpment (LCA E2), to the south.

Key Characteristics

- A flat terrace of arable fields at the foot of the imposing Fovant and Chalke escarpment;
- Large geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the Greensand Hills to the north;
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value;
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing;
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment;
- Coniferous shelter belts run at right angles to the escarpment cutting across the contours;
- Settlement is sparse - dispersed farm buildings are dotted along the route of the A30, a busy transport corridor;
- Uninterrupted views of the adjacent chalk escarpment from the terrace. Views to the Fovant Badges provide visitor interest and link this landscape to the Chalk escarpment.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Area, which rises above the open terrace and offers a sense of containment. Arable farming is the dominant land use with large fields and the presence of many new farm buildings a key feature. Mixed woodland nestles at the foot of the adjacent chalk escarpment forming a transitional belt and marking the distinctive change in landform at the edge of the terrace. Coniferous block planting at the junction with the escarpment, by comparison provides a more abrupt contrast. Localised changes in landform are most marked towards the settlement of Charlton, where the land becomes more undulating and tree cover increases – evoking a more enclosed character. Settlement pattern is dispersed and characterised by scattered farmsteads. The sense of remoteness in this landscape is disrupted by the busy A30 transport corridor that runs along the full length of the terrace.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- The continuity and intensity of arable cultivation may account for the general absence of prehistoric earthworks, as found on the immediately adjacent areas. The key visible historic components of the landscape are the Parliamentary-type inclosures characterised by large rectangular fields and the former parkland.
- Wardour Castle Registered Park and Garden 18th century landscape park, at most extensive c.400ha, in divided use and ownership. It is also associated with the remains of a medieval deer park.

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54 Refer to Character Area 6A ‘Fovant Greensand Terrace’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of G2 Fovant Greensand Terrace landscape character area

Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment
Field Patterns and Boundaries

- The large rectangular arable fields that dominate the terrace landscape are characteristic of Parliamentary inclosure of a probable late 18th / early 19th century date. These form a distinct patterning with field boundaries consistently running at right angles to the escarpment.

Historic Development of Settlement

- Settlement is sparse in comparison with surrounding areas. These typically comprise of stone farmhouses with recent additions of modern farm buildings.

Biodiversity

This area is characterised by intensive arable agriculture, together with smaller areas of improved pasture and small, planted woodland blocks and shelterbelts. These woodland areas are widely scattered throughout the landscape and provide valuable nesting and feeding habitat for a range of typical farmland bird species, a declining bird group within the UK. Occasional small blocks of ancient woodland also remain (e.g. Pond, Woodcock Corner and Great Wurs Copses) and further add to the ecological potential of the landscape. There are no sites with statutory nature conservation designation within this area.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

Although the simple landform and land cover, are consistent, the landscape is interrupted by the A30 which frequently has poor quality margins. Lay-bys along the A30 are also degraded- making some of the most visible areas within the landscape the poorest in terms of condition. The land is very intensively farmed – evident through the presence of large fields and absence of features such as hedgerows and woodland copses. Intensive arable farming has also accounted for the loss of visible historic components in the landscape. The extent of arable farming also means that this area has restricted biodiversity value. Current landscape condition is moderate.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

The character of this landscape has been evaluated as strong and is derivative of the flatness of its landform, which stands in stark juxtaposition to the adjacent chalk escarpment, and the simplicity of its land cover. Bar the small woodland blocks, including ancient woodland to the north of the A30 in the vicinity of Fovant, its ecological and historical attributes are very much reduced by the dominance of intensive arable production. Some areas are further fragmented and weakened in character through the influence of nearby settlement and transport corridors. In general, the sensitivity of this landscape’s characteristics is considered to be moderate, though where the landform becomes more complex and the aesthetic factors accordingly more diverse, the sensitivity of the landscape is considered to increase to moderate-high.

Visual Sensitivity

This is generally a flat and open landscape with uninterrupted views of the adjacent chalk escarpment from the A30 and the local public rights of way. Views to the Fovant Badges provide visitor interest and link this landscape to the chalk escarpment. Intensive arable farming has resulted in substantial

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55 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
hedgerow removal and their replacement with post and wire fencing creates an open and expansive character. The overall visual sensitivity of this landscape is therefore considered to be moderate to high.

Key Landscape Changes

- Amalgamation and enlargement of arable fields and addition of new agricultural buildings in the past has resulted in increasing landscape scale;
- The loss and decline of field boundaries is apparent, especially along the A30. Some planned hedgerow restoration is evident;
- Litter accumulation and dumping in lay-bys along the A30 evoke a sense of neglect;
- Loss and inconsistent management of the woodland at the base of the scarp and replacement with coniferous blocks in the past has resulted in a sharp transition between the scarp and terrace;
- Growing intensity of farming practices, including the shift from spring sown to autumn sown crops, has resulted in a change in landscape character and decline in farmland birds;
- Past expansion of villages has resulted in encroachment of buildings from the adjacent Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Greensand Hills (LCA H3) onto the terrace.

Management Strategy and Objectives

Overall, management of this landscape should conserve the simple, flat, open character of the landscape and the important (undeveloped) physical and visual relationship between terrace and escarpment. Restoration of lost and/or declining features such as field boundaries and woodland will improve condition, quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve characteristic open views across the terrace towards the escarpment;
- Consider compiling local design guidance for farm buildings to help ensure new buildings reflect the sense of place;
- Restrict further residential development in this largely unsettled landscape;
- Seek to restore hedgerows and apply consistent management techniques;
- Appropriate roadside management (regular litter picking, monitoring of fly tipping) along the A30 will improve the appearance of lay-bys and verges;
- Thicken and replant woodland at the break of the scarp to enhance the transition between the scarp and terrace, and provide valuable nesting and feeding habitat for farmland bird species;
- Coniferous plantations interrupt the landscape. Further coniferous planting would intrude on the character of the deciduous woodland and on the visual relationship between scarp and terrace;
- Promote appropriate management of arable land including retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields to encourage wildlife, particularly farmland birds.
4.9 GREENSAND HILLS (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE H)

Key Characteristics

- Upper Greensand is exposed as a band between the older clays and younger chalk;
- The Greensand typically forms upstanding hills that have been eroded by tributaries of the major rivers into a series of rounded knolls and deep valleys;
- Hills support a large proportion of woodland, both deciduous and coniferous;
- Country houses and estates, set within landscaped parkland contribute to the scenic beauty of the area;
- Distinctive patterns of settlement include villages hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys;
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hill tops;
- Ancient sunken lanes wind their way through the hills;
- Small and irregular fields characterise areas of agricultural land use;
- Meadows and wet woodland are typical of the valley floors.

Summary of Visual Character

The transition from the clay lowlands to the elevated chalk beyond is marked by a series of greensand hills. These run along the north and south sides of the Vale of Wardour (Landscape Character Area I1) and along the north-western boundary of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB between Penselwood and Warminster. Although composed of Upper Greensand, tributaries of the major rivers have eroded the Greensand to expose underlying older deposits. These hills are characterised by tight valleys, sunken lanes and are typically covered in woodland. The patterns of settlement are also distinctive. Villages are hidden among these hills, focused on the springline at the junction of the Chalk and Greensand, tucked into the valleys. The hills have historically provided desirable locations for siting large houses and parklands as well as providing strategic sites for fortified settlements and buildings where they have commanding views over the adjacent lowlands. Views vary between enclosed and framed to open and panoramic.

Character Areas

H1. Longleat to Stourhead
H2. Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill
H1: LONGLEAT TO STOURHEAD GREENSAND HILLS

Location and Boundaries

The Longleat-Stourhead Hills are the west-facing edge of the band of Greensand that extends beyond the Kilmington Greensand Terrace (LCA G1) from Mere to Warminster (outside the District). Their boundary of the hills with the terrace landscape is clearly defined by a change in density of contours and amount of woodland. To the north-west is a gradual transition into the clay valley of the Frome that lies beyond the District boundary. Landscape of a similar character continues to the north of the District (within West Wiltshire District).

Key Characteristics

- A series of eroded Upper Greensand hills creating a sinuous escarpment containing some deep valleys;
- Fluvial erosion of the Frome and Stour tributaries has exposed older rocks;
- The hills are clothed in deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations;
- Neatly laid hedges, tree clumps, avenues and grazing animals associated with private estates contribute to the scenic beauty of the area;
- Fields are predominantly small and of an irregular form - indicative of early inclosure;
- Extensive landscaped parks surrounding large country houses at Longleat and Stourhead;
- A wide range of habitat types including wet woodland, unimproved chalk grassland and ancient woodland, with several designated nationally important wildlife sites;
- Pockets of dense development occur in the shelter of the deep valleys that cut through the Upper Greensand;
- Earthworks and ruins of hill forts and castles are strategically located, on the hill tops;
- Landscape parks and historic estates provide important recreation attractions;
- A peaceful landscape with great variety at the small scale, but with an overall unified character.

Summary of Visual Character

The Longleat-Stourhead Hills is a landscape with a steeply undulating landform- it is a landscape of secretive valleys and exposed hills where the sunken lanes high proportion of woodland cover contribute to an enclosed character. Picturesque villages lie sheltered by landform where mature oaks and stone walls provide a sense of history and permanence. Views vary between enclosed and framed, to the open and panoramic. Extensive woodland, forestry operations and designed parkland provide a unifying feature across the area and form a strong contrast to the open character of adjacent farmed landscapes. This area remains peaceful and rural despite the large number of visitors that are accommodated within its bounds.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- A series of earthwork enclosures and hillforts along the edge of the Greensand terrace indicate the strategic importance of the Greensand Hills. These hills were important because they formed the boundary between the downland landscape to the east and the clay vales to the west, each offering different economic resources.
- The present day wooded character of the area reflects the originally more extensive medieval Royal forest of Selwood Forest, forest law giving the Crown rights to exploit the land’s resources.

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56 Refer to Character Area 7B ‘Penselwood-Longleat Greensand Hills’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of H1 Longleat to Stourhead Greensand Hills landscape character area

Mature woodland provides a sense of enclosure
especially for hunting. The continuing strategic importance of the landscape is evident through the presence of a number of castles, such as Kenwalch’s Castle and Orchard Castle.

- The historic character of the present landscape is largely influenced by the large country estates and their landscaped parkland. Stourhead 18th century landscape garden, lake and woodland, 16ha, within larger estate of park, wood and farmland, at most extensive c.1200ha, in divided use and ownership grade I Registered Park and Garden.

**Field Patterns and Boundaries**

- Much of the woodland within this area comprises coniferous plantations, bounded by pastures along the foot of the Greensand escarpment. The dominant field pattern in the area is small and irregular and is indicative of early inclosures. These contrast with the straight-sided but still irregular fields at the edges of the woodland – a likely reflection of the 19th century or later rationalisation of earlier inclosed fields, and the influence of agricultural improvements associated with the large area of estate land. Individual fields are often divided by hedgebanks and hedgerows that are generally intact. Limestone walls are also strongly associated with the estates and villages.

**Historic Development of Settlement**

- Significant parts of the character area remain unsettled, reflecting both the gradient and the dominance of forestry. However, pockets of dense development occur along the minor lanes that access the hills. The historic houses, their immediate gardens and parkland surrounds, together with estate woodland and farmland contribute to the character and quality of the landscape. Their influence extends well beyond the strict confines of the estate. There are also a handful of hamlets, such as Gasper, often comprising little more than a row of houses. Typical building materials are red brick and limestone with clay tile roofs.

**Biodiversity**

This area supports significant ecological and nature conservation interest, including a wide range of habitat types, such as wet woodland, unimproved chalk grassland, neutral hay meadow and a small section of the River Avon System. However, ancient woodland is perhaps the most distinguishing feature and is still relatively widespread throughout the character area, despite much having been replanted with coniferous species. As well as being a landscape peppered with woodland blocks and shelterbelts, there is a coherent network of hedgerows delineating the fields. Together, these provide nesting opportunities for birds and have an important corridor function.

In total the area contains all or part of two nationally important wildlife sites, these being Bradley Woods (SSSI) and Heath Hill Farm (SSSI).

Bradley Woods (SSSI) is an extensive area of lowland alder woodland, with oak and hazel dominating on the drier ground. The site has largely been managed under a coppice regime, and supports a rich ground flora. Many plant species are present which indicate a long continuity of woodland cover, for example dog’s mercury, yellow archangel and ramsons, and several locally restricted plants such as marsh violet, and thinspiked wood sedge. However, the most notable feature of this woodland is its exceptional diversity of bryophytes and lichens, including several species with nationally restricted distribution.

Heath Hill Farm (SSSI) is an important example of unimproved neutral to calcareous hay meadow and pasture – representing a fine example of this rapidly diminishing habitat type.
EVALUATION

Current Condition

The condition of the landscape is perceived to be good. Overall the landscape possesses a high degree of intactness with good survival of historic earthwork features, early inclosure patterns and ancient broadleaved woodland. There are few areas of underused land and built features are in a good state of repair. The estates are well managed and this has an influence on the condition of the wider landscape. However, the replanting of native woodlands by blocks of conifers has eroded the ecological condition of some of the native woodlands.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

This Landscape Character Area has significant ecological and nature conservation interest, encompassing a wide range of habitat types including unimproved chalk grassland, neutral hay meadow, ancient and wet woodland and the river corridor itself. The area’s historic and cultural environment is also notably rich, with an abundance of earthworks and the ruins of hill forts and castles, strategically located on the hilltops. Landscape parks and historic estates, such as Stourhead provide important visitor attractions. Despite the visitor pressure and potential impacts on landscape character, the experiential qualities of the landscape are still intact with significant parts of the area being largely unsettled and conveying a strong sense of tranquillity and ruralness. Generally, the sensitivity of this character area is thus judged to be high.

Visual Sensitivity

In resemblance to the Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Greensand Hills, the range of views is highly variable and contrasting between enclosure in the deep valleys and openness or a sense of exposure on the hilltops. The most sensitive parts of this landscape are the elevated hills which are prominent in the local landscape and, despite their being clothed in woodland, most scales of land use change or development would give rise to visual intrusion. Overall visual sensitivity is considered to be high.

Key Landscape Changes

- The principle issues affecting the Longleat-Stourhead Hills in the past have related to forestry, the loss of ancient woodland and the landscape impacts of felling and replanting large areas;
- Large numbers of visitors have exerted pressures on the landscape, bringing traffic and requirement of services, facilities and accommodation;
- The presence of visitor traffic has resulted in road improvements including widening, signage, and lighting;
- There has been a gradual decline in traditional woodland management techniques as skills have been lost and forestry has concentrated on coniferous species;
- Invasion of exotic species from parkland landscapes into the native woodlands is evident in some areas;
- Wetland habitats on valley floors have been lost in the past.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management objective should be to conserve the woodland, parkland and the mosaic of pastures and meadows that characterise the landscape. Woodland conservation and management is key in this wooded landscape.

57 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
Specific management objectives are to:

- Reduce impact of forestry operations by encouraging sensitive forestry practice, for example mixing different species and felling small coupes;
- Consider restoring traditional management techniques, such as coppicing to encourage adverse age structure and a rich ground flora;
- Encourage woodland management of the remaining deciduous woodlands to check invasion of exotic species and encourage a healthy new generation of woodland trees;
- Encourage interest in, and marketing of, local wood products
- Resist urbanisation of the country lanes or excessive signage that detracts from the rural character of the area;
- Consider the use of signage that fits with the rural character of the landscape;
- Ensure that new development does not affect the character of hamlets and villages and that it does not impinge upon the setting of Stourhead and Longleat;
- Monitor the effects of incremental, small scale change in the built environment. Local authorities can minimise the impacts of incremental change by providing suitable design guidance and encouraging applicants to enter into discussions at an early stage in the preparation of their proposals;
- Conserve and protect the remnant semi-natural habitats including the wetland habitats on the valley floor and isolated areas of hay meadow. Opportunities to restore and extend these rare habitats should be considered;
- Encourage management of parkland and designed landscapes that are characteristic of the area. Consider targeting these for funding such as Heritage Lottery Grant funding.
**H2: DONHEAD, FOVANT AND FONTHILL GREENSAND HILLS**

**Location and Boundaries**

This Landscape Character Area is situated towards the centre of Salisbury District and falls within the Cranborne Chase and Wiltshire Downs AONB. Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Hills wrap around the Vale of Wardour (Landscape Character Area I1) enclosing it on all sides. To the south, the hills separate the rolling valley landscape of the Vale of Wardour from the flat landscape of the Fovant Greensand Terrace (LCA G2). To the north the hills separate the rolling lowland landscape of the Vale of Wardour from the West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Downland Landscape Character Area (D1).

**Key Characteristics**

- The Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Hills occur as exposures of Upper Greensand around the anticline of the Vale of Wardour (LCA I1);
- The Upper Greensand has been eroded into a series of rounded knolls by tributaries of the River Nadder, many of which have carved deep valleys (or coombes) into the Greensand;
- Steep slopes are clothed in woodland, both deciduous and coniferous irregular and indented outlines around many of the areas of woodland indicate early assart incursions and inclosure of fields;
- Villages are hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys, or combes, which cut through the Upper Greensand;
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hill tops overlooking the Vale of Wardour;
- Ancient sunken lanes, enclosed by high banks and shaded by trees, produce strongly framed views;
- Historic estates and parkland are typical, including Fonthill Abbey and Phillips House;
- Woodlands and meadows are important nature conservation habitats;
- A peaceful landscape with great variety at the small scale, but with an overall unified character.

**Summary of Visual Character**

The Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Hills is a landscape with a distinctive undulating landform. Its tight valleys, sunken lanes and high proportion of woodland cover all contribute to an enclosed landscape of intimate spaces. Stone villages contain picturesque cottages that lie nestled within the tight valleys, sheltered by landform and woodland. The strong silhouette of the Fovant and Chalke Escarpment (LCA E2) forms a skyline beyond the hills to the south. This is a landscape of contrasts, between the shaded sunken lanes and the open and exposed hill tops - providing a range of viewing experiences from strongly framed views down the enclosed sunken lanes to the panoramic views over the Vale of Wardour (LCA I1).

**Human Influences**

**Historic Environment**

- A series of earthwork enclosures and hillforts along the edge of the Greensand terrace indicate the strategic importance of the Greensand Hills. These hills were important because they formed the boundary between the downland landscape to the east and the clay vales to the west, each offering different economic resources. The hills also provided defensible sites as indicated by castles and forts;
- Large country estates such as Ditton Park, an early 19th century landscape park Grade II Registered Park and Garden, or Fonthill, a grade II* landscape park developed c.1740 onwards by

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58 Refer to Character Area 7A ‘Donhead-Fovant Hills’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of H2 Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Greensand Hills landscape character area

Steep slopes are clothed in woodland
Alderman William Beckford and later by his son William Beckford, with further development c.1850 are typical of the post-medieval ownership of the character area.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- Much of the woodland within this area comprises coniferous plantations, bounded by pastures along the foot of the Greensand escarpment. The dominant field pattern in the area is small and irregular and is indicative of early inclosures. These contrast with the straight-sided but still irregular fields at the edges of the woodland – a likely reflection of the 19th century or later rationalisation of earlier inclosed fields, and the influence of agricultural improvements associated with the large area of estate land. Individual fields are often divided by hedgebanks and hedgerows that are generally intact. Limestone walls are also strongly associated with the estates and villages.

Historic Development of Settlement

- This character area is surprisingly well settled. Along the south side of the Vale of Wardour (I1) a series of villages are hidden in the deep valleys, or coombes, which cut through the Upper Greensand. Ansty, Swallowcliffe and Fovant, for example, are almost triangular villages set at the heads of the valleys which separated the rounded greensand hills. The location of villages would have provided water together with access to the downs (reflected in their names e.g. Fovant Down and Swallowcliffe Down) and pastures of the Vale of Wardour to the north.

Biodiversity

In contrast with the open landscape associated with the widespread chalk downland, this character area represents a heavily wooded landscape. Much of this woodland, for example Compton Wood, is of ancient origin, while some such as that around Fonthill Abbey have been widely planted with coniferous species. Ancient origin replanted examples include Lodge Wood and Berry Wood copses and Hang and Little Ridge Woods. As well as being a landscape peppered with woodland blocks and shelterbelts, there is a coherent network of hedgerows delineating the fields. Together, these provide nesting opportunities for birds and have an important corridor function. Two woodlands within the character area have statutory nature conservation designation, namely Gutch Common (SSSI) and Hang Wood (SSSI). The composition of this woodland varies according to topography, but generally falls within two broad community types namely, wet ash and field maple woodland or acid oak hazel and ash woodland. The site has a history of traditional coppice management, and supports a rich associated ground flora, with species such as bluebell, dog’s mercury, and sweet woodruff the most conspicuous species. Gutch common comprises a mosaic of habitat types including wet and dry acid woodland, open bracken stands and a neutral meadow. This habitat diversity has resulted in the site supporting a wide range of plant species, together with a good range of woodland birds.

EVALUATION

Current Condition

The landscape possesses a high degree of intactness and integrity with good survival of landform and earthwork features, survival of the typical small scale, irregular fields, few areas of underused land and a good state of repair of built features. However, the replanting of native woodlands by blocks of conifers has eroded the ecological condition of some of the woodlands and many hedgerows have been heavily flailed or lost altogether. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be good.
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

This landscape has a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements with rounded knolls clothed in woodland and crowned by ancient fortifications, with villages and ancient sunken lanes hidden in the shelter of coombes. The aesthetic factors making up this landscape are thus particularly rich and diverse. Overall, Landscape Character Sensitivity is considered to be high.

Visual Sensitivity

Visual experiences within this landscape are highly variable and contrasting. Upstanding hills afford commanding views over adjacent lowlands, namely, the Vale of Wardour, a settled landscape with potentially a large number of visual receptors, and with which the Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Hills share inter-visibility. Conversely, tight valleys, sunken lanes and extensive woodland cover enclose and frame views giving rise to a strong sense of enclosure. Although views within this area sharply contrast between enclosed and open, and thus making this area difficult to assess in terms of general visibility, it is considered that the landscape’s inherent sensitivity to the cumulative impact of small-scale changes, together with the likelihood of visual intrusion, makes it highly sensitive.

Key Landscape Changes

- Some hedgerow field boundaries have been intensively flailed or lost altogether;
- Agricultural improvement in the past has resulted in rationalisation of an early field system of small, irregular fields into larger field units and decline of fen and neutral meadows on the valley floors;
- There has been a gradual decline in traditional woodland management techniques as skills have been lost and forestry has concentrated on coniferous species;
- Conifer coupes within deciduous woodland are visually intrusive, particularly where they occur on skylines. The presence of coniferous coupes means rate of change in the landscape is rapid during felling of large coupes;
- There is evidence of a decline in grazing with marginal pastures no longer actively grazed and being invaded by scrub;
- There are considerable pressures for new built development within the attractive villages as well as redevelopment of agricultural buildings to residential, amenity or industrial use creating broader economic activity but a change in landscape character.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management objective should be to conserve the rich mosaic of land uses and the contrast between the shaded, enclosed coombes and exposed hills. Woodland conservation and management is key in this wooded landscape.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Consider re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost;
- Encourage traditional management of hay meadows on the valley floors;
- Conserve the small scale pattern of irregular fields that are characteristic of the hills;
- Consider restoring traditional management techniques, such as coppicing to encourage a diverse age structure and a rich ground flora. Encourage interest in, and marketing of, local wood products;
- Consider removal of conifers where they are particularly visible, for example on skylines;

59 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
- Typical woodland types in this area include wet ash (Fraxinus excelsior) and field maple (Acer campestre) woodland or acid oak (Quercus robur), hazel (Corylus avellana) and ash woodland;
- Encourage sensitive forestry practices, for example mixing different species and felling small coupes;
- Encourage extension of semi-natural habitats such as fen meadow, unimproved neutral grassland, acid woodland, meadows and wet flushes;
- Avoid urbanisation of lanes through addition of signs, road markings and concrete kerbs or lamp posts;
- Further built development should respond to the villages' character, avoiding the use of standard 'suburban' designs and details - attention to details such as drives, curbs, footways, fencing and plot size will be critical.
4.9 CLAY VALE (LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE I)

Key Characteristics

- Vale occupying a geological anti-clinal between the chalk;
- Varied underlying geology with many different geological exposures;
- Pastoral landscape of small scale fields divided by lush hedgerows and scattered with woods and copses;
- Layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of medieval settlement, clearance and farming;
- Rivers and their tributaries meander through the vale;
- A sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding upland landscapes;
- A mixed agricultural landscape of lush improved pastures and arable production with water meadows on the valley floor;
- Wooded character with broad leaf and mixed woodland (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale;
- Villages dispersed over the floor of the vale.

Summary of Visual Character

Millions of years ago complex geomorphological processes created a series of east-west faults where the Chalk beds were vertically sheared from one another. These east-west anti-clinal axes allowed further erosion to cut through the Chalk and into the older Jurassic rocks that underlie it (Upper Greensand, Portland Stone and Kimmeridge Clay). The result of this process gave rise to wide open vales exhibiting a number of different geological exposures. These vales provide a contrast to the adjacent upland chalk downland and are characterised by a pastoral valley of small scale fields divided by lush hedgerows and scattered with woods and copses - both mixed and deciduous. The layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of medieval settlement, clearance and farming, and the post-medieval process of agricultural improvement and estate development.

Character Areas

11 Vale of Wardour
I1: VALE OF WARDOUR ROLLING CLAY VALE

Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Area occupies a central location within Salisbury District and is situated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The boundaries marking the northern and southern extents of this landscape are almost entirely defined by the character area Donhead, Fovant and Fonthill Greensand Hills (H2).

Key Characteristics

- Varied landform character - a deep and narrow valley to the east widening to form a wide and open vale in the west;
- The River Nadder and its tributary the Sem wind their way across the floodplain;
- A varied underlying geology with Clay, Gault, Portland and Purbeck Stone predominating;
- Soils varying from loamy to calcareous reflecting changes in underlying geology;
- A mixed agricultural landscape comprising improved pastures and arable cropping;
- Strong wooded character with broad leaf and mixed woodland (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale;
- A sense of enclosure provided by the surrounding landscape of the Fovant Greensand Hills (LCA H2);
- A settled landscape containing the relatively large settlement of Tisbury;
- Nationally important geological (fossil beds) and biological (bat roosting) SSSIs;
- Visible historic components displaying evidence for past settlement and agriculture.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Area encompasses a rolling clay valley defined by mix of pastures and arable crops – distinctly different from the chalk landscapes which dominate other parts of the District. Contained between the greensand hills to the north and south, it is a settled landscape of farms, hamlets and villages that sit within the folds of the valley bottom. The River Nadder and its tributary, the Sem, flow west to east seemingly contradicting the shape of the vale which appears to mature (and widen) in the opposite direction. The changing landform from deep valley to wide open vale provides a variety of viewing experiences but the repetition of key features across the landscape provides a unified character.

Human Influences

Historic Environment

- While there is some evidence of prehistoric settlement in the Nadder Valley, the present settlement pattern originates in the Saxon period, Tissebiri (Tisbury), being first mentioned in AD 759. There is a string of smaller villages, with long-established farmsteads at their nucleus, along the course of the river and more dispersed hamlets and farmsteads particularly where the valley widens to the west. Village earthworks, for instance at Ugford, and at the site of Wyck, southwest of Tisbury, indicate the variable extent to which some villages thrived or contracted during the medieval period;
- The vale landscape contrasts markedly with the chalk downland to the north, displaying little evidence now of any prehistoric settlement. The layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of medieval settlement, clearance and farming, the post-medieval process of agricultural improvement and estate development. The key visible historic components are the small irregular

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60 Refer to Character Area 8A ‘The Vale of Wardour’ within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).
Location and boundaries of I1 Vale of Wardour Rolling Clay Vale landscape character area

Strong wooded character with broad leaf and mixed woodland (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale
fields, suggesting early assart of woodland and inclosure, the water meadows in the lower reaches of the vale; the medieval settlement pattern and deserted medieval villages; and the large country houses with extensive estates, including some landscaped parkland;

- Fonthill Grade II* Registered Park and Garden Landscape park developed c.1740 onwards by Alderman William Beckford and later by his son William Beckford, with further development c.1850. Now in divided ownership and in varied use - mainly parkland, woodland, and agricultural, and with several separate residences. The present Fonthill House is not within the area covered by the erstwhile Beckford estate, nor has it any connection with that estate;
- Ditton Park Grade II Registered Park and Garden Early 19th century landscape park, 83ha;
- Survival of ancient grazed common land in the region of Semley.

Field Patterns and Boundaries

- Around Semley, the pattern of small irregular fields and narrow lanes interspersed with irregular remnants of woodland represent early clearance and the later systematic inclosure in the post-medieval period. During this period parcels of lands changed hands to form large estates such as Wardour, Chicksgrove and Pythouse, around which the larger more regular fields may reflect agricultural improvement on the estate farmlands.

Historic Development of Settlement

- This is quite a settled area, including Tisbury and a number of hamlets and villages such as Semley, Newtown and Upper and Lower Chicks Grove. Settlements are largely of a nucleated form. A dense network of lanes linked the many farms which are found within the valley;
- Settlements are generally located on the sheltered valley sides of the tributary rivers close to the water, for example Teffont, with many centred around a pond or village green such as Semley. Traditional stone cottages are common, with clay roof tiles.

Biodiversity

Although the Vale of Wardour is dominated by arable agriculture and pastoral land uses, the area has retained a reasonable woodland cover, including several sites which are considered to be of ancient origin.

The area has many sites, which are of high scientific interest for geological rather than biological reasons, mainly for their rich fossil beds. These important geological sites include, Dinton Quarry (SSSI), Dinton Railway Cutting (SSSI), Lady Down Quarry (SSSI), Teffont Evias Quarry / Lane Cutting (SSSI) and Upper Chicksgrove Quarry (SSSI).

Of the biologically important sites is a 12km stretch of the River Nadder, which falls under the River Avon System (SAC). This section of River is primarily calcareous in character but shows influences of the greensand through which it flows for some of its length. It is of significant ecological and nature conservation interest and supports a wide range of aquatic flora and fauna, including floating Ranunculus vegetation, and diverse assemblages of invertebrates, fish and birds.

A further distinguishing feature of this character area is the presence of caves, (created during past quarrying activity), and man-made follies, which support important numbers of roosting bats. Chilmark Quarries (SAC) for example, is home to the largest UK wintering roost of the rare Bechstein’s bat as well as significant numbers of other bat species. A further nationally important bat roosting site is located at Fonthill Grottoes (SSSI).
EVALUATION

Current Condition

This ancient vale has retained a substantial area of pasture, unlike the adjacent chalk downlands and chalk valleys. It exhibits a diversity of land cover and land uses and a reasonable woodland cover, including several sites which are considered to be of ancient origin. Ecological condition is therefore good. A number of hedgerows have been lost – some have been replaced by post and wire fencing. Boundaries are therefore varied and discontinuous – reducing the sense of intactness across the vale. There are also a number of overmature and stagheaded trees. The natural landform has been influenced by humans through previous and present day quarrying activities but many of the redundant quarries are now important scientific sites of biological and geological interest. Settlement and built character is in good condition. Overall, landscape condition may be described as moderate.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

Landscape Character Sensitivity

Woodlands are perceived as sensitive landscape elements within this Landscape Character Area, as they are typically associated with large country houses and historic parkland, and perform a valuable connective role in linking the Vale with the landscape of the Greensand Hills. An area of particular note is the manor house at Teffont Manor, where the enclosing elements of the valley landform, woodland and parkland trees combine to create a highly picturesque scene. The historic components of the landscape make an important contribution to the area’s strength of character. These inherent landscape sensitivities include the pattern of small to medium scale irregular fields, principally concentrated in the west of the area and signifying early assart of woodland and inclosure; the water meadows on the valley floor; the medieval settlement pattern; and the large country houses and landscaped parkland. The sensitivity of this landscape lies in its enclosing elements, which are of moderate habitat value. For example, the variety of woodlands including ancient woods plus scattered trees, and the water courses of high ecological value edged with alder and willow. Overall this area is judged to have moderate-high sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

Overall, a sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding landscape of the Fovant Greensand Hills, which are widely visible throughout the area. The undulating landform of the area accordingly contributes to the variable sense of enclosure, which is often underscored by land cover and land use practices. For example, the narrow, deep valley in the east is typically more wooded and pastoral in character, and gives rise to a semi-enclosed character. Farther west the valley widens to form a broad, open vale, which in places has a distinctly arable character and an inherent sense of openness, derivative of the absence of tree cover and a large-scale field pattern defined by mechanically trimmed hedgerows or post and wire fencing. Overall, the visual sensitivity of the character area is considered to be of moderate to high sensitivity.

Key Landscape Changes

- In the past many hedgerows have been lost either through field enlargement or through lack of management. Erection of post and wire fencing has created a discontinuous character to boundaries;
- Many scattered trees are becoming overmature and stagheaded;
- Previous quarrying activities has disturbed the landform, but created areas of biological and geological interest;

61 Refer to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB – Landscape Sensitivity Study (The Landscape Practice, May 2007) for more detailed sensitivity information relating to this Landscape Character Area.
There is evidence that traditional farm buildings are being converted into flats and apartments in the vale;
There has been a change of character along rural lanes due to road engineering – particularly concrete kerbing;
Traditional black and white wooden signposts at cross roads and junctions are falling into decline;
Pressures for new residential development are threatening the distinctiveness of settlement patterns.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall management objective for the Vale of Wardour should conserve the pastoral character of the vale and the diversity of habitats. The key features that unify the landscape must be conserved such as the consistent use of building materials and the presence of scattered trees. Restoration of many key features, such as the hedgerows and characteristic rural signage is also required to enhance the sense of intactness and continuity across the landscape.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Replant hedgerow sections where gappy and discontinuous and apply consistent cutting and management regimes;
- Plant a new generation of standard trees to replace overmature/dying stock;
- Traditional black and white signs should be replaced, in the same style, where weathered and falling into decline;
- Conserve the ancient pattern of small irregular fields and narrow lanes interspersed with irregular remnants of woodland that is unusual within the surrounding landscape;
- Employ appropriate restoration schemes for quarries when excavation ceases;
- Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of the lanes;
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements.