

4.0 THE SETTING OF AMESBURY, BULFORD AND DURRINGTON

4.1 Historical Development of the Settlements

Amesbury

Landscape and Location

- 4.1.1 Amesbury lies on a meander of the River Avon, nearly thirteen kilometres north of Salisbury, at a point where the main road from London to Exeter bridges the river. The chalk downlands of the Salisbury Plain surround the town, richly dispersed with the remains of earlier civilisations.

Historical Origins

- 4.1.2 Settlement near Amesbury first occurred in the Iron Age (c.500BC) at Vespasian's Camp, on the western bank of the river. Similar to Salisbury, the settlement transferred from the hilltop fort to the present lowland site of the town after 500AD. The area continued to be farmed during the Roman period, and by the 10th century Amesbury was a notable settlement. Amesbury Abbey was founded in 979, which was later replaced in 1177 by a priory.
- 4.1.3 Strategically located by the river Avon and a main road; Amesbury had become a small town with a market and tenements by the 13th century. However, the Priory ceased in 1540, and most of the buildings were demolished or unroofed. Except for the Abbey Church, no medieval buildings have survived.

18th and 19th Century Expansion

- 4.1.4 Amesbury largely depended on agriculture and much of the surrounding downland pasture had been ploughed by the early 18th century. Until the opening of the Amesbury union workhouse in 1837-8, the population had not substantially grown since medieval times²³.

²³ Crowley, D.A., Pugh, R.B., Stevenson, J.H. (1995) *A History of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington*.

The 20th Century

- 4.1.5 The neighbouring service establishments at Bulford Camp and Larkhill provide a strong focus for employment. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) airbase at Boscombe Down is another key influence, which has been in operation since 1938. Since the airfield opened in 1917 for training pilots, the establishment greatly expanded after the Second World War as a major focus for research and development, with many new buildings erected during the 1950s.
- 4.1.6 The first council houses in Amesbury were built in the 1920s and 1930s; more were built after 1945. To accommodate those employed in businesses in the town and the civilians working at the camps, Amesbury substantially grew after 1918, mainly eastwards. The railway reached Amesbury in 1902, with a station south of London Road. The line extended to Bulford and Bulford camp in 1906, and later served Boscombe Down airfield from 1918 to 1920. However, the railway later closed in 1963 and was lifted in 1965. The nucleus of the town and its medieval abbey church remain, although the ‘great thoroughfare’ that formed the High Street has been channelled into a modern by-pass.

Bulford

Landscape and Location

- 4.1.7 Similar to Amesbury, Bulford evolved from the gravel bed beside the Avon and Nine Mile rivers. Located 2.5 kilometres north of Amesbury, Bulford spills across the lower slopes of the chalk downlands, up to the foot of Beacon Hill, with chalk outcrops all over the parish.

Historical Origins

- 4.1.8 The area has been occupied since Neolithic times; and richly dispersed with the remains of earlier civilisations. There are numerous barrows of various types, including a cemetery of 70 or more bowl barrows on Beacon Hill²⁴. Farming, from the Middle Ages to the 20th century was the traditional sheep and corn economy. By the 16th century, two watermills serviced the town.

²⁴ Crowley, D.A., Pugh, R.B., Stevenson, J.H. (1995) *A History of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington*.

18th and 19th Century Expansion

- 4.1.9 Bulford's population remained almost constant until the turn of the 19th century. The town comprised three main lines of settlement along Church Street, High Street and Old Coach Road. A number of buildings have survived, including the church and a line of vernacular houses either side of the Nine Mile River. The houses, characteristically flint and red brick with thatched roofs, are mostly 18th century, and once lined Water Street.

The 20th Century

- 4.1.10 In the 20th century, Bulford Village rapidly expanded to the north, south and east. A large army camp was built east of the town, at the foot of Beacon Hill, and from c. 1898 much of the land was used for military training. Once a primary base for the Royal Artillery from 1905-77, the camp is now the headquarters of South West District command. Strongly characterised by a grid street pattern, extensive housing estates were built for soldiers and their families during the late 1960s, which soon met an eastward extension of the village.
- 4.1.11 In 1906, the Amesbury and Military Camp light railway was extended as a single track through Bulford village for passengers and goods. This was later closed in 1963. After the Second World War, some infilling occurred, including council housing, a new school and an estate of private housing. Bulford remains as an army-orientated community.

Durrington

Landscape and Location

- 4.1.12 Comparable to Amesbury and Bulford, Durrington lies on an eastwards meander of the River Avon, within chalk downlands of the Salisbury Plain.

Historical Origins

- 4.1.13 Durrington and its surroundings have been inhabited since Neolithic times. The Parish is rich in archaeological remains, containing sites of two large henge monuments, Durrington Walls and Woodhenge. The town evolved from two north-south aligned streets by the river, which represent the location of manors.

- 4.1.14 The sheep and corn economy developed by the 14th century and this pattern of farming continued well into the 19th century.

18th and 19th Century Expansion

- 4.1.15 The settlement remained a prosperous and fairly popular farming community, however apart from the church, there is little visible evidence before the 17th century. By 1773 settlement had expanded eastwards along Church Street and a new route to Milston over the Avon was built in the late 18th century or early 19th century. This remains as a footpath today. Durrington Manor was later built in 1800.

The 20th Century

- 4.1.16 From 1899, part of Salisbury Plain to the north west of the village was used for artillery practice and a camp was set up on Durrington Down. By the beginning of the First World War there were three tented camps known as Durrington, Larkhill, and Fargo Camps; which were later replaced by permanent brick buildings. The military expansion caused a decline in all types of farming as the army occupied most of the land, however, the rapid rise in population brought about the establishment of many shops and business. After the Second World War the town expanded between Netheravon Road and the river Avon, including large council estates and two new schools. Durrington remains as an army-orientated community.

4.2 Environmental Policy Designations

- 4.2.1 The landscape setting of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington is rich in wildlife and natural features, with many sites of national or international importance. Environmental designations cover a range of habitats with many different reasons for designation; their implications are shown in **Figure 4.1** and discussed in Section 4.8.
- 4.2.2 Two substantial areas of land to the northeast and northwest of the settlements are wholly covered by statutory designations, including Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Forming part of the Salisbury Plain, these areas are rich in ecological value and offer a range of habitats for a range of wildlife species; especially birds.

4.2.3 There are a range of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites within the area, including species-rich chalk grassland habitat, unimproved wet grassland and water meadows; which reflect the region's diverse landscape and underlying geology. The river Avon is the principal river system that winds through the area. Its floodplains are a particular feature and considered to be of outstanding landscape and ecological importance, particularly where remnants of unimproved water meadows still exist. Furthermore, its grasslands are renowned for supporting populations of breeding waders and wintering wildfowl. The Avon river system is recognised as being of importance to nature conservation, reflected in its numerous designations including as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and as a Special Area of Conservation²⁵, a European designation for habitats of rare or endangered species.

4.2.4 Other important wildlife habitats include ancient and semi-natural woodland.

4.3 Cultural and Access Policy Designations

4.3.1 **Figure 4.1** illustrates cultural and access designations within the Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington area.

4.3.2 The majority of land to the west of Amesbury is wholly covered by a locally defined and recognised landscape planning designation (Special Landscape Area) which ensures that only developments with particular regard for the high quality of the landscape will be considered in these areas. Similarly, the Special Landscape Area planning designation, wholly covers a large belt of land that wraps around Bulford Camp from the north of Durrington to the south of Boscombe Down.

4.3.3 Furthermore, a locally defined and recognised Conservation Area wholly covers three areas of distinctive townscape/landscape incorporating the historic cores of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington. This planning designation ensures that any new development assimilated within these areas will not be of detriment to the historic interest, visual quality and inherent character of the townscape and landscape²⁶.

4.3.4 The area is profoundly rich in historical and archaeological features, including numerous barrows, hillforts, field systems and water meadows. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are dispersed throughout the area and represent archaeological sites from Prehistory onwards.

²⁵ Salisbury District Council (2003) *Salisbury District Council Local Plan*.

²⁶ Salisbury District Council (2003) *Salisbury District Council Local Plan*.

The Neolithic monuments at Stonehenge form a particularly important and prominent historic site, east of Amesbury. The settlements are within an Area of Special Archaeological Interest, within which known or potential sites of archaeological interest are protected through Local Plan policy.

- 4.3.5 There is one large historic park and garden in the area, Amesbury Park, immediately west of Amesbury. Nestled in a westward bend of the river Avon and enclosed by semi-natural woodland, the park includes historic Amesbury Abby and grounds.
- 4.3.6 A network of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways and byways) traverse the setting of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington, including routes following ancient trackways, alongside river valleys, and across chalk downland; with a small number of links between the settlements. A large proportion of the high chalk plain north of Bulford, Durrington and Larkill has restricted public access, due to its active use for military training by the MOD. Although numerous public rights of way traverse this area, use of the land is dominated by the MOD and includes ‘danger areas’ and ‘managed access’ areas.

4.4 Topography and Geology

- 4.4.1 **Figure 4.2** illustrates the topography of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington, and the surrounding landscape.
- 4.4.2 The varied topography in the area closely reflects the underlying geology, which consists of extensive rolling, chalk downland incised by simple network of narrow chalk river valley (refer to the Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment, carried out by CBA in unity with this study). **Figure 4.2** clearly illustrates the settlements within a river valley setting, surrounded by higher land to the east and west. The lowest point, where the River Avon leaves Amesbury, is a little below 70 metres above sea level. There are some steep slopes on either side of the river Avon, including a prominent ridge of higher land between Amesbury and Bulford, reaching 116 metres. Similarly, a ridge of higher land stretches from a high point of 118 metres between Stonehenge and Amesbury. Furthermore, the chalk escarpment east of Bulford Camp is a profound topographic feature that rises to form an upstanding plateau, reaching levels over 200 metres.
- 4.4.3 Although the location and pattern of each settlement’s historic core strongly identifies with the River Avon, contrasts in landform are somewhat masked the nature and size of 20th and

21st century developments within the area, forming substantial urban extensions on areas of higher land.

4.5 Townscape Character

4.5.1 The historical cores of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington have inherently responded to their river setting.

4.5.2 Substantial development during the 20th century associated with the arrival of the military has resulted in an extensive and fairly insensitive urban grain structure, with reflective townscape character types and distinct character areas.

4.5.3 The alignment of the principal approach roads into and around the settlements has also been influential in determining the distinctiveness of and boundaries to each of the townscape character types.

4.5.4 **Figure 4.3** illustrates the results of the townscape character assessment, which are described below.

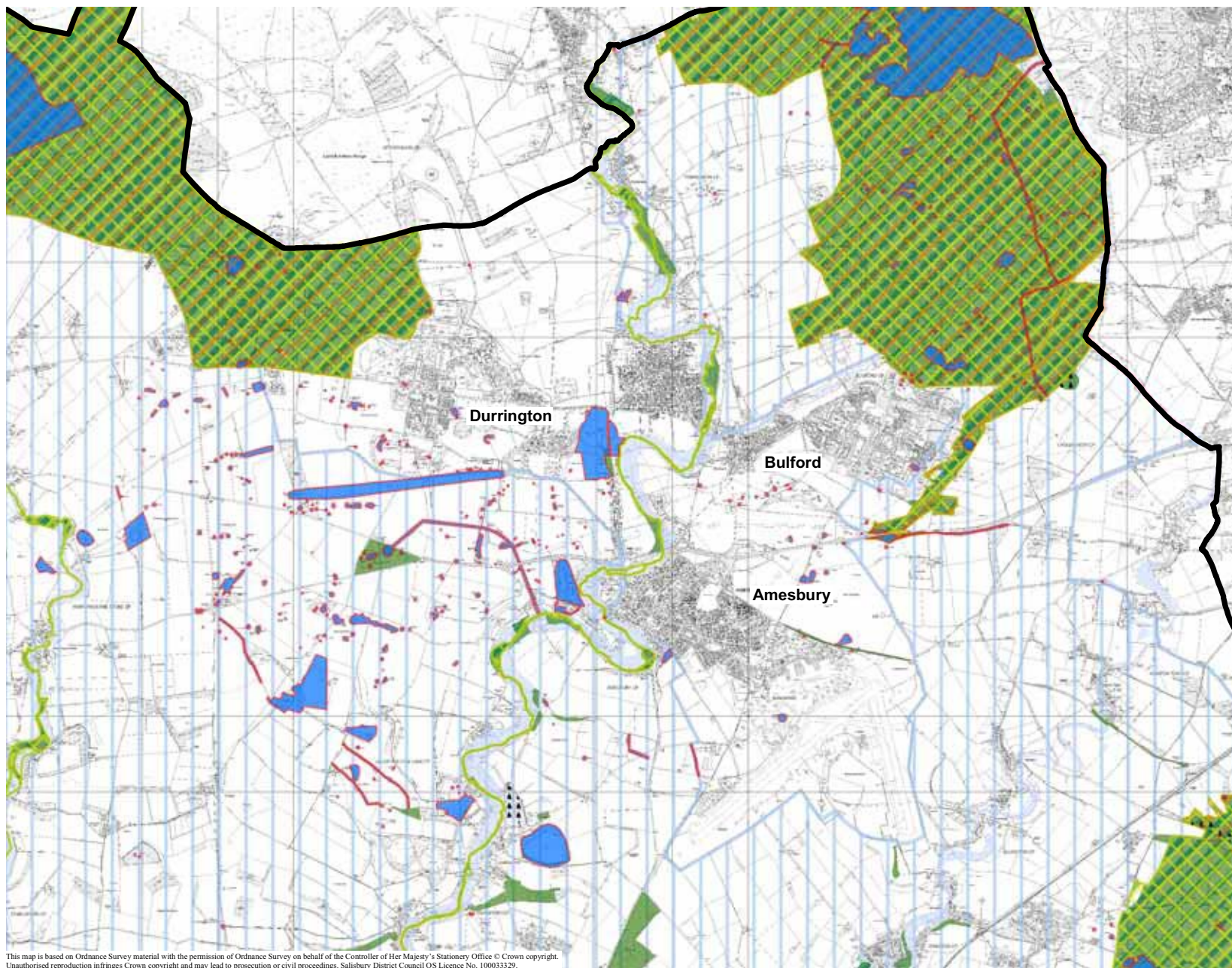
Historic Core

4.5.5 Historic cores of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington are defined as coherent pre-1800 settlement cores that strongly relate to a river valley setting. The historic cores sit within designated Conservation Areas and include a mixture of architectural styles and materials.

4.5.6 The urban grain structure within **Amesbury's** historic core comprises a largely intact Medieval street pattern which has evolved from the town's market place at the crossroads of High Street and Market Street (now Salisbury Street).

4.5.7 The urban grain structure within **Bulford's** historic core evolved from the local church beside the Avon and Nine Mile Rivers, following three main lines of settlement along Church Street, High Street and Old Coach Road. Other early settlement occurred either side of the Nine Mile River, along Water Street.


4.5.8 The urban form within **Durrington's** historic core evolved from two north-south aligned streets by the river Avon, which represent the location of manors. These include Bulford Road (East-end) and High Street (West end). Settlement further developed between these streets along Church Street, including the local church.



- KEY**
-  Special Areas of Conservation
 -  Special Protection Areas
 -  SSSI
 -  Ancient Woodland
 -  County Wildlife Sites
 -  Conservation Areas
 -  Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 -  Registered Historic Parks and Gardens
 -  Special Landscape Areas
 -  Flood Plain
 -  Salisbury District Boundary

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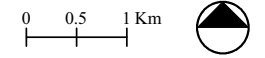
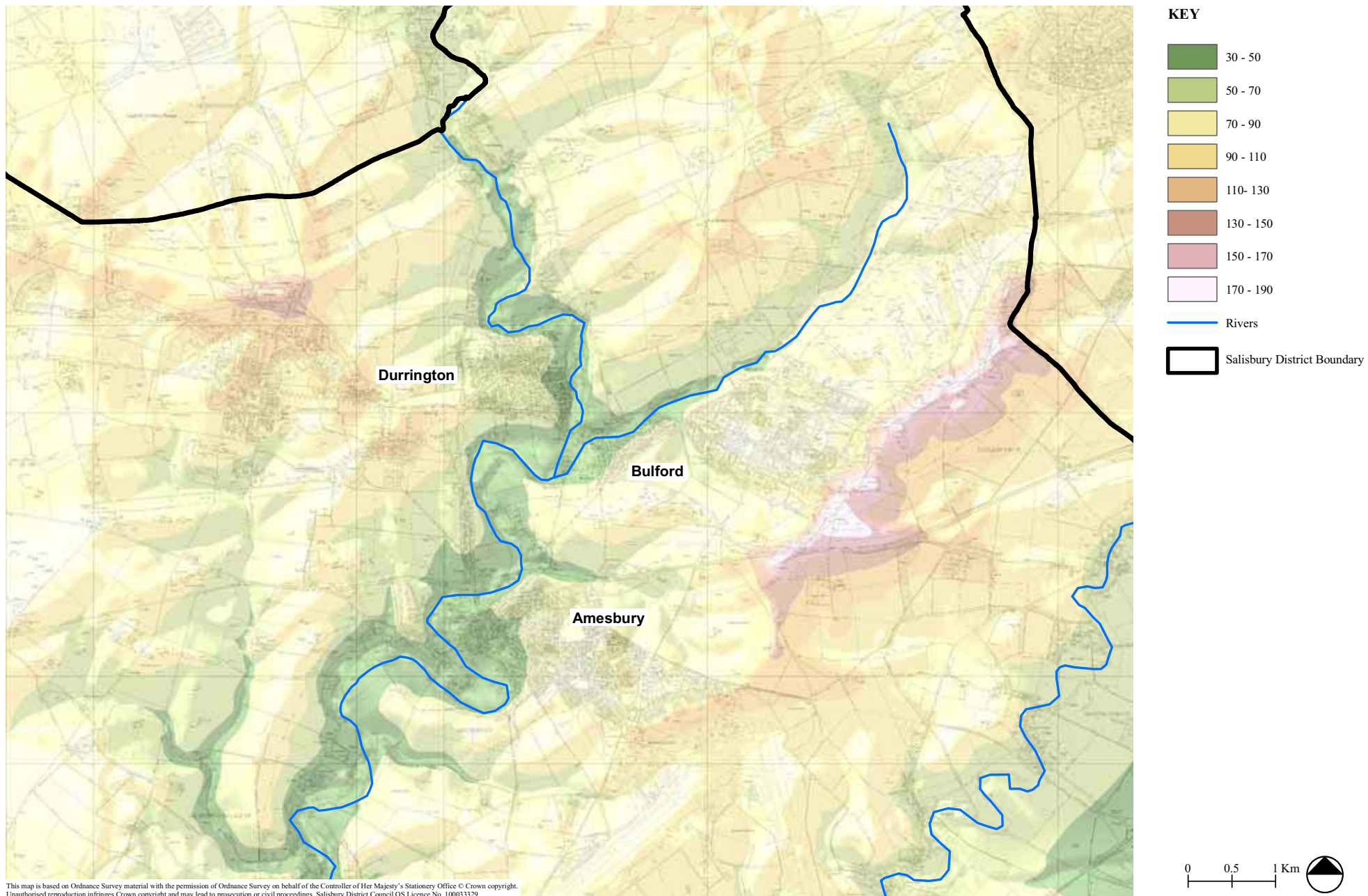


FIGURE 4.1
POLICY DESIGNATIONS



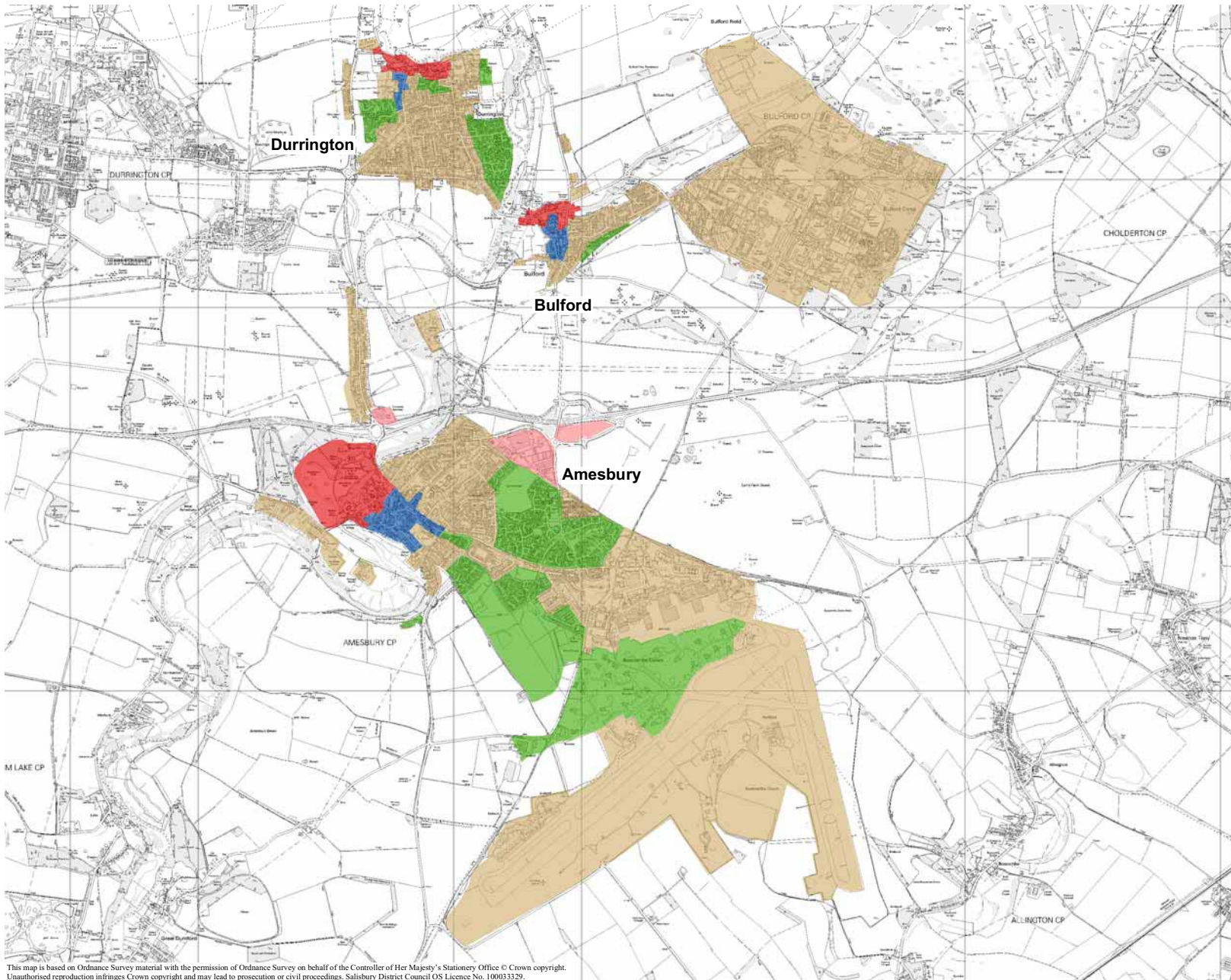
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FIGURE 4.2
TOPOGRAPHY



KEY

- Historic Core
- Victorian Expansion (including terraced housing)
- Commercial / Industrial / Service Development
- Pre and Post-War Development (including military and suburban housing)
- Late 20th Century and Recent / New Residential Development

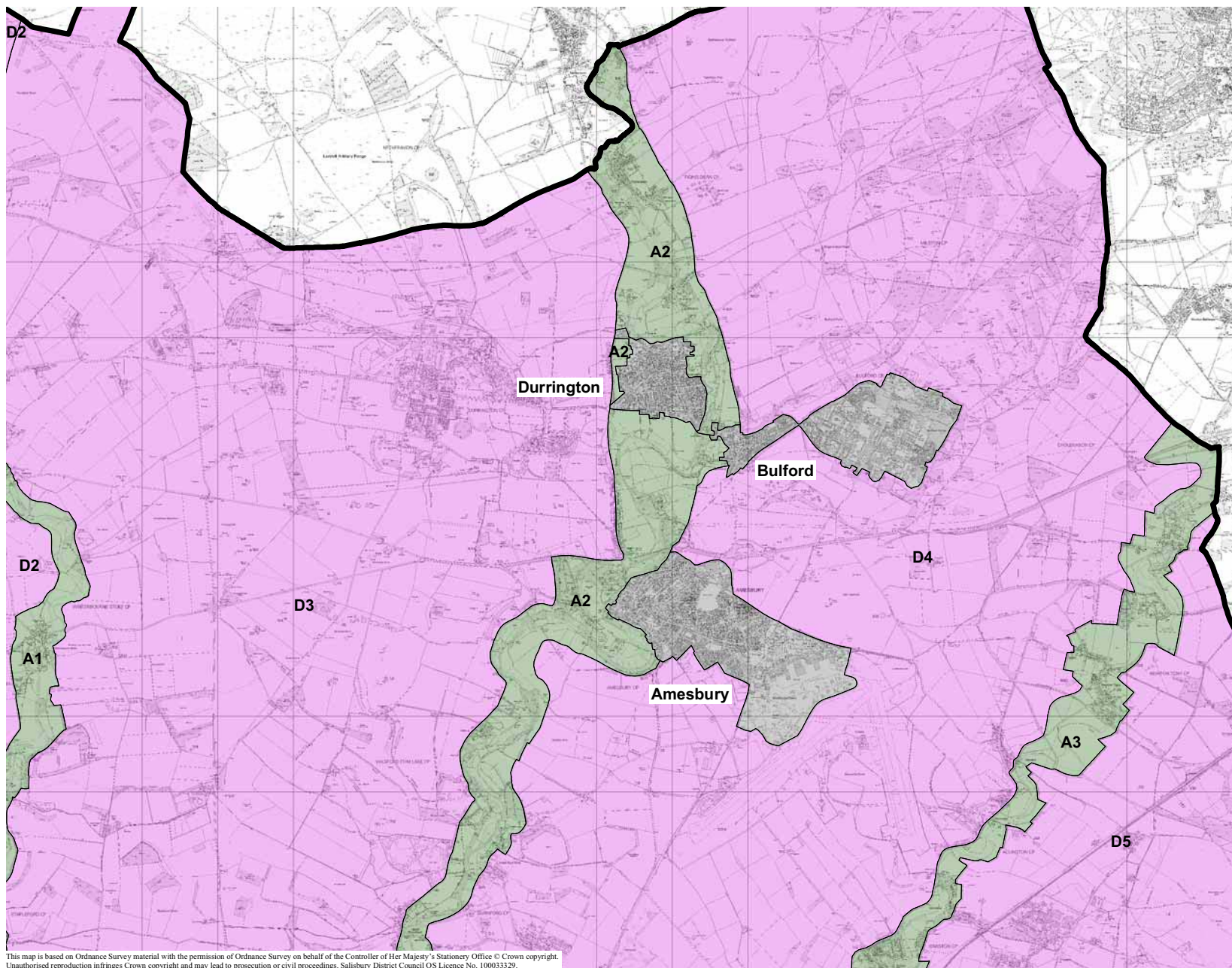
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FIGURE 4.3
TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER



KEY

- A Narrow Chalk River Valley**
 - A1 Till Narrow Chalk River Valley
 - A2 Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley
 - A3 Bourne Narrow Chalk River Valley
- D Chalk Downland**
 - D2 Tilshead Chalk Downland
 - D3 Larkhill Chalk Downland
 - D4 Boscombe Down Chalk Downland
 - D5 Porton Down Chalk Downland
- Salisbury District Boundary**

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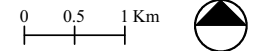
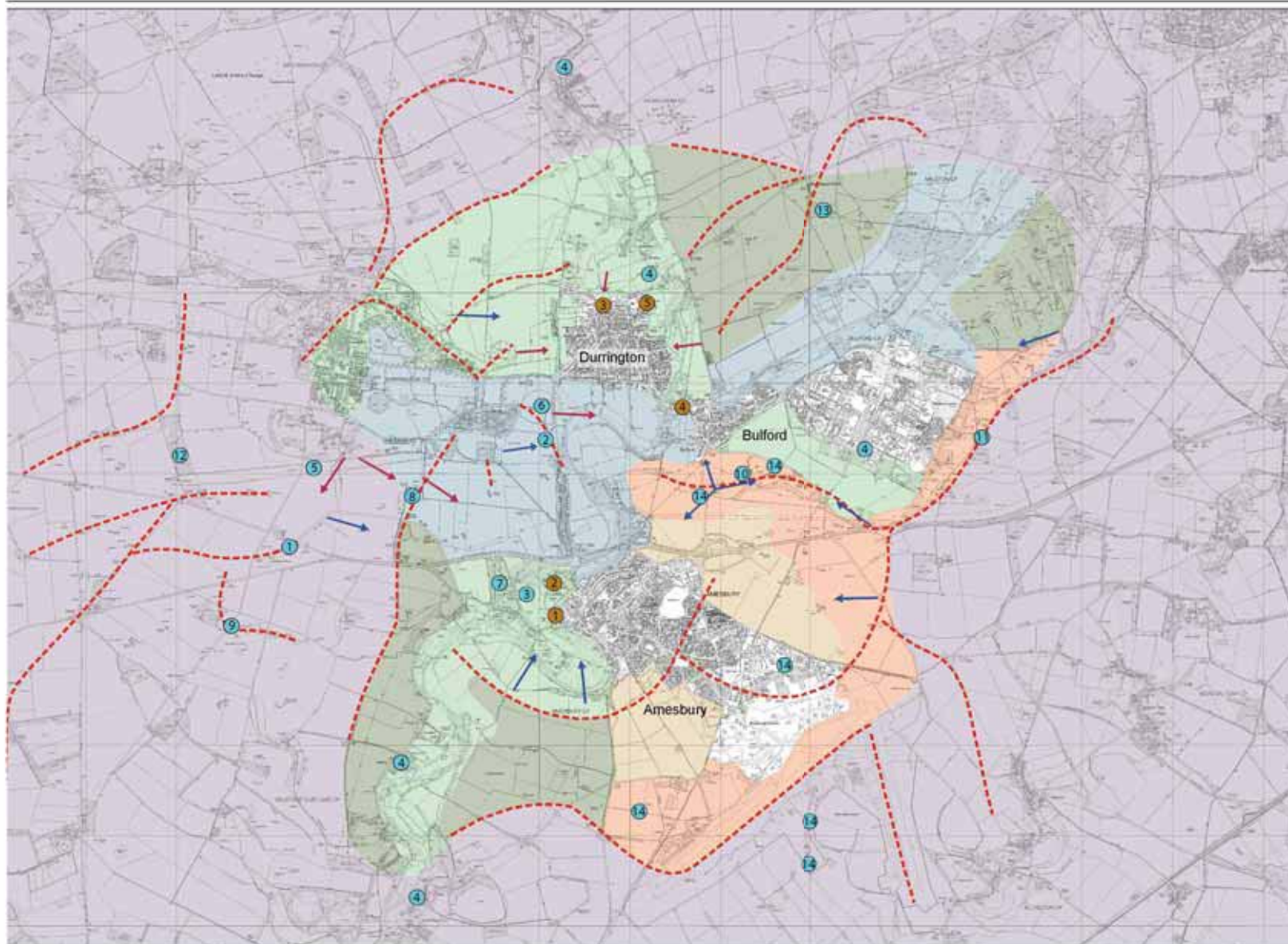


FIGURE 4.4
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



KEY

- Key elevated panoramic view to Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- Key low-level view to Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- Key Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington landmark
- Distinctive / Memorable features in the setting of Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- Ridgelines

TOWNSCAPE / COUNTRYSIDE INTERFACE

elevation, foreground character and built edge character as seen in immediate views from settlement setting

- Level views, countryside or river valley foreground, generally soft settlement edge
- Elevated views, countryside or river valley foreground, generally soft settlement edge
- Level views, little / no foreground, generally harsh, abrupt settlement edge
- Elevated views, little / no foreground, generally harsh, abrupt settlement edge
- Level views, mixed foreground, mixed settlement edge
- Rural setting with necklace villages (including springline villages)

Key Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington landmarks:

1. Amesbury St. Mary & St. Melore's Church
2. Amesbury Abbey
3. Durrington All Saints Church
4. Bulford St. Leonards Church
5. Avon Valley College

Distinctive / Memorable features in the setting of Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington:

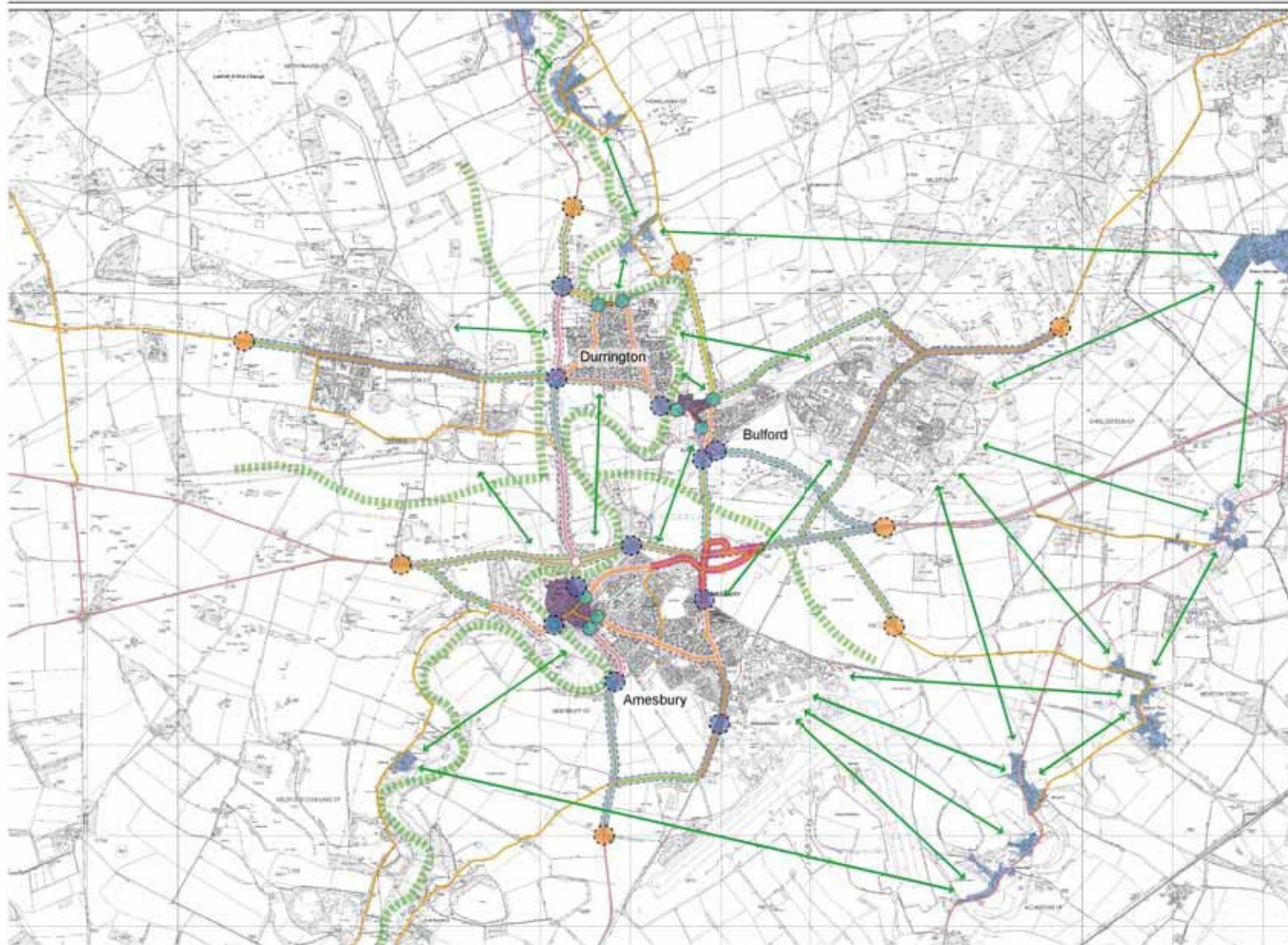
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|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Stonehenge | 9. Normanton Downs Barrows |
| 2. Woodhenge | 10. Ridgeline tumuli |
| 3. Amesbury Park | 11. Beacon Hill ridge |
| 4. Village Churches | 12. Fargo Plantation |
| 5. The Cursus | 13. Dumbell Copse |
| 6. Durrington Walls | 14. Radio station masts |
| 7. Vespasian's Camp | |
| 8. King Barrows | |

Not to Scale



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KEY

- First view of Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- Urban Gateway
- Gateway to distinctive Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- Approaches between first view and distinctive Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- A Road
- Secondary Road

CHARACTER OF APPROACHES

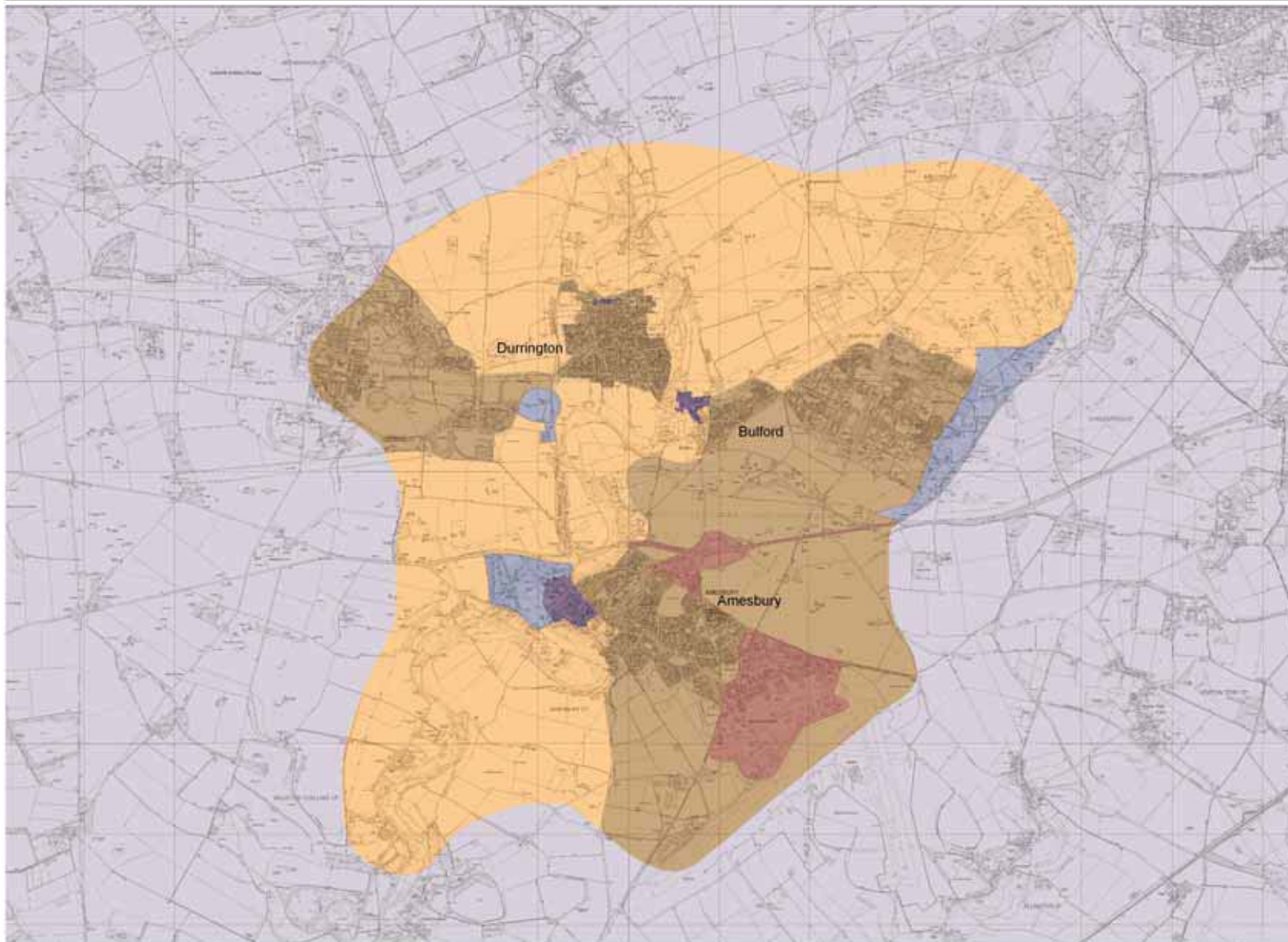
- Green / Treed / River valley
- Suburban
- Commercial
- Rural
- Military

SELECTED FEATURES ON APPROACHES

- Green finger
- Distinctive Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington
- Necklace villages (including springline villages)
- Open countryside separating necklace villages and these villages and Amesbury / Bulford / Durrington

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FIGURE 4.6
TOWNSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE
ANALYSIS



KEY

- Visually Cohesive Historic Core**
 This is the compact pre-1800 settlement core. Elements such as historic street pattern, building type, scale, architectural style, detailing and materials all generate a strong sense of story for each settlement.

- Distinctive Townscape / Landscape**
 These are areas defined as specifically recognisable and distinctive to the settlements. They include townscape and landscape components such as quintessential views, the interaction of buildings forming spaces or the setting to local events, landform, setting and backdrops to the settlement, areas of rich biodiversity, historic approach routes and landmarks of distinctive character. These areas, frequently contiguous with the historic cores, often borrow from or bestow character to them.

- Supportive Townscape / Landscape**
 These are areas of townscape / landscape which support the character of the historic cores and areas distinctive to the settlements. They provide the backdrop and ambience, and bolster the sense of place of the towns and their approaches.

- Connective Townscape / Landscape**
 These are areas of townscape / landscape which are an integral part of the settlements and their environs, but lack individual distinction, or do not play a significant contribution to the setting of the settlements. This classification does not render these areas unimportant, or lacking in their own identity. Rather, they are often areas divorced from or weakly attached to their landscape setting, or from landmarks within the landscape or historic cores. The use of mass-produced building materials, standard suburban layouts, styles and details are also contributing factors in the lack of local identity.

- Weak Townscape / Landscape**
 These are areas or elements that detract from the distinctive and special character of the settlements and their setting. These may include routes, edges, built elements or districts, or degraded landscapes that contribute to an area of weak townscape / landscape.

- Outer Rural Areas**
 These are areas of landscape from which distinctive views of the settlements are scarce or absent. The function of this landscape is in providing a backdrop to views of the settlements, and in providing a setting for approaches to connective, supportive and distinctive areas of townscape and landscape.

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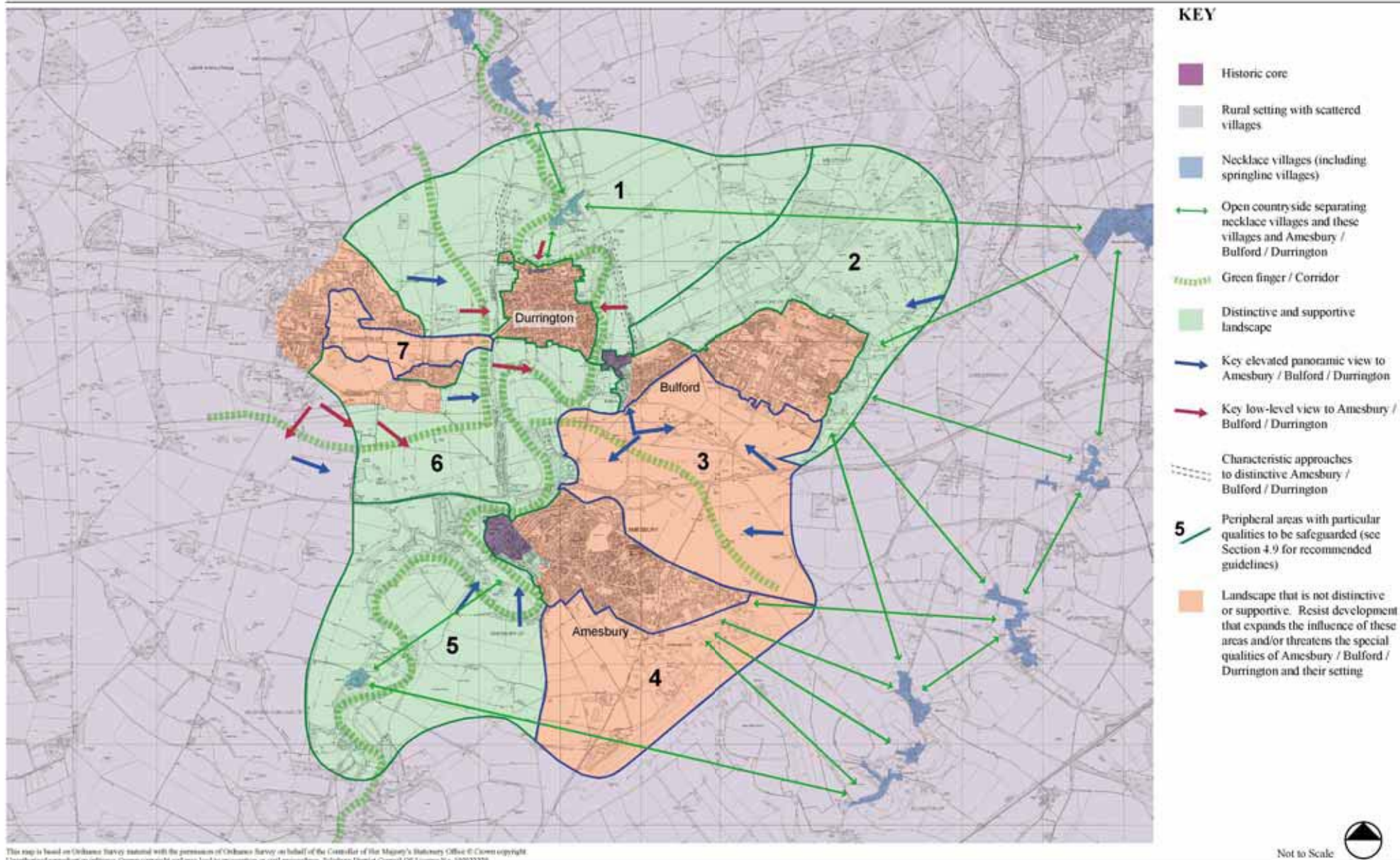
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FIGURE 4.7
TOWNSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE
ROLE AND FUNCTION



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Not to Scale 

FIGURE 4.8
SPECIAL QUALITIES TO BE SAFEGUARDED