

2. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

THE NATIONAL CHARACTER CONTEXT

The County-wide assessment has been prepared within the framework of the Countryside Agency and English Nature's Countryside Character Initiative as shown on the *Character of England Map* (see **Figure 3**) and it also considers the context provided by the Agency's *National Landscape Typology* (see **Figure 2**). There are also a number of existing landscape character assessments of areas within Wiltshire and bordering the county. This study has reviewed these studies alongside a baseline assessment of the landscape of Wiltshire in order to produce an up to date, comprehensive and integrated assessment of the county's landscape.

The diverse landscape of Wiltshire is represented at the national level by eleven Countryside Character Areas. The county-wide classification nests within this framework. The areas are:

I07: Cotswolds

I08: Upper Thames Clay Vales

I09: Midvale Ridge

I16: Berkshire and Marlborough Downs

I17: Avon Vales

I29: Thames Basin Heaths

I30: Hampshire Downs

I31: New Forest

I32: Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs

I33: Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour

I34: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase

COUNTY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

Three of the four local authorities within Wiltshire have produced landscape character assessments and these are shown on **Figures 4 and 5**. A small section to the south east has been covered by an assessment of the New Forest and this is also included on **Figure 4**.

There are also existing assessments for the three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which fall partly within Wiltshire; the Cotswolds, the North Wessex Downs and Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs. These are shown on **Figure 6**.

An assessment has been made of the Salisbury Plain Training Area for Defence Estates (see **Figure 7**).

Finally the assessments for surrounding counties are shown on **Figure 8**.

A scoping study of the assessments of parts of Wiltshire showed that although 80% of Wiltshire was covered by existing landscape character assessments significant further work was required to produce a consistent over-arching county wide study:

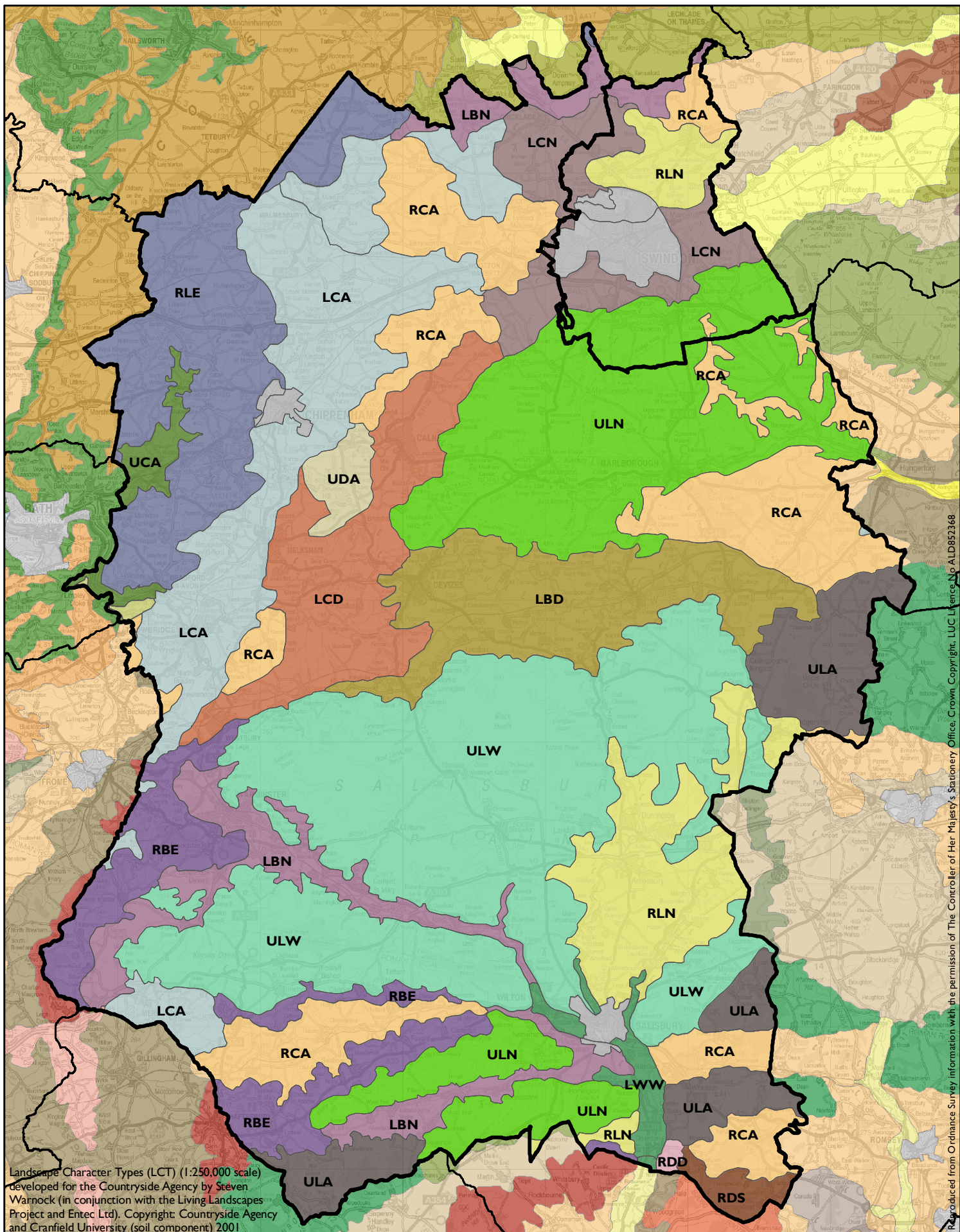
- Most of the studies focused at character area level and are at 1:25,000 scale.
- There were discrepancies in determining the boundaries.
- Some character area/types were so small in scale that they were not likely to be appropriate for inclusion as separate units in a county-wide study.
- There were varying levels of detail in descriptions.
- Evaluations varied widely in scope and generally did not detail strength of character, condition, and/or sensitivity, or, in half the assessments, forces for change.

THE COUNTY-WIDE ASSESSMENT

Following this scoping exercise the draft assessment was arrived at through mapping all the areas and types at 1:50,000 scale and using these along with the characteristics and other information in the existing assessments, the national landscape character framework, the neighbouring district and county level assessments and the baseline information such as geology, topography, and hydrography to group areas and types together thus forming the new classification. For the purposes of this county-wide assessment emphasis has been placed upon the definition and subdivision of the landscape at a scale of 1:50,000 and at the Landscape Type scale.

A field survey was undertaken to appraise the draft characterisation in order to confirm the draft boundaries, confirm fit with new classification, confirm descriptions and gather evaluation data. From this fieldwork, the study of existing assessments and of baseline data the final classification, descriptions and evaluation were arrived at.

A summary of the relationship between the landscape types and character areas determined by this study and those of existing assessments covering areas within the county is given in **Appendix 2**.



WILTSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Figure 2:
National Landscape Typology Key

Legend

- Wiltshire and Swindon
- Other county boundary
- Urban areas

Physiography (1st letter)

- L – Lowlands
- R – Intermediate
- U – Low Hills

Landcover (2nd letter)

- B – Other light land
- C – Clayland
- D – Heath & Moorland
- L – Chalk & Limestone
- W – Wetland

Cultural Pattern (3rd letter)

- A – Wooded – Ancient woods
- D – Dispersed unwooded
- E – Wooded – estate land
- N – Nucleated unwooded
- O – Unsettled/open land
- W – Wetland/waste unwooded

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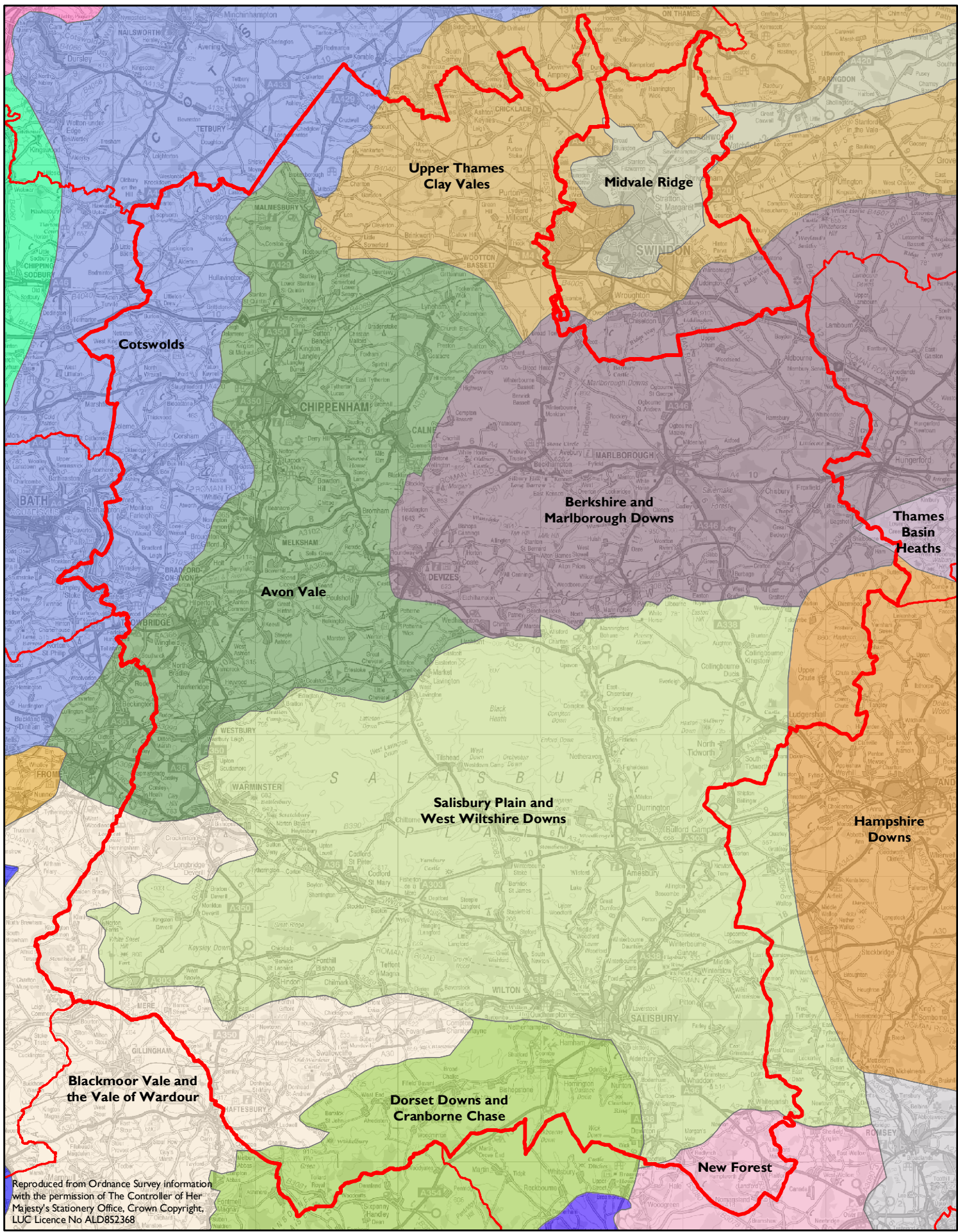
London, NW1 1JD

Ph: 020 7383 5784

Fax: 020 7383 4798

www.landuse.co.uk





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WILTSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Figure 3: Countryside Character Areas identified by the Character of England Map

- Key**
- Wiltshire and Swindon
 - Other county boundary
 - Character Area boundary (shaded and labelled)

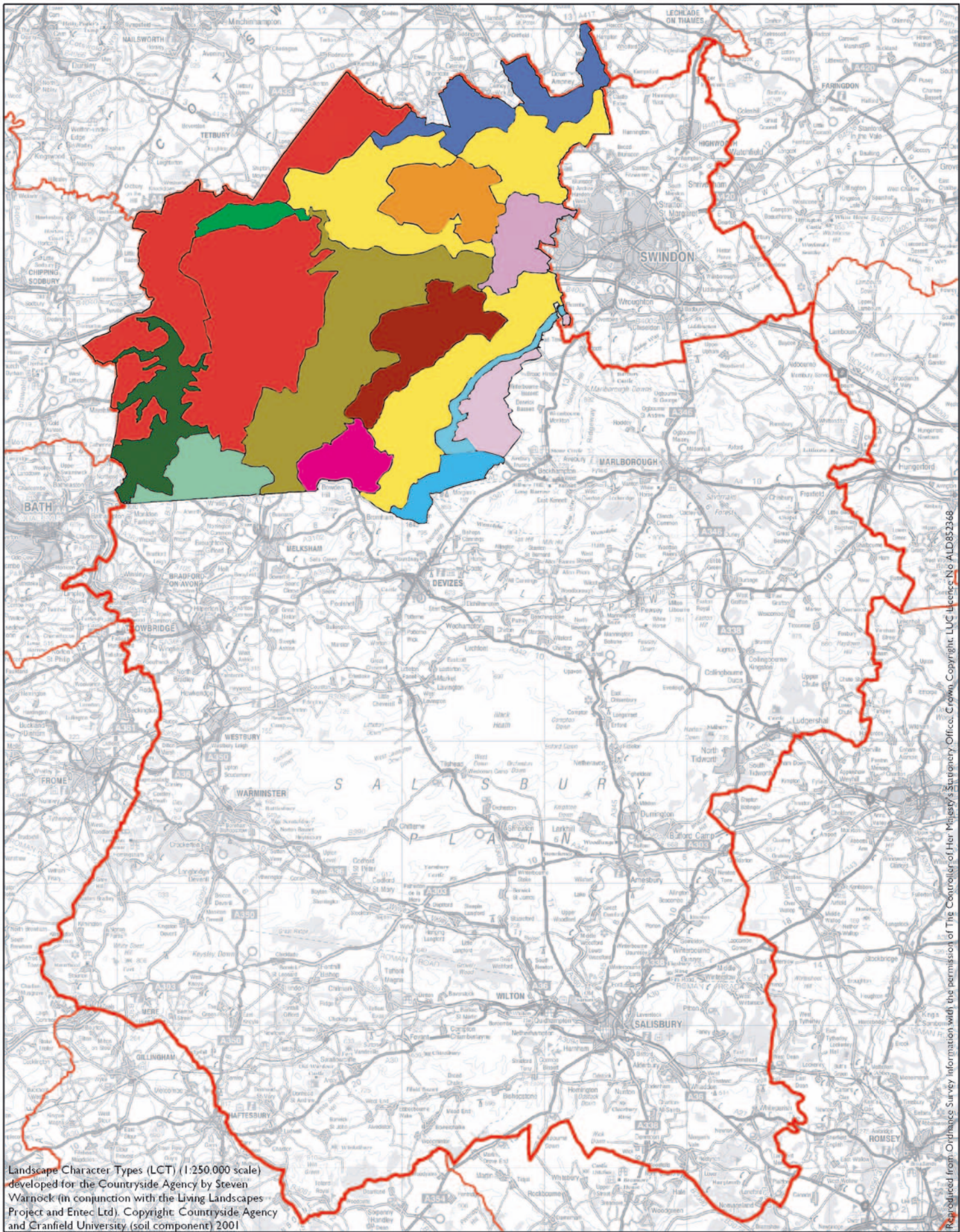
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43 Chalton Street
London, NW1 1JD
Ph: 020 7383 5784
Fax: 020 7383 4798
www.landuse.co.uk





Landscape Character Types (LCT) (1:250,000 scale) developed for the Countryside Agency by Steven Watcock (in conjunction with the Living Landscapes Project and Entec Ltd). Copyright: Countryside Agency and Cranfield University (soil component) 2001

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Figure 5:
North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

Key
 Wiltshire and Swindon
 Other county boundary

- | | |
|---|--|
| Chalk Plateau Farmland | Wooded Parkland Hill |
| Urban Fringe Scarp | Settled Farmland Valley |
| Lowland Clay Woodland | Wooded Lowland Valley |
| Lowland Clay Farmland | Chalk Scarp Farmland |
| Rolling Settled Lowland | Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland |
| Alluvium River Terrace Farmland | Settled Hill Farmland |
| Rolling Clay Farmland | Lowland River Farmland |

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 London, NW1 1JD
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 Fax: 020 7383 4798
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