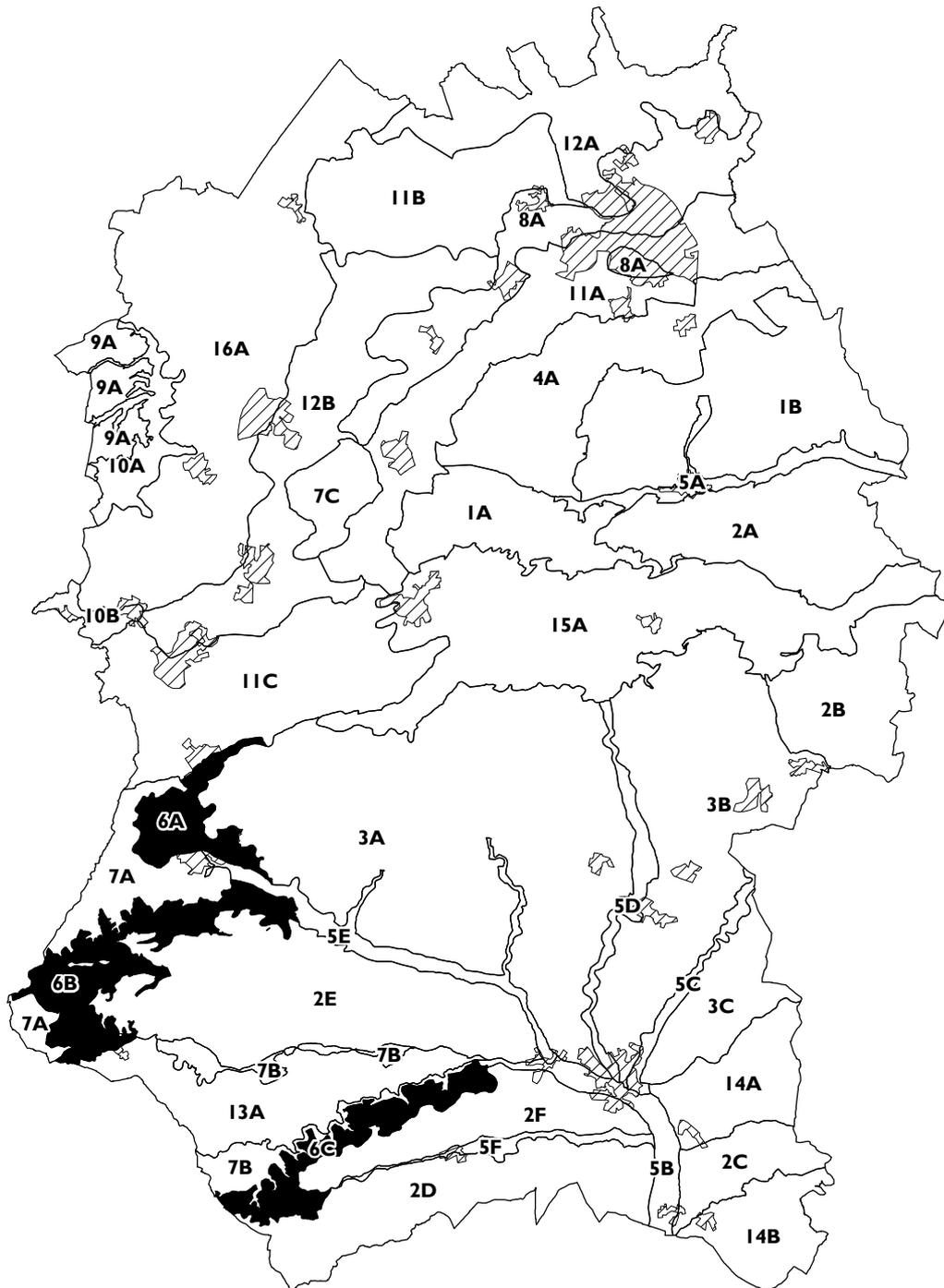


LANDSCAPE TYPE 6: GREENSAND TERRACE



6: GREENSAND TERRACE



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- 6A Warminster Terrace
- 6B Kilmington Terrace
- 6C Fovant Terrace
-  Urban Area

TYPE 6: GREENSAND TERRACE

DESCRIPTION

Location and boundaries

The *Greensand Terrace* Landscape Type encompasses three character areas 6A: *Warminster Terrace*, 6B: *Kilminster Terrace* and 6C: *Fovant Terrace* which are sited at the south east of the county and form level terraces lying between the greensand hills and chalk escarpments. These distinctive terraces form flat platforms between the undulating *Wooded Greensand Hills* and the dramatic scarps of the *Wooded Downland* with boundaries following contours at the break of the slopes. The *Greensand Terrace* Landscape Type falls largely within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Key Characteristics

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and hills rise.
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary enclosure.
- Large geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent *Wooded 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 planted as game coverts.
- Sparse settlement of scattered farmsteads and a few villages.
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks in contrast to the surrounding chalk landscapes.

Physical influences

The type is defined by its Upper Greensand geology. Lower Chalk marks the terraces at the base of the adjacent chalk escarpment. This change is consistent with a change in land cover as arable fields give way to mixed woodland along at the junction with the scarps. The landscape appears very flat however the landform becomes more undulating where influenced by waterways such as the River Wylde and tributaries of the River Nadder.

The geology has given rise to rich brown earths which are well-drained, loamy soils suited to arable crop production, reflected by the intensive arable land use over much of the type.

Biodiversity

This landscape type is characterised by intensive arable agriculture, together with smaller areas of improved pasture and some small, planted woodland blocks and shelterbelts which 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, and further add to the ecological potential of the landscape. The only sites with statutory nature conservation designation within the type is a very small section (0.1%) of the River Avon System which is designated SAC and SSSI for its exceptional range of aquatic plants, invertebrates and fish, and the Cley Hill SSSI.

Historic environment

The continuity and intensity of arable cultivation on the Greensand terrace may account for the general absence of prehistoric earthworks, as found on the nearby Chalk landscapes. The presence of isolated Bronze Age round barrows close to the River Wylye reflects suggests that the landscape at the base of the chalk escarpment was settled from an early date. Apart from these few prehistoric earthworks the key visible historic component of the type are medieval settlements such as Hill Deverill and the Parliamentary-type enclosures of a probable late 18th/early 19th century date characterised by large rectangular fields. Around some settlements and farmsteads fields are smaller and less regular indicating an earlier process of enclosure.

Settlement and built character

Settlement is sparse in the *Greensand Terrace* Landscape Type in comparison with the adjacent *Wooded Greensand Hills* and comprises dispersed farmsteads, a few nucleated villages such as the Deverills and Berwick St John, the small town of Mere and the northern periphery of Warminster. In some places villages traditionally associated with the adjacent *Wooded Greensand Hills* have extended south onto the terrace – Swallowcliffe, Fovant and Compton Chamberlayne for example. Farmhouses are generally of stone with recent additions of modern farm buildings and chert, greensand and red brick are the most common building materials, with clay tiles and thatch characterising the roofs.

CHARACTER AREAS

6A: Warminster Terrace

The *Warminster Terrace* is a open area bounded to the east by the chalk scarp of *Salisbury Plain East* and the the west by the *Longleat-Stourhead Greensand Hills*. The area, although level compared to the surrounding uplands, is more gently rolling than the others in the type and also more affected by settlement with the edge of Westbury to the north and Warminster to the south. Other settlement is in the form of a few scattered farms and the small village of Upton Scudamore. There is some pasture around this village but large scale arable fields dominate elsewhere with hedgerows patchy and low flailed in places. A striking feature in the level landscape is the dramatically rising Cley Hill, an outlier of the Middle and Upper Chalk, which is designated an SSSI for its chalk grassland. Unusually for this type the area includes a large block of woodland, Norridge Wood, a mixed wood incorporating substantial coniferous planting. Two major roads cross the area which along with a railway line entailing large scale cuttings and embankments. The slightly more varied landscape, the proximity of

settlement and the busy transport corridors make this area less rural and more fragmented than the others in the type.

6B: Kilmington Terrace

The *Kilmington Terrace* wraps around the western edge of the *West Wiltshire Downs Wooded Downland* and the steeply rising scarp slopes form a dramatic backdrop to the level open terrace. To the east and north the *Wooded Greensand Hills* enclose the area. The *Kilmington Terrace* has a varied field pattern with mainly medium to large fields and some smaller fields characterising the remaining areas of (largely improved) pasture. There is a general absence of woodland with tree cover consisting just of hedgerow trees, poplars defining property margins, and individual trees along the River Wylfe. As well as scattered farmsteads this area has the medieval villages of the Deverills, the village of Sutton Veny and the small town of Mere. A rare sign of older settlement in the landscape type are the Bronze Age round barrows in the remnant pasture to the west of Kingston Deverill.

6C: Fovant Terrace

The *Fovant Terrace* is a strip of level land lying at the base of the dramatic chalk scarps of the *Fovant Down* and *Cranborne Chase Wooded Downland* while to the north the area is bounded by the wooded slopes of the *Greensand Hills*. Sparse settlement of just a few scattered farmsteads strung along the A30 characterises the *Fovant Terrace* however the sense of remoteness in the landscape is disrupted by the A30 transport corridor running the full length of the terrace. Views to the stark chalk escarpment are enlivened by the feature of the Fovant Badges. Small woodland blocks and shelterbelts are scattered throughout area, including occasional blocks of ancient woodland in contrast to the largely unwooded area *6B: Kilmington Terrace*. Coniferous shelterbelts run at right angles to the escarpment cutting across the contours and interrupting the smooth open character of the terrace. There is a simple and consistent field pattern of large fields at right angles to the scarp slope, but hedgerows are denuded and replaced by post and wire fencing.

EVALUATION

Positive landscape features of significance

- Level terrace landform with wide open skies contrasts with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent *Wooded Greensand Hills* landscape type.
- Dramatic views from the terraces to the steeply rising backdrop of the Chalk escarpments, with added interest due to features such as the Fovant Badges.
- Belts of mixed woodland running along the base of the chalk escarpment visually emphasise the change in topography and enrich the biodiversity of the landscape type.
- Presence of Bronze Age round barrows close to the River Wylfe reflect the survival of remnant areas of pasture.
- Some medieval settlements including the deserted medieval village at Yarnfield.

Forces for change

- 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.
- Over maturity 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 plus creation of new coniferous plantations has resulted in a change in visual and ecological character.
- Future pressure for linear expansion of settlement along the Wylve Valley and for infill and expansion of towns and villages may lead to loss of settlement identity.
- 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 in evidence.
- 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 to Fovant Greensand Hills (7B)* onto the terrace.

Condition

The dominance of intensive arable farming throughout the *Greensand Terrace* Landscape Type has led to the loss of biodiversity and cultural value. For example, there are few semi-natural habitats and, many sections of hedgerow have been lost or replaced with post and wire fencing. 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**.

Strength of character

This landscape is judged to have **moderate** strength of character. The level, simple and open topography contrasts strongly with the dramatic backdrop of the escarpment and the enclosed and rolling wooded hills. The regular large scale geometric pattern of the arable fields and the sparse settlement creates a simple land cover emphasising the sense of openness and expanse. However some areas are fragmented and weakened in character through the influence of nearby settlement and transport corridors.

Inherent landscape sensitivities

- Open landscape with wide views to the stark Chalk escarpments.
- Small woodland blocks including ancient woodland in the *Fovant Terrace*.

- Medieval villages and stone built farmhouses.
- Bronze Age remains near to the course of the Wylye.

STRATEGY

The overall management strategy is to **conserve** the open farmed character of the terrace with its distinct pattern of settlement and the contrast with the adjacent escarpment. **Improvement** of lost and/or declining features such as field boundaries and woodland will increase the quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value.

Broad management objectives

- Conserve characteristic open views across the terrace towards the escarpment.
- Improve the condition and character of hedgerow boundaries by thickening and replanting where lost, apply consistent management techniques and replacing hedgerow trees where over mature and dying.
- 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.
- Encourage new native woodland planting at the break of the scarp to enhance the transition between the scarp and terrace.
- Discourage further coniferous planting where this would detract from the character of the deciduous woodland and the visual relationship between scarp and terrace.
- Consider opportunities for re-planting trees and woodland following the course of the River Wylye.
- Conserve the open character of the terrace and retain the concentrated character of the settlement by resisting linear growth along transport routes or such as has occurred between Longbridge Deverill and Hill Deverill. Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure future development respects traditional settlement form.

THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

The character of the Wiltshire landscape has already been investigated in a number of studies as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2. Landscape Type 6: *Greensand Terrace* is largely within the area covered by the Cranborne Chase AONB Landscape Character Assessment (2003) and includes most of Type 6: Greensands Terrace from that study. Only area 6A: *Warminster Terrace* is not covered by this existing assessment.

The two character areas 6C: *Fovant Terrace* and 6B: *Kilminster Terrace* correspond to areas 6A: *Fovant Greensand Terrace* and 6B: *Kilminster Greensand Terrace* in the AONB Assessment. However the boundaries of these areas *Terrace* differ from the corresponding Cranborne Chase areas, with the character areas extended to north and south beyond the AONB boundary and defined instead by changes in geology.