



West Wiltshire District Council

**WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**



Draft Final Report

December 2006

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

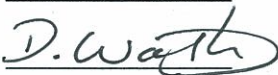
Environment Landscape Planning

West Wiltshire District Council

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Approved By: Dominic Watkins
Signed: 
Position: Director
Date: 6th December 2006

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning
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PREFACE

This Technical Study was commissioned by West Wiltshire District Council. The Study provides a baseline inventory of the landscape character within the District, and also sets out recommendations for the application of the Study for consideration and action as appropriate by the Council. The need to protect and enhance landscape character is recognised by Government planning policy on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. To ensure that full account is given to landscape character in planning decisions, this Study is commended to the Council for use as an evidence base for informing the preparation of the Local Development Framework and in development control.

We are grateful for the advice and guidance provided by the Steering Group, namely:

- Mark Russell – Planning Policy & Conservation Services Manager, West Wiltshire District Council
- Linda Jennings – Planning Policy & Conservation Officer, West Wiltshire District Council

In addition, we appreciate the help of individuals from other organisations who willingly assisted in the provision of data and information for the Study. We would also like to acknowledge the representatives of organisations who attended the stakeholder consultation workshops held during the course of the Study (see Appendix A for details). The information gained from these stakeholders provided an important input to the Study.

The Consultant Team comprised:

- Dominic Watkins
- Emma Clarke
- Alison MacDonald
- Sarah de Vos
- Jonathan Webb

Chris Blandford Associates
December 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In April 2006 West Wiltshire District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of the District.

The aim of the Study is to provide an integrated assessment of the character of the District at 1:25,000 scale, to serve as a baseline of environmental information to enable a better understanding of West Wiltshire's landscapes. The Landscape Character Assessment will be specifically used as a technical evidence base to inform the Local Development Framework currently being prepared by the Council.

The overall aim of landscape planning, design and management should be to achieve 'sustainable landscapes' that are as visually, biodiverse and culturally rich as possible to meet all of society's social, economic and environmental needs. A better understanding of landscapes provided by Landscape Character Assessments – their diversity, character and distinctiveness, evolution, sensitivity to change and their management needs – is essential to help to work towards this goal.

Methodology

The overall approach to the study is based on *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland* (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002), the latest published guidance, and takes into account current best practice. Landscape Character Assessment addresses both the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping, classifying and describing 'landscape character', and the more subjective process of evaluating landscape character to inform planning and land management decisions. In summary, the main stages involved in the study process were:

- Information Scoping
- Desk Study Research
- Field Survey
- Characterisation
- Evaluation
- Preparation of the Study Report

Consultation with key stakeholder organisations via two workshops was an important and integral element of the Study. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering opinions about landscape character from the key stakeholders, and to promote the value of the Study as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions in rural areas.

Structure of the Report

Section 1.0 sets out the context for the Study. It explains the background to the Study, its aims and objectives, and highlights the importance of landscape character. It also describes the planning policy framework for the Study, and outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of the District. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today.

Section 3.0 provides an overview of landscape character across the District as a whole in its national and county context.

Section 4.0 of the report provides detailed ‘profiles’ of the Landscape Character Units identified within the District. These have been subdivided into 40 Landscape Character Areas that reflect distinctive variations in local character. The profiles describe the character of each Landscape Character Area, and set out a management strategy and objectives for informing land use planning decisions and environmental land management initiatives.

Section 5.0 sets out the main conclusions of the Study, and provides recommendations to the Council for its consideration and action as appropriate. Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment, and in relation to landscape policy advice for the Local Development Framework. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape character of the District, and in relation to monitoring of policies, are also provided.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In April 2006 West Wiltshire District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of the District.
- 1.1.2 West Wiltshire has an administrative area of approximately 518 square kilometres. Apart from the five towns of Bradford on Avon, Melksham, Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury, there are around fifty villages of various sizes (see **Figure 1.1**).
- 1.1.3 The District is predominantly rural in character and has a diverse landscape. The north west area of the District includes deeply incised, heavily wooded valleys, such as that around Limpley Stoke and low limestone plateau. In the local villages such as Monkton Farleigh and Atworth, the use of ‘traditional’ local stone has ensured that buildings blend well with the landscape.
- 1.1.4 The centre and north east of the District is characterised by undulating clay vales which contain small wooded areas and are in a mix of arable and pasture use. The south of the District contains extensive open chalk plateau with scattered copses and chalk river valleys, some with well wooded slopes and bottoms. Steep escarpments form dramatic features and are the locations for carvings like the famous Westbury White Horse and the less known regimental badge west of Codford. Springline villages have grown up at the foot of the escarpment. Where there are extensive deposits of clay with flints on the chalk downland, major woodland areas such as the Great Ridge/Grovely are supported.
- 1.1.5 The attractiveness of the District’s landscapes is reflected in the fact that almost 30% of the total area is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Parts of two AONBs are within West Wiltshire’s boundaries. The Cotswolds AONB, which extends into the north west corner of the District along the Avon valley to the western boundary of Bradford on Avon, covers under 3% of the District. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB covers over 27% of the District south of Warminster.
- 1.1.6 Outside the AONBs, the District currently contains five locally designated Special Landscape Areas identified in the District Local Plan (Policy C3), which were originally defined in the Wiltshire Local Landscape Plan 1986. They are as follows:
- Salisbury Plain
 - The Corsley Heath to Chapmanslade Ridge
 - The higher land of the Spye and Bowood Parklands
 - The River Frome Valley at Vaggs Hall
 - The southern fringes of the Cotswolds not covered by AONB designation.

1.2 Study Aims and Objectives

- 1.2.1 The aim of the Study is to provide an integrated assessment of the character of the District’s landscape defined at 1:25,000 scale, to serve as a baseline of environmental information to enable a better understanding of West Wiltshire’s landscapes.
- 1.2.2 The key objectives of the Study are to:
- provide an up to date and integrated description of West Wiltshire’s landscape, identifying key landscape features.

- in line with the requirements of PPS7, assess the justification for retaining the existing Special Landscape Areas and a separate policy for their protection.
- identify, in broad terms, the key sensitivities of the landscape to development and change.
- produce a concise management strategy to inform future activities connected with the conservation and enhancement of West Wiltshire's landscape.
- raise public, member and officer awareness of landscape issues generally.
- inform Local Development Framework policy formation.
- provide information for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Plans.
- act as a tool for the purposes of performing the District Council's Development Control functions, particularly decision making on the siting and design of new housing, employment, telecommunications and wind energy proposals.
- act as a reference and provide justification for environmental enhancements, design and restoration projects and management initiatives; and
- guide and inform the process for the assessment of external grant applications.

1.2.3 The area of study characterised by this assessment includes all the rural area up to and including the urban edge and, where they exist, river valleys and other green corridors extending into urban areas.

1.3 The Importance of Landscape Character

1.3.1 The UK Government signed the European Landscape Convention¹ on the 24 February 2006. The Convention aims to encourage public authorities within member states to adopt policies and measures for the protection, management and planning of all landscapes, both outstanding and ordinary, that determine the quality of people's living environment. The Convention specially encourages local authorities to introduce exemplary and long lasting policies or measures to protect, manage and plan landscapes.

1.3.2 The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as:

'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'

1.3.3 The term landscape is typically synonymous with the countryside; however, landscape is everywhere and may comprise rural landscapes, urban landscapes or townscapes, urban fringe landscapes, coastal landscapes or seascapes, etc.

1.3.4 The European Landscape Convention defines 'landscape character' as:

'a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape.'

¹ The European Landscape Convention opened for signature in Florence on 20 October 2000. Jim Knight, Minister for Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity announced the UK signing of the European Landscape Convention on 24 February 2006.

- 1.3.5 In England and Scotland, Landscape Character Assessment² is a tool that allows landscape character to be understood, explained and described in a transparent and robust way. It does this by mapping and describing the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes and experiential characteristics that make one area distinctive from another at a range of spatial scales. Landscape Character Assessment also recognises how landscapes have changed over time, and acknowledges the changing influences of human activities and the impacts of economic development.
- 1.3.6 The overall aim of landscape planning, design and management should be to achieve *sustainable landscapes* that are as visually, biodiverse and culturally rich as possible to meet all of society's social, economic and environmental needs. A better understanding of landscapes provided by Landscape Character Assessments – their diversity, character and distinctiveness, evolution, sensitivity to change and their management needs – is essential to help to work towards this goal.

1.4 Planning Policy Framework

- 1.4.1 National Planning Policy relating to landscape character is contained in PPS1³ and PPS7⁴.

Planning Policy Statement 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development

- 1.4.2 PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It states that one of the Government's objectives for the planning system is that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable urban and rural development by protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside (para 5). In its key principles, PPS1 states that '*a spatial planning approach should be at the heart of planning for sustainable development*' (para 13.iii) and '*design which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted*' (para 13.iv). When preparing development plans '*planning authorities should seek to enhance as well as protect biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment and landscape and townscape character*' (para 27). PPS1 also requires new design to be integrated into the existing urban form and natural and built environments (para 35).

Planning Policy Statement 7 : Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 1.4.3 Landscape Character Assessment, along with Village or Town Design Statements and Village or Parish Plans, is recommended by PPS7 as a tool to assist Local Authorities in the preparation of policies and guidance that encourages good quality design throughout rural areas (para 13). Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended by PPS7 as a tool for creating carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in Local Development Documents to protect valued landscapes outside nationally designated areas without the need for rigid local designations, which may restrict sustainable development and the economic vitality of rural areas. PPS7 advises that local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection (paras 24 and 25).

² Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

³ Planning Policy Statement 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005).

⁴ Planning Policy Statement 7 : Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004).

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West

1.4.4 The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West⁵ was published for public consultation in June 2006. Following the formal consultation period, an Examination in Public will be held in Spring 2007, the recommendations from which will be considered by the Secretary of State prior to approval and issuing of the RSS in early 2008.

1.4.5 The Draft RSS is based on the principles of sustainable development, and specifically identifies the need to protect and enhance the distinctiveness of the Region's natural environment (including landscape) as a key consideration in managing the spatial development of the South West.

1.4.6 Policy ENV1 – Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Historic Environment - states:

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

1.4.7 The RSS recognises that the landscapes, townscapes and seascapes of the South West are defining features of the Region, providing an important setting for settlements and contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. The landscape character assessment approach is supported by the RSS as a basis for considering development impacts and promoting quality development which enhances local character and distinctiveness. Policy ENV2 – Landscape Character Areas – states:

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

1.4.8 The RSS also includes a specific policy on protected landscapes in the South West, which includes AONBs. The Strategy recognises that these areas have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, requires relevant authorities (including statutory undertakers and other public bodies) to have regard to the statutory purposes of AONBs. In this context, the RSS requires the relevant authorities to ensure that they have taken account of the statutory purposes of AONBs in reaching decisions or carrying out their activities. Joint working on LDDs by Local Planning Authorities is encouraged for AONBs which cross administrative boundaries. In drafting LDDs, Local Planning Authorities should have regard to statutory AONB Management Plans, and positive land management policies should be developed to sustain and enhance the area's landscape quality. The overall approach to development in these

⁵ The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006-2026 (South West Regional Assembly, June 2006).

protected landscapes and in adjacent areas is set out in Policy ENV3 – Protected Landscapes – which states:

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

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

Consideration will also be given to proposals which promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Particular care will be taken to ensure that no development is permitted outside the National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which would damage their natural beauty, character and special qualities or otherwise prejudice the achievement of National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty purposes;’

The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan

- 1.4.9 The approved Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan⁶ was adopted in April 2006. Under the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, the Structure Plan and its policies are saved until April 2009 – or until superseded by the published RSS (whichever is sooner).
- 1.4.10 The Structure Plan contains two policies related to landscape protection: Policy C8 on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Policy C9 on Special Landscape Areas. Once the RSS is approved and issued, these policies will be repealed and will have no effect.

Local Planning Context

- 1.4.11 West Wiltshire District Council has prepared and adopted (2004) a Local Plan for the whole of the District to guide development and to protect and enhance the environment. Chapter 2 of the West Wiltshire District Local Plan contains a number of policies concerned with the protection of different aspects of landscape, including in particular:
- Policy C1 - Countryside Protection
 - Policy C2 - AONBs
 - Policy C3 - Special Landscape Areas
 - Policy C4 - Landscape Setting⁷
 - Policy C6a - Landscape Features
 - Policy C8 - Woodlands
 - Policy C9 - Rivers

⁶ Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 (Wiltshire County Council/Swindon Borough Council, Adopted April 2006)

⁷ Landscape Setting – relates to the historic towns of Bradford on Avon and Warminster

The Local Plan will eventually be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF) under the arrangements set out in the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*. The LDF comprises a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs) that will set out proposals for the future development use and conservation of land and buildings.

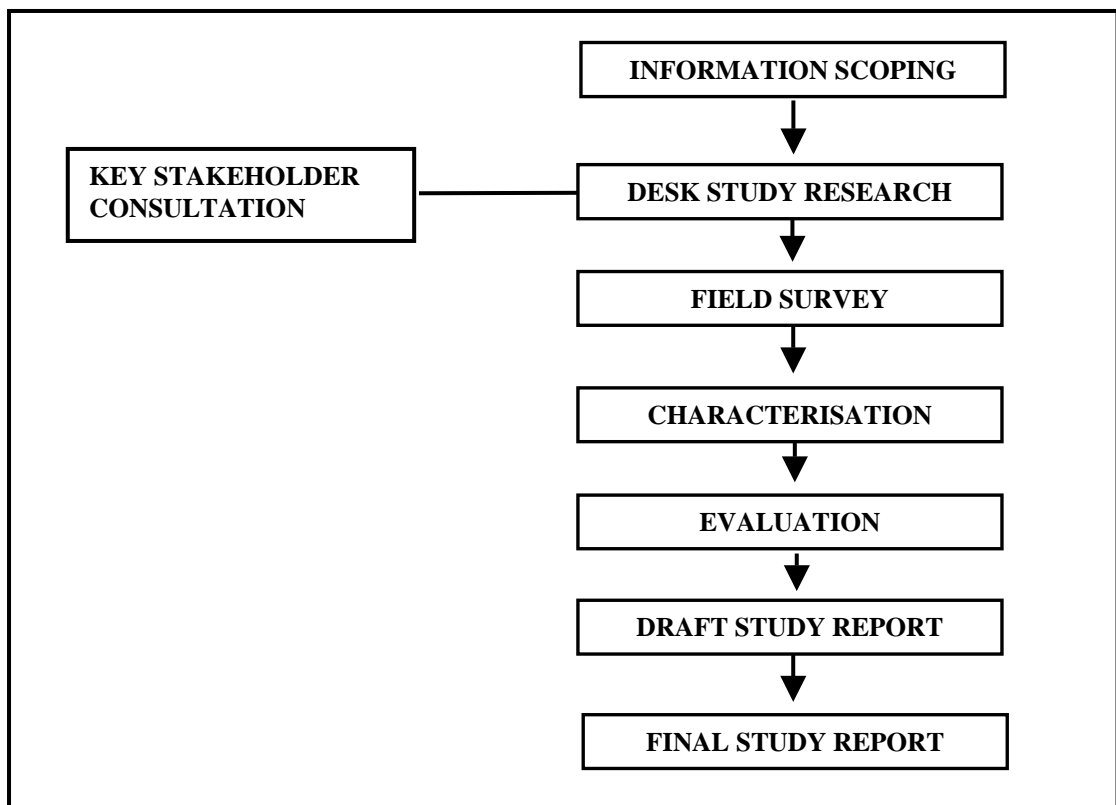
- 1.4.12 The identification of future LDDs and the timetable for their production is set out in the District Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS). This document describes the subject matter of each LDD; it also specifies which policies of the Local Plan each LDD will replace. This LCA will be used as part of the evidence base to inform the preparation of LDDs.

1.5 Approach and Methodology

- 1.5.1 The overall approach for undertaking the Landscape Character Assessment is based on the latest guidance published by the Countryside Agency⁸, taking into account current best practice. Landscape Character Assessment addresses both the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping, classifying and describing 'landscape character', and the more subjective process of evaluating landscape character to inform planning and land management decisions.

- 1.5.2 The study process is illustrated in Box 1, and described below.

Box 1 – Landscape Character Assessment Process



⁸ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

Information Scoping

1.5.3 This preliminary stage involved the following main tasks:

- Identify and review existing landscape character assessments covering West Wiltshire.
- Obtain landscape character assessment information for incorporation into the landscape character assessment.
- Identify shortfalls in coverage of landscape character assessment, and determine further work required where necessary to provide an appropriate level of information for incorporation into the District landscape character assessment.

Desk Study Research

1.5.4 This stage involved desk-based research to identify the physical and historical factors that have influenced the shape and use of the landscape. This work drew on a variety of documents and maps that describe the physical geography and cultural history of the District (see Appendix C for details). The desk research also identified the forces for change affecting the character of the District's landscape.

1.5.5 In summary, the desk work involved:

- Meeting of existing national, county and local landscape character assessment classifications, including the Countryside Agency's Character of England Map, the Wiltshire County Landscape Character Assessment; the two AONB Landscape Character Assessments; and existing assessments for neighbouring local authority areas.
- Production and analysis of map overlays of physical and cultural components of the landscape
- Identification of draft Landscape Character Types and draft Landscape Character Areas.

Field Survey

1.5.6 Field surveys were undertaken during Summer 2006. The aim of the surveys was to undertake a visual analysis of how different features and elements combined to create distinctive patterns in the landscape. The surveys were undertaken from key viewpoints within each draft Landscape Character Area by a team of field assessors using a structured checklist. The checklist included:

- Landform
- Rivers/drainage
- Land cover
- Field pattern and field boundaries
- Communication routes
- Settlement form/pattern
- Building styles
- Scale
- Texture
- Enclosure
- Stimuli
- Sense of tranquillity

- Movement
- View types and composition
- Landmarks

1.5.7 The survey information (including photographs) was used to (i) inform the descriptions of landscape character and (ii) to test and refine the boundaries of the draft Landscape Character Types and Areas.

Characterisation

1.5.8 The characterisation stage involved the combination of the desk study research and field survey analysis to identify and map generic Landscape Character Types and geographically unique Landscape Character Areas at 1:25,000 scale.

1.5.9 For each generic Landscape Character Type, its boundaries were mapped and its key characteristics described. For each unique Landscape Character Area, its boundaries were mapped and characterisation information recorded under the following headings:

- Key Characteristics
- Location and Boundaries
- Summary of Visual Character
- Overall Character Description
- Historic Environment
- Biodiversity

Evaluation

1.5.10 This stage involved making the following judgements about each Landscape Character Area:

- Current Condition
- Inherent Landscape Sensitivities
- Key Landscape Changes
- Management Strategy and Objectives

1.5.11 The condition, sensitivity and change analysis, together with the proposed management strategies and objectives for each Landscape Character Area, can be used to inform:

- the identification of spatial development options within the Local Development Framework.
- Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Development Framework site allocations.
- the highlighting of landscape issues that may need to be considered in greater detail in relation to development control decisions.
- the application of criteria-based landscape protection and enhancement policies within the Local Development Framework.

Key Stakeholder Consultation

1.5.12 Consultation with key stakeholder organisations was an important and integral element of the Study. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering opinions about landscape character from the key stakeholders, and to promote the value of the Study as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions in rural areas.

- 1.5.13 The consultation involved two workshops to explore stakeholder's views on what gives different places their local identity and distinctive character (see Appendix A for further details). This information was fed into the desk study research and field survey stages of the Study to refine and validate the preliminary draft mapping of Landscape Character Types and Areas by the Consultant Team.
- 1.5.14 It is anticipated that community involvement in the future application of the Landscape Character Assessment will be encouraged through development of 'bottom up' character-based design guidance at the local level (e.g. Village Design Statements, Town Design Statements, Parish Plans etc.).

1.6 Structure of the Report

- 1.6.1 The study report is structured as follows.

Section 1.0 sets out the context for the Study. It explains the background to the Study, its aims and objectives, and highlights the importance of landscape character. It also describes the planning policy framework for the Study, and outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of the District. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today.

Section 3.0 provides an overview of landscape character across the District as a whole in its national and county context.

Section 4.0 of the report provides detailed 'profiles' of the Landscape Character Units identified within the District. These have been subdivided into 40 Landscape Character Areas that reflect distinctive variations in local character. The profiles describe the character of each Landscape Character Area, and set out a management strategy and objectives for informing land use planning decisions and environmental land management initiatives.

Section 5.0 sets out the main conclusions of the Study, and provides recommendations to the Council for its consideration and action as appropriate. Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment, and in relation to landscape policy advice for the Local Development Framework. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape character of the District, and in relation to monitoring of policies, are also provided.

2.0 THE SHAPING OF THE WEST WILTSHIRE LANDSCAPE

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2.1 General

2.1.1 This section describes the physical and historical features that have influenced the shape of the West Wiltshire landscape, and highlights past and current perceptions of the landscape. It also provides an overview of recent forces for change affecting the character of the West Wiltshire landscape.

2.2 Physical Influences

2.2.1 The landscape of West Wiltshire, like all others, retains traces of the many different influences that have acted upon it. The character of the landscape has evolved in response to the basic underlying geological characteristics of the land upon which natural processes and human activities have operated, which in turn influences the patterns of land use as well as ecological and cultural character.

2.2.2 West Wiltshire is dominated by the chalk of the Cretaceous period. This outcrops at the south of the District form the upland landscape of the downs, whilst in the north older rocks create a varied landscape including the clay vales and the limestone of the Cotswolds.

2.2.3 An overview of the physical factors that have influenced the character of the Wiltshire landscape can be found in the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment⁹. Based on this overview, the following is a summary of the physical influences that have shaped the West Wiltshire landscape.

Landform (see Figures 2.1 and 2.3) Geology and Soils

2.2.4 The rocks underlying the north west of West Wiltshire were created in the Mid Jurassic Period, these are the limestones of the Great Oolite group which form much of the broad uplands of the Cotswold Hills and yield outstanding building stone for buildings, sculpture and stone slates for roofing. As well as the use of the stone for buildings the underlying geology is made evident on the dip slope of the Cotswolds by the stone walls enclosing fields and dwellings.

2.2.5 The Jurassic rocks were deposited mainly in shallow shelf seas quite close to land. At that time the climate would have been warm and humid leading to the formation of coral, shelly and oolitic limestones. Variations in thickness and layering of the rocks formed by the various deposits relate to changes in environments during the period.

2.2.6 Further south, the limestone gives way to a broad band of Oxford Clay and Kellaways Beds which form the wide, gently undulating vale of the Bristol Avon. Within the Kellaways Beds are pockets of Kellaways Sand which yield areas of free draining soils contrasting with the generally seasonally wet deep clay soils.

2.2.7 Upper Greensand, a delicately coloured pale greenish grey stone, forms level terraces around Warminster and steep hills to the southwest of the District. The loam soils arising from the sandstone support a mix of arable and pasture with woodland on the steep slopes.

2.2.8 In the late Cretaceous period rising sea levels progressively inundated the area and calcareous sediments, which eventually became chalk, were deposited. Chalk was originally deposited throughout the region and during Alpine tectonic phases the south part of the District was folded into the broad asymmetric syncline of the London Basin. The principal

⁹ Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, December 2005)

outcrop of this chalk forms a broad arc radiating from Salisbury Plain with one arm stretching across Wiltshire, Hampshire and Sussex and the other across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

- 2.2.9 The chalk was deposited sequentially into layers of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk. The Middle and Upper chalk comprise pure white chalks which have resisted weathering, giving rise to the distinctive elevated plateaus of expansive downs that characterise the south of the District, specifically Salisbury Plain.
- 2.2.10 The high plateaus of open, smoothly rolling downland are dissected by a network of dry valleys and long sinuous scarp slopes interlocking with gently rounded domed summits. The thin covering of well-drained soils overlying the chalk bedrock supports a characteristic vegetation of herbs and grasses. Traditionally grazed by sheep and rabbits, these create the distinctive short springy chalk downland turf. These soils are also ideal for cereal growing and much of the downs are now under intensive arable cultivation.
- 2.2.11 An unusual feature of the chalk uplands are blocks of quartz sandstone, known as sarsens. The hard siliceous sandstones derive from Tertiary deposits, later eroded and moved by periglacial processes. The sarsens have long been used for building stone, and today can be seen in the megalithic standing stones at Longbridge Deverill, as well as within vernacular buildings.
- 2.2.12 The landscape is also considerably influenced by drift deposits, which overlay the solid geology. Many of the plateaux and ridges of the chalk downs are capped with Quaternary deposits of Clay-with-Flint; pockets of reddish brown clay containing flint pebbles. The heavier clay soils have retained their woodland cover and form the characteristic landscapes of the wooded downs.
- 2.2.13 Slope deposits, also known as 'combe deposits', are local features where frost-weathered debris accumulated during winter, forming a slurry when the snows melted and flowing down the slopes to create deposits resembling till. This type of deposit is widespread in the dry valleys of the downs.
- 2.2.14 River alluvium dominates the main valley floodplains throughout West Wiltshire from the narrow river valleys through the chalk such as the Wylye to the broad vales of the Bristol Avon. The alluvium gives rise to rich wetland landscapes and pasture while the gravel of the river terraces supports arable farming.

Drainage (see Figure 2.1)

- 2.2.15 The pattern of drainage of West Wiltshire can be divided into the north where the Bristol Avon and its tributaries flow and the south where the River Wylye, a tributary of the Salisbury Avon, flows.
- 2.2.16 The deeply incised river valleys of the Wylye are key features of the chalk uplands. With their clear waters these watercourses are highly prized for their distinctive ecology and their valleys form the main routes for communication and settlement, contrasting with the sparsely populated chalk summits. The downland is also dissected by a number of dry valleys, some of which support distinctive ephemeral winter streams or 'bournes'. These were formed during the Ice Age, when permafrost impeded sub-surface drainage and valleys, or coombes, were cut through the chalk. Today, however, much of the high open downland is waterless due to the porous nature of the bedrock.

- 2.2.17 Springs are also a feature of the chalk landscapes, particularly the valleys and scarps, issuing at the point where the porous chalk overlies the impermeable clays. These give rise to the distinctive scalloped coombe landform and spring line villages clustered along the foot of the slope.
- 2.2.18 The wide low lying clay vales of the Bristol Avon contrast with the narrow chalk valleys with their wide areas of alluvium and river terrace gravels forming a level landscape of fields drained by systems of ditches and threaded with tributary streams.

Ecological Habitats

- 2.2.19 There are a wide range of habitats within the District, the most characteristic types of which include grassland (including calcareous, neutral and acid grassland), arable farmland, hedgerows, woodlands, wood-pasture/parkland, chalk rivers and associated habitats, and standing open water. Many of these habitats are of particular value for nature conservation and are protected by European, national and local designations (see **Figure 2.2**).

2.3 Historical Influences

- 2.3.1 The landscape of West Wiltshire has long been subject to episodes of settlement, abandonment and reuse, evolving from Palaeolithic times into the present day rich tapestry.
- 2.3.2 An overview of the historical factors that have influenced the character of the Wiltshire landscape can be found in the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment¹⁰. Based on this overview, supplemented where appropriate by the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs¹¹ and the Cotswolds¹² AONB Landscape Character Assessments, the following is a summary of the historical influences that have shaped the West Wiltshire landscape.

Palaeolithic to Mesolithic Periods (c.500,000 to c.4,500 BC)

- 2.3.3 During the time of the last glacial maximum (c.18,000 BC) West Wiltshire lay to the south of an ice sheet extending over Europe. As the climate began to stabilise (11,000 BC) forest spread, giving way to scrub and then mixed broad-leaved forest. There is little evidence for Palaeolithic occupation within West Wiltshire, and occupation seems likely to have been confined to very limited activity.
- 2.3.4 By 8500 BC people had returned to the area, and evidence for the Mesolithic period consists of scatters of worked flint. The higher downland may have formed upland hunting areas, with valleys exploited for food. By the late Mesolithic, groups were deliberately clearing areas of the forest uplands to attract grazing animals, and generally becoming more sedentary.

Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age Periods (c.4,500 BC to c.43 AD)

- 2.3.5 Evidence indicates a Neolithic landscape that was still substantially wooded, although areas of grassland were now established. Communities would still have been small, though people were gathering for certain activities, for example the building of monuments.

¹⁰ Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, December 2005)

¹¹ Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment (Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, 2003)

¹² Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003)

2.3.6 By the late Neolithic (3000 BC), there is more evidence for cultivation and a decreasing amount of woodland. No field systems have been dated to the Neolithic period but almost certainly, the first fields were established at this time. Overall there is very little archaeological evidence for permanent settlement structures during the Neolithic, however evidence for occupation within West Wiltshire includes:

- Causewayed enclosures.
- Long barrows.
- Flint scatters and pottery fragments.
- Henge complexes.

2.3.7 During the Bronze Age monument construction continued, but the most dramatic change in the landscape was the widespread appearance of field systems defined by banks, ditches and possibly hedges. Associated with these fields were small enclosures containing roundhouses and ancillary buildings. Landscape evidence for the Bronze Age includes:

- Round barrows, for example at Arn Hill Down.
- Larger linear earthworks, for example those between Bishopstrow Down and South Down Sleight.

2.3.8 In the Iron Age most people lived in open settlements of roundhouses, and field systems continued to be used, or were re-used from earlier periods. Other examples of Iron Age monuments include:

- hillforts for example at Bratton Camp; and
- fields and farmsteads linked together by trackways and complex social networks of kinship, reciprocity and trade.

Romano-British Period (c.43 AD to 4th century AD)

2.3.9 Following the Roman invasion of Britain (AD 43), the landscape was under widespread agricultural use and they exploited this by establishing towns and a road system. In valley locations villa estates were established, many over previous Iron Age settlements. These tended to be grouped around urban settlements and used the limestone for building stone.

2.3.10 Roman roads were an important development as they resulted in new markets being created. The Romans also introduced significant agricultural innovations. Improvements in ploughs meant that heavier soils could be cultivated and place names indicate that much of the land in the clay vales had been cleared of forest.

Early Medieval Period (4th century to 1066 AD)

2.3.11 Early Saxon evidence suggests there was a decline of centralised political control following the withdrawal of the legions, and the loss of the market meant that agricultural production returned largely to subsistence levels. There is little evidence for this period, but it does include:

- Saxon church remains, for example at Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Warminster and Heytesbury.
- Strip fields that dissected the valleys from side to side.
- Saxon estate boundaries that are reflected in modern landscape boundaries.
- Saxon burials inserted into Neolithic long mounds or Bronze Age round barrows, examples of which have been found at Swallowcliffe Down.

Medieval Period (1066 to 16th century AD)

- 2.3.12 The Norman conquest (1066) replaced the earlier social structure. The Domesday survey (1086) shows that medieval villages were located in the valleys, and some may have been continuations of Saxon settlements.
- 2.3.13 Trade became wider and large-scale once more. Strip lynchets and ridge and furrow reflect this period of agricultural expansion. Many medieval droveways and tracks may have had earlier origins, and some were themselves incorporated into later roads.
- 2.3.14 The Saxons had established hunting parks, but it was the Normans who codified their management. Forests provided deer and revenue for the king, but the areas of woodland also provided timber for construction and other resources for the local communities.
- 2.3.15 The phase of agricultural expansion was slowed or even reversed during the later 14th century, with the Black Death causing rural depopulation and an economic depression. By the 15th century, in many areas of the chalk downlands this led to the consolidation of land blocks and their enclosure as fields using hedges, banks or ditches.

Post Medieval Period (16th century to 1900)

- 2.3.16 This period is marked by the transformation to a capitalist market economy. Many field systems remained little altered, but elsewhere enclosure during the 15th and 16th centuries meant land use became more intensive. In some cases, enclosures were informal and the result of moves within the communities involved, but in others they were forcible events dictated by Crown officials. Large areas of former arable land on the downs were converted to pasture and long sheep runs were created between existing roads, tracks and paths, often several kilometres long, and some are still reflected in present-day field patterns. From the 16th century systems of managed water meadows developed in many valley bottoms.
- 2.3.17 By the 18th century informal, piecemeal enclosure had created a patchwork of small, irregularly shaped fields and winding lanes and tracks in many areas. From the later 18th century though, some areas of down pasture were converted to arable, and common woods, heaths and grasslands were also enclosed. The rectangular, regular patterns of field systems bounded by hedges on low field banks, which are especially evident on the West Wiltshire Downs, were the result of these later enclosures.
- 2.3.18 Further changes include turnpike roads and, towards the end of the 18th century, canals which were significant improvements in communication. The Kennet and Avon Canal was constructed between 1794 and 1810, provide a direct and safe waterway between Bristol and London.

Modern Period (1901 – present day)

- 2.3.19 Following the Napoleonic Wars conditions in the countryside were poor, and town populations grew rapidly. By the end of the 19th century, more people were working in industries based in towns than were working in agriculture.
- 2.3.20 Post-war intensification of agriculture continued with the ploughing of slopes and elevated downland, and the removal of hedgerows and field boundaries to create large scale fields.
- 2.3.21 In recognition of the value of the historic environment to current and future generations, the post-war planning system in England has sought to protect features of historic and archaeological significance. In respect of West Wiltshire, these include:

- 197 Scheduled Monuments which are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) (compared to 1,292¹³ in Wiltshire as a whole).
- 37 Conservation Areas of special architectural or historical interest protected under the listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990) (compared to 238¹⁴ in Wiltshire as a whole).
- 51 Grade I, 124 Grade II* and 2359 Grade II Listed Buildings of architectural merit, protected under the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990) (compared to 275 Grade I, 692 Grade II*, and 11,763 Grade II in Wiltshire as a whole).
- 8¹⁵ historically designed landscapes included on the English Heritage non-statutory national Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest (compared to 36¹⁶ in Wiltshire as a whole).

2.4 Past and Current Perceptions

2.4.1 An examination of the way that others have perceived the landscape over time provides an insight to what particular features of the landscape have consistently attracted attention and comment. This section considers the perception of the landscape of West Wiltshire chiefly through its literary and artistic associations.

2.4.2 In his 1914 prose work ‘In pursuit of Spring’¹⁷ Edward Thomas describes a journey through southern England and, in this extract, recounts a walk through the gentle landscape of the Wylye Valley:

“I did not go into Wilton, but kept on steadily alongside the Wylye. For three miles I had on my left hand the river and its meadows, poplars, willows and elms – the railway raised slightly above the farther bank – and the waved green wall of down beyond, to the edge of which came the dark trees of Gravely ... The road was heavy and wet, being hardly above the river level, but that was all the better for seeing the maidenhair lacework of the greening willows, the cattle among the marshmarigolds of the flat green meadows, the moorhen hurried down the swift water, the bulging wagons of straw going up a deep land to the sheepfolds, and the gradual slope of the Plain where these sheepfolds were, on my right.”

2.4.3 The river valleys, which are the focus for communication and settlement, appear to have inspired much more in the way of descriptive writings than the open downland. Common themes include the character and density of old villages, the close juxtaposition of river, watermeadows, arable fields and grass downland, and the way that the valleys are hidden among the folds of the downs. Indeed, Defoe¹⁸ writing in 1722 wrote that:

“while you view the downs, and think the country wild and uninhabited; yet when you come to descend into these vales you are surprised with the most fertile country in England.”

¹³ English Heritage, 2004, Heritage Counts 2004 The State of South West’s Historic Environment. English Heritage: London.

¹⁴ English Heritage, 2004, Heritage Counts 2004 The State of South West’s Historic Environment. English Heritage: London.

¹⁵ <http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/arch/landscapes/ukpg/database/> & http://www.cartoplus.co.uk/west%5FWiltshire/text/2_4_builtenv.htm

¹⁶ English Heritage, 2004, Heritage Counts 2004 The State of South West’s Historic Environment. English Heritage: London.

¹⁷ In Pursuit of Spring, (Thomas, E, 1914)

¹⁸ Defoe, D (1962), *A tour through England and Wales in 1722*, Everyman.

2.4.4 Defoe goes on to describe how:

“these hills and plains are most beautifully intersected, and cut through by the course of divers pleasant and profitable rivers; in the course, and near the banks, of which there is always a chain of fruitful meadows and rich pastures ...”.

2.4.5 The Wylde Valley is regarded as being particularly attractive. Cobbett¹⁹, writing in 1830, wondered at the concentration of *“one and thirty churches in the space of twenty seven miles”* and described the *“innumerable flocks of sheep, watermeadows and the cornfields which were sometimes up to 40 hectares in size”*.

2.4.6 Hudson described the character of the old stone and flint cottages that make up villages within these valleys as:²⁰

“weathered and coloured by sun and wind and rain and many lowly vegetable forms to a harmony with nature. They appear related to the trees amid which they stand, to the sloping downs at the side, and to the sky and clouds over all.”

2.4.7 In all these chalk river valleys, the landform and availability of water has had a profound influence of the settlement pattern, as Massingham²¹ observed:

“River and hill-scarps ... squeeze out such villages into long, irregular, parallel lines and yet, by the courteous, unforced habit of the river’s passage through the chalk and the generosity of slope along the hill-flanks, allow the houses plenty of elbow room to settle in. The street that gently winds in conformity with the river and down and the spacious disposition of the houses great and small, together or detached, catch the genius of the chalk and translate it into a different medium.”

2.4.8 A Mrs Haughton, in her book ‘In a Wiltshire Valley’²², wrote:

“Where the modern system of farming has broken up the down, there I most willingly allow that nothing can be so ugly, so dreary, so wild and desolate as the Wiltshire Downs! What used to be a vast expanse of grass, is now turned into as many miles of turnips, or ploughed fields, and it is only in the harvest time that there is any redeeming feature in the view.”

2.4.9 By the middle of the 20th century the conversion of downland pasture to arable cultivation was almost complete. Massingham²³ mourned the change, arguing that:

“Yes, sheep are the treasure of the downs ... it was sheep whose teeth created the very tapestry of the downland surface ... and I have noticed how disastrously the decline of the village community combined with the post-war depression in agriculture have, by the withdrawal of multitudes of sheep from the uplands, affected the growth and quality of their pasture.”

2.5 Forces for Change in the Landscape

2.5.1 The landscape, ecological and historic character of West Wiltshire District is dynamic, and is constantly changing in response to human activity and natural processes. Historically changes in agriculture, the socio-economic structure of local communities, and industrialisation has all had important impacts. The pace of change today is far greater than

¹⁹ Cobbett, W (1922), *Rural rides*, Cambridge University

²⁰ Hudson, WH (1910), *A shepherd’s life*, republished in 1981 by Macdonald Futura Press, London

²¹ Massingham, H J (1936) *The English Downland*, Batsford, London

²² Massingham, H J (1935), *The English Downland*, Batsford, London

²³ Massingham, H J (1936), *The English Downland*, Batsford, London

ever before. Development and other environmental changes are having increasingly visible, cumulative and far-reaching effects on landscape character. These include increasing demands for road transport, new infrastructure and high rates of residential and commercial development. The landscape is also undergoing significant change from new patterns of agricultural land use in response to changing climatic and market conditions.

Agriculture and Land Management

2.5.2 The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and Government policy to reduce production subsidies in favour of environmental subsidies, provides significant opportunities safeguard and restore characteristic features of the agricultural landscape through Environmental Stewardship schemes.

2.5.3 Key changes include:

- Agricultural improvement 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, and continues to threaten the remaining medieval field patterns and traditional pastoral landscape
- Changes in agriculture leading to lack of maintenance of traditional valley features including watercress beds, water meadow systems, mills and leats.
- Changes in military activity potentially leading to alterations to the management of the calcareous grassland, Juniper scrub and the woodland blocks.
- Conifer blocks within deciduous woodland can be visually intrusive, particularly where they occur on skylines. The rate of change in the landscape is rapid during felling of large coniferous blocks.
- Damage to ancient monuments from intensive arable cultivation.
- Decline in species rich grasslands and hay meadow with intensification of agricultural practices.
- Elm loss of 1970s.
- Encroachment of scrub into grassland due to changes in farming practices leading to change in balance of grassland/scrub mix.
- 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 and a loss of biodiversity on chalk grassland.
- Loss of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.
- Intensification in farming leading to drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation.
- Invasion of exotic species from parkland landscapes into the native woodlands is evident in some areas.
- Loss of semi-natural woodland plus creation of new coniferous plantations has resulted in a change in visual and ecological character.
- Need for sustainable woodland management including traditional maintenance techniques where appropriate to conserve ancient woodlands and particularly surviving areas of wood pasture and coppice.
- Nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run off affecting the high water quality of the streams and rivers.
- Over maturity and non-replacement of old tree stock within hedgerows has resulted in the loss of trees as landscape features.

Built Development

2.5.4 As elsewhere in the country, housing development represents a significant pressure for change in West Wiltshire District. Continued urban development around the towns have all had impacts on local landscape character. The challenge for the future is to accommodate housing development without eroding local character and distinctiveness.

2.5.5 Key forces for change are:

- Development pressures, particularly for new housing which will affect the character of the existing small settlements - villages may appear to coalesce and suburbanisation may occur.
- Isolated development such as new single dwellings that might compromise rural character.
- Loss of vernacular architectural features such as old barns and industrial heritage features such as mills.
- Modern residential developments in more open locations, some close to the floodplain, have weakened the pattern of tight knit villages in the past.
- Pressure for development on main road corridors such as services which are highly visible in more open landscape types.
- Pressure for further expansion of settlement and new development along rural lanes threatening the character of the small villages and scattered farmsteads.

Transport and Traffic

2.5.6 Reflecting the national trend, the District has seen increasing levels of car usage. This is leading to major congestion, pollution problems, and pressures for new road schemes in the countryside between the towns and road improvements that significantly affect landscape character.

2.5.7 Key forces for change are:

- Increased traffic on the rural road network, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character and further diminishes the rural tranquillity of the landscape.
- Pressure to build new roads.
- The presence of major transport corridors particularly the trunk roads has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage.
- Upgrading of the rail network may create new types of pressure and the building of new multi-modal transport interchanges.

Access, Recreation and Leisure

2.5.8 In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number and proportion of people taking part in outdoor recreational activities. Tourism, leisure and the boating industry make a vital contribution to local employment. In addition the many 'traditional' villages and the countryside in the District are an attraction in their own right.

2.5.9 Key forces for change are:

- Recreational pressure on chalk scarps.
- Managing high visitor numbers to key sites with potential adverse effects on historic landscapes, archaeological sites and nature reserves, and need for supporting infrastructure.

Climate Change

2.5.10 Climate change is a global issue, and evidence of it is growing in the UK with trends towards increased temperatures, wetter winters, and more extreme weather events in the last ten years already identified. The scenarios produced by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP02) suggests that the UK could experience by 2080:

- An increase of current average temperatures by 2-3.5°C.
- Drier summers and wetter winters.
- More frequent summer droughts, winter flooding and storms; and
- A rise in the average level of the sea.

2.5.11 Whilst there are still uncertainties regarding exact changes at regional and local levels, it is clear there could be both direct and indirect impacts on landscape character. The potential implications for landscape character in West Wiltshire include changes in habitats and species composition, habitat fragmentation, water resources, soils, agricultural land use, recreation and tourism and cultural heritage. Rises in river levels, frequent summer droughts and winter flooding and the potential drying out of winter bournes, due to lower water tables, are also anticipated changes in the landscape as a result of climate change.

Energy Generation and Supply

2.5.12 Changes in the way in which energy is generated are evident throughout the country and this is no different within West Wiltshire. The Wiltshire Renewable Energy Action Plan may impact on the landscape of the West Wiltshire District through the potential impact of tall structures - communications masts and transmitters plus future renewable energy developments (wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness. The planting of biofuels is also a potential change to the character of the landscape.

Minerals Extraction and Waste Disposal

2.5.13 West Wiltshire produces a range of minerals including chalk and clay for cement manufacturing and natural building stone. The effects of minerals/landfill operations on the landscape include changes to field pattern, loss of landscape features, introduction of incongruous landforms, land raising, haulage routes and lighting. Restoration to agriculture, woodland or other uses can be unsympathetic to landscape character if not designed with care.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 General

3.1.1 This section describes the context provided by the hierarchical classification of Landscape Character Areas and Types defined at the national and county levels. It also explains the relationship of the study to the classification of landscape character units provided by the two AONB Landscape Character Assessments within the District. Within this context, the classification of Landscape Character Types and Areas within the District is presented.

3.1.2 The descriptions of individual Landscape Character Areas in Section 4.0, should be read in conjunction with this information to ensure that the contextual relationship with the wider landscape is understood.

3.2 National and County Level Context

The National Character Context

3.2.1 The national context for defining the boundaries of the different Landscape Character Units within the District is provided by the Countryside Character Areas from the Character of England Map²⁴.

3.2.2 As illustrated on **Figure 3.1**, the District contains part of the following four Countryside Character Areas defined at 1:250,000 scale:

- Cotswolds (107)
- Avon Vales (117)
- Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs (132)
- Blackmoor Vale and the Vale of Wardour (133)

3.2.3 The character of these Countryside Character Areas is described in Countryside Character Volume 8, published by the Countryside Agency²⁵.

3.2.4 The Countryside Character Areas provide the contextual framework within which more detailed classifications of Landscape Character Units at 1:50,000 (County) and 1:25,000 (District) scale can be defined.

The County Character Context

3.2.5 Informed by the framework of the Countryside Character Areas and the Agency's National Landscape Typology²⁶, the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment²⁷ identifies ten Landscape Character Types and 12 Landscape Character Areas within West Wiltshire District (see **Figure 3.2**). The County 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 hydrology, to group areas and types together thus forming the new

²⁴ Character of England Map (Countryside Agency, English Nature, Rural Development Service, English Heritage, updated 2006).

²⁵ Countryside Character Volume 8 – South West (Countryside Agency, 1999, CA 14).

²⁶ The National Landscape Typology is a hierarchical classification of Landscape Character Types being developed by the Countryside Agency and English Nature. The Typology has produced a national classification of 'Level 1' Landscape Character Types defined at a 1:250,000 scale. These are homogenous units of land with a uniform character that are distinct from each other on the basis of definitive natural and cultural attributes.

²⁷ Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (LUC for Wiltshire County Council, December 2005).

classification. For the purposes of the county-wide assessment, emphasis was placed upon the definition and subdivision of the landscape at a scale of 1:50,000 and at the Landscape Type scale.

The AONB Assessments

- 3.2.6 Two parts of the District are recognised as being of national landscape importance and have been designated as AONBs by the Countryside Agency. These designated areas, the Cotswolds AONB and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, were indicated on **Figure 1.1**.
- 3.2.7 The Cotswolds AONB covers the River Avon valley, west of Bradford on Avon around Limply Stoke and Monkton Farleigh. The landscape includes the gently undulating oolitic limestone plateau of the Cotswolds, with its deeply incised, heavily wooded valleys. A Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2004 for the AONB.²⁸
- 3.2.8 The part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB within the District covers the Wylde Valley, the Deverills, Longleat and the West Wiltshire Downs. Its landscape varies from rolling chalk downland and dry valleys, to heavily wooded areas and attractive river valleys. A Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2003 for the AONB.²⁹

3.3 The District Assessment

- 3.3.1 The County Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas provides the framework for the more detailed assessment of landscape units within West Wiltshire District at 1:25,000 scale. The distribution of the District Landscape Character Types and Areas defined within West Wiltshire are shown on Figure 4.1 in Section 4.0, and this section includes the detailed descriptions or ‘profiles’.
- 3.3.2 Eleven Landscape Character Types were defined within the District. These are listed below:
- Limestone Lowland (Type A)
 - Clay River Floodplain (Type B)
 - Open Clay Vale (Type C)
 - Limestone River Valley (Type D)
 - Rolling Clay Lowland (Type E)
 - Greensand Hills (Type F)
 - Greensand Terrace (Type G)
 - Chalk Downland Edge (Type H)
 - Chalk Downland (Type I)
 - Chalk River Floodplain (Type J)
 - Greensand Vale (Type K)

Each of the above generic Landscape Character Types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, biodiversity and historical evolution.

²⁸ Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (LDA for Cotswolds AONB Unit, April 2004)

²⁹ Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (LUC for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

3.3.3 Within the 11 generic Landscape Character Types, 40 Landscape Character Areas have been identified within the District. The Landscape Character Areas reflect distinctive variations in local character within each Landscape Character Type based on visual analysis of how different combinations of physical features and perceptual qualities such as scale, pattern, tranquillity, cultural associations, etc. create areas of distinctive landscape character.

3.3.4 The Landscape Character Areas are:

A Limestone Lowland

- A1 South Cotswolds Limestone Lowland
- A2 South Wraxall Limestone Lowland
- A3 Broughton Gifford Limestone Lowland
- A4 Cleeve Limestone Lowland

B: Clay River Floodplain

- B1 Avon Floodplain
- B2 Biss Floodplain

C Open Clay Vale

- C1 Melksham Open Clay Vale
- C2 Semington Open Clay Vale

D Limestone River Valley

- D1 Limpley Stoke and Westwood Limestone River Valley

E Rolling Clay Lowland

- E1 Wingfield Rolling Clay Lowland
- E2 Belle Coeur Rolling Clay Lowland
- E3 North Bradley Rolling Clay Lowland
- E4 Green Lane Rolling Clay Lowland
- E5 Steeple Ashton and Keevil Rolling Clay Lowland
- E6 Bulkington Rolling Clay Lowland
- E7 West Ashton Rolling Clay Lowland
- E8 Heywood Rolling Clay Lowland

F Greensand Hills

- F1 Bowden Hill Greensand Hills
- F2 Sandridge Park Greensand Hills
- F3 Chapmanslade Greensand Hills
- F4 Corsley Heath Greensand Hills
- F5 Longleat Greensand Hills

G Greensand and Chalk Terrace

- G1 Bratton and Edington Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G2 Westbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G3 Upton Scudamore Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G4 Norridge Wood Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G5 Heytesbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G6 Warminster Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G7 Longbridge Deverill Greensand and Chalk Terrace

H Chalk Downland Edge

- H1 Bratton Chalk Downland Edge
- H2 Bishopstrow and Codford Down Chalk Downland Edge
- H3 Norton Bavant Chalk Downland Edge
- H4 Cold Kitchen Hill Chalk Downland Edge
- H5 The Deverills to Stockton Chalk Downland Edge

I Chalk Downland

- I1 Salisbury Plain West Chalk Downland (including I1a – Imber Valley Sub-Area)
- I2 Cope Hill Down Chalk Downland
- I3 Great Ridge Chalk Downland

J Chalk River Valley

- J1 Wylde Chalk River Valley
- J2 Chitterne Brook Chalk River Valley

4.0 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF WEST WILTSHIRE

4.0 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF WEST WILTSHIRE

4.1 General

4.1.1 This section of the report describes the variations in the character of the West Wiltshire 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:

- Key Characteristics
- Location and Boundaries
- 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.

4.2 Limestone Lowland (Type A)

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating lowland landscape which rises gradually from east to west across the type.
- A mixture of arable farmland and permanent pasture underlain by geology of predominantly mudstone and limestone with some pockets of clay.
- Numerous small rivers and stream corridors crossing the landscape.
- Field boundaries delineated by a strong network of hedgerows, often containing hedgerow trees.
- Scattered settlement pattern, consisting predominantly of villages and isolated farmsteads.
- Predominantly rural landscape with subtle variations in character relating to the varied geology, topography and watercourses.
- Large-scale, predominantly geometric field pattern, typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure with small-scale irregular fields of medieval pattern close to small settlements.
- Landscape scattered with traditional buildings, of local limestone, which provide a key distinguishing characteristic.

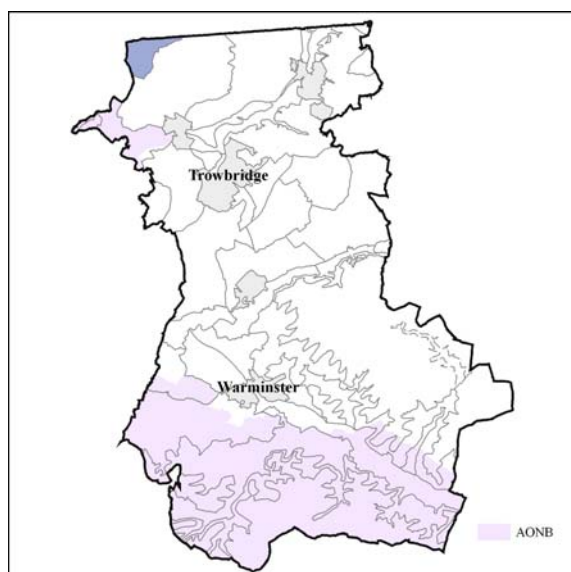
Summary of Visual Character

The limestone lowlands are underlain by geology of the Great Oolite Groups, formed in the Mid Jurassic Period. The landform undulates, rising from 35m AOD adjacent to the Limestone River Floodplain Landscape Type in the southeast to higher land in the northwest (200m). Numerous small rivers and stream corridors cross the type. There is a strong network of hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees and field trees visible. Settlement pattern consists of scattered villages and isolated farmsteads, which are connected by a series of minor rural roads. Villages are peaceful and rural, often centred on a village green, pond or area of common land. Buildings are traditional in style, with many dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, built from local limestone. Away from the main A363 and A365 road corridors, there is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity.

Character Areas

- A1 South Cotswolds Limestone Lowland
- A2 South Wraxall Limestone Lowland
- A3 Broughton Gifford Limestone Lowland
- A4 Cleeve Limestone Lowland

A1 : SOUTH COTSWOLDS LIMESTONE LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

The South Cotswold Landscape Character Area is situated in the northwest of the District, and forms part of the Cotswolds AONB.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating lowland farmland over underlying geology of predominantly limestone.
- A peaceful and rural landscape with subtle variations in character relating to the varied geology, topography and water courses.
- Mix of permanent pasture and arable farmland.
- Strong network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Dry stone wall field boundaries in some areas and around settlements.
- Field pattern predominantly large geometric field typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure with small scale irregular fields of medieval pattern close to close to settlement.
- Panoramic views over the surrounding lowland.
- Occasional woodland blocks, copses and frequent hedgerow trees give a greater sense of enclosure in places, with intermittent views.
- Settlements in the form of the village of Monkton Farleigh and scattered farmsteads distributed throughout the type linked by network of rural roads.
- Traditional buildings of local limestone an outstanding feature.
- Presence of historic parkland and estates marked by stone estate walls, grand entrances and parkland trees and avenues.



Summary of Visual Character

The character area is predominantly rolling mixed pastoral and arable farmland, in a pattern of large fields bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. The hedgerows vary in condition with some gappy and low flailed hedges in evidence. There are panoramic and distant views across the farmland as it falls away gently to the east. Areas of open pastoral land with numerous standard trees can be found throughout the area. Some areas have a designed character such as the large avenue near Monkton Farleigh. A key element in the area is the distinctive limestone village of Monkton Farleigh. Other

settlements exist in the form of scattered farmsteads. A network of rural roads and footpaths connects the settlements in the area.

Historic Environment

- Evidence of small and irregular medieval field patterns are still apparent, particularly close to settlement, although most of the fields are larger and more regular indicating more recent enclosure.
- Monkton Farleigh Manorhouse of 18th century origin and the adjacent 13th century remains of a Cluniac Priory refectory are Grade I listed buildings.
- Monkton Farleigh Mine – one of three central ammunition depots used by the MOD in WWII is situated underneath the village.

Biodiversity

The landscape as a whole is a valuable habitat for bats. There is also a strong network of hedgerows and frequent hedgerow and standard trees including veteran oaks, ash and willow along water courses. Some ancient woodland remains. Hazelton Wood, a small ancient semi-natural woodland site which, although is now mixed plantation, retains much of the understorey and ground flora of interest including bath asparagus is locally designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The condition of the area is generally good with intact hedgerows and evidence of vernacular stone dwellings and stone walls in the traditional village of Monkton Farleigh. In some sections of the area there are elements in poorer condition such as gappy and flailed hedgerows, overgrown stone walls and encroaching horse pasture close to some of the settlement.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- The peaceful rural nature of the area.
- Areas of ecological importance including ancient woodland and chalk grassland.
- The setting, containment and scale of Monkton Farleigh.
- The remaining medieval field patterns and dry stone walls around and close to settlement.
- Historic parkland.

Key Landscape Changes

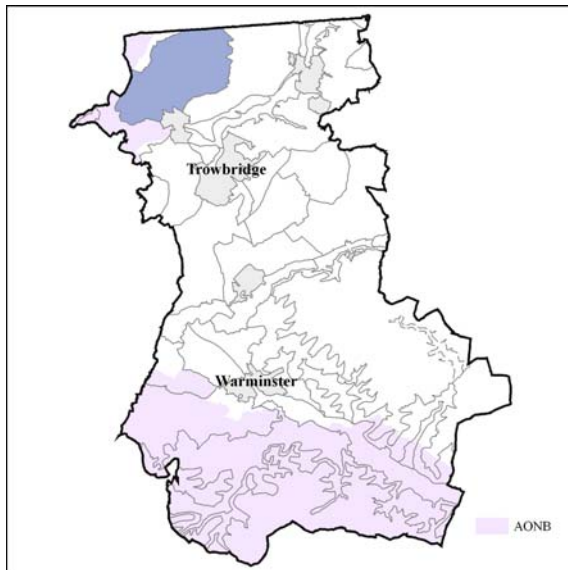
- Continued amalgamation and enlargement of fields.
- Some hedgerow field boundaries have been intensively flailed.
- Some dry stone wall field boundaries are becoming overgrown.
- Increasing traffic on narrow rural lane network leading to urbanisation through kerbing, additional lighting and signage.
- Pressure for new development along rural lanes and around existing settlements.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The strategy for the area is to conserve those elements intrinsic to the type's character or important in their own right, such as the distinctive stone village, the areas of ecological importance and the historic parkland and to strengthen locally degraded elements such as the flailed hedgerows and overgrown stone walls. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the network of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland copses and take opportunities for new planting where this will strengthen local character (for instance avoiding planting that will affect the open views in the high ground at the west of the area).
- Encourage conservation and rebuilding of dry stone wall field boundaries, particularly close to settlement.
- Conserve the remaining areas of ecological interest such as those with statutory designations, areas of ancient woodland and veteran hedgerow trees.
- Maintain the subtle variations that occur throughout the landscape, encouraging local distinctiveness for instance in the variation in field boundaries from hedgerows to stone walls.
- Encourage management and restoration of the historic parkland landscapes that are characteristic of the area.
- Retain the distinctive character of Monkton Farleigh ensuring any change respects the traditional stone built character and vernacular form.
- Resist urbanisation of the country lanes through addition of road markings and concrete kerbs or lamp posts or excessive signage that detracts from the rural character of the area.

A2 : SOUTH WRAXALL LIMESTONE LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

The area stretches from the northern edge of Bradford-upon-Avon in the south to Cottles Wood in the north where it is constrained by the district boundary. It encompasses the villages of South Wraxall, Lower Wraxall and Winsley. The A363 cuts diagonally through the area in the southwest whilst a couple of rural roads and a dense network of footpaths further cover the area.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating limestone lowland.
- Largely undeveloped and strong rural character with extensive views, occasionally framed by (ancient) woodland.
- Distinct pattern of small to medium sized irregular shaped fields enclosed by mostly intact hedgerows with mature trees.
- Few scattered small villages, hamlets and farm buildings.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.
- Pylons as a dominant vertical element.



Summary of Visual Character

The area is largely undeveloped with a strong rural character. It gently undulates with an overall slope from west to east, with views more open and long range on the higher ground in the west. Views on Inwood forest and the AONB in the southwest provide a contrast with the farmland views looking east. A mix of pasture and arable farmland, in a patchwork of medium sized irregular fields bounded by mostly intact hedgerows and trees, covers the land. Here and there a copse or woodland block can be found. The traditional limestone buildings in the villages of Winsley, South Wraxall and Lower Wraxall reflect the underlying geology of the area. A network of rural roads and footpaths connect the few small villages and scattered farms in the area, adding to the strong sense of tranquillity, only slightly disturbed by the pylons that are prominent in every direction.

Historic Environment

- Of particular note are South Wraxall Manor, dating back to 15th/16th century, and South Wroxall Farmhouse, dating back to 14th century.³⁰
- Cottles Wood, Inwood and Hays wood are ancient and semi-natural woodlands.³¹

³⁰ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. *The Buildings of England Wiltshire*. Yale University Press: London.

³¹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Traditional buildings are of local limestone and are an outstanding feature.

Biodiversity

This character area is covered by mainly farmland, both arable and pasture. The strong network of mostly intact hedgerows with several mature trees together with the presence of several – ancient – woodland blocks, in particular Cottles Wood, Park Wood, Cumberwell Wood and part of Inwood, also add to the ecological value of the area. In addition a number of ponds can be found in the area. Inwood (a calcareous ash-wych elm and dry maple woodland with an extremely rich ground flora including species of plant that are nationally rare) has SSSI status.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The traditional field pattern remains mostly intact with the hedgerow boundaries generally in good condition. Equally the limestone buildings in the traditional villages seem to be in fairly good condition. Remnant ancient woodland copses appear to be largely well managed.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- The setting, containment, vernacular character and scale of the villages.
- The extensive views across the farmland and to the AONB in the west.
- Areas of ecological value including ancient woodland.
- The remaining traditional field pattern.

Key Landscape Changes

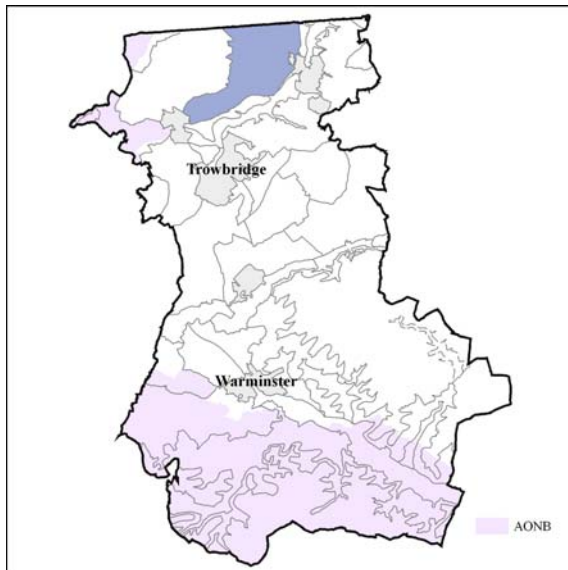
- Agricultural intensification could threaten to damage the current field pattern with the network of hedges.
- Increasing pressure for development along rural lanes and in villages.
- Increasing visual intrusion and noise pollution associated with the A363.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The management strategy is to conserve the peaceful rural nature of the area with its patchwork of arable and pastoral fields enclosed by hedgerows with trees and other characteristic elements such as the woodlands and network of footpaths, together with the scattering of farmsteads and small villages. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and enhance the current pattern of fields with hedgerows by careful management and encouraging planting to restore any gaps in the hedges, and by promoting ecological farming.
- Maintain the peaceful nature of the area and to conserve the extensive views by avoiding any developments that would cause major visual intrusion and/or noise pollution.
- Conserve the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of excessive visually intrusive signage.
- Conserve the remaining areas of ecological value such as the woodlands, some of which is ancient, and hedgerows with trees by promoting appropriate management – consider restoring traditional practices, such as coppicing, where possible.
- Encourage ecological management of the arable fields by maintaining an unploughed margin around the fields.

A3 : BROUGHTON GIFFORD LIMESTONE LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

The area encompasses the villages of Atworth, Whitley, Shaw, Broughton Gifford and Holt. The northern edge is formed by the district boundary whilst the floodplain of the river Avon restricts the area in the east and west. The A365 and the B3107 run along the northern and southern edge of the area respectively, and meet in Melksham in the east.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating limestone lowland.
- Predominantly rural character with several linear villages and scattered farm buildings connected by a dense network of rural roads and footpaths.
- Distinct pattern of small sized mainly irregular fields enclosed by in places fragmentary hedgerows with mature trees.
- Generally extensive views.
- Pylons as a conspicuous vertical element.



Summary of Visual Character

The area has a strong rural character with a mixture of pasture and arable farmland. The small sized, mainly irregular fields are enclosed by generally mature and intact but in places gappy, hedgerows with trees. Views tend to be open with the main notable vertical elements being pylons and hedgerow trees. A few small woodland blocks are scattered in the area, including the more expansive ancient Great Bradford Wood, in the south, cupped in one of the coils of the River Avon. The villages of Atworth and Shaw in the north of the area are situated linearly along the A365 whilst Whitley, Broughton Gifford and Holt are, also linearly, situated along secondary and more rural roads, with the exception of the higher part of Broughton Gifford, which is centred round a village green or Common. A large number of footpaths cut across the area, linking the villages and many scattered farms.

Historic Environment

- Several manor and country houses of note in the area, including Great Chelfield Manor and The Courts at Holt, both classified as Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest.³²
- Presence of historic parkland and estates marked by stone estate walls, grand entrances and parkland trees and avenues.

³² Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

- Daniel's Wood is an ancient and semi-natural woodland.³³
- Traditional buildings are of local limestone and are an outstanding feature.

Biodiversity

This largely rural area is scattered with several woodland clumps, some of which is ancient – including Great Bradford Wood. Other interesting ecological features are rough grass margins on the edge of paths and the historic parkland with its single mature trees and tree avenues. The network of brooks and ponds and the hedgerow field boundaries with mature trees serve a corridor function. No statutory nature conservation designations cover the area. Apart from Daniel's Wood and Great Barford Wood, Norrington Common, Broughton Gifford Meadow and Lady's Coppice are locally designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The condition of the hedgerows varies from generally intact to fragmentary in places. The remaining ancient woodland and historic parkland appear to be well managed and mostly in good condition. Much of the traditional field pattern remains today. Villages are traditional with vernacular limestone buildings.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- The extensive views.
- Landscape setting, vernacular character and small scale of the villages.
- Areas of ecological value including ancient woodland copses.
- The remaining traditional field pattern.
- Historic parkland.

Key Landscape Changes

- Agricultural intensification could threaten to damage the historic network of small fields and hedgerows.
- Increasing visual intrusion and noise pollution associated with the A365 and the B3107.
- Pressure for new – linear - developments in and around villages could cause the villages to lose their distinctiveness and threaten the traditional form of the Broughton Gifford Common.

Management Strategy and Objectives

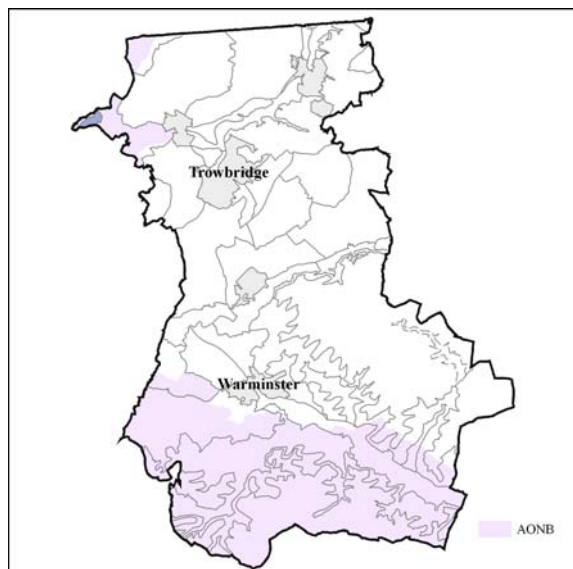
The management strategy for this area is to maintain and conserve the peaceful rural nature of the area with the small villages set in their surroundings of arable and pastoral farmland, including the hedgerows enclosing the fields, the coppices, the network of footpaths and rural roads connecting the villages and the scattering of farms in the area. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and maintain the traditional pattern of hedgerows enclosing arable and pastoral fields by encouraging planting to restore any gaps in the hedges and by promoting ecological management.
- Encourage new developments in and around the villages to be in line with the traditional vernacular character of the villages and – where possible – the traditional form around the Broughton Gifford Common.

³³ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Conserve the extensive views by avoiding any planting or developments that would have an adverse affect on those.
- Conserve the remaining areas of ecological value such as the woodland (some of which ancient) and hedgerow network with mature trees by promoting appropriate management – consider restoring traditional practices, such as coppicing, where possible in the woodland.

A4 : CLEEVE LIMESTONE LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

This small section of limestone plateau is part of a much larger area separating the Wallow Brook and Frome/Avon Valleys to the west and east respectively. It lies within the Cotswolds AONB.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating open plateau; expansive long distance views across the open plateau to distant hills and immediate surrounding valleys.
- Generally equal distribution of arable and pastoral land of medium and occasionally large sized, geometric fields enclosed principally by hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.
- Sparse woodland cover of small farm woodlands and shelterbelts limiting the sense of exposure.
- Limited areas of species rich grassland on the fringes of the landscape type.
- Sparsely settled with little settlement beyond isolated farmsteads.
- Communication routes principally limited to one minor road connecting small settlements and individual dwellings; and
- Limited number of archaeological remains, although their presence verifies the long history of settlement and use of the area.



Summary of Visual Character

Fields of arable and pastoral land are medium in size, and occasionally large, enclosed by hedgerows and post and wire / rail fences. Mature hedgerow trees are frequent, usually oak, with a smaller number of ash, sycamore and beech.³⁴ Tracts of biologically important species rich calcareous grassland and hay meadow are scattered across the area. Stone walls can also be found in the area and intermittently along the roadsides. Deciduous woodland predominates, with only limited areas of coniferous plantation. The settlement pattern consists of a number of individual farmsteads scattered across the plateau.

³⁴ Refer to Character Area 13B: Hinton Charterhouse Plateau within Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, 2003).

Historic Environment

- Continuous human habitation since the prehistoric period with evidence of tumuli on the plateau areas, and just to the south, the remains of a Roman road.
- Settlement is sparse, limited to occasional scattered farmsteads
- Building materials include Oolitic Limestone, and red clay or brown concrete tiles, harmonising buildings with the surrounding landscape.

Biodiversity

The landscape is dominated by a mixture of farmland (both arable and pasture) and – mainly ancient – woodland. The hedgerow field boundaries with mature hedgerow trees, together with the tracts of species rich calcareous grassland and hay meadow, add to the biodiversity value of the area. A significant portion of the area, known as Midford Valley Woods is designated a SSSI. Short Hill and Stout Wood are locally designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The landscape has a high degree of intactness and has a number of high quality landscape features such as the ancient woodland. The pastoral farmland appears to be well managed and the character of the stone buildings intact. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be good.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- The intact pattern of medium and irregular pastoral fields bounded by a network of hedges.
- Tracts of biologically important species rich calcareous grassland and hay meadow.
- The ancient woodland.
- The skyline which is largely free from development.
- Vernacular farmstead buildings constructed from local stone.

Key Landscape Changes

- Decline in species rich grasslands and hay meadow with intensification of agricultural practices.
- Deterioration of field boundaries.
- Loss of vernacular architectural features such as old barns.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy is to conserve the rural character of the area and retain the important landscape elements and patterns. This includes the tracts of ancient woodland, the surviving calcareous grassland, the dispersed settlement pattern and the network of rural roads and footpaths. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage important areas of ancient woodland and species rich grassland and take opportunities to extend these habitats.
- Ensure any development respects the traditional stone built character and vernacular form.
- Conserve and restore traditional hedgerow boundaries.
- Conserve the distinctive rural and dispersed settlement pattern and the network of rural roads and footpaths that connect them.

4.3 Clay River Floodplain (Type B)

Key Characteristics

- Flat or gently undulating valley floor, incorporating the floodplain of the river.
- Predominantly underlain by mudstone and clay geology.
- Gently meandering river course.
- Sparse, scattered settlement pattern.
- Mixture of pasture and arable farmland.
- Intimate, small-scale landscape.

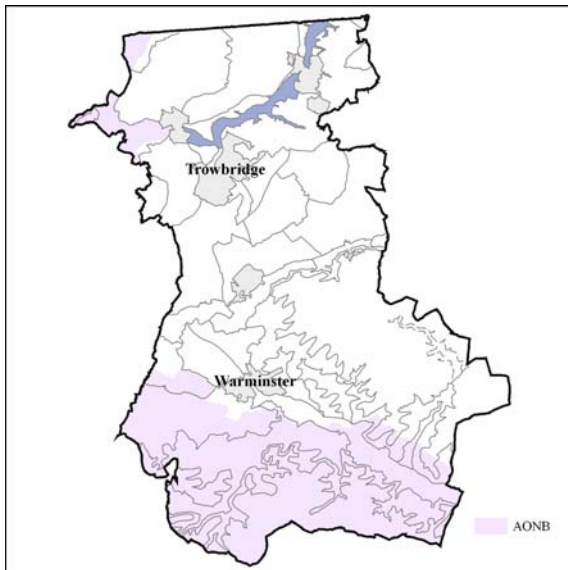
Summary of Visual Character

The Clay River Floodplain Landscape Type is underlain by geology of clay and mudstone. Within its lowland context, topography is predominantly flat, sandwiched between Open Clay Vales to the east and Limestone Lowlands to the west. The type is crossed by the gently meandering courses of the River Avon and Biss, which are lined with mature deciduous vegetation. This vegetation provides recognisable landscape corridors, which are visible within views from adjacent landscape character areas. The river corridors are lined with a combination of rough grassland and pasture, with arable fields set back at distance from the channel. Although the floodplain runs in close proximity to several settlements, settlement pattern within the floodplain is generally sparse and consists of isolated farmsteads. Sense of tranquillity varies as a result of proximity to settlements and main roads, however there is generally an overall sense of intimacy and calm along the river corridors.

Character Areas

- B1 Avon Floodplain
- B2 Biss Floodplain

B1 : AVON FLOODPLAIN



Location and Boundaries

Located towards the north of West Wiltshire District, the Avon Clay River Floodplain flows from the north through Melksham, meandering south-westwards to the north of Trowbridge and enters Bradford on Avon to the east. To the south of Melksham, the corridor of Semington Brook feeds westwards into the main Avon river corridor. The character area encompasses the small settlement of Staverton and associated works and is surrounded by Limestone Lowlands and Open Clay Vale landscape to the south.

Key Characteristics

- Meandering River Avon and its adjacent low-lying, flat floodplain.
- Intimate river corridor, lined with riverside trees (including alder and willow).
- Patchwork of rough grassland and arable fields within the floodplain, along both sides of the river channel.
- General lack of settlement pattern.
- Away from the settlements, a strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- River corridor is generally inaccessible via road, although a comprehensive network of footpaths leads to, and along the river corridor.



Summary of Visual Character

The gently meandering river corridor of the Avon is situated within a predominantly flat, lowland landscape, which is underlain by geology of predominantly mudstone with pockets of clay. Within this section of the river corridor, the relatively narrow river channel is lined along both banks by riverside trees (predominantly willows), which demarcate the path of the river, within views from adjacent farmland. Set back from the immediate banks of the river, a patchwork of rough grassland and arable fields cover the floodplain, with generally few hedgerows visible, but dry stone walls visible at field boundaries. In places, the route of the B3107 road corridor and several footpaths follow the route of the river. Generally, however, few minor roads cross the river corridor, other than at Staverton, and within Bradford-on-Avon. Settlement pattern is sparse, with occasional scattered farmsteads (several of which are built from traditional local limestone) situated along the river corridor. Staverton factory (CPUK cereals) is a very dominant built landmark along the river corridor, towards the centre of the character area. There is a general sense of openness across the floodplain, however views are often channelled along the river corridor as a result of tall vegetation

along the banks. Sense of tranquillity is relatively strong throughout the character area, at distance from the main settlements.

Historic Environment

- Canal bridge at Staverton and the Packhorse Bridge over the River Avon, are listed structures.
- Flowing water and sheep grazing in the area served as a catalyst for a weaving industry – as evidenced by a few remaining weaver’s cottages.
- Buildings are generally vernacular in style, constructed from stone with clay tile or slate roofs.

Biodiversity

The trees (predominantly willow) and other tall vegetation lining the river corridor function as a wildlife corridor and provide nesting opportunities for birds. Other elements of nature conservation in the area include the rough grassland and the few hedgerows set back from the banks of the river. No ancient woodland remains in the river floodplain. The River Avon is recognised for its biodiversity value through its designation as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Where present, hedgerows generally vary in condition (mature in places, and gappy in others). Mature, intact vegetation lines the river corridor, providing recognisable sense of place.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Generally peaceful, rural nature of the area, coupled with a relatively strong sense of tranquillity at distance from major settlements.
- Mature trees and intact vegetation lining the river corridor.
- Overall, rural, generally undeveloped character of the river corridor.

Key Landscape Changes

- Potential enlargement and amalgamation of fields as a result of agricultural intensification, which may also lead to deterioration and eventual loss of hedgerows.
- Overgrown dry stone walls at field boundaries.
- Increased traffic on minor rural roads which may lead to additional signage and lighting.
- Potential pollution of the river corridor from run-off associated with adjacent agricultural land.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with B3107.
- Visual intrusion from the factory building at Staverton.

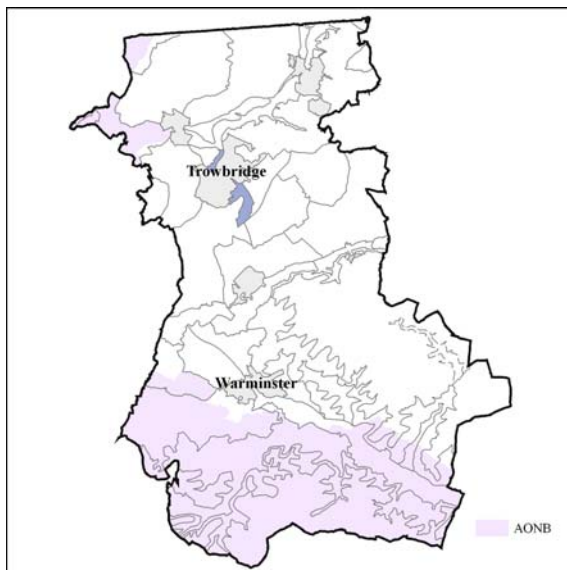
Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the overall peaceful rural character of the area, including the pattern of mature vegetation along the river corridor and scattered/ isolated settlement pattern. There are also opportunities to enhance the landscape setting of Melksham and North Trowbridge. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve mature vegetation lining the banks of the River Avon.
- Conservation and rebuilding of dry stone walls.
- Seek to conserve and maintain the overall rural character of the area and generally strong sense of tranquillity away from major settlements.
- Conserve and enhance the northern landscape settings of Melksham and Trowbridge.

- Conserve the relatively isolated settlement pattern along the river corridor.
- Conserve the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of excessive visually intrusive signage or lampposts.

B2 : BISS FLOODPLAIN



Location and Boundaries

Extending northwards from the north of Yarnbrook and east of North Bradley, the corridor of the River Biss flows into the southern edge of Trowbridge and northwards through the urban fabric of the town, where it eventually meets the River Avon. The stream corridor begins further to the southwest, where it meanders through Rolling Clay Lowland landscape. The character area is bordered to the east by West Ashton Road and to the south by Yarnbrook Road.

Key Characteristics

- Predominantly flat landscape encompassing the relatively narrow corridor of the River Biss.
- Combination of rough grassland and meadow/ pasture line the channel, with arable farmland at greater distance from the river corridor.
- Mature deciduous vegetation lining the river corridor and delineate its course from the surrounding landscape.
- Several major roads cross the area and converge (in close proximity to Yarnbrook), bringing associated noise and visual intrusion.
- Field boundaries delineated by a combination of low to medium height hedgerows (sometimes containing mature deciduous trees).
- Parts of the area lack a sense of tranquillity.
- Scattered farmsteads throughout the area.



Summary of Visual Character

The topography of this landscape character area is predominantly flat, surrounding the relatively narrow channel of the River Biss (which starts as Biss Brook to the southwest and is a tributary of the River Avon). Two smaller tributary streams feed into the River Biss (one to the south of Lower Studley and the other, running from the east of Blackball Bridge) and large pools are visible to the southeast of Manor Farm. A combination of rough grassland and meadow/ pasture line the channel, with arable farmland at greater distance from the river corridor. Mature vegetation (predominantly deciduous riverside trees) lines the riverbank and delineates its course from the surrounding landscape. Field boundaries are delineated by a combination of low to-medium height hedgerows (sometimes containing deciduous hedgerow trees). A mixture of aquatic and marginal vegetation distinguishes the watercourse as an intricate landscape features. Towards the southern end of the area (in close proximity to Yarnbrook) several major roads converge (A350: Westbury Road, A363 and Yarnbrook Road in a series of junctions and roundabouts, which introduce visual and noise intrusion to the

character of the area. This part of the character area is particularly lacking tranquillity due to its proximity to the railway (with associated brick and concrete bridges) and road corridors and also by the constant low background buzz of visually dominant pylons crossing the area. Within this area, views to the adjacent visually intrusive car showroom further disturb the rural character. Where the river corridor enters the southern urban fabric of Trowbridge (Lower Studley), views to the visually harsh edges of new development (with associated tarmac footpath and lampposts) introduce further human influence to character. Farmsteads are scattered throughout the area.

Historic Environment

- Associations with the 18th and 19th century weaving industry in Trowbridge with weaver's cottages, mills and other industrial relics.
- Buildings are generally vernacular in style, constructed from stone with clay tile or slate roofs.

Biodiversity

The mature vegetation (predominantly mature riverside trees) lining the river corridor, together with the network of hedgerows, has an important wildlife corridor value. The combination of rough grassland and meadow/ pasture lining the channel add to the ecological potential of the area. No ancient woodland remains and none of the area is included in a statutory area of nature conservation.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Vegetation lining the river corridor is generally mature and intact. The condition of field boundaries varies (with evidence of deterioration/ gaps in places). Landscape pattern is generally disturbed by the number of communication corridors (roads and railway) crossing the area. In proximity to the southern urban edge of Trowbridge, landscape structure is relatively weak.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature vegetation lining the banks of the River Biss.
- Mosaic of rough grassland and meadow/ pasture adjacent to the river channel.

Key Landscape Changes

- Noise and visual intrusion associated with main road corridors (A350, A363), railway corridor and pylons.
- Deterioration of field boundaries.
- Visual intrusion of harsh urban edge associated with new development (Lower Studley).
- Potential pollution of river corridor from run-off associated with adjacent agricultural land.
- Visually intrusive large commercial/ industrial warehouse units at North Bradley.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to enhance the landscape setting of Trowbridge and the industrial estate at North Bradley and restore gappy field boundaries and landscape structure surrounding visually intrusive corridors and developments. Specific management objectives are to:

- Enhance the landscape setting of Trowbridge (using native species which are appropriate to local landscape character).
- Screen visually intrusive commercial and industrial warehouse units.
- Mitigate the visual impact of the A350 and A363 road corridors.

- Conserve mature vegetation lining the riverbanks.
- Conserve the scattered and relatively isolated settlement pattern along the river corridor.

4.4 Open Clay Vale (Type C)

Key Characteristics

- Underlying geology of Alluvium and River Terrace Gravels around the watercourses and tracts of Sand throughout the vales.
- Landform generally flat, or very gently rolling throughout the area and ranges from 30 to 60m AOD.
- Dominated by a mixture of arable farmland and pasture, with hedgerows or drainage channels demarcating field boundaries.
- Settlement pattern is generally scattered, consisting of small, nucleated settlements and isolated farmsteads.
- The underlying geology is reflected in local building materials (brick and tile) within traditional historic buildings.

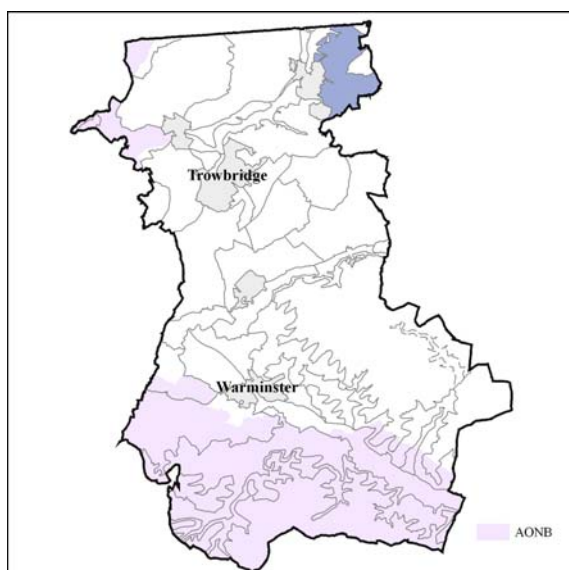
Summary of Visual Character

The underlying geology of the Open Clay Vales varies, with Alluvium and River Terrace Gravels around the watercourses and tracts of Sand throughout the vales. Landform is generally flat, or very gently rolling throughout the area and ranges from 30 to 60m AOD. Land cover is dominated by a mixture of arable farmland and pasture, with hedgerows or drainage channel delineating field boundaries. The sale of woollen cloth was associated with the River Avon during the post-medieval period, which led to the development of towns along the course. This was followed by the development of main roads and the Kennet and Avon Canal corridor. Settlement pattern is generally scattered, consisting of small, nucleated settlements and isolated farmsteads. The underlying geology is reflected in local building materials (brick and tile) within traditional historic buildings.

Character Areas

- C1. Melksham Open Clay Vale
- C2. Semington Open Clay Vale

C1 : MELKSHAM OPEN CLAY VALE



Location and Boundaries

Melksham Open Clay Vale is situated in the north east of the District, east of Melksham and Bowerhill.

Key Characteristics

- Flat, low-lying landscape (in places adjacent to the floodplain of the River Avon).
- Predominantly arable farmland.
- Relatively regular, medium-scale field pattern.
- General sense of openness throughout the character area.
- Road corridors lined in places with mature deciduous hedgerows and telegraph poles.
- Comprehensive footpath network.
- Pylons are dominant vertical elements across parts of the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with isolated farmsteads.
- Brooks and stream corridors scattered across the landscape – including Clackers Brook (a tributary of the River Avon).



Summary of Visual Character

This character area is situated upon a relatively open and predominantly flat expanse of Open Clay Vale (underlain by Oxford and Kellaway Clays on slightly higher ground and tracts of sand throughout the vales). The relatively narrow course of Clackers Brook (a tributary of the Avon) crosses the area and occasional drainage ditches are visible at field boundaries. Agricultural farmland (predominantly arable, with patches of pasture), dominates the character of the area, with a medium-sized, relatively regular field pattern apparent. Field boundaries are delineated with a mixture of mature hedgerows and deciduous hedgerow trees. However, although predominantly intact, the hedgerow network is gappy in places. Occasional deciduous copses are scattered throughout the landscape, although these are not a dominant characteristic. The area is served by the main A3102 to the north and the A365 to the south, which provide access through the area (with associated noise and visual intrusion). A comprehensive network of public footpaths also serves the area, however the minor road network is less well connected. Pylons are also visible as dominant vertical elements in certain parts of the character area. The landscape has a strong settled and urbanised feel in proximity

to Melksham and Bowerhill (where views to the urban edge are apparent), however settlement pattern throughout the rest of the area is relatively isolated (consisting predominantly of scattered farmsteads). Despite mature field boundaries, there is a strong sense of openness throughout the area. Sense of tranquillity is moderate, depending on distance from the major road corridors.

Historic Environment

- The widespread use of brick and tile reflects the use of local clay, but there is also render and Oolitic limestone, a mixture of the latter and the local brick characterising the historic centres of settlements.
- Although the lowlands do not have the outstanding archaeological sites of the nearby Chalk uplands, there is evidence of continuity of settlement on the gravel spreads of the vales from the iron Age through the Anglo-Saxon and Roman periods and beyond.
- The surviving pattern of scattered nucleated villages is largely medieval.

Biodiversity

This area is predominantly arable farmland, with patches of pasture. The focus on arable has limiting effect on the ecological value of the area. However the hedgerows demarcating the fields have an important corridor value. The occasional woodland copse and Clackers Brook stream corridor also contribute to the biodiversity potential of the area. A small tract of ancient woodland remaining in the northeastern corner of the area is also included in the Spye Park SSSI. Also in the vicinity, several areas of woodland and meadow are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. It lies within a larger locally designated Special Landscape Area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall, field boundaries generally mature and intact. The area is however, relatively intensively managed, loss of hedgerows apparent (gappy) in certain locations (as a result of intensive cultivation). Overall, however, the condition of this landscape is perceived to be good.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Predominantly intact, mature field boundaries and overall intact, coherent landscape pattern.
- Open and glimpsed views across the floodplain of the River Avon (adjacent and to the west).
- Wide, open skies, with distant views to higher downland.

Key Landscape Changes

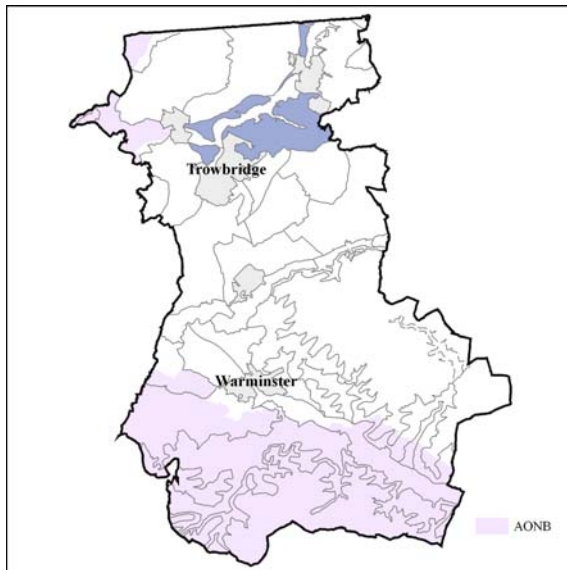
- Potential visually intrusive urban extensions to Melksham and Bowerhill.
- Potential deterioration and or loss of field boundaries.
- Large commercial/ industrial developments to the west of Bowerhill.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with the A3102 and A365 road corridors.
- Visual intrusion from pylons.
- Increased vehicle pressure on minor rural roads associated with visitors.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the intact and recognisable existing landscape pattern and enhance the landscape settings of adjacent urban areas and features that have been lost (e.g. hedgerows). Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of existing settlements/ urban areas (such as Melksham and Bowerhill).
- Conserve open views across the clay vale to distant downland ridges.
- Encourage screening of visually intrusive modern farm buildings.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the A3102 and A365 main road corridors.
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow network.
- Introduce arable field margins as an important nature conservation feature.
- Screen visually intrusive urban edges of Melksham and Bowerhill.

C2 : SEMINGTON OPEN CLAY VALE



Location and Boundaries

This landscape character area stretches from the northeastern edge of Trowbridge, eastwards (incorporating Semington) and northwards to the southern edges of Melksham and western edges of Bowerhill. The area is sub-divided by the River Avon floodplain.

Key Characteristics

- Predominantly flat, sloping gradually upwards to the south of Bowerhill and at Hill Farm east of Hilperton.
- Gently meandering course of Semington Brook, lined in places by mature vegetation.
- Kennet and Avon Canal and disused railway corridor are distinctive corridor features.
- A mixture of arable fields and pasture.
- Urban fringe character apparent, adjacent to Trowbridge and Melksham/ Bowerhill.
- Hampton Business Park and Police Headquarters are dominant visible features within views from surrounding landscape.
- Several interconnecting main road corridors cross the area.
- Settlement pattern comprising Semington village and a number of isolated farmsteads.
- Strong sense of openness.
- Sense of tranquillity disturbed by proximity to major road corridors.



Summary of Visual Character

Landscape within this area is predominantly flat (sloping gradually upwards to the south of Bowerhill and at Hill Farm (east of Hilperton). Underlying geology comprises a mixture of Oxford/ Kellaway Clays and tracts of sand within the vales. The gently meandering course of Semington Brook (a tributary of the River Avon) runs east west across the character area, lined in places by mature vegetation and fields of pasture, marshes and rough grassland. Kennet and Avon Canal (with straighter and engineered form) and the associated towing path, provide a distinctive corridor within the landscape. To the north-east of Trowbridge, a new marina and residential development introduces a relatively harsh urbanised influence adjacent to the canal corridor. The dismantled railway corridor provides another distinctive linear corridor. A mixture of arable fields and pasture/ dairy farming (close to the corridor of Semington Brook) are apparent, however, field boundaries are fragmented and incoherent in several locations. Mature single deciduous trees are however, a characteristic of field

boundaries, where present. In close proximity to the urban edges of Trowbridge (Hilperton) and Bowerhill, an urban fringe character is apparent, with views to visually harsh urban edges apparent. A small pocket of arable fields has also been encapsulated amongst the urban fabric at the eastern edge of Trowbridge (Hilperton Marsh). Hampton Business Park and the Police Headquarters to the north of Semington are also visually intrusive landmarks within views across the adjacent landscape. The area is crossed by several interconnecting main road corridors (including A361 and A365), which introduce noise and visual intrusion to the character of the area. Semington (a small nucleated village) provides the main settlement, which is accessed via a minor road to the south and via a hump-backed bridge crossing the canal to the north. Berryfield, a suburban enclave, and Whaddon (an isolated hamlet), and a number of isolated farmsteads, also contribute to settlement pattern. Overall, there is a strong sense of openness throughout the area, with characteristically extensive views across the vales from certain locations. Sense of tranquillity is, however, disturbed due to proximity to main settlements and major interconnecting road corridors.

Historic Environment

- St George's Hospital, a former workhouse, since converted to residential use, is typical of the Victorian buildings of this area.³⁵
- Within Hilperton, three buildings reflect the history of this area as a through road in the post-medieval period.: two turnpike houses, probably c.1830-40, the Lion and Fiddle and Navy Cottage; and the lockup opposite the garden of Hilperton House, with its domed roof.³⁶
- Historic use for transport evident in canals.
- Although the lowlands do not have the outstanding archaeological sites of the nearby Chalk uplands, there is evidence of continuity of settlement on the gravel spreads of the vales from the iron Age through the Anglo-Saxon and Roman periods and beyond.
- The widespread use of brick and tile reflects the use of local clay, but there is also render and Oolitic limestone, a mixture of the latter and the local brick characterising the historic centres of settlements.
- The surviving pattern of scattered nucleated villages is largely medieval.

Biodiversity

This intensively managed area is fragmented in places by busy communication channels. The embankment of the (disused) railway however, together with the mature vegetation lining Semington Brook corridor, the hedgerow field boundaries and the field trees area of significant ecological value. No ancient woodland or statutory nature conservation designation cover this area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The hedgerow network is gappy in places and the landscape pattern relatively fragmented by major road corridors and the canal/ dismantled railway corridors. The area is intensively managed and in several places, character is strongly influenced by human activity.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Open and glimpsed views across open clay vales.
- Wide, open skies, with distant views to higher downland.
- Mature single trees at field boundaries and within fields.

³⁵ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

³⁶ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

Key Landscape Changes

- Visually harsh residential development at the northeastern edges of Trowbridge and edges of Melksham and Bowerhill.
- Further deterioration and loss of field boundaries.
- Expanding influence of urban areas (urban fringe characteristics).
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A361 and A365 road corridors.
- Visually intrusive Business Park development.
- Loss of mature vegetation lining Semington Brook corridor.
- Increased pressure on use of Kennet and Avon Canal as a visitor resource.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to enhance the landscape setting of Trowbridge, Melksham and Bowerhill and restore fragmented hedgerows and deteriorating landscape pattern. Specific management objectives are to:

- Enhance visually intrusive harsh urban edges of Trowbridge, Melksham and Bowerhill.
- Conserve open views across the clay vale to distant downland ridges.
- Restore gappy hedgerows with species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the A361 and A365 road corridors.
- Introduce arable field margins as an important nature conservation feature.
- Screen visually intrusive large developments (such as Hampton Business Park and the Police Headquarters).
- Encourage any new development within villages to fit with the local vernacular character.

4.5 Limestone River Valley (Type D)

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating valley floor with steep limestone sides which provide a strong sense of enclosure.
- Intimate, small scale landscape with landform and woodlands restricting long views out of the valley.
- Predominantly pastoral farming with hedgerows delineating field boundaries.
- Generally remote and rural character throughout the area.
- Numerous small settlements within the valley bottom, often in association with bridging points or along transport routes.
- Settlement character dominated by traditional stone building material.
- Network of minor rural roads cross the landscape type.

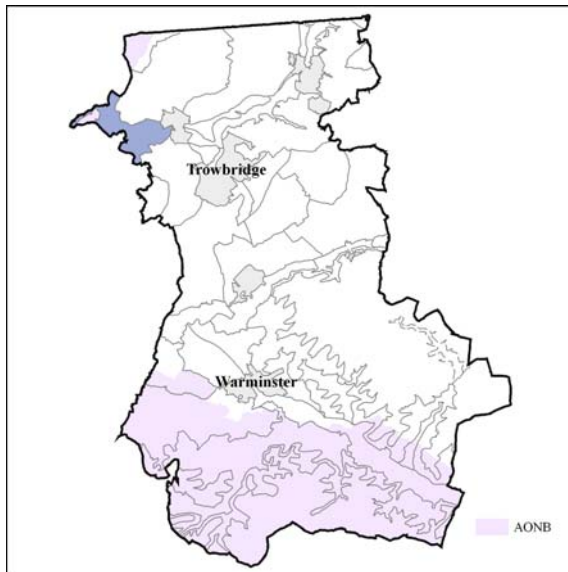
Summary of Visual Character

A mixture of Jurassic Oolitic Limestone and Lias Group sandstone underlies this landscape type. The valley is relatively broad with a flat to gently undulating bottom, with steep valley sides providing a strong sense of enclosure. There is strong biodiversity interest within this type, as a result of scattered tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland and species rich limestone grassland. The lower valley sides, a sheltered location with a plentiful supply of water would have been an attractive place to settle for early man. During the 15th century the close proximity of flowing water and sheep grazing on the valley sides was a catalyst for the development of the weaving industry, and with it came the construction of weaving cottages, many of which can still be found throughout the valley. Similarly, mills and other 18th/19th century industrial relics are also apparent. An interconnected network of minor rural roads crosses the landscape type.

Character Areas

D1. Limpley Stoke and Westwood Limestone River Valley

D1 : LIMPLEY STOKE AND WESTWOOD LIMESTONE RIVER VALLEY



Location and Boundaries

The character area following the Avon river valley west of Bradford on Avon, extending into the limestone landscapes of the Cotswolds AONB.

Key Characteristics

- River valley which is relatively narrow in places, with gently undulating valley floor and steep limestone sides.
- Intimate, small scale landscape with landform and woodlands restricting long views out of the valley.
- Strong sense of enclosure created by landform contributing to a remote, rural character, despite numerous settlements.
- Some significant areas of woodland, a number of which are ancient semi-natural woodlands, particularly on steeper slopes of the valley.
- Predominance of open pastoral farmland divided by hedgerows into a variety of field sizes.
- Sequence of stone built villages occupying secluded locations in the valley bottom, often in association with a bridging point or along transport routes defined by the valley.
- Small scale quarries and mines.
- Associations with the 18th and 19th century weaving industry with weaver's cottages, mills and other industrial relics.



Summary of Visual Character

The area is a relatively narrow yet steep sided valley following the course of the River Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal. Woodland within the valley is a significant presence³⁷, cloaking the upper slopes and valley tops and limiting views to urban edges such as Bradford-on-Avon to the east. This is a well settled area with villages following the transport routes along the valley sides. Buildings are predominantly stone and vernacular in style with some large mansions. Despite the fairly high density of settlement, busier and more frequent transport routes and close proximity large urban areas, the landform and woodland help to retain a rural feeling, directing views to the pastoral lower slopes.

³⁷ Refer to Character Area 4B: Bathampton and Limpley Stoke within Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, 2003).

Historic Environment

- The lower valley sides, a sheltered location with a plentiful supply of water would have been an attractive place to settle for early man.
- The close proximity of fortified sites, most notably on the edge of Castle Combe (within an adjacent District), also demonstrates that the area has been settled for a significant amount of time dating from at least the Iron Age, through the Roman and Medieval periods.
- During the 15th century the close proximity of flowing water and sheep grazing in the area was a catalyst for the development of the weaving industry, and with it came the construction of weaver's cottages, some of which can still be found throughout the valley. Similarly, mills and other 18th/19th century industrial relics are also apparent; there is a mill and workhouse at Avoncliff, for example.

Biodiversity

The area has a rich biodiversity interest with numerous tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland and species rich limestone grassland. The landscape is a valuable habitat for bats. A few fragments of the Bradford on Avon Bats SSSI fall within the area near Winsley. Conkwell Wood, an ancient semi-natural woodland site with mixed replanting retaining some wych elm, a rich fungal diversity and ground flora indicative of ancient woodland is also a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, as is the River Avon and the Kennet & Avon Canal.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The landscape has a high degree of intactness and has a number of high quality landscape features such as the ancient woodland. The pastoral farmland appears to be well managed and the character of the stone villages intact. In some areas however, particularly around the larger urban area of Bradford-on-Avon its strong character has been diluted with more ubiquitous suburban elements. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be good.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- The rural character of the valley.
- The intact pattern of medium and irregular pastoral fields bounded by a network of hedges.
- Tracts of biologically important species rich calcareous grassland and hay meadow.
- Extensive areas of ancient woodland.
- The valley sides and skyline which are largely free from development.
- Nucleated villages of vernacular buildings constructed from local stone.

Key Landscape Changes

- Decline in species rich grasslands and hay meadow with intensification of agricultural practices.
- Reversion of previous industrial landscapes to unmanaged sites.
- Suburbanisation of existing rural valley settlements.
- Isolated development on the valley slopes that might compromise the rural character.
- Loss of vernacular architectural features such as old barns and industrial heritage features such as mills.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy is to conserve the rural character of the valleys and retain the important landscape elements and patterns. This includes the tracts of ancient woodland, the surviving calcareous grassland, vernacular and industrial features (mills, weaver's terraces etc) the character and setting of the stone villages and the network of winding rural roads and sunken lanes. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage important areas of ancient woodland and species rich grassland and take opportunities to extend these habitats.
- Counteract the impact of degraded urban edges with new woodland planting that links to existing woodland of the valley slopes.
- Retain the distinctive character of the villages by restricting development that encroaches the valley sides. Ensure any change respects the traditional stone built character and vernacular form.
- Conserve and restore traditional hedgerow boundaries.
- Conserve the distinctive rural and dispersed settlement pattern and the network of rural roads and sunken lanes that connect them.

4.6 Rolling Clay Lowland (Type E)

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling lowland based on clay.
- Mixture of arable and pastoral farmland, delineated by mature hedgerows, with mature hedgerow trees often visible.
- Variable field pattern.
- Presence of streams marked by lines of willows and crossed by bridges.
- Scattered woodland blocks, including some ancient woodland.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with several settlements exhibiting traditional materials, including brick, half-timber, stone, tiles and thatch.
- Network of minor, rural roads crossing the landscape.
- Predominantly rural landscape, with an overall strong sense of tranquillity away from major road corridors and settlement edges.

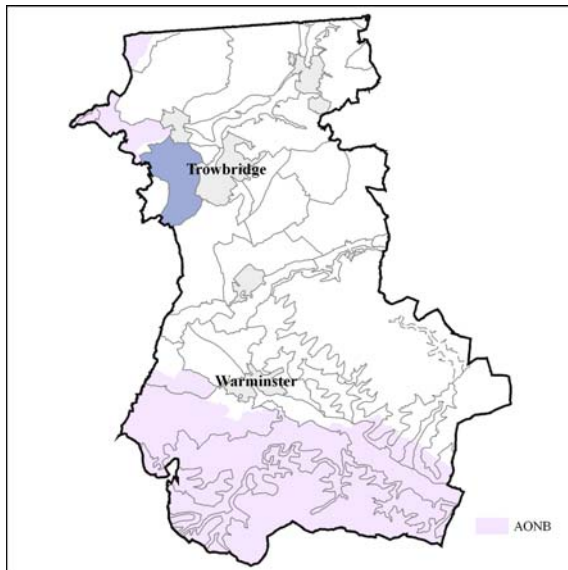
Summary of Visual Character

The Rolling Clay Lowlands are gently undulating and predominantly founded on a base of clay. Topography ranges from approximately 50m AOD in the east to 100m AOD in the west. The underlying clay geology and the many small watercourses give rise to seasonally wet soils of deep clay and loam to clayey soil over shale. Land cover is dominated by mixture of intensively farmed arable and pasture farmland. Patches of scattered woodland are also a characteristic feature, providing a sense of enclosure, particularly along the western edge of the type. The lowland Clay landscapes were generally cleared and settled much later than adjacent areas of Chalk Plain and Downland. Other than the relatively large town of Trowbridge, settlement pattern predominantly consists of series of small-nucleated settlements, the built character (brick and tile) of which often reflects the underlying geology. Views to the large scale industrial buildings on the outskirts of Trowbridge and noise and light pollution from transport corridors detract from the rural, tranquil feel certain locations within this Landscape Character Type.

Character Areas

- E1. Wingfield Rolling Clay Lowland
- E2. Belle Coeur Rolling Clay Lowland
- E3. North Bradley Rolling Clay Lowland
- E4. Green Lane Rolling Clay Lowland
- E5. Steeple Ashton and Keevil Rolling Clay Lowland
- E6. Bulkington Rolling Clay Lowland
- E7. West Ashton Rolling Clay Lowland
- E8. Heywood Rolling Clay Lowland

E1 : WINGFIELD ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

Bradford-on Avon and Trowbridge frame the area in the north and east respectively. The western edge of the area follows the district boundary, the A366 and the B3109 Frome Road whilst the A361 forms the southern border of the area.

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling farmland based on clay with a mixture of arable and pasture.
- Largely rural character with extensive views.
- Distinct pattern of medium sized mostly irregular fields enclosed by mainly intact hedgerows with mature trees.
- Small settlements in the form of the village of Wingfield and several scattered farmsteads.
- Strong sense of tranquillity despite the presence of busy roads.
- Pylons as a dominant vertical element.



Summary of Visual Character

The area has a generally rural character with a mixture of pasture and arable farmland. The B3109 which connects Bradford-on-Avon and Frome, and the A366 Trowbridge to Radstock road cut across the area, meeting in the village of Wingfield. Despite this junction of two busy roads there is a fairly strong sense of tranquillity in Wingfield and surroundings. The settlement pattern further consists of a scattering of farmsteads and manors, connected by a network of footpaths and rural roads. The medium to large sized, irregular fields, are typically bounded by hedgerows with mature trees. The condition of the hedgerows varies, being gappy in places and intact in others. Views are panoramic throughout the area with the chalk downland being visible looking south. The pylons, which are aplenty, together with some large-scale industrial buildings on the outskirts of Trowbridge – such as the sewage works – detract slightly from the rural character of the area.

Historic Environment

- The Church of St Mary, Wingfield House and Westwood Manor, are buildings of note.
- Midway Manor, Col. Henry Shrapnel's house is within this area. Col. Shrapnel invented the Shrapnel bomb in 1785 and on the listed gateway piers his work is commemorated with shrapnel bombs and the names of battles won by their use.³⁸
- Scattered settlement of small villages and farmsteads; traditional material is limestone.

Biodiversity

The network of hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees bounding the fields in this largely rural area has an important corridor function. It also provides nesting opportunities for birds. No ancient woodland remains in the area and there are no statutory nature conservation designations.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The traditional field pattern remains largely intact in the area with many of the hedgerow boundaries generally in good condition. Buildings in the village of Wingfield appear to be in fairly good condition.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- The extensive views.
- The landscape setting and scale of the village of Wingfield.
- The remaining traditional field pattern with the hedgerow boundaries.

Key Landscape Changes

- New developments in and around Wingfield could threaten the small scale of the village.
- Increasing visual intrusion and noise pollution associated with the busy roads.
- Potential further decline in traditional management techniques within woodland areas.
- Agricultural intensification could result in loss of the traditional field pattern with the network of hedges and hedgerow trees.

Management Strategy and Objectives

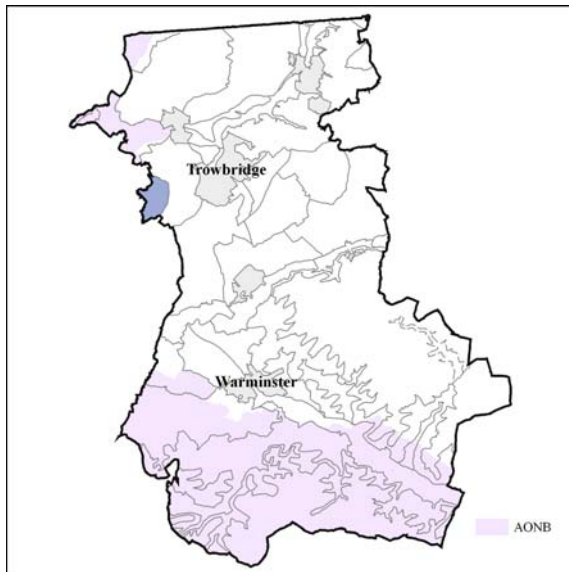
The strategy is to maintain the rural, open character of the area with its mosaic of fields and hedgerows, farms and footpaths. Specific management objectives are to:

The objectives are:

- Maintain the open character of the area by resisting any development that would have adverse affects on the extensive views.
- Respect the small-scale village character of Wingfield by ensuring that any new development is in line with the vernacular nature of the existing buildings.
- Conserve the traditional field pattern by promoting new planting to repair gaps in the hedges and by encouraging ecological farming.

³⁸ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

E2 : BELLE COEUR ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

The area is situated west of the village of Wingfield. It is bounded by the A366 in the north and the B3109 in the east. The district boundary forms the southern and western edge.

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling wooded farmland based on clay with predominantly pasture.
- Views framed by scattered ancient woodland blocks.
- Distinct pattern of small to medium sized fields enclosed by mainly intact hedgerows with some mature trees.
- Few scattered farmsteads linked by footpaths and rural roads.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.
- Roads mainly minor and rural.



Summary of Visual Character

Wooded farmland with mainly pasture, covers this area of gently rolling clay southwest of the village of Wingfield. Six main ancient woodland blocks, Pomeroy Wood, Tipney Wood, Birch Wood, Sleight Wood, Vagg's Hill Bushes and High Wood give the area an enclosed feel, in strong contrast with the open character of the farmland northeast of Wingfield (E1 Wingfield). Views are generally intermittent due to the woodland blocks with the chalk uplands being visible from the northeastern corner of the area. There is a lack of main roads within the area with a couple of one-track rural roads and several footpaths the only communications in the area. Settlements consist of a few scattered farm buildings, mainly situated along Pomeroy Lane in the north. A strong sense of tranquillity is apparent across the entire area.

Historic Environment

- Pomeroy Wood, Tipney Wood, Sleight Wood, High Wood, Birch Wood and Vagg's Hill Bushes are all ancient and semi-natural woodlands.³⁹
- Scattered farmsteads where stone buildings predominate.

³⁹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

Biodiversity

The area is characterised by a mixture of ancient woodland and – predominantly pastoral – farmland. The focus on pasture in favour of arable adds to the biodiversity in the area. The ancient woodland consists of six main blocks: Pomeroy Wood, Tipney Wood, Birch Wood, Sleight Wood, Vagg’s Hill Bushes and High Wood. Together with the hedgerows demarcating the fields they are of considerable nature conservation value. There are no statutory sites of nature conservation in the area. All the woods are locally designated as Areas of High Ecological Value and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The ancient woodland generally appears to be in good condition and well managed. The condition of the hedgerows varies with the hedges being gappy in places but mostly intact. Most of the traditional field pattern remains. Overall this landscape is perceived to be largely intact.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- Areas of ecological value in particular the ancient woodland.
- The remaining traditional field pattern.

Key Landscape Changes

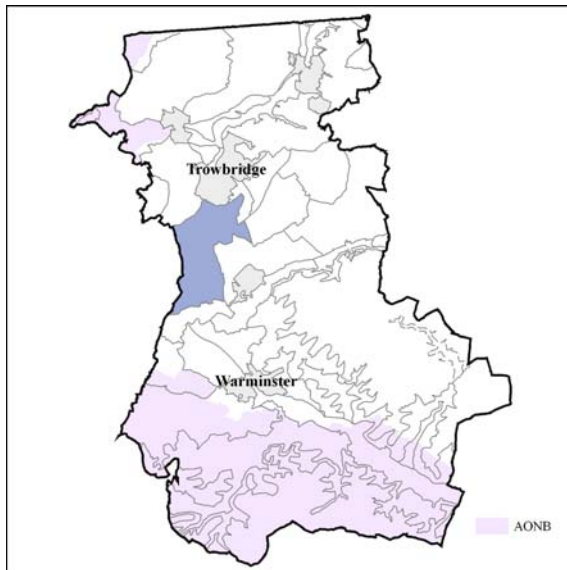
- Visual and noise intrusion from the A366 and the B3109.
- Potential further decline in traditional management techniques within woodland areas.
- Agricultural intensification could threaten the ancient woodland and the traditional field pattern with its hedgerows.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The strategy is to conserve the peaceful rural and enclosed character of the area with its pastures, hedgerows and woodland blocks. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the ancient woodland in the area by promoting appropriate management – consider restoring traditional practices, such as coppicing, where possible.
- Maintain the scarce settlement pattern which adds to the rural character of the area.
- Conserve the field pattern with the network of hedgerows by promoting ecological farming and by encouraging planting to fill in gaps in the hedges.

E3 : NORTH BRADLEY ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

The area is situated between the towns of Trowbridge and Westbury. It is bounded in the North by the A361 and the southern edge of Trowbridge. The village of Dilton Marsh indicates the southern boundary of the area whilst it is constrained by the district boundary in the west.

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling farmland based on clay, with extensive views, including views on the chalk downland in the east and south.
- Distinct pattern of small to medium sized fields enclosed by mainly intact hedgerows with mature trees.
- Predominantly pasture with a few scattered ancient woodland blocks.
- Settlements consist of several villages and farmsteads linked by a dense network of mainly secondary roads and footpaths.
- Pylons as a dominant vertical element.



Summary of Visual Character

This area of gently rolling clay lowland is covered by predominantly farmland with a mixture of pasture and arable. A network of mainly intact hedgerows with occasional mature trees bounds the fields, which are generally small in size and irregularly shaped. Farms are scattered throughout the area and tend to be clustered around the villages. The two main settlements in the area, the villages of Southwick and North Bradley, are situated in the north, extending along the A361 and the A363 respectively. A stronger urban feel is apparent in both villages, due to the busy traffic connected with Trowbridge and the industrial estate near North Bradley. In contrast the south of the area is a lot less developed and has a much more distinct rural character. The presence of ancient woodland blocks – including Hazel Wood and Round Wood – add to the tranquillity. There is a general lack of main roads in the area with the farms and villages being connected by a network of rural roads and footpaths. Other communications are the Wessex Main Line and the Great Western Main Line, running north south and east west through the area respectively. Views tend to vary from panoramic to framed by woodland and scattered mature trees, with pylons apparent in most directions. The West Wilts Trading Estate northwest of Westbury detracts slightly from the rural character but is generally well shielded by planting.

Historic Environment

- St Nicholas Church, North Bradley, dates back to the 15th century and is listed Grade II*.⁴⁰
- Round Wood, Hazel Wood and Brokerswood Country Park are ancient and semi-natural woodlands.⁴¹
- Medieval settlement and associated field systems west of Brook Farm, including the medieval settlement of Brook, a manor house site and associated field systems, located on a slight east facing slope of Oxford Clay dropping to the Biss Brook, 2km west of Westbury represent a succinct and complete example of a small rural settlement. As well as the settlement itself, two contrasting forms of medieval land use are represented; the typical strip field system and a less common division of the land into paddocks, probably associated with forest clearance.⁴²

Biodiversity

This character area is dominated by farmland, with several remnant ancient woodland copses (Hazel Wood and Round Wood). These copses, along with Brokerswood Country Park, are locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. Other ecologically important features in the area include Biss Brook and the network of hedgerows (for their corridor function and in case of the hedgerows, nesting opportunities for birds), Fairwood House Marsh, scattered tree clumps and the railway embankment. No sites of statutory nature conservation value are included in the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Hedgerow field boundaries are generally intact. The remnants of ancient woodland appear to be well managed and usually in good condition. Most of the traditional field pattern remains intact.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- The open views, including views on the chalk downland.
- Areas of ecological value in particular the ancient woodland.
- The remaining traditional field pattern.
- The scale and landscape setting of Southwick and North Bradley.

Key Landscape Changes

- The urbanisation of the villages of Southwick and North Bradley by the extension of Trowbridge along the main roads leading to the villages.
- Agricultural intensification could threaten the woodland and the traditional field pattern with its hedgerows.
- Potential future visually intrusive development on the outskirts of Trowbridge and Westbury – in particular in West Wilts Trading Estate and North Bradley Industrial Estate.

⁴⁰ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

⁴¹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

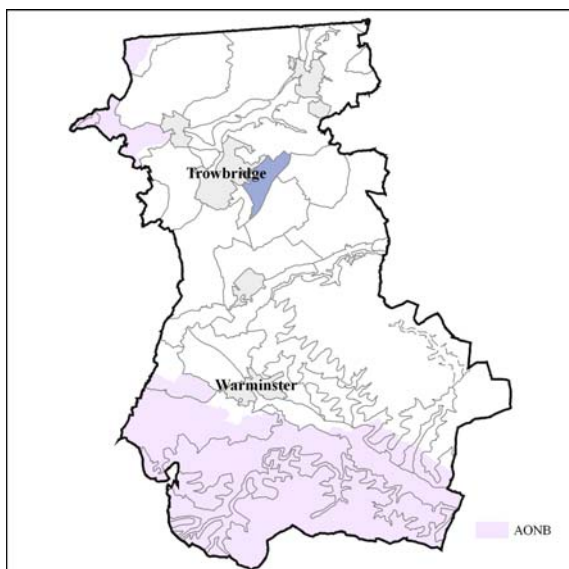
⁴² <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/34182.pdf>

Management Strategy and Objectives

The management strategy is to conserve the peaceful rural and enclosed character of the area with its pastures, hedgerows and woodland blocks. Specific management objectives are to:

- Protect the ancient woodland in the area by promoting appropriate management – consider restoring traditional practices, such as coppicing, where possible.
- Conserve the field pattern with the network of hedgerows by promoting ecological farming and by encouraging planting to fill in gaps in the hedges.
- Ensure that any major development in the area respects the scale of the character area and does not adversely affect the open views.

E4 : GREEN LANE ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

This character area is situated at the eastern edge of Trowbridge and is bordered to the east by the Main A365 road. The corridor of the River Biss abuts the character area to the south, whilst adjacent areas of rolling clay lowland are situated to the east and open clay vale to the north.

Key Characteristics

- Flat, to gently sloping from south to north.
- Patchwork of arable and pasture (grazed) farmland.
- Field boundaries generally well maintained, comprising a mixture of low, clipped hedgerows (southeast) and fuller hedges to the northeast.
- Two large areas of woodland (Green Lane and Biss Wood) provide a sense of enclosure.
- Open views to the urban edge of Trowbridge (sometimes visually harsh).
- Strong sense of enclosure to the south, with more open views to the north (across adjacent open clay vales).
- Scattered settlement pattern.
- Varied sense of tranquillity, dependent on distance from A365 and Trowbridge urban edge.



Summary of Visual Character

The area slopes gently from north to south, towards a ridge, which runs along Yarnbrook Road to the southeast. The landscape is underlain by clay geology. Field pattern is relatively regular within the northeastern half of the area, where the landscape comprises patchwork of arable and pasture (grazed) farmland. To the southwest, farmland is predominantly arable, and dominated by two large areas of predominantly deciduous woodland (Green Lane Wood and Biss Wood). To the northeast field boundaries consist of generally intact, mature hedgerows, whilst to the southwest, fields are demarcated by low, trimmed (intact) hedgerows. Other than the close proximity of the area to Trowbridge, settlement pattern consists of a couple of scattered farmsteads. Open views to the urban edge of Trowbridge (which is harsh in places, especially where new development is visible) and noise/visual intrusion associated with Yarnbrook Road; detract from the otherwise predominantly rural character of the area. A series of minor roads (including West Ashton Road) and an interconnected network of footpaths (including Green Lane) provide access to the area. A strong sense of enclosure is

apparent in the southwest as a result of Green Lane and Biss Wood and also woodland lining the ridge to the south. In contrast, further to the north, sense of openness is more apparent with views to the northern edge of Trowbridge and across adjacent areas of open clay vale. Overall sense of tranquillity is varied, depending on proximity to the A365 and urban edge of Trowbridge.

Historic Environment

- Biss Wood and Green Lane Wood are Ancient and semi-natural woodlands.⁴³

Biodiversity

The area is dominated by a mix of farmland – mainly arable – and deciduous woodland. The woodland is ancient and consists of two main blocks – Green Lane Wood and Biss Wood, both locally designated as nature reserves and recognised for their importance for bats (maternity roosts), in particular the internationally significant Bechsteins and also Barbestell and Horseshoe species. The hedgerows with mature trees bounding the fields serve as wildlife corridors and provide nesting opportunities for birds. No ancient woodland or statutory nature conservation designations cover the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Hedgerows within the area are generally well maintained and intact and woodland blocks appear to be in generally good condition. Field pattern appears to be generally intact, especially within the northern part of the area.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact hedgerow network, mature and generally well maintained.
- Green Lane and Biss Woods, which provide a sense of enclosure and contribute to distinctive landscape pattern within the area and have ecological value.
- Sense of tranquillity away from major road corridor and settlement edge.

Key Landscape Changes

- Pressure for further expansion of settlement and new development threatening the rural character of the area.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A365 road corridor.
- Sustainable management of woodlands to maximise ecological and historic potential.
- Potential loss of hedgerow network due to intensification of agricultural practices, resulting in change to/ loss of existing landscape pattern.
- Pressure on minor rural roads connecting to Trowbridge.

Management Strategy and Objectives

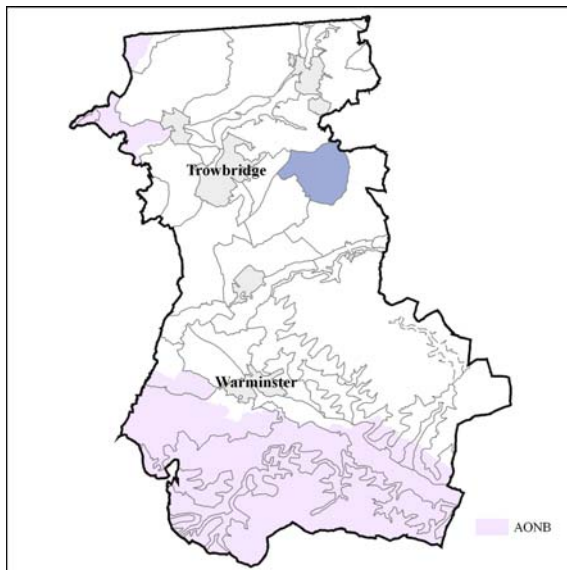
The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the existing mature landscape structure (hedgerow network and woodlands) and enhance the landscape setting and urban edges of Trowbridge. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the mature and predominantly intact hedgerow network, and where repair is necessary, use native species which are typical of the local area.

⁴³ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Conserve and manage existing areas of woodland and ancient woodland to maximise ecological, historic and landscape value.
- Where appropriate, consider the reintroduction of traditional coppice management within woodland areas.
- Conserve open views across adjacent open clay vales to the north.
- Screen visually intrusive urban edges of Trowbridge.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Trowbridge.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the A365 main road corridor.
- Conserve the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of visually intrusive signage.

E5 : STEEPLE ASHTON AND KEEVIL ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

Situated to the east of Trowbridge, this area is bordered to the south by adjacent areas of Rolling clay Lowland and overlooks Open Clay Vale landscape to the north. The imposing edges of the Chalk Downland provide a dramatic distant backdrop to views southeastwards. The main A365 provides access to the western edge of the area, with a network of minor roads extending eastwards from the main road corridor.

Key Characteristics

- Rolling topography, with small settlements (Steeple Ashton, Keevil and Great Hinton) occupying elevated positions.
- Mixture of arable and pastoral (dairy) farmland with patches of rough grassland also peppered throughout the area.
- Relatively regular field pattern consisting of a spread of small to medium-sized fields.
- Keevil airfield: a distinct and recognisable landscape feature.
- An interconnecting network of minor rural roads and a series of public footpaths crossing the area.
- Small villages house a combination of attractive, distinctive churches and historic buildings.
- Strong sense of enclosure and tranquillity.
- Strong recognisable sense of place apparent, with views to landmark churches and over adjacent areas of Rolling Clay Lowland and Open Clay Vale.



Summary of Visual Character

Steeple Ashton and Keevil Rolling Clay Lowland encompasses an area of rolling topography, with the three main villages (Steeple Ashton, Keevil and Great Hinton) situated in an elevated position in relation to the surrounding landscape. The rolling lowlands are underlain by a base of clay, which is covered by a mixture of arable and pastoral (dairy) farmland. Patches of rough grassland are also peppered throughout the area. Field pattern is relatively regular, consisting of a spread of small to medium-sized fields. Landscape structure is generally mature, with intact hedgerows demarcating field boundaries. Mature hedgerow trees and small clumps of trees within fields are also a distinctive characteristic. Keevil airfield occupies a large proportion of the landscape within the southern part of the area (and is a distinct and recognisable landscape feature). An interconnecting network of minor rural roads, which connect the three villages, serves the area. In places, these roads are single track and lined on both sides by tall hedgerows. Several footpaths also traverse the landscape (including the

White Horse Trail). Settlement pattern consists of three small settlements (Steeple Ashton and Keevil – linear villages) and Great Hinton (nucleated hamlet). The villages house a combination of attractive and distinctive churches and historic buildings. St. Mary’s church with steeple (Steeple Ashton) provides a landmark within the village and within views from the surrounding landscape and was described by Pevsner as a ‘gay and fantastical site’⁴⁴. A number of other traditional vernacular buildings (combination of red brick, or black timber-with white infilling) line the High Street. Manor houses in both Steeple Ashton (1647) and Keevil (c.1580) (and also St. Leonard’s church: Keevil) form distinctive characteristics within the village fabric. Throughout the character area, there is strong sense of enclosure and tranquillity. Strong recognisable sense of place is also apparent, with views to landmark churches and over surrounding areas of Rolling Clay Lowland and Open Clay Vale.

Historic Environment

- Steeple Ashton acquired its name from the steeple of St Mary’s Church, which is a Grade I listed building of 15th century origin.⁴⁵
- The village contains a large number of listed buildings including: Manor House (dated 1647), Church Farmhouse (16th century), the Blind House (18th century), the Market Cross (1679), and Ashton House (originating in the 14th century).
- Keevil also contains a large number of listed buildings – notably Keevil Manor (16th century), ‘Talboys’, a detached timber-framed medieval house, and the Church of St Leonard, originating in 13th century.
- Keevil airfield, built during the Second World War, consisting of three long concrete runways the airfield was used by both the RAF and USAF mainly as a transport cum glider base, represents the recent history of the area and is still evident northwest of Keevil.⁴⁶
- There are many vernacular buildings within this character area.

Biodiversity

This landscape is characterised by arable and pasture farming. Hedgerows with mature trees bounding the fields serve as wildlife corridors and provide nesting opportunities for birds. Other ecologically important elements in the area are the small tree clumps within fields. The whole area is a valuable habitat for bats. Keevil airfield, in the south, has limiting effects on the biodiversity of the area. No ancient woodland or statutory nature conservation designations cover the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall the condition of landscape elements such as hedgerows and single trees within field appears to be good. Villages have strong vernacular character and there are generally few elements in poor condition other than occasional patches of hedgerows.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Intact and mature hedgerow network and pattern.
- Distant views to dramatic chalk downland backdrop to the south.
- Rich variety of vernacular building materials.
- Strong recognisable pattern and sense of place.

⁴⁴ The Buildings of England: Wiltshire, Pevsner/Cherry, 1975.

⁴⁵ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

⁴⁶ <http://www.2sa.co.uk/about/airfield.html>

Key Landscape Changes

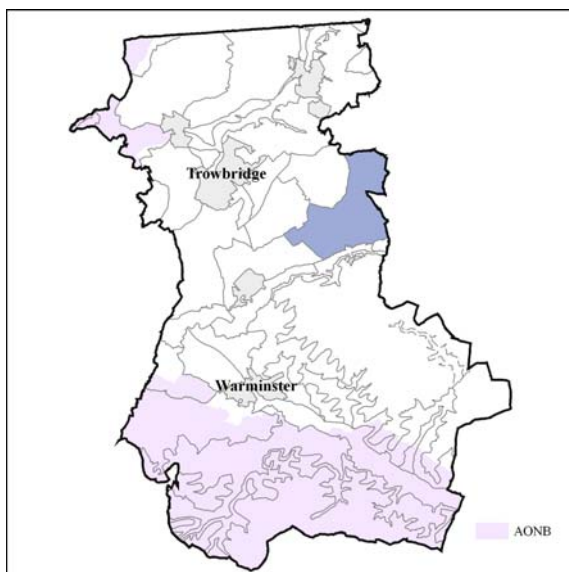
- Maturing hedgerow trees which will eventually die and without replacement, lead to loss of existing intact landscape pattern.
- Elm loss of the 1970s.
- Pressure for expansion at urban edges of Steeple Ashton, Great Hinton and Keevil.
- Pressure on minor rural roads and potential greater visual intrusion from additional signage and lighting.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A365 (main road corridor).

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the intact hedgerow network and strong landscape and settlement pattern. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage the mature hedgerow network and replace where lost or over maturing with native species appropriate to the local area.
- Minimise incremental improvements to minor road corridors (such as signage and lighting) which may impact on the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of existing settlements (Steeple Ashton, Keevil and Great Hinton).
- Ensure that any new development/redevelopment in the existing villages respects local distinctiveness.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the main A365 road corridor.
- Introduce arable field margins as an important nature conservation feature.

E6 : BULKINGTON ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

Situated towards the east of West Wiltshire District, Bulkington Rolling Clay Lowland nestles to the north of the Chalk downland and is overlooked by the Chalk Downland Edge and its associated villages. The area is crossed by a main railway corridor and is accessible via a series of minor roads, which connect to the main A361 to the north.

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling landscape in the north, which becomes flatter to the south.
- Field boundaries delineated by occasional drainage ditches and intact hedgerows with several mature deciduous trees also visible.
- Field pattern is regular, consisting of predominantly medium and occasional large fields.
- Predominantly rural character, served by a series of narrow (often single track) rural lanes, which lead from the periphery towards the centre of the area.
- Narrow lanes lead to a series of scattered, often isolated farmsteads, which contribute to a sparse settlement pattern.
- Generally sparse settlement pattern.
- Lack of vertical elements.
- Strong recognisable sense of place as a result of views to the wooded chalk downland edge.



Summary of Visual Character

Landscape within this area is gently rolling to the north, in close proximity to Bulkington, becoming flatter towards the south and is predominantly underlain by clay. The relatively narrow course of Summerham Brook crosses the area and occasional drainage ditches are visible at field boundaries. Character is dominated by an intricate patchwork of arable and pasture (dairy farming) fields, interspersed with patches of rough grassland. Field boundaries are generally delineated with intact hedgerows (low or medium in height) with several single mature deciduous trees at field boundaries also contributing to the character of the area. Field pattern is regular, consisting of predominantly medium and occasional large fields. The area has a predominantly rural character and is served by a series of narrow (often single track) rural lanes, which lead from the periphery towards the centre of the area and are not well connected (often terminating in dead ends). These narrow lanes lead to a series of scattered, often isolated farmsteads, which contribute to a sparse settlement pattern.

Bulkington village is the only main small settlement to the north of the area. Overall, sense of tranquillity is generally strong however; there is occasional noise and visual intrusion from the railway corridor, which crosses the area. The general lack of vertical elements also contributes to the character of the area. A strong recognisable sense of place is apparent, as a result of views to the wooded chalk downland edge, which forms the southern boundary to the area

Historic Environment

- Christ Church, Bulkington originating in 1860, is one of a few listed buildings in the village.⁴⁷
- Scattered settlement of one village and several farmsteads, with a variety of materials of brick, timber-frame, stone and thatch.

Biodiversity

Farmland dominates the landscape in this character area. The hedgerow field boundaries with mature deciduous trees serve as wildlife corridors and provide nesting opportunities for birds. Summerham brook corridor, together with several scattered ponds also contribute to the nature conservation importance of the area. Few woodland copses and shelterbelts are present in the area. The railway embankment in the south of the area provides excellent habitat for wildlife. In addition the whole area is a valuable habitat for bats. No ancient woodland remains. Part of Steeple Ashton (near Keeper's Cottage in the north of the area) is designated a geological SSSI due to the presence of Corillain Limestone.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall, landscape within the area appears to be in relatively good condition. Hedgerows at field boundaries are generally intact, which contributes to a coherent landscape pattern. There are generally few elements (other than the railway corridor), which detract from the coherent rural character of the area.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact hedgerows at field boundaries.
- Strong recognisable sense of place as a result of open views to chalk downland edge.
- Generally strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Sparse and isolated settlement pattern.
- Network of minor rural roads, which contribute to an overall rural character.
- General lack of vertical elements.

Key Landscape Changes

- Maturing hedgerow trees which will eventually die and without replacement, lead to loss of existing intact landscape pattern.
- Pressure for expansion at edges of Bulkington village.
- Potential visual intrusion from new modern farm buildings.
- Pressure on minor rural roads and potential greater visual intrusion from additional signage and lighting.

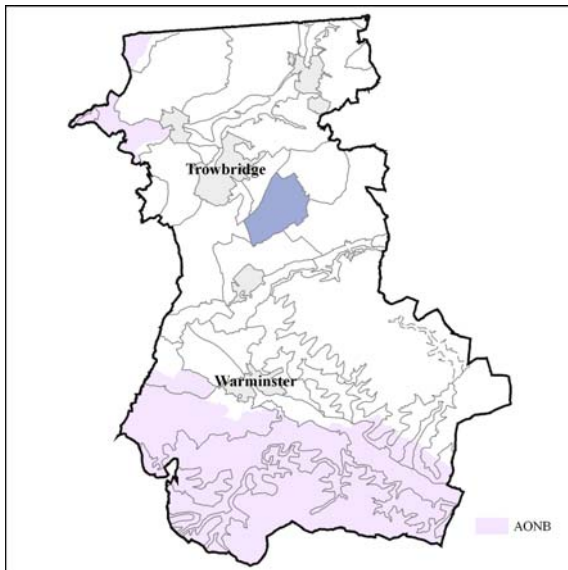
⁴⁷ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the intact hedgerow network and strong landscape and isolated settlement pattern. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage the mature hedgerow network and replace where lost or over maturing with native species appropriate to the local area.
- Minimise incremental improvements to minor road corridors (such as signage and lighting) which may impact on the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Bulkington.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the main A361 road corridor.
- Introduce arable field margins as an important nature conservation feature.
- Conserve open views to the wooded chalk downland edge.

E7 : WEST ASHTON ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

West Ashton Rolling Clay Lowland is situated to the east of Trowbridge and encompasses the small linear village of West Ashton. A network of rural roads serves the area, which are accessed from the main A350 (Yarnbrook Road) to the west. The Biss brook watercourse abuts the northern boundary of the area and Rolling Clay Lowland landscapes surround the south, west and eastern edges. To the north, the area overlooks Open Clay Vales.

Key Characteristics

- Strongly rolling topography.
- Mixture of field sizes, which are predominantly arable.
- Field boundaries demarcated by mature hedgerow field boundaries, often with mature single deciduous trees.
- Clanger and Picket mixed woodlands provide a sense of enclosure and contribute to an intimate landscape pattern.
- Interconnecting network of public footpaths.
- Series of minor rural roads.
- Scattered, and often isolated settlement pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the landscape.



Summary of Visual Character

Topography within the area is strongly rolling and is cut by corridors of the River Biss to the north and Bitham Brook to the southwest. Stourton Water fishing lake (fed by a number of small streams) provides a visible water feature within the surrounding landscape. Fields comprise a mixture of small (adjacent to West Ashton), medium and large, predominantly arable fields, delineated with mature hedgerow field boundaries. Clanger/Picket mixed woodlands provides a strong sense of enclosure to the southwest of West Ashton, resulting in an intricate landscape, which is also intimate in places. Other small copses and linear belts/ plantations of mixed woodland are scattered throughout the area, especially surrounding Rood Ashton Park. The area is accessed via the main A350 (Yarnbrook Road) to the west, however a number of smaller interconnecting minor rural roads and lanes are a more recognisable key characteristic of the area as a whole. A number of public footpaths also cross the area (including the White Horse Trail and East Town Lane). West Aston (with the spire of St. John's church as a visible landmark from adjacent landscape character areas) provides the main small linear settlement within the character area, and contains a variety of buildings. The remains of Rood Ashton Hall on a hilltop site (within its associated parkland landscape), also contribute to settlement pattern,

alongside a number of isolated farmsteads. Throughout the character area, there is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity and enclosure, leading to an overall sense of familiarity and recognisable sense of place.

Historic Environment

- Rood Ashton House, built in the early 19th century, was once a large building in extensive grounds; only parts of it now survive.
- St John the Evangelist, built in 1846, stands in the grounds of Rood Ashton.⁴⁸
- Picket Wood, Flowers Wood and Kettle Lane Wood are ancient and semi-natural woodlands⁴⁹
- Scattered settlement with a village and farmsteads, using a variety of materials.

Biodiversity

This intensively farmed landscape is peppered with several woodland blocks and shelterbelts. They, together with the coherent network of hedgerows delineating the arable fields, provide nesting opportunities for birds and have an important corridor function. In addition several small stream courses cut through the area. The whole area is also a valuable habitat for bats. The ancient Picket and Clanger Woods (both part of a SSSI) greatly contribute to the biodiversity value of the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall, landscape within the area appears to be in generally good condition. Hedgerows at field boundaries are generally intact, which contributes to a coherent landscape pattern. There are generally few detracting elements, other than telegraph poles.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact hedgerows at field boundaries.
- The contribution of Clanger Wood, Picket Wood and other smaller copses/ belts of woodland to a coherent landscape pattern.
- Strong sense of enclosure as a result of patches of woodland and strongly rolling topography.
- Generally strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Sparse and isolated settlement pattern.
- Network of minor rural roads, which contribute to an overall rural character.

Key Landscape Changes

- Maturing hedgerow trees which will eventually die and without replacement, lead to loss of existing intact landscape pattern.
- Pressure for expansion at urban edges of West Ashton village.
- Potential visual intrusion from new modern farm buildings.
- Pressure on minor rural roads and potential greater visual intrusion from additional signage and lighting.
- Potential deterioration in condition of woodlands and woodland edges.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A350 (Yarnbrook Road) corridor.

⁴⁸ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

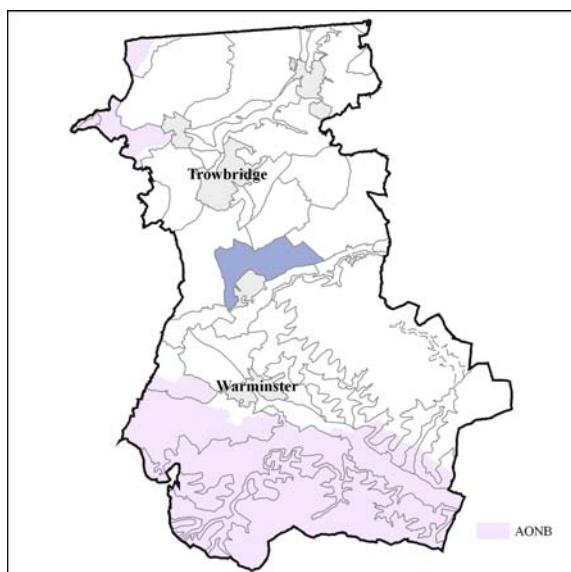
⁴⁹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the intact hedgerow network and intimate landscape pattern and also to conserve areas of woodland and the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage the mature hedgerow network and replace where lost or over maturing with native species appropriate to the local area.
- Minimise incremental improvements to minor road corridors (such as signage and lighting) which may impact on the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of West Ashton.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the main A350 road corridor.
- Introduce arable field margins as an important nature conservation feature.
- Where appropriate, consider the reintroduction of traditional coppice management.
- Conserve the sparse settlement and communication pattern, which contribute to an overall rural character.

E8 : HEYWOOD ROLLING CLAY LOWLAND



Location and Boundaries

Situated adjacent and to the north of Westbury, Heywood rolling clay lowland encompasses the crossroads of two main railway lines and is accessible via the A350 main road corridor (Warminster/ Trowbridge Road) to the east. The character area is surrounded to the north, east and west by adjacent Rolling Clay Lowland landscapes.

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling topography of the area slopes gradually downwards, moving southwards towards Westbury.
- Human influence strongly visible in the form of West Wiltshire Trading Estate and junction of two main railway corridors.
- Rural character disturbed by noise and visual intrusion associated with the railway corridors and West Wiltshire Trading Estate.
- Combination of small, medium and large, farmed fields surround the trading estate, the boundaries of which are delineated by hedgerows in varying condition.
- A series of interconnecting minor roads cross the area.
- Generally, sense of tranquillity throughout the area is disturbed by the presence of the railway corridor and Trading Estate.



Summary of Visual Character

Underlain by predominantly clay geology, the gently rolling topography of the area slopes gradually downwards, moving southwards towards Westbury. Towards the centre of the area, the colourful and visually dominant commercial and light industrial warehouses and units of West Wiltshire Trading Estate dominate the character of the area. Human influence is further visible to the south of this area, where two main railway corridors cross the area (meeting at Westbury Station). The once rural character and sense of tranquillity is therefore disturbed by noise and visual intrusion associated with the railway corridors and West Wiltshire Trading Estate. A combination of small, medium and large, farmed fields surround the trading estate, the boundaries of which are delineated by hedgerows in varying condition. The narrow course of Bitham Brook runs through the area, leading southwards to a series of large ponds adjacent to the railway corridor and the northern urban edge of Westbury. A series of interconnecting minor roads cross the area (accessible via the A350 to the east and the B3097 to leading through Westbury to the south). The character of these roads is influenced by their function

and heavy use as access routes to Westbury, the station and West Wiltshire Trading Estate. The A350 is the main north–south route through the District. Settlement pattern is dominated by the nucleated arrangement of large warehouses within West Wiltshire Trading Estate. Other settlement includes scattered farmsteads to the north and a linear arrangement of houses (the Ham) to the north of the station. To the east of Trowbridge Road, the tall chimney associated with the cement works, is a dominant visually detracting landmark within views from adjacent landscape character areas. Heywood House and its surrounding grounds are clearly visible traveling northwards on the A350. Open views to the urban edge of Westbury (which is visually harsh in places) can be gained from the southern half of the area. Generally, sense of tranquillity throughout the area is disturbed by the presence of the railway corridor and Trading Estate.

Historic Environment

- Of significance is the Grade II* listed Heywood House, which stands in grounds and is separate from Heywood Village by the A350.⁵⁰
- Medieval moated sites are a feature of the Heywood landscape and three survive within the area; one on the West Wiltshire Industrial Estate; one north west of Grange Farm, and one north of Lower Dunge Farm.⁵¹

Biodiversity

This intensively farmed landscape is fragmented by two main railway corridors. The railway embankments however, provide a valuable habitat for wildlife. Other elements in the area of nature conservation importance include several lakes the hedgerow boundaries and the scattered woodland copses (including Conigree Wood and thin belts of woodland to the west of Hawkeridge). The whole area is a valuable habitat for bats. No ancient woodland or statutory nature conservation designations cover the area. The area to the north of the cement works, incorporating a clay pit, is classified as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS).

Evaluation

Current Condition

Landscape within the area is in a generally mixed condition. In places, hedgerows are gappy, whilst in others; they are mature and generally intact. Sense of tranquillity is disturbed and there are several visual detractors throughout the area (West Wiltshire Trading Estate, sewage works and railway corridor).

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact hedgerow network in places.

Key Landscape Changes

- Maturing hedgerows will eventually die and without replacement, lead to loss of existing intact landscape pattern.
- Pressure for expansion at urban edges of Westbury.
- Further visual intrusion from new large warehouses at West Wiltshire Trading Estate.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A350 road corridor and railway corridor.
- Visual intrusion of harsh urban edges along the northern edge of Westbury.
- Incoherent and fragmented landscape pattern.
- Visually detracting works (particularly the tall chimney) to the south of Trowbridge Road.

⁵⁰ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

⁵¹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/12041.pdf>

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to enhance the northern landscape setting of Westbury and the West Wiltshire Trading Estate, and seek to restore hedgerows where fragmented and landscape/ settlement pattern, where incoherent. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage the existing hedgerow network and replace where lost or over maturing with native species appropriate to the local area.
- Seek measures to minimise the visual impact of the A350 road and main railway corridors.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Westbury and West Wiltshire Trading Estate.
- Screen visual detractors (such as the sewage works).
- Conserve and enhance the medieval landscape pattern of the area.

4.7 Greensand Hills (Type F)

Key Characteristics

- A series of upstanding hills that have been eroded by tributaries of the major rivers into a series of rounded knolls and deep valleys.
- Upper Greensand geology is exposed as a band between the older clays and younger chalk.
- Hills are covered in several places by large patches of deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland.
- Settlement pattern is often consists of a series of small isolated farmsteads and hamlets and is related to a wider landscape pattern of halls with associated parkland landscapes.
- Series of narrow, often single track and sunken lanes snake through the hills.
- Predominantly agricultural land use, including arable and dairy farming.
- Network of hedgerows delineating field boundaries.
- Striking topography facilitates dramatic and often panoramic views across adjacent lowland landscape character types.

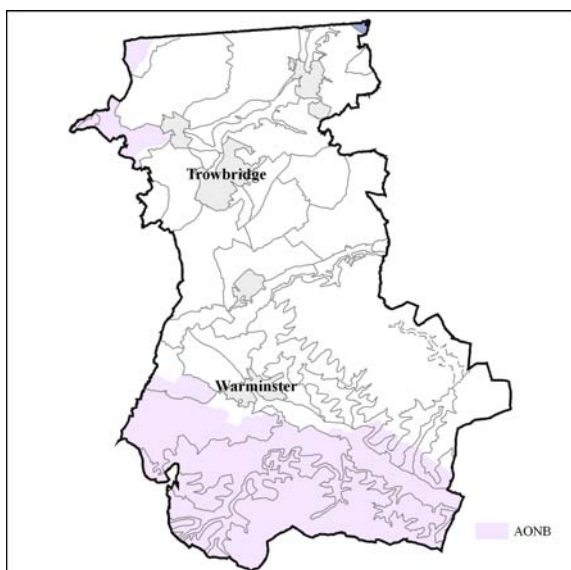
Summary of Visual Character

Greensand Hills generally occur where younger chalk has been eroded away to expose the Upper Greensand series of the Cretaceous period forming undulating hills at an elevation between 40 and 245m AOD. Large patches of woodland (several of which are ancient) dominate the landscape and provide a strong sense of enclosure. Longleat Woods (SSSI) provides an example of a nationally important ancient woodland site found within the character type. This woodland has a high forest structure, and has developed over a range of soil conditions reflected in the diverse range of woodland stand types. The dominant field pattern across the type is small and irregular and is indicative of early enclosures. Hedgebanks and hedgerows that are generally intact often divide fields. A network of ancient sunken lanes, many enclosed by steep banks and shaded by woodland, follow the valley bottoms providing links between the low lying vales and chalk landscapes. The extensive landscape park at Longleat makes a positive contribution to the character and quality of the landscape. Typical building materials within the type include red brick and local stone with clay roofing tiles or thatch.

Character Areas

- F1. Bowden Hill Greensand Hills
- F2. Sandridge Park Greensand Hills
- F3. Chapmanslade Greensand Hills
- F4. Corsley Heath Greensand Hills
- F5. Longleat Greensand Hills

F1 : BOWDEN HILL GREENSAND HILLS



Location and Boundaries

Bowden Hill is situated in the northeastern corner of the district, and extends outside the District Boundary into the adjacent Kennet District to the east. The character of this landscape forms an extension of ‘Spye Parklands’ landscape character area⁵² (Kennet District Council). The sloping western sides of Bowden Hill overlook open clay vale and floodplain landscapes to the south and east.

Key Characteristics

- Steeply rising western slopes of Bowden Hill, which facilitate dramatic views across adjacent Avon limestone floodplain.
- Mixture of farmland and rough grassland on the slopes, demarcated by mature hedgerow field boundaries, with occasional single trees.
- Small-scale, irregular field pattern.
- Landscape forms part of wider area of parkland landscape to the east.
- Sparse settlement and communication pattern.
- Mature landscape structure.
- Overall strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.



Summary of Visual Character

Forming part of a wider corresponding area of landscape to the east, the western slopes of Bowden Hill fall relatively steeply downwards to the adjacent floodplain of the River Avon. Underlying geology is predominantly Greensand, which has previously been eroded by the river corridor, to form the current topographical appearance. The slopes are covered by a mixture of farmland and rough grassland, with a series of small and irregular fields dominating the pattern. Patches of the slopes, and also the top of the slopes are dominated by mature (predominantly deciduous) woodland, which provides a strong sense of enclosure. Mature field boundaries are apparent (but not dominant), consisting of a mixture of hedgerows and single mature deciduous trees. The area is accessible via one minor road, which winds its way up the hill. Forming part of a larger parkland landscape to the east (which contains several large houses and halls), settlement pattern within this part of the character area is sparse. Patches of woodland (such as Upper Selves Wood) frame dramatic, often panoramic views across the adjacent river floodplain landscape to the southeast (contributing to a strong sense of place). Overall there is a strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.

⁵² Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy: Final Consultation Draft (Kennet District Council, June 2001).

Historic Environment

- Upper and Lower Selves wood are ancient and semi-natural woodland.⁵³
- Within the district, the area is sparsely populated; traditional dwellings are of stone.
- The dominant field pattern in the areas is small and irregular and is indicative of early enclosure.

Biodiversity

The patches of woodland in this relatively small character area dominated by farmland, are important elements of nature conservation value. In particular Upper Selves Wood, an ancient woodland patch, is designated as a SSSI. Equally contributing to the nature conservation importance of the landscape is the rough grassland within the area, together with the network of hedgerows with mature single deciduous trees.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Mature single deciduous trees and field boundaries are generally in good condition. Woodland is generally intact and appears to be well managed and in good condition. The area has fluid and mature landscape pattern (which appears to follow the contours), with survival of irregular fields and areas of ancient woodland.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure (including hedgerows, single deciduous trees and areas of woodland).
- Predominantly rural character of the area, with sparse settlement and communication pattern.
- Overall strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Open, panoramic views across adjacent Avon floodplain landscape.
- Small-scale, intimate character of the landscape.

Key Landscape Changes

- Future visually intrusive developments on hillsides, which may be highly visible from adjacent low Clay Vale and floodplain landscapes.
- Amalgamation of smaller fields to form larger-field units.
- Loss and deterioration of hedges and mature single deciduous trees at field boundaries.
- Potential further decline in traditional management techniques within woodland areas.
- Visitor and tourist pressure on the network of minor (often narrow) rural roads.

Management Strategy and Objectives

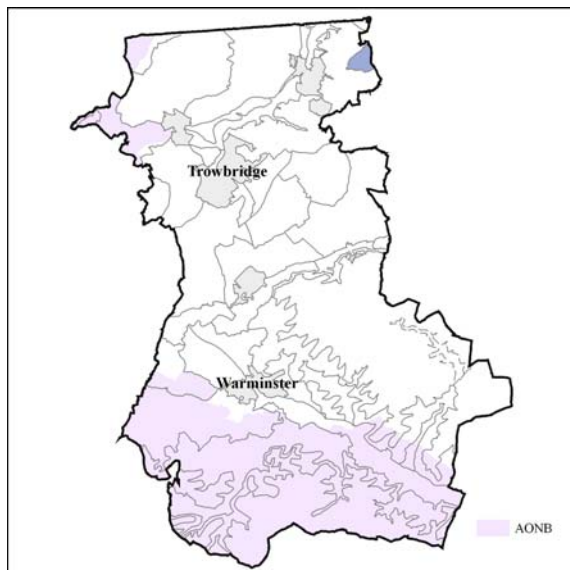
The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the mature, small-scale and relatively intimate landscape pattern within this character area. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the mature and intact network of hedgerow trees, and where repair is necessary, use native species which are typical of the local area.
- Conserve the sparse settlement and communication pattern, which contribute to an overall rural character.
- Maintain, and where appropriate, restore distinctive parkland trees and boundary walls.

⁵³ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Conserve and manage existing areas of woodland to maximise wildlife, historic and landscape value.
- Where appropriate, consider the reintroduction of traditional coppice management.
- Conserve dramatic open views across adjacent floodplain landscape.
- Conserve the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of excessive visually intrusive signage.

F2 : SANDRIDGE PARK GREENSAND HILLS



Location and Boundaries

Sandridge Park Greensand Hills landscape character area is located towards the northeastern boundary of West Wiltshire District and extends outside the District Boundary into the adjacent Kennet District to the east. The character of this landscape forms an extension of ‘Spey Parklands’ landscape character area⁵⁴ (Kennet District Council). The hill upon which Sandridge Park is situated forms a contained unit of landscape character, which is accessed via the main A3102 and overlooks open clay vale to the north and south.

Key Characteristics

- Rounded hill/ridge and steep slopes, which facilitate dramatic views across adjacent open clay vales to the north and south.
- Irregular patches of woodland on slopes, which provide a sense of enclosure and frame views across adjacent landscape.
- Sparse settlement pattern.
- Wooded parkland surrounding Sandridge Park (Victorian Villa, built c.1850).
- Landscape forms part of a wider areas of parkland landscape to the east.
- Mature landscape structure.
- Slopes covered by a patchwork of rough grassland and arable farmland/ pasture, with field boundaries delineated by mature hedgerows (and occasional single trees).
- Overall strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.



Summary of Visual Character

This character area encompasses a relatively broad ridge, which slopes dramatically downwards towards adjacent open clay vale landscape character areas to the north and south, facilitating dramatic views across the surrounding landscape. Character is influenced by a mixture of rough grassland and pasture on the slopes (with small pockets of arable fields also visible). A mature and intact landscape structure is apparent, as a result of predominantly intact hedgerows and irregular patches and plantations of mixed and deciduous woodland on the slopes. These woodland patches create a varied sense of enclosure and in places, frame dramatic views across the lower open clay vale to the north and south. The main A1302 road (leading eastwards from Melksham) and one main footpath leads north south across the area. Settlement pattern is sparse and scattered, consisting predominantly of Sandridge Park House (a former stables) alongside other isolated buildings on the slopes. Overall there is an intimate character throughout the area, with recognisable sense of place provided by

⁵⁴ Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy: Final Consultation Draft (Kennet District Council, June 2001).

dramatic views across adjacent open clay vale landscape character areas. Sense of tranquillity is strong, at distance from the A1302 road corridor.

Historic Environment

- Sandridge Park House, a former stables, Sandridge Lodge and Sandridge Tower, are all 19th century buildings of note.
- Within the District, the area is sparsely populated and stone buildings predominate.
- The dominant field pattern in the areas is small and irregular and is indicative of early enclosure.

Biodiversity

The biodiversity interest of this area, which is characterised by farmland, is mainly provided by the ancient woodland (Hanging Wood, Basin Covert and Morass Wood). Further elements of nature conservation importance include the hedgerow field boundaries and the mature single deciduous trees. No statutory nature conservation designations cover the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Mature single deciduous trees and field boundaries are generally in good condition. Woodland is generally intact and appears to be well managed and in good condition. Overall, the landscape has a strong structure, which is generally intact and in good condition.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure (including hedgerows, single deciduous trees and areas of woodland).
- Predominantly rural character of the area, with sparse settlement pattern.
- Overall strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Open, panoramic views across adjacent open clay vale landscape character areas.
- Small-scale, intimate character of the landscape.

Key Landscape Changes

- Future visually intrusive developments on slopes, which may be highly visible from adjacent low, open clay vale landscapes.
- Amalgamation of smaller fields to form larger-field units.
- Loss and deterioration of hedges and mature single deciduous trees at field boundaries.
- Deterioration of woodland edges.
- Potential further decline in traditional management techniques within woodland areas.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A1302 road corridor.
- Visitor and tourist pressure on the network of minor (often narrow) rural roads.

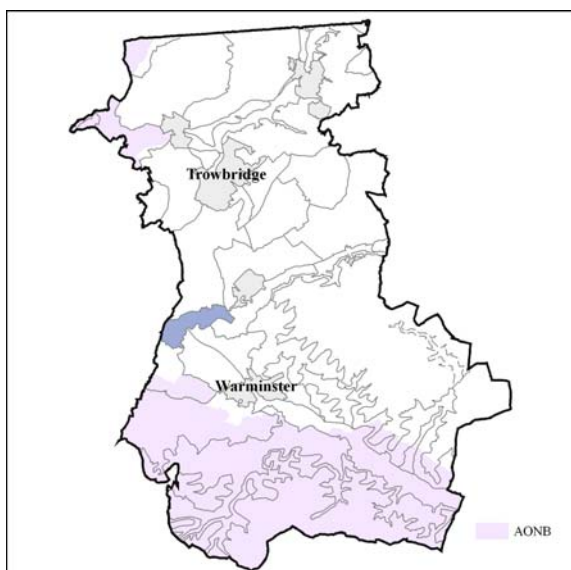
Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the mature, intact and relatively small-scale landscape pattern within this character area. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the mature and intact network of hedgerow trees, and where repair is necessary, use native species which are typical of the local area.
- Conserve the sparse settlement pattern, which contributes to an overall rural character.
- Maintain, and where appropriate, restore distinctive parkland trees, buildings and boundary walls.

- Conserve and manage existing areas of woodland to maximise wildlife, historic and landscape value.
- Where appropriate, consider the reintroduction of traditional coppice management.
- Conserve dramatic open and framed views across adjacent open clay vale landscape character areas.
- Conserve the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of excessive visually intrusive signage.

F3 : CHAPMANSLADE GREENSAND HILLS



Location and Boundaries

The area is located south west of Westbury, with the village of Dilton Marsh on the northern edge. The area is bounded by the district boundary in the west, and the A3098 in the south.

Key Characteristics

- Hilly wooded farmland with parkland.
- Settlement pattern consists of the low lying village of Dilton Marsh and the village of Chapmanslade on top of a hill, few scattered farms and an estate – Chalcot House.
- Distinct pattern of small sized mainly regular shaped fields enclosed by mostly intact hedgerows with mature trees.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and enclosure.



Summary of Visual Character

This fairly small-scale landscape of farmland, farmsteads and parkland is dominated by ancient woodland. The northwest corner of the area is covered by Black Dog Woods, whilst smaller tracts are distributed over the rest of the area. Chalcot Park with its scattering of trees adds to the wooded character of the area. Apart from several farms and Chalcot estate there are two linear settlements, Dilton Marsh along the B3099 in the north and Chapmanslade along the A3098 in the south. Dilton Marsh is low-lying whereas the village of Chapmanslade is situated on top of a hill, looking out over the greensand terrace directly to the east of the area. Buildings in both villages are of mixed materials, though brick is more of a tendency in Dilton Marsh. A network of foot- and bridlepaths and few rural one-track roads cover the farmland with its small fields of mainly pasture enclosed by generally intact hedgerows. Despite the presence of two busy roads, the A36 Trunk road and the A3098 there is generally a strong sense of tranquillity in the area.

Historic Environment

- Chalcot House, listed Grade II*, and Park originate in the early 18th century.
- Black Dog Woods is an ancient, semi-natural and ancient replanted woodland.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Ancient sunken lanes wind their way through the hills.
- Distinctive pattern of settlement with linear villages of a mix of stone and brick materials.
- The dominant field pattern in the area is small and irregular and is indicative of early enclosure.

Biodiversity

This area of wooded farmland has many elements of significant nature conservation value. The ancient Black Dog Woods, which cover a large chunk of the area, greatly add to the ecological potential of the area, together with the smaller – also ancient – Chalcot Wood and the parkland trees within Chalcot Park. The fragmentation of Black Dog Woods by the A36 has an adverse affect on the ecological (corridor) potential of the woodland. Farmers Hill, north of Chalcot Wood, is also designated locally for its nature conservation interest. The hedgerows bounding the fields further serve as wildlife corridors and provide nesting opportunities for birds. None of the area has been designated as a statutory nature conservation area. The entire area is part of a larger Special Landscape Area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

A mixture of ancient woodland and farmland in a pattern of mainly arable fields characterises this area. The condition of the hedgerows bounding the fields is generally perceived to be intact. The villages have retained their traditional vernacular character with buildings predominantly made of stone. The landscape pattern is slightly disturbed by the A36 cutting through the area, dividing Black Dog Woods in two.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- Areas of ecological value including the ancient Black Dog Woods, Chalcot Wood and Park.
- The remaining traditional field pattern with the network of hedgerows.

Key Landscape Changes

- Agricultural intensification could threaten to destroy the current field pattern with the network of hedges.
- Potential further decline in traditional management techniques within woodland areas.
- Visual intrusion and noise pollution from the A36 and the A3098.

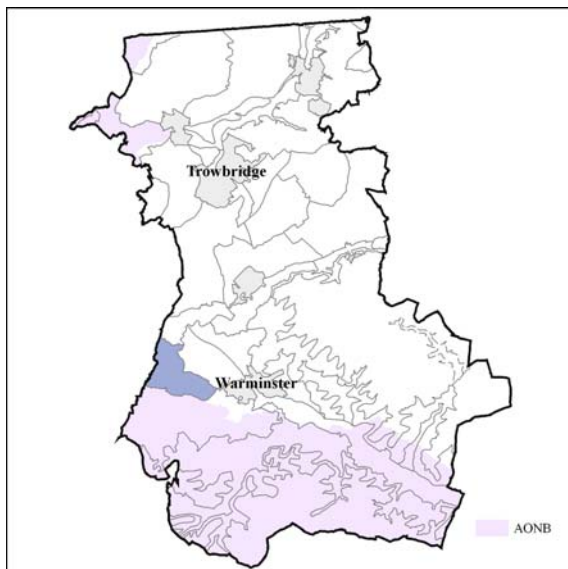
Management Strategy and Objectives

The strategy is to conserve the areas of ecological value, in particular the ancient woodland and parkland and to maintain the peaceful nature of the area with its patchwork of arable and pastoral fields enclosed by hedgerows with trees and other characteristic elements such as the network of rural roads, footpaths, together with the scattering of farmsteads and villages. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the ancient woodland and parkland by encouraging sustainable woodland management – consider restoring traditional practices, such as coppicing, where possible– and management and restoration of the parkland.
- Restore/enhance the corridor function of Black Dog Woods by considering ways to help wildlife cross the A36 safely.
- Maintain the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of excessive visually intrusive signage.

- Conserve and enhance the current pattern of fields with hedgerows by careful management and encouraging planting to restore any gaps in the hedges.

F4 : CORSLEY HEATH GREENSAND HILLS



Location and Boundaries

The area is located west of Warminster, with the district boundary providing the western extent.

Key Characteristics

- Hilly undulating farmland, predominantly pasture, with scattered tree clumps.
- Distinct pattern of small to medium sized mainly regular fields enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Cley Hill, a rounded chalk knoll, as a distinctive land mark.
- Contrast between sense of enclosure in the valleys and extensive views on the hilltops, in particular on Cley Hill.
- Settlement pattern consists of small villages and hamlets and several farms.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.



Summary of Visual Character

This area is characterised by its rolling hills, creating a strong contrast between a sense of enclosure on the valley floor and the openness on the hilltops. Cley Hill, a chalk knoll in the east of the area, in particular, provides extensive panoramic views over the surrounding areas. The importance of this landscape is recognised in the inclusion of Cley Hill, together with the land south of the A362, in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Farmland is the dominant land use in the area with – mainly pastoral – small to medium sized generally regular fields enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. The condition of the hedgerows varies between fairly gappy in places and intact in others. The tree clumps framing views in every direction give the area a slightly wooded feel. Several farmsteads are scattered over the area whilst small villages and hamlets can be found both on the hills and valley floors. A sense of peacefulness is apparent across the entire area, made stronger by the lack of busy main roads. A network of footpaths and narrow sunken winding lanes connects the various settlements in the area.

Historic Environment

- A continuity in landscape use is seen on Cley Hill where a large univallate hillfort, two bowl barrows, two flights of medieval strip lynchets and a cross dyke are located on the steep sided Middle and Upper Chalk outlier of Salisbury Plain.⁵⁶
- Ancient sunken lanes wind their way through the hills.
- Distinctive pattern of settlement with small villages and hamlets of stone dwellings hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys.
- The dominant field pattern in the area is small and irregular and is indicative of early enclosure.

Biodiversity

The farmland covering the area is scattered with hedgerows with mature trees, tree clumps and mature field trees (providing nesting abilities for birds and a corridor function) and several meadows. Rough chalk grassland dominates Cley Hill SSSI. The chalk knoll also boasts six different species of orchid. No ancient woodland remains in the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

With its strength of character and variety of intact features, such as Cley Hill SSSI, the tree clumps, the sunken lanes, vernacular character of the settlements, extensive views from the hilltops and surviving traditional field pattern bounded by hedgerows the area generally appears to be in good condition.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- The extensive views from the hilltops and the enclosed feel of the valleys.
- Cley Hill with its ecological and archaeological features.
- Other areas of ecological value including the tree clumps, the hedgerow boundaries and the meadows.
- The remaining traditional field pattern.

Key Landscape Changes

- Agricultural intensification could threaten to damage the current field pattern with the hedgerow boundaries.
- Visual intrusion and noise pollution from the A362.
- Increasing visitor pressure on Cley Hill.

Management Strategy and Objectives

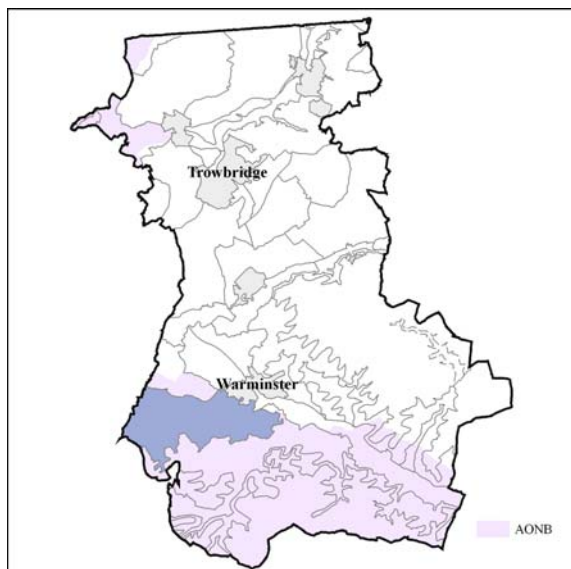
To maintain the rural nature of this area with its characteristic elements such as the pattern of regular fields with hedgerow boundaries, Cley Hill, the settlement pattern with its small villages and scattering of farmsteads, together with the distinct contrast between the small scale of the valleys and the extensive views on the hilltops. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve the sense of space of the hilltops by resisting any major development that would affect the extensive panoramic views.

⁵⁶ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/31693.pdf>

- Conserve the rural character of minor roads and country lanes, through avoidance of excessive visually intrusive signage.
- Conserve the sparse settlement pattern, which contributes to an overall rural character.
- Conserve and repair the strong network of hedgerows.
- Conserve and manage the meadows by encouraging appropriate grassland management.
- Conserve Cley Hill as a distinct landmark.

F5 : LONGLEAT GREENSAND HILLS



Location and Boundaries

The Longleat Hills are the west-facing edge of the band of Greensand that extends beyond the Greensand Terrace to Warminster. The boundary of the hills with the terrace landscape is clearly defined by a change in density of contours and amount of woodland. The area encompasses the villages of Horningsham and Crockerton.

Key Characteristics⁵⁷

- A series of eroded Upper Greensand hills creating a sinuous escarpment containing some deep valleys.
- 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, ponds and lakes surrounding Longleat House.
- 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.
- Longleat House and Park is an important tourist attraction along with the Centre Parcs Holiday Village.
- A peaceful landscape with great variety at the small scale, but with an overall unified character.
- The River Wylde watercourse.



Summary of Visual Character

The landscape is steeply undulating. It contains secretive valleys and exposed hills where the sunken lanes and 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

⁵⁷ Refer to Character Area 7B Penselwood – Longleat Hills within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).

form a strong contrast to the open character of adjacent farmed landscapes. This area remains peaceful and rural despite the large number of visitors associated with the Centre Parcs Holiday Village and Longleat House and Park. Horningham is an estate village, distinctive for its stone, timber-framed and thatched houses.

Historic Environment

- Longleat House and Park, Grade I listed, is the ‘jewel in the crown’ of the District’s historic environment.
- Post-medieval to modern coniferous plantations, and estate farmland, with a low level of settlement.

Biodiversity

The area supports significant ecological and nature conservation interest, including a wide range of habitat types, such as wet woodland, unimproved chalk grassland and neutral hay meadows. 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. The area contains Longleat Woods (SSSI). This woodland has a high forest structure, and has developed over a range of soil conditions reflected in the diverse range of woodland stand types. The area also contains the River Wylde, which as a tributary of the Hampshire Avon, is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

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 enclosure patterns and ancient broadleaved woodland. There are few areas of underused land and built features are in a good state of repair. The estate is 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

- The intact pattern of small and irregular fields typical of early enclosure and assart incursions often with ditched and banked hedgerows.
- The range of habitats of nature conservation value – substantial areas of ancient woodlands with wet woodland and meadows along the valley floors.
- The historic estate of Longleat with its fine mansion house and designed landscapes.
- Villages of local stone concealed in valleys.
- Rural sunken lanes, giving framed views to the adjacent open landscapes.
- Views to wooded hill summits and to distinctive skylines of adjacent chalk scarp tops.
- Multiplicity of ancient earthworks, hillforts and castles.
- The course of the River Wylde.

Key Landscape Changes

- Loss of ancient woodland and the landscape impacts of felling and replanting large areas.
- Visitor pressures including traffic and requirement for services, facilities and accommodation.
- Gradual decline in traditional woodland management techniques.
- Invasion of exotic species from parkland landscapes into the native woodlands.
- Loss of wetland habitats on valley floors.

- Planting of more native species and softening edges of forestry plantations.
- Increasing professionalisation of livestock farming limiting availability of livestock to graze marginal land of high environmental value.
- Pressure for new built further tourism development.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy 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. 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 a diverse 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 does not impinge upon the setting of Longleat.
- Protect the nature conservation value of the River Wylye.
- Monitor the effects of incremental, small scale change in the built environment and minimise the impact of development through the use of design guidance.
- 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.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation.

4.8 Greensand and Chalk Terrace (Type G)

Key Characteristics

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and hills rise.
- Dominated by predominantly arable fields, with Parliamentary enclosure visible within field pattern.
- Mixed field pattern, comprising a combination of large and smaller scale fields, with a visible intact hedgerow network.
- Landscape underlain by Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value.
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment.
- Settlement pattern is sparse and dispersed, consisting of scattered farmsteads and occasional small villages.

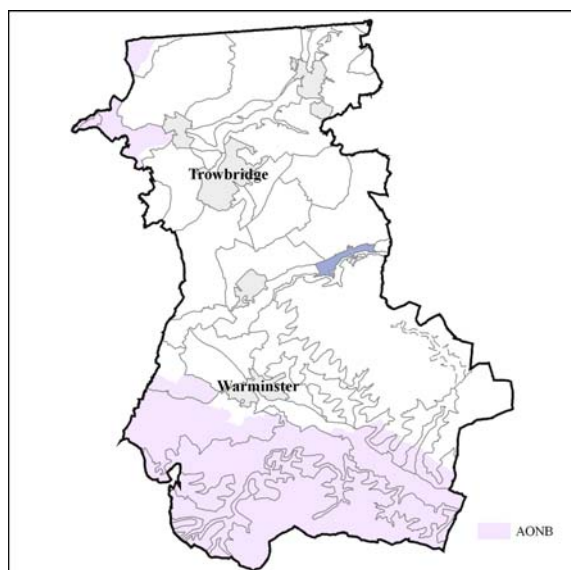
Summary of Visual Character

The distinctive landform of this landscape character type forms level terraces lying between the greensand hills and chalk escarpments and flat platforms between Greensand Hills and Chalk Downland/ Chalk Downland Edge. Landscape within the type is underlain by Upper Greensand Geology with small pockets and belts of chalk, and Lower Chalk marking the terraces at the base of the chalk escarpment. Arable fields give way to mixed woodland along at the junction with the scarps. Generally the landform is flat, but becomes more undulating in close proximity to the River Wylye. A patchwork of intensive arable farmland, pasture and small woodland blocks and shelterbelts covers the area. 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. Settlement pattern is scattered and relatively sparse, consisting predominantly of isolated farmsteads with occasional nucleated villages, such as the Deverills. 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

- G1. Bratton, Edington Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G2. Westbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G3. Upton Scudamore Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G4. Norridge Wood Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G5. Heytesbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G6. Warminster Greensand and Chalk Terrace
- G7. Longbridge Deverill Greensand and Chalk Terrace

G1 : BRATTON AND EDINGTON GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

Located towards eastern edge of West Wiltshire District and to the east of Westbury, Bratton and Edington Greensand and Chalk Terrace landscape character area embraces the edge of the higher (Salisbury Plain) Chalk Downland Landscape to the south.

Key Characteristics

- Topography slopes gradually upwards in a southerly direction, to meet the dramatic slopes (which are wooded in places) of the Chalk Downland Edge.
- Underlying geology of Upper Greensand and very small pockets of chalk, giving rise to rich brown earth soils.
- Series of small ponds, situated in close proximity to the villages.
- Farmland is dominated by small, predominantly arable fields, with a relatively regular field pattern.
- Field boundaries are demarcated by mature hedgerows, which are generally intact.
- Settlement pattern is sparse, consisting of three nucleated villages (Edington, Bratton and Coulston).
- Dramatic views to rising chalk backdrop, which is peppered with patches of mature woodland and coniferous belts.
- Overall, strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Network of minor rural roads cross the area and connect villages.



Summary of Visual Character

Topography within this area slopes gradually upwards in a southerly direction, to meet the dramatic slopes (which are wooded in places) of the Chalk Downland Edge. This apron of landscape is underlain by Upper Greensand geology with very small pockets of chalk, giving rise to rich brown earth soils. Rivers and stream corridors are not an apparent feature of this landscape, however, a series of small ponds, situated in close proximity to the villages are a characteristic feature. Farmland along this linear (relatively thin tract of landscape), is dominated by small, predominantly arable fields, with a relatively regular field pattern. Field boundaries are demarcated by mature hedgerows, which are generally intact. Settlement pattern is sparse, consisting of three nucleated villages (Edington, Bratton

and Coulston), clustered at the base of the Chalk Downland. Within these settlements, there is a strong sense of enclosure, as a result of the dominant rising chalk backdrop, which is peppered with patches of mature woodland and coniferous belts (some of which were planted as game coverts). Edington, Bratton and Coulston have an intimate and enclosed character, exhibiting several distinctive and attractive traditional/ historic buildings (with features such as thatch roofs and timber frames). Edington church, described by Pevsner⁵⁸ as ‘so varied in its skyline and so freely embattled that it looks like a fortified mansion, and the solemn lines of the downs rising immediately south are the perfect foil’, provides a clearly recognisable landmark within views to the area from adjacent landscape character areas. Dramatic views can be gained from this area, to the steeply rising backdrop of the Chalk escarpments. Overall, there is a strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Historic Environment

- Bratton Castle, on the escarpment above Bratton is a prominent mound and originally an Iron Age bivallate defensive structure. It is prominent mound and in it is probably a long barrow illustrating the longevity of occupation of this area.
- There are several buildings of 18th century or earlier origin within Bratton including: the Church of St James (14th-15th century); the Baptist Chapel (1734); Bratton House (1715) and Court House (1656).⁵⁹
- In Edington, St Mary, St Katherine and All Saints Church is highly important and dates back to the 14th century. *‘It is so varied in its skyline and so freely embattled that it looks like a fortified mansion, and the solemn lines of the downs rising immediately south are the perfect foil’.*⁶⁰
- The remains of a medieval priory in the grounds of the Monastery Gardens, the Fish Ponds and a medieval detached house, The Priory, are also of note.

Biodiversity

Small arable fields dominate this character area. A number of ponds in the area, together with the network of hedgerow field boundaries and the linear belts of woodland (game coverts) are valuable nature conservation elements. No ancient woodland remains and the area has no statutory nature conservation designations, with the exception of a couple of small sections of the adjacent Bratton Downs.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The dominance of intensive arable farming throughout the area has led to a gradual loss of biodiversity and cultural value. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, in places, hedgerows have been lost and replaced with post and wire fencing. Buildings within settlements and settlement edges are generally in good condition.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Surviving hedgerow network.
- Open views to dramatic Chalk Downland Edge (which is wooded in places).
- Intact and distinctive nature of historic and vernacular buildings within villages.
- Rural character of series of minor roads connecting settlements.
- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.

⁵⁸ The Buildings of England: Wiltshire, (Pevsner/ Cherry), 1975.

⁵⁹ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

⁶⁰ Pevsner N & Cherry B, 1975. The Buildings of England Wiltshire. Yale University Press: London.

Key Landscape Changes

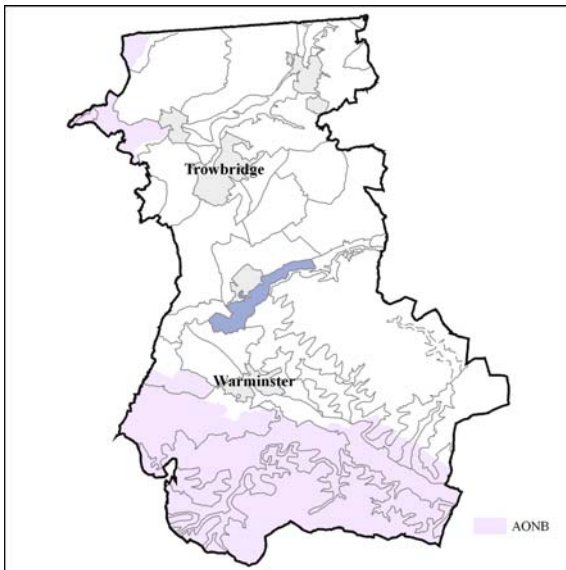
- Loss and decline of arable field boundaries (hedgerows), which has led to a loss of intact field pattern.
- Potential visually intrusive development at the edges of Edington and Bratton, which would be particularly visible along the southern edge, as the ground rises to meet Chalk Downland Edge.
- Visual and noise intrusion associated with the railway corridor within adjacent character area to the north.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the generally intact landscape and settlement pattern, with small villages nestling at the bottom of the Chalk Downland and also to enhance/ repair the existing hedgerow network using species that reflect local landscape character. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to resist any development that would affect the open views across the terrace to the chalk uplands.
- Conserve and enhance the current field pattern and hedgerows with careful management and restoration (where necessary) with species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve the existing small-scale settlement pattern and avoid larger developments that would be out of scale and character within the existing situation.
- Promote appropriate management of the woodland clumps in the area.
- Seek to encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.

G2 : WESTBURY GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

Located towards eastern edge of West Wiltshire District and directly to the east of Westbury, Westbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace landscape character area hugs the western edge of the higher (Salisbury Plain) Chalk Downland Landscape to the east. It is accessible via Westbury Road (B3099) to the north and Warminster Road (A350), which runs along the western side of the character area.

Key Characteristics

- Topography slopes gradually upwards in a south easterly direction (forming a terrace) to meet the dramatic slopes (which are wooded in places) of the Chalk Downland Edge to the south and east.
- Landscape is underlain by Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils.
- Several springs and the Upper valley of the Biss Brook permeate the landscape.
- Farmland is dominated by a medium to large-scale pattern of predominantly arable fields, with field boundaries delineated by hedgerows.
- Settlement pattern is sparse, with occasional isolated farmsteads visible.
- Occasional minor roads and footpaths cut upwards (at right angles to the road corridors), across adjacent Chalk Downland edge, leading to areas of Higher Chalk Downland.
- Westbury White Horse is a visible landmark within views eastwards, and contributes to a strongly recognisable sense of place.
- Overall, strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.



Summary of Visual Character

Topography within this area slopes gradually upwards in a south easterly direction (forming a terrace) to meet the dramatic slopes (which are wooded in places) of the Chalk Downland Edge to the south and east. Immediately to the east of Westbury, a distinct hill is visible. Landscape within the area is underlain by Upper Greensand and narrow belts of chalk geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils. Several springs permeate the area (such as Bridewell Springs and Wellhead Springs), flowing down from the Upper Chalk Downland. Within the southern half of the area, the upper, narrow corridor of the Biss Brook valley creates a meandering landscape feature, which runs adjacent to a railway corridor as it heads northwards towards Westbury and Dilton Marsh. Farmland is dominated by a medium to large-scale pattern of predominantly arable fields, with field boundaries delineated by

hedgerows in varying condition. Settlement pattern is sparse, with occasional isolated farmsteads visible. Due to proximity to Westbury, however views to the urban edge (which is often harsh) are a characteristic of the western half of the area. The area is served by the corridors of the B3098 (running along the northern edge of the area and the A350, bisecting the southern half of the area). Occasional minor roads and footpaths cut upwards (at right angles to the road corridors), across adjacent Chalk Downland edge, leading to areas of Higher Chalk Downland. Sporadic patches of woodland cover the slopes. Dramatic views can be gained from this area, to the steeply rising backdrop of the Chalk escarpments. The Westbury White Horse is a visible landmark within views eastwards, and contributes to a strongly recognisable sense of place. Overall, there is a strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Historic Environment

- Few prehistoric earthworks in contrast to the surrounding chalk landscapes, which could be due to the continuity and intensity of arable cultivation.
- Dominated by arable field of Parliamentary enclosure, of the late 18th / early 19th century, which are characterised by large rectangular fields.

Biodiversity

The landscape in this area is predominantly arable farmland. Apart from the network of hedgerows delineating the fields, a number of chalk-fed streams (including Biss Brook) run through the area and a few woodland patches are visible. There is no ancient woodland remaining and no statutory nature conservation designations are present in the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The dominance of intensive arable farming throughout the area has led to a gradual loss of biodiversity and cultural value. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, in places, hedgerows have been lost and replaced with post and wire fencing.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Surviving hedgerow network.
- Open views to dramatic Chalk Downland Edge (which is wooded in places).
- Open views to Westbury White Horse as a dramatic landscape feature.
- Rural character of series of minor roads connecting settlements.
- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.

Key Landscape Changes

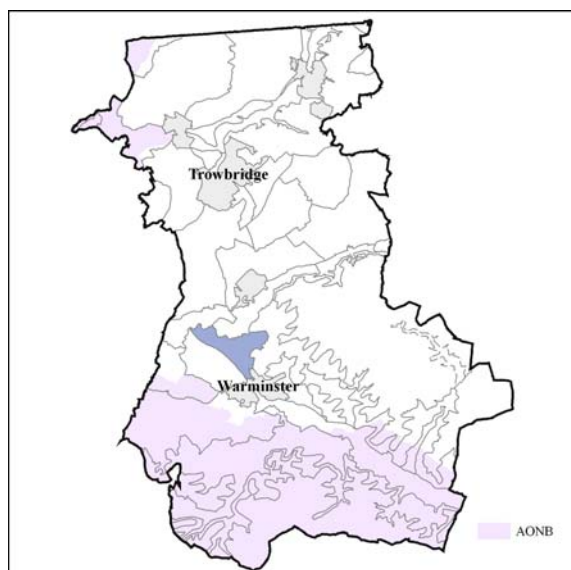
- Loss and decline of arable field boundaries (hedgerows), which has led to a loss of intact field pattern.
- Potential visually intrusive development at the edges of Westbury which would be particularly visible along the eastern edge, as the ground rises to meet Chalk Downland Edge.
- Visual and noise intrusion associated with the railway corridor within adjacent character areas.
- Increased visitor and parking pressure on minor rural roads, as a result of visitors requiring to view the White Horse.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the existing landscape pattern and dramatic open views to the adjacent Chalk Downland Edge and enhance the landscape setting of Westbury. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to resist any development that would affect the open views across the terrace to the chalk uplands.
- Conserve open views to the Westbury White Horse as a distinctive landmark.
- Conserve and enhance the current field pattern and hedgerows with careful management and restoration (where necessary) with species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve the existing sparse settlement pattern and avoid larger developments that would be out of scale and character within the existing situation.
- Promote appropriate management of the woodland clumps in the area.
- Seek to encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Westbury.
- Conserve and manage the setting of earthworks/archaeological sites within the area.

G3 : UPTON SCUDAMORE GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

Situated in between the towns of Westbury and Warminster, this area of greensand and chalk terrace stretches from the A36 Warminster-Bath road in the south to the north where it follows the contour lines at the base of the slope to the slightly higher land of the next character area. The chalk downs from the Salisbury plain form its boundary in the east.

Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating farmland with extensive views on the chalk downland.
- Settlement pattern consists of the village of Upton Scudamore, several hamlets and farm buildings.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.
- Distinct pattern of medium sized mainly regular shaped fields enclosed by hedgerows with mature trees.



Summary of Visual Character

Farmland, mainly arable, is the dominant land use in this generally rural area. The field pattern consists of mainly medium sized, mostly regular fields, often enclosed by hedgerows, in varying condition, with hedgerow trees. Landscape is underlain by areas of chalk and bands of Greensand. Clumps of woodland, shelterbelts, hedgerows and mature trees in Thoulstone Park an unused golf course – give the northwestern part of the area a more wooded feel, creating a contrast with the openness in the rest of the area. The golf course within Thoulstone Park closed in 2002 but fairways are still occasionally trimmed. Settlements are sparse and include Upton Scudamore as the only village and few scattered farms. Views from Upton Scudamore, which is situated on a low mound rising from the greensand terrace, are extensive in all directions apart from the east. The chalk escarpments in the east are visible throughout the area. The A350 and the Wessex Main Line both cut through the area, connecting Westbury and Warminster. Despite the presence of these main transport corridors, and the proximity of the A36, the area has a fairly strong sense of tranquillity. Other routes in the area include a number of rural roads, footpaths and bridleways.

Historic Environment

- At the enclosure of the parish in 1807 the village of Upton consisted chiefly of about ten farmhouses, the Angel Inn, the rectory, and a few cottages. Manor and Temple Farmhouses are two 17th century residences which remain today.⁶¹
- Little is known about the layout of the fields of Upton before the 16th century. The total extent of the arable at that time was probably not greatly different from that at the enclosure of the parish in 1805, when it covered the open hollow between Upton Cow Down and the Warminster boundary and extended westward to surround the crofts of the village and join the lands of the holdings in Norridge and Thoulstone. The dearth of streams in Upton has always made meadow land scarce and no commonable meadows seem to have existed; what little meadow there was lay in small enclosures about the village or near the Biss.⁶²
- The bowl barrow 500m south of Upton⁶³ and the bowl barrow south of Biss Farm, Upton Scudamore⁶⁴ gives a clear indication of the extent to which the area was settled during the Bronze Age period.
- Around some settlements and farmsteads fields are smaller and less regular indicating an earlier process of enclosure.

Biodiversity

This character area is dominated mainly arable farmland. Scattered field trees and some small woodland blocks and shelterbelts in and around Thoulstone Park, together with the network of hedgerows with trees, function as wildlife corridors and provide nesting opportunities for birds. Ancient woodland is absent in the area and there are no statutory nature conservation designations, however the nature conservation value of Thoulstone Park has been locally recognised in its Special Landscape Area status.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Most of the traditional field pattern remains with field boundaries – mainly hedgerows – mostly intact. The buildings in Upton-Scudamore appear to be in generally good condition. The landscape pattern however is slightly disturbed by the communication corridors – A36 and A350 – cutting across the area. Thoulstone Park golf club closed in 2002 but the fairways are still occasionally trimmed.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Open, rural and peaceful nature of the area.
- The extensive views in the chalk downland.
- Areas of ecological value including Thoulstone Park with its field trees, small woodland blocks and shelterbelts.
- The remaining traditional field pattern with the network of hedgerows.

⁶¹ 'Upton Scudamore', A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 8: Warminster, Westbury and Whorwellsdown Hundreds (1965), pp. 78-89. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=16080>

⁶² 'Upton Scudamore', A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 8: Warminster, Westbury and Whorwellsdown Hundreds (1965), pp. 78-89. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=16080>. Date accessed: 15 September 2006.

⁶³ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/12293.pdf>

⁶⁴ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10071.pdf>

Key Landscape Changes

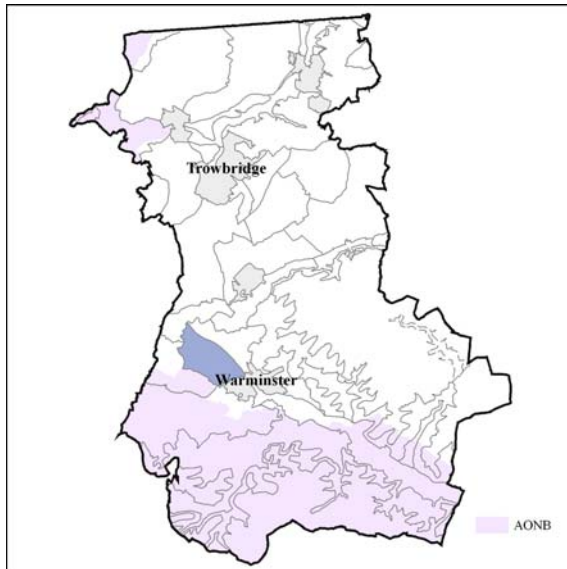
- Agricultural intensification could threaten to destroy the current field pattern with the hedgerow boundaries.
- Visual intrusion and noise pollution from the A36 and the A350.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The management strategy is to conserve the open rural nature of the area with its patchwork of fields bounded by hedgerows with mature trees and other characteristic elements such as the woodland clumps and settlement pattern. Specific management objectives are to:

- Resist any development that would affect the open views across the terrace to the chalk downland.
- Conserve and enhance the current pattern of fields with hedgerow boundaries by careful management and encouraging planting to restore any gaps in the hedges.
- Maintain the peaceful nature of the area by discouraging any major developments that would cause visual intrusion and/or noise pollution.
- Encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.

G4 : NORRIDGE WOOD GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

This area of greensand and chalk terrace is situated between Warminster in the southeast, Cley Hill in the southwest and the village of Chapmanslade and the A36/A350 Bath road in the northwest and the northeast respectively.

Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating wooded farmland.
- Extensive views on the chalk downland edge in the east and the neighbouring greensand hills, in particular Cley Hill.
- Largely undeveloped with settlement consisting of a few hamlets and farmsteads.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.
- Distinct pattern of medium sized mainly regular shaped fields enclosed by hedgerows with mature trees.



Summary of Visual Character

Wooded farmland dominates this largely undeveloped area of gently undulating chalk which is crossed by thin belts of greensand. The openness of the farmland is in strong contrast with the small scale of the ancient woodland and provides extensive views, in places framed by woodland, on the greensand hills of adjacent areas in the north, south and west, and the chalk downland edge in the east. The field pattern consists of medium sized, generally regular fields, often enclosed by mainly intact hedgerows, with hedgerow trees. With its scarcity of settlements there is a strong sense of peacefulness in the area, despite main roads. A network of footpaths connects the scattering of hamlets and farmsteads.

Historic Environment

- Ancient, semi-natural and ancient replanted woodland to the northwest of Warminster, at Trussenhaynes, Clear Wood and Norridge Wood.⁶⁵
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks in contrast to the surrounding chalk landscapes, which could be due to the continuity and intensity of arable cultivation.
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary enclosure, of the late 18th / early 19th century, which are characterised by large rectangular fields.

⁶⁵ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

- Around some settlements and farmsteads, fields are smaller and less regular indicating an earlier process of enclosure.

Biodiversity

This area is dominated by a mixture of farmland and ancient woodland. The ancient woodland (Norridge Wood, Clear Wood and a smaller tract in the west of the area), is of great biodiversity value, and is recognised as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. The network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees has a corridor purpose and provides nesting opportunities for birds. There are no statutory nature conservation designations in the area however the local nature conservation importance area has been recognised in the designation of a large proportion of the area as a Special Landscape Area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The field boundaries (mainly hedgerows) generally appear to be intact. The condition of the ancient woodlands is perceived to be good. The A36/A350 cutting through the landscape slightly disturbs the landscape pattern.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Peaceful, rural nature of the area.
- The extensive views on the chalk downland edge and the neighbouring greensand hills.
- Areas of ecological value, in particular the ancient woodland and the network of hedgerows.
- The remaining traditional field pattern.

Key Landscape Changes

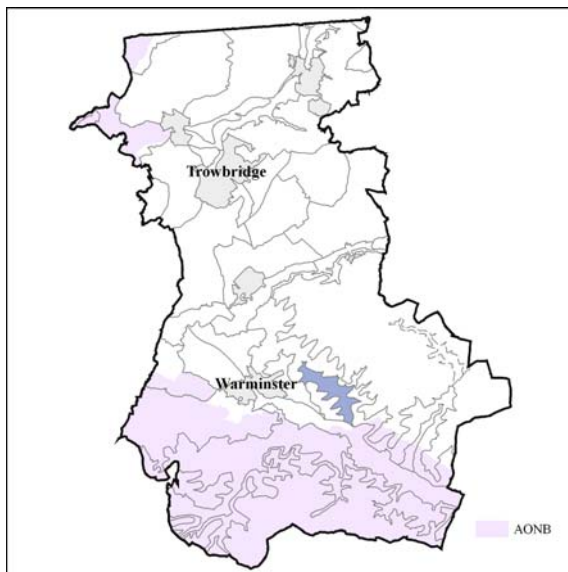
- Agricultural intensification could threaten to damage the current field pattern with the hedgerow boundaries.
- Management change in the ancient woodlands.
- Visual intrusion and noise pollution from the A36/A350.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy is to conserve the peaceful undeveloped nature of the area with its contrast between ancient woodland and open farmland, with the distinct pattern of mostly regular fields bounded by hedgerows with mature trees. Specific management objectives are to:

- Resist any development that would affect the open views across the terrace to the neighbouring greensand hills and chalk uplands.
- Conserve and enhance the current pattern of fields with hedgerows by appropriate environmental land management and encouraging planting to repair any gaps in the hedges.
- Maintain the peaceful nature of the area by discouraging any major developments that would cause visual intrusion and/or noise pollution.
- Promote appropriate management of the ancient woodland in the area, consider restoring traditional practices, such as coppicing, where possible.
- Encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation, particularly in relation to Cley Hill.

G5 : HEYTESBURY GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

Located to the east of Warminster, Heytesbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace provides a platform between the higher Chalk Downland to the east and the corridor of the Wylde river to the west. Chalk Downland Edge overlooks the area on most sides. The area is generally inaccessible via main roads, with only one minor road leading to the area (to the south of East Hill Farm).

Key Characteristics

- Somewhat isolated terrace of Upper Greensand, which is surrounded to the north and south by areas of Chalk Downland Edge.
- Combination of relatively large arable fields and rough grassland cover the area.
- Hedgerows visible along several field boundaries.
- Patches of mixed woodland to the north of Heytesbury House contribute to recognisable landscape structure.
- Occasional scattered farmsteads and a generally very isolated settlement pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area, despite proximity to military training areas on Salisbury Plain to the north.



Summary of Visual Character

This area of flat, to gently sloping landscape forms a somewhat isolated terrace, which is surrounded to the north and south by areas of Chalk Downland Edge. Landscape is predominantly underlain by Upper Greensand geology, giving rise to rich brown earth soils. A combination of relatively large arable fields and rough grassland cover the area, with hedgerows visible along several field boundaries. Patches of mixed woodland to the north of Heytesbury House also contribute to recognisable landscape structure within the area. Other than occasional scattered farmsteads, there are no settlements within the area, which is generally inaccessible, other than via one minor rural road. A strong sense of enclosure is provided by surrounding areas of Chalk Downland Edge, and higher Chalk Downland (Salisbury Plain) to the north and east. Overall, there is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area, despite proximity to military training areas on Salisbury Plain to the north.

Historic Environment

- General absence of prehistoric earthworks in contrast to the surrounding chalk landscapes, which could be due to the continuity and intensity of arable cultivation.
- Dominated by arable field of Parliamentary enclosure, of the late 18th / early 19th century, which are characterised by large rectangular fields.
- Around some farmsteads, fields are smaller and less regular indicating an earlier process of enclosure.
- Heytesbury House is a Grade II listed country house which dates back to 18th century.

Biodiversity

The elements of nature conservation value in this farmed greensand terrace include the hedgerow network demarcating the fields, the patches of woodland (to the north of Heytesbury House) and the chalk-fed streams. No ancient woodland remains in the area and there are no statutory nature conservation designations covering the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The dominance of intensive arable farming throughout the area has led to a gradual loss of biodiversity and cultural value. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, in places, hedgerows have been lost.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Surviving hedgerow network.
- Open views to dramatic Chalk Downland Edge (which is wooded in places).
- Generally rural and somewhat isolated character.
- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.

Key Landscape Changes

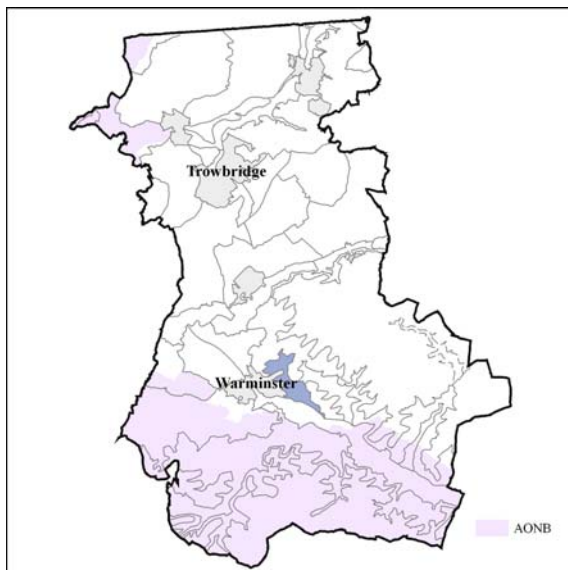
- Loss and decline of arable field boundaries (hedgerows), which has led to a loss of intact field pattern.
- Potential visually intrusive development at the edges of Warminster.
- Visual and noise intrusion associated with the A36 road corridor within adjacent character area to the south.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the existing landscape pattern and dramatic open views to the adjacent Chalk Downland Edge. Specific management objectives are to:

- Resist any development that would affect the open views across the terrace to the chalk uplands.
- Conserve and enhance the current field pattern and hedgerows with careful management and restoration (where necessary) with species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve the existing sparse settlement pattern and avoid larger developments that would be out of scale and character within the existing situation.
- Promote appropriate management of the woodland clumps in the area.
- Encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.
- Conserve and manage the setting of earthworks/ archaeological sites within the area.

G6 : WARMINSTER GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

Situated directly adjacent and to the east of Warminster, this area of Greensand and Chalk Terrace is crossed by a main railway line and accessible via the B3414 and several minor roads leading north-eastwards across the area.

Key Characteristics

- Gently downward sloping topography from Chalk Downland Edge to the northeast towards Warminster and the valley of the Wylde River to the south.
- Landscape is predominantly underlain by Upper Greensand geology, giving rise to rich brown earth soils.
- Land use is mixed, with a combination of large arable fields and smaller patches of pasture and rough grassland visible.
- Warminster Training Centre introduces a strong built, human element to the character of the area.
- Settlement pattern is dominated by proximity to Warminster to the west.
- Occasional isolated farmsteads scattered throughout the character area.
- Sense of tranquillity disturbed by proximity to main railway corridor, Warminster's urban edge and B3414 road corridor.
- Prehistoric visible earthworks.



Summary of Visual Character

Topography within the area slopes gently downwards in a southwesterly direction from the Chalk Downland Edge to the northeast towards Warminster and the valley of the Wylde River to the south. Landscape is predominantly underlain by Chalk geology, giving rise to rich brown earth soils. Land use is mixed, with a combination of large arable fields and smaller patches of pasture and rough grassland visible. Within the northern corner of the area (in close proximity to adjacent Chalk Downland Edge), the simple form and arrangement of accommodation and administration buildings within Warminster Training Centre introduce a strong built, human element to the character of the area. Striking contrast is visible against a backdrop of relatively wooded Chalk Downland Edge. Mature hedgerows, often containing several hedgerow trees, delineate field boundaries, where present. Settlement pattern is dominated by proximity to Warminster to the west. Clear views towards the

urban edge (which is visually harsh in places) are visible from the surrounding landscape. Occasional isolated farmsteads are also scattered throughout the character area. The railway corridor, running across the centre of the area (with associated industrial/ commercial warehouse development spreading eastwards from Warminster), disturbs the rural character of this area. To the east of Warminster (just to the north of the Wylde valley), Bishopstrow House, with its associated designed landscape, including belts of woodland, provides a recognisable landscape feature. Sense of tranquillity within the area is disturbed by proximity to main railway corridor, Warminster's urban edge and B3414 road corridor.

Historic Environment

- The bowl barrows to the east and north of Bishopstrow House⁶⁶ and the King Barrow: a long barrow 100m north of Bishopstrow House combined, give an indication of how settlement of the area continued between the 5th and 2nd millennia BC.⁶⁷
- The Motte and double ringwork east of Bishopstrow Farm, which includes an earthwork castle comprising a motte, a double ringwork and associated features and it is suggested that the castle was a short-lived fortification erected during the Anarchy.⁶⁸
- Dominated by arable field of Parliamentary enclosure, of the late 18th / early 19th century, which are characterised by large rectangular fields.
- In some areas fields are smaller and less regular indicating an earlier process of enclosure.

Biodiversity

The landscape in this area is predominantly farmland, mainly arable with patches of pasture and rough grassland. East of Warminster there are several woodland belts, associated with Bishopstrow House. The hedgerow field boundaries with deciduous mature trees serve as wildlife corridors and provide nesting opportunities for birds. No ancient woodland remains in the area. The area includes a very small section of the adjacent Salisbury Plain SSSI whilst the southern half of the area is part of the Cranborne Chase AONB.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The dominance of intensive arable farming throughout the area has led to a gradual loss of biodiversity and cultural value. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, in places, hedgerows have been lost.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Surviving hedgerow network.
- Open views to dramatic Chalk Downland Edge (which is wooded in places).
- Prehistoric visible earthworks.

Key Landscape Changes

- Loss and decline of arable field boundaries (hedgerows), which has led to a loss of intact field pattern.
- Potential visually intrusive development at the edges of Warminster.
- Visual and noise intrusion associated with the B3414 road corridor and railway corridor.
- Visually harsh urban development in places along the western settlement edge of Trowbridge.

⁶⁶ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/34187.pdf>

⁶⁷ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/12294.pdf>

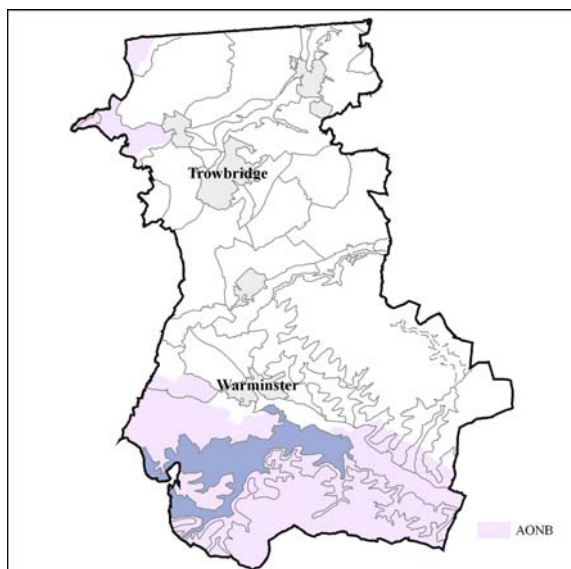
⁶⁸ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10211.pdf>

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the existing landscape pattern and dramatic open views to the adjacent Chalk Downland Edge and enhance the landscape setting of Warminster to the west. Specific management objectives are to:

- Resist any development that would affect the open views across the terrace to the chalk uplands.
- Conserve and enhance the current field pattern and hedgerows with careful management and restoration (where necessary) with species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Promote appropriate management of the woodland clumps in the area.
- Encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.
- Conserve and manage the setting of earthworks/archaeological sites within the area.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Warminster.
- Screen visually intrusive large developments along the railway corridor, extending eastwards from Warminster.

G7 : LONGBRIDGE DEVERILL GREENSAND AND CHALK TERRACE



Location and Boundaries

The Longbridge Deverill character area is located within the north western part of the Cranborne Chase AONB. It is bound along its western edge by the district boundary and along its eastern edge by the Wylde Chalk River Floodplain, with the chalk escarpments rising up from the terrace in the south.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating and shelving terrace of Upper Greensand in the north-west of the AONB.⁶⁹
- 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 Wylde reflect the survival of remnant areas of pasture.
- Upper reaches of the River Wylde.
- Settlement is focused around the River Wylde (The Deverills in the west, and Sutton Veny and Tytherington in the east).
- Well served by transport routes with the main A350 running north/south and a number of secondary roads criss-crossing the terrace.
- Sense of remoteness to the west of Longbridge Deverill.



Summary of Visual Character

This 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 Chalk Downland Edge landscape type forming a prominent backdrop. This is a simple landscape, appearing uncluttered and offering few distinguishing features apart from the Upper Wylde – the large scale regular field units reinforcing the

⁶⁹ Refer to 6B: Kilmington Terrace Character Area – within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, 2003).

sense of openness. Settlement is a key feature – the attractive nucleated settlements of the Deverills villages for example found towards the east of the area clustered along the upper Wylde valley.

Historic Environment

- Isolated prehistoric earthworks, including a henge and round barrows.
- Medieval settlements with surviving earthworks showing that some have contracted, such as Hill Deverill.

Biodiversity

North of Longbridge Deverill, the River Wylde as a tributary of the Hampshire Avon, is classified as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC); south of the village it is locally designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. 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. Only traces of ancient woodland remain.

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

- Open landscape with wide views to the stark Chalk escarpments.
- Small woodland blocks and shelterbelts.
- Medieval villages and stone built farmhouses.
- Bronze Age remains near to the course of the Wylde.

Key Landscape Changes

- Loss and continued decline of hedgerow boundaries in places.
- Loss of trees as landscape features.
- 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.
- Creation of new coniferous plantations on the terrace.
- Diversification of farm businesses into secondary enterprises such as farm house accommodation or commercial activities.
- Agri-environment schemes diverting unwanted arable land to environmental management.
- Future pressure for linear expansion along the Wylde Valley may result in merging of villages and loss of settlement identity.

Management 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 rivers will improve condition, quality and visual integrity of the landscape as well as its ecological value. Specific management objectives 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.
- Protect nature conservation value of the River Wylye.

4.9 Chalk Downland Edge (Type H)

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic scarps eroded into rounded spurs and deep combes.
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk.
- Panoramic views of the valleys and plateaus from the scarp slopes and valley sides.
- Steeply rising scarp slopes are visually dominant in surrounding lowland areas.
- Remnant chalk grassland is an important habitat on the steep slopes of the scarps.

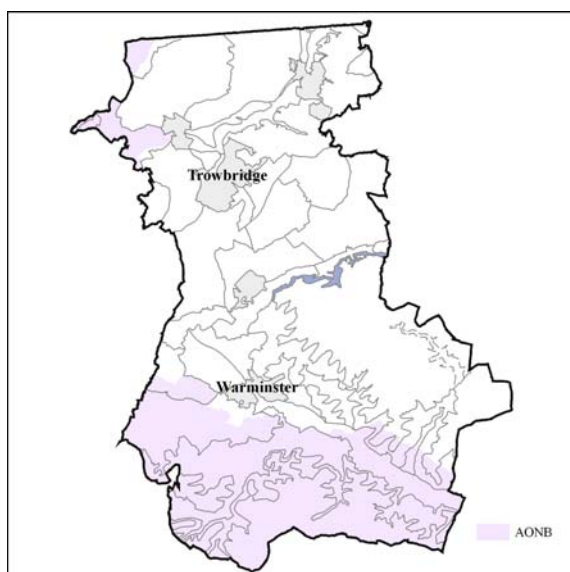
Summary of Visual Character

Chalk Downland Edge landscapes are amongst the most dramatic elements of the chalk landscape within the District. 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 the weakness. Landscape is underlain by a combination of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk. Chalk Downland Edges often support remnant chalk grassland, which provides an important and diverse ecological habitat. Characteristically, panoramic views across adjacent lowland Landscape Character Types and across adjacent Chalk Downland can be gained from the Chalk Downland Edge. Landscape pattern is large and expansive, the pattern of chalk elements creating strong recognisable and dramatic sense of place.

Character Areas

- H1. Bratton Chalk Downland Edge
- H2. Bishopstrow and Codford Down Chalk Downland Edge
- H3. Norton Bavant Chalk Downland Edge
- H4. Cold Kitchen Hill Chalk Downland Edge
- H5. The Deverills to Stockton Chalk Downland Edge

H1 : BRATTON CHALK DOWNLAND EDGE



Location and Boundaries

Located in the centre of the District, this character hugs the northern edge of Salisbury Plain West Chalk Downland to the south, with the low-lying landscapes of the Greensand Terrace and Rolling Clay Lowlands to the north.

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic, steeply sloping scarp face of higher Chalk Downland to the south and east.
- Long, sinuous nature of the scarp slopes, wrap tightly around the Downland, covered with small patches of deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland.
- Narrow combe valleys cross the Downland Edge at right angles.
- Land cover is dominated by rough grassland.
- Extensive, panoramic, sweeping views across adjacent Rolling Clay Lowland to the north.
- Bratton Camp fort and associated long barrow (at the edge of this character area) provide recognisable archaeological and landscape features.
- Landmark Westbury White Horse, which has been carved from the underlying chalk.



Summary of Visual Character

This character area encompasses the dramatic, steeply sloping scarp face of higher Chalk Downland to the south and east. The long, sinuous nature of the scarp slopes, wrap tightly around the Downland and are covered with small patches of deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland. Narrow combe valleys cross the Downland Edge at right angles, and then are often associated with the site of villages at the foot of the slopes. Landscape is generally devoid of water features, as a result of the underlying porosity of the chalk bedrock. Land use is dominated by rough grassland, with the terrain generally too steep to sustain agricultural use. The dramatic nature of the topography facilitates extensive, panoramic, sweeping views across adjacent Rolling Clay Lowland to the north. Throughout the character area, there is a strong sense of exposure, remoteness and tranquillity. Sense of isolation is further enhanced by lack of settlement pattern. To the east of Combe Bottom, the dramatic Bratton Camp fort and associated long barrow provide recognisable archaeological and landscape features, in their position which commands views across the adjacent lowland landscape. Another landscape feature, which contributes to recognisable sense of

place within and in views to the area, is the Westbury White horse, which has been carved from the underlying chalk. This landmark is highly visible within views north and eastwards from Heywood Rolling Clay Lowlands landscape character area.

Historic Environment

- Medieval strip lynchets are a feature of this landscape; examples are west of Patcombe Hill where a flight of well preserved lynchets with steps over 2m in height⁷⁰; and south of Greater Lane Farm⁷¹. Lynchets provide distinctive traces of medieval and earlier agricultural activities in downland areas, indicating the level of intensity of land use and farming practices through time.
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland at Coulston Hillside Wood and Baynton Hillside Wood.⁷²
- Bowl barrows, funerary monuments dating from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age, can be seen at Picquet Hill⁷³ and south east of Fitzroy Farm⁷⁴, these show the longevity of the occupation sequence of this area.

Biodiversity

The steep scarps are predominantly covered with species rich rough chalk grassland and interspersed with small patches and belts of deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland, some of which is ancient (Coulston Hillside Wood and Baynton Hillside Wood). Hedgerows are generally absent. Much of the area is included within Bratton Down SSSI, which offers valuable habitats for invertebrates, rare plants and birds.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The current condition of this landscape character area is perceived to be good. The traditional land use 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 historic features, such as Bratton Camp.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Visible archaeological earthworks (Bratton Camp).
- Landmark Westbury white horse carving.
- Open, panoramic views across adjacent lowland landscapes.
- Strong sense of isolation and tranquillity throughout the character area.

Key Landscape Changes

- Pressure for car parking to house visitors to the Westbury White Horse and Bratton Camp.
- Erosion by walkers.
- Protection and availability of archaeological sites from and to the public.
- Prominent character of scarps may bring about demand for construction of tall structures such as telecommunication masts and wind turbines.
- Potential for new visually intrusive development on the scarp slopes which would be highly visible from surrounding landscape character areas.

⁷⁰ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10014.pdf>

⁷¹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/33521.pdf>

⁷² <http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/>

⁷³ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/31699.pdf>

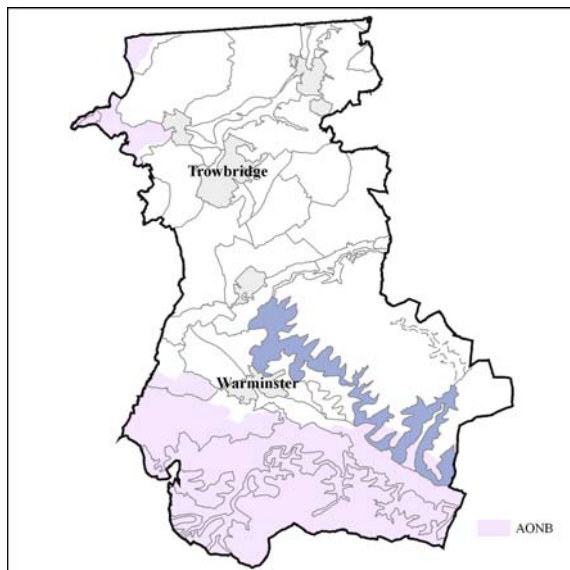
⁷⁴ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/31698.pdf>

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy of the area is to conserve the intact landscape pattern and open nature of the Chalk Downland edge, whilst also managing sites of archaeological and ecological interest. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage blocks and strips of woodland on the scarp slopes and limit further woodland planting within this area to maintain the generally open character of the scarps.
- Encourage continued grazing management of grassland to limit scrub encroachment and maintain the distinctive smooth landform.
- Conserve important archaeological features (such as Bratton Camp) on the scarp landscape and manage for visitor pressure.
- Ensure that tall structures, such as communication masts and wind turbines do not create visual clutter on the skyline of the Chalk Downland Edge.
- Maintain the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area.
- Maintain open, panoramic views from the scarp, across adjacent lowland landscapes.

H2 : BISHOPSTROW AND CODFORD DOWN CHALK DOWNLAND EDGE



Location and Boundaries

Located towards the eastern boundary of West Wiltshire District, Bishopstrow and Codford Down Chalk Downland Edge spreads along the western scarp edge of the higher Salisbury Plain Chalk Downland to the north and east. The area is accessible in places via minor roads, running at right angles to the main A350 (Warminster Road) that encircles the base of the Chalk mass. Parts of the area are inaccessible as a result of their location within Salisbury Plain army training area.

Key Characteristics

- Series of Chalk Downland Edges, which fall sharply and dramatically from the higher Chalk Downland to the north and east.
- Series of narrow valleys break through the continuous belt of edge or scarp of the chalk.
- Slopes are covered with a patchwork of arable fields (with predominantly mature and intact hedgerow field boundaries) and rough grassland.
- Series of footpaths lead up from surrounding lowland landscapes, to the base of the Chalk Downland Edge.
- Dramatic, panoramic views across adjacent lowland landscapes and Warminster to the south and west.



Summary of Visual Character

This character area encompasses a series of Chalk Downland Edges (Upton Cow Down, Warminster Down, Boreham Down, Bishopstrow Down and Middleton Down), which fall sharply and dramatically from the higher Chalk Downland to its north and east. A series of narrow valleys break through the continuous belt of edge or scarp of the chalk, running at right angles to the natural course of the chalk. In places (where the steep topography is not limiting), the slopes are covered with a patchwork of arable fields (with predominantly mature and intact hedgerow field boundaries). Other patches of the Downland Edge are covered with rough grassland. A series of footpaths lead up from surrounding lowland landscapes, to the base of the Chalk Downland Edge. Overall, however, the area is generally inaccessible and there is generally a sense of isolation. Patches of woodland are scattered along the scarps, however, generally there is a sense of openness throughout the area. A series of earthworks and tumuli are also peppered across the slopes. The strong form of topography within the area facilitates dramatic, panoramic views across adjacent lowland landscapes and Warminster to the south and west. Overall sense of tranquillity throughout the area is strong.

Historic Environment

- An Iron Age hillfort, an unenclosed Iron Age settlement, a cemetery, three bowl barrows, a field system and enclosure within the hillfort, and two strip lynchet systems outside the hill fort, collectively known as Battlesbury Camp Monuments, situated within this area represent one of the few extant archaeological 'landscapes' in Britain and are considered to be of special significance because they differ in character from those in other areas with comparable levels of preservation.⁷⁵
- Field system on Codford Down, represent occupation from the Bronze Age (2000-700 BC) to the end of the fifth century AD⁷⁶ and strip lynchets south of Bigbury Wood provide distinctive traces of medieval and earlier agricultural activities in downland areas, indicating the level of intensity of land use and farming practices through time.

Biodiversity

The chalk slopes are covered with a patchwork of arable farmland and rough chalk grassland, interspersed with patches and belts of deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland, a tiny section of which (in the north, including Dirtley Wood) is ancient. Some other down areas such as Knook Down and Codford Down have been locally designated for their nature conservation value. A large section of the landscape is included in Salisbury Plain Special Area of Conservation and SPA, which includes important examples of grassland, orchids and bird species.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The current condition of this landscape character area is perceived to be generally good. The traditional land use 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 historic features, such as Battlesbury Camp.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Visible archaeological earthworks and tumuli.
- Open, panoramic views across adjacent lowland landscapes.
- Patches of woodland.
- Hedgerow network (where present).
- Strong sense of isolation and tranquillity throughout the character area.

Key Landscape Changes

- Erosion by walkers.
- Protection and availability of archaeological sites from and to the public.
- Prominent character of scarps may bring about demand for construction of tall structures such as telecommunication masts and wind turbines.
- Potential for new visually intrusive development on the scarp slopes, which would be highly visible from surrounding landscape character areas.

⁷⁵ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10081.pdf>

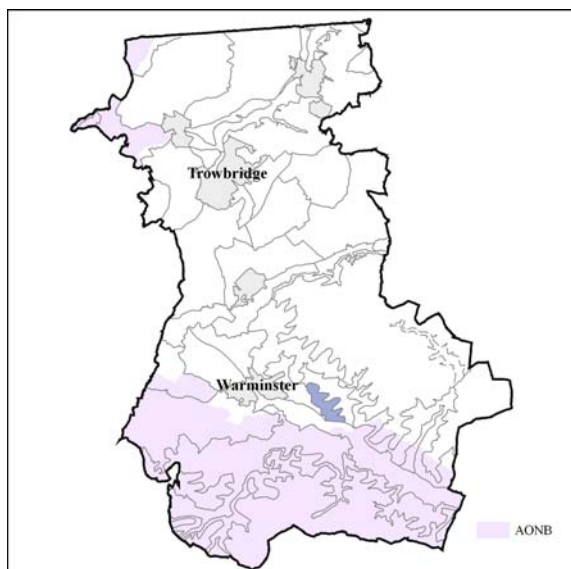
⁷⁶ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/33522.pdf>

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy of the area is to conserve the intact landscape pattern and open nature of the Chalk Downland edge, whilst also managing sites of archaeological and ecological interest. Specific management objectives are to:

- Conserve and manage blocks and strips of woodland on the scarp slopes and limit further woodland planting within this area to maintain the generally open character of the scarps.
- Encourage continued grazing management of grassland to limit scrub encroachment and maintain the distinctive smooth landform.
- Conserve important archaeological features on the scarp landscape and where necessary manage for visitor access.
- Seek to ensure that tall structures, such as communication masts and wind turbines do not create visual clutter on the skyline of the Chalk Downland Edge.
- Maintain the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area.
- Maintain open, panoramic views from the scarp, across adjacent lowland landscapes.

H3 : NORTON BAVANT CHALK DOWNLAND EDGE



Location and Boundaries

Situated to the east of Warminster and northeast of Heytesbury, this character area is surrounded on both sides by areas of Greensand Terrace. The character area lies adjacent to the A36 main road corridor, however it is generally inaccessible via roads, other than the two minor roads running directly to the east and west.

Key Characteristics

- Three distinctive, steeply sloping hills, which form a distinct and somewhat isolated unit of Chalk Downland Edge.
- Long fields, which are predominantly arable.
- Occasional patches of rough grassland and scrub situated on the top of the hills.
- No apparent settlement pattern.
- Strong sense of openness.
- Sense of tranquillity throughout the area is strong.
- Number of tumuli scattered throughout the area.



Summary of Visual Character

This character area encompasses three distinctive, steeply sloping hills, which form a distinct and somewhat isolated unit of Chalk Downland Edge. The hills and Chalk Downland Edge are indented with a series of finger-shaped corridors of Greensand Terrace. The hills are covered with long fields, which are predominantly arable, with occasional patches of rough grassland and scrub situated on the top of the hills. Regular patches and belts of mixed woodland populate parts of the slopes. Imber range perimeter paths runs across the top of the hills, providing public access to the area. There is no apparent settlement pattern, and a strong sense of openness throughout the area. Overall, sense of tranquillity throughout the area is strong. Extensive panoramic views across adjacent Greensand Terrace and distant lowland landscapes can be gained from the top of the hills and along the slopes of the Chalk Downland Edge. A number of tumuli provide visible archaeological and landscape features within the landscape.

Historic Environment

- Scratchbury Hill Iron age hillfort, round barrows and enclosures, which are associated with contemporary archaeological features such as field systems and land boundaries, show continuity of settlement in this area from c.1000BC and the remains of Middle Hill round take occupation of this area even further back to around c.3000⁷⁷.
- Middlehill settlement and associated cultivation earthworks, the site of a deserted medieval village, provide distinctive traces of medieval and earlier agricultural activities in Downland areas, and indicate the degree of intensity of land use and farming practices through time.⁷⁸

Biodiversity

The chalk hills are covered with arable fields interspersed with occasional patches of rough species rich calcareous grassland and Juniper scrub. Occasional mixed woodland belts – none of which is ancient – on the slopes serve as wildlife corridors. Part of the area is designated as Scratchbury and Cotley Hills SSSI.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The current condition of this landscape is perceived to be generally good. The traditional land 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 historic features, such as the numerous tumuli scattered throughout the area.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Patches of woodland running along and up the slopes.
- Hedgerow network where present.
- Strong sense of openness and tranquillity throughout the area.
- Predominantly rural character.
- Extensive panoramic views across adjacent areas of Greensand Terrace and other lowland landscapes.

Key Landscape Changes

- Erosion by walkers.
- Protection and availability of archaeological sites from and to the public.
- Prominent character of scarps may bring about demand for construction of tall structures such as telecommunication masts and wind turbines.
- Potential for new visually intrusive development on the scarp slopes, which would be highly visible from surrounding landscape character areas.

Management Strategy and Objectives

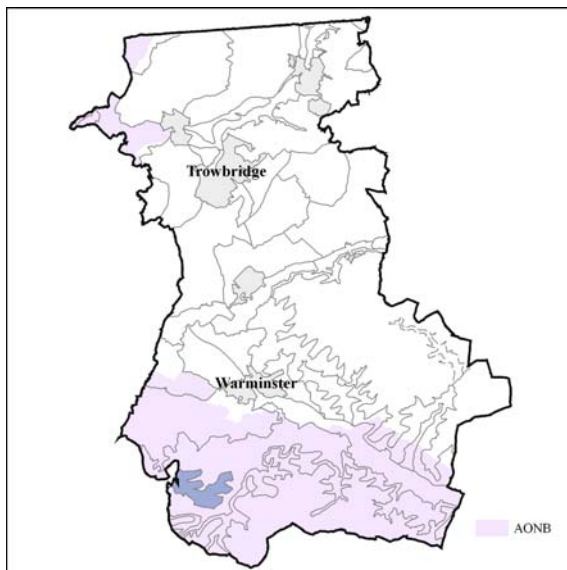
The overall strategy of the area is to conserve the intact landscape pattern and open nature of the Chalk Downland edge, whilst also managing sites of archaeological and ecological interest. Specific management objectives are to:

⁷⁷ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10212.pdf>

⁷⁸ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10087.pdf>

- Conserve and manage blocks and strips of woodland on the scarp slopes and limit further woodland planting within this area to maintain the generally open character of the scarps.
- Encourage continued grazing management of grassland to limit scrub encroachment and maintain the distinctive smooth landform.
- Conserve important archaeological features on the scarp landscape and manage for visitor pressure.
- Seek to ensure that tall structures, such as communication masts and wind turbines do not create visual clutter on the skyline of the Chalk Downland Edge.
- Maintain the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area.
- Maintain open, panoramic views from the scarp, across adjacent lowland landscapes.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation – especially in relation to the Scratchbury and Cotley Hills (where some parts are designated as ‘open country’).

H4 : COLD KITCHEN HILL CHALK DOWNLAND EDGE



Location and Boundaries

This area comprises an outlying hill that is separated from the escarpment/chalk downland edge by the River Wylde.

Key Characteristics

- Sculpted, convoluted landform comprising deeply incised combe valleys that create surprise views and dramatic shadows in strong sunlight.⁷⁹
- 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.
- Straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure are highly visible where they cut across the contours.
- Woodland swathes associated with the break of the slope, following the line of the contours and delineating the contrast between the escarpment and adjacent Open Chalk Downland landscape.
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments.
- Later prehistoric/Romano-British landscape divisions incorporating long bank and ditch earthworks and associated cross-ridge dykes.



Summary of Visual Character

Cold Kitchen Hill stands proud of the surrounding Greensand Terrace landscape - providing a strong contrast in relief. The hill 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 Wylde (and its tributaries) whose course has followed fault lines to break through the chalk and thus

⁷⁹ Refer to 1B: West Wiltshire Downs Character Area within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).

interrupt the continuity of the landscape, creating a fragmented escarpment. The processes of riverine erosion over millions of years has led to deep incisions – forming combe valleys.

The hill provides commanding long distance views over the neighbouring landscapes 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.

Historic Environment

- As an isolated chalk hill this gave the area a particular strategic significance during the prehistoric period.
- Numerous monuments, including the Cold Kitchen Hill long barrow, numerous round barrows and extensive linear earthworks as well as lengths of cross-ridge dyke.

Biodiversity

The area has retained significant ecological interest, including Brimsdown Hill SSSI. Although Brimsdown Hill is predominantly composed of chalk grassland, the northern scarp also supports a small area of ancient woodland. This woodland grades from ash dominated on the calcareous slopes, through to oak and downy birch woodland on the more acidic plateau. Buzzards are known to use this area of ancient wood, and the site is unusually rich in ground dwelling chalk mosses, including *Scapania aspera*, which is known from only one other site in Wiltshire.

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

- Views to scarp slopes from lowland areas.
- Variety of woodlands including wood pasture, coppice and veteran trees.
- Settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads built of local materials.
- Highly rural, peaceful, isolated character.
- Designed landscapes of parkland, avenues, tree clumps.
- Chalk grassland.
- Pattern of roads, tracks and paths following dry valleys linking the lowland valleys and vales with the downs.
- Archaeological remains of barrows and hillforts.

Key Landscape Changes

- Encroachment of arable farming onto parts of the scarp slope, displacing pasture or unimproved chalk grassland.
- 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.

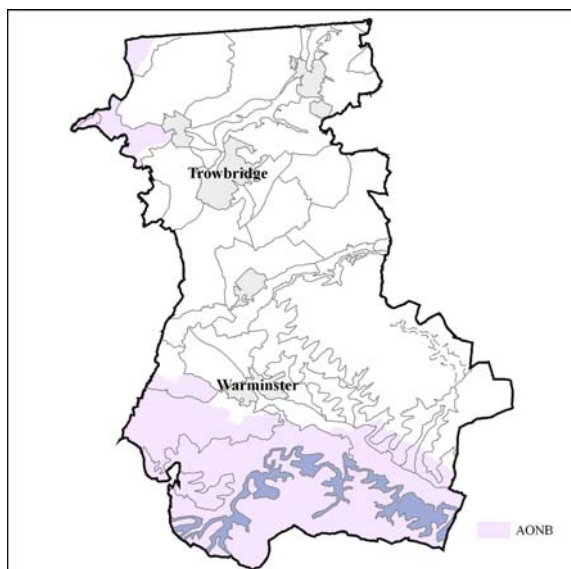
- Increasing professionalisation of livestock farming, limiting availability of livestock to graze the chalk grassland.
- Erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape.
- Construction of tall structures, including communication masts and possibly wind turbines.
- Reversion to chalk grassland through continued enhancement and environmental management of the landscape.

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.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in relation to the areas designated as ‘Open Country’.
- Visitor access and any parking should be carefully managed to protect 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 structure, 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.

H5 : THE DEVERILLS TO STOCKTON CHALK DOWNLAND EDGE



Location and Boundaries

The Deverills to Stockton Chalk Downland Edge marks the northern edge of the Great Ridge Chalk Downland. The area rises above the lowland of the Longbridge Deverill Greensand Terrace and Wylde Valley to the north.

Key Characteristics

- Fragmented, eroded chalk escarpment broken by the course of the River Wylde marking the boundary between the Greensand Terrace landscape to the north and the Chalk Downland to the south.
- Sculpted, convoluted landform comprising deeply incised combe valleys that create surprise views and dramatic shadows in strong sunlight.⁸⁰
- 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.
- Straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary inclosure are highly visible where they cut across the contours.
- Woodland swathes associated with the break of the slope, following the line of the contours and delineating the contrast between the escarpment and adjacent Open Chalk Downland landscape.
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments.
- Later prehistoric/Romano-British landscape divisions incorporating long bank and ditch earthworks and associated cross-ridge dykes.
- Strip lynchets near the medieval settlements at Kingston and Monkton Deverill.
- Small villages strung out along the upper River Wylde.



⁸⁰ Refer to 1B: West Wiltshire Downs Character Area within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003)

Summary of Visual Character

The pronounced form of the escarpment above the Greensand Terrace and Wylve Valley gives this area a strong presence. This is a large-scale landscape – a vast chalk escarpment that stands proud of the lower lying 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 Wylve (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. The processes of riverine erosion over millions of years has led to deep incisions – forming combe valleys. The escarpment provides commanding long distance views over the neighbouring Greensand Terrace and Wylve Valley, 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. The settlement is of varying form, nucleated (Monkton Deverill) and linear (Hill Deverill).

Historic Environment

- Localised groupings of strip lynchets near the villages of Kingston and Monkton Deverill, which represent the deliberate exploitation of this marginal area.
- Earthwork features, such as linear banks and ditches and round barrows, extend into this area from their main areas of distribution on the open downs.
- Church of St Michael at Brixton Deverill, listed Grade II* and dating back to 13th century.
- A number of valued historic buildings – manor houses, farmhouses and cottages dating back to 17th century.

Biodiversity

Species-rich chalk grassland dominates on the chalk downland edge. Woodland blocks often associated with the break of the slope, add to the biodiversity value of the site. A very small section of the chalk downland edge landscape Brimsdown Hill has SSSI status, whilst the upper River Wylve is designated for its nature conservation interest. No ancient woodland remains.

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

- Views to scarp slopes from lowland areas.
- Variety of woodlands including wood pasture, coppice and veteran trees.
- Settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and few small villages built of local materials.
- Highly rural, peaceful, isolated character.
- Designed landscapes of parkland, avenues, tree clumps.
- Chalk grassland.
- Pattern of roads, tracks and paths following dry valleys linking the lowland valleys and vales with the downs.
- Archaeological remains of barrows and hillforts.

Key Landscape Changes

- Encroachment of arable farming onto parts of the scarp slope, displacing pasture or unimproved chalk grassland.
- Increasing professionalisation of livestock farming, limiting the availability of livestock to graze chalk grassland.
- Erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape. The prominent character of the scarp is likely to bring demand for construction of tall structures, including communication masts and possibly wind turbines.
- Reversion to chalk grassland through continued environmental management of the landscape.

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.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in relation to the areas designated as 'Open Country'.
- Visitor access and any parking should be carefully managed to protect 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 structure, 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.

4.10 Chalk Downland (Type I)

Key Characteristics

- Elevated chalk upland, dominated by Upper Chalk with a capping of clay with flint.
- Strongly rolling landform with gently domed hilltops, dry valleys and dramatic scarps.
- Wide open views of rolling downland and large-scale ‘rooms’ of arable farmland enclosed by woodland.
- Varying mix of land cover elements, including the open arable fields and the woodland blocks and belts, which are linked by a network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Field pattern dominated by large rectangular fields typical of 18th and 19th century enclosure with some remnant small-scale medieval patterns close to villages.
- Low density scattered settlement pattern of farmsteads and occasional villages often sheltering in the valleys.
- Varied vernacular built form includes red brick, flint, stone and render with roofs of tile and thatch.
- Very large-scale and open, exposed landscape.

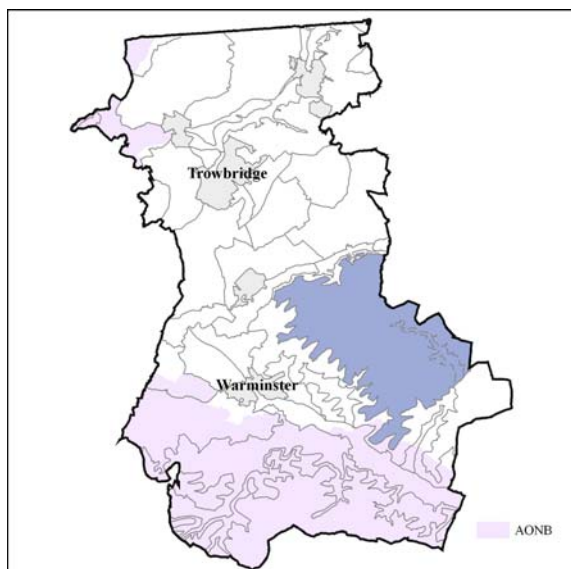
Summary of Visual Character

A large proportion of the Chalk Downland Landscape Character Type is Ministry of Defence (MOD) land, with restricted public access. Landscape within this type sits on a belt of chalk from the Upper Cretaceous period that runs east to west across the District. The majority of the area comprises of Upper Chalk with Middle Chalk and Lower Chalk occurring on the steep slopes and at the base of slopes respectively. Steep scarp slopes rise to form an upstanding plateau, with wide flat areas incised by a complex network of dry valleys forming an expansive rolling landscape. Small isolated areas of Clay with Flint and Sandstone also occur. The underlying chalk geology has led to the predominance of free draining calcareous soils, and a lack of surface water. The landform undulates between 100m and 230m AOD. Areas of nationally rare chalk grassland are scattered across the type. The long established military land use has contributed to these ecologically important areas. 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 Chalk Downland has many sites of historic and archaeological interest and importance. The military use has contributed to preserving a number of archaeological sites from the Prehistoric and Roman periods that would have otherwise been lost through ploughing. Whole archaeological landscapes survive in this landscape type largely undisrupted by any activity following the Roman period. Settlement pattern is sparse and consists of nucleated villages, military camps and isolated farmsteads.

Character Areas

- I1. Salisbury Plain West Chalk Downland
- I2. Cope Hill Down Chalk Downland
- I3. Great Ridge Chalk Downland

II : SALISBURY PLAIN WEST CHALK DOWNLAND



Location and Boundaries

Salisbury Plain West Chalk Downland is situated upon Salisbury Plain (to the east of Westbury). Public access to the area is generally prohibited (excluding a few days per year) as a result of landscape within the area being used for military training purposes. Minor rural roads, which lead onto the plain, are generally only accessible to a certain point, limiting access to the landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Vast, unenclosed undulating landscape of rough grazed chalk grassland.
- Predominantly unsettled.
- Localised steep slopes and dry valleys accentuate the pronounced topography.
- The military use of the landscape contributes to its character, as does the associated military tracks and mixed (deciduous and coniferous) plantations.
- Localised presence of military structures such as target tanks and buildings (built from corrugated concrete and iron).
- Localised presence of earthworks.



Key Characteristics of sub area II A

- Relatively narrow, yet steep-sided valley running southwards across the downland.
- Relic settlement of Imber village (and associated St. Giles church) at the northern end of the valley corridor.
- Mixed linear woodland/ plantation belts along the valley sides.
- Series of earthworks running along the top of the valley sides.

Summary of Visual Character

This character area forms part of a larger area of landscape to the east (Salisbury Plain Unenclosed Downland⁸¹). The area is characterised by vast, unenclosed undulating landscape of rough grazed chalk grassland that is predominantly unsettled. However, the remains of Imber (a once inhabited village, with associated St. Giles Church) are located at the northern end of Imber Valley, which forms a distinctive sub-area within the overall character area. The localised steep slopes and dry valleys

⁸¹ Landscape Character Assessment for the Army Training Estate – Salisbury Plain, (Entec, May 2003).

accentuate the pronounced topography, which is highly visible due to the wide, open views provided by the lack of woodlands/ thick tree cover which would otherwise restrict views. Dry valleys are particularly wet in the winter and flow as winterbournes subject to ground water levels at any given time. The military use of the landscape contributes to its character, as does the associated military tracks and mixed (deciduous and coniferous) plantations. Further evidence of the military land use is found in the localised presence of military structures such as target tanks and buildings (built from corrugated concrete and iron) and the occasional military signs erected. Ash and beech trees provide localised tree cover where relic settlements/ farmsteads once stood. The evidence of human presence within the landscape is further perpetuated by the localised presence of earthworks. The relic red buildings associated with these farmsteads/ villages re utilised by the military for training purposes with roofs often replaced with metal sheeting.

Historic Environment

- Unenclosed field pattern
- Military plantations
- St Giles Church, Grade II* listed dating back to 13th century.
- The evidence of human presence within the landscape is further perpetuated by the localised presence of earthworks.
- Within the valleys are the relic settlements such as Imber village and Southdown Farm with their associated ash and beech tree cover of individual trees. In an area to the north of the derelict Southdown Farm field boundaries occur as part of a military training facility.
- Knook Castle hillfort and associated prehistoric and Romano-British landscape⁸² coupled with Bratton Camp Iron Age hillfort, the Westbury White Horse, barrows and trackways on Bratton Down⁸³ and enclosure and linear earthworks between Bishopstrow Down and South Down Sleight, together provide evidence for the use of Bratton Down for funerary, defensive and display purposes over a period of five millennia.

Biodiversity

Rough chalk grassland dominates the Salisbury Plain landscape. With the exception of the northern and southern edges, the area has international designation as a Special Area of Conservation and SPA, recognising its high percentage of species rich unimproved calcareous grassland cover, which provides valuable habitats for rare plants, invertebrates and birds. Mixed plantations and woodland belts are also found scattered in the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall, this landscape appears to be in generally good condition (generally protected from human intervention, other than military activities).

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intricate chalk downland habitats.
- Pattern of mixed woodlands.
- Sense of tranquillity (obviously dependent on level of military activity).
- Presence of earthworks.
- Open and dramatic views across the downland landscape.
- Views into and along Imber valley.

⁸² <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/10227.pdf>

⁸³ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/26708.pdf>

- Relict features within Imber village.

Key Landscape Changes

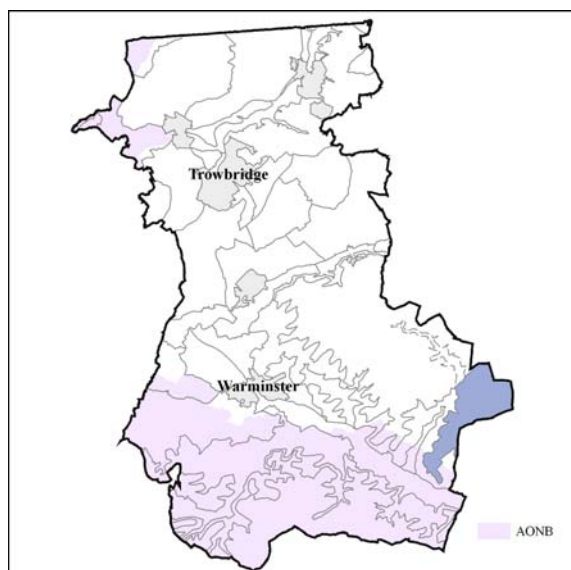
- Scrub invasion and management of grazing levels.
- Erosion, track speed and run off from military tracks.
- Retention of ash and beech tree cover around farmsteads/ settlements.
- Location and species composition of military woodland.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with military vehicles.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the strong sense of openness and intact landscape features (such as plantations). Ecological habitats (chalk grassland) and distinctive archaeological features should also be conserved wherever possible. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek active stock management and scrub removal where possible.
- Seek active management of military woodland to consider boundary shape and species composition.
- Seek opportunities to remove plantations that are not yet fully established where they threaten the open character of the landscape.
- Ensure effective conservation methods are taken to preserve earthworks.
- Maintain open and dramatic views across the chalk downland.
- Protect the nature conservation value of the Plain's habitats and species.

I2: COPE HILL DOWN CHALK DOWNLAND



Location and Boundaries

Cope Hill Down Chalk Downland is situated to the east Salisbury Plain West character area (at the eastern edge of West Wiltshire District). Public access to the area is generally prohibited as a result of the landscape within the area being used for military training purposes. This landscape character area forms part of a larger area of landscape to the east (Cope Hill Down Unenclosed Downland⁸⁴).

Key Characteristics

- Character dominated by an undulating landscape of rough grazed chalk grassland.
- Utilised for military training.
- Localised dry valleys contribute to the undulating landform.
- Generally unenclosed field pattern.
- Beech plantations provide visually significant landscape features.
- Predominantly unsettled landscape.
- Occasional earthworks, relic settlement and dew ponds.



Summary of Visual Character

Landscape character within this area is dominated by an undulating landscape of rough grazed chalk grassland that is utilised for military training. The undulating topography is highly visible due to open views over the landscape. Localised dry valleys contribute to the undulating landform. Throughout the area, there is a generally unenclosed field pattern, within a landscape that is grazed by livestock and is mown for hay. Chalk grassland occurs throughout the landscape. Where wet pasture occurs, this may be due to the presence of winter bournes or could be produced through the waterlogging of soils. Beech plantations occur in the landscape. The military plantations are of various species and provide a more visually significant form of tree cover and are located throughout much of this landscape. Although predominantly an unsettled landscape this character is slightly diluted by the presence of Cope Hill Down FIBUA, which looks like a settlement within the landscape. Occasional earthworks, relic settlement and dew ponds can be found in this area contributing to the archaeological character and great time depth associated with the landscape.

⁸⁴ Landscape Character Assessment for the Army Training Estate – Salisbury Plain, (Entec, May 2003).

Historic Environment

- Unenclosed field pattern.
- Military plantations.
- Occasional earthworks, relic settlement and des ponds can be found in this area contributing to the archaeological character and great time depth associated with the landscape.
- Cope Hill Down FIBUA.
- Codford Circle hilltop enclosure⁸⁵.

Biodiversity

Rough grazed chalk grassland dominates this landscape. The northern part of this area is part of the Salisbury Plain Special Area of Conservation and SPA, internationally designated for its high percentage of species-rich unimproved calcareous grassland cover, which provides valuable habitats for rare plants, invertebrates and birds. Mixed plantations and woodland belts further contribute to the biodiversity value of the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall, this landscape appears to be in predominantly good condition (generally protected from human intervention, other than military activities).

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intricate chalk downland habitats.
- Beech plantations.
- Sense of tranquillity (obviously dependent on level of military activity).
- Presence of earthworks.
- Open and dramatic views across the downland landscape.

Key Landscape Changes

- Erosion and management of military tracks.
- Retention of beech plantations.
- Location, shape and species composition of military woodland.
- Disturbance from military related activities.

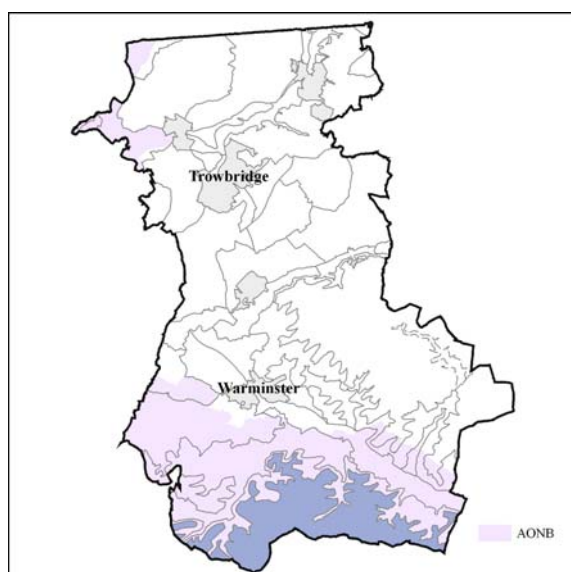
Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the strong sense of openness and intact landscape features (such as plantations). Ecological habitats (chalk grassland) and distinctive archaeological features should also be conserved wherever possible. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to maintain active stock management.
- Ensure conservation of grassland through appropriate stock management.
- Seek opportunities to remove plantations that are not yet fully established where they threaten the open character of the landscape.
- Encourage the retention of unenclosed land.
- Ensure effective conservation measure area taken to preserve earthworks.
- Protect the nature conservation value of the area's habitats and species.

⁸⁵ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/rsm/31667.pdf>

I3 : GREAT RIDGE CHALK DOWNLAND



Location and Boundaries

The character area of the Great Ridge Chalk Downland occupies an extensive area within the southern part of the district. The northern edge is defined by the distinctive Chalk Downland Edge.

Key Characteristics

- A large-scale landscape of broad rolling hills and undulating land separated by dry river valleys.⁸⁶
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- 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 consists of 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 Wylde Valley, including the localised preserved prehistoric/Romano-British landscapes at Stockton Wood.
- 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 corridor of the A350 (and the A303 in the eastern corner of the area), running across and through the landform in cuttings and on embankments.
- Extensive woodland around Great Ridge.



⁸⁶ Refer to 2A: West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland Character Area, Within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty : Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).

Summary of Visual Character

The character area is a distinctive, large scale landscape covering an extensive area. With a surface geology of Upper Chalk, the landscape is typically characteristic of the Open Chalk Downland landscape 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 quality enjoyed by many walkers and riders using the extensive network of rights of way that cross the downs. With the exception of the farmsteads, 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.

Historic Environment

- Iron Age and Romano-British settlement enclosures and associated field systems, Grim's Ditch linear earthwork and the Roman Road from Old Sarum to the Mendips, are found around Stockton Wood.
- 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.

Biodiversity

Although this character area is dominated by arable agriculture, it has retained substantial ecological value, and supports a variety of habitat types. This includes the unimproved chalk grassland of Stockton Wood a SSSI and the network of hedgerow field boundaries. A large tract of ancient woodland remains in the area. There are numerous locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, including Great Ridge Wood in the south of the area and Corton Down.

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

- Views to scarp slopes from lowland areas.
- Variety of woodlands including wood pasture, coppice and veteran trees.
- Settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and few small villages built of local materials.
- Highly rural, peaceful, isolated character.
- Chalk grassland.

- Pattern of roads, tracks and paths following dry valleys linking the lowland valleys and vales with the downs.
- Archaeological remains of barrows and hillforts.

Key Landscape Changes

- Conversion from sheep grazing on unimproved grassland to intensive arable production.
- Substantial increase in the number of game coverts grown by commercial shoots.
- New woodland belt planting, when mature, may reduce the distinctive open character of the landscape.
- Pressure for development, facilities and shelterbelt planting along transport corridors e.g. the A303 and A305.
- Loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with varied approaches to field boundary management affects the visual integrity of the landscape.
- Changes in the visual character of the landscape as well as a decline in farmland birds due to intensive farming practices.
- Marginal arable land being abandoned from production and reverted to chalk grassland or woodland with the help of agri-environment schemes. This could result in increased landscape diversity.
- Diversification into biomass crops.
- Diversification of farm businesses into secondary enterprises such as farm house accommodation or commercial shoots.
- Erosion and pressure for visitor facilities in the open landscape.
- Pressure for development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.

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.

4.11 Chalk River Valley (Type J)

Key Characteristics

- Strongly enclosing valley sides frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys.
- 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.
- The clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams are a key habitat.
- The floodplains support watermeadows, cress beds and damp pastures.
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads and railways.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, 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.
- A series of linear springline villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and watermeadow 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.

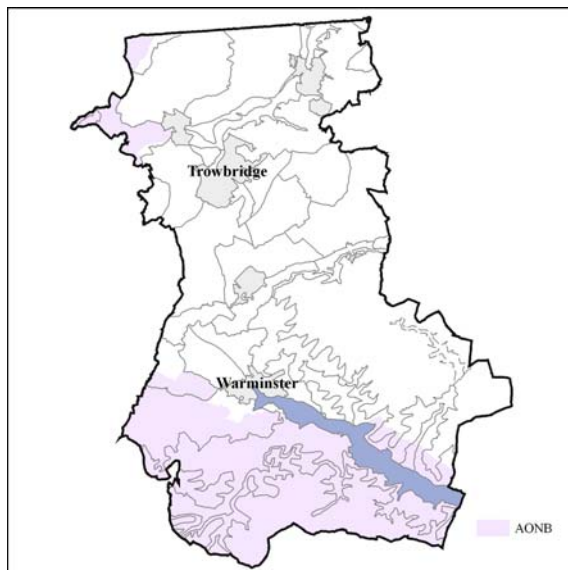
Summary of Visual Character

The Chalk River Valley Landscape Type encompasses the sides and floodplain of the narrow river valley (River Wylye), which cuts through the Chalk Uplands. The river corridor is cut into the solid geology generally of the Upper Chalk. The Chalk has been overlain by Alluvium immediately along the river courses and River Terrace Deposits at the valley sides. The latter have created brown calcareous loamy/clayey soils which are well drained and suited to arable farming while the Alluvium has formed ground water gleys which are susceptible to water logging and riverine flooding and so used for pasture. The river irrigates the floodplain to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens. The rivers irrigate the valley floodplains to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland and fens. 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. The river valley corridor forms an important route through the landscape. 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

- J1. Wylye Chalk River Valley
- J2. Chitterne Brook Chalk River Valley

J1 : WYLYE CHALK RIVER VALLEY



Location and Boundaries

The Wylde Floodplain extends along the floor of this major chalk river valley that cuts through and separates Salisbury Plain to the north and the Great Ridge to the south.

Key Characteristics

- Strongly enclosed valleys with an intimate scale contrasting with the surrounding open upland landscape.
- Level valley floor with relatively steep sides.
- Pastoral land use along the valley floor with small scale fields contrasts with arable farmland on the valley sides with medium to large geometric fields.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the lush and enclosed feel of the valleys.
- Riparian woodlands, lines of poplar along ditches and willow pollards.
- Diverse mosaic of land cover and habitats includes meadows, fen and wet woodland on valley floor.
- Clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams a key habitat.
- Valleys contain a concentration of settlement in contrast to the adjacent unsettled downs.
- Many long established villages, sited along the spring line and built of a rich variety of vernacular materials.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.⁸⁷
- Valley used as transport corridors with major roads and railway lines along valley sides.
- Rural landscape sometimes interrupted by the large volume of traffic.



Summary of Visual Character

The Wylde Chalk River Valley runs eastwards from Warminster enclosed by steep chalk slopes. The valley floor is a rural landscape where sheep and cattle graze the floodplain within small irregular

⁸⁷ Refer to 5A: Wylde Chalk River Valley Character Area, within Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty : Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, June 2003).

fields bound by intermittent hedgerows. Tree cover includes small beech plantations and lines of willows and poplars which follow field boundaries together with the past and present courses of the Wylde and its tributaries. The floodplain 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, their traditional buildings are predominantly of stone, and there are some with distinctive flint and limestone chequers. The long history of human occupation of the valley is made evident by the survival of Neolithic long barrows on the valley floor, as well as a number of Bronze Age round barrows, the Norman motte and bailey earthworks at Sherrington and the pattern of medieval settlements along the valley, largely surviving today. 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. Despite the relatively large-scale landform of the valley, this is an intimate landscape with a semi-enclosed character. Although characterised by busy transport corridors, both along and across the valley, the floodplain retains a peaceful quality.

Historic Environment

- Range of archaeological sites and artefacts from the prehistoric period onwards.
- Numerous manors and villages, many of which are recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086.
- Many well-preserved deserted or shrunken Medieval villages, often surviving as complex earthworks adjacent to the current settlements.
- Water meadows of 17th century origin.

Biodiversity

The spring River Wylde as part of the Hampshire Avon, is designated as a Special Area of Conservation for 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. This is due, in part to the high-quality of the base-rich water which is naturally clear and fast flowing. The river irrigates the valley floodplain to create a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats including water meadows, damp pasture, wet woodland – none of which is ancient, and fens. Other elements of ecological value include the network of hedgerows.

Evaluation

Current Condition

The overall condition of the landscape is good with its chalk river of high water quality and rich biodiversity, its largely intact hedgerow network, riparian woodland and compact well kept villages. However there are some elements of declining condition: some hedgerows in poor condition and the loss of traditional land management methods such as water meadows has led to decline in ecological value of the wet grasslands.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Small scale enclosed landscape.
- High water quality and outstanding ecological richness of the chalk river.
- Remnants of water meadows including a few in active management plus other historic floodplain feature such as mills and leats and watercress beds.
- Rich floodplain landscape of small scale grazed pastures, riparian vegetation and damp woodlands.
- Small distinctive villages and manors built of rich variety of local materials.
- Peaceful rural landscape away from the major roadways.
- Valley crests are visually sensitive.

Key Landscape Changes

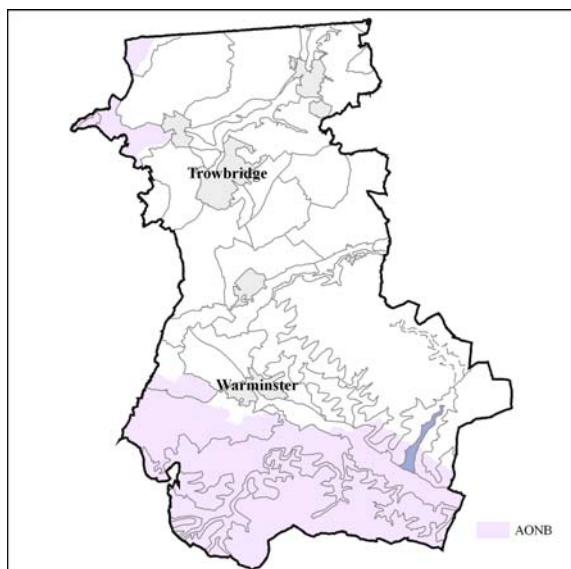
- Nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run off affecting the high water quality of the river.
- Intensification in farming leading to drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation.
- Potential changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some remaining valley pastures and meadows no longer being grazed with consequential scrub encroachment.
- Wet woodland is now mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow and alder along the immediate river banks.
- The presence of major transport corridors 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.
- Changes in agriculture leading to lack of maintenance of traditional valley features including watercress beds and historic features - water meadow systems, mills and leats.
- Loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.
- Increased traffic on the road network, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character.
- Development pressures, particularly for new housing which will affect the character of the existing small settlements - villages may appear to coalesce along the valley side roads.
- Development pressure may also affect the rivers through increased extraction causing lower flows.
- Increasing road use which will further diminish the rural tranquillity of the valley landscape.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The strategy is to conserve the tranquil, intimate and rural character of the landscape. This will include maintenance of key features including permanent pasture, wet grassland and riparian woodlands and historic features associated with the mills and water meadows, historic parklands and vernacular villages. There are opportunities for restoration of waterside pastures, replanting and management of hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration. 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.
- Identify, conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature - and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques.
- Identify, conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen, marsh and swamp.
- 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 valleys.
- Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of the lanes.
- Conserve the pattern of tight knit villages, maintaining the physical and visual gap between them.
- 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 nature conservation value of the River Wylde.

J2 : CHITTERNE BROOK CHALK RIVER VALLEY



Location and Boundaries

The valley and floodplain of Chitterne Brook, first becomes visible within the landscape to the south of Chitterne village, at the southern edge of Salisbury Plain Chalk Downland. The area is accessible via Chitterne Road, which meanders along the brook corridor, connecting Chitterne (in the north) to Codford St. Peter in the south (which in turn connects to the A36 to the south).

Key Characteristics

- Brook and floodplain contained within relatively steep-sided valley.
- Tributary of main River Wylde to the South.
- Codford Hill provides strong sense of enclosure to the east.
- Small pockets of deciduous and mixed woodland are scattered along the floodplain corridor.
- Predominantly arable fields, cover the slopes of the valley sides, arranged in a large-scale, relatively regular and geometric field pattern.
- Settlement pattern is generally sparse along the brook corridor.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and a generally intimate, small-scale, rural character.



Summary of Visual Character

The valley, which contains the floodplain of Chitterne Brook, is relatively steep-sided and cuts through surrounding steep underlying chalk. To the east, the Brook is overlooked by the dramatic landform of Codford Hill, which provides a strong sense of enclosure. Chitterne Brook is a Winterbourne stream (that only flows in Winter) and meanders southwards from Chitterne to join the main River Wylde to the south. In places, at the northern end of the brook corridor, water is relatively fast flowing. A number of small pockets of deciduous and mixed woodland are scattered along the floodplain corridor, which comprises lush improved pasture and meadows in places. Predominantly arable fields, cover the slopes of the valley sides, arranged in a large-scale, relatively regular and geometric field pattern, with hedges demarcating field boundaries (which are gappy in places). Chitterne Road (connecting Chitterne to Codford St. Peter) provides the main route along the floodplain and through the valley and brook corridor is crossed is bridged in three places, providing access to isolated farmsteads along the valley sides. Settlement pattern is generally sparse along the brook corridor. To the west, Codford Hill provides a strong sense of enclosure, whilst to the west,

more open views to adjacent sloping landscapes can be gained. There is a strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area, which has a generally intimate, small-scale, rural character.

Historic Environment

- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.

Biodiversity

The landscape in this character area encompasses a mix of arable (on the slopes of the valley sides) and improved pasture/meadows (along the river corridor). Several small patches of deciduous and mixed woodland are scattered in the area, none of which is ancient. No statutory nature conservation designations cover the area.

Evaluation

Current Condition

Overall, landscape pattern is generally intact. Although the hedgerow network is generally intact, in places, hedgerows have been lost.

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Patchwork of riparian habitats lining the brook corridor.
- Mature vegetation along the river corridor.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.
- Small patches of woodland along the floodplain corridor.
- Isolated settlement pattern.

Key Landscape Changes

- Potential nutrient pollution of stream corridor from adjacent arable land.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with Chitterne/Codford Road corridor.
- Loss of hedgerow boundaries and poor management of remaining hedgerows
- Increased traffic on minor rural roads, with associated signage and lighting and loss of sense of tranquillity.
- Maintenance of small patches of woodland.
- Potentially visually intrusive new modern agricultural or residential development along the valley sides.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the area is to conserve the tranquil and intimate rural character of the area and enhance existing landscape features such as the hedgerow network, which is gappy in places. Specific management objectives are to:

- Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost, using species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Identify, conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen marsh.
- Conserve the generally rural character of minor roads, avoiding excess signage or lighting, which may affect the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Conserve the existing, relatively intact landscape pattern.

- Conserve views across and along the valley corridor.
- Conserve the existing sparse settlement pattern and avoid larger developments that would be out of scale and character within the existing situation.
- Promote appropriate management of the woodland clumps in the area.
- Seek to encourage ecological management of the arable fields by keeping an unploughed margin around the fields to promote wildlife.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 General

5.1.1 This section sets out the main conclusions of the Study, and provides recommendations to the Council for its consideration and action as appropriate. Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment, and in relation to landscape policy advice for the Local Development Framework. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape character of the District, and in relation to monitoring of policies, are also provided.

5.2 Conclusions

Diversity of the District's Landscapes

5.2.1 This assessment has confirmed the diversity of West Wiltshire's landscapes, identifying 11 different types of landscape within only 518 square kilometres. This diversity is largely influenced by the varied geology of the District (limestone, clay greensand and chalk) and its topographic variety (rolling lowland, river valleys and floodplains, hills, terraces, escarpments and downland). This assessment also confirms that the historical settlement, development and use of the West Wiltshire landscape, and its ecological character, reflect this diversity. Within the context of this diversity of landscape types, the assessment has identified 40 areas of distinctive landscape character. These areas reflect distinct and recognisable patterns of different natural and cultural elements that combine to create a particular experience or 'sense of place.'

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

Condition and Sensitivities of the District's Landscapes

5.2.3 The profiles set out in Section 4.0 identify, in broad terms, the current condition and sensitivities of each of the 40 landscape character areas. This information highlights the main issues affecting landscape character that need to be considered in decisions involving the development and use of land within a particular character area. In summary, the key issues in relation to development planning can be summarised as follows:

- *Built development* – expansion of suburban character and pattern; use of standardised housing designs/inappropriate building methods/materials/details that ignore local vernacular; expansion of industrial, leisure and retail developments on settlement edges; pressure on open character of countryside gaps.
- *Infrastructure* - loss of tranquillity from road and development growth/widespread lighting; increase in power lines, telecommunication masts and associated buildings.
- *Small-scale and incremental change* - gentrification, suburbanisation and extension of rural settlements, dwellings and gardens; planting of exotic species, urban style fencing and lighting; loss of locally distinctive features such as walls, fences, signs, etc; increased car use/erosion of narrow lanes/adverse impact on landscape and settlement character/obtrusive road signage and traffic calming measures.

- *Settlements in their landscape settings* - relationship between settlement core and landscape severed by settlement expansion; new development unsympathetic to original settlement pattern and relationship with landscape; poor relationships between settlement and landscape/key views/landmarks/other landscape features.
- *Recreation and tourism* – access infrastructure; horse-related developments, golf courses.
- *Climate change* – reducing the causes of climate change through energy conservation/efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources, in particular increasing demand for power generated from wind and biomass and potential associated landscape and visual impacts; adapting to the consequences of climate change in relation to flood risk and sea level rise.

Landscape Management Needs

- 5.2.4 Taking into account the current condition, sensitivities and changes affecting the character of each landscape character area, the profiles in Section 4.0 also identify guidance in the form of an overall strategy and set of objectives for managing landscape change. These reflect the specific needs of different character areas - ranging from protecting the highest quality and most sensitive landscapes from adverse changes, to promoting positive management actions to strengthen specific characteristics and features within landscapes of poor condition through environmental enhancement, design and restoration projects.

The Landscape Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2.5 The landscape planning policy framework in the District was outlined in Section 1.4. In a nutshell, the focus of the current national and emerging regional planning policy framework in relation to the protection and enhancement of landscape can be summarised as:
- Sustainable development is the overarching objective and priority.
 - Landscape character, settlement character and local distinctiveness should be taken into consideration in development.
 - Landscape character should inform but not constrain development.
 - The countryside is to be protected for its own sake but development that supports the rural economy should be considered.
 - Core policies need to be clear, concise and criteria-based.
 - A strong evidence base is required to support policies and any Supplementary Planning Documents.
 - Local landscape designations and green wedges/strategic gaps, where these are to be retained, need justification based on a formal and robust assessment.
 - Design policy is an important means for achieving landscape character objectives.

- 5.2.6 This assessment provides the evidence base required to support the Council's Local Development Framework in general, and to underpin the development of criteria-based policies in particular.

Synergy with Existing Landscape Character Assessments

- 5.2.7 As demonstrated in Section 3.0, this 1:25,000 'district-scale' assessment of landscape character units has been undertaken to 'nest' within the framework provided by the 1:250,000 'national-scale' Character of England Map and the 1:50,000 'county-scale' assessment set out in the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment. This assessment also incorporates information from the two AONB Landscape Character Assessments, with which it shares similar character area boundaries at the 1:25,000 scale of assessment.

- 5.2.8 This assessment has sought to strongly reflect the relevant management strategies, objectives and guidelines defined in the existing County and AONB Landscape Character Assessments to ensure synergy between the documents wherever appropriate. Depending on the circumstances and scale of consideration, this assessment should be read in conjunction with the relevant assessment(s) to inform decision-making processes.

Relationship with Landscape Designations

- 5.2.9 Whilst recognising that large tracts of West Wiltshire are covered by statutory protected landscapes (the two AONBs) and non-statutory local landscaped designations (the five Special Landscape Areas), this study provides a seamless assessment of all of the District's landscapes irrespective of their quality or value.
- 5.2.10 The spatial relationship between this assessment's classification of landscape character units, the AONB designated areas and the SLA designated areas in West Wiltshire is set out in the following table.

5.3 Applications of the Landscape Character Assessment

- 5.3.1 It is intended that this Landscape Character Assessment can be used by all those with an interest in landscape planning, design and management within the District.

West Wiltshire District Landscape Character Area	Special Landscape Areas in West Wiltshire						
	Cotswolds AONB	Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs	Salisbury Plain	Corsley Heath to Chapmanslade Ridge	Higher Land of the Spye and Bowood Parklands	River Frome Valley at Vaggs Hill	Southern Fringes of Cotswolds outside the AONB
A1 South Cotswolds Limestone Lowland							
A2 South Wraaxall Limestone Lowland							(part)
A4 Cleeve Limestone Lowland							
C1 Melksham Open Clay Vale					(part)		
D1 Limpley Stoke & Westwood Limestone River Valley							
E2 Belle Coeur Rolling Clay Lowland						(part)	
E3 North Bradley Rolling Clay Lowland				(part)			
F1 Bowden Hill Greensand Hills							
F2 Sandridge Park Greensand Hills							
F3 Chapmanslade Greensand Hills				(part)			
F4 Corsley Heath Greensand Hills				(part)			
F5 Longleat and Cley Hill Greensand Hills			(part)				
G1 Bratton and Edington Greensand and Chalk Terrace							
G2 Westbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace			(part)	(part)			
G3 Upton Scudamore Greensand and Chalk Terrace				(part)			
G4 Norridge Wood Greensand and Chalk Terrace				(part)			
G5 Heytesbury Greensand and Chalk Terrace							
G6 Warminster Greensand and Chalk Terrace							
G7 Longbridge Deverill Greensand and Chalk Terrace			(part)				
H1 Bratton Chalk Downland Edge							
H2 Bishopstrow & Codford Chalk Downland Edge							
H3 Norton Bavant Chalk Downland Edge							
H4 Cold Kitchen Hill Chalk Downland Edge							
H5 The Deverills to Stockton Chalk Downland Edge							
I1 Salisbury Plain West Chalk Downland							
I3 Great Ridge Chalk Downland							
J1 Wylde Chalk River Floodplain			(part)				
J2 Chitterne Brook Chalk River Floodplain			(part)				

5.3.2 In line with the aims and objectives set out in Section 1.2, the principal application of this Landscape Character Assessment is in relation to the Council's development planning functions. Practical uses of the Landscape Character Assessments in this regard include:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the District by recognising:
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design.
- Informing the formulation of criteria-based landscape character policies in the Local Development Framework (see Section 5.4).
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework.
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change.
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Framework of the impact of new development on landscape character.
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes.
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design.
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.

5.3.3 Planners, developers, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and other professionals may also find the characterisation information and guidelines useful as a reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes. Other applications of the Landscape Character Assessments include its use by those involved in the targeting and delivery of environmental land management schemes - e.g. Environmental Stewardship advisers, landowners and managers. Local communities and other stakeholders may also find the Study useful as a basis for guiding their responses to consultations by the planning authorities on plans, strategies and planning applications that may have significant implications for their local landscapes.

5.4 Landscape Policy Recommendations

Special Landscape Areas

5.4.1 The Government acknowledges in PPS7⁸⁸ that there are areas of locally important landscape that are not nationally designated but need adequate protection (para 24). Recent research carried out for the Countryside Agency⁸⁹ notes that local landscape designations are generally successful in protecting areas of high local importance from development, but that

⁸⁸ Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004)

⁸⁹ Review of Local Landscape Designations (CBA for the Countryside Agency, June 2006)

they do not typically facilitate appropriate development or actively promote the enhancement of local character and distinctiveness within these areas.

- 5.4.2 PPS7 states that, with respect to highly valued local landscape areas, the Government *‘believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas’* (para 24). PPS7 also states that when compiling and reviewing LDDs local planning authorities *‘should rigorously consider the justification for retaining existing local landscape designations’* and that these *‘should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. LDDs should state what it is that requires extra protection, and why’* (para 25).
- 5.4.3 Whilst not explicitly ruling them out, the draft RSS for the South West does not provide specific policy support for the retention of local landscape designations by local planning authorities in their LDDs. Policy ENV2 (Landscape Character Areas) promotes the use of landscape character assessments to identify priority areas for the maintenance, enhancement and/or restoration of distinctive qualities and features of defined landscape character areas, and the provision of an appropriate policy framework in LDDs for each area.
- 5.4.4 Not only does this assessment clearly identify the specific characteristics and features within a landscape character area that require protection, it also highlights objectives that promote the enhancement of local character and distinctiveness within these areas. Taking this into account, it is recommended that the Council consider replacing Special Landscape Areas and using key characteristics and qualities of character areas to protect landscapes. This is consistent with approaches by a growing number of other local authorities in England where criteria-based landscape character policies, with supporting guidance, are replacing the traditional reliance on local landscape designations where these are considered to be too blunt an instrument for delivering sustainable development in landscape terms⁹⁰.

Landscape Character Policy

- 5.4.5 It is recommended that the Council consider incorporating a criteria-based Landscape Character policy into the appropriate LDD to provide a character area-based approach to landscape protection and enhancement. This new policy could replace the existing Policy C6a (Landscape Features) if required. It is recommended that the wording of the Landscape Character policy should include reference to the following main components:
- Landscape character and local distinctiveness will be conserved and, where possible, enhanced.
 - Proposals for development will
 - * be considered in relation to their contribution to the management strategy and objectives of the relevant Landscape Character Area(s) identified by this Landscape Character Assessment.
 - * take into account the key landscape characteristics, distinctive features and sensitivities of the relevant Landscape Character Area(s).
 - * have regard to highways, access, scale, design, materials, location, siting, landscaping and other appropriate environmental considerations.

⁹⁰ See for example - Countryside Agency Demonstration Project - Criteria-based Landscape Policies and Guidance in Local Development Documents : an Approach in West Sussex, Report No.1 Policies (White Consultants, February 2006)

- Development to be permitted where it can protect, conserve and enhance:
 - * landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area (including its historical, biodiversity and cultural character and its tranquillity)
 - * the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, settlement and buildings and the landscape including important views
 - * the function of watercourses, woodland, trees, field boundaries, vegetation and other landscape features as ecological corridors
 - * the special qualities of rivers, waterways, wetlands and their surroundings
 - * the distinctive topography of the area including sensitive skylines, hillsides and geological features.

5.4.6 It is recommended that the supporting explanatory text for the landscape character policy should include reference to the following:

- Landscape character is of fundamental importance to the quality of life for communities in all areas.
- High priority to be afforded to the protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character in delivering sustainable development in line with Government policy.
- A clear definition of landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- A Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document (if considered necessary – see below) to provide guidance on how the overall character of each Landscape Character Area identified in the Landscape Character Assessment can be protected, conserved and enhanced.
- Other existing and proposed character studies that provide part of the evidence base for landscape character in the District.
- Well-designed, high quality new development within rural areas that helps sustain and/or create landscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity to be encouraged.
- Encouragement for landscape enhancement schemes, submission of landscape design statement with planning applications and provision of landscape-scale management plans/strategies.
- The characteristics and qualities of Landscape Character Areas as set out in the District's LCA should inform the implementation of policy.

5.4.7 The purpose of a Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document would be to:

- Provide concise and process-based guidance for development control planners and applicants on the use of the Landscape Character Assessment and other characterisation information to inform the criteria-based planning policies and guidance in LDDs.
- Promote consistent approaches to development control practice within the local planning authority.
- Provide a link between the Landscape Character Assessments that form the evidence base, and the LDD policies.
- Help integrate development planning with conservation and land management, in line with the requirements of PPS12⁹¹, by making the link between planning policy work and landscape management guidance for landowners and managers.

5.4.8 Examples of this type of guidance include High Peak Borough Council's Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document⁹².

⁹¹ PPS12 Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2004).

⁹² High Peak Borough Local Development Framework : Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document SPD5 (High Peak Borough Council, Adopted March 2006).

5.5 Recommendations for Further Work

Enhancing the Character Evidence Base

- 5.5.1 This Landscape Character Assessment provides information to help understand the distinctive character of landscapes within the District, and it is expected that the evidence base will be treated as a material consideration in planning decisions. A variety of other character-based studies may be needed to more fully inform the LDF policies and any SPD. It is therefore recommended that, over time, the Council give consideration to working with Wiltshire County Council and other key partners to enhance the current character evidence base within the framework provided by this and other Landscape Character Assessments.
- 5.5.2 Options for enhancing the evidence base in relation to the character of the landscape within the District include:
- *Local Distinctiveness Studies* – these should complement and significantly expand upon the content of this Landscape Character Assessment to provide comprehensive illustrated information and analysis of distinctive settlement forms/patterns, building styles and materials, and countryside signage/furniture.
 - *Landscape Design Guidance* – to promote sensitive and high quality landscape design, by providing guidance on how the settings of new development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of the Local Development Framework in order to help retain local distinctiveness.
 - *Settlement Studies* – including for example Townscape/Urban Character Assessments, urban archaeological surveys, settlement-edge studies, Conservation Area Character Appraisals, Town and Village Design Statements, and Parish Plans.
 - *Local Landscape Studies* - more detailed assessments of landscape character at the local scale, undertaken to inform place-specific planning, design and management issues.
 - *Historic Landscape/Environment Characterisation Studies* - detailed assessments of built heritage, historic landscape features and archaeological potential (in conjunction with Wiltshire County Council).
 - *Area-based Regeneration Initiatives* – detailed character appraisal studies to inform and underpin masterplans and design frameworks for the renewal and reuse of brownfield sites in and around settlement edges.
 - *Green Infrastructure Network Plans* – long-term plans to establish networks of multi-functional green infrastructure sites, corridors and areas within the countryside in and around the District's main settlements.
 - *Urban Green Space Strategies* – detailed strategies for delivering high quality parks and other public open spaces, based on PPG17⁹³ open space audits and need assessments, prepared in line with CABE Space guidance⁹⁴.
 - *River Corridor Environmental Strategies* – including a coherent vision, objectives and an action plan for the long-term conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of key river/canal corridors within the District.

⁹³ PPG17 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation (HMSO, 2002).

⁹⁴ Green Space Strategies - a Good Practice Guide (CABE Space, Undated).

- 5.5.3 In order to provide an evidence base to inform the application of Policy C4 (Landscape Setting), it is also recommended that the Council consider undertaking an assessment of the landscape setting of the historic towns of Bradford-on-Avon and Warminster within the framework of character areas defined by this district-wide assessment.

Monitoring Landscape Policies

- 5.5.4 In line with the requirements of PPS12⁹⁵, there is a need to monitor the impacts of LDF policies over time. In order to measure the effectiveness of planning policies in protecting, conserving and enhancing landscape character, quality and local distinctiveness, it is recommended that the Council give consideration to working with Wiltshire County Council and other key partners to develop a framework for monitoring landscape change within the Landscape Character Areas identified by this assessment.

⁹⁵ PPS12 Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2004).

APPENDIX A STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION



West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

Statutory Stakeholder Workshop Note

26th July 2006, 3-5pm

West Wiltshire District Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge

Participants:

Richard Burden, Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
Malcolm Watt, Cotswolds Conservation Board
Ally Rood, Countryside Agency
Dominic Ash, Defence Estates
Maxine Russell, Wiltshire County Council
Sue Farr, Wiltshire County Council
Andrew Sharland, B & NES
Will Harley, Kennet DC
Linda Jennings, West Wiltshire DC
Mark Russell, West Wiltshire DC
Dominic Watkins, CBA
Emma Clarke, CBA
Sarah de Vos, CBA
Gudrun Schmid, CBA

1. Welcome and Introduction

Linda Jennings gave an introduction to the workshop and programme for the afternoon.

2. The Landscape Character Assessment – An Overview by CBA

DW introduced the landscape character assessment and explained that several different landscape character assessments had already been undertaken within the District:

- West Wiltshire County LCA @ 1:50,000
- Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB @ 1:25,000
- Cotswolds AONB @ 1:25,000
- Defence Estates - Salisbury Plain @ 1:25,000

DW noted that CBA are currently undertaking desk and fieldwork as part of an iterative process, culminating in production of a Draft Report mid September/ beginning of October.

DW noted that information from previous assessments, which have been carried out in line with most up-to-date Countryside Agency LCA Guidance (2002), would be incorporated.

DW explained the differences between the two stages of the process, characterisation and evaluation.

Evaluation will include an assessment of landscape condition, qualities, sensitivities and planning/management strategies and guidelines.

DW noted that the proposed landscape typology is broadly consistent with County work that has been carried out. However, in some cases variations have been made to incorporate other studies and landscape features.

3. Review of Draft Character Area Map - Discussion Groups

DW explained that the purpose of the workshop was to obtain views on the following:

- Character Area Boundary Amendments
- Character Name Amendments
- Key issues/threats and opportunities

4. Feedback from Discussion Groups

The following Stakeholder comments were observed:

- Should floodplain be referred to as 'valley floor'? - only floodplain at certain times of the year.
- Military training area - access should be available during August.
- D - Greensand river valley - should be ridge rather than valley.
- Cotswold AONB: - naming - may be possible to name types 'West Wiltshire - Greensand Terrace' to identify locally.
- Cotswolds confirm happy with match with AONB areas and assessment.
- Type B to West of Bradford-on-Avon - probably not same as B to east of Bradford-on-Avon.

- The same applies to type H to either side of the Deverills? - Greensand terraces are so distinctive that they do need to be separated.
- If something is identified as different to other studies - please identify and make clear so that people can follow differences of opinion.
- Descriptions of types pulled from County assessment need to be edited. Characterisations need to match the District rather than character areas outside.
- Salisbury Plain area - valleys can be identified as different to chalk grassland areas.
- Is Salisbury Plain (H) the same type as J3/J4? (Largely arable downland).
- J3/J4 - AONB LCA & County LCA is open downland/ wooded downland. CBA have it as Chalk Downland, but should this be arable downland?
- Downland can have a number of land use and land cover connotations - at the moment we have called it 'downland' with character areas splitting this into open and wooded character.
- Kennet – need look at adjacent assessments.
- Description - Longleat Park/Longleat Forest.
- F - types - distinct ridge between Great Hinton/West Ashton where this drops down to Trowbridge - there may be a Greensand Terrace in here (needs greater detailed look/observation).
- Chalk areas seem to be quite divided, whilst clay areas are less divided.
- May be areas on the chalk that need to be broken down further.
- Underlying character of landscape running through urban areas, which may inform landscape treatment of developments at the edges of settlements.
- Urban edge/settlement analysis may be undertaken next year.
- Landscapes not purely open, undeveloped land.
- H4 - characteristics of this area that make it different from I escarpment to the east. Part of this has an urban feel and the other part has more of a scarp edge character.
- Distinctive floor around the Deverills.
- There are distinctive landscape types within the area, i.e. greensand is different to chalk.
- Stakeholders to forward any relevant information, i.e. conservation strategies to CBA.
- Countryside Agency - High Peak Landscape Character SPD (available on High Peak website, under Core Strategy) - useful tool, summarising LCA technical info and making it into a tool, which can be used by planners - with signposts to any other background info that has been used/may, be useful.
- Countryside Agency - concerned that Landscape Character Assessments are emerging, - but there then seems to be a delay in the way in which these are being used for planning and management.

- Kennet adopted their LCA in 2001, which included a Landscape Conservation Strategy and Woodland Strategy (See Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy - May 2005) www.kennet.gov.uk).
- Maxine Russell (Wiltshire County Council) to provide detailed feedback at County level.



West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

Community Stakeholder Workshop Note

26th July 2006, 6-8pm

West Wiltshire District Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge

Participants:

Carol McCaw, CPRE
Rolf Brindle, Melksham Without PC
Janet Repton, WWDC/Bradford on Avon TC
Richard Munro, Upper Deverills PC
David Lovell, WWDC/Warminster TC
Carola Puddy-Henny, Codford PC
Dot Williams, Wiltshire County Council (Tourism)
Steve Oldrieve, WWDC
Sarah Brice, British Waterways (SW)
Jeff Osborn, WWDC, Planning Portfolio Holder

1. Welcome and Introduction

Linda Jennings gave an introduction to the workshop and programme for the evening.

2. The Landscape Character Assessment – An Overview by CBA

DW introduced the landscape character assessment and explained that LCA has been undertaken throughout the UK, and will become a Technical background document.

DW noted that the exercise was as objective as possible, the aim of which was to help people understand what makes one place different to another. The process follows a structured methodology (set out by the Countryside Agency).

DW explained that LCA is an important tool, which collates natural/ecological/historical and cultural factors about a place or landscape and will be used to aid land management and as a background to planning policy and development control decisions.

DW noted that the aim was to provide a seamless and comprehensive database of landscape across the District.

DW explained that the landscape character of the County has already been assessed @ 1:50,000 scale, which provides a useful background document to the study. Within this study, landscape character types have been identified.

DW summarised findings to date, referring to maps of landscape character types and areas.

3. Review of Draft Character Area Maps - Discussion and feedback

- Stakeholders questioned what is the relationship between this assessment and work carried out by Cranborne Chase and West Wilts Downs AONB. DW explained that this will be incorporated into the current study
- Urban units (main towns) have been excluded as a matter of scale. Urban areas require a more detailed assessment of the character and sensitivity of the built fabric and the setting of towns.
- The canal is an important feature within this district's landscape. There is a need to recognise this within each of the character areas that it crosses, where this is a key characteristic of the landscape.
- There will be a section within the report to explain the hydrological character of the District.
- Rivers have a key relationship to settlements within the District.
- Village Design Statements should feed into the study to provide detailed local knowledge of villages within the area.
- Melksham/Holt – Spa towns – why is this? Could be identified within the historical section of the report.
- Demise of industry within the area.
- The geography of Bradford on Avon is incredibly important – it was a hillfort originally and the town has progressed from this.
- Combination of built-form topography is interesting.
- Some villages have a changed character, e.g. Redford – where modern development has changed the character of the village.
- It is important to try to keep the character of villages and avoid future blots on the landscape.

Several Stakeholders took copies of maps away from the for further consideration.

APPENDIX B GLOSSARY

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

Community Strategy

All local planning authorities have a duty to prepare community strategies under the Local Government Act 2000 in conjunction with other public, private and community sector organisations. Community Strategies should promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Local Development Frameworks provide the spatial expression to those elements of the Community Strategy that relate to the use and development of land.

Conservation Area

Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is desirable to preserve or enhance, through strict control of new development, and protection of trees, and the need for demolition of buildings or walls to be subject to Conservation Area Consent.

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the long term vision and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision. Its main aim is to promote sustainable development. It will also seek to protect and enhance the environment, as well as defining the general locations for delivering strategic development including housing, employment, retail, leisure, community and transport. This Development Plan Document reflects existing national, regional and local strategies that have implications for the development and use of land. The Core Strategy includes a key diagram showing in broad terms the main policies and proposals, and also includes a number of strategic development policies that set out the broad criteria against which planning applications for the development and use of land and buildings will be considered. Such policies will ensure that any development in the area is in harmony with the spatial vision and objectives set out in the core strategy. They will also highlight the needs and characteristics of the local area.

Design Guides

A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of a local authority or other organisation often with a view to retaining local distinctiveness.

Development Briefs

Inform developers and other interested parties of the constraints and opportunities presented by a site, and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policies.

Development Plan Document (DPD)

Development Plan Documents include the core strategy, site-specific allocations of land and area action plans. There will also be a proposals map, which will illustrate the spatial extent of policies; this must be prepared and maintained to accompany all development plan documents. All Development Plan Documents must be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination, and adopted after receipt of the inspector's binding report.

Evidence Base

An up-to-date information base on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the area, to enable the preparation of a sound spatial plan that meets the objectives of sustainable development.

Landscape Character Area

A discrete geographical area of a particular Landscape Character Type with a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area.

Landscape Character Type

A generic unit of landscape with a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the type.

Local Development Document (LDD)

Local Development Documents are those documents that together make up the Local Development Framework. They comprise Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

This is the term given to the portfolio of Local Development Documents which will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for the area.

Scheduled Monument

An ancient monument or deposits designated by DCMS under the Ancient Monuments Act 1979.

Site Specific Allocations

Land allocated for specific uses identified in specific Development Plan Documents. Specific policies that relate to these designations are set out in a Development Plan Document and cover principles such as design or specific requirements for implementation. Policies relating to the delivery of the Site Specific Allocations, such as any critical access requirements, any broad design principles or any planning obligations which may be sought, are set out in a development plan document.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This sets out the standards that a Council intends to achieve in relation to involving the community and all stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Local Development Plan Documents and in significant planning applications, and also how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards. A consultation statement showing how a council has complied with its Statement of Community Involvement should accompany all Local Development Documents.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

These documents contain policy guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in Development Plan Documents. They do not form part of the development plan, nor are they subject to independent examination.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

An appraisal of the economic, social and environmental effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made to accord with sustainable development.

APPENDIX C SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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APPENDIX D PHOTO LOCATION PLAN A & B

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