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VOLUME 2

Natural Environment and Landscape Policy Recommendations

Cover photographs from top to bottom:

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Section A

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1 Introduction

The Study Area

1.1 This study describes the landscape character of North Wiltshire. The district covers 674 square kilometres and is located to the west of Swindon, sitting astride the M4. It is a diverse, though essentially gentle, landscape dominated by rivers and influenced on the fringes by hills. The River Avon runs in a gentle valley north to south through the centre of the area while the River Thames passes through the north east corner. To the south east the dramatic topography of chalk scarp of the North Wessex Downs with distinctive White Horses dominate the landscape. To the west, the dipslope and wooded valleys of the Cotswolds provide further variety. Both these areas are designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The main settlements of the area are Chippenham, Calne, Wootton Bassett and Malmesbury. Other smaller nucleated settlements are spread throughout what is a settled lowland landscape.

Background and Context

1.2 North Wiltshire District Council, commissioned White Consultants on the 11th February 2004 to prepare a landscape assessment and strategy for the district. The assessment is intended to inform and support policies in the Local Plan 2011. It may form supplementary planning guidance or subsequently become a supplementary planning document relating to the Local Development Framework. The aim of the study is to ascertain a clear understanding of the landscape resource and set out management guidelines which will contribute to the environmental enhancement of the district.

Approach and Methodology

1.3 The assessment has been carried out in line with the latest guidance from the Countryside Agency 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland' published in 2002.

1.4 In undertaking the landscape assessment, the process has been as follows:

- A briefing and orientation stage where the process and outputs of the study have been defined.
- A desk study reviewing relevant documentation including the Countryside Character for England, the national landscape typology, AONB reports, planning background, adjacent authority landscape assessments, historical and nature conservation information and aerial photographs.
- Overlays at 1:25,000 produced from the above data and for geology, topography, settlement pattern and land use. From the combined data candidate landscape character types and areas were identified. These candidate areas were presented to the council.

- Field Survey using agreed field study forms, 1:25,000 mapping and photography. Each character area was assessed from three defined viewpoints to define the intrinsic character and accurately refine boundaries.
- Refined landscape types and character areas mapped and digitised. Descriptions, management guidelines and landscape sensitivity assessment undertaken for each of the character areas.
- National and local planning framework studied and designations reviewed, to identify policies which will contribute to the Local Plan and link into the overall landscape assessment.

1.5 The landscape sensitivity assessment has been carried out primarily in relation to ability of a landscape to absorb new development such as housing.

Report Structure

1.6 The report is divided into two volumes. The first for the landscape assessment and management guidelines and the second for policy recommendations.

1.7 The first section summarises the main characteristics of the North Wiltshire landscape in a landscape overview. The second section addresses each character area in turn, firstly providing a general overview, then main characteristics, management guidelines and landscape sensitivity.



Liddington Scarp

2 Overview of North Wiltshire's landscape

Physical Influences

2.1 Much of the landscape character of North Wiltshire is dominated by underlying geology of the middle to late Jurassic period, with elements of rock from the later Cretaceous period. The age of the rock bed moves roughly from the older Middle Jurassic to the west through the Upper Jurassic to the Lower and Upper Cretaceous in the south east .

2.2 In the west of the district the landscape is underlain by limestone, more specifically the 'Great Oolite Series'. This forms the eastern edge of the Cotswolds. Forest Marble limestone dips south east, gradually giving way to Cornbrash limestone which yields well drained soil for corn production. The deeply eroded and incised valleys to the south, By Brook and its tributaries, expose the underlying Fullers Earth and pockets of Lower Jurassic Sands are revealed.

2.3 The limestone gives way to the undulating landscape of Kellway clay and the higher strata of the Oxford Clays towards the east. The dominance of the underlying Upper Jurassic geology is disrupted by alluvium deposits and river terraces of the Avon and Thames and their major tributaries. The Thames crosses the northern fringes of the district from west to east and the Avon runs north to south both cutting through the underlying clay. Within the Kellway Beds are pockets of Kellway Sand, providing free draining ground in this heavy clay landscape.

2.4 To the east of the Avon Valley, the landscape rises in a significant scarp slope, where thin beds from the Corallian Series of the Upper Jurassic period are present. The higher ground is dominated by Coral Rag[stone] which in places gives way to the more fertile lower Calcareous Grits.

2.5 Further east, the Corallian series gives way to an undulating landscape as the underlying fine mudstone of Kimmeridge Clay becomes dominant. The presence of this clay follows low lying ground below the Cretaceous chalk scarp, rising in the south east of the district.

2.6 The south east corner of North Wiltshire is exclusively Cretaceous. These include the Lower Greensands of the Lower Cretaceous period (a thin bed in which siliceous iron-rich sands and sandstones prevail) which area evident at the base of the Cretaceous Scarp. Gault Clay forms the next layer and Chalks overlie this forming the more resistant layer which forms the higher ground of plains and downs. Lower Middle and Upper Chalk are both present. This Cretaceous landscape forms part of the extensive Wessex Downs, which extends both to the south and east.

2.7 The geology is shown on Figure 1 and topography and drainage is shown on Figure 2.

Human Influence

2.8 Archaeological evidence throughout the district signifies human interventions in the landscape since Neolithic times. Discoveries from this era are chiefly focused in the south east on the upper chalk, although marks and earthworks are present through much of the rest of the area. Remains of long and round barrows are widespread throughout the area, and Iron Age hill forts can be found above Box, on the chalk downs to the south east and at Malmesbury.

2.9 There is significant evidence from the Romano-British era, the most apparent being the network of Roman Roads forming a triangle around the fringe of the district, often acting as the district boundary. Ermin Way runs south east to north west on the north eastern edge of the district as it heads to Cirencester. The Fosse Way, runs south west to north east across the western fringes and Sandy Lane runs east to west along the southern boundary. The presence of this communication network and the areas close proximity to Bath and Cirencester encouraged the development of related settlements. There have been numerous finds across the whole of the district, with the exception of the Braydon Wood area.

2.10 A number of settlements present today relate to the Saxon era. These include Cricklade, Wootton Bassett and Chippenham, the latter being an administration centre. Corsham in the south east of the district was a royal seat, and royal possession was retained into Norman times.

2.11 The area denoted as Braydon Wood was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 as Royal Forest. It retains part of its ancient woodland cover as remnants from the more extensive woodland of the Roman era. Elsewhere across the district, significant areas of ancient woodland have been retained around Bowood, part of the previously extensive Chippenham Wood and in the valleys above Box.

2.12 The existence of a more extensive Medieval settlement pattern in rural areas than at present points to a significant reduction in the population due to the Black Death and subsequent changes to less labour intensive agricultural practices.

2.13 Much of the area developed through the cloth industry, a strong cottage industry developing across the area. Poor transport connections meant the area was late turning to the factory system. The extension of the Wiltshire and Berkshire canal and later the construction of the GWR London to Bristol line allowed the area to develop.

Settlement

2.14 The district is predominantly a rural area, with small, scattered settlements throughout. The settlement pattern to the south, with the larger settlements of Chippenham, Calne and Corsham lying on the A4 is generally more intense than that of the north where large tracts of land especially

around Braydon are sparsely populated. Swindon is a significant urban presence on north east boundary of the District, lying on the M4, close to its outlier, Wootton Bassett. The area close to the town is subject to urban fringe pressures. Cricklade is located on the edge of the Thames valley, close to the Ermin Way while the historic town of Malmesbury is isolated in the north west corner of the area a little distance from the Fosse Way. Much of the district is serviced only by minor road system.

2.15 The main lines of modern communication are east west, leading to London. These include the M4, A4 and London to Bristol railway lines which diverge at Wootton Bassett and the Cheltenham line running from Swindon.

2.16 Across the area there is a significant presence of military installations, both active and redundant. These take the form of airfields, associated barracks and depots, evident on higher flat ground [eg Lyneham] and in the Thames valley [eg Fairford]. Land to the west of Corsham is significantly influenced by military infrastructure.

Ecology

2.17 The main strands of the ecological character of the district relate to the presence of woodland, grassland and the wetland environments/water bodies which exist throughout the area.

2.18 Although woodland is often sparse, there are significant pockets. The most important woodland ecology is linked to the ancient mixed deciduous woodlands of Braydon and Chippenham woods [around Bowood] and isolated areas within the steeper valleys to the south west of the district and along scarp edges. Yew is frequently present in these woodlands. Many of these woodlands have been designated as SSSI's. New planting in some areas, especially of coniferous plantation is reducing the integrity and value of these habitats.

2.19 The wetland ecology of the district is primarily found related to water courses such as the Avon and Thames. However, significant interest is found in man made water elements, particularly the gravel pits of the Cotswold Water Park to the north, which have developed into marl lakes, a nationally rare habitat. A number of wetland meadows are designated SSSI's.

2.20 Calcareous and chalk grassland are important. The former is present across the west and the south east of the district. These fragile, herb rich habitats have been maintained often on the least accessible land.

2.21 The combination of woodland, wetland, and grassland present in many areas creates important complexes of habitats.

Agriculture

2.22 The majority of the land in the district is of classified as lower quality agricultural land, predominantly at grade 3 and 4. This is related to

the underlying heavy clays. Areas of grade 5 are rare but are present on steeper ground.

2.23 There are isolated pockets of higher grade land through the area (Grades 1 & 2). These exist primarily on freer draining soils within the clay landscape or on the lighter Cornbrash, evident to the west of the district. The landscape within the Avon Valley exhibits a significantly higher quality of agricultural land on the pockets of fertile, freer draining ground. The Chalk plains to the south are also of consistently higher quality at grade 2.

2.24 The landscape of the district exhibits mixed agricultural practices to varying degrees. Arable practices dominate on much of the higher grade, freer draining and more fertile level land. Pastoral agriculture dominates on the poor grade, wetter and steeper topography, the valley and scarp sides, along watercourses and across much of the rolling heavy clay landscape.

2.25 To the west, on the edge of the Cotswolds, the fields are frequently bounded by limestone walls, many of which are in need of repair. Away from the west, evidence of stone walls soon disappear, replaced by hedges of mixed species and varied management. Boundaries around more intensively farmed land appear more degraded than those in the pastoral landscape.

2.26 The overall picture across the district is of a patchwork of mixed agricultural land.

Recreation

2.27 Recreation within the district is on numerous levels from local to national, covering a wide range of activities, from walking to motor sports.

2.28 Across the whole district there is a comprehensive network of parish, district and national footpaths. The latter consisting of the 450 miles Macmillan Way, which runs from Boston on the North Sea coast to Abbotsbury on the Dorset coast, and the Wessex Ridgeway which runs from Marlborough to Lyme Regis on the Dorset coast.

2.29 There is considerable recreation use of the gravel pits of the Cotswold Water Park to the north. Taken together with the lakes in the neighbouring Cotswold District these act as a regionally important destination for tourism including boating of all sorts, accommodation and fishing.

2.30 Corsham, Bowood, Bowden, Lydiard and numerous minor parks held on the Historic Parks and Gardens Register act as significant visitor attractions along with their surrounding landscape and features.

2.31 The use of the countryside by 4x4's, mountain biking and other forms of transport can lead to conflict and damage in places.

3 Landscape Character Types

3.1 The analysis of the district's landscape reveals a series of landscape character types. These are partly derived from the national landscape typology which defines both types and description units for England, and partly from detailed desk study and site assessment. Each landscape character area is based on a landscape type and shares its boundaries. Table 1 shows the Landscape Character Areas and their type and Figure 3 shows the location of the areas.

3.2 Each type is briefly described below:

Alluvium River Terrace farmland: Low lying, flat river valley landscape dominated by water in the form of rivers or drainage ditches with associated riparian vegetation including pollarded willow. Mixed farming with hedges and mature trees. River terraces form the only topographical variation. There is limited settlement.

Lowland Clay Farmland: A gently undulating lowland landscape on heavy clay soils forming a transition between the valley bottom and higher ground. Mixed farming and a dispersed settlement pattern enclosed by hedges with trees. Watercourses influence lower lying areas.

Urban Fringe Scarp: Rolling lowland hills with a scarp slope and mixed farming. Influence of settlements which have been significantly extended in the 20th century and evidence of urban fringe uses.

Lowland Clay Woodland: Gently undulating lowland dominated by woodland cover on clay. Larger fields, mixed farming and relatively recent settlement dispersed pattern.

Settled Farmland Valley: Distinct valley, enclosed in places, focussed on valley floor and river course. Mixed farming and scattered rural settlement.

Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland: Gently undulating lowland farmland underlain by limestone. Open landscape with broad low hills and shallow river valleys. Limestone walls boundaries in places and stone built settlements.

Wooded Lowland Valley: Enclosed valley with mosaic of strong woodland cover and pasture. Scattered settlement. Strong hedgerow cover and riparian vegetation.

Rolling settled lowland: Rolling lowland farmland with hedges and woodland. Strong influence of settlement in parts.

Lowland River Farmland: Low lying mixed farmland centred on river and associated watercourses and riparian vegetation. Damp meadow and pasture on valley floor with species such as poplar and willow. Hedges are main enclosure. Scattered settlement in slightly higher areas.

Wooded Parkland Hill: Elevated rolling hill landscape of historic parkland, woodland and enclosed pasture. Small enclosed valleys. Settlement dominated by estate buildings.

Settled Hill Farmland: Elevated area of hill and ridge with mixed farming enclosed by hedgerows and woodland. Visual influence of urban settlement.

Rolling Chalk Farmland: Undulating chalk downland and scarp dominated by an open arable and open pasture grassland respectively. Very limited settlement except at base of slope.

Chalk Scarp Farmland: Chalk scarp slope dominated by pasture grassland with woodland. Very limited settlement except at base of slope.

Chalk Plateau Farmland: Open chalk downland dominated by arable farmland with enclosure limited to settlement. Occasional beech plantations.

Table 1 Landscape Character Types and Areas

<i>No.</i>	<i>Landscape Character Areas</i>	<i>Landscape Character Types</i>
1.	Thames Valley Floor	Alluvium River Terrace Farmland
2.	Thames Valley Lowland	Lowland Clay Farmland
3.	Swindon Fringe	Urban Fringe Scarp
4.	Braydon Wooded Plateau	Lowland Clay Woodland
5.	Minety and Malmesbury Rolling Lowland	Lowland Clay Farmland
6.	Upper Avon Valley	Settled Farmland Valley
7.	Sherston Dipslope lowland	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland
8.	Hullavington Rolling Lowland	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland
9.	By Brook Valley	Wooded Lowland Valley
10.	Corsham Rolling Lowland	Rolling settled lowland
11.	Avon Valley lowland	Lowland River Farmland
12.	Bowood and Bowden Parkland	Wooded Parkland Hill
13.	Lynham Hills	Settled Hill Farmland
14.	Hilmarton Rolling Lowland	Lowland Clay Farmland
15.	Cherhill Down	Rolling Chalk Farmland
16.	Liddington Scarp	Chalk Scarp Farmland
17.	Avebury Plain	Chalk Plateau Farmland

Section B

4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Character Area 1 Thames Valley Floor

General description

4.1 This low-lying area is centred on the River Thames and its floodplain. It is predominantly a flat landscape, punctuated by lines or small clumps of willows and other wetland trees. The agricultural use of the land includes both arable and wet pasture, with open water ditches as well as hedges in defining field boundaries. It is a varied landscape which includes large areas of open water from former gravel pits, and field patterns which vary from the small and irregular to larger fields on reclaimed, drained land. Historical features indicate how mankind has adapted to the challenge of this predominantly wet land, with raised ancient roadways such as the Roman Ermine Way, a network of drainage channels, and pollarded waterside willows.



The River Thames at Waterhay

4.2 The area sits between approximately 75 to 85m AOD on the alluvial and terrace drift geology of the Thames basin, with some slightly higher areas on Oxford clay up to 105m AOD. The terrace areas around Ashton Keynes have been exploited for sand and gravel extraction, leaving areas of open water which are now part of the Cotswold Water Park, used for watersports and other recreational activities. A number of small streams flow directly into the Thames, as well as large tributaries such as the River Ray which flows north to meet the Thames on its easterly course. Open water channels are also common features, used to help drain the fields to allow pasture on the wet meadows. The disused and partially filled Wiltshire and Berkshire canal is also evident, with its course from just south of Marston Meysey past the northern side of Cricklade. Biodiversity is high in relation to the wet features of the landscape, especially the meadows near Cricklade and two others which are designated as SSSIs.

4.3 The waterbodies in this area are often highly alkaline and of high quality so that a number of the former gravel pits are developing into marl lakes containing a diverse range of aquatic plants, marginal plants and invertebrates. Marl lakes are a scarce habitat nationally and they support distinctive aquatic plant communities, particularly

rich in pondweeds and stoneworts. The Cotswold Water Park is the most extensive marl lake system in Britain.



Ashton Keynes

4.4 There is little settlement within this wet landscape, although Ashton Keynes is an exception, and is distinctive in the presence of open canalised water courses within the village. Two other small villages are located in the area, at Latton and Marston Meysey, with Cricklade on the edge of the area on higher ground. Romano British settlements are also evident in the area, reflecting the continuity of man's presence along the course of the Thames. The old Saxon word for island is *sey*, which forms part of two place names, and may reflect slightly raised areas within the wet landscape. Vernacular building materials in this area reflect both the use of brick, for quoins and copings, alongside limestone from further west which runs throughout the North Wiltshire district.

4.5 To the north east edge of the area, drier ground has been used for the Fairfield airport. Although this occupies a large tract of land, it is largely hidden from view due to the hedgerows in the flat landscape.

4.6 Historically, the area would have been largely open and dominated by wet meadows. The grazed meadows at Cricklade were recorded in the Domesday Book, whilst no mention is made at the time of any place names relating to woodland. The Roman Ermine Way, now largely on the route of the A419, runs north west through the area on a slightly raised embankment, and was a key connection north from Swindon. Ancient field systems are also evident as crop marks, with ridge and furrow patterns highly evident from aerial photographs from 1967, although many of these have now been lost through arable ploughing. The wettest areas north of Cricklade, however, do not show evidence of ridge and furrow, suggesting that these areas may have been abandoned in the middle ages and reclaimed more recently.

4.7 The flatness of the area generally restricts views to the field boundaries close to the viewer. However, on slightly raised ground, longer views are possible to the higher ground to the south, and vertical features such as the church spire at Cricklade can be visible for many miles.

4.8 In general the area has a strong sense of place due to the contained views and distinctive ditched

field boundaries, pollarded willows and relative lack of settlement. It has a calm and remote character, with a feeling of historical continuity, disturbed only by the traffic on the busy A419.



Main characteristics

4.9 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Low-lying, largely level topography largely between 75-85m AOD, on river terrace and alluvial geology with heavy soils.
- Dominant presence of water in the form of ditches, gravel pits, rivers and streams.
- Land use and landscape features associated with the wetland environment, including raised tracks, wet meadows, drainage ditches and ponds, reed beds, groups or lines of willows, alders and poplars, and pollarded willows.
- Field sizes and types varying from small scale irregular water meadows and permanent pasture, through to large fields in regular shapes which have been drained and are used for arable crops.
- Some remnant ridge and furrow on meadow lands.
- Hawthorn and blackthorn hedges in the slightly drier areas with individual mature oak and ash.
- Dispersed and minimal settlement, including villages with distinctive drainage features, small hamlets and farmsteads on isolated areas of higher ground.
- Remnant historical features including Roman and early medieval roads or settlement, field patterns and drainage features.
- Rich biodiversity especially with regard to wet meadows and other wetland features.
- Views contained by hedgerows and tree belts in the flat landscape, but with features such as church spires forming key visual reference points.

Management guidelines

4.10 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve the distinctive low lying valley floor character and its associated water based, riparian and built features. The tranquil, somewhat remote character is a result of the sparseness of settlement, the contained views, and the

pervading sense of history embodied in the distinctive landscape elements.

4.11 Boundary and riparian tree and shrub cover should be conserved and enhanced to maintain screening and visual containment of settlement and development.

4.12 Wetland features should be conserved for landscape and biodiversity.

4.13 Features of historical and archaeological interest relating to man's use of this wet landscape and early settlement features should be protected.

4.14 In parallel, opportunities for recreation and informal enjoyment of the landscape should be provided especially on open water, where these do not conflict with the above objectives.

Management actions

4.15 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve wetland features including open ditches, reed beds, meadows and associated tree species - especially willow, poplar and alder.
- Enhance the wetland character by pollarding willows, planting new reed beds, and planting alder, willow and poplar along water courses in informal groups and broken lines.
- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including allowing new trees to emerge in existing hedges, and discourage field amalgamation.
- Protect historical features including old field boundaries and ridge and furrow field patterns, in particular by discouraging arable activities on land where ridge and furrow patterns can still be seen.
- Enhance the sense of place through use of appropriate building materials in respect of new development, extensions or other built features - especially through the use of limestone, red brick and clay tiles.
- Encourage biodiversity by creating wetland habitats.
- Discourage development which would detract from the sense of remoteness and the quiet rural character.

Long term

- Seek opportunities to enhance the character of the landscape by creating new wetland areas where agricultural futures may be marginal.
- Encourage the creation of public access along waterways, where consistent with nature conservation objectives.

Key views management strategy

4.16 The main consideration in respect of views is the maintenance of hedgerows and tree lines, in order to contain views. However, views to individual focal points such as the church spire at Cricklade should be opened up in planning any changes which affect view corridors or vistas in the landscape. Key views are available from the A419 and associated junctions and the Cotswold Water Park.

4.17 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of waterside trees, especially pollarded willows.
- Loss of mature hedgerows.
- Change in the nature of drainage, especially any loss of open ditches and associated reed beds.
- Amalgamation of fields through hedgerow loss.

Landscape sensitivity

4.18 This landscape is highly sensitive to change. The overriding sense of tranquillity, and the feeling that this is a landscape imprinted with history, could easily be lost through insensitive landscape change, especially new development. The area is relatively intact and offers a fair representation of floodplain landscapes in this part of England. Much of the area is remote and therefore few people will be affected by change; however, the view from the A419 and from routes to the Cotswold Water Park mean that parts of the area are well observed.

4.19 In terms of the specific landscape elements which contribute to the character, the most important are the wetland features and the pattern of fields and diverse field boundaries, from ditches and channels to hedges and groups or lines of willow, poplar and alder. Wetland features associated with these field edges and landcover elements are highly dependent on particular forms of management, which could quickly change with new agricultural regimes. The remaining ridge and furrow patterns could either be lost under the plough, or disappear under invading scrub if marginal fields are abandoned.

4.20 The proximity to Swindon and the A419 [T] brings with it particular pressure for development. The landscape is therefore vulnerable to change either through cumulative small scale development which over time will change the area's character or through larger scale developments which have a more obvious immediate effect.

4.21 Housing development has already taken place in defined pockets, for example on the edges of Latton, where it has been adequately absorbed due to careful grouping and the use of appropriate design styles and detail. Only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form and mitigated by trees or mature hedgerows, could be

successfully accommodated without adverse landscape effects.

4.22 Opportunities for new recreational development should be contained by considerations of nature conservation and noise generation as well as landscape impact.

Character Area 2

Thames Valley Lowland

General description

4.23 This area stretches from the low wetlands of the Thames Floodplain between Cricklade and Purton, westwards to the higher ground south of Minety. The land changes from the flatter landscapes in the east, at about 85m AOD, to the undulating or rolling land up to 100m AOD. Consistent with this change in topography, the area forms a transition between the flatter, wetter landscapes with some open water ditches and waterside willows, through to a more pastoral landscape of mixed pasture and arable with mature hedgerows and specimen oak trees.



4.24 The area lies almost entirely on Oxford Clay, a heavy blue-grey clay, with an arm of alluvial deposits running south west through the area from the Thames floodplain along the course of the River Key and along the River Ray on the eastern boundary of the District. These give rise to heavy soils which support mainly permanent pasture, but with extensive arable crops in places. Field sizes vary from small and irregular, especially in the east of the area and close to the River Key, to medium sized regular fields from later periods of enclosure. Close to Cricklade, fields in aerial photographs dated 1967 show extensive ridge and furrow patterns, most of which have now been lost through ploughing. Whilst hedgerows in good condition are typical as field boundaries, some stone walls are also found, especially in relation to settlements.

4.25 The lowland meadows are agriculturally unimproved grassland communities are usually hay meadows except where subject to frequent or prolonged flooding when swamp or inundation communities are more common.

4.26 Settlement is sparse and dispersed throughout the area. Cricklade is the major centre of population, located on the slightly higher ground above the Thames floodplain, with the land rising to the immediate west of the town and containing the 20th century expansion of the residential area. The town is a Saxon settlement, with strong

evidence locally of Roman occupation, and focuses on a high street of terraced two and three storey buildings, with a diversity of building materials from timber framed to stone and brick, many of medieval origin. The church spire forms a prominent landmark in the flat or undulating rural context.

4.27 Other settlement comprises hamlets and farmsteads, some of which are located on slight rises, such as Purton Stoke and Leigh. Most vernacular buildings are built of limestone from the Cotswolds, with some brick and clay tile also in evidence. The use of local clay as a building material has been evident from Roman times, with brick, tile or ceramic kilns found at Minety and Purton. As the flatter land rises to meet the villages of Witham and Purton, a more urban fringe character begins to be evident, with some service land uses such as a waste disposal site, and a more eclectic mix of building styles.

4.28 To the west of Cricklade, a disused airfield occupies a large tract of land of approximately 2x1 km. Despite the extensive nature of this land use, however, it remains largely unseen from the public domain due to the relatively level ground and screening from roads by hedges.

4.29 A major railway line crosses the area in a north westerly direction from Swindon, with most of the minor roads in the area crossing it on bridges which afford slightly longer views over the landscape. The disused Swindon to Cricklade railway runs along the eastern edge of the area, and forms part of network of routes known as the Cricklade County Way.

4.30 Whilst woodland is largely absent from the area, the large plantation at Red Lodge containing the house and farm, forms a significant visual backdrop to many views in the west of the area. Other views in the area are constrained by the intervening hedges in the largely level or gently undulating ground, although in many places one can see the higher ground to the south forming the hills of Purton and Broad Blunsdon, and to the north of the area there are opportunities to glimpse wide views over the Thames floodplain.



Main characteristics

4.31 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Low, level or undulating ground at between 85m and 100m AOD, on Oxford clay or alluvial deposits.
- Wetland features on the lower ground, including open water ditches and mature willows.
- Continuous hedges with many mature oak and ash, although there is sparser tree cover in the east close to the River Thames.
- Field sizes varying from small and irregular, to medium sized and regular shaped enclosures.
- Predominantly pasture, with some arable, with some ridge and furrow patterns.
- Dispersed or nucleated settlement on higher ground, within a largely pastoral landscape, with a strong sense of place in the use of stone and local brick, which begins to break down in the southern approaches to Purton.
- A general absence of woodland, with the exception of a few smaller woodlands in the east of the area.
- Some wetland and meadow habitats of nature conservation interest.
- Generally contained views but with longer views and a sense of containment by high ground to the south, and some wide views over the Thames floodplain.

Management guidelines

4.32 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve and enhance its rural pastoral character. The diversity of the area should be maintained, reflecting how it gradually changes from the lowest areas with their open water, streamside vegetation and irregular fields, to the undulating higher ground with continuous hedgerows and mature trees.

4.33 New development, such as housing, should be contained within defined envelopes within or adjacent to existing towns or villages, and care should be taken to limit the ribbon development north of Purton. Any new buildings in this area should aim to improve the currently dislocated urban fringe character while maintaining appropriate gaps for views into the landscape.

4.34 Biodiversity should be promoted, especially through the management of wetland areas, and through encouraging the planting of woodland copses and individual trees in farmland.

4.35 The airfield at Cricklade may be the subject of future development proposals, which should be critically considered in the light of the tranquil rural character of the area and relative absence of built development in the countryside.

Management strategy: actions

4.36 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve wetland features including open ditches, meadows and associated tree species - especially willow - in particular along the course of the River Key and River Ray.
- Enhance the wetland character by pollarding willows, planting new reed beds, and planting alder, willow and poplar along water courses in informal groups and broken lines.
- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners etc, especially in the eastern part of the area where tree cover is sparse.
- Discourage arable cropping on areas of remnant ridge and furrow.
- Encourage the planting of new woodland copses.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials including limestone, red brick and clay tiles are important in this area.
- Discourage development which would detract from the tranquil, rural character.
- Consider where development related to principal settlements is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.

Long term

- Review development or reclamation opportunities at Cricklade airfield to be consistent with the tranquil rural character.

Key views management strategy

4.37 The main consideration in respect of views is the maintenance of hedgerows and tree lines, in order to contain views. Views to individual focal points such as the church spire at Cricklade should be opened up, however, in planning any changes which affect view corridors or vistas in the landscape.

4.38 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of waterside trees, especially pollarded willows.
- Loss of hedgerows and mature oak and ash.
- Loss of open ditches.
- Built form using traditional stone, brick and clay tile.

Landscape sensitivity

4.39 Whilst most of this area is relatively intact in its distinctive landscape elements, some areas have lost defining features such as hedgerow trees, and close to Purton, there is evidence of new land uses which are typical of the urban fringe. These two issues - the loss of hedgerows and mature trees, and encroaching urban fringe land uses - are the main threats to the character of the landscape in this area, and will be an on-going issue in the

Purton fringes and with regard to the future of Cricklade airfield.

4.40 The proximity to Swindon brings with it particular pressure for development. The landscape is therefore vulnerable to change either through cumulative small scale development which over time will change the area's character or through larger scale developments which have a more obvious immediate effect.

4.41 The majority of the area has an essentially rural, agricultural character within which only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

4.42 The area is not highly visible, being a quiet rural hinterland, but the railway line, the A419 and local traffic on B roads through the area, open the area up to views for many. There are also distant views over the area from housing at the edges of Purton and from suburban areas on the north west edge of Swindon.

4.43 The landscape is rich in features which contribute to its maturity, especially the mature trees and continuous hedgerows. These could be lost through intention or neglect, especially if agricultural futures for pastureland in particular become more uncertain. Similarly the remaining ridge and furrow patterns could either be lost under the plough, or disappear under invading scrub if marginal fields are abandoned. The riverside and wetland elements too, could easily be lost in future generations if not actively conserved and enhanced.

Character Area 3 Swindon Fringe

General description

4.44 This area of higher ground lies to the west of the urban area of Swindon, lying at between 90-155m AOD. It is defined on the western and northern side by a steep scarp slope overlooking the Thames lowlands. To the south it is defined by the edge of Wootton Bassett and the higher ground overlooking the shallow valley of the Brinkworth Brook. It includes the town of Wootton Bassett and the more straggling villages of Purton, Hook and Lydiard Millicent.

4.45 The area is one of rolling hills, and sits on the Coral Rag, a Jurassic limestone and Kimmeridge clays in the southern part of the area. The Rag a rough grain of limited use for building materials. The scarp of the Coral rag is defined on the western and northern edges, falling more gently to the River Ray to the east, and to the upper reaches of the Brinkworth Brook to the south.



View east towards Swindon

4.46 The influence of Swindon is significant in this area, with ribbon development along roads between the major urban centres and a diversity of land uses, from residential to light industrial and service sector or retail uses. Building materials and ages are also eclectic, from the fine stone buildings of the old village cores to 20th century residential development in a variety of styles. Some use is made of the Coral Rag in rubble walls, with Cotswold limestone ashlar or brick quoins. Much of the housing development is on high ground, or visually prominent, such as on the northern edges of Purton, where houses and mature garden planting create a defined skyline visible from the lower areas to the north. There are many places too where views are open to the developed edges of Swindon, especially where this is on high ground as at Peat Moor and Moredon. Power lines, two main railway lines, and the M4 motorway running east west add to the sense of the urban fringe.

4.47 The agricultural landscape between the urban centres and ribbon development is in many places degraded, with gappy hedgerows, few trees, and poorly maintained field boundaries.

However, beyond the landscape immediately visible from the main roads, there are diverse landscape elements and locations of historical interest. These include woodlands such as Brockhurst Wood, which is an SSSI, Park Copse, and the Iron Age earthwork at Ringsbury Camp. Agricultural land use is a mix of pasture and arable, which in a number of areas is now used for equestrian purposes. Many footpaths cross the agricultural backlands, which retain a pattern of small irregular fields, indicating medieval enclosure. There are also patches of wet ground and ponds in the clay areas, marked by groups of mature willow or individual poplars.



Pavenhill, west of Purton

4.48 Wootton Bassett is a small town of Saxon origin, with a historic core but with extensive mixed age residential development, the most recent of which is to the north east. The A and B roads to the north form a strong edge to the town, whilst to the south, housing is contained by Brynards Hill, and by the railway and a restored section of the Wiltshire Berkshire canal, beyond which is a pastoral landscape of pasture and hedges and the floodplain of the Brinkworth Brook. The southern edge of the town has straggled over the railway line and down into the shallow valley of the Brinkworth Brook.

Main characteristics

4.49 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Elevated ground with rolling hills and a steep escarpment to the north and west.
- Significant areas of housing and other development in the town of Wootton Bassett, and in ribbon development between the villages.
- A mix of building ages and styles, from historic village centres of buildings with distinctive stone details including stone slates, to more recent brick and reconstituted stone houses - with modern building materials sometimes jarring against the muted colours of the local vernacular.
- Wide views from elevated positions on the scarp slope of the coral rag and from high points such as Brynard's Hill, over floodplain and lowland vales, and also eastwards to development on the edge of Swindon.

- Degraded agricultural landscapes, including arable and by pasture some of which is for equestrian use, and small irregular fields of medieval origin, with gappy hedgerows, boundaries in poor condition and a lack of mature trees.
- Some unimproved meadows.
- Presence of power lines, service sector land uses such as garden centres and workshops, and communication corridors.
- Areas of woodland including ancient woodland.
- Features of historical interest including an iron age earthwork, Roman remains, and the disused canal.
- A comprehensive network of public footpaths.

Management guidelines

4.50 The overall objectives for the area are to restrict new development to maintain separation between settlements and to restore the integrity of the rural landscape.

4.51 There is a need to guide very limited development where it is considered appropriate, such as on existing brownfield sites but only where a landscape and visual benefit would result, and with associated landscape infrastructure. It would be unacceptable to have widespread change of use. Existing detractive uses such as garden centres, storage or workshops should be screened where possible. This should include new planting of woodland blocks or belts.

4.52 In the intervening rural landscape the restoration and enhancement of landscape elements such as hedgerows and boundaries should be carried out to reinforce the landscape pattern and reduce intervisibility.

Management strategy: actions

4.53 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Restore and re-plant hedgerows and specimen trees, especially oak and ash, or willow and poplar on wetter areas.
- Discourage further ribbon development along roads.
- Discourage change of land use except where visual impact from the public realm is minimised.
- Design and maintain roads as rural, not urban in character.

Long term

- Consider where development related to principal settlements is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular, and incorporates landscape mitigation to minimise adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity.

- Identify and seek opportunities to create new woodland belts and copses, in particular to help screen and contain settlement.
- Maintain and use footpath network to offer local people recreational opportunities in terms of countryside access routes and cycleways.

Key views management strategy

4.54 The high ground in this area offers many long views, both to the urban areas nearby and over the lowland countryside adjacent. Viewpoints and footpaths where long views are possible could be developed as for recreational and educational purposes.

4.55 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of or deterioration of hedgerows
- Loss of mature trees, especially oak, ash, willow and poplar
- Condition of field and farm boundaries
- Screening of development edges
- Use of locally appropriate building materials

Landscape sensitivity

4.56 This area is rich in history, with evidence of occupation on the higher ground since Roman period and a clear pattern of medieval field systems. However, its proximity to Swindon has meant that the area is vulnerable to significant development pressure. Building has occurred during the late 20th century in several areas, in particular Wootton Bassett, but also extending villages and as ribbon development. In association with this and other pressures, such as development of service sector land uses, many areas of countryside have been degraded in terms of hedges, trees and boundaries. Pasture shows signs of poor management through equestrian use or poor stewardship.

4.57 The area is seen by many on the A3102 which runs eastwards to Swindon, and to some extent from the M4 motorway. The minor roads crossing the area are also well used, and footpaths are extensive. Long views to the area are also evident in the intervisibility from the residential areas on the edges of Swindon.

4.58 The landscape is vulnerable to change in the future either through further cumulative small scale development which over time will continue to change the area's character or through larger scale developments which have a more obvious immediate effect. The trend may continue particularly if rural areas are in places no longer managed for agriculture.

4.59 Small groups or new individual houses located within or adjacent to the villages, could be considered where landscape and visual impact was minimised and the opportunity to mend the existing built fabric taken.

Character Area 4

Braydon Wooded Plateau

General description

4.60 This area is located within the Oxford clay belt, and occupies gently undulating higher ground generally over 100m AOD. It has a number of large woodland blocks and smaller copses, interspersed with permanent pasture and some arable in generally large fields. Roads and field boundaries are often straight, and settlement is absent apart from a number of isolated farm buildings and other houses.



4.61 Archaeological records show almost a complete absence of sites in this area. There is an Iron Age earthwork at Bury Hill, and a Roman tile kiln at Minety, but the geometry of roads, absence of many footpaths, and the larger, regular field patterns suggest that until the modern period this area was largely unsettled by man.

4.62 The countryside here before the Romans was dominated by the great Braydon Forest, which stretched almost from Malmesbury to Cricklade. At the time of the Domesday Book 1086, it was a Royal Forest - a mosaic of woodland, deer park, wood pasture, open grazing and roughly cultivated land. Henry III in 1217 issued a Charter of the Forest which forbade cutting of trees, digging of ditches, building or fencing, but certain lands or clearings were allowed as common land on which villagers could graze cattle, with Minety, Somerford and Milbourne Commons surviving as place names.



4.63 In this area small-leaved lime is a characteristic component, with hazel coppice with

oak standards in a number of the woods, although many of the woodlands now include coniferous plantations, including what was probably last remnant of wood pasture in the area at Somerford Common. They are of wildlife interest for their insect fauna, particularly their butterfly and moth communities, and the ancient woodlands have complex ecosystems which have developed over centuries.

4.64 The few farms and houses in the area are dispersed, with some recent workshop or light industrial land uses now open to view from the roads through the area.

4.65 Power lines cross the area from north west to south east and the water tower north of Braydon Wood are prominent features.

4.66 Hedges are mature and generally in good condition, reflecting the stock rearing pasture use, and mature oak is a strong feature in many hedgerows.

Main characteristics

4.67 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Undulating plateau over 100m AOD, on Oxford Clay.
- Straight roads or edges to woodland blocks, and medium to large, regular field patterns.
- A variety of woodland sizes and types, from large mixed plantations, to small coppice woods and mature belts of oak.
- High nature conservation value in many woodlands.
- Predominantly pasture with some arable.
- Very sparse settlement in the form of dispersed farms and houses.
- Detractors of power lines and water tower.
- Few footpaths.

Management guidelines

4.68 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve and enhance its pastoral character, conserve the diversity of woodlands and the integrity of hedges and hedgerow trees, and to ensure that the visual impact of land use changes are adequately controlled.

4.69 Woodland management is important, as well as ensuring succession in hedgerow trees by encouraging new specimen tree planting, especially of oak.

4.70 The scarcity of settlement requires that care is needed in controlling new land uses. Screening of diversified or new commercial activities should be carried out to minimise landscape and visual effects.

Management strategy: actions

4.71 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Plant/encourage new specimen oaks in hedgerows or close to farm or other buildings.
- Encourage appropriate woodland management through offering practical advice and assisting landowners in developing wood product based commercial activities.
- Identify and conserve or enhance woodland habitats especially for invertebrates.
- Screen existing diversified or new commercial activities and discourage location of similar uses in locations where they have an adverse landscape or visual impact.

Long term

- Where agricultural land may become marginal in economic return, encourage large scale woodland planting and natural restoration to reflect the former extent and diversity of the Braydon Forest.

Key views management strategy

4.72 Most views within this area are constrained by the woodland blocks and mature hedgerows. The undulating topography also constrains views into defined pockets, except at the edges of the area, for example at Stone Hill, where there are wide views over the lowland landscape to the west. These contained views are in places contrasted with long vistas along the straight sections of roads such as the B4696, passing through from north to south, and the B4040 passing along the north of the area. The landscapes visible from these roads may therefore indicate priority areas for targeting environmental management initiatives.

4.73 It may be appropriate to build on the containment of views, by maintaining and creating new woodland areas, contrasting with the more open landscapes of the clay lowlands adjacent.

4.74 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss or deterioration of hedgerows.
- Loss of mature trees, especially oak.
- Containment of view by woodland.
- Increase of diversified or new commercial activities.

Landscape sensitivity

4.75 This area has a more recent historical evolution from continuous woodland cover and common land uses, which is evident in the geometry of the agricultural landscape, roads and woodland edges. Settlement is also very sparse and there is a sense of remoteness.

4.76 Whilst significant woodland blocks and copses remain, there may be issues regarding management in some locations, allowing nature conservation value and visual richness to

deteriorate. In parallel, the uncertainty of agriculture may lead to areas of pasture gradually reverting to scrub and woodland.

4.77 The main threat to the integrity of landscape character in this area is therefore one of potential lack of management. This may be observed already in the somewhat untidy diversified commercial activities on farms and roadside buildings, and in unmanaged woodland.

4.78 Housing development would be considered unsuitable in this area, as this would be inconsistent with its historical evolution and sense of remoteness.

Character Area 5

Minety and Malmesbury Rolling Lowland

General description

4.79 This area lies to the east of Malmesbury, covering a large area of rolling or undulating lowland hills at between 70-100m AOD. It lies mainly on the Oxford Clay, but includes areas of Cornbrash, a crumbly shelly limestone, with some Forest Marble close to Malmesbury, and alluvial deposits along the course of Woodbridge Brook to the north of Brinkworth.



4.80 Historically the area was part of the Braydon Forest, but unlike the plateau landscape to the immediate east, has been continuously occupied by man, with a rich evidence of archaeological features and a largely medieval field pattern. Copses and small woodlands remain in a number of locations, and these, with mature hedgerow trees, are often seen on the skyline and create a harmonious patchwork of fields and mature trees. There is one larger block of woodland at Flisteridge Wood to the north of the area.

4.82 The influence of Malmesbury Abbey is significant, with a number of small villages or hamlets and fine stone country houses in the rural areas nearby, which may have been closely associated with the abbey as grange farms. Charlton Park, close to Malmesbury, occupies some of the most fertile land and includes several blocks or belts of woodland and parkland features.

4.83 Malmesbury itself is an historic walled town, of Saxon origin with surviving medieval street patterns. It is located on steep hills overlooking two branches of the River Avon, which run through the town beside water meadows and open pasture. Whilst housing has extended beyond the historic core, especially to the west and north, picturesque views to the town and abbey remain from many viewpoints to the south and east.

4.84 Limestone from the Cotswolds is the predominant building material, for both houses and the dry stone walls which are common in villages and forming boundaries to Charlton Park and other

properties. Buildings include the use of undressed stone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates. Some red brick is also in evidence.

4.85 Minety, on the north east extremity of the area, is a village with a more mixed range of ages and building styles, which straggles along the roads leading to the village centre.

4.86 Soils on the clay and alluvial land is overlain with clay loam, which leads to imperfect drainage and difficult working conditions, lending itself mainly to permanent pasture, although arable cropping is carried out in several locations. The soils on the Cornbrash, such as at Charlton Park, tend to be more fertile, and arable in these areas is more common. The resulting landscape is essentially pastoral, comprising pasture and some arable in generally irregular shaped small to medium sized fields, with an intact network of well maintained hedges. Mature oak and ash are common features of the hedgerows, and small groups of willows are found along the stream courses and ponds in the lower and wetter areas.

4.87 Viewpoints within the area often allow wide panoramas over the patchwork of small fields and mature trees. These include views to the abbey and church spire on high ground in Malmesbury, and also the prominent water tower beside the by-pass to the north of the town. Power lines also cross the northern part of the area.



Main characteristics

4.88 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Rolling or undulating lowland hills between 70-100m AOD, on Oxford Clay, with some Cornbrash and Forest Marble.
- Patchwork of irregular, small to medium sized fields, mainly pasture but with arable on the richer soils.
- Continuous hedges with many mature oak and some deciduous copses.
- Wetland features including groups of willows on wetter ground along streams and on alluvial soils.
- Mature trees on the skyline.
- Dispersed small villages or hamlets and fine stone country houses.

- Use of undressed limestone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates.
- Dominance of Malmesbury both on views and communication routes, and in historical influence of the Abbey.
- Water meadows and open pasture on two arms of River Avon at Malmesbury.
- Detractors of water tower and power lines, but otherwise an unspoilt, quiet pastoral landscape.

Management guidelines

4.89 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve and enhance its pastoral character, and to ensure that any new development respects the pattern of the dispersed settlement in the area and the vernacular building materials.

4.90 The maturity of hedgerow trees is important in shaping the character of the area and is a local asset of significance which should be conserved and enhanced.

4.91 The use of limestone in buildings and boundary walls should be supported, both in helping conserve existing features, and in the appropriate use of materials in new construction.

4.92 The environs of Malmesbury are highly sensitive to change and great care will need to be taken in planning any development or other land use or management change in the visual envelope of the town.

Management strategy: actions

4.93 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners.
- Enhance the wetland character in river valleys by planting willows along water courses in informal groups and broken lines.
- Discourage hedgerow loss and field amalgamation.
- Encourage woodland management to provide continuity of cover while optimising ecological value. Reintroduce coppicing in places.
- Encourage less intensive farming on arable land introducing headlands and margins.
- Support less intensive farming on semi-improved and unimproved pasture.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials including limestone are important in this area.
- Discourage development in the rural hinterland.

Long term

- Consider where development related to Malmesbury is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects. Prepare a design guide and management recommendations for the visual envelope to preserve key views eg to the abbey and spire, conserve the integrity of the riverside environment, define potential areas for new housing and prepare outline site design briefs, and the appropriate use of materials and site boundary details.

Key views management strategy

4.94 The views to Malmesbury are critical in this area, and should be preserved or enhanced. The A429, connects with the M4 motorway and collects traffic on the western side of the area, bypassing Malmesbury. Views from this road, and the connecting B4040 and B4042, are important for the perceptions of many local people.

4.95 Within the rural hinterland, the key visual elements are the mature trees and the patchwork of small irregular fields.

4.96 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of hedgerows and mature oak trees of other species such as willow relating to wetter ground conditions.
- Built form using traditional stone materials and detailing.
- Changes in rural built form such as new farm buildings.

Landscape sensitivity

4.97 This area has a harmonious character due to the combination of gentle topography, the patchwork of small fields and the mature hedgerows and large oaks within which only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

4.98 Malmesbury is a prominent visual focus and historical market town and former abbey, with a distinctive character defined by its hillside location at the confluence of two rivers, and the contrast of the riverside meadows with the medieval town centre. The valley floor and river meadows are particularly sensitive and should be kept free of development to maintain the connection between the landscape and the town core. Some housing development could potentially be absorbed at the edges of Malmesbury but great care would be necessary in design and implementation as discussed above.

4.99 The landscape is rich in features which contribute to its maturity, especially the mature trees and continuous hedgerows. These could be lost through intention or neglect, especially if agricultural futures for pastureland in particular

become more uncertain. The riverside and wetland elements too, could easily be lost in the next generations if not actively conserved and enhanced.

Character Area 6

Upper Avon Valley

General description

4.100 This small area lies to the west of Malmesbury, focused on the Sherston branch of the River Avon. The area is defined by two roads - the B4040 which runs between Malmesbury and Chipping Sodbury, and an unclassified road to the south. The river runs eastwards on a convoluted course, in a valley which is in places steep sided, and in other locations more open and shallow. The topography lies at between 85-110m AOD, and sits on a complex geology of Oxford Clay, Cornbrash, Forest Marble and alluvial deposits.



4.101 The area is rich in history, with a major Roman settlement, Easton Grey, at the convergence of the Fosse Way with the river. It was the site of a small town which played a vital part in the economic life of the area. It sat where the ancient Fosse Way, an arterial route between the West Country and the Midlands, crossed the River Avon.

4.102 There are many other archaeological sites in the area, from the Bronze Age including the earthwork at Whiteworth Wood, as well as from Roman, Saxon and medieval periods. Strip lynchets are also found on the steep ground near Easton Grey, which are medieval terraces formed by ploughing and are reflect the growing need to find extra cultivatable land from which to feed the local population.

4.103 This continuity of settlement reflects several factors, including the more fertile soils, particularly on the shelly limestone of the Cornbrash, and the rich grazing meadows and clean water from the river. Field patterns vary, from the small and irregular medieval fields especially in the steeper western area, to large fields which have been created to suit arable agriculture in the shallower valley areas. The wetter areas beside the river are more commonly permanent pasture.

4.104 Small blocks of woodland and copses are also a feature of the area, in particular on the steeper slopes and where closely related to the estates at Pinkney Park and Easton Grey. They comprise both deciduous woodland dominated by oak with hazel coppice, some of which is ancient

woodland, as well as softwood plantations. Mature oak trees are also a feature of the agricultural land, some in hedgerows and some singly in larger fields. Adjacent to the river and tributaries, there are also characteristic groups of mature willow and lines of alder. In places in winter, the orangey colour of the stems of Crack willow stands out brightly, and complements the lighter brown of the ploughed fields. The river and bank side is also an important habitat for wildlife, particularly the brown trout, bullhead and rare and protected native white-clawed crayfish.

4.105 Settlement also reflects the status and fertility of the area, with a number of fine estate buildings and large farmsteads. Sherston village, at the western edge of the area, also acts as a major village closely associated with the market town of Malmesbury to the east. Building materials are predominantly limestone from the Cotswolds, for both houses and the dry or bonded boundary and field walls. Buildings include the use of undressed stone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates. In some farms, however, new barns and other modern buildings in unsympathetic materials detract from the rural character.

Main characteristics

4.106 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Steep and intimate or more open, shallower valley.
- Complex geology and resulting variation in fertility and agriculture, from riverside meadows to arable.
- Variation in field sizes and shapes, from small irregular medieval, to larger fields enclosed or amalgamated in the modern period.
- Continuity of settlement and richness of archaeological sites.
- Important river ecology.
- Small blocks of woodland and copses, both deciduous and coniferous.
- Mature oaks on drier land, and willow and alder by stream-sides.
- Bright winter colours of crack willow and soils on the cornbrash.
- Fine stone buildings, and use of undressed limestone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates.
- Dry stone walls as field boundaries.
- Quiet and unspoilt character, with a strong sense of time depth.



Management guidelines

4.107 The overall objectives for the area are to protect the rich historical and ecological heritage of the area, and to conserve and enhance its distinctive and unspoilt character. The diversity of the area's landscape features, relating to the topography, rivers and different forms of agriculture, combined with the mature trees and fine stone buildings, creates a distinctive area of high landscape quality.

4.108 Good practice in the management of both agricultural systems and built form will be a priority in this area. Particular care will be needed in areas of historical or archaeological significance.

4.109 Biodiversity should be protected and enhanced particularly relating to the river corridor and woodland.

Management strategy: actions

4.110 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners.
- Enhance the wetland character in riverside and meadow areas, by planting willows and alders along watercourses in informal groups and broken lines.
- Discourage hedgerow loss and field amalgamation.
- Encourage woodland management to provide continuity of cover while optimising ecological value.
- Conserve and enhance the valley floor watercourse corridor optimising ecological value.
- Prepare guidelines for the management of landscape features of historical significance and the protection of sites of archaeological value.
- Discourage new development particularly in the valley floor.

Long term

- Ensure agricultural buildings reflect the character and scale of the landscape in their location and design.

Key views management strategy

4.111 There are many views from the roads which mark the boundary of the area, although no one location is an obvious viewing point.

- Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this

- Species such as willow relating to wetter ground conditions.
- Loss of or deterioration of dry stone walls.
- Change in the character of farm buildings.
- Use of traditional stone materials and detailing in new built form.

Landscape sensitivity

4.112 The area is within the Cotswold AONB which is an indication of its value. Its character is distinctly rural, tranquil and unspoilt, with a strong sense of time depth and man's shaping of the landscape. Whilst there is some diversity in landscape elements, the area has a strong coherence with the river as a unifying feature. Some of the riverside locations have an enclosed and intimate feel, whilst the more open areas allow wider views and a better sense of the continuity of the valley.

4.113 The landscape is rich in features which contribute to its maturity, especially the mature trees, diversity in riverside character, stone walls and small woodlands. These could be lost through intention or neglect, especially if the agricultural future for pasture in particular become more uncertain. The distinctive riverside and wetland features could easily be lost in future generations if not actively conserved and enhanced. The archaeological and ecological heritage of the area is also very strong, and requires pro-active measures to conserve this resource.

4.114 Only sensitively designed small-scale single, infill or restoration development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

Character Area 7

Sherston Dipslope Lowlands

General description

4.115 This area lies on gently undulating land underlain by the Forest Marble limestone. The land rises from an average of around 90m to 125m AOD towards the Cotswolds in the west, with some localised higher ground. There are a number of shallow river valleys and associated alluvial soils, and some dry valleys especially towards the south. Some of the river valleys have locally steeper and more enclosed valley forms. Towards the south of the area the area becomes segmented, divided by steep valleys.



4.116 The area has a number of prehistoric remains, including two long mounds with possible chambered tombs lying a few hundred metres apart near Luckington. Roman occupation is also evident, with the Fosse Way running through the area towards Cirencester.

4.117 It is in most places a fairly open landscape of large fields with low hedges or dry stone walls. There are broad panoramas and distant views to the hills and large woodlands to the west, although in places the landscape is more intimate and views are contained by hedgerows and mature trees. Some field boundaries west of Sherston include great numbers of stately veteran oak trees, some of which are ancient pollards. Close to the rivers, groups of mature willows are also a feature.

4.118 Agriculture is a mix of permanent pasture and arable, with a field pattern that varies from an irregular medieval layout, especially close to villages, to the more regular shaped and more recently enclosed larger fields.

4.119 Woodland cover varies, with many areas quite bare except for shelterbelts, although there are a number of small woodlands in the north of the area, and large parkland woods to the immediate west of the District boundary, including the Westonbirt Arboretum.

4.120 The area includes unimproved limestone grassland characterised by upright brome and tor grass, which in the wider area of the Cotswolds is a nationally significant resource. The limestone grasslands are rich in plants and invertebrates, particularly butterflies. Many of these grassland areas are fragmented and no larger than 1 ha in extent, and as a result, are ecologically isolated.

4.121 Settlement on the area is confined to dispersed small villages, hamlets and farmsteads. The villages are mainly located adjacent to the Avon and its tributaries, and include some fine stone buildings in the local stone. The Oolitic limestone is most notably used for the finely crafted stone slates for roofing. Luckington Court is one such stately home, Queen Anne for the most part, which was famed as the Bennet's home in *Pride and Prejudice*. It has a three-acre garden, whose mature ornamental trees can be seen from several locations near the village.

4.122 A number of important footpaths cross the area, including the Macmillan Way. This is a network of routes linking the south coast, Bristol Channel and North Sea coast of England, taking in the Cotswolds. It also forms part of the Cross-Cotswold Pathway, an 86-mile walk linking public transport interchanges at Banbury and Bath.

4.123 Kemble Airfield lies at the extreme north of the area, with associated hangars and related buildings; and in the extreme south the presence of Colerne and its neighbouring airfield have a significant detracting visual impact on the character of the area. The M4 motorway also crosses the area and with nearby Castle Combe racing circuit, forms a contrast to the tranquil rural character of the rest of the area.

Main characteristics

- 4.124 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:
- Gently undulating, broad low hills and shallow river valleys.
 - Locally steeper and more enclosed valley forms.
 - Rich heritage of human settlement and archaeological sites.
 - Broad panoramas and distant views.
 - Continuity of hedgerows and veteran oak trees.
 - Dry stone walls as field boundaries and in relation to larger properties and village houses.
 - Variation in field sizes and shapes, from small irregular medieval, to larger fields enclosed or amalgamated in the modern period.
 - Variation in woodland cover, with many areas devoid of woodland cover, and other areas with small woods or copses.
 - Small areas of unimproved calcareous grassland.
 - Dispersed settlement and few villages.

- Fine stone buildings, and use of undressed limestone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates.
- Long distance footpaths.
- Localised developments such as Castle Combe circuit and Colerne airfield.



Management guidelines

4.125 The overall objectives for the area are to enhance the character of the area through strengthening the landscape elements which contribute to its distinctiveness, and conserve the ecological heritage and unspoilt character. The diversity of the area's landscape features, relating to the topography, broad views, mature trees, dry stone walls and fine stone buildings, will require care and good stewardship.

4.126 The veteran hedgerow trees are features of high local significance, and a programme of long term replanting should be established.

4.127 Good practice in the management of both agricultural systems and built form will be a priority in this area.

4.128 Particular care will be needed in areas of historical or archaeological significance.

Management strategy: actions

4.129 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners.
- Enhance biodiversity through good practice in woodland management and by encouraging farming practice which supports good environmental management.
- Encourage wetland habitat creation and planting of willow and alder by waterside areas in enclosed river valleys.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials including limestone are important in this area.

- Discourage development in the rural hinterland.

Key views management strategy

4.130 Much of the area is remote and is crossed by few main roads. However, the openness of the views where there is little woodland cover, and the broad shallow hills, offer wide views from many locations. The M4 crosses the area and is afforded broad views as is the A429 north of Malmesbury.

4.131 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of hedgerows and mature oak trees.
- Loss of or deterioration of dry stone walls.
- Use of traditional stone materials and detailing in new built form.

Landscape sensitivity

4.132 The area is within the Cotswold AONB which is an indication of its value. It has a distinctive character at the edge of the Cotswolds, with its gently rolling hills and remoteness, matched by mature landscape features such as veteran trees and old dry stone walls. Although settlement is dispersed, there are some fine stone villages and intimate valley landscapes associated with the upper reaches of tributaries of the Avon.

4.133 The area is generally tranquil and has little through traffic. In this sense there may be relatively few members of the public regularly viewing the area, but these may include visitors and local people for whom the unspoilt nature of the landscape is an important resource and of national significance as part of the AONB.

4.134 The sensitivity of the landscape to change is predominantly an issue of agricultural management. The use of the area for sheep grazing in particular may be uncertain. This affects the pasture and on-going management of hedgerows and dry stone walls for stock control.

4.135 The remoteness and openness of much of this area means that only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

Character Area 8

Hullavington Rolling Lowland

General description

4.136 This large area lies between Malmesbury in the north and Chippenham in the south. It is a rural area of gently rolling hills and shallow valleys, based on a number of geological formations, predominantly Forest Marble limestone, Oxford Clay and Cornbrash. The landform rises from approximately 60mAOD in the east of the area close to the Avon valley, to over 120m with some localised high points of up to 139m AOD.



4.137 This diverse geology gives rise to an area of mixed soil conditions, from predominantly pasture on the clay, to arable on the better soils of the Cornbrash. Field patterns are a mix of medium to large sizes, with a pattern of irregular medieval boundary shapes to more regular shapes from later enclosures. There are a number of villages within the area, but few other settlements and a dispersed pattern of farms. Woodlands and generally intact hedgerows with mature trees further contribute to the patchwork of fields in this gentle landscape.

4.138 The area has evidence of a succession of occupation with evidence of prehistoric settlement in the area such as the Neolithic chambered long barrow at Lanhill and an early Bronze Age bowl barrow at Barrow Farm. This part of Wiltshire is likely to have been Romanized from the latter part of the 1st century A.D. with the large Roman settlement at Easton Grey to the north, and a number of villas in the vicinity. Although the first recorded settlement in the locality of Kington St Michael is in the 10th century, it is likely that there was earlier Saxon settlement in this area.

4.139 The Domesday Book records that considerable lands in the area were owned by the bishop of Glastonbury, and included much woodland, which was much reduced shortly afterwards. The bounds of the royal forests of Chippenham and Melksham were declared in 1228, lying to the west of Chippenham, but the woodlands were largely felled and enclosed in the early 17th century. A number of small and medium

sized woodlands remain, however, both to the north of the M4 and west of Chippenham. Corsham Court provides a significant large scale parkland landscape at the southern tip of the area. The seat was first kept by King Aethelred in the early 9th century and was passed to various noblemen subsequently. Capability Brown prepared plans to enlarge the park in 1760 which was finished by Repton in 1799.

4.140 A major early road ran from London, through Hungerford, Marlborough and Chippenham to Bristol - now the route of the A420. This was part of a highly developed national road system by the mid-fourteenth century and would have been of particular importance to the locally important cloth trade.

4.141 Limestone from the Cotswolds is the predominant building material, for both houses and the stone walls which are common in villages. Dry stone walls are also evident but not common as field boundaries. The villages of Kington Langley and Kington St Michael are notable for their fine stone buildings, many dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, and include the use of undressed stone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates. This extensive use of weathered stone creates a landscape of muted colours.

4.142 The M4 motorway now carves a major swathe through the centre of the area, connecting with the A429 running north south, and the A420 running west from Chippenham. The edge of Chippenham is in the character area where it rises onto higher land bordering the Avon valley. Just south of Malmesbury there is a former airfield at Hullavington with large hangars and associated buildings.

4.143 In many places there are wide views over the area, where agriculture is the dominant and shaping force in the landscape, which in places has been to the detriment of local distinctiveness, for example in the loss of distinctive features of habitats associated with waterside environments.



Main characteristics

4.144 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Rolling or lowland hills between 60-120m AOD, on Forest Marble limestone, Oxford Clay and Cornbrash.

- Patchwork of irregular, medium sized fields, mainly pasture, and larger more recent enclosures used for arable, especially in on the richer soils.
- Continuous hedges with many mature oaks.
- Medium sized woodlands and deciduous copses.
- Fine stone villages with muted colours and dispersed farms.
- Historic Corsham Park.
- Use of undressed limestone to walls, ashlar quoins, lintels and mullions, and stone slates.
- Detractors of the M4, the edge of Chippenham and Hullavington airfield.

Management guidelines

- 4.145 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve and enhance its pastoral character, and to ensure that any new development respects the grain of the dispersed settlement in the area and the vernacular building materials.
- 4.146 The continuity of hedgerows is important in shaping the character of the area, and should encourage through appropriate land management programmes.
- 4.147 River valleys should be enhanced by encouraging habitat creation and planting of riverside trees.
- 4.148 The use of limestone in buildings and free standing walls should be supported, both in helping conserve existing features, and in the appropriate use of materials in new construction.
- 4.149 Protect the setting and intrinsic character of Corsham Park.
- 4.150 Minimise the landscape and visual effects of the expansion of Chippenham.

Management strategy: actions

- 4.151 The following actions are recommended to help realise the overall objectives for the area:

Short term

- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners.
- Encourage woodland management to provide continuity of cover while optimising ecological value.
- Enhance the wetland character in riverside locations by planting willows along water courses in informal groups and broken lines, and by encouraging landowners to help in the creation of more diverse waterside habitats.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials including limestone are important in this area.

- Discourage development in the rural hinterland.
- Conserve the setting of Corsham Park.

Long term

- Consider where development related to Chippenham is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.

Key views management strategy

4.152 Many wide views are possible over this broad, rolling landscape. Within the rural hinterland, the key visual elements are the mature trees and the patchwork of small irregular fields. A number of major roads cross the area, including the M4 motorway and the A429 and A420. Views from these roads, and the connecting B roads, are important for the perceptions of many local people. Much of the rural hinterland, however, is relatively remote and tranquil.

4.153 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of hedgerows and mature oak trees.
- Landscape elements associated with riverside environments – in particular wet meadows, waterside trees, and reed beds or other wetland species.
- Built form using traditional stone materials and detailing.

Landscape sensitivity

4.154 Corsham Park is designated as an Historic park and garden and forms part of a small Special Landscape Area which is an indication of its perceived high value. The broader area is typified by a gently undulating patchwork of arable and pasture with mature hedgerows, some woodlands and nucleated settlement in the form of fine stone villages. In some areas the distinctive features of the landscape have been lost, such as the relative lack of diversity in river corridors.

4.155 The landscape retains many features which are of local value, especially the woodlands, mature trees and continuous hedgerows. These could be lost through intention or neglect, especially if agricultural futures for pastureland in particular become more uncertain. The riverside and wetland areas, however, have lost much of their visual and ecological diversity.

4.156 The whole area has an essentially tranquil and pastoral character within which only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

Character Area 9 By Brook Valley

General Description of Character

4.157 This heavily valleyed area, focuses on By Brook and its tributaries and lies completely within the Cotswold AONB. By Brook runs southwards in a convoluted path ultimately joining the River Avon just beyond the county boundary, while its tributaries predominantly run from the west. The area is defined by the break in slope at the top edge of the valley side, bordering gently undulating open farmland.



Colerne viewed from the south across Lidbrook Bottom

4.158 The valley bottom ranges from approximately 30m AOD near Box in the south to approximately 85m AOD below Castle Combe. The surrounding farmland predominantly lies over 130m AOD, reaching 160m AOD near Colerne in the south. The underlying geology is dominated by landslip over Oolitic limestone and Forest Marble to the north. To the south, a more complex geology of clays, fullers earth and alluvial deposits are present. This dictates the topographical character, the north consisting of steep sided narrow valleys, providing a strong sense of enclosure, while the south gradually opens out into a broader, more expansive and exposed valley.

4.159 The north of the area is significantly wooded on the many steep slopes, enhancing the sense of enclosure developed by the valley sides. Even from higher ground, views out are restricted by the woodland fringing open areas. In their higher reaches the valleys become a dry pastoral landscape while, lower down, the valley bottom is dominated by the watercourses, associated riparian vegetation and wet pasture.

4.160 Deciduous and mixed woodland cover dominates large tracts in the north of the area, much of it designated ancient woodland, with small pockets of pasture interspersed along the valley sides and along the damper ground of the valley floors. Biodiversity is high throughout this area, in relation to both the woodland (Colerne Park and Monks Wood designated SSSI woodlands) and areas of calcareous grassland on the valley sides, many of which have SSSI designation. Arable land from the surrounding character areas impinges on some of the higher fringes of the

valleys and also on isolated areas of higher ground surrounded by the valley landscape.

4.161 The woodland cover diminishes to the south, yet is still a significant element especially on steeper ground. Livestock farming dominates, yet the valley topography still retains a sense of enclosure. Here, a more pastoral character pervades, with an irregular, medium size field pattern, held together by well-established mixed hedges containing mature hedgerow trees. Hedges are the dominant field boundary throughout most of the area and area frequently outgrown, further enhancing the sense of enclosure. Stone walls are present on the fringes of the area and area associated with settlements. Peripheral walls are usually poorly maintained.

4.162 The area is rich in archaeological sites especially on the shoulders of valleys, where remains of Iron Age habitation are evident (eg the hill fort west of Slaughterford). The area also contains many Roman sites relating to the occupation of Bath and the location of the Fosse Way running through the area. It is considered that the ancient woodland pattern reflects the woodland retention from Roman times. In the valley bottoms there is evidence of ridge and furrow.

4.163 The area as a whole is relatively sparsely populated, the north more so than the south. In the north, the small settlements and dwellings sit along the valley floor. The nucleated settlements comprising of vernacular dwellings around a church, with minimal, if any, new interventions. In the south, settlements are stretched along the valley sides and most significantly on the southern slope of the valley, where dwellings are strung out along the A4. The larger settlements of Box and Corsham, containing church and small commercial concerns, extend down towards the valley floor. Box's development is based around the mining of Bath stone, from which much of the settlement is constructed.

4.164 Although churches are significant buildings in the settlements, the lack of extensive views prevents them from being prominent within the broader area. Vernacular buildings throughout are constructed of mainly of local Oolitic limestone.



4.165 Other than the A420 running east to west across the centre of the area and the A4 skirting the southern edge, the area is serviced and connected by minor roads, often single track with

only minimal traffic. At Box, the railway cuts into the valley, emerging from the box tunnel, a Brunel design, at the very south of the area.

4.166 There are a limited number of footpaths through the area, the only significant recreation route being the Macmillan Way, which runs through the length of this area.

Main characteristics

4.167 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Meandering brook, dominating the valley floor.
- Heavily valleyed landscape, providing enclosure.
- Considerable woodland cover dominated by deciduous species and with yew in places.
- Significant areas of calcareous grassland.
- Field boundaries of mature hedges often outgrown, containing mature trees.
- Valleys skirted by assortment of historical, archaeological elements and edge cut by Roman Road.
- A series of small vernacular settlements, with significant buildings, and very little degradation.
- Network of small minor roads.
- Nationally important footpath.
- Settled tranquil valley.



Management Guidelines

4.168 The overall objectives for the area are to preserve and enhance the area's distinct and predominantly unspoilt character and maintain and develop its ecological and cultural heritage. The diversity of the area linked to its valley topography, watercourses and woodland cover interspersed with open calcareous grassland, create an area with distinct character.

4.169 The diversity of the area should be maintained, reflecting the characters of the enclosed narrow wooded valley to the north, open pastoral valley to the south, and small dry open valleys at the fringes.

4.170 Good woodland and agricultural management practices should be undertaken in response to retention of both the cover and composition of the mature woodland and maintenance of the calcareous grass cover, for both visual diversity and ecological benefit.

4.171 Hedges should be maintained and where necessary gaps filled, especially in the southern open pastoral valley, hedgerow trees should also be encouraged. Species diversity of roadside verges should be maintained and enhanced.

4.172 Development should focus in and around existing larger settlements, respecting the dispersed dwelling pattern present through much of the area.

Management Strategy Actions

4.173 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Conserve and promote continuity of the existing mature woodland cover, for ecological and visual interest.
- Protect and maintain mosaic of semi improved calcareous grassland.
- Conserve existing hedgerows and develop establishment of hedgerow trees. Discourage hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing.
- Conserve and maintain river corridors, valley bottom pasture, meadows and riparian vegetation to reinforce landscape character and enhance biodiversity.
- Manage landscape features of historical significance and protect of sites of archaeological value.
- Discourage new development.

Key Views management strategy

4.174 There are many, varied enclosed views within this landscape, yet much of the area is remote, serviced only by minor roads and footpaths. This remoteness to much of the area increasing the significance of views from the A420, which are predominantly characteristic of the narrow valleyed area, with small dwellings, woodland enclosure, elements of open grassland valley side and valley bottom watercourse with associated wetland.

4.175 In the south the broad open valley landscape affords views of large tracts of the area, its pastoral landscape of intact hedges and grassland cover

4.176 Indicators of change from within this character area should include:

- Change in composition and cover of woodland.
- Loss of areas of calcareous grassland.
- Loss of pastoral character in south, due to impingement of settlements and change in building form such as new farm buildings.
- Loss or deterioration of field boundaries and associated hedgerow trees in the south.
- Use of traditional stone materials and detailing in new built form.

Landscape Sensitivity

4.177 The whole area has an essentially rural character, pastoral in the south, wooded to the north, with small settlements and dwellings dispersed through much of the area. Only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts. Development should avoid the valley floor and reflect the existing traditional pattern of the settlement.

4.178 In the north, the enclosure provided by both topography and woodland cover may accommodate small scale, sensitively designed development, associated and in character with existing built form. Any development should be focused in close proximity to the major roads to prevent undue disruption to the tranquil rural character.

4.179 The open pastoral character of the south is more visually sensitive than the enclosed north. Minimal development could be accommodated around the settlements at the fringes of the area where there is potential to improve a poor 20th century settlement edge. This should be in conjunction with the development of a strong landscape structure along the edge of the development.

4.180 Open areas of calcareous grassland represent a scarce landscape and ecological resource, making them particularly unsuitable for development.

4.181 Woodlands are an important and characteristic landscape resource and are similarly unsuitable for development.

Character Area 10 Corsham Rolling Lowland

General Description of Character

4.182 This area of landscape rises up to a gentle rolling sloped east west ridge to the south, ranging from approximately 60m AOD near the Avon Valley to approximately 170m to the west of the area. It extends beyond the county borough to the south, which at this point follows a Roman Road, running east to west. To the north and east the area is defined by break in topography. The area is a catchment for both the Avon to the east and By Brook to the west.



4.183 The character area lies on a bed of Forest Marble to the west, which gradually gives way to Cornbrash to the east. The latter gives rise to higher quality, better drained agricultural land.

4.184 There is evidence of human habitation since prehistoric times such as Bronze Age barrow above Box. Influence from the Roman period is evident from the Roman Road to the south, along with other sites throughout the area. The history of the settlement of Corsham extends to before 1001AD when the area belonged to the king in Saxon times and the crown retained possession through Norman times. The area's economy originally developed on agriculture and the cloth industry. The area then gained in prosperity from quarrying and mining, prior to the development of Corsham as a military depot, shortly after the First World War.

4.185 The northern extent of this character area is dominated by the settlements of Corsham, Rudloe and military and commercial developments. Corsham is historically linked to Corsham Court, with older dwellings and civic buildings constructed either in the vernacular style of the area or with stylistic links to the estate. This is only really evident within the core of the settlement. The fringes consist of 20th century development with military structures and industrial areas mixed with a mosaic of housing, small fields and woodlands. The military compounds of RAF Rudloe Manor include a variety of utilitarian structures including offices, sheds, barracks and masts with high security fencing a feature along roadsides. Some roads have been clearly built to

accommodate military traffic and are urban in character with lighting. Country lanes show signs of frequent use by traffic.

4.186 The area is enclosed on the southern edge of the town around Westwells and Potley Farm which are associated with the valley and more open to the north along the A4. Some parkland appears to remain with mixed planting. Hedgerows are overgrown in places or are replaced with fences. Structures such as equestrian sheds associated with small fields are common.

4.187 The Avon Valley to the east contains roads, railways and electricity transmission lines visible from the area. Smaller settlements including individual dwellings and hamlets lie on the gentle ridge to the south, accessible along minor roads. As with the older buildings of Corsham these are predominantly built with local stone with stone slate roofing tiles and occasionally thatch.

4.188 The agricultural landscape is mixed, arable and livestock, with the quieter areas having a strong rural character. This is enhanced by an intact and tree'd hedge pattern, providing a sense of enclosure and an element of intimacy to some areas. Elsewhere large panoramic views to the north and Bowden to the east often dominate. Small woodland blocks and parkland trees also enhance the settled nature of this area.

4.189 The area is crossed to the north by the A4, while through the more rural hinterland to the south smaller settlements are connected by a series of quiet, often single track roads. These are bounded by walls of local stone, frequently deteriorating, gappy and grown through with hedge species. A comprehensive network of paths and recreation routes run through the area linking the settlements with the surrounding countryside.



Houses at Gastard

Main characteristics

- Gently sloping topography with a small steep valley.
- Traditional core of Corsham.
- Urban fringe character of areas at periphery with Corsham including mosaic housing, military infrastructure, industrial areas, communication corridors, small fields and woodlands.
- Rural character in the southern part of the area with traditional rural settlements.

- Panoramic views out towards north and east in parts.
- Visual influence of electricity transmission lines.

Management Guidelines

4.190 The overall objective for this area is to control the pattern of new development and restore the rural character of the urban fringe area, while retaining the rural character to the south.

4.191 There will need to be protection of the remaining fields, woodland and parkland to maintain separation of the built form around Corsham. Enhancement of the landscape structure through boundary improvements and new woodlands is required to help screen elements of the existing built form. New development should be restricted to existing brownfield sites and the opportunity taken to significantly improve the layout creating settlements set in and responding to the landscape.

4.192 It is important to maintain and conserve the rural character away from the urban edge, managing and repairing field and road boundaries, maintaining diversity of agricultural practices and discouraging further development.

Management Strategy Actions

4.193 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Maintain existing woodland cover and hedge trees,
- Restore field boundaries around settlements and other areas where gappy or degraded.
- Conserve the rural character to the south of the area.
- Encourage less intensive agricultural practices around settlements to retain and expand semi-improved grassland.
- Consider where development related to Corsham is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.
- Discourage new development in rural area.

Long Term

- Create new woodland cover to mitigate the landscape or visual impact of new development.
- Maintain and use footpath network to offer local people recreational opportunities in terms of countryside access routes and cycleways.

Key Views management strategy

4.194 The gently sloping topography of this area offers expansive views of both urban areas and the rural landscape. Views from key footpaths could be developed. Views from the A4 are important and clear separation between settlements needs to be maintained eg between Corsham and Rudloe.

4.195 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area should include:

- Loss of mature trees in the landscape.
- Loss of or deteriorating condition of field and roadside boundaries.
- Outward development of the built form.

Landscape Sensitivity

4.196 The intact rural character, sparse settlement pattern and prominent and slightly exposed elevation, make the south of the area sensitive to development. Only limited small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts. Where the openness is mitigated to some extent by localised woodland clumps, providing some sense of enclosure essential development, in keeping with the rural character of the area, may be acceptable provided landscape and visual impacts can be minimised.

4.197 Around Corsham and associated settlements, the lower elevation and disrupted skyline is less sensitive to development although particular care is needed on the rising land around the A4 which is exposed to wider views. Any development within this area should be considered not within the countryside but on brownfield sites. The countryside is sensitive to development and urban fringe pressures. Development should be considered in conjunction with the development of a strong landscape structure which should screen and separate from other settlement.

Character Area 11

Avon Valley

General Description of Character

4.198 This large character area is focused around the River Avon, its tributaries, Brinkworth Brook and Marston River and the surrounding low-lying landscape. The Avon meanders from Malmesbury to the north, through Chippenham, to leave the district below Lacock Abbey in the south. Brinkworth Brook runs from below Wootton Bassett to join the River Avon in the west; and River Marston runs west from Calne. The area is hemmed in by elevated ground surrounding the area and sits below 70m AOD, and at its lowest point is 36m AOD below Lacock.



The River Avon

4.199 The topography is characterised by a predominantly level landscape with only minor undulations at its fringes as the land runs to higher ground. This produces a wide flat valley with areas of openness and vast skies. Towards the south the surrounding topography of adjacent character areas provides more enclosure. The geology underlying this landscape varies, from alluvium and river terrace gravel adjacent to the watercourses, to the dominance of Oxford and Kellaway Clays on the adjacent land. There are large tracts of Kellaway sand which provides pockets of free draining high-grade agricultural land, throughout the valley.

4.200 The landscape is managed through mixed agricultural practices, with arable dominating the freer draining higher-grade agricultural land, and the damper land adjacent to the watercourses consisting almost entirely of wet grassland, including areas of meadow which are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Through much of area the integrity of the hedges and hedgerow trees provides a sense of enclosure. Below Chippenham, to the south, hazel hedges are evident, providing a variety to the character of the area. On tracts of intensively farmed arable land hedges are gappy and lacking trees, and the area has an exposed character. This is especially prevalent on the fringes of development and communication corridors. The character on the urban fringes of Chippenham, is further influenced by the built form and roads which are particularly prominent to the south west of the town.

4.201 The area has limited tree cover which is restricted to shelterbelts, hedgerow trees and small clumps of woodland. The latter are infrequent throughout the area but are slightly more evident to the south, below and around Chippenham, reducing the effect of the urban fringe. Poplar windbreaks are frequent across the whole area, breaking up views and acting as significant landscape features. The presence of watercourses through the area is marked by riparian vegetation dominated by willow, frequently pollarded, which enhances the damp, low lying character of these areas.

4.202 The water related character is further developed by the open ditches system which is prominent along low lying roadsides. The watercourses themselves are attractive and interesting features, meandering through landscape. Bridges across the river and causeways across wetter areas are significant elements relating to the watercourses. Maud Heath Causeway, north east of Chippenham, is one of the most well known. It was created circa 1458 as an investment by an individual for the public good.

4.203 With the exception of Chippenham, settlements are generally small, with a vernacular core, constructed of a mixture of Oolitic limestone and local brick, with varying degrees of 20th century development. Church towers are local landmarks within the settlements and their immediate environs but are less significant features in the wider landscape.

4.204 Chippenham's early development was linked to its importance as a Saxon administrative centre, the old core of the town sited as today within a loop of the Avon. The town sat on the Bristol-London road, part of a national road system, highly developed by the mid 14th century. However, significant expansion of the town began at the end of the 18th century with further development of communication links. Both the Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal and then the GWR London to Bristol line allowed the existing cloth industry of the town and surrounding area to flourish and other industries to develop. Extensive late 20th century development once more expanded the town, probably as a result of the town's proximity to the M4. Large scale expansions associated with peripheral roads have occurred particularly to the west and north west, but also to the south east. The valley bottom of the Avon has generally been avoided and forms a green corridor into and through the town part of which is used for recreational purposes. Development is particularly prominent on the rising land to the north.

4.205 The village of Lacock sits to the south of the area- a settlement dating from the 13th century which gained prosperity through the wool industry. The village remains largely unchanged, an eclectic mix of built styles and materials, maintained by the National Trust. The village, adjacent settlement and surrounding settled landscape make this area a popular visitor destination.

4.206 There is evidence of habitation from prehistoric times, with numerous crop marks visible. These are more obvious north of Chippenham, along the Avon. Discoveries denoting man's intervention within this landscape continue through Roman times, with the presence of settlement remains. Through both the Avon valley & Brinkworth Vale a wealth of medieval settlement existed. Many of these villages were lost through the Black Death and resulting changes in agricultural systems.

4.207 The A4 and A350 are significant roads in the southern part of the area. The A4 east west through Chippenham and the A340 runs along the south western fringes. The only road of significance to the north is the M4 motorway. This creates a major feature, source of noise and barrier in the landscape as it cuts through the valley. Away from the main roads traffic is very light, the scattering of small hamlets serviced by minor, often single-track roads, which enhance the rural character.

4.208 Two railways traverse the area. The main line London to Cardiff runs east west from Wootton Bassett through Brinkworth Brook valley and London to Exeter one runs south west through Chippenham. These are heavily vegetated with hedgerow species, reducing their effect on the landscape. The airfield at RAF Lyneham lies on high ground to the east, beyond the character area boundary. The heavy use of the airfield by cargo aircraft disturbs the inherent tranquillity of the surrounding area. Additionally, electricity transmission lines form dominant structures in this flat landscape.

4.209 There is a comprehensive network of footpath and recreation routes throughout the area, although few have any direct relation to the watercourses. The line of the Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal runs along the eastern edge of the area providing a distinct feature in the landscape.



Main characteristics

4.210 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Low-lying river landscape, between 70m and 30m AOD on river terrace and alluvial geology with heavy soils, interspersed with light sands.
- Dominant presence of water in the form of ditches, streams and river with related riparian vegetation and structures.

- Damp meadow and pasture along watercourses/valley floor.
- Intact and predominantly well managed hedgerows frequently with hedgerow trees.
- Areas of high quality arable agricultural land located through out the area, on areas of Kellways Sand.
- Shelterbelts of poplar act as significant vertical elements in the horizontal landscape.
- Rural and somewhat isolated feel to remoter parts of character area.
- Scattered settlements and dwellings.
- Strong rural sense of place, which begins to break down around Chippenham and communication corridor.
- Green valley floor through Chippenham.
- Broad expansive skyline, frequently unbroken by development.
- Significance of electricity transmission lines.



Management Guidelines

4.211 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve the rural character, and ensure development of the urban fringe and communication corridors does not compromise the nature of the area.

4.212 Individual elements within the landscape which make up the character should be maintained, conserved and when necessary replenished. This should include the retention of the ditch system which runs through the area, maintenance and replacement of hedges.

4.213 Conserve and where possible enhance the biodiversity of the watercourse, its environs and adjacent habitats.

4.214 Features of historical and archaeological interest relating to man's use of this wet landscape and early settlement features will also require care and protection.

4.215 Minimise the landscape and visual effects of the expansion of Chippenham.

Management Strategy Actions

4.216 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Conserve valley bottoms including wetland features, open ditches, meadows and riparian vegetation, especially willows.
- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including allowing new trees to emerge in existing hedges, and discourage field amalgamation.
- Consider where development related to Chippenham is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.
- Enhance the sense of place through use of appropriate building materials in respect of new development, extensions or other built features - especially through the use of materials used in vernacular buildings.
- Conserve the alignment and features of the Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal

Long Term

- Encourage the creation of public access along waterways, where consistent with nature conservation objectives.

Key Views management strategy

4.217 The area is primarily viewed from the M4, A350 and from the edges of Chippenham. Elsewhere, the large scale of the character area, views reduced by level topography and vegetation and the sparse settlement pattern make view points scarce. Watercourses are important so views from bridges over the Avon should be monitored.

4.218 Indicators for change within this area should include:

- Change to watercourses.
- Loss of riparian vegetation
- Loss of grassland through the area particularly adjacent to watercourses.
- Amalgamation of fields
- Loss of mature hedgerow trees
- Expansion of Chippenham
- Establishment of screening around Chippenham

Landscape Sensitivity

4.219 Away from the influence of Chippenham, much of the area has an essentially rural character with small, scattered settlements and individual dwellings. The landscape is predominantly gently undulating with vegetation preventing extensive views. Only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

4.220 Around Chippenham, the original settlement in the valley bottom has expanded up the valley sides. These areas are exposed to wider views and are sensitive to further development. Care is required in further expansion of the town to

minimise the effect on landscape and visual receptors. Development should be carried in conjunction with the development of a strong landscape structure to repair urban fringe landscapes.

4.221 Where the traditional settlement form meets the landscape in river corridors or other green wedges, these areas should be kept free of new development to protect the relationship between built form and landscape. The valley floor overall is a sensitive landscape with some of the most attractive landscapes of the area focussed on the watercourses and riparian vegetation.

Character Area 12

Bowood and Bowden Parkland

General Description of Character

4.222 This character area is centred on three estates- Bowood Park, Bowden Park and Spye Park which lies outside the district to the south. It is a rolling hill landscape of parkland, woodland and enclosed pasture higher than surrounding areas within the district. The land rises from approx 40m AOD in the Avon Valley to 180m above Bowden Park, the highest point in the area. The area has many small valleys with minor tributaries running to both the River Avon and River Marden. Underlying this landscape is a complex geology of sands, landslide, and a variety of grits.



4.223 While land cover is predominantly woodland with parkland and pasture enclosed by tree belts, the lower slopes to the west of the area are managed as open pasture and there are small areas of arable agriculture on higher ground. The woodland is mixed, dominated by mature deciduous cover, and is managed predominantly for recreation and biodiversity. Much of this woodland is listed in the English Nature Inventory of Ancient Woodland and is probably a remnant of the previously expansive Chippenham Forest. Areas of coniferous plantation have a regular, often geometric shape in places.

4.224 Towards the east of the character area, the landscape is dominated by Bowood Park and its associated management. The central core of Bowood Park, is a 'Capability' Brown landscape, listed on the English Heritage, Historic Parks and Gardens register. It is dominated by open parkland and gardens surrounded by woodland and managed for recreation. A number of ornamental species, present in the garden and parkland, create significant elements in the wider landscape, appearing to rise from within the woodland and visible from the landscape beyond. The park also includes a rhododendron walk and a golf course, as additional visitor attractions. To the east, the landscape is managed as pasture, enclosed by mature clumps of woodland and mature parkland trees. At the west extent of the area the common land of Bowden provides an open grazed landscape

with wide views across the Avon Valley. Close by is Bowden Park.

4.225 Large tracts of the area are designated SSSI, this designation also extends south into Spye Park. The designation relates to an extensive habitat mosaic of alder and oak woods, parkland and an area of dry acidic grassland which contains locally uncommon plants.

4.226 There is a largely intact hedgerow system on the lower slopes, (predominantly hawthorn but with hazel in the more sheltered valley to the north), which provides channelled views from the roads and a sense of maturity and permanence to the landscape. The hedges give way to fences and woodland edge surrounding arable fields on the higher ground. The higher ground also contains a number of shelterbelts, of varied character, from mixed deciduous strips to single species coniferous lines, these frame and also reduce the expansive views and panoramas from the summit. The woodland and shelterbelts produce enclosed areas of farmland and sheltered character at higher elevations.

4.227 There is wide spread evidence of man's habitation of the area from the Roman era, with discoveries of settlements relating to the Roman Road to the south of the character area.

4.228 Settlements tend to be scattered dwellings strung out along the roadsides. These are a mix of vernacular or distinctive estate dwellings with some more recent developments. Derry Hill is the exception, mainly developed from the early 19th century onwards with housing estates nucleated around the church and school. The vernacular buildings closer to the Avon Valley tend to use brick as a building material, while to the east, stone becomes predominant.

4.229 Two major roads run through the area, the A350, dissecting the area from north to south, running against the contour of the hill and the A4, which skirts the southern edge and lower ground. The rest of the area is accessed by minor roads. Although there is only minor public right of way coverage of the area, the parkland provides a substantial recreation area with open access and wooded paths.

4.230 This area has significant impact on the character areas surrounding it, rising above valleys and acting as backdrop to much of the area to the North. The open slopes also provides significant views out to the surrounding landscape.



Bowood Park

4.231 The summit of the area is topped by an aerials, yet the woodland cover reduced the impact of these from afar and prevents them dominating their immediate environment.

Main characteristics

4.232 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Significant area of hills with small valleys rising from 40m AOD to 180m AOD.
- Dominance of mature deciduous woodland cover along the slopes.
- Significant parkland, containing significant numbers of mature trees, held on Parks and Gardens Registry.
- Large panoramic views afforded from grazed, open ground.
- Significant visitor attraction.
- Fields enclosed by woodland belts.
- Mature and intact hedge system, which provides sense of maturity and frames views
- Complexity woodland and grassland habitats, with large tract of area designated SSSI.
- Some coniferous elements in woodlands and some coniferous plantations.
- Strong altitudinal variation between grazed landscape and higher wooded slopes.



Management Guidelines

4.233 The overall objectives for the area are to preserve and enhance the parkland and woodland character and retain the essentially rural character of the area.

4.234 The parkland should be maintained to reflect its most important period of historical character. Recreation and tourism should be managed to respect this.

4.235 Woodland belts and plantations should be maintained as mixed deciduous/coniferous stands providing enclosure for the range of activities.

4.236 The woodland and grassland complexes should be managed to optimise nature conservation value.

4.237 The diversity of landscape pattern from open grazed pasture on lower slopes to wooded enclosures on higher slopes and hill tops should be maintained.

Management Strategy Actions

4.238 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short term

- Conserve and promote continuity of existing cover and diversity of both woodland and parkland, for ecological and visual interest.
- Conserve and where necessary replant parkland trees.
- Conserve landscape features of historical significance and the protect sites of archaeological value.
- Discourage coniferous only plantations and where present, enhance edges and watercourses with deciduous planting.
- Conserve hedgerows and mature trees on lower slopes, including allowing new trees to emerge in existing hedges.
- Support recreation and tourism where consistent with maintaining and enhancing landscape character and nature conservation.
- Discourage new development.

Long term

- Support nature conservation management of area designated as an SSSI.

Key Views management strategy

4.239 Within much of this area the views are restricted by the woodland cover and shelterbelts. Views from the A4 and A342 are restricted but are important to the perception of the area. The main consideration should be the positive management of the woodland belts and related parkland and pastures and historic built form.

4.240 In areas to the west and on lower slopes, expansive views out across the Avon valley are possible framed by roadside hedges.

4.241 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss or deterioration of woodland belts
- Loss of parkland trees.
- Loss of hedges and hedgerow trees.
- Excessive recreation use and wear indicated on roadsides.



Landscape Sensitivity

4.242 The area is designated as a Special Landscape Area which is an indication of its perceived high value. The whole area has an essentially tranquil, intimate and parkland character within which only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

4.243 The prominence and exposed nature of the Avon valley sides make this area particularly unsuitable for development.

4.244 As well as being a recreational attraction the woodland and open parkland is a valuable ecological resource vulnerable to development. Any recreational development should not conflict with the nature conservation requirements of this area.

Character Area 13 Lyneham Hills

General Description of Character

4.245 This character area forms a shoulder of land that divides the Avon valley to the west from the lowlands of the River Marston tributaries to the east. To the north, the scarp slope rises sharply from the Avon valley and slopes more gently to the east around Tockenham. To the south, the ridge narrows and slopes steeply on both sides, terminating at the River Marden. The scarp rises from approx 60m in the Avon Valley to 150m at Lyneham Airfield, it reaches 128m AOD in the south around Wick Hill.



4.246 The underlying geology of the area is dominated by Coral Ragstone which is exposed on the scarp. In places this gives way to the more fertile lower calcareous grit, while the on lower ground of the northern fringes these give way to the heavy Oxford Clay.

4.247 The presence of Round Barrows around Lyneham, provides evidence of prehistoric habitation by man with in this landscape. As through much of the district, Roman influences are present evident, an example being a Roman villa near Tockenham. The settlement pattern is much reduced from the medieval era, when settlements developed predominantly along the fertile area to the east. Also evident is an extensive complex of medieval earthworks north of Lyneham which includes the remains of Bradenstoke Augustinian Priory, fishponds, and the remains of an associated motte and bailey castle known as Clack Mount.

4.248 The steep western slopes are significantly wooded. Woodland cover over the rest of the area is present in large clumps and within minor valleys. Agriculture is predominantly pasture, with arable located on the more fertile higher grade calcareous grit. There is a pattern of small fields on the steeper scarp slopes with larger, more regular fields on the plateau. These are bounded by hedges, which are predominantly intact, forming a comprehensive network often with hedgerow trees. On the steeper land and secluded valleys the hedges are often outgrown, providing a strong sense of enclosure. Minor roads are lined with high hedges and hedge banks, framing and containing views out to the surrounding landscape.

On the more intensively farmed land the hedges are frequently gappy and cut low.

4.249 Around Lyneham, the landscape is dominated by the airfield and related structures. Its presence is also evident through the regular cargo aircraft activity and the perimeter security fence. Yet the impact on the surrounding area is limited due to the plateau location with viewpoints at a lower level and obstructing vegetation and buildings. Most of the development is focused around Lyneham and consists of predominantly 20th century residential developments, linked to the military use of the area. This also increases the traffic along the A3102. The rest of the area contains only minor nucleated settlements and scattered dwellings, constructed of a mixture of stone and brick.

4.250 Wide expansive panoramas are possible, especially from the scarp slopes to the lower flat land on all sides. From the south east, this includes views down to Calne and the industrial development associated with the settlement. The M4 is also visible to the north. To the northeast views are restricted by the more gentle rolling landscape. The scarp slope is particularly dominant viewed from the Avon Valley and the M4, forming the backdrop to much of the valley.

4.251 Away from Lyneham itself the area has a strong rural character, with small valleys, woodland and hedge system creating areas of shelter and enclosure in the landscape, contrasting with the vast views facilitated from the higher ground.



4.252 The persistent presence of military aircraft is a noise source which reduces the tranquil rural character on the flight path.

Main characteristics

4.253 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Prominent scarp slope rising from 60m AOD to 150m AOD on all but the north east edge with small scale fields and deciduous ancient woodland.
- Dominance of Lyneham airfield and associated development on plateau area.
- Occasional nucleated settlements and scattered dwellings through the more rural hinterland.

- Secluded wooded valleys with overgrown hedges creating an enclosed rural feel.
- Evidence of continual human habitation through archaeological finds.
- Intact hedgerow system occasionally impoverished on more intensively managed land.
- Expansive panoramas across lower lying land to all sides.



Management Guidelines

4.254 The overall objectives for the area are to preserve the rural character of the area and maintain the visual interest of the scarp slope viewed in particular from the Avon Valley. This should include maintaining and where necessary enhancing woodland cover and the hedge network.

4.255 The sense of enclosure within valleys and exposure on the scarp edge should be maintained.

4.256 A further key objective is to restrict the development of Lyneham to ensure that adverse landscape and visual effects are minimised.

Management Strategy Actions

4.257 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Conserve and enhance the hedge system, repairing and replanting impoverished hedges where necessary
- Retaining variation between dense out grown hedges of secluded valleys and open character on more exposed ground
- Maintain woodland cover of scarp slope for both visual and nature conservation benefits.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials are important in this area.

Long Term

- Ensure any future development of Lyneham airfield and the surrounding area respects the landscape. Any development within this area should be considered preferably within existing brownfield sites. Outside these the opportunity to improve the urban edge could

be explored to create a positive junction between built form and the landscape, reflecting traditional urban form. A strong landscape structure should also be considered as part of this strategy.

Key Views management strategy

4.258 The topography of this area, varying from scarp to undulating higher ground, and the variations to the character of this landscape yields a number of key views. These include the M4 corridor and various points on the A3102. These should take into account the character of the scarp slope, both as a backdrop to the lower landscape and the variation between its inherently intimate valleys and wide exposed views of the upper areas. They should consider the mixed arable landscape of the higher ground as it runs to the lower ground to the east, with small settlements and woodland clumps

4.259 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of woodland along scarp
- Amalgamation of hedgerows
- Development of Lyneham

Landscape Sensitivity

4.260 The prominence and exposed nature of the scarp slope and the related edge of the plateau or top of ridge makes the area particularly unsuitable for development.

4.261 On the wider plateau area set back from the scarp slope The majority of the area away from Lyneham has an essentially rural, agricultural character within which only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape effects.

4.262 Around Lyneham, the landscape is affected by the existing built form including the airfield and housing estates and in parts is less sensitive to development, where enclosed from wider view by vegetation.

Character Area 14

Hilmarton Rolling Lowland

General Description of Character

4.263 This large area lies between the scarp slope of the Wessex downs to the east, the Lyneham Hills to the west and Bowood to the south. The landform rises from approximately 70m AOD at Calne to over 110m to the north with localised areas of up to 128m AOD. The area drains through minor tributaries and drainage ditches into the River Marden, except the northern part which drains into Brinkworth Brook. The land is generally gently undulating with areas of level land around watercourses which also run through localised small enclosed valleys. There are a few high points and small hills, some bordering higher land outside the character area. This landscape sits on a geology of predominantly Kimmeridge Clay, areas of Gault Clay and Lower Greensand dominant to the east, while to the west the clay gives way to Coral Rag.



4.265 The landcover is predominantly pasture and meadow with pockets of arable farming located on the lighter Greensand. The land is bounded by a fairly comprehensive network of thorn hedges, frequently including hedgerow trees, which creates a varied field system of medium sized irregular fields and small regular strips. Through much of the area the hedge system is well developed and maintained, creating a sense of enclosure and restricted views. On the more intensively farmed areas the hedges become discontinuous and are cut low or are replaced by fences, developing a more exposed character.

4.266 A number of watercourse and drainage ditches lace the area. Their riparian vegetation, with a high proportion of willow, and the surrounding pastures/meadow create a distinctive lowland landscape with rectilinear fields indicative of more recent draining. Place names such as Marsh Farm and Cotmarsh illustrate the character of the area.

4.267 Although there is no large scale woodland cover, a number of small wooded clumps and shelterbelts create some enclosure, restricting wider views, particularly north of Calne. These are

comprised mainly of deciduous species, although conifers are present in some cases.

4.268 The agricultural use promotes a strong unspoilt rural feel over much of the area. At Calne, commercial units and new housing bounded by a new bypass extend the settlement to the north and west respectively. These create a new edge to the settlement and are visible from higher ground to the west in particular. Tree cover linked with the valley topography mitigate the visual impact of development to an extent to the south and east.

4.269 There is minimal evidence of habitation prior to the Roman era, when influenced by the Roman Road a number of settlements developed to the south. The existing settlements are remnants of more extensive medieval habitation, reduced by Black Death and changes in agricultural practices. Deserted villages south east of Bushton are a testament to this.

4.270 Except for the settlement of Calne, the area is now sparsely populated, with much of the area settled by scattered and isolated farmsteads. The town of Calne, mentioned in the Domesday Survey, is located on historic Bath to London Road, the present day A4. This was part of a highly developed national road system by the mid-fourteenth century and would have been of particular importance to the local cloth trade on which the town developed in the 16th century. The town expanded in the 18th century as ribbon development along roads leading from the centre. Infill development of both housing and industry, 'rounding off' the town, occurred during the mid 20th century.

4.271 Sand extraction has been carried out east of Calne leaving water bodies and pits used for waste disposal. This is the only evidence of a disturbed landscape. The main roads are the moderately busy east west A4 and the north south A3102, both running through Calne. The main line London to Bristol railway clips the northern extent of the area. These uses affect the tranquillity of their immediate environs but much of the area has a quiet settled rural feel, accessed only by minor roads and a network of public rights of way. Recreation is found in areas such as Blackland Park which accommodates camping and caravanning and is located to benefit from the adjacent dramatic chalk scarp and downland landscape which dominates views east.

Main characteristics

4.272 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Low lying mixed agriculture, between 70m AOD and 130m AOD on geology dominated by clays.
- Scattered dwellings and small settlements away from Calne.
- Areas of valley bottom, dominated by wet grassland and willows.

- Patchwork of small to medium sized fields, mainly pasture but with arable on lighter soils.
- Hedged boundaries predominantly well managed, but becoming discontinuous on more intensively farmed land.
- Mix of brick and stone buildings, the core of Calne predominantly built from Freestone Oolitic limestone.
- Broad expansive views.
- Peaceful rural character.



Management Guidelines

4.273 The overall objectives for the area are to maintain and enhance the tranquil, rural character which prevails through much of the area. The character of areas of low lying drained wetland associated with watercourses should be developed and enhanced.

4.274 The integrity of hedges and the maturity of hedgerow trees, woodland clumps and shelterbelts is important in shaping the character of the area and a programme of long term planting should be established.

4.275 There should be control of the nature of development; this will require careful decision-making and design sensitivity, to guide development where it is considered appropriate, and to offer help to existing property owners in improving the visual impact of land uses. This should include the retention and where appropriate new planting of woodland blocks to help screen existing development and ensure absorption of future development.

Management Strategy Actions

4.276 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Encourage repair, replanting and extension of hedgerows and development of hedgerow trees where hedgerows are in poor condition.
- Conserve mature trees, woodland clumps and shelterbelts.
- Enhance the valley bottom character along watercourses by planting willows in informal groups and broken lines.

- Consider where development related to Calne is most appropriate in terms of landscape and visual effects.
- Discourage development in the rural parts of the area.
- Conserve and maintain river corridors, valley bottom pasture and meadows and riparian vegetation.
- Encourage less intensive farming on arable land introducing headlands and margins.

Long Term

- Repair landscapes Identify and seek opportunities to create new woodland belts and copses, in particular to help screen and contain development.

Key Views management strategy

4.277 The rolling landscape, hedge system and shelterbelts, prevent extensive views within this landscape. The isolation of many areas increases the significance of views from the 'A' roads and views into the area from higher surrounding landscape.

4.278 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Loss of or deteriorating condition of hedgerows
- Loss of mature trees in hedgerows, shelterbelts and woodland clumps
- Screening of development edges
- Condition of watercourses and associated riparian vegetation eg willows

Landscape Sensitivity

4.279 Much of the area has a rural character with small, scattered settlements and individual dwellings. Vegetation generally prevents extensive views. This area has an essentially tranquil and pastoral character.

4.280 The proximity to Swindon brings with it particular pressure for development. The landscape is therefore vulnerable to change either through cumulative small scale development which over time will change the area's character or through larger scale developments which have a more obvious immediate effect.

4.281 Only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts.

4.282 Around Calne, the original settlement in the valley bottom has expanded up the valley sides. These areas are exposed to wider views and are sensitive to further development. The south western fringes bordering Bowood are sensitive due to the character of the valley and its relationship with the parkland area. The setting of Cherhill Downs to the east is an important consideration.

Character Area 15 Cherhill Downs

General Description of Character

4.283 This is an area of chalk downland in the south east corner of the district. The area is defined by the break in topography between the scarp slope and the lowland farmland below and extends south and east into Kennet District. The area rises from approx 100m AOD by the River Marden to 262m AOD above Cherhill with a landform characterised by folded valleys on the scarp edge levelling out to a plain on the higher ground. The underlying geology is of upper and lower Chalks. The topography of the area creates a sharp variation in character, from the sheltered, occasionally intimate contoured landscape of the scarp to the exposed, downs on the higher ground.



Cherhill Hill with Monument and White Horse

4.284 Simple land cover emphasises the topography, the higher land dominated by large-scale arable agriculture, while the scarp slope has open pasture, with areas of encroaching scrub. This runs down to medium size arable fields on the more gentle lower slopes.

4.285 Boundary treatment throughout the area is minimal. Field boundaries on the downland are few with occasional impoverished hedge or fences with remnants of hedge species along them. Clumps of beech are the only significant tree cover on the downs, while scrub with occasional mature trees are present on the scarp slope.

4.286 Settlement is very limited with a few farms clustered at Calstone Wellington, houses associated with the A4 and isolated cottages, all linked by single track roads. These are often dead ends, truncated by the steep slopes. The only significant road, the A4, forms the northern extent of the area, reducing the tranquillity in its direct environs. Footpath and bridleway accesses are fairly frequent climbing and skirting the scarp. The long distance Wessex Ridgeway crosses the area. This is a 136 miles route running from Marlborough to Lyme Regis on the Dorset Coast.

4.287 Man's existence in this landscape is evident from prehistoric times. There is a wealth of

archaeological interest such as round barrows around the Lansdown Monument [also known as the Cherhill Monument]. These date from Late Neolithic times and other sites from this era have been subsequently adapted by Bronze Age and Iron Age civilizations. A Roman Road runs up the scarp heading for Morgan Hill to the east.



4.288 More recent features which are significant features in the landscape include the Cherhill White Horse, the second oldest white horse in Wiltshire cut in 1780. Nearby lies the Lansdowne Monument, an obelisk put in 1845 in memory of Sir William Petty, a 17th Century economist.

4.289 The area of heavily contoured land around and south of Lansdowne Monument holds a SSSI designation as an extensive area of herb-rich chalk grassland.

Main characteristics

4.290 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- Simple middle chalk geology with steep intricate topography of folded valleys, rising from 100m AOD to over 260m AOD
- Scarp slope and steeper land dominated by open pasture grassland
- Undulating downland predominantly arable with few boundaries.
- Scarcity of dwellings
- Herb rich chalk grassland across the higher ground, designated as SSSI
- Rich archaeological heritage
- Significant landscape features of the white horse and monument.

Management Guidelines

4.291 The overall objectives for the area are to conserve and protect the rich historical and ecological heritage of the area, and to conserve and enhance its distinctive and unspoilt character. The diversity of the area's landscape features, relating to the topography and its simple land cover, creates a distinctive area of high prominence.

4.292 Particular should be taken to preserve areas of archaeological and historical importance and

maintain significant landscape features and their settings.

4.293 The area should be protected from new development.

4.298 The remnant areas of herb rich chalk grassland are of significant ecological value and therefore highly sensitive to change.

Management Strategy Actions

4.294 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Retain open character, discouraging planting of trees and hedge planting on traditionally unenclosed areas.
- Restore existing hedge boundaries, where fences with remnant hedges are present to provide contrast with the open areas.
- Retain areas of unimproved chalk grassland, prevent scrub encroachment and enhance biodiversity by encouraging farming practice which supports good environmental management.
- Conserve landscape features of historical significance and the protect sites of archaeological value.
- Discourage new development.

Long Term

- Ensure continued scouring and maintenance of White Horse.
- Encourage access and interpretation of areas of archaeological significance, where consistent with archaeological conservation and nature conservation objectives.

Key Views management strategy

4.295 The most important views in the area are from the A4 towards the White Horse and Cherhill Monument. Also views from the road to Cherhill Down and from the lower land around Calne towards the scarp are significant.

4.296 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Scrub invasion
- Loss of permanent grassland
- Loss of open character
- Deterioration of the White horse or Monument

Landscape Sensitivity

4.297 The area is located within the Wessex Downs AONB and is therefore perceived to be of particular landscape value. The whole area has a rural character and has very little settlement. The open, exposed and simple nature of the valleyed scarp and the exposed downs mean that virtually no development would be acceptable in this area apart from that essential to agricultural use. This would need to be sited in discreet areas well screened from view, in valley bottoms.

Character Area 16

Liddington Scarp

General Description of Character

4.299 This narrow character area consists of a steep scarp slope which extends along the south east of the district and continues beyond the assessment area to the north. The slope rises from the mixed farming lowland landscape of Hilmarton at around 100m AOD to the arable chalk landscape of Avebury Plain at around 200m AOD. The underlying geology is Lower Chalk overlying Gault Clay.



4.300 The steep topography of the scarp dictates the land use, significantly wooded in places with areas of open grassland. For much of the scarp, woodland cover is located on the higher and steeper ground, with grassland on lower slopes. Woodland is dominated by mature deciduous trees, creating a settled and sheltered character to the landscape. Bricknoll Dip Woods, a broadleaved and yew woodland, is designated an SSSI. To the south, above Cherhill, the scarp becomes gentler and the pastoral and wooded landscape gives way to arable land use.

4.301 The fields are generally small scale, with intact mature hedges with boundary trees on lower ground, gradually becoming more patchy with elevation. The most important field boundaries run directly up the slope connecting to field boundaries on adjacent higher and lower ground. Some are original parish boundaries and reflect the historical division of the scarp. Where there is no woodland the landscape appears bleaker and on higher ground scrub regeneration has begun which seems to make the landscape appear uncared for.

4.302 The only significant road in the area is the A4 which forms the southern boundary south of the village of Cherhill. This reduces the tranquillity of its direct environs. There are a number of minor roads which run along the western edge of the scarp of which two climb the scarp to the higher ground beyond. A number of footpaths associated with field boundaries connect the low ground to the plateau landscape beyond, suggesting a previous use as droving tracks and seasonal use of high and low ground.

4.303 The settlements within the character area are remnants of more extensive medieval

habitation in the area, reduced through Black Death and changes in agricultural practices. The attractive and well healed villages and hamlets generally sit comfortably on the gentler gradients at the base of the scarp slope, except Cherhill, which lies on gentler topography within a shallow valley.

4.304 Cherhill is the only settlement of significant size and is also the only settlement with any significant 20th century development which lies partly on the A4. The village core is set back from the main road. Other settlements are linear, set out along predominantly minor roads. The vernacular buildings are a mixture of clay brick and stone, with the core of all of the settlements recognised as conservation areas on the local plan.

4.305 The scarp is a significant feature viewed from the west. Its strong character enhances the settled feel and character of the adjacent lowland. There is a White Horse on the hillside above Broad Town, which acts as a visual focal point to the lower landscape to the north.

4.306 From within the area there are significant views out from the scarp, but often the woodland cover encloses these views. Minimal road access reduces the significance of view out.

Main characteristics

4.307 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- West facing Scarp slope.
- Heavily wooded especially on upper fringes.
- Pasture on lower elevations
- Hedgerows with dominant lines running up the slope.
- Attractive settlements located at base.
- Series of footpath bridleways, and minor roads running up to higher ground.



Management Guidelines

4.308 The overall objectives for the area to maintain the settled, rural character which is inherent from within the character area, while retaining the visual interest of the area as a backdrop to the landscape below. This should include maintaining the diversity of the area, especially the altitudinal variation present along much of the scarp from pasture at the base to

woodland clinging to the top. Grassland should be maintained to prevent scrub encroachment.

4.309 Biodiversity should be promoted through the management of woodland and grassland, developing the mosaic of this area with low intensity agricultural management.

4.310 Small scale new development, should be contained in defined envelopes within existing settlements at the base of scarps if appropriate to character of the settlements.

use. This would need to be sited in discreet areas well screened from view.

4.315 At the base of the steep slope, only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts. This would need to respect the historic form and linear pattern of the settlement retaining open spaces and views as appropriate.

Management Strategy Actions

4.311 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Encourage woodland management to provide continuity of cover while optimising ecological value.
- Conserve grassland cover.
- Maintain altitudinal variation along scarp, from grassland to woodland.
- Maintain and enhance the existing field boundaries.
- Ensure development reinforces the locally distinctive character and respects the vernacular. The use of traditional building materials are important in this area.

Long Term

- Prevent scrub encroachment onto grassland

Key Views management strategy

4.312 Views from within the character area are limited to two lanes and footpaths. Views out are important and should be retained where possible. Views of the scarp are critical from the surrounding area including from the A4, Calne and villages within the Hilmarton Character area.

4.313 Indicators of change from chosen viewpoints within this character area might include:

- Change in woodland cover
- Loss of grassland to scrub
- Loss of altitudinal variation between woodland and grassland
- Development encroaching onto scarp

Landscape Sensitivity

4.314 The area is contained within the Wessex Downs AONB which is an indication of its perceived outstanding value. The whole area has a rural character and has very little settlement. The exposed nature of the scarp mean that virtually no development would be acceptable on this steeply rising land apart from that essential to agricultural

Character Area 17 Avebury Plain

General Description of Character

4.316 This character area lies on the eastern fringes of the district sitting at an elevation of over 170m AOD, reaching 211m AOD at its northern edge. The character of the area extends into Kennet District towards Avebury itself.



4.317 This is a geologically simple area of lower chalk, which sits atop of the scarp slope to the west. On the edge of the area this elevation affords wide views across the lower valleys landscapes around Calne. This reduces significantly as one travels into the area. The gentle topography and openness increases the prominence of the sky and also allows views across the landscape. The area feels exposed due to its elevation.

4.318 The landscape is predominantly arable, developed on the free draining relatively flat land. Away from Yatebury, the only settlement in the area, the fields are large scale, creating an often repetitive landscape lacking significant features. Boundaries tend to be gappy hedges often replaced by fences.

4.319 The settlement of Yatebury, has a very intimate character, with shelterbelts and clumps of woodland providing shelter for buildings and small fields and elements of pasture associated with the built form. Although beech dominates as a tree species, pines are significant within shelter belts.

4.320 The diversity of this area also contrasts with the simplicity of the rest of the character area. An animal feed works, the A4 and Yatebury air strip are prominent to the south. However, woodland and mature shelter belts, provide a sense of shelter and focal points to the east and north. Away from Yatebury the area is sparsely settled with only very occasional farm complexes and dwellings, giving this area an isolated character.

4.321 Bowl Barrows, close to Yatesbury, provide evidence of late Neolithic habitation of this area. The extent of this has been lost probably due to the nature of the Lower Chalk which does not retain crop marks, resulting in minimal archaeological evidence. This contrasts to the Upper Chalk south of A4.

4.322 Much of the area is inaccessible to vehicles, the A4 the only major road and with coverage of minor roads only to the south and north. A number of footpaths and bridleways run from up from the lower landscape below, perpendicular to the scarp, possibly following former droving lanes. These run along the field edges forming a comprehensive network of public right of way routes.

4.323 There are a significant number of beech trees with clumps creating dramatic silhouettes on the skyline. These clumps are predominantly on high ground outside of the assessment area.

4.324 To the north, at the edge of the scarp slope at Nebo Farm, a wireless mast acts as minor detractors.

Main characteristics

4.325 The main characteristics of the area can be defined as follows:

- An open landscape of exposed downland.
- Predominantly large fields of intensively farmed arable land, on free draining chalk.
- Boundaries dominated by impoverished hedges, fences and minimal hedgerow trees.
- Views out to the west on the edge of the scarp slope only.
- High intervisibility across the open gently rolling or level landscape.
- Feeling of isolation, particularly to the north because of scarcity of settlement and roads, exposure and lack of significant landscape features.
- Dominance of beech as tree species.



Management Guidelines

4.326 The overall objectives for the character area are to retain its simple open character, while maintaining and enhancing the existing landscape features. The simplicity of the area is linked to its open nature, high intervisibility and general lack of development. Development will have to be very sensitive to this character.

4.327 The enclosed and sheltered character of Yatebury should be reinforced with appropriate tree planting. Detractors should be screened with appropriate planting which echoes the pattern and scale of the area.

4.328 Further intensification of farming of this landscape should be avoided. Hedges and field trees should be maintained and enhanced and further loss of pasture and amalgamation of arable fields avoided.

4.329 The nature conservation value of the area the arable landscape should be improved.

would have a significant visual impact on the area and higher ground to the east and south.

Management Strategy Actions

4.330 Conserve and enhance the Character Area through carrying out the following actions:

Short Term

- Conserve and enhance field boundaries.
- Retain grassland cover and manage to prevent scrub invasion
- Prevent further amalgamation of arable fields.
- Encourage less intensive farming on arable land introducing headlands and margins.
- Discourage large-scale agricultural buildings and screen existing.
- Maintain and enhance tree cover and field boundary planting to screen Yatebury and associated development.

Long Term

- Review consistency of any future development or reclamation opportunities at Yatebury airfield with the open, rural and exposed character of the area.

Key Views management strategy

4.331 The area has high intervisibility and viewpoints range from the A4, Yatesbury and from the network of footpaths, bridleways and lanes to the north.

4.332 Indicators of change within the character area should include:

- Loss of field boundaries.
- Increase in field size.
- Increase in large scale agricultural or other developments.
- Loss of tree cover.

Landscape Sensitivity

4.333 The area is entirely within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is an indication of its perceived value.

4.334 The whole area has an essentially open rural, agricultural character with sparse weak field boundaries and gentle topography. Within the area only small-scale, sensitively designed development, appropriately associated with existing built form, could be successfully accommodated without adverse landscape impacts. Outside settlement any development

North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

Volume 2: Natural Environment Policy Recommendations

Final Report

for

North Wiltshire District Council

August 2004



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1 Introduction

Background

North Wiltshire District Council commissioned White Consultants on the 11th February 2004 to prepare a landscape assessment and strategy for the district. The assessment is intended to inform and complement the Local Plan 2011 and act as supplementary planning guidance.

This volume of the study reviews existing natural environment policies in the light of the landscape character assessment [Volume 1] and makes recommendations for revised policies. In Section A, the planning context is set out in Chapter 2, the rationale for any revisions set out in Chapter 3 and revised policies set out in Chapter 4. In Section B, objections to the Local Plan 2011 First Deposit Draft are responded to in the light of the proposed policies.

2 Planning and Legislative Context

Policies are divided into national, county and district wide. These are discussed below along with the documents which inform the policy decisions.

National Policies

Planning Policy Guidance [PPG] 1: General Policy and Principles [February 1997]

The strategy section states:

The Strategy recognises the important role of the planning system in regulating the development and use of land in the public interest. A sustainable planning framework should:

provide for the nation's needs for commercial and industrial development, food production, minerals extraction, new homes and other buildings, while respecting environmental objectives;

use already developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive places in which to live and work;

conserve both the cultural heritage and natural resources (including wildlife, landscape, water, soil and air quality) taking particular care to safeguard designations of national and international importance; and

shape new development patterns in a way which minimises the need to travel.

[para 5]

'Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose a particular architectural taste or style arbitrarily. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary design guidance. Local planning authorities should not concern themselves with matters of detailed design except where such matters have a significant effect on the character or quality of the area, including neighbouring buildings. Particular weight should be given to the impact of development on existing buildings and on the character of areas recognised for their landscape or townscape value, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas.'

[para 18 my emphasis]

In respect of Rural areas the guidance states:

'A number of the previous themes come together in considering development in the countryside. Here, the planning system helps to integrate the development necessary to sustain economic activity in rural areas with protection of the countryside. Rural areas can accommodate many

forms of development without detriment, if the location and design of development are handled with sensitivity. Building in the open countryside, away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled. In areas such as National Parks which are statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities and in areas of best and most versatile agricultural land, policies give greater priority to restraint.' [para 2 my emphasis 8]

The general policy relating to rural areas states:

'...Building in the open countryside, away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled.....' [para 28]

Planning Policy Guidance [PPG] 2: Green Belts [February 1997]

Para 1.4 states:

'The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. Green Belts can shape patterns of urban development at sub-regional and regional scale, and help to ensure that development occurs in locations allocated in development plans. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use. They can assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development...'

The purposes of including land in Green Belts is stated in para 1.5:

'There are five purposes of including land in Green Belts:

- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'*

1.7 continues:

'The extent to which the use of land fulfils these objectives is however not itself a material factor in the inclusion of land within a Green Belt, or in its continued protection. For example, although Green Belts often contain areas of attractive landscape, the quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land within a Green Belt or to its continued protection. The purposes of including land in Green Belts are of paramount importance to their continued protection, and should take precedence over the land use objectives.' [my emphasis]

The essential characteristic of green belts is their permanence. Their protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead. [para 2.1]

Therefore, this designation, which is irrelevant to landscape quality, is required to be kept.

Planning Policy Guidance [PPG] 7: The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development [February 1997]

This PPG is most central to landscape and countryside matters.

In relation to the character of the countryside the guidance states:

'The guiding principle in the countryside is that development should both benefit economic activity and maintain or enhance the environment Rural areas can accommodate many forms of development without detriment, if the location and design of development is handled with sensitivity. New development should be sensitively related to existing settlement patterns and to historic, wildlife and landscape resources. Building in the open countryside, away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled. In areas statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities, policies give greater priority to restraint.' [para 2.3 my emphasis]

'The Government's policy is that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and non-renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection. Since the Second World War conservation efforts have concentrated on designating and protecting those areas of countryside which are most important for landscape and wildlife. The priority now is to find new ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside while accommodating appropriate development, in order to complement the protection which designations offer (see part 4 of this PPG) [my emphasis para 2.14].'

In addressing local countryside designations, it states :

'Over the years, local authorities have introduced a multiplicity of local countryside designations, such as Areas of Great Landscape Value. These designations carry less weight than national designations, and development plans should not apply the same policies to them. They may unduly restrict acceptable development and economic activity without identifying the particular features of the local countryside which need to be respected and enhanced. Local planning authorities should only maintain or extend local countryside designations where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. They should state in their plans what it is that requires extra protection and why. When they review their

development plans, they should rigorously consider the function and justification of existing local countryside designations. They should ensure that they are soundly based on a formal assessment of the qualities of the countryside, or the contribution of sites such as 'strategic gaps' or 'green wedges' to urban form and urban areas.' [para 4.16]

Where formal assessments have not been made the guidance states that LCD's are not acceptable.

Draft Planning Policy Statement [PPS] 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas [2003]

This document is a consultation document which is intended to replace PPG7. The consultation period ended in December 2003 and the final version is awaited.

The first objective of the guidance states:

'In carrying forward this vision and the associated strategies, the Government's objectives are:

i. To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of:

- *thriving, inclusive and sustainable rural communities;*
- *sustainable economic growth and diversification;*
- *good quality, sustainable development that respects local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside; and*
- *a high level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources.'*

The **Key Principles** state:

'Planning authorities should adhere to the following principles in their approach to planning and development control in rural areas:

i. Decisions on development proposals should be firmly based on sustainable development principles - ensuring an integrated approach to the consideration of social progress, effective protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources, and maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

ii. Good quality, carefully-sited development within existing towns and villages should be allowed where it meets local economic and community needs (including affordable housing for identified local needs), maintains or enhances the local environment, and does not conflict with other planning policies.

iii. Larger scale developments should be located in or near to towns or other service centres that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

iv. New development away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; in particular, isolated new

houses in the countryside require special justification.

v. Priority should be given to the re-use of previously-developed (brownfield) sites in preference to the development of greenfield sites, except in cases where brownfield sites perform so poorly in terms of sustainability considerations (e.g. remoteness from settlements and services) in comparison with greenfield sites.

vi. All development in rural areas should be well designed, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.'

[para 1 my emphasis]

With respect to Countryside protection and development in the countryside the guidance states:

'Planning authorities should continue to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes and wildlife and the wealth of its natural resources. They should have particular regard to any areas that have been statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities where greater priority should be given to restraint of potentially damaging development.' [para 16 my emphasis]

'When preparing their development plans and determining planning applications for development in the countryside, local planning authorities should:

i. support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises;

ii. support other countryside-based enterprises and activities which contribute to rural economies, and/or promote recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside, and help to maintain its character and quality;

iii. take account of the need to protect natural resources;

iv. provide for the sensitive exploitation of renewable energy sources;

v. protect specific features and sites of landscape, wildlife and historic or architectural value, in accordance with statutory designations.'

[Para 17 my emphasis]

In relation to Local countryside designations Paragraph 25 states:

'The Government does not believe that local countryside designations are necessary and considers that the policies set out in this PPS, when incorporated into development plans, should provide sufficient protection for the countryside. In reviewing their development plans, planning authorities should remove any

existing designations and instead adopt criteria-based policies in development plans for the location and design of rural development throughout their area.' [my emphasis].

This paragraph significantly changes the emphasis from PPG 7. Designations such as the rural buffers, Special Landscape Areas, river valleys within towns and Landscape settings are local countryside designations which will need to be reviewed in this context. Having said this, the PPS is still in draft at present and could be modified and PPG7 still applies.

2.7 Paragraph 14 states:

'Local planning authorities should prepare positive policies on rural design, utilising tools such as Countryside Character, Village Plans and Village Design Statements prepared by local communities. These policies should guide developers towards good quality design, appropriate to its location. Planning authorities should take care to apply design criteria reasonably and not render necessary development in rural areas prohibitively expensive and unfeasible, particularly where restrictive policies and decisions would adversely affect the vitality of rural communities, and their ability to adapt to change.'

The landscape character assessment is therefore given an underlying importance to help define rural design.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation [July 2002]

This PPG focuses primarily on open spaces as being used for access and recreation but it also defines the value of open spaces for visual amenity and for strategic separating and defining urban areas. It states in the Annex [Definitions]:

'... in applying the policies in this Guidance, open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.' [Annex 1]

Section 3 states:

'Local authorities should also recognise that most areas of open space can perform multiple functions. They should take account of the various functions of open space when applying the policies in this document. These include:

i strategic functions: defining and separating urban areas; better linking of town and country; and providing for recreational needs over a wide area;.....

....vi. as a visual amenity: even without public access, people enjoy having open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape.' [my emphasis]

Wiltshire Structure Plan 2011 Adopted January 2001

2.24 Policy DP13- The Swindon Rural Buffer states:

'DP13 Rural buffers should be maintained to protect the separate identities of the following towns and villages and prevent their coalescence with Swindon:

<i>Broad Blunsdon</i>	<i>Purton</i>
<i>Chiseldon</i>	<i>South Marston</i>
<i>Cricklade</i>	<i>Stanton Fitzwarren</i>
<i>Highworth</i>	<i>Wanborough</i>
<i>Liddington</i>	<i>Wootton Bassett</i>
<i>Lydiard Millicent</i>	<i>Wroughton'</i>

[my emphasis]

It goes on to state that Local Plans will need to define an area for each settlement that is essential to maintaining its physical separate identity and distinctive character. The extent of the area will be limited to only identifying land that would be essential to protect the named settlements from the continued growth of Swindon [4.77]. Where settlements are in close proximity it may be appropriate to identify a combined buffer [4.78].

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are covered by Policy C8 and include the Cotswolds to the west and North Wessex Downs to the south east. The policy states:

'In areas of outstanding natural beauty, proposals for development should be considered having particular regard to the designation of their landscape quality, and the need to protect, conserve and where possible enhance by positive measures, the natural beauty of the landscape...'

Special Landscape Areas are identified in Policy C9 which states:

'Within Special Landscape Areas any proposals for development should have regard to the need to protect landscape character and scenic quality.'

The areas include two areas in North Wiltshire:

- The higher land of the Spye and Bowood Parklands
- The southern fringes of the Cotswolds, not covered by designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Forestry and woodlands are addressed in Policy C11:

'The planting of new woodlands and the effective management of existing woodland areas will be encouraged, particularly where this retains or enhances amenity, provides recreation opportunities, is compatible with the landscape character, and will not lead to the loss of an

existing wildlife resource or damage to an archaeological site

The conservation of broadleaved woodlands and the retention of small woods will be given special attention.

All of the above will be given high priority within the area defined as the Great Western Community Forest, Braydon Forest and areas which are easily accessible from other urban centres in the county'.

[my emphasis]

Structure Plan 2016 Deposit Draft Alteration October 2003

This plan is limited in extent due to the implementation of the Planning Bill which is discussed below. No landscape or environmental policies are changed.

Other Planning and Landscape Document Context

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill

The bill was introduced to Parliament in December 2002. It is in progress through Parliament at present and when completed is likely to result in the termination of Structure and Local Plans, replacing them with Local Development Frameworks [LDF's]. Councils will be able to retain what constitutes a Development Plan for a period of three years from the commencement of the new Act. During this period the authority will bring forward new Local Development Documents to progressively replace policies on the 'saved' plan.

It is important that work on current Local Plan is not wasted and therefore it should include policies and supplementary planning guidance that is compatible with the new LDF.

Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland [Countryside Agency 2002]

This best practice guidance sets out how to carry out a landscape assessment and also suggests ways of incorporating landscape character into planning policy. A landscape character policy is suggested which requires development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and maintain its distinctiveness. This can either be supported by descriptions/ characteristics relating to defined areas included into planning policy as supporting text or as a landscape character assessment in the form of supplementary planning guidance [para 8.7].

Further guidance on Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity has been issues as Topic Paper 6 [2003]. This sets out a range of ways of analysing the landscape and puts forward a set of definitions for

terms to improve consistency of approach nationally.

The Landscape Character Assessment carried out in Volume 1 incorporates best practice above and describes the landscape, its key characteristics, management recommendations and landscape sensitivity to development.

North Wiltshire Rural Buffers and Local Rural Buffers Study, White Consultants, October 2002.

This study reviewed the boundaries of the rural buffers in the district in terms of national, regional and structure plan policy. Boundaries and policies were revised. The majority of the recommendations have been incorporated into the current First Deposit Draft.

3 Recommendations for New Policies

The Planning Framework is undergoing change in a number of ways at present. New guidance is emerging which will have a significant effect on landscape related policies and the Planning Bill will overhaul the structure of policies at a local Authority level. The objective of this report is to put forward policies which will serve the needs of the present framework while looking forward to being viable or adaptable in any new framework.

The statement of objections and support for the Natural Environment Policies have been reviewed and where these are considered to be helpful, amendments have been made.

Each policy is considered in turn and recommendations made. Text that is crossed out is original text which is recommended for deletion while text that is underlined is suggested additional text.

NE1 WESTERN WILTSHIRE GREEN BELT

Discussion

This policy relates to the green belt around Bath and Bristol in the Structure Plan. It is essentially a policy of restraint rather than a landscape character related policy. It is also regarded as permanent. Therefore only minor changes in response to objections are included below.

Proposed Policy

NE1 WESTERN WILTSHIRE GREEN BELT

In the Green Belt, outside the village of Box, approval will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings, other than:

- i) For agriculture and forestry;
- ii) Essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, for cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with ~~its~~ the purposes of including land in it;
- iii) The limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings or existing employment buildings.

iv) limited infilling in existing villages where development does not have an adverse effect on the character of the village and limited affordable housing for local community needs under development plan policies according with PPG3.

The reuse of buildings will be approved providing:

(a) it does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it;

(b) strict control is exercised over the extension of re-used buildings, and over any associated uses of land surrounding the building which might conflict with the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it

(c) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and

(d) the form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings

Approval will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the carrying out of engineering or other operations, or material changes in the use of land, for development, such as engineering and other uses, which would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, or would conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

7.1 The Western Wiltshire Green Belt was originally approved in 1966 and is part of the larger Green Belt around Bath and Bristol, which was introduced to check the sprawl of development on the edge of the built-up areas and to safeguard the surrounding countryside from development pressures. This policy will have regard to, and be read in the context of, National Planning Policy Guidance.

7.2 The particular objectives of the Western Wiltshire Green Belt, relevant to North Wiltshire, are:

- To maintain the open character of undeveloped land adjacent to Bath, Trowbridge and Bradford on Avon
- To limit the spread of development along the A4 between Batheaston and Corsham

7.3 Existing Villages in the Green Belt: It is proposed to allow no new building beyond the categories normally appropriate in the Green Belt. This includes the scattered settlements of Ashley, Box Hill, Ditteridge, Kingsdown, and Middlehill. In the case of the village of Box, infilling only is proposed and a tightly drawn framework boundary is shown on the Proposals Map defining the infill boundary.

NE2 THE SWINDON RURAL BUFFER

Discussion

This policy relates to the green buffer on the western edge of Swindon. The Structure Plan maintains this policy and it is expected to remain in

place until the future expansion of Swindon is resolved. The White Consultants Rural Buffers study dated October 2002 comprehensively reviewed the boundaries and justification of the area. The current policy and area is based broadly on the recommendations of the report. The exceptions are the extension of the area up to the Cricklade Road north of Purton, the inclusion of housing at Common Platt and the exclusion of land north of Wootton Bassett that is east of the road to Hook. These alterations are to ensure that the boundaries have easily identifiable and permanent boundaries ie roads and district boundaries, rather than field boundaries.

Therefore only minor changes in response to objections are included below.

Proposed Policy

NE2 THE SWINDON RURAL BUFFER

In the Rural Buffers, as defined on the proposals map, new development will be strictly controlled. Approval will not be given for the construction of new buildings which, individually or cumulatively, would lead to the coalescence of settlements. Subject to the proviso, new buildings for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, or other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted.

7.4 The Structure Plan introduced a policy [DP13] for a series of Rural Buffers to be maintained to protect the separate identities of towns and villages and prevent their coalescence with Swindon. These settlements included Wootton Bassett, Lydiard Millicent, Purton and Cricklade. It states that Local Plans need to define an area for each settlement that is essential to maintaining its physical separate identity and distinctive character. The extent of the area is limited to only identifying land that is essential to protect the named settlements from the continued growth of Swindon. The policy is intended to protect the buffer from new buildings, to prevent any coalescence from building development pending a decision on the long-term future of the town. The policy is intended not only to prevent coalescence of settlements, but also new building development which might cumulatively lead to such coalescence. Other policies of the Local Plan apply to the Rural Buffer, including policies relating to the conversion of suitable buildings in accordance with the specified criteria. Tree planting and the conservation of the ancient woodlands and unimproved meadows in the area will be encouraged with the help and assistance of the Braydon Forest Countryside Management Project.

7.5 The general countryside **and landscape** policies apply to the Rural Buffer. Essential facilities for outdoor sport may include small changing rooms, or unobtrusive spectator accommodation. The extension, alteration, or replacement of dwellings will normally be acceptable in the Rural Buffer, provided proposals do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Similar

considerations would also apply to existing employment buildings.

7.6 Other Uses Appropriate To A Rural Area: These are uses that comply with the general countryside policies of the Plan and can include outdoor sport, recreation and tourism facilities.

NE3 LOCAL RURAL BUFFERS

Discussion

Local rural buffers are local countryside designations. They have been reviewed and justified through the White Consultants study [2002]. Their primary function is to act as strategic gaps between settlements and they are not therefore related to landscape quality although some may be attractive. There is strong local support for the Chippenham buffer noted by the previous Plan Inspector. The above study looks at the surrounds of each settlement in more detail than the landscape character assessment in Volume 1. The latter would not offer protection in an adequate manner in areas of significant pressure for development. It is therefore suggested that it is the rural buffer study is a reasonable justification for the policy until more detailed studies are carried out.

Policy

NE3 LOCAL RURAL BUFFERS

In the Local Rural Buffers, as defined on the proposals map, new development will be strictly controlled. These areas will remain predominantly in rural land uses. Approval will not be given for the construction of new buildings which, individually or cumulatively, would lead to the coalescence of settlements or seriously undermine the openness of the rural landscape. Subject to the proviso, new buildings for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, or other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted.

7.7 The purpose of identifying Local Rural Buffer areas is to prevent coalescence between settlements, cumulative or otherwise, and protecting settlements' separate identity and distinctive character. This is the same criteria as for the Rural Buffer but applied to main settlements other than those adjacent to Swindon. The Local Rural Buffers have been defined to protect areas of land considered as particularly at risk and in danger of development where this is undesirable.

7.8 Within such sensitive gaps between settlements, it will be important to restrict the erection of certain buildings that may generally be appropriate in the countryside, but which could lead to the visual coalescence of these settlements. The land can continue to be used for open uses, such as agriculture, woodland, and public and private open space. Buildings will be limited to those essential for the needs of

agriculture or forestry, or justified in association with existing or open uses. Such buildings should generally be ancillary to, or directly associated with, the open use of the land, should be carefully sited, and should be of a scale and design to harmonise with the character and appearance of the area. Development will also be subject to the other policies of the Local Plan as appropriate.

NE4 THE RIVER VALLEYS WITHIN THE TOWNS

Discussion

This policy could be construed as an LCD in terms of PPG 7 para 4.16. However, it has not been justified by a detailed study as required by this paragraph. Emerging policy PPS7 indicates that LCD's are not supported. The landscape character assessment broadly identifies river corridors as being of particular value. It is suggested that the general landscape/countryside policy is used to protect these areas and that this policy is deleted. More detailed studies of the area could identify particular qualities and areas sensitive to development.

NE5 WOOTTON BASSETT LANDSCAPE SETTING

Discussion

This policy could be construed as an LCD in terms of PPG 7 para 4.16. However, it has not been justified by a detailed study as required by this paragraph. Emerging policy PPS7 indicates that LCD's are not supported. The landscape character assessment broadly identifies the Coral Rag escarpment and Brynards Hill as being distinctive and sensitive features. It is therefore suggested that the general landscape/countryside policy is used to protect these areas and that this policy is deleted. More detailed studies of the area could identify particular qualities and areas sensitive to development.

NE6 AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Discussion

These areas are national designations which are accorded the highest level of protection in national policy relating to landscapes. More recent legislation [eg the CROW Act 2000] updates the duties in relation to the AONB.

The following amendments are recommended:

Policy

NE6 AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, priority will be given to the conservation **and enhancement** of the natural beauty of the landscape. The environmental effects all development will be a major consideration. Development will be restricted to:

- i) The change of use of existing buildings; and/or
- ii) That which is appropriate to the economic and social well-being of the area;
- iii) That which is desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of its amenities;

And provided the proposal:

- a) Does not cause demonstrable harm to, **and conserves and enhances**, the natural beauty of the landscape, including its open rural character, and any riverside or water features, wildlife sites, trees or woodland;
- b) Is so sited **and designed** as to minimise its impact on the natural beauty of the area, and where possible, is located close to and in association with existing buildings; and
- c) **Is designed to enhance the locally distinctive character of the landscape and settlement including appropriate building materials and landscape treatment.**
- d) Uses appropriate building materials and landscaping.

Other proposals, including major industrial and commercial development, will not be permitted unless they are in the proven national interest, and cannot be accommodated outside the AONB.

Major developments will not be permitted unless they are demonstrated to be in the public interest. Consideration of such applications will include an assessment of:

- i) the need for the development, in terms of national considerations, and the impact of permitting it or refusing it upon the local economy;**
- ii) the cost of and scope for developing elsewhere outside the area or meeting the need for it in some other way;**
- iii) any detrimental effect on the environment and the landscape, and the extent to which that should be moderated.**

7.11 The two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the District are the North Wessex Downs and the Cotswolds. The policy has regard to current National Planning Policy Guidance. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and additional legal powers are contained in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

7.12 The purpose of designation is as follows:

- (a) The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- (b) In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development which in themselves, conserve and enhance the environment.
- (c) Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

7.13 The Cotswold AONB has a Conservation Board and the North Wessex Downs AONB has a Council of Partners. Both have Landscape Character Assessments and Management Plans which should be taken fully into consideration in addition to the landscape assessment for the district.

NE7 SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Discussion

SLA's are LCD's in terms of PPG 7 para 4.16. However they have not been justified by a detailed study as required by this paragraph. Emerging policy PPS7 indicates that LCD's are not supported. The landscape character assessment identifies the distinctive characteristics and sensitivities of all areas including the SLA's. It is therefore suggested that the general landscape/countryside policy is used to protect these areas and that this policy is deleted.

NE13 WOODLAND

Discussion

This policy identifies only four specific areas of woodland mixing a nature conservation value policy with an amenity justification. A broader policy is required protecting woodland across the whole district and mention can be made of these woodlands as specific examples.

Policy

The conservation, enhancement and positive management of woodlands across the district will be supported. In particular, areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland should be protected. The retention of the visual amenity and nature conservation will be sought in particular at the following:

- i) Bird's Marsh Wood, Chippenham
- ii) Vincient's Wood, Chippenham
- iii) Pockeredge Drive Wood, Corsham
- iv) **Woodland within** Braydon Forest.

Woodlands are a very important element within the landscape of the district. They enhance urban

areas and edges and the wider countryside. They have landscape, visual and nature conservation value, are often historic features and can be used for recreation. Ancient and semi-natural woodlands are particularly important and are protected. Circular 9/95 should be referred to in this regard. The multi-purpose use of forestry and woodland is supported and should be carried out in accordance with the English Forestry Strategy and UK Forestry Standard.

7.26 Bird's Marsh Wood, Vincient's Wood and Pockeredge Drive Wood have been specifically identified in the Local Plan in view of their importance to the landscape setting of their respective towns, where they are not covered by other landscape designations. Bird's Marsh Wood is a large wood of approximately 24 hectares, which is valuable for its flora and its refuge for wildlife.

Vincient's Wood, under the control of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, forms a significant landscape feature, the protection of which is further needed due to its being surrounded by housing and the Western Bypass.

The woodland at Pockeredge Drive adjoins a Site of Special Scientific Interest and forms part of a wider wooded landscape in the historic Box Tunnel Valley area.

Braydon Forest is a larger area covering a number of SSSI's. **The Braydon Forest Project** is run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust with the aim of conserving and enhancing the distinctive landscape of the old Braydon Forest **which is** pasture and coppice woodland.

NE16 THE GENERAL LANDSCAPE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Discussion

This policy should be informed by the landscape assessment and should take the place of the LCD policies recommended for deletion. The landscape character assessment should be used as an SPG with the following policy as a short reference to it or the policy should be expanded to include each area and its key characteristics. We recommend the former for the sake of brevity.

Policy

NE16 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

The landscape of North Wiltshire and its locally distinctive characteristics shall be conserved and enhanced. Within the countryside, development will normally only be permitted if it does not adversely affect the character of an area and features that contribute to local distinctiveness.

Development shall take into account:

i) The setting of, and relationship between, settlement and buildings and the landscape.

ii) The pattern of woodland, trees, field boundaries, other vegetation and features.

iii) The special qualities of watercourses and waterbodies and their surroundings such as valley floors.

iv) The topography of the area avoiding skylines, hills and not detracting from important views.

The countryside shall be safeguarded for its own sake and in order to protect its intrinsic character and beauty. The authority shall find ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside while accommodating appropriate development.

A landscape character assessment has been prepared for the district which defines 17 character areas. Each area is described in terms of its character, key characteristics, management guidelines and actions, and landscape sensitivity. It is intended that the assessment will become supplementary planning guidance and development shall take it into account. The built up areas of Chippenham, Calne, Corsham, Wootton Bassett, Cricklade and Malmesbury have not been described in detail as they are not in open countryside.

Building in the open countryside, away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in development plans, shall be strictly controlled. All development in rural areas shall contribute to sustainability, be well designed, in keeping and in scale with its location, and sensitive to the area's landscape character and local distinctiveness. In particular, isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification.

NE8 NATURE CONSERVATION SITES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Discussion

Greater precision in wording and explanation of procedure required.

Policy

Development which is likely to have a significant adverse effect on any existing or proposed nature conservation sites of international importance will not be permitted, unless there is no alternative solution and:

i) In the case of a site which does not host a priority natural habitat or species, the development has to be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature sufficient to override the ecological importance of the site; or

In the case of a site which does host a priority natural habitat or species, the development should be carried out for reasons of human health, public safety, or beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment.

Development which may affect a European Site, a proposed European Site or a Ramsar site will

be subject to the most rigorous examination. Development that is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site for nature conservation, which is likely to have significant effects on the site [either individually or in combination with other plans and projects] where it cannot be ascertained that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of the site, will not be permitted unless:

i] there is no alternative solution,

ii] there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the development.

iii] where compensation measures are available to protect the overall coherence of the network of European sites.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or priority species, development or land use change will not be permitted unless the authority is satisfied that it is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or for the beneficial consequences of primary importance for nature conservation.

7.7 European sites comprise Special Areas of Conservation designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Special Protection Areas designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). Together, these sites form the Natura 2000 network and comprise the most important or threatened habitats and species in Europe.

7.14 Within North Wiltshire there are two areas of international nature conservation importance, these are:

Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats cSAC, comprising Box Mine SSSI - European interest in the site, including the underground mine workings, is due to the presence of the Greater Horseshoe Bat, the Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Bechstein's Bat. These bats are dependent on caves, mines and other cavelike places for undisturbed hibernation over the winter, as well as old mature forests, rough pasture, or linking hedgerows and large old buildings for feeding and roosting in summer.

North Meadow and Clattinger Farm cSAC, comprising North Meadow, Cricklade SSSI and Clattinger Farm SSSI - European interest in the site is the lowland hay meadows rich in herbs and grasses, of which these are two of the best examples in the UK.

7. The authority will, in addition to following its usual development control procedures, when development is proposed in the vicinity of, or in, a site of international nature conservation importance:

1. Determine if the development is in the vicinity of a site of international nature conservation importance
2. Collate all available information on the development, the European qualifying features and all potential impacts to the

- European site, including direct and indirect impacts such as changes to hydrology or pollution.
3. Undertake a brief risk assessment to determine whether the development, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will result in a "likely significant effect" to the European Site. English Nature may be consulted at this stage.
 4. If no significant effect is likely to occur to the European site, permission can be given, subject to other planning considerations.
 5. If a significant effect is likely to occur, the authority will undertake an Appropriate Assessment to determine whether the integrity of the European site will be adversely affected in the light of its conservation objectives. Whilst undertaking an Appropriate Assessment, the Authority will consult English Nature and follow their advice unless it can otherwise be justified. The authority will also require the developer to provide such information as may reasonably be required for the purposes of the assessment.
 6. If the authority can determine that the development would not adversely affect the integrity of the European site, permission will be given, subject to other planning considerations.
 7. However, if the authority ascertains that the development would adversely affect the integrity of the European site or no firm conclusions can be drawn, the authority will consider whether conditions or restrictions can be imposed so as to avoid adverse effects.
 8. If such conditions can be imposed, permission will be given, subject to other planning considerations. However, if it is ascertained that the development would adversely affect the integrity of the site, despite imposition of conditions or restrictions or if no firm conclusions can be drawn, the authority will refuse the permission or apply the three tests in the policy.

Guidance from English Nature will be taken into consideration, in particular the Habitat Regulations Guidance Note

NE9 NATURE CONSERVATION SITES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Discussion

Greater precision in wording required.

Policy

Development affecting a site of special scientific interest, as shown on the action plan, will be subject to special scrutiny and will only be permitted:

i) Where damaging impacts on wildlife habitats, or important physical features, can be prevented; or

ii) Where other material planning considerations are sufficient to override the importance of protecting the nature conservation importance of the site.

Development in or likely to affect SSSI's will be subject to special scrutiny. Where such development may have an adverse effect directly or indirectly on the special interest of the site, it will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard such sites. The proposals maps outline all SSSI's. Where development is permitted the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation interest.

7.15 A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), including a National Nature Reserve, is a legal designation applied to land of special nature conservation interest by the Nature Conservancy Council for England (known as English Nature). Designation is intended to protect the nature conservation interest of the site. These sites of special interest cover plants, animals, geological features, or landforms of special interest. There are a total of 30 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, covering about 698 hectares, in North Wiltshire.

7.15 A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is part of a network of sites which represent the country's very best wildlife and geology, often standing out as the last remaining areas of natural habitat in our modern countryside. SSSIs are designated for their special nature conservation interest by the Nature Conservancy Council for England (known as English Nature), which serves to protect the interest of the site. SSSIs may include rare plants, animals, geology or landforms of special interest. There are a total of 31 SSSIs, covering about 705Ha in North Wiltshire.

7.16 The essential characteristic of National Nature Reserves is that they are primarily used for nature conservation. Set up under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, to protect important national sites, the sites are owned or leased by English Nature, or bodies approved by them, or are managed in accordance with Nature Reserve Agreements with landowners and occupiers. North Wiltshire has one National Nature Reserve at North Meadow, near Cricklade, which is also a SSSI. Development that involves any potentially damaging works in these areas will only be granted under exceptional circumstances, as determined by statutory bodies such as English Nature.

7.17 A full list of SSSI's in the District can be found in Appendix 1.

7.18 Environmental Impact assessments will be required to be submitted with planning applications for developments that may adversely affect SSSIs.

NE10 NATURE CONSERVATION SITES OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE

Discussion

AHEV's need removal and greater precision in wording required.

Policy

Development affecting an area of high ecological value or nature conservation site of local importance will only be permitted where:

i) The value of the site for nature conservation, and its local contribution to biodiversity, would not be seriously harmed, or could be mitigated by planning conditions or obligations; or where

ii) Other material planning considerations are sufficient to override the importance of protecting the local nature conservation value of the site.

Development likely to have an adverse effect on County Wildlife Site [including Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites or RIGS and Protected Road Verges] or a Local Nature Reserve will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard substantive nature conservation value of the site. Where development is permitted, the authority will consider the use of conditions and/or planning obligations to provide appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures.

7.18 Areas of High Ecological Value (AHEV) are broad zones of wildlife importance, where both their richness and extent need to be conserved as far as possible. AHEVs provide wildlife corridors, links and/or stepping stones from one habitat to another. The areas are shown on the Proposals Map and are based upon areas with a high proportion of semi-natural vegetation. The aim has been to include only minimal areas of intensive farming, housing and limited value for wildlife. Appendix 2 includes a brief description of each area. The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2002, prepared by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, states that the replacement of AHEVs by wider biodiversity protection policies is their priority. Until such time, the Local Plan will continue to use the existing AHEV designation.

7.19 Nature conservation sites of local importance also include the Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) which have been designated by the Wiltshire County Council, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and English Nature. Wildlife Sites have been identified by the Wildlife Sites Project Steering Group. As they sites of local importance are not statutory designations, the location, extent and number of sites are likely to change over time. Up to date information on sites

should be sought from the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre. The sites current at the time of publication of the Plan are shown on the Proposals Map. in the Wiltshire Biodiversity action Plan. Because the local sites are defined using convenient physical boundaries, such as field boundaries, the nature conservation interest of a site may only apply to a part of the site. English Nature considers that this category of site is of substantive nature conservation importance and, taken with the sites of national and international importance, represent the critical core of the biodiversity of Wiltshire.

County Wildlife Sites are defined as being of value for their wildlife in a county context. Sites are judged according to rigorous scientific criteria and comprise the best examples of habitat within Wiltshire. County wildlife sites within North Wiltshire comprise woodland, wood pasture, unimproved neutral and calcareous grassland, swamps, fens and marshes standing open water and rivers. Some artificial habitats, such as disused quarries, gravel pits, disused railway lines and mines may also support habitats of sufficient quality to be designated. The County Wildlife Site system is essential to complement the statutory SSSI system and to ensure adequate nature conservation provision within the county.

7.20 A list of the type of nature conservation sites of local importance in North Wiltshire are listed at Appendix 2.

NE11 NATURE CONSERVATION AREAS IN THE COTSWOLD WATER PARK

Discussion

More information and balance of nature conservation with other interests required

Policy

Development on and around those lakes identified on the proposals map as being of international or national importance for nature conservation in the Cotswolds Water Park will be subject to policies NE8 and NE9.

Development on other areas within the Water Park will only be permitted where:

i) The value of the site for nature conservation, and its local contribution to biodiversity, would not be seriously harmed, or could be mitigated by planning conditions, obligations or the creation of new, equivalent wildlife features; or where

ii) Other material planning considerations are sufficient to override the importance of protecting the local nature conservation value of the site.

7.21 The Cotswold Water Park forms the largest number concentration of man-made lakes in Britain and has been created through mineral workings. and it forms the most extensive marl

lake system in the country. All the lakes of the Water Park within North Wiltshire are Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. Lake 52 is part of the Cotswold Park SSSI and the area contains several other grassland SSSIs and one cSAC. Reedbed lake 40 has a very important reedbed habitat.

7.24 The Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan [BAP] sets out the nature conservation framework for the area and relevant targets which should be taken into consideration in any proposed development. The aim of the policy is to maintain the overall scale and importance of the area of the Water Park as a nationally and regionally important nature conservation area.

7.22 The purpose of the policy is to indicate that Development will normally only be permitted where it is compatible with sustaining the wildlife biodiversity resource of the site in particular, and the area in general, and where the proposed development is able to demonstrate that it can avoid irreversible change or damage to important nature conservation sites. The policy should be taken in the context of the Cotswold Water Park Strategy so that a balanced approach is taken between mineral working, recreation/tourism, development and nature conservation.

7.23 The Cotswold Water Park supports a widespread and mobile bird interest including nationally significant numbers of wintering birds and regionally significant numbers of breeding birds. An opportunity exists for permitting appropriate development and land uses in and around the lakes of the Water Park, where such development is able to either:

[i] Demonstrate that the proposal will not reduce the wintering and breeding bird numbers, or adversely affect any other important wildlife or natural feature; or

(ii) Compensate for any potential reduction in the number of important wintering or breeding birds, or other adverse affects on any important wildlife or natural feature, by ensuring that adequate and suitable new or enhanced areas of replacement habitat are provided on a permanent or long-term basis as part of the proposals, such that the applicant can demonstrate that the nature conservation value of the area as a whole will not be diminished by the proposed development.

7.? This policy should be considered in association with the Mineral Local Plan strategy for mineral working, restoration and after use for the area. The Airfield Safeguarding Areas around RAF Fairford and South Cerney and RAF Lyneham shall also be taken into consideration in terms of the potential encouragement of birds which could interfere with air traffic.

NE12 PROTECTION OF SPECIES

Discussion

Greater precision in wording required.

Policy

Unless there are other overriding material considerations, development will not be permitted which would adversely affect species protected by European legislation, or other species protected under UK legislation or their habitats.

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on badgers or species protected by Schedules 1,5 or 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended or Schedule 2 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations (1994). English Nature will be consulted prior to any planning decision where an application affects a protected species. Where an overriding need for the development is demonstrated, the planning authority will impose conditions on the planning permission or enter into planning obligations to:

[i] facilitate the survival of the individual members of the species

[ii] reduce disturbance to a minimum

[iii] provide adequate alternative habitats to ensure the population is maintained at favourable conservation status within its natural range.

7.25 The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a local planning authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. The attachment of an appropriate planning condition to a permission, and a request to the applicant to enter into a planning obligation under which the developer would take steps to secure the protection of the species, particularly if a species listed in Annex IV to the European Union Habitats Directive would be affected, might need to be considered. If the proposals are likely to have an effect on protected species or protected species habitat, protected species surveys must be undertaken and contact made with the other relevant bodies such as English Nature prior to the determination of the application.

7.? In order to assess whether protected species are present on a development site, relevant surveys must be undertaken by ecological consultants acting for the applicant and submitted with the planning application. It is important to note that many protected species surveys are seasonally constrained. Detailed and adequate mitigation proposals must also be submitted with the planning application where impacts on protected species are predicted.

7.? European protected species under Annex IV to the European Union Habitats Directive receive

extra protection under the Habitat Regulations [1994]. English Nature should be referred to for further information. The local BAPs will also give information on species likely to be found in the area such as water voles.

NE? MANAGING NATURE CONSERVATION FEATURES

Discussion

Additional policy required to address legal requirements of Article 10 adequately.

Policy

Development which may adversely affect, directly or indirectly, landscape features which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora will only be permitted if it can be shown that the reasons for the development outweigh the need to retain the features and that mitigating measures can be provided for, which would reinstate the nature conservation value of the features. Appropriate management of these features will be encouraged through the imposition of conditions on planning permissions where appropriate, the use of planning obligations and by entering into management agreements with landowners and developers where appropriate.

There is a legal requirement through Article 10 of the EC Habitats Directive, as transposed into Regulation 37 of the Habitats Regulations 1994, for local authorities to include policies within development plans aimed at encouraging the management of landscape features which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such landscape features are those which, by nature of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers or field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods) are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. This applies to designated and undesignated areas.

Features of major importance are listed in supporting text for Policy NE? Conserving Biodiversity. However, this policy applies to any feature used as a wildlife corridor or as a refuge for wild species as they move through the landscape.

NE ? CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY

Discussion

Additional policy required to address biodiversity adequately.

Policy

Development proposals should ensure that species and habitats set out in the UK and local biodiversity action plans will be protected, and where possible, enhanced to help deliver targets. Development which would adversely affect, directly, or indirectly, the biodiversity resources of the district will only be permitted

when mitigating measures can be provided to retain and reinstate and where possible enhance their biodiversity value. In order to achieve this, conditions and/or planning obligations will be used. Appropriate management will also be encouraged through use of conditions, planning obligations and by entering into management agreements with landowners and developers, where appropriate.

7.20 The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan [BAP] [2002] was produced by the Wiltshire BAP Forum. It identifies key habitats which should be taken into consideration in any development. Briefly these include:

1. Deciduous Woodland including alder woods and ash/oak and oak woodlands such as Bowood and Braydon Forest.
2. Wood/pasture and parkland features in some areas including Bowood.
3. Grassland habitats such as chalk downland to the south east of the county, limestone grassland on the Cotswold dip slope and unimproved neutral grassland in the Thames and Avon Vales. Of particular value are the seasonally inundated neutral grasslands/hay meadows at North Meadow and Clattinger Farm near Cricklade which host the UK's largest population of Snake's Head Fritillary.
4. Old hedgerows are prevalent throughout the area and form valuable reservoirs and corridors for wildlife.
5. Key wetland habitats include river systems, some of which support water vole, otter and native crayfish communities, canals, and the extensive standing water of the Cotswold Water Park.
6. The Box Mine acts as a series of caves accommodating rare bats and forming a cSAC.
7. Arable land, supports species such as brown hare and stone curlew.

The value of urban areas for wildlife should also be taken into consideration.

Targets and actions within the Wiltshire BAP are material considerations within the planning process. Developers are expected to establish the biodiversity resource within a development site and its environs and subsequently assess the ecological effects of the development proposal. If required, there should be a programme of avoidance, mitigation and management that results in at least no net loss for biodiversity and a net gain where possible. Opportunities for biodiversity gain should be sought by developers for example by the provision of land for creation of habitats such as wetlands.

7.21 The UK BAP priority habitats that are found in North Wiltshire include:

1. Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows
2. Caves and natural rock exposures
3. Cereal field margins
4. Eutrophic standing waters
5. Lowland calcareous grassland
6. Lowland meadows
7. Lowland wood-pasture and parkland
8. Reedbeds
9. Wet woodland

NE14 THE GREAT WESTERN COMMUNITY FOREST

Discussion

More explanation required on exact purpose of the Forest and clarification that its role not as a local countryside designation.

Policy

Development shall only be permitted where it does not prejudice the implementation of the Great Western Community Forest Plan.

7.27 The aim of the Great Western Community Forest is one of twelve forests for the community in the UK. Its aim is to develop a multi-purpose forest around Swindon, creating a high quality environment for everybody. The Forest covers a large area of the North East of the District. Development proposals should accord with, and help achieve, the aims and objectives of the Great Western Community Forest contained in the "Great Western Community Forest Plan 1994". This is a non-statutory document with proposals over a period of 30 years.

7.? The Forest does not necessarily preclude appropriate development that would be acceptable in terms of other policies but matters that should be taken into account include:

1. The improvement of the landscape.
2. Increasing opportunities for access, recreation and cultural events.
3. Protecting areas of conservation and landscape value.
4. Creating new opportunities for conservation.
5. Creating new opportunities for environmental education.
6. Establishing supplies of local timber.
7. Improving the environment of housing and commerce.

NE15 TREES, SITE FEATURES AND THE CONTROL OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

Discussion

Policy is a mixed bag focussing mainly on trees. It depends on whether site assessment/retention of

site features has been required in other general policies as to whether this policy should focus solely on trees. It has been assumed that this is not the case for the policy below.

Policy

Permission will not be granted for proposals that would result, or be likely to result, in the loss of any valuable trees, hedges, lakes/ponds or other important landscape or ecological features that could be successfully and appropriately incorporated into the design of a development.

Planning conditions will be imposed and Tree Preservation Orders made, for safeguarding single and small groups of trees in the interests of public amenity.

7.28 It is the duty of the local planning authority to ensure, whenever it is appropriate, that in granting planning permission for any development adequate provision is made, by the imposition of conditions, for the preservation or planting of trees. The latter should be substantially native tree species of local provenance.

7.? A pre-planning tree survey shall be carried out of the site and directly adjacent land by a competent expert to establish the quality and condition of trees potentially affected by development as appropriate. BS5837 offers relevant guidance.

7.? Other pre-planning surveys shall be carried out as appropriate to determine the nature conservation and landscape value of other features on the site.

7.? Development shall be designed to ensure the longevity of retained vegetation and features through management of construction, appropriate levels and separation from excavation and foundations. BS5837 offers relevant guidance for trees.

NE22 WATER COURSES

Discussion

GOSW suggests that the policy should be omitted but special requirements for watercourse maintenance may be enough of a justification.

Policy

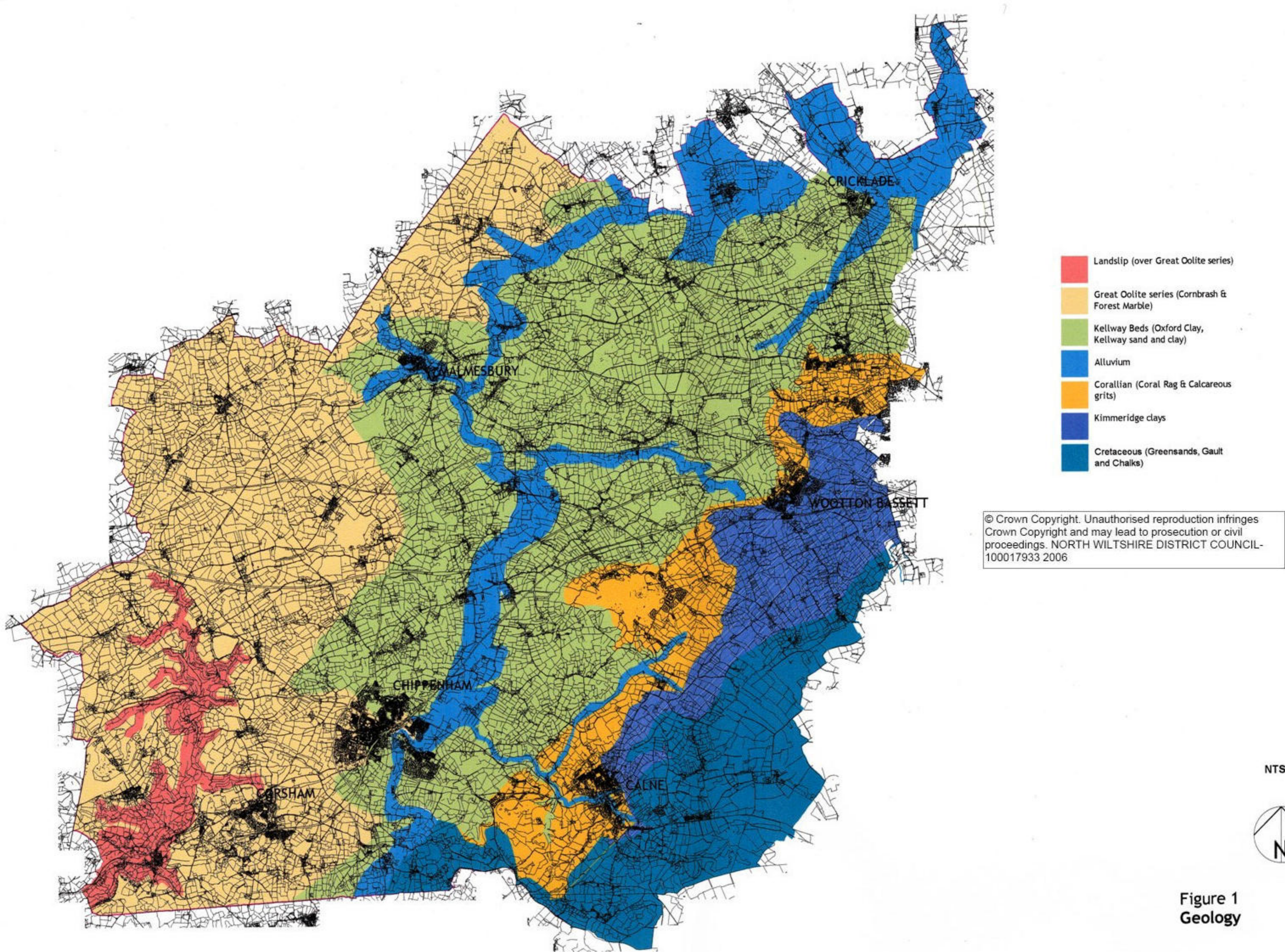
Development affecting water courses will only be permitted provided the proposal avoids demonstrable harm to the amenities and appearance of the area and to nature conservation interests.

Development adjacent to any watercourse will only be permitted where retention of a natural corridor is provided to cater for channel maintenance, enhancement and environmental interests.

7.36 The policy applies to all water courses, from main rivers to small streams and canals, and relates to the channel of the stream of water and its banks. Water courses should be preserved

wherever possible in their existing and natural state, **including their flow characteristics** and. The culverting of watercourses should be avoided wherever possible and, if required for example in connection with road access, should be kept to the minimum that is necessary. The opportunity for enhancement should be taken in and adjacent to new development.

7. Bank protection works can be particularly unsightly and damaging in appearance and other ways. Where such works are necessary to protect property or rights of way, care needs to be taken to ensure that the design and its use of materials do not unduly harm the amenities or appearance of the area.

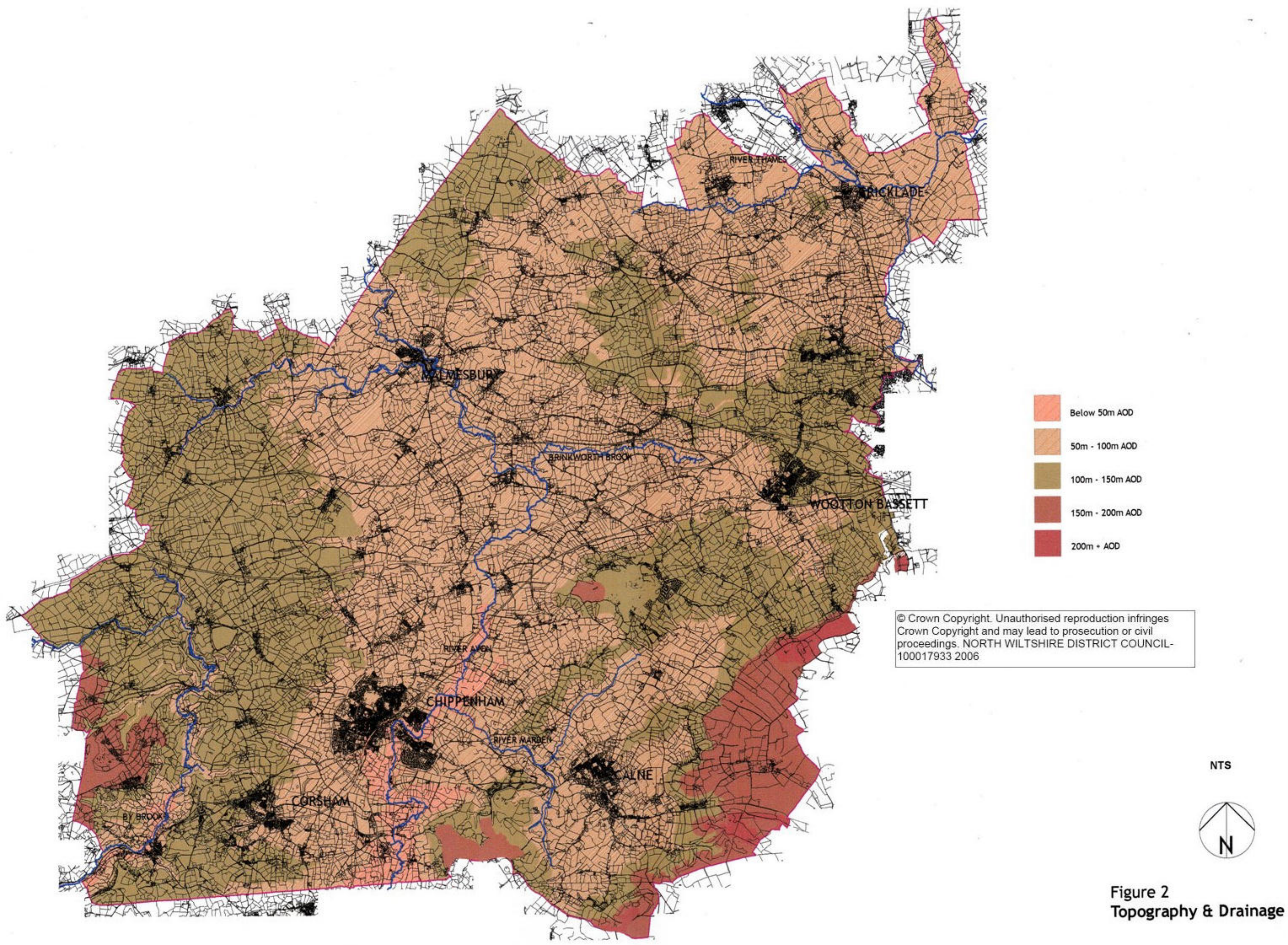


- Landslip (over Great Oolite series)
- Great Oolite series (Cornbrash & Forest Marble)
- Kellway Beds (Oxford Clay, Kellway sand and clay)
- Alluvium
- Corallian (Coral Rag & Calcareous grits)
- Kimmeridge clays
- Cretaceous (Greensands, Gault and Chalks)

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**Figure 1
Geology**





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Figure 3
Landscape Character Types



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Figure 4
Landscape Character Areas