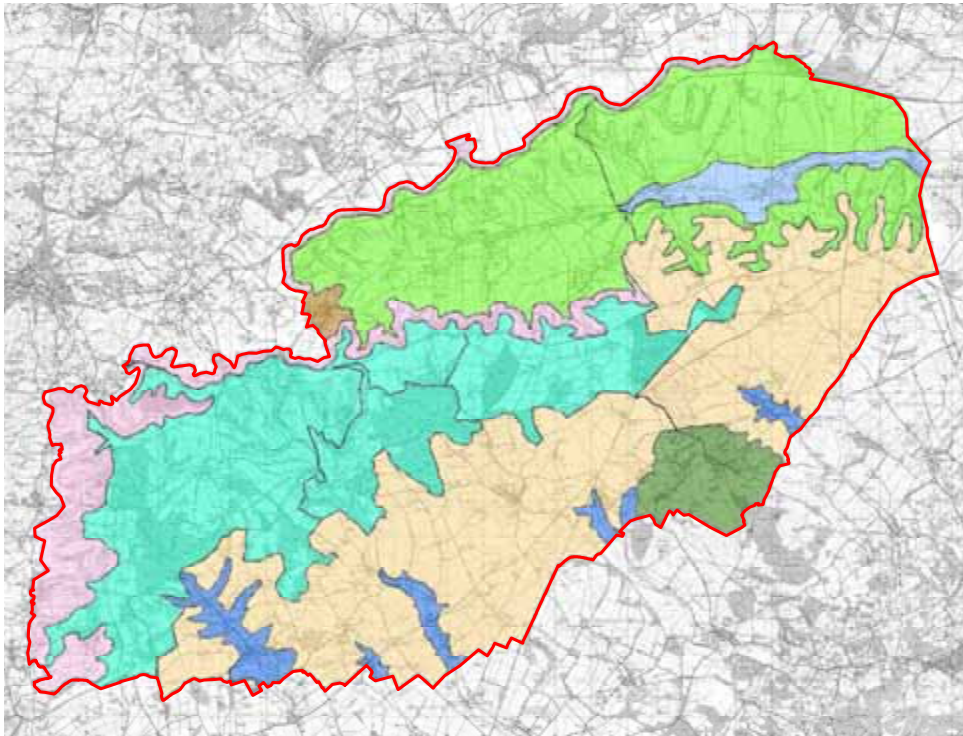


Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley  
Landscape Partnership  
**Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley  
Landscape Character Assessment**



Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley  
Landscape Partnership  
**Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley  
Landscape Character Assessment**

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Dominic Watkins

Position Director

Date 8th January 2018

Revision FINAL V2

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Context**

1.1.1 This Landscape Character Assessment was commissioned in 2017 by the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership to support a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership programme, which provides grants for the conservation and enjoyment of areas of distinctive landscape character. The study was prepared by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA).

1.1.2 The overall aim of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme is to enable a wide range of people to engage in the conservation and enjoyment of the area's historic, natural and cultural landscapes.

1.1.3 The purpose of this study is to provide a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the area to inform the Partnership's Landscape Conservation Action Plan to be submitted in support of the HLF bid. The objectives of the LCA are twofold:

- To provide an up-to-date and consistent technical assessment of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape by developing a classification and descriptions of locally distinctive landscape character areas; evaluating the key qualities, forces for change and sensitivity of the character areas to change; and providing guidelines for protecting, conserving and enhancing the distinctive characteristics of the areas. Particular emphasis is given to how the historical development of the area and its habitats contribute to the current character of the landscape.
- To develop a non-technical, accessible and simple narrative that brings the story of the historic evolution and current character of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape to life. This is intended to help improve people's understanding of the area's unique sense of place and its importance as a cultural landscape and their connections to it, and encourage greater participation in conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the landscape for future generations to enjoy.

1.1.4 The study was undertaken in accordance with the principles of Natural England's Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014), taking into account current best practice. The study was informed by feedback from consultation on the draft LCA with local stakeholders and the projects' partners.

1.1.5 The LCA informs, and should be read in conjunction with, the following other studies commissioned to support the Landscape Partnership Scheme:

- Heritage Compendium
- Biodiversity Permeability Mapping
- Interpretation Strategy
- Audience Development Strategy

1.1.6 Together, these documents provide the evidence base for many of the projects and the delivery partners' activities set out in the Landscape Conservation Action Plan.

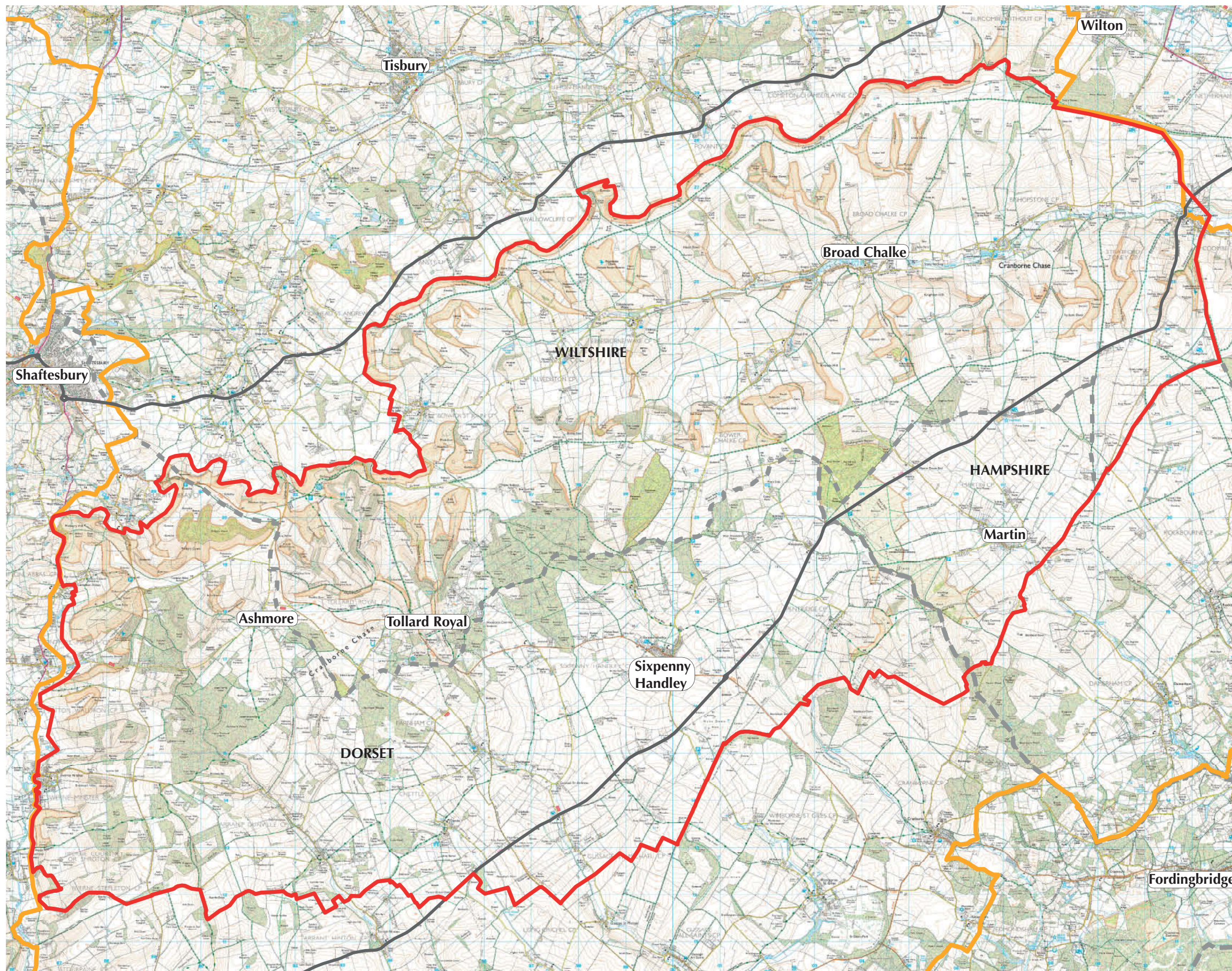
## 1.2 Landscape Partnership Area

1.2.1 In accordance with the HLF's Landscape Partnerships Application Guidance (2013), Landscape Partnership Areas should have '*a distinctive landscape character, recognised and valued by local people*' in terms of '*the built and natural heritage, management practices and the range of cultural heritage associated with the area*'. The HLF's Guidance also advises that the scheme boundary area should normally not exceed 200km<sup>2</sup>, unless there is clear justification for doing so.

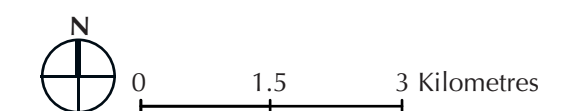
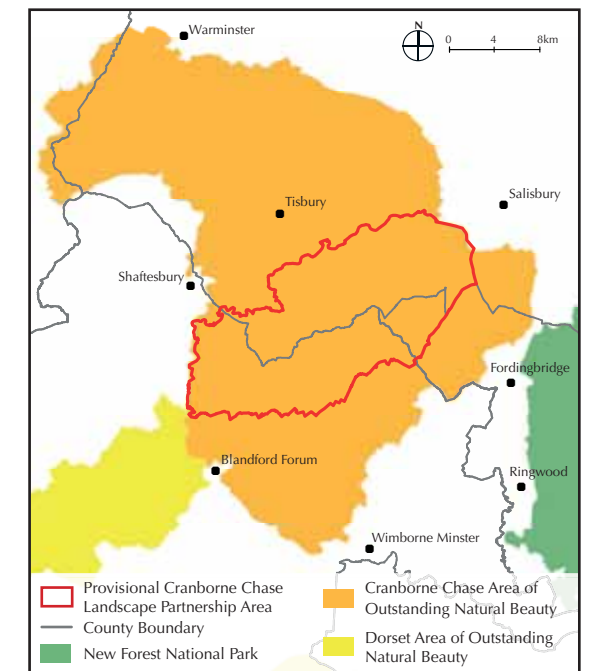
1.2.2 As shown on **Figure 1.1**, the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area covers 265km<sup>2</sup>. The boundary of the Landscape Partnership Area has been defined with reference to the topography, geology and soils, which in turn have influenced the distinctive historic patterns of settlement and field enclosure, and chalk grassland and woodland habitats associated with successive periods of agricultural land use.

1.2.3 Located in southwest England, the Landscape Partnership Area is within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which lies within the extensive chalklands that stretch north-eastwards from the Dorset coast to Salisbury. The AONB is a strongly rural area with scattered villages and narrow roads, and no large settlements.

1.2.4 The Landscape Partnership Area encompasses an historic borderland, where the ancient shire boundaries of Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire coincide. It is dominated by four distinct but interrelated chalk landscape types: the unusual wooded chalk downland of the Cranborne Chase; dramatic chalk escarpments; open chalk downland and the broad chalk river valley landscape of the Chalke Valley.



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
  - Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
  - County Boundary
  - Main Roads



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- 1.2.5 The Landscape Partnership Area focuses on the traditional heart (known as the ‘inner bounds’ – see **Figure 2.3**) of the Cranborne Chase Medieval royal hunting grounds, together with the river valley to the north known locally as the Chalke Valley.
- 1.2.6 The special hunting laws rigorously applied to protect the inner bounds of Cranborne Chase were not dissolved until 1829. This has led to the high level of survival of Medieval land use patterns, woodland archaeology and a wealth of archaeological sites (including important Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon features), in addition to extensive tracts of ancient woodland and lowland calcareous grassland habitats.
- 1.2.7 There have long been historical, natural and social links between the inner bounds of Cranborne Chase and the Chalke Valley. Historic Medieval parishes in this area provided a slice of river bottom, valley sides and open downland grazing beyond. People have traditionally worked and travelled across the valley onto the downland areas as well as along the valley bottoms, a story which continues today.
- 1.2.8 The Landscape Partnership Area lies between the market towns of Shaftesbury and Blandford Forum, on the western edge, and the village of Coombe Bissett on the east. This is a deeply rural, sparsely populated area of 11,000 people. A further 60,000 people live in the adjacent market towns. Just under half a million people live within half an hour’s drive in the conurbation of Poole/Bournemouth/Christchurch. The area covers all or part of 30 modern parishes, and includes the villages of Sixpenny Handley, Tollard Royal, Ashmore, Berwick St John, Broad Chalke, Iwerne Minster, Bishopstone, Coombe Bissett, Tarrant Gunville, Bowerchalke and Martin.
- 1.2.9 The Landscape Partnership Area is bounded on the western and northern sides by steep chalk escarpments, including settlement along the scarp spring line. The eastern boundary has been drawn along a dry valley where there is a change in the topography at Coombe Bissett. The southern boundary encompasses a prehistoric landscape of national importance closely associated with the inner bounds of Cranborne Chase, and also the Martin Down National Nature Reserve which represents the second largest area of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain.
- 1.2.10 Justification for the Landscape Partnership Area defined on **Figure 1.1** is explained further in **Chapter 4.0**.



## 1.3 Structure of the Report

1.3.1 The remainder of this report comprises the following chapters:

- **Evolution of the landscape (Chapter 2.0)** – this chapter provides an overview of the physical and human influences on the evolution of the landscape within the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area, including its geology; the history of settlement and land use from pre-history to the present day; literary, artistic and cultural associations; and its biodiversity value.
- **Character of the landscape today (Chapter 3.0)** – this chapter explains the approach to characterisation of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape and provides descriptions of each local landscape character area, identifying key qualities that are particularly sensitive to change and providing guidance for directing landscape change in ways that conserve and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the area.
- **What makes Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley distinctive (Chapter 4.0)** – the final chapter identifies the natural and historic/cultural landscape characteristics and qualities that make the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area distinctive, and are therefore particularly important to conserve and enhance for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. In doing so, it provides further justification for the definition of the Landscape Partnership Area.

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 We would like to acknowledge the support of all the stakeholders who provided information and commented on drafts of this report. Thank you in particular to Harry Bell for his help in providing the GIS data for the project.

1.4.2 CBA would also particularly like to thank the Client Group for their generous help and support throughout this project:

- Anne Carney - Funding and Partnerships Officer, Cranborne Chase AONB
- Richard Burden - Landscape and Planning Advisor, Cranborne Chase AONB
- Roger Goulding - Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Development Officer

1.4.3 The CBA Team comprised:

- Dominic Watkins
- Harriet Stanford
- Stuart Ratcliffe
- Bill Wadsworth

## 2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

### 2.1 General

2.1.1 This chapter provides an overview of the physical and human influences on the evolution of the landscape within the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area, including its geology; the history of settlement and land use from pre-history to the present day; literary, artistic and cultural associations; and its biodiversity value.

2.1.2 Throughout this chapter there are ‘Chase Chatter’ boxes which highlight the historic origins and meanings of selected natural and human features of the landscape. These help to bring the story of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape to life, explaining how and why familiar patterns and features have developed.

### 2.2 Physical Influences

2.2.1 The physical landscape is the expression of the underlying geological, geomorphological and hydrological processes that fundamentally shape a landscape’s character. This section presents an overview of how the character of the Landscape Partnership Area has been influenced by these physical influences.

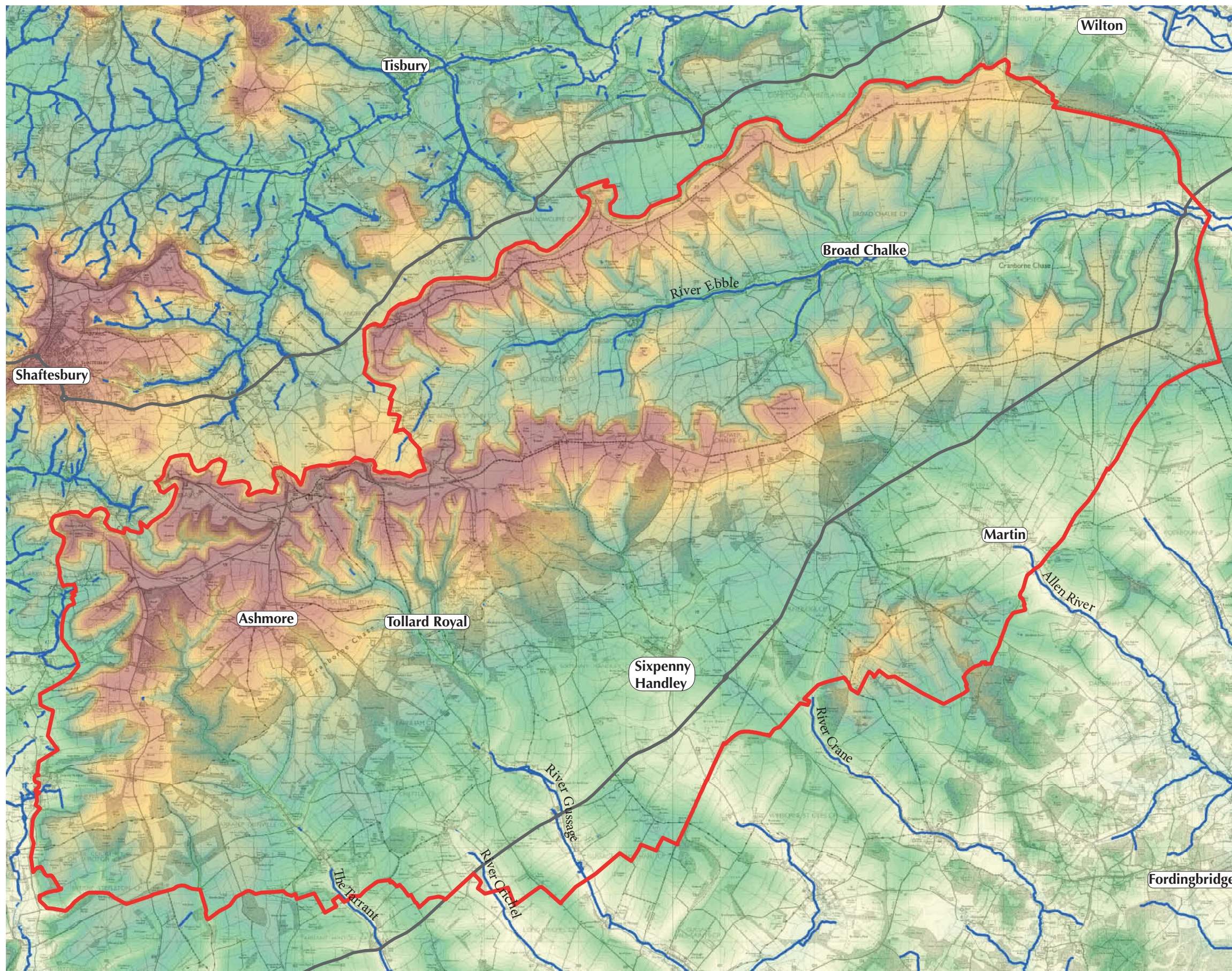
#### Topography & Hydrology

2.2.2 The underlying chalk geology (see **Figure 2.1**) has strongly influenced the varied topography of the area. The landscape within the study area is dominated by the smooth rounded downs, steeply cut coombes and dry valleys typical of a chalk landscape. The dip slope descends to the south-east where it meets the Dorset Heaths outside the AONB. The area is fringed in the north and west by dramatic scarps.

#### *Chase Chatter - Coombe (also Combe)*

A short valley or hollow on a hillside, especially in southern England. A dry valley in a chalk escarpment.

2.2.3 The main drainage pattern of the rivers within the area can be split into two. The key river influencing the landscape of the northern half is the River Ebble, a tributary draining eastwards into the River Avon south of Salisbury, just beyond the study area. The River Ebble flows through the chalk following lines of weaknesses to create a distinctive valley landscape with a narrow valley floor. The Ebble is a gently flowing river, falling just 60m over a 16km stretch within the LPS area.



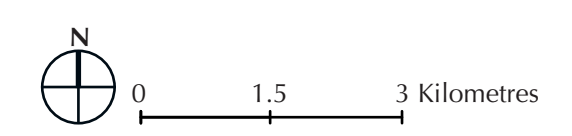
**KEY**

- Landscape Partnership Area

**Height AOD (m):**

- 7.5
- 283.5

- Main Watercourses



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2.2.4 Within the south of the study area watercourses drain the dip slope of the Chalk, flowing through the landform in a northwest-southeast direction. The northern and higher parts of the valley forms are now predominantly dry, but further south, the Rivers Tarrant and Allen flow southwards, and are tributaries of the River Stour. Both rivers meet the River Stour outside the study area, the Tarrant meets the Stour south east of the town of Blandford Forum whilst the Allen and Stour meet on the southern edge of Wimborne Minster. Further east, the Allen River and the River Crane, flow south eastwards, converging with the River Avon. See **Figure 2.1**.

### **Geology and Geomorphology**

2.2.5 The study area is dominated by a tract of chalk, a rock which has formed the distinctive landforms of the open downland and framing scarps. **Figure 2.2** illustrates the geology.

2.2.6 In summary, the chalk beds were formed some 100 million years ago. Embedded within the chalk are flints which have been formed at different periods during and after the deposition of the chalk. These areas are particularly prominent in the surface geology to the north west of Broad Chalke, and also in a broken band from the south of Ashmore, through Vernditch Chase to the south of Coombe Bissett Down. A major feature of the chalk geology of the study area are the chalk escarpments caused by tectonic and geomorphological processes. In places through the centre of the study area, along the southern sides of the River Ebble Valley, the white chalk subgroup, which forms much of the bedrock of the study area, is interspersed with areas of grey chalk, gault formation and upper greensand formation. The surface geology in this area also includes river terrace deposits along the River Ebble valley, and in the river valleys which run southwards in the south of the study area.

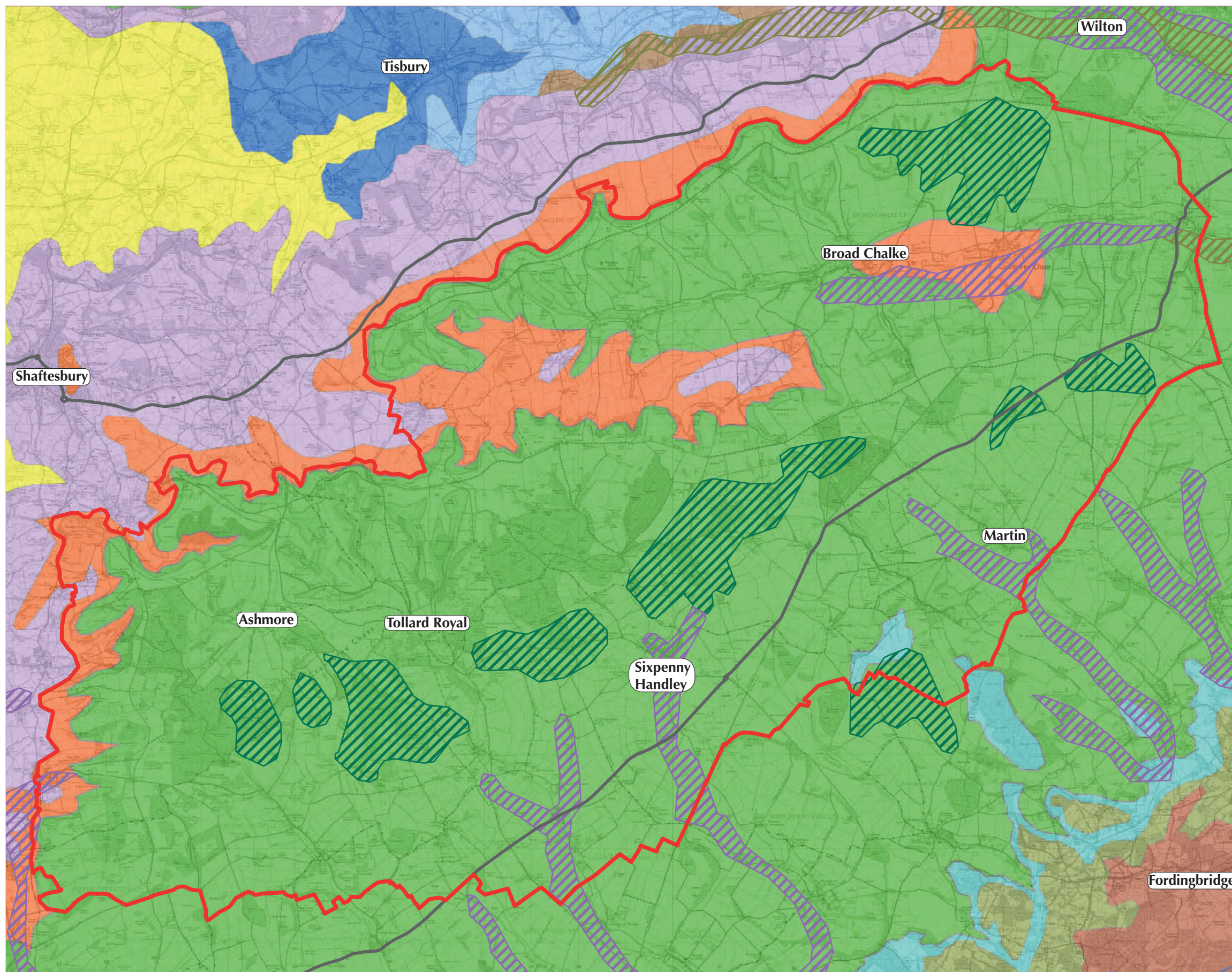
2.2.7 The highest parts of the chalk downs in this area, notably the ridge to the north of the River Ebble, represent the remains of a once extensive chalk surface. In the Ebble Valley, the removal of weakened chalk has created a broad chalk valley. High points in the LPS area include Win Green at 227m, Melbury Hill in the west at 263m and White Sheet Hill at 242m. The lowest areas include the wide valley to the east of Coombe Bissett, at 56m, and the valley south of Gussage St. Andrew, at 57m.

#### *Chase Chatter - Downland or Down(s)*

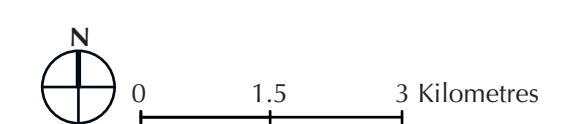
Areas of downland are often referred to as downs. A downland is an area of open chalk hills. The term is especially used to describe the chalk countryside in southern England. The name comes from the Old English *dūn* ("hill")<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Downs>



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- Bedrock Geology**
- Bracklesham Group and Barton Group
  - Gault Formation and Upper Greensand Formation
  - Grey Chalk Subgroup
  - Lambeth Group
  - Purbeck Group
  - Portland Group
  - Thames Group
  - West Walton, Amptill Clay and Kimmeridge Clay Formation
  - Wealden Group
  - White Chalk Sub Group
- Surface Geology**
- Alluvium
  - Clay-with-Flints
  - River Terrace Deposits



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## 2.3 Human Influences

2.3.1 The countryside we see today is an expression of the interaction between people and the landscape over the millennia. Every part of the landscape has a history and this is a major component that contributes to the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape. These landscapes bear the imprint of successive eras of human activity and settlement. This is one of the archeologically richest and most closely studied parts of prehistoric Wessex. Celebrated by artists, archaeologists, scholars and writers, the name Cranborne Chase evokes an ancient mysterious landscape with a rich patina of stunning interrelated natural and cultural assets.

### Historical Evolution of the Landscape – An Overview

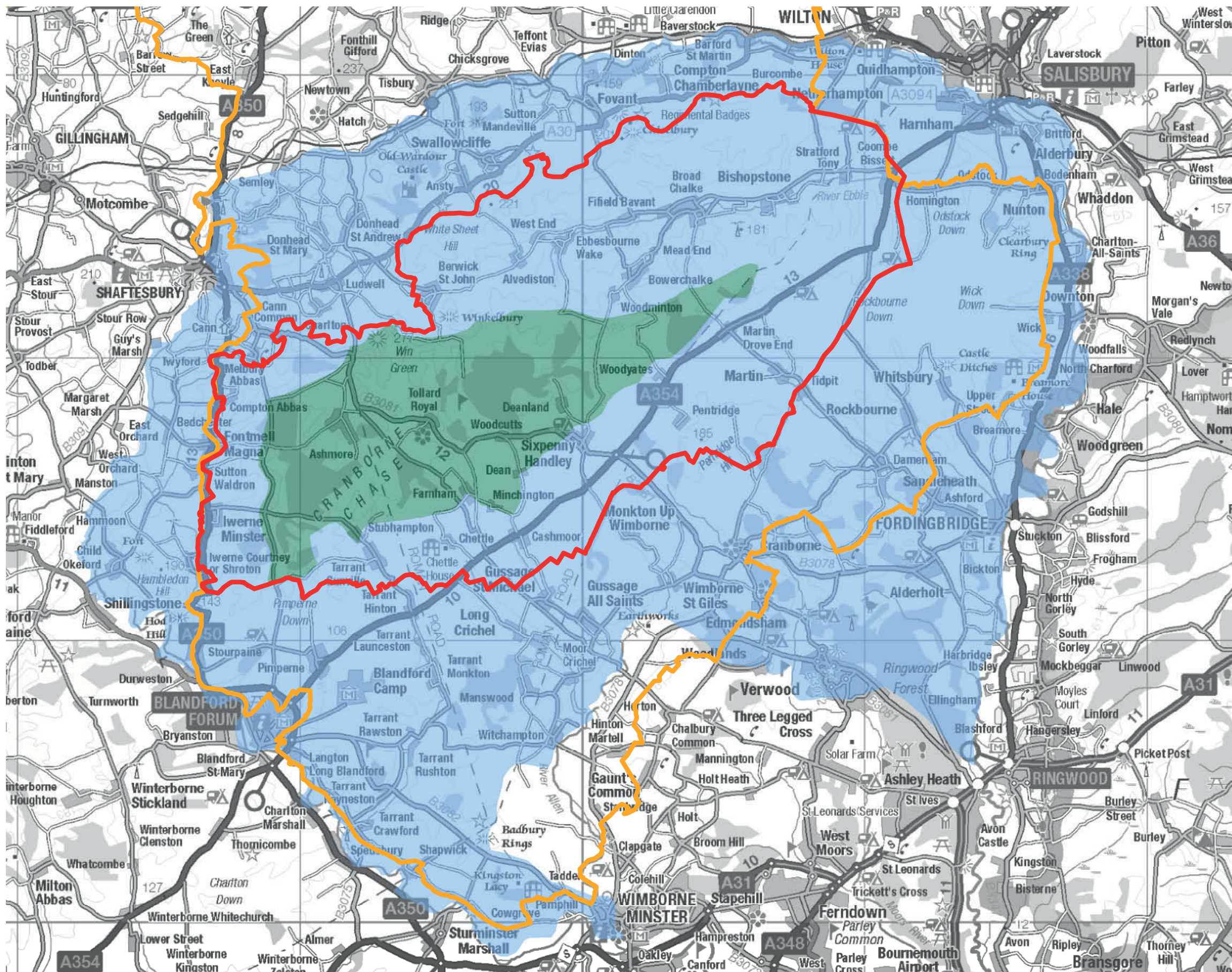
2.3.2 A summary overview of the historical evolution of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape is provided below. Historic Landscape Character is illustrated on **Figure 2.4**, and Historic Sites, Monuments and Designations on **Figure 2.5**. A more detailed description of the archaeology by time period can be found in Background Paper 2 of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.

2.3.3 The area is associated with important Mesolithic features but is most well-known for its Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age archaeology, and is notable not just for well-preserved examples of individual types of monuments but also for nationally important monument groups forming ceremonial complexes or monumental landscapes. Cranborne Chase is synonymous with a dense concentration of Neolithic monuments. These consist of areas in the landscape which were the foci of burial or symbolic activity and includes the complex of monuments around the approximately 10 km long Dorset Cursus, which incorporates several upstanding long barrows into its length and includes several more constructed nearby. The Cursus is also associated with other upstanding and known buried Neolithic monuments including henges, mortuary enclosures and Neolithic round barrows, as well as forming the focus for later Prehistoric activity including a concentration of Bronze Age round barrows<sup>2</sup> that contribute to the significance of the setting of the Cursus. The Bronze Age archaeology is characterised by a shift to sedentism marked by extensive field systems and clearly defined settlements. Notable Iron Age archaeology includes multiple hillforts.

2.3.4 Traces of later historic landscapes are also important and include juxtaposed fragmented areas of unimproved chalk grassland, ancient woodland and important remnants of medieval landscape which have disappeared elsewhere. These are intimately related to the former medieval hunting grounds of Cranborne Chase (see **Figure 2.3**), which was set within a

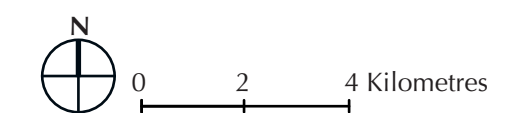
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<sup>2</sup> Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (2009) Historic Environment Action Plans Theme 8: Landscapes of Prehistory

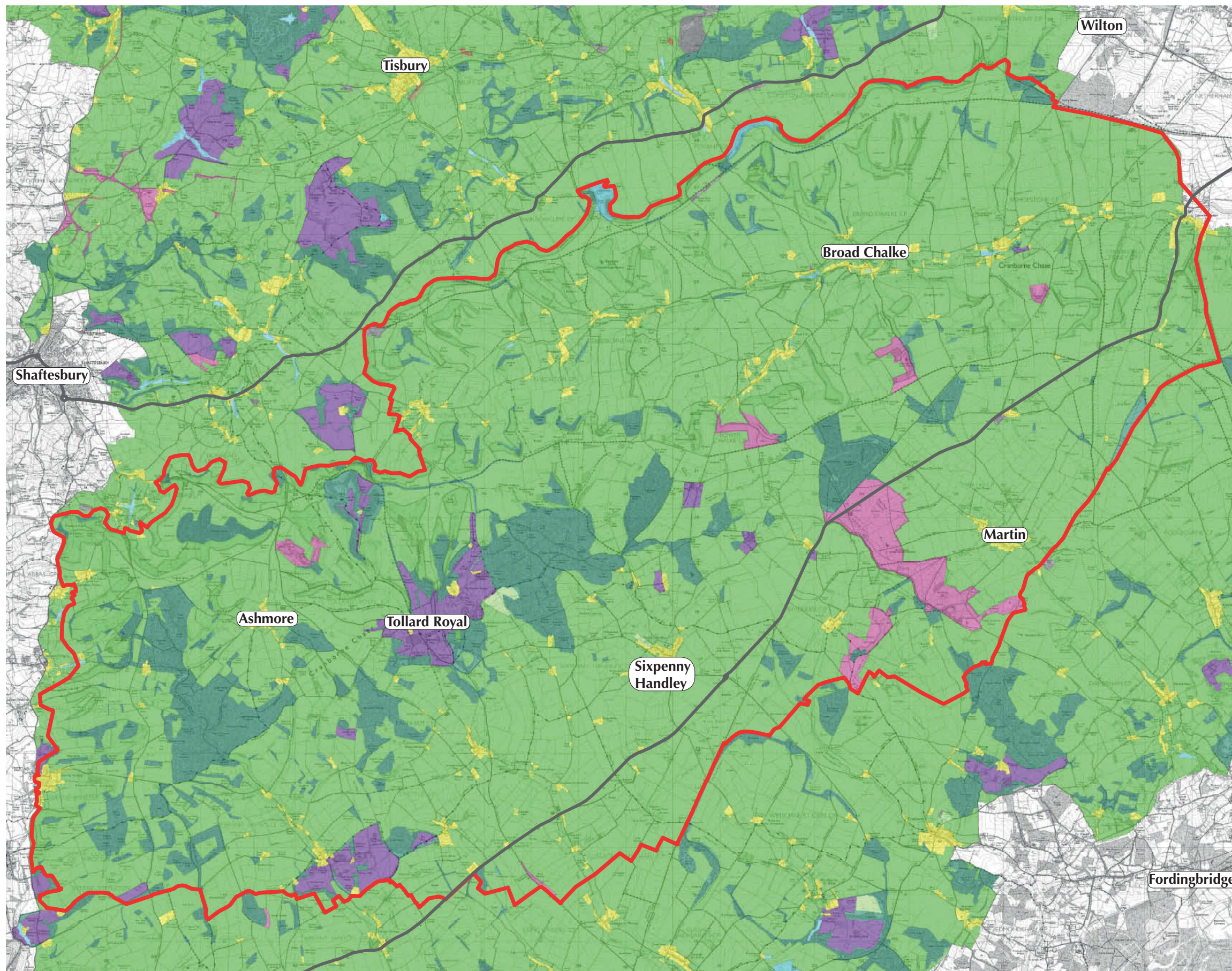


- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
  - Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
  - Outer Bounds of Cranborne Chase
  - Inner Bounds of Cranborne Chase

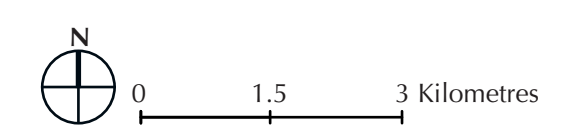
Based on the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Historic Environment Action Plan - Theme 5: Hunting Landscapes, Figure 2



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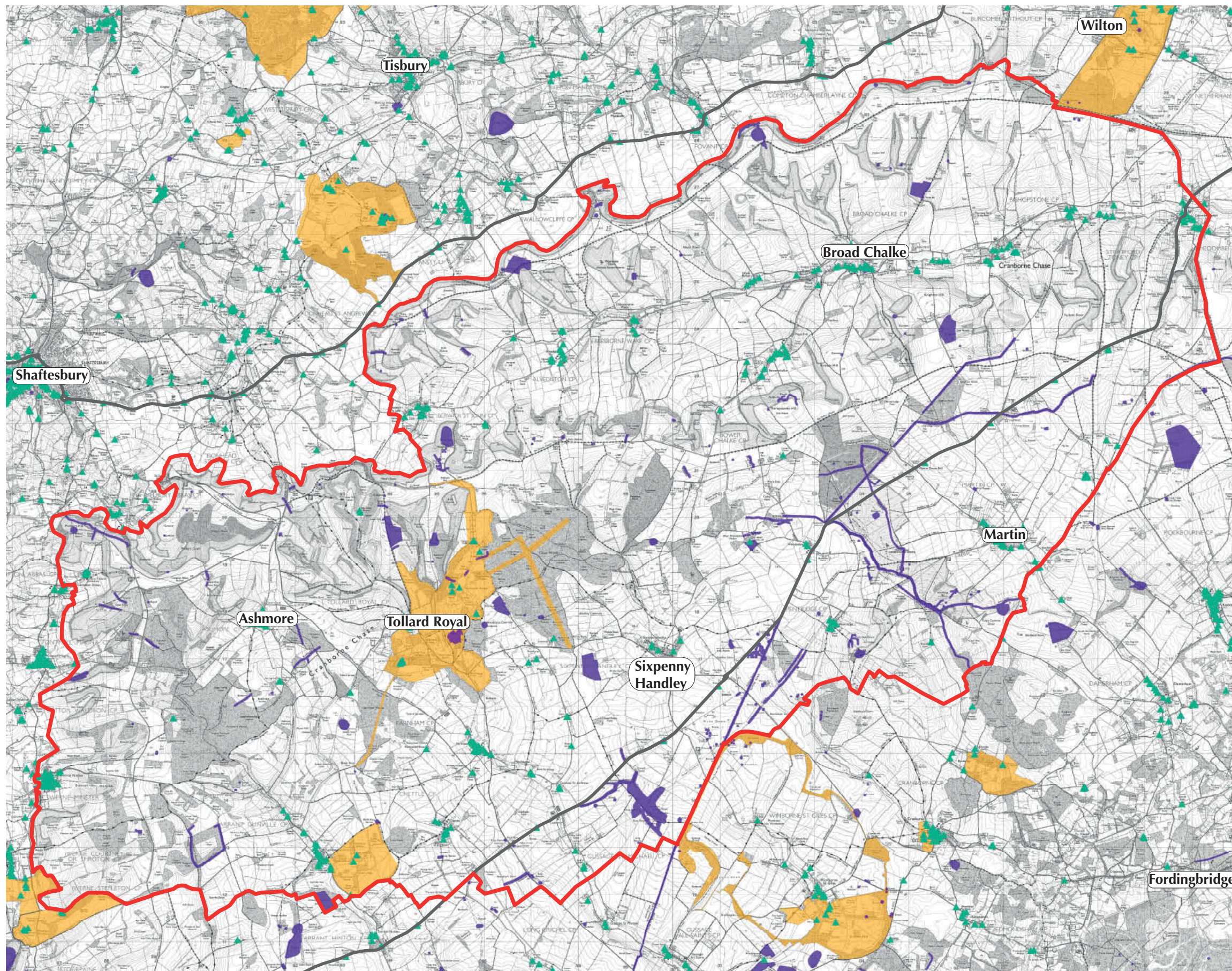


- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- Broad HLC Types:**
- Archaeology
  - Civic
  - Designed and Ornamental
  - Enclosed Land
  - Industry
  - Inland Communications
  - Open Land
  - Recreation
  - Settlement
  - Water Association
  - Woodland

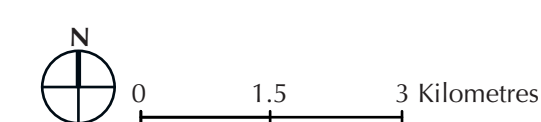


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- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
  - Scheduled Monument
  - Registered Historic Park and Garden
  - ▲ Listed Building



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medieval world of commons strip fields, and ancient woodlands cut into by tiny assarts. Many of the former Medieval Deer parks which are scattered across the area were transformed into the nationally important conglomeration of designed landscapes.

*Chase Chatter - Assart*

An area of clearance in woodland, typically where trees have been removed to convert to arable or pasture.<sup>3</sup>

- 2.3.5 Cranborne Chase is a relic of a Medieval hunting forest, the bounds of which are shown on **Figure 2.3**. The inner bounds of the Chase straddled the ancient Dorset-Wiltshire border, comprising an area of approximately 40,000 acres, while the outer bounds covered an area of approximately 800,000 acres. The Chase laws were most strictly applied in the inner bounds.
- 2.3.6 From the 11th century until its disenfranchisement in 1829 the area was managed as a chase, sometimes owned privately, and from the time of King John until James I by royalty, although it was never a Royal Forest. Deer were maintained at high populations and keepers upheld forest laws preventing their exploitation. Throughout this time, the Chase was managed for several interests, accommodating the rights of commoners to graze stock and take underwood, as well as the hunting prerogatives of the Crown or Lords of the Chase.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.3.7 From the Norman period, courts were established to protect greenery that provided food and shelter for the King's deer. Known as 'vert and venison', this Chase law severely restricted the agricultural improvements of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 2.3.8 Post medieval planned enclosure and the creation of new large scale fields in the 20th century have reduced the extent of the surviving ancient landscapes transforming some areas of the landscape. The 18th and 19th century, for example, saw the dominance of the sheep-corn system of agriculture in Wessex, when vast flocks of sheep grazed on the high downland. Many parishes were newly enclosed and the chalk river valleys were dominated by water meadows along their lengths.
- 2.3.9 Historic route ways can still be seen in the landscape, with sections of Roman roads still providing the foundation for modern day roads. Other drove routes and tracks between villages and farmsteads are today treasured Public Rights of Way.

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<sup>3</sup> St John's College, Oxford. Forests and Chases in England and Wales, c. 1000 to c. 1850. <http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/forests/glossary.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Natural England. Citation for Cranborne Chase SSSI.

- 2.3.10 The landscape continues to change: agriculture intensifies, infrastructures are upgraded, and the make-up of rural society and settlement adjusts to regional and national pressures. The landscape is susceptible to a range of forces for change, many of which impact on the historic environment.

### **History and Context of Historic Landscape Character Areas**

- 2.3.11 The history and context of the distinct Historic Landscape Character Areas identified within the Landscape Partnership Area by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans are outlined below.

#### **Wooded Chalk Downland of Cranborne Chase**

- 2.3.12 The Medieval hunting area of the Cranborne Chase covered a large part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The inner bounds of the Chase straddled the Dorset Wiltshire border comprising an area of approximately 40,000 acres, and it is to this area the Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase roughly corresponds. The rights to hunt on the Chase first came into Crown hands during the reign of William I and during the Medieval period they passed between the Crown and magnates close to the Crown before passing back to Edward IV in 1460. The Chase rights remained in Crown hands until the reign of James I when they were granted to Robert, Earl of Salisbury. By this time the Chase rights could only be effectively exercised over the Inner Bounds and in 1671 the rights to hunt in Vernditch were sold to the Earl of Shaftesbury. In 1692 the remaining rights were sold to Thomas Freke of Shroton passing through inheritance to the Baron Rivers who held the rights until their disenfranchisement in 1829.

#### *Chase Chatter - Chase*

A tract of land reserved for hunting. Typically a private forest or area of land where hunting rights were exclusive to the landholder (they had rights to hunt deer and boar).<sup>5</sup>

- 2.3.13 The Inner Chase, in which the Chase laws were most strictly applied, was split into a series of Walks. These provided the infrastructure through which the hunting grounds could be maintained. There were eight named Walks, and six of these were grouped into the inner Chase bounds forming the heartland of the Chase. These six walks, including West Walk, Burse Stool Walk, Rushmore Walk, Staplefoot Walk, Copley Walk and Vernditch Walk lie within the LPS area. In each walk the majority of the area was woodland which was divided into copses.

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<sup>5</sup> St John's College, Oxford. Forests and Chases in England and Wales, c. 1000 to c. 1850.  
<http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/forests/glossary.htm>

2.3.14 Post disenfranchisement of the open land surrounding the core woodland areas on the Chase Woodland has been the focus for parliamentary enclosure. In the 19th century the area centred on Rushmore Park became associated with the father of scientific archaeology General Pitt Rivers. During the 19th and 20th century the woodland in the area has been steadily transformed from coppice woodland to high forest.

### **Chalk Escarpments**

2.3.15 The creation of the fields on the side of the chalk escarpments began in the 18th and 19th century, and escalated during the 20th century. The topography of the escarpments has very much dominated the form that the newly created fields have taken. They are very steep and sinuous in nature, with curving and semi-irregular boundaries at the top and bottom of the slope. In contrast, the boundaries which divide the escarpments into discrete parcels and run up the slopes tend to be completely straight and spaced evenly apart.

2.3.16 This suggests that while the top and bottom of these escarpments has been enclosed by default of the land either side being enclosed, an organised effort has been made to further subdivide this land into a series of individual regular land parcels. This form of enclosure can be characterised as forming the final stage of the enclosure of the open chalk grassland and downland which was once a dominating component of this landscape. Given the steepness of the escarpments in question it is not surprising that these areas were not enclosed until recently, and are more usually managed as pasture rather than under arable cultivation.

#### ***Chase Chatter - Enclosure***

The act and process of enclosing areas of land previously part of the open woods or fields, including forests and commons.<sup>6</sup>

2.3.17 In general the boundaries are formed of fences and the escarpments are still composed of rough grazing and scrub and thus maintain much of their previous open nature. Indeed, from a distance the dividing straight boundaries make little impact on the appearance of the escarpment. This feeling of openness is often emphasised by the fact that they are sandwiched between the intensively enclosed valley bottom below and the ploughed downland above.

2.3.18 The survival of grassland in these areas has resulted in the retention of the range and variety of archaeological earthworks which can be seen in this landscape. The bottom of the north-south Melbury to Blandford Escarpment hosts a number of historic settlements which are situated on the spring line, emanating from the bottom of the chalk.

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<sup>6</sup> St John's College, Oxford. Forests and Chases in England and Wales, c. 1000 to c. 1850.  
<http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/forests/glossary.htm>

## **Southern Downland Belt**

- 2.3.19 The area is wholly within the Medieval hunting area of the Cranborne Chase. The rights to hunt on the Chase first came into Crown hands during the reign of William I and during the Medieval period they passed between the Crown and magnates close to the Crown. During the whole of the Medieval period the Chase rights were imposed across the whole of the Chase bounds which placed restrictions on the amount of enclosure which could incur in this area.
- 2.3.20 The extent of the Southern Downland Belt moved north-westwards after the disenfranchisement of the Chase in 1829, and up until 150 years ago was a large area of open chalk downland. Today the open downland in this area is limited to small areas on the edge of farms, in steep sided combes or at the Martin Down Nature Reserve. However, historic ordnance maps show that as recently as 50 years ago the Southern Downland Belt was dominated by open downland and unimproved grassland.
- 2.3.21 These high downlands were typified by vast uninterrupted vistas, lack of dwellings, few marked roads and very large flocks of sheep. The open downland, areas of rough grazing, and furze were all extremely important features of the landscape in the past, much of these areas were subject to common rights which gave people access to fuel, summer grazing and materials for construction. These more marginal lands were increasingly encroached upon as the land was more intensively farmed in the 19th and 20th centuries. These pressures meant that the open land in the area shrunk to a fraction of its former size. The locations where it is still found mark an important historical survival, therefore, which is often also of great ecological significance. Piecemeal enclosure of this area began prior to 1750 but was formalised through the process of Parliamentary enclosure between 1750 and 1850 and accelerated during the late 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.3.22 The nucleated settlements on the northern side of the area exploited this resource and are associated with pockets of earlier land use, including the fossilised Medieval strip fields at Martin. Between 1600 and 1900 landowners expressed their status and wealth through the construction of great houses, often associated with formally designed gardens and landscapes. The Southern Downland was no exception to this trend, with several strikingly designed landscapes being created including Kingston Lacy, Eastbury and Wimborne St Giles.

## **Downland Hills**

- 2.3.23 This area is on the far eastern edge of the Medieval hunting area of the Cranborne Chase. The rights to hunt on the Chase first came into Crown hands during the reign of William I and during the Medieval period they passed between the Crown and magnates close to the Crown.

During the whole of the Medieval period the Chase rights were imposed across the whole of the Chase bounds which placed restrictions on the amount of enclosure which could occur in this area.

- 2.3.24 The pre 1800 enclosures are probably derived from the piecemeal and ad hoc enclosure of formerly open land and the clearance of wooded areas. In general, they fossilise few traces of previous land uses suggesting their possible antiquity. They are also associated with a concentration of pre 1800 settlement, and old routeways. These are overlain by 19th century Parliamentary enclosure. These Parliamentary enclosures consolidated strips in the open fields into more compact units, and enclosed much of the remaining pasture commons or wastes. Parliamentary enclosures usually provided commoners with some other land in compensation for the loss of common rights, although often of poor quality and limited extent.

#### **Ebble (Chalke) Valley Sides**

- 2.3.25 The area has been a focus of Prehistoric and Roman activity. The area as it appears today is dominated by the impact of 19th and 20th century enclosure. Many of these fields were created through the process of parliamentary enclosure in the 19th century. Enclosure is the process by which land that has formerly been owned and exploited collectively is divided into separate parcels, each owner exchanging rights in part of it. The First World War saw further woodland and scrub clearance, and large areas of open downland ploughed up for cereals. Post Second World War intensification of agriculture continued with the ploughing of slopes and elevated downland. This resulted in loss of archaeological features and, in some instances, loss of topsoil, and a decline in chalk grasslands.
- 2.3.26 Some areas are now once again improving - agri-environment schemes have started to encourage animal and plant species back to the downlands. The creation of small geometric blocks of woodland in this area began from 1800 as areas of game cover and coverts. This is linked to the increasing importance of fox hunting and shooting.

#### **Chalk River Valleys**

- 2.3.27 The intensive use of the bottoms of the chalk river valley has obscured many earlier traces of human activity in these landscapes. Where evidence is available it shows that this area was important in prehistory, suggested by both Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds in the valley bottoms, and was increasingly exploited in the Iron Age and Roman period, suggested by extensive field systems.

- 2.3.28 The pattern of Medieval settlement along the valley, and the pattern of ancient parishes, demonstrates that this area was being intensively exploited by this period and that it was important that manorial estates were able to exploit a range of resources, including valley bottom, valley side and the woodland and downland beyond. Access to water was a crucial factor in the positioning of settlements and the river was heavily exploited, including for water power in the form of mills, and as a source of food. The course of the rivers and their streams were often altered to provide artificial fish ponds.
- 2.3.29 This pattern of usage intensified in the Post Medieval period with the creation of sophisticated networks of water meadows which played a crucial role in Britain's farming economy between 1600 and 1900. The meadows formed a central feature of the local sheep/corn system of agriculture. They allowed for the artificial control of the watering of meadows using a sophisticated system of hatches, weirs, channels and drains. This watering of the meadows with warmer water allowed a lush crop of grass to grow several weeks before natural grazing became available and allowed for greater flocks of sheep to be maintained, and thus more farmland to be enriched with manure.
- 2.3.30 The intensive exploitation of the chalk valley systems was further encouraged by the industrial revolution as water mills were increasingly harnessed to other forms of production, including the cloth trade. The coming of the railways opened up new markets for these goods, encouraging further production. Another way the chalk river valleys were exploited during the 19th century was by watercress beds, a pattern which continued into the 20th Century. During the 20th century the use of the chalk rivers as a source of power has diminished.

### **Literary, Artistic and Cultural Associations**

- 2.3.31 The landscapes in this area hold a special place in the origins and development of archaeology. General Pitt-Rivers' excavations and findings on Cranborne Chase in the late 19th century marked a new systematic approach to archaeological excavations. An approach also followed by Heywood Sumner, archaeologist, artist and writer, when he undertook a survey of the archaeology of Cranborne Chase between 1911 and 1913.
- 2.3.32 Important literary figures associated with the area include poet and barrister Sir John Davies (1569-1626), antiquarian and writer John Aubrey (1626-1697), naturalist and writer W H Hudson (1841-1922), author and surgeon Sir Frederick Treves (1853-1923), poet Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) and author and broadcaster Desmond Hawkins (1908-1999). Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) described the Cranborne Chase in his novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Desmond Hawkins (1908-1999) wrote the definitive book about the Cranborne Chase (1980).

- 2.3.33 Other artistic and cultural connections include the architect Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) Prime Minister Anthony Eden (1897-1977), photographer Sir Cecil Beaton (1904-1980), conductor Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and classical guitarist Julian Bream. King John (1167-1216) is one of the Medieval Kings known to have hunted across Cranborne Chase.
- 2.3.34 An event celebrating the artistic and cultural connections with this landscape was held in 2012 at the Salisbury and West Wiltshire Museum. The exhibition called 'Circles and Tangents - Art in the Shadow of Cranborne Chase' featured the work of Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Ben Nicholson, John Craxton, Lucian Freud, Stanley Spencer, Elisabeth Frink, William Nicholson and over 25 other artists and sculptors connected with Cranborne Chase. Artists in the exhibition from the earlier generation included the Nicholson family (William, Ben, Winifred and E.Q.), John Craxton, Lucian Freud, Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Frances Hodgkins and Katharine Church (Kitty West) as well as less familiar names – all painters who lived on Cranborne Chase but never actively sought recognition for their work. The exhibition also included the works of contemporary artists such as Ursula Leach who explores the new 'face of agriculture', and Brian Rice, who studies ancient sites on the Chase for his inspiration.
- 2.3.35 Further details about people in the landscape can be found in Background Paper 6 of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.



## 2.4 Landscape Scale Habitats

2.4.1 The Study Area is home to a rich variety of habitats and associated species (see **Figure 2.6**). The chalk geology and topography, in association with traditional land management regimes, has led to the high survival of **chalk grassland**, which is characterised by species-rich plant communities. Chalk grasslands support many nationally rare and scarce plant species, such as early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*). In addition to their botanical significance, these grasslands also support diverse assemblages of butterflies, including important populations of the marsh fritillary (*Eurodryas aurinia*), and the silver spotted skipper (*Hesperia comma*), as well as many other notable invertebrates.

### *Chase Chatter - Lowland calcareous grassland (chalk grassland)*

Found on shallow, well-drained soils which are rich in bases (principally calcium carbonate) formed by the weathering of chalk (and other types of limestone) and is characterised by vegetation dominated by grasses and herbs. The altitude at which this occurs varies across the UK, but typically becomes higher towards the south.<sup>7</sup>

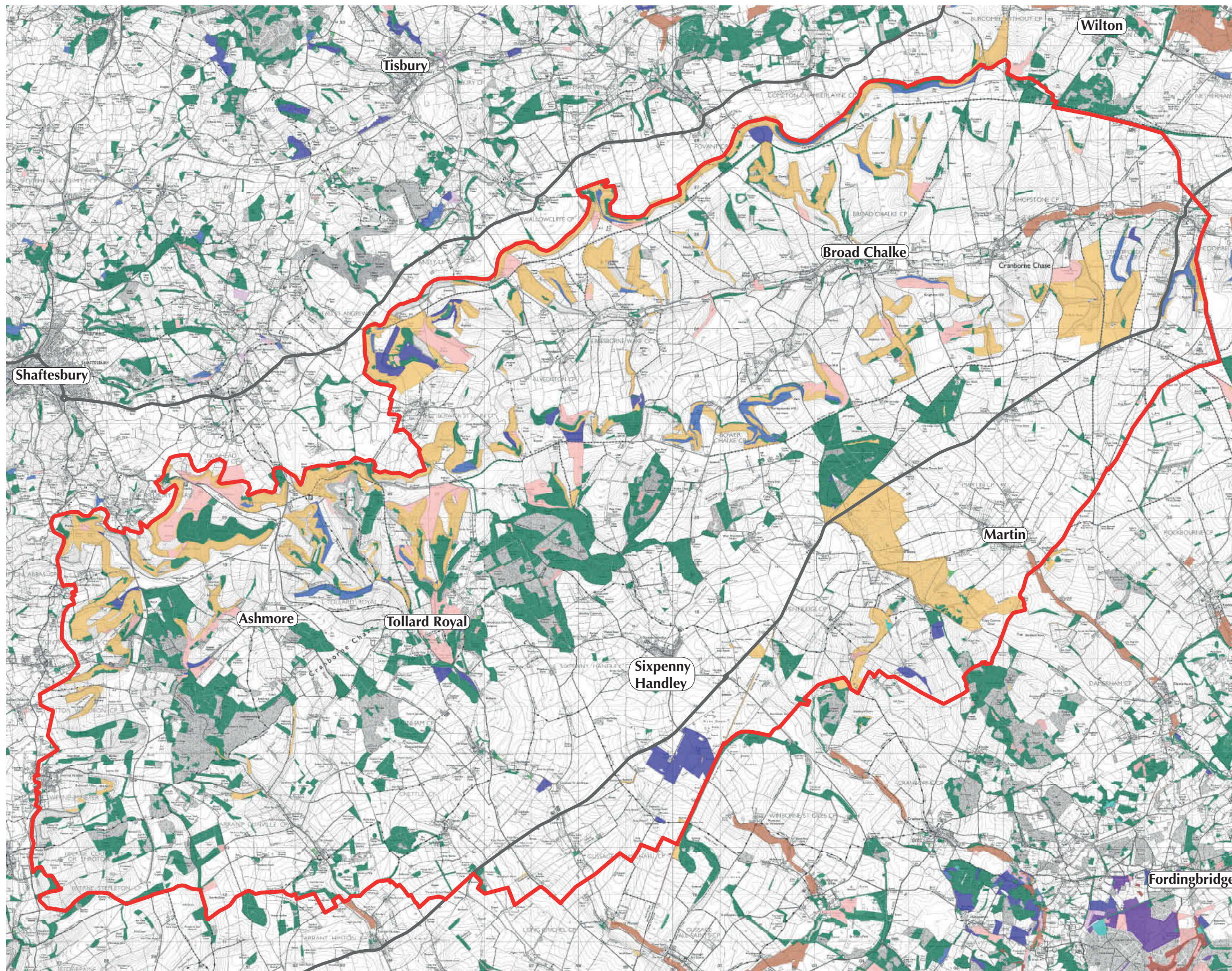
2.4.2 The chalk geology also supports the presence of **chalk streams and rivers**. Chalk rivers are a feature of the study area, including the River Ebble, which runs eastwards through the north of the area, and the Rivers Allen and Tarrant in the south. These clear rivers represent an important nature conservation resource, and contribute significantly to the overall ecological value of the area.

2.4.3 The study area supports significant **woodland** cover with a particularly well-wooded area being found in the centre, formed by the historic Cranborne Chase. The study area contains 16.6 square kilometres of ancient woodland comprising 6.5%. Ancient woodlands, which have existed since 1600AD<sup>8</sup>, are widely scattered throughout the study area, and are of high nature conservation importance, due to the diverse animal and plant communities which they support. Their character varies largely according to the underlying soils, with those on chalky soils being the most common. This calcareous woodland contains characteristic woody species including, beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), oak (*Quercus robur*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

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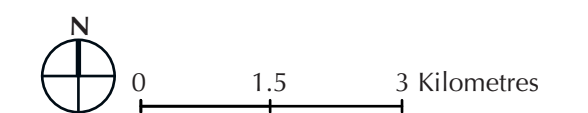
<sup>7</sup> JNCC [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UKBAP\\_BAPHabitats-25-LowlandCalcGrass.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UKBAP_BAPHabitats-25-LowlandCalcGrass.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/trees-woods-and-wildlife/woodland-habitats/ancient-woodland/>



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- BAP Priority Habitats:**
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
  - Deciduous Woodland
  - Good quality semi-improved grassland
  - Lowland calcareous grassland
  - Lowland dry acid grassland
  - Lowland fens
  - Lowland heathland
  - Lowland meadows
  - Mudflats
  - Traditional orchard
  - Purple moor grass and rush pastures
  - No main habitat but additional habitats present\*

\* In some cases, a priority habitat may be present, but its extent may be less than the minimum mapping area, and it will not have been mapped separately. In such cases a polygon may be attributed as no main habitat.



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## Biodiversity Designations

2.4.4 The study area is of great ecological importance and exhibits exceptionally rich and diverse habitats. It contains a number of sites designated for their biodiversity, both nationally and internationally (see **Figure 2.7**).

### Special Areas of Conservation

2.4.5 The area contains two internationally recognised Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). **Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC** is predominantly located on the chalk scarp along the west of the area. **Prescombe Down SAC** is located to the north of Ebbesbourne Wake. Both sites comprise large areas of species-rich chalk grassland, and support consistently large populations of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*<sup>9,10</sup>.

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

2.4.6 There are 21 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the study area<sup>11</sup>:

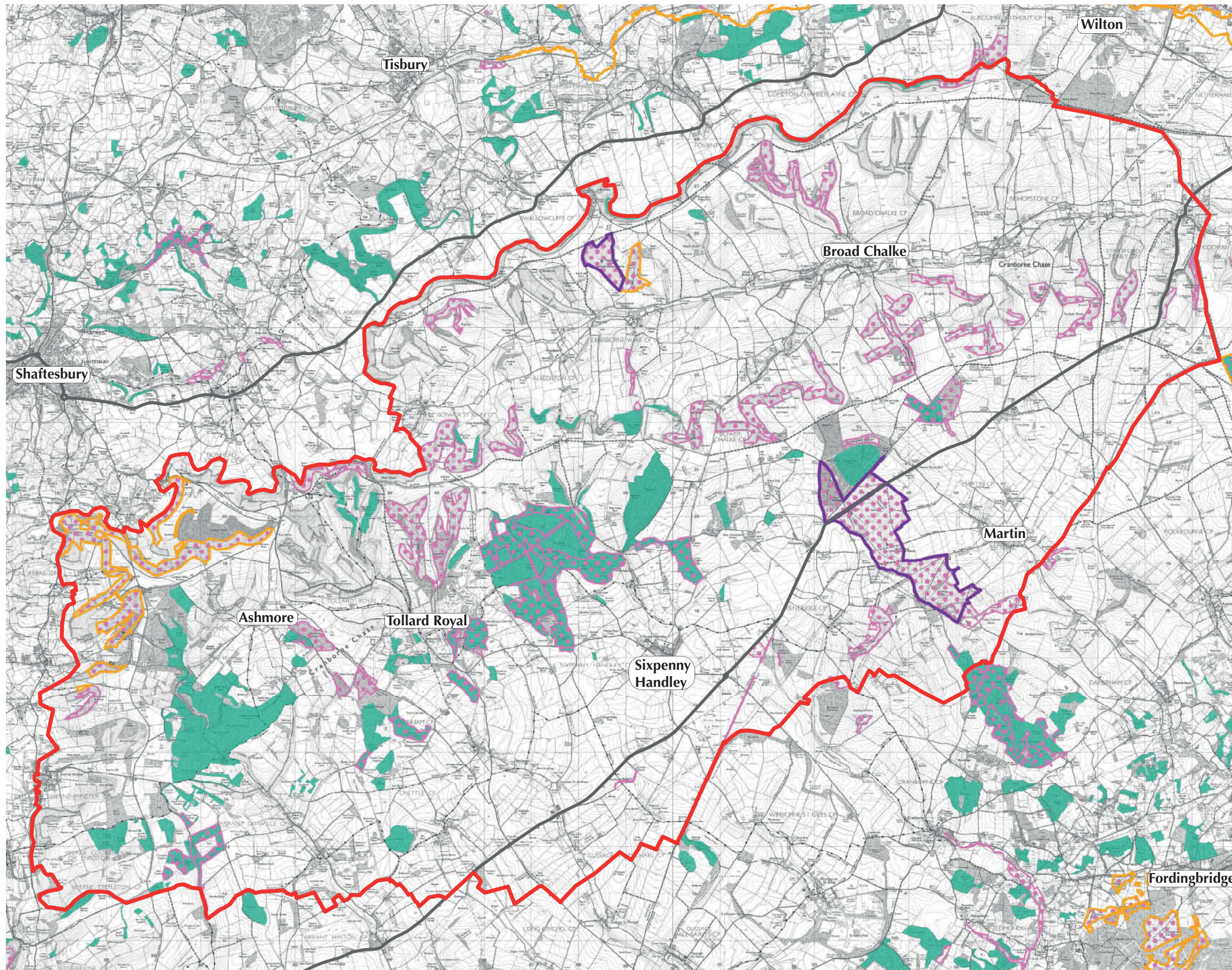
- **Boulsbury Wood SSSI** – a large varied wood, with a complex variety of soils. It has a large number of different natural groupings of tree species, with the most characteristic association being oak standards with hazel coppice. Associated with this wide range of stand-types and physical conditions, there is an exceptionally diverse flora, which includes many uncommon species.
- **Bowerchalke Downs SSSI** – rich chalk grassland with a wide range of flora and fauna. Present on the site are plant and animal species with a nationally restricted distribution.
- **Burcombe Down SSSI** - rich, grazed, chalk grassland. Nationally restricted plant species are present in the turf.
- **Chickengrove Bottom SSSI** - a mixture of botanically rich chalk grassland, scrub and woodland, with invertebrates and reptiles well represented.
- **Cranborne Chase SSSI** - a large tract of semi-natural woodland, derived from an ancient hunting forest, and includes remnants of enclosed medieval coppice, commonland wood pasture and 19th century hazel plantation. The ground flora includes many uncommon species and is exceptionally rich in plants closely associated with ancient woodland. The Chase is one of the richest sites for lichens in southern England. The invertebrate fauna includes uncommon butterflies and moths, and supports a diverse woodland bird fauna.
- **Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI** - a large site, comprising part of the edge of the chalk escarpment holds unimproved chalk grassland and scrub communities and has high botanical and entomological interest.
- **Gallows Hill SSSI** - botanically diverse chalk grassland and scrub containing animal and plant species of a nationally restricted distribution.

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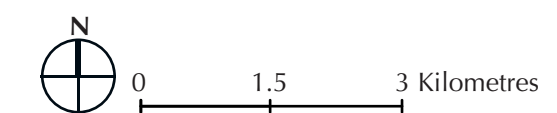
<sup>9</sup> Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC Citation <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012550>

<sup>10</sup> Prescombe Down SAC Citation <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012553>

<sup>11</sup> SSSI Citations: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - National Nature Reserve
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Ancient Woodland



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- **Handcocks Bottom SSSI** - ancient, semi-natural woodland surrounding the former medieval deer park of Harbins Park. It has rich and diverse plant communities, and the virtual absence of atmospheric pollution and the continuity of woodland cover on the site have led to the development of an important lichen flora. Also present is an area of chalk grassland and scrub which supports an extensive assemblage of butterflies.
- **Homington and Coombe Bissett Downs SSSI** - several blocks of botanically rich chalk grassland. Several animal and plant species of a restricted distribution in Britain are well established on parts of the downs.
- **Knapp and Barnett's Downs SSSI** - a large area of botanically rich chalk grassland. The site supports a grassland community which is rare in Britain and which includes uncommon plants and invertebrates.
- **Knighton Downs & Wood SSSI** - a large area of botanically diverse chalk grassland, scrub and semi-natural woodland supporting several plant and butterfly species of nationally restricted distribution.
- **Martin and Tidpit Downs SSSI** - an extensive tract of chalk downland, chalk heath and scrub. They include a gently undulating plain rising to a high east-west ridge, the crest of which is marked by the Bokerley Ditch, a massive linear prehistoric earthwork. The whole area is rich in archaeological features of Bronze Age and subsequent dates, and these, together with the varied topography, soils, and differences in past management, contribute to great habitat variation.
- **Pentridge Down SSSI** - the largest surviving area of unimproved chalk downland in eastern Dorset.
- **Pincombe Down SSSI** - an area of chalk grassland situated on the sides of a valley with floristically diverse turf, supporting a number of uncommon plants including one of nationally restricted distribution.
- **Prescombe Down SSSI** – a botanically rich chalk downland site with a flora characteristic of the south and south-west chalk grassland. Much of the vegetation is dominated by a nationally restricted sedge species and the fine sward comprises a wide diversity of herbs and grasses. In addition the downland supports a rich butterfly community, including some scarce species.
- **Rotherley Downs SSSI** - diverse chalk grassland, scrub and woodland communities and supporting several uncommon plants and invertebrates.
- **Stratford Toney Down SSSI** - botanically rich sheep's-fescue–meadow oat-grass chalk grassland community. It also supports nationally rare plant and butterfly species.
- **Sutton Combe SSSI** - unimproved chalk downland with a rich flora and fauna.
- **Throope Down SSSI** - a botanically rich sheep's-fescue–meadow oat-grass chalk grassland with associated butterflies.
- **Win Green Down SSSI** - highly diverse chalk grassland with a rich flora including species of a nationally restricted distribution. It is one of the most southern chalk grasslands in Wiltshire.
- **Winklebury Hill SSSI** - an extensive (over 50 ha.) and topographically varied area of herb rich chalk grassland supporting several plants and a butterfly of restricted British distribution.

## National Nature Reserves

2.4.7 The area contains two National Nature Reserves (NNRs):

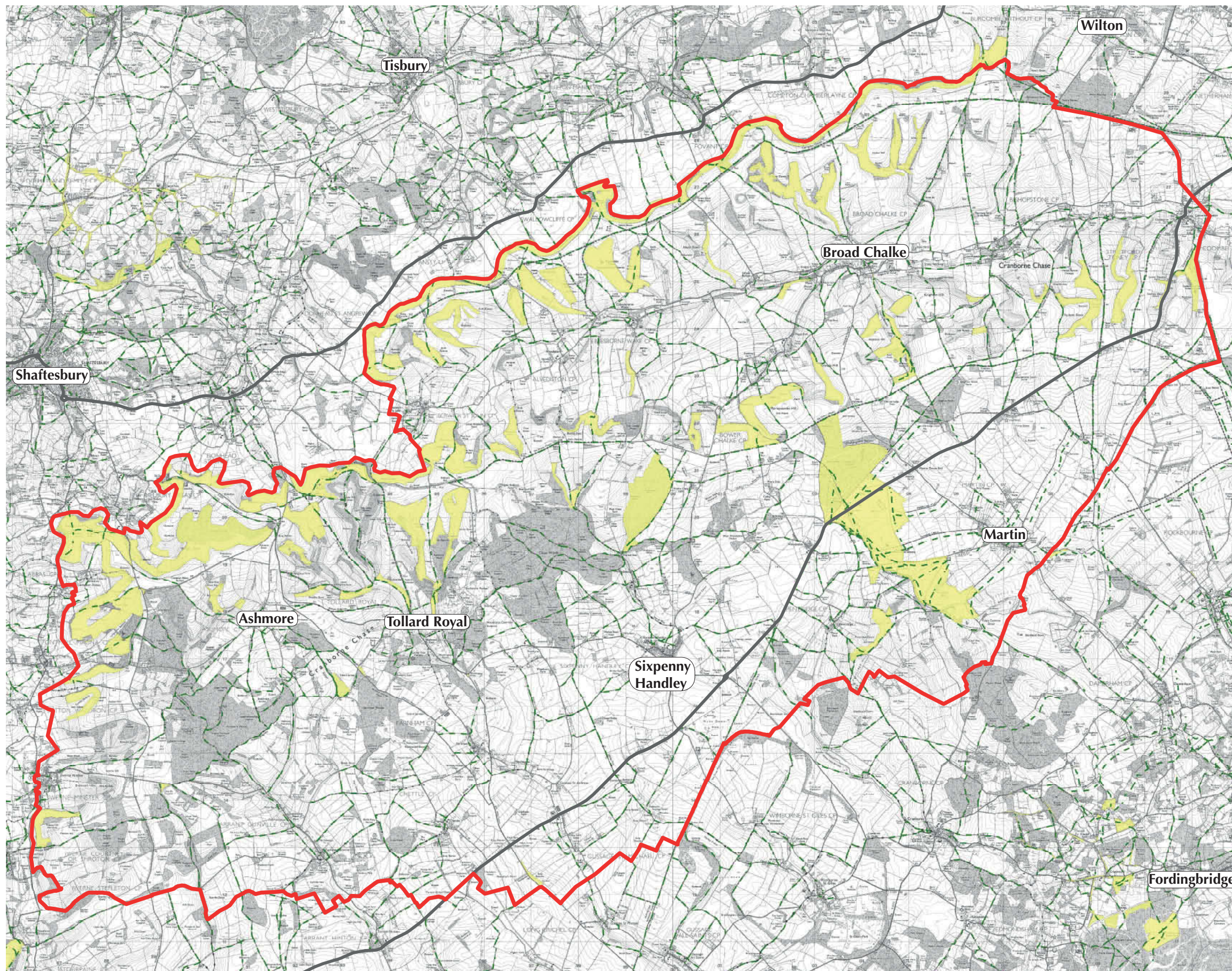
- **Martin Down NNR** - is located in the west of the study area, between Woodyates and Martin. It represents the second largest area of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain. This area of chalk downland, chalk heath and scrub is home to a number of nationally rare and scarce beetles, flies and bees.
- **Prescombe Down NNR** - is a publicly accessible chalk downland area located north of Ebbesbourne Wake, known for its resident population of the Adonis Blue butterfly.

## 2.5 Access and Recreation

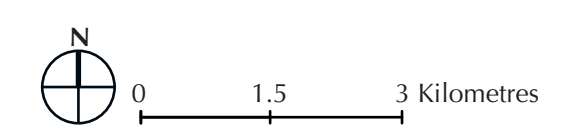
2.5.1 **Figure 2.8** shows access and recreation opportunities within the Landscape Partnership Area with respect to Countryside & Rights of Way Act 200 Access Land and Public Rights of Way.

## 2.6 Tranquil Areas

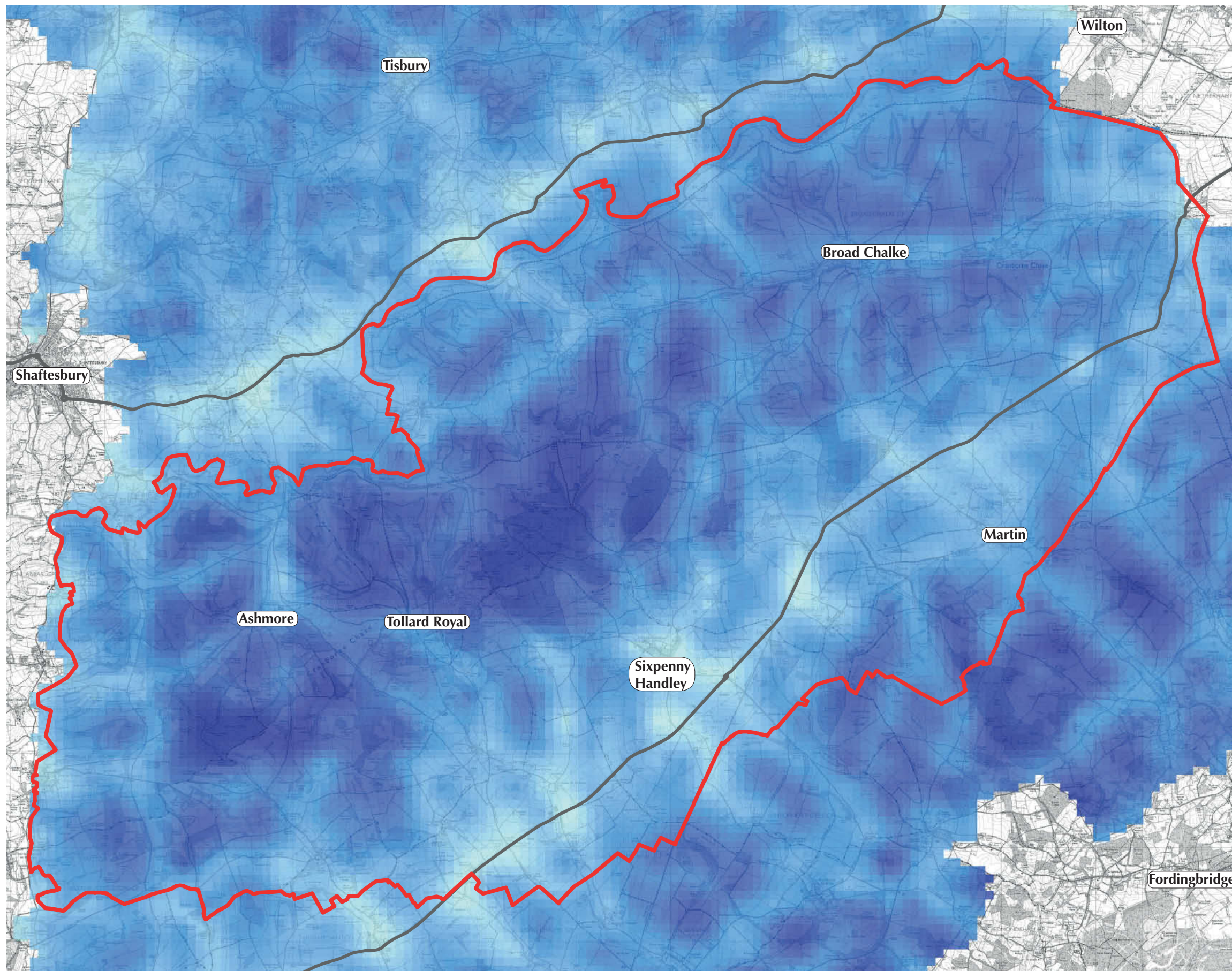
2.6.1 **Figure 2.9** shows tranquil areas within the Landscape Partnership Area as defined in the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Tranquillity Mapping (July 2010). This provides an indication of the relative sense of remoteness and tranquillity that is an important experiential characteristic of much of the area.



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
  - CRoW Act 2000 Access Land
  - Public Rights of Way



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**KEY**

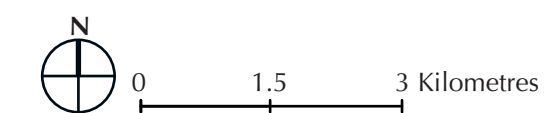
Landscape Partnership Area

**Tranquillity\*:**

Highest

Lowest

Tranquillity relative to the rest of the CCWWD AONB - See Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Tranquillity Mapping (July 2010) for details.



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## **3.0 THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE TODAY**

### **3.1 General**

3.1.1 This chapter explains the approach to characterisation of the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley landscape and provides descriptions of each local landscape character area, identifying key qualities that are particularly sensitive to change and providing guidance for directing landscape change in ways that conserve and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the area.

### **3.2 Approach to Characterisation**

3.2.1 Landscape characterisation is the process of identifying and describing variations in landscape character – the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Characterisation involves identifying landscape types and areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character at a scale appropriate to the purpose of the study.

3.2.2 This study re-interprets and builds on existing landscape character assessments and other related information to provide a bespoke, finer scale of assessment for the Landscape Partnership Area. The Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley LCA defines local landscape character areas at a scale of 1:25,000 (integrated with historic character) that broadly ‘nest’ within the landscape classification hierarchy established by the following existing studies covering the Landscape Partnership Area:

- Natural England National Character Area 134: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase
- Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2003)
- Cranborne Chase AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation (2008)
- Cranborne Chase AONB Historic Environment Action Plans (2011)
- Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005)
- Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment (2008)
- Hampshire County Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2010)
- New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment (2000)
- North Dorset District Landscape Character Assessment and Addendum (2008)
- East Dorset District Landscape Character Assessment (2008)

3.2.3 The characterisation process was also informed by analysis of key 'landscape attributes' relevant to understanding the character of the study area. These landscape attributes are represented by the GIS datasets mapped on the following Figures:

- Figure 2.1 - Topography and Hydrology
- Figure 2.2 - Geology
- Figure 2.3 – The Cranborne Chase Medieval Hunting Area
- Figure 2.4 - Historic Landscape Character
- Figure 2.5 - Historic Sites, Monuments and Designations
- Figure 2.6 - Wildlife Habitats
- Figure 2.7 – Biodiversity Designations
- Figure 2.8 - Access and Recreation
- Figure 2.9 - Tranquil Areas

3.2.4 The desk studies were supplemented by targeted field survey work to verify and refine LCA boundaries on the ground; capture the visual and sensory (aesthetic, perceptual and experiential) qualities of the landscape; and to identify the general condition of key landscape features. The study was also informed by feedback from consultation on the draft LCA with local stakeholders and the projects' partners.

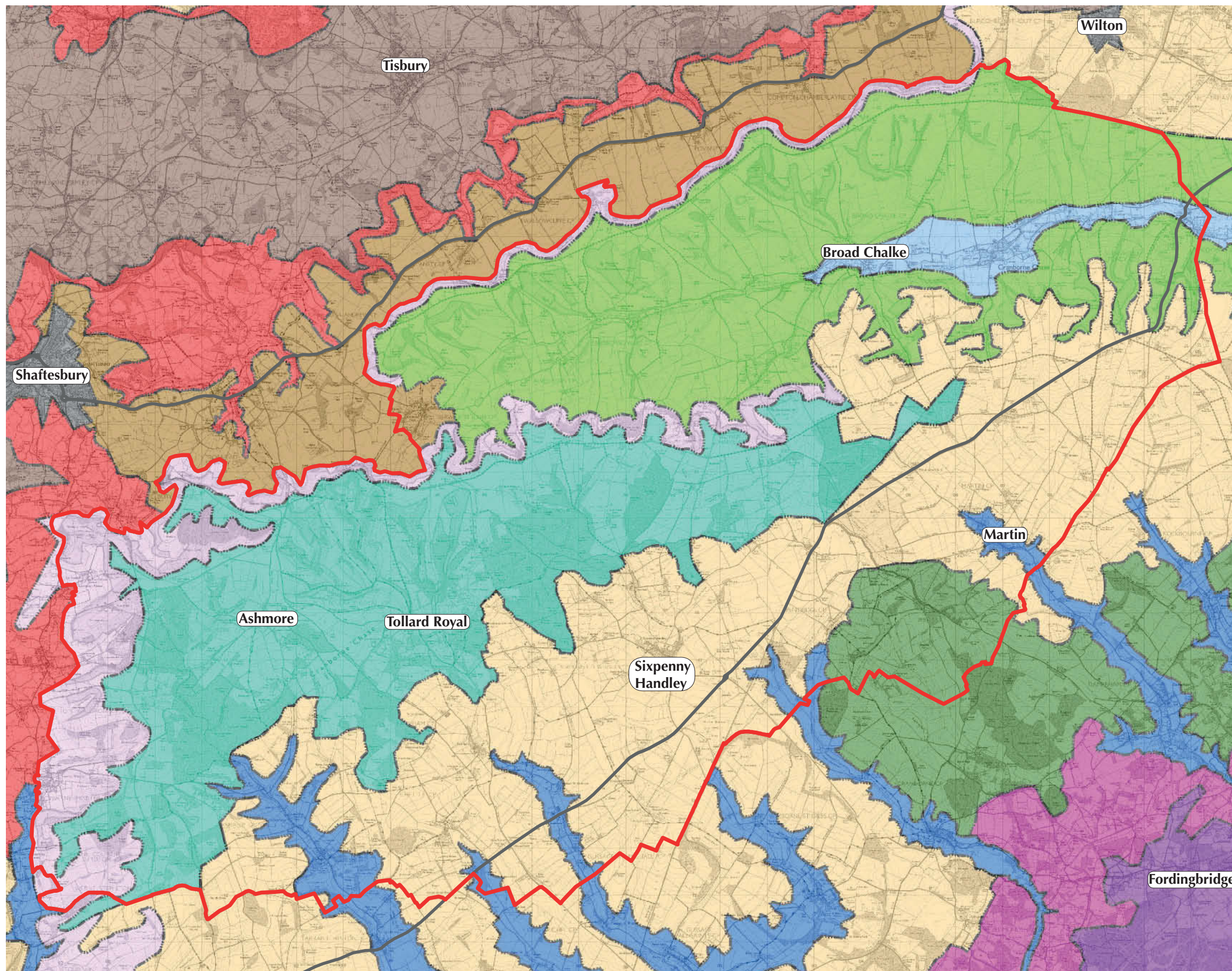
### **Landscape Character Types**

3.2.5 Landscape Character Types are generic types of landscape that may occur in different areas, with broadly similar and distinctive patterns of geology, topography, drainage, vegetation, historic land use, settlement and field shapes.

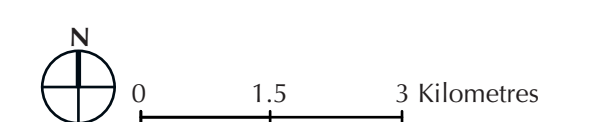
3.2.6 The Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified within and around the Landscape Partnership Area shown on **Figure 3.1** are a refinement of the AONB LCA (2003) typology, taking into account other area-specific LCAs where relevant.

3.2.7 The LCTs within the Landscape Partnership Area are as follows:

- **A - Wooded Chalk Downland:** A series of amendments has been made to the southern boundary of this LCT (as defined in the AONB LCA, 2003) to align with the edge of the woodland land cover. A similar amendment has been made to the north-east boundary (north of Vernditch Chase) for the same reason.
- **B - Chalk Escarpments:** The western boundary of the LCT defined in the AONB LCA, 2003 was the boundary of the AONB. The revised western boundary of the LCT has been defined by the edge of the surface chalk geology – incorporating the west facing chalk foothills, including the chalk escarpment.
- **C - Open Chalk Downland:** This LCT has been amended slightly in combination with the changes in the adjacent Wooded Chalk Downland LCT.



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- Landscape Character Types:**
- A Wooded Chalk Downland
  - B Chalk Escarpment
  - C Open Chalk Downland
  - D Downland Hills
  - E Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes
  - F Broad Chalk River Valley Floor
  - G Narrow Chalk River Valley
  - H Greensand Terrace
  - I Greensand Hills
  - J Rolling Clay Vale
  - K Rolling Farmland / Woodland Mosaic
  - L Forest Heath Mosaic



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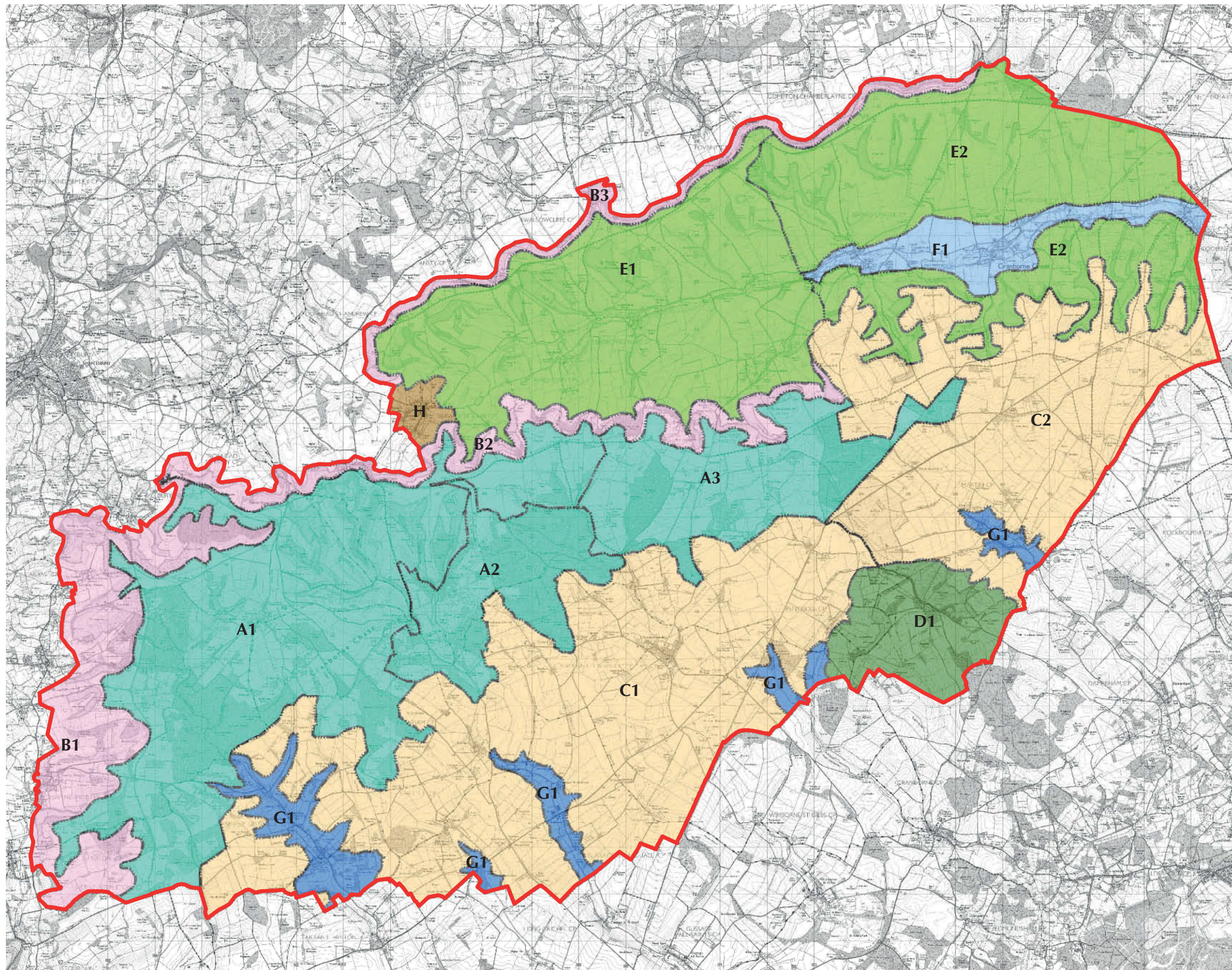
- **D - Downland Hills:** This LCT is predominantly defined by topography. Minor amendments have been made to the southern boundary of the LCT defined in the AONB LCA, 2003 to align with the topography/geology, rather than aligning to the boundary of the AONB.
- **E - Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes:** The 'Chalk River Valleys' LCT defined in the AONB LCA, 2003 has been adjusted to more closely align with the Salisbury LCA, 2008 to include the slopes and valley floor as two separate LCTs in the lower part of the Chalke/Ebble Valley, where the valley floor is considered to be distinctive.
- **F - Broad Chalk River Valley Floor:** The 'Chalk River Valleys' LCT defined in the AONB LCA, 2003 has been adjusted to more closely align with the Salisbury LCA, 2008 to include the slopes and valley floor as two separate LCTs in the lower part of the Chalke/Ebble Valley, where the valley floor is considered to be distinctive.
- **G - Narrow Chalk River Valley:** This LCT is as per the AONB LCA, 2003.
- **H – Greensand Terrace:** This LCT is as per the AONB LCA, 2003 and aligns with the Salisbury LCA, 2008 for areas outside the AONB.

### Local Landscape Character Areas

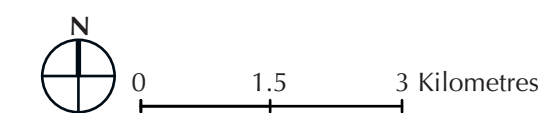
3.2.8 Local Landscape Character Areas are unique and discrete geographical areas of landscape that share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own individual distinctive characteristics/qualities that give the area its particular identity and sense of place.

3.2.9 As shown on **Figure 3.2**, the following Local Landscape Character Areas have been identified within the Landscape Character Types found in the Landscape Partnership Area. The Local Landscape Character Areas have been defined predominately based on distinctive patterns of vegetation, historic land use, settlement and field shapes:

- **A1 - Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland**
- **A2 - Rushmore Park & Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland**
- **A3 - Stonedown Wood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland**
- **B1 - Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment**
- **B2 - Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment**
- **B3 - Donhead St. Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment**
- **C1 - Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland**
- **C2 - Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland**
- **D1 - Pentridge Hill Downland Hills**
- **E1 - Upper Ebble/Chalke River Valley Slopes**
- **E2 - Lower Ebble/Chalke River Valley Slopes**
- **F1 - Lower Ebble/Chalke River Valley Floor**
- **G1 - Tarrant, Crichel, Gussage, Crane and Allen Narrow Chalk River Valleys**



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- Local Landscape Character Areas:**
- A - Wooded Chalk Downland
    - A1 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland
    - A2 Rushmore Park & Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland
    - A3 Stonedown Wood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland
  - B - Chalk Escarpment
    - B1 Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
    - B2 Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment
    - B3 Donhead St. Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment
  - C - Open Chalk Downland
    - C1 Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland
    - C2 Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland
  - D - Downland Hills
    - D1 Pentridge Hill Downland Hills
  - E - Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes
    - E1 Upper Ebble/Chalke River Valley Slopes
    - E2 Lower Ebble/Chalke River Valley Slopes
  - F - Broad Chalk River Valley Floor
    - F1 Lower Ebble/Chalke River Valley Floor
  - G - Narrow Chalk River Valley
    - G1 Tarrant, Crichel, Gussage, Crane and Allen Narrow Chalk River Valleys
  - H Greensand Terrace



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3.2.10 The descriptions developed for each Local Landscape Character Area within the study area are structured as follows:

- **Key Characteristics**
- **Location and Boundaries**
- **Landscape Character**
  - ❖ **Geology, Topography/Landform and Hydrology**
  - ❖ **Land Use and Settlement**
  - ❖ **Tree Cover**
  - ❖ **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape**
  - ❖ **Biodiversity**
  - ❖ **Historic Environment**
  - ❖ **Designations**
- **What's Important and Why?**
  - ❖ **Landscape Qualities**
  - ❖ **Landscape and Visual Sensitivities**
  - ❖ **Strength of Character**
  - ❖ **Forces for Change**
- **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.2.11 Within the descriptions, 'Chase Chatter' boxes highlight the historic origins of selected local place names. These help to bring the story of local landscapes and places to life.

### 3.3 Wooded Chalk Downland (A)

3.3.1 The Wooded Chalk Downland Landscape Character Type is similar to the Open Chalk Downland landscape type in terms of its underlying geology, elevation, hydrology and early history. The most distinguishing feature is its woodland cover which is present in the form of large woods, shelter belts, copses, and clumps creating a series of enclosed spaces or 'rooms' surrounded by trees. This creates a downland mosaic of woodland, grassland and arable land that wraps around the steeply undulating landscape of upstanding chalk ridges and deeply incised combes.

3.3.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:<sup>12</sup>

- An elevated downland landscape with dramatic intersecting combe valleys and rounded upstanding ridges.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping higher ground.
- A well wooded landscape with large woods, shelter belts, copses, and clumps creating a series of enclosed spaces or 'rooms' surrounded by trees.
- Mosaic of unenclosed downland, improved grassland and arable fields, dating from 19th century enclosure, between the woodland.
- Chalk grassland and ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats.
- Typically low density, scattered settlement of individual farmsteads with the occasional downland village or Medieval hunting lodge.
- Visible archaeological features including Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows, prehistoric to Romano-British earthworks and field systems.
- Panoramic views from upstanding chalk ridges to adjacent ridges and into valleys/combes.

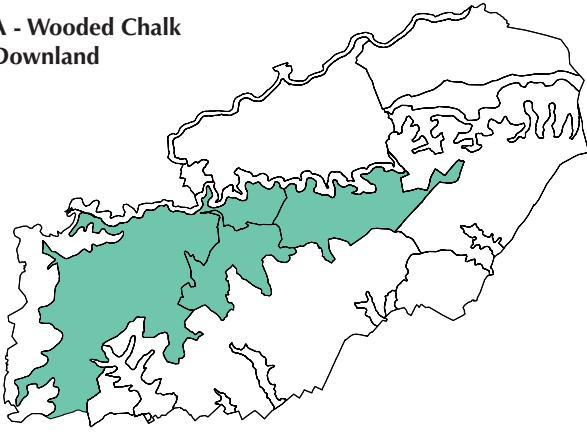
3.3.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

- A1: Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland
- A2: Rushmore Park and Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland
- A3: Stonedown Wood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland

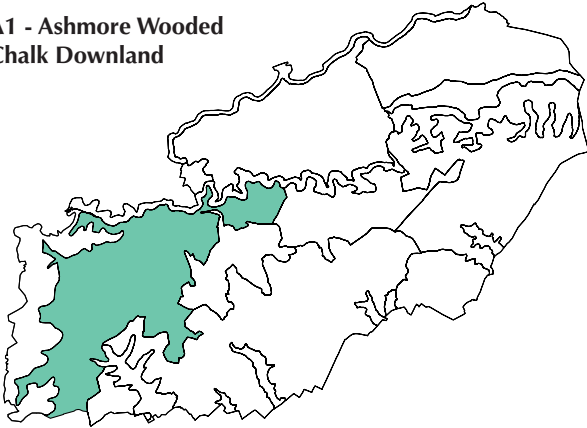
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<sup>12</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

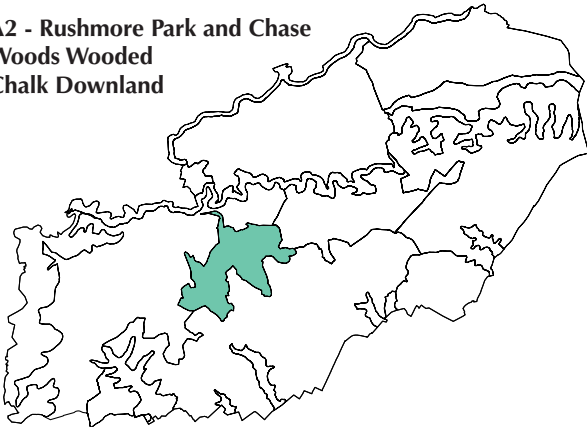
**A - Wooded Chalk Downland**



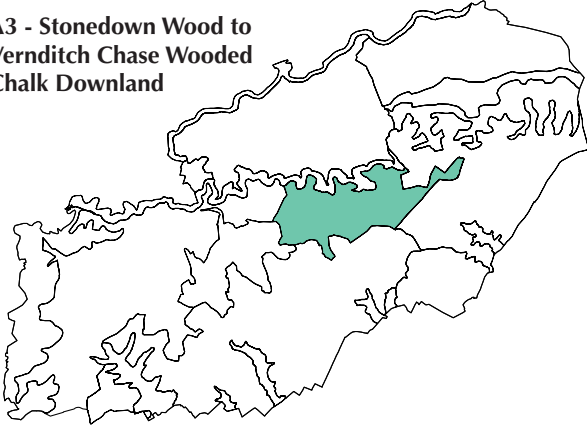
**A1 - Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland**



**A2 - Rushmore Park and Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland**



**A3 - Stonedown Wood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland**





## A1 - Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland

### Key Characteristics

- An undulating landscape of chalk, deeply eroded in the east to form a series of dry valleys. The landscape is overlain by a mosaic of large and small blocks of woodland, downland and farmland.
- Wide panoramic views and big skies, particularly notable from the higher ground in the north, such as from the top of Win Green.
- Low density pattern of scattered individual farmsteads and nucleated settlements, which include the small villages of Ashmore in the centre of the LLCA and Tollard Royal to the east.
- A number of promoted routes cross the area, including the Wessex Ridgeway Trail and the Hardy Way.
- High levels of tranquillity and noted for its dark skies.
- High quality habitats including deciduous woodland, lowland calcareous grassland and semi-improved grassland.
- A high density of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, a Roman Road and a medieval deer park pale.

### Location and Boundaries

3.3.4 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA is the westernmost of the Wooded Chalk Downland Character Areas, which forms much of the western and central part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme Area. Its northern and western boundaries are defined by the Chalk Escarpment (LLCA B1 Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment in the west and LLCA B2 Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment in the north), and its southern boundary by the change to the Open Chalk Downland LLCA C1 Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland. In the east, its boundary is defined by the change to a more managed, parkland character, LLCA A2 Rushmore Park and Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland.

### Landscape Character

3.3.5 In overview, the Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA is an extensively wooded area of chalk downland. Settlement is sparse, comprising two small villages and a number of farmsteads, and land use between the woodland is predominantly arable farmland. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, Topography/Landform and Hydrology:** The character area lies on an undulating and eroded chalk plateau, with local deposits of Clay-with-Flints. The chalk is deeply eroded in the eastern part of the LLCA in a series of dry, chalk valleys, including Ashgrove Bottom, Ashcombe Bottom, Malacombe Bottom and Rotherley Bottom. The highest parts of the LLCA are found along the ridge line in the north, with topography ranging between

277m AOD at the top of Win Green and 100m AOD near Tollard Royal. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** There are two small villages within the LLCA, Ashmore and Tollard Royal. Land use is a mosaic of farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland. The farmland is predominantly arable with some pastoral land, with scattered farmsteads, including Ashmore Farm, Ashgrove Farm, Sutton Hill Farm and Spring Farm. The B3081 cuts through the centre of the area from Tollard Royal in the east in a north-western direction. Minor roads cross the area, including connections to Ashmore in the centre of the LLCA. The area includes a system of historic, broadly north/south route ways. This pattern has been infilled by modern permissive paths and Rights of Way along the county boundary and older 19th century enclosure roads running east west<sup>13</sup>. The Wessex Ridgeway Trail promoted route passes through the LLCA. The Dorset section starts in Tollard Royal and is approximately 58 miles long, ending in Lyme Regis. It is one of the links in a prehistoric route, often called the Greater Ridgeway, from The Wash to the South Devon coast. This route is an extension of the Ridgeway National Trail to the south-west. The Hardy Way, a 217 mile, circular, long distance walk also passes through the area as does the Ox Drove, an ancient track.

#### *Chase Chatter - Ashmore*

At a height of 720 feet, Ashmore is one of Dorset's most remote and most appealing villages. At its centre is its well-known pond, possibly a type of dew pond that only dries out rarely. The village possesses many cottages from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century that employ a particularly pleasing blend of brick, local building materials and thatch.<sup>14</sup>

- **Tree Cover:** Woodland cover in this area is extensive, comprising both large blocks of woodland such as the Ashmore Wood complex (incorporating Fontmell Wood, Ashley Knapp, West Wood, Stubhampton Bottom together with Great Peaky Coppice, Payne Coppice and Spinney Pitts Coppice) in the south east and smaller blocks and strips of woodland, such as Wiltshire Copse (located to the east of Ashmore) and Farnham Woods (to the south-west of Tollard Royal). The valleys are typically wooded on their steep sides in contrast to the more open downland on the ridges above. Much of the woodland is ancient, reflecting the origins of Cranborne Chase as a royal hunting ground.
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has some of the most tranquil areas within the wider CC&WWD AONB<sup>15</sup>. Win Green is also acknowledged as one of the top 10

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<sup>13</sup> Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (2009) Historic Environment Action Plans Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood.

<sup>14</sup> John Chaffey in a 'fascinating, timeless landscape' Published in December '09 <http://www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2009/12/the-face-of-dorset-cranborne-chase/>

<sup>15</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Tranquility Mapping (July 2010)

stargazing locations within the CC&WWD AONB<sup>16</sup>. The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the higher ground in the north, especially from the top of Win Green and the surrounding elevated downland where woodland is sparse. These views extend to the Isle of Wight in the south-east to the Quantock Hills far in the north-west. The open landscape and skyline of the downland in the north, bordered by dramatic scarp slopes is exposed and can be windy. These features combine to give a feeling of remoteness. There is a stark contrast between the openness of the ridges and downland and the shelter of the wooded valleys, providing a variety of experience.

- **Biodiversity:** key biodiversity features in the landscape comprise:
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation.
  - ❖ Unimproved chalk grassland in places on higher ground in the north.
  - ❖ Extensive woodland coverage, predominantly broadleaved or mixed, but with some pockets of conifer, particularly in the south. Many of these woodlands are ancient, though some of these ancient woodlands have been subject to widespread replanting, diminishing their ecological value.
  
- **Historic Environment:** This LLCA formed part of the inner area of the historic Cranborne Chase hunting grounds, which was divided into a series of walks. These provided the infrastructure through which the hunting grounds could be maintained. There were eight named Walks, and six of these were grouped into the inner Chase bounds forming the heartland of the Chase<sup>17</sup>. The LLCA has ancient woodland at its core and is associated with ancient assarts and enclosures. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century the woodland in the area has been steadily transformed from coppice woodland to high forest<sup>18,19</sup>. The LLCA has a high density of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites. There are numerous Bronze Age round barrows, and surviving earthworks indicating late prehistoric to Romano-British settlements and field systems. A Roman Road between Badbury Rings and Bath dissects the LLCA with several parts scheduled as ancient monuments. Other Scheduled Monuments include Harbin's Park, a medieval deer park pale, located in the south of the LLCA, dating to as early as 1279. The monument includes the bank and ditch which defines part of the boundary of a medieval deer park, west of Harbin's Park Farm. A small number of ancient fieldscapes (Pre-1800 Fields) are found across the LLCA. These are predominantly found to the west of Harbin's Park and include an extensive area of cohesive assarts, but there is also a large example of Pre-1800 field

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<sup>16</sup> Chasing Stars Website <http://www.chasingstars.org.uk/uploads/docs/top10.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (2009) Historic Environment Action Plans Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood.

<sup>18</sup> Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB (2009) Historic Environment Action Plans Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood.

<sup>19</sup> Oxford English Dictionary - High Forest: "Forest raised wholly or mainly from seed, especially as opposed to pollarded or coppiced forest"

system around Higher Bridmore Farm in the north-west of the area. A mosaic of 18th and 19th Century fields (a combination of both Parliamentary and Planned Enclosure) are dominant around Ashmore, to the west and north-west of Tollard Royal and around Troy Down in the north-west of the area. There are also a series of 18th and 19th Century fields to the west of the Ashmore Woods complex which includes areas that are classed as large scale enclosure of downland. 20th Century fields are the more dominant field type on the more elevated downland in the north of the area (e.g. close to Win Green and Rotherley Down) but are also present around Caesar’s Camp, to the west of Farnham Woods and to the north of Harbin’s Park. These are typically new, enlarged or reclaimed fields created in the second half of the 20th Century.

*Chase Chatter - Tollard Royal*  
 The ‘Royal’ refers to the royal hunting lodge that dates back to King John who used the area for hunting on the Cranborne Chase.<sup>20</sup>

- **Designations:** conservation designations specific to the LLCA are highlighted below.

Designation Type	Name/Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cranborne Chase</li> <li>• Handcocks Bottom</li> <li>• Rotherley Downs</li> <li>• Winklebury Hill</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade I: (1 No) West Lodge, the part in the parish of Iwerne Minster</li> <li>• Grade II*: (2 No) King John’s House (old royal hunting lodge) and the Church of St Peter Ad Vincula, both in Tollard Royal</li> <li>• Grade II: (37 No) for example, the Church of St Nicholas, Ashmore and Tollard Royal and Rushmore War Memorial, Tollard Royal</li> </ul>
Registered Parks & Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II: (2 No) Part of Rushmore Park and part of Stepleton House</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	32 No in total, examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 bowl barrows, several round barrows and 1 long barrow</li> <li>• Several complexes of Iron Age and Romano-British settlements</li> <li>• Harbin’s Park, a medieval deer park pale</li> <li>• Linear boundary and sections of Roman road</li> <li>• Cross-dyke and sections of cross-ridge dyke</li> <li>• Winklebury camp and Winklebury Hill earthworks</li> <li>• Wermere pond</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Tollard Royal Village website. <http://tollardroyal.com/about/>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A distinctive, undulating landscape of chalk, deeply eroded in the east forming a series of dry, chalk valleys.
- The landscape is covered by a strong pattern of large and small blocks of woodland, and farmland.
- Wide panoramic views and big skies, particularly notable from the higher ground in the north, such as from the top of Win Green.
- High levels of tranquillity and noted for its dark skies.
- Habitats of high ecological value, including chalk grassland and ancient woodland.
- A high density of archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, a Roman Road and a medieval deer park pale.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.3.6 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views from the higher, more open ground.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including large and small blocks of woodland, downland and farmland.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows, particularly in lower lying areas.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including extant historic properties and upstanding archaeological remains (such as bowl barrows).

### ***Strength of Character***

3.3.7 The strength of landscape character in this LLCA is judged to be strong. This landscape displays a distinctive pattern, including the mosaic of woodland and farmland/downland, and includes a number of visible remnant historic features including upstanding Bronze Age barrows and ancient woodland. The condition of the landscape is considered to be predominantly good, as the landscape is well managed, though condition of ecological habitats is variable, with three SSSIs in a predominantly 'unfavourable recovering' condition, and one (Winklebury Hill) in a favourable condition<sup>21</sup>. Some ancient woodland sites are 'ancient replanted' rather than 'ancient semi-natural'.

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<sup>21</sup> Natural England – Winklebury Hill SSSI.

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportConditionSummary.aspx?SiteCode=S1003211&ReportTitle=Winklebury%20Hill%20SSSI>

### ***Forces for Change***

3.3.8 The key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Decline in coppice woodland due to changing management techniques, and ancient woodland replanting.
- Tree diseases could impact the nature of the woodland or harm specimen trees.
- Loss of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, in addition to poor management of remaining hedgerows.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.3.9 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the highly rural, tranquil character and sense of remoteness and isolation of the LLCA with its distinctive and varied topography, and land cover of woodland, farmland and downland.

3.3.10 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Where possible, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of the sense of enclosure, particularly in lower lying parts of the LLCA. Where appropriate, restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows.
- Where possible, limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Where possible, enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Retain and enhance areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encouraging management to improve species diversity. Consider opportunities to extend and link chalk grassland habitats, whilst preserving the biodiversity associated with some of the farmland areas.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in areas of access land, which contain sensitive ecological habitats.

## A2 - Rushmore Park & Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland

### Key Characteristics

- An undulating landscape of chalk with a more subtle and less eroded and dramatic landform.
- Dominated by the designed, landscaped parkland of Rushmore Park (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) an ancient woodland of Chase Woods, with avenues created to give views across the wider landscapes of the area.
- Golf course and school ground landscapes within Rushmore Park.
- A number of promoted routes and footpaths cross the area including the Hardy Way and Shire Rack, the latter following the historic border between Wiltshire and Dorset.
- High levels of tranquillity although not particularly accessible due to the mostly private land, few roads and no hamlets/villages.
- Significant upstanding and known buried archaeology present which is typical of the wider area.

### Location and Boundaries

3.3.11 Rushmore Park and Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA is the central of the three Wooded Chalk Downland Character Areas, and forms part of the centre of the Landscape Partnership Scheme Area. Its area is defined by the extent of the designed landscaped parkland of Rushmore Park (Grade II listed Park and Garden), including Rushmore Golf Club and Larmer Tree Gardens, together with the wooded area of Chase Woods. To the west its boundary is defined by the transition to more open fields in the eastern part of LLCA A1 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland, and its southern boundary by the change to the LLCA C1 Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland. In the east, its boundary is defined by the change from the woodland cover of Chase Woods to the more open downland area of West Chase.

### Landscape Character

3.3.12 In overview, Rushmore Park and Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA is an extensively wooded area of chalk downland, with the designed parkland of Rushmore Park and the woodland of Chase Woods as its defining features. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** This LLCA lies on an undulating chalk plateau, with local deposits of Clay-with-Flints. The chalk is less eroded than LLCA A1 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland overall, apart from Cuttice Bottom, with the landform less dramatic, and gently sloping from north-west to south-east. The highest parts of the LLCA are where it meets the Ox Drove in the north near Bridmore Belt, with topography ranging between 250m AOD and 97m AOD. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** There are no settlements within the LLCA. Land use is predominantly the designed parkland of Rushmore Park and the woodland of Chase Woods. Banked beech hedges, iron railings and beech avenues features of Rushmore Park and its parkland setting. The B3081 passes through the south-east of the area in a south-eastern direction, towards Sixpennyndley. More minor roads connect Rushmore Park with the wider road network. The area is associated with an irregular system of north south route ways which link into key access routes to Chase Woods. These historic route ways have been infilled by modern permissive paths and Rights of Way including The Hardy Way, a 217 mile, circular, long distance walk, which follows the Shire Rack, an ancient track along the historic border between Dorset and Wiltshire. A number of other Rights of Way pass through Chase Woods.
  
- **Tree Cover:** Chase Woods makes up the eastern half of this LLCA, most of which is classified as Ancient Woodland. There is 537ha of Ancient Woodland within the character area, 53% of the LLCA. Other small blocks of woodland are scattered across the LLCA. The woodlands of Rushmore Park and the wider Rushmore Estate contain one of the largest blocks of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland in southern England.
  
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has some of the most tranquil areas within the wider CC&WWD AONB<sup>22</sup>. This is particularly notable at Chase Woods, a result of the lack of settlement, major roads and generally restricted public access (being mainly privately owned land). Rushmore Park, which includes a golf course and school, has a sense of tranquillity. The land rises at the northern part of the LLCA from where there are views of the Dorset coast. The avenues cut into Chase Woods in the late 19th Century provide views out across the wider landscape. To the south of Tollard Park lies Larmer Park, at the eastern corner of which is Park View Point. From here there are views to the north-west of King John's House in Tollard Royal village and to the north into the other areas of parkland.
  
- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Extensive woodland coverage, predominantly broadleaved or mixed in the smaller pockets and belts of woodland, but with some pockets of conifer, particularly in Chase Woods. Many of these woodlands are ancient, though some of these ancient woodlands have been subject to widespread replanting, diminishing their ecological value.
  - ❖ Parkland with scattered mature trees.

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<sup>22</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Tranquillity Mapping (July 2010)



- Historic Environment:** Together with LLCA (A1) Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland and LLCA (A3) Stonedown Wood and Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland, this LLCA formed part of the inner area of the historic Cranborne Chase hunting grounds. The parkland at Rushmore Park is a late 19th century park laid out by General Pitt-Rivers incorporating a smaller 17th century enclosure and parts of a medieval deer park. Chase Woods, which form the eastern part of the area, is a large block of Ancient Woodland which would have formed part of the ancient hunting forest of Cranborne Chase. Beech avenues planted by Pitt-Rivers, run north-eastwards across the main area of the park extending beyond it into Chase Woods, connecting the parkland and woodland landscapes. The Larmer Tree Gardens, in the southwest of the LLCA, were created by General Pitt Rivers in 1880 as pleasure grounds. The garden contains a collection of ornate buildings, trees and arbours.<sup>23</sup> The field pattern in this LLCA is varied. There are small blocks of Post-1800 Woodland mainly to the south of Rushmore Park, planted in both the 19th and 20th Centuries. There is one large Pre-1800 assart field in the north of Chase Woods. Three large 19th Century (Planned Enclosure) fields exist in the very south of the area. A few 20th Century fields exist within the area, these being mainly new, large fields created in both the first and second half of the 20th Century. The LLCA has a number of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites. Other Scheduled Monuments include The Carrion Tree Rack, a linear boundary within Rushmore Park.

*Chase Chatter - Larmer Tree Gardens*

The garden takes its name from a magnificent landmark tree (probably a Wych Elm) that stood on this site as early as the 10th century. The origin of the word 'Larmer' is so ancient that it can only be guessed at. Originally spelt Lavermere, 'Mere' would certainly mean a boundary, while 'Laver' might have come from the Anglo-Saxon 'Laur'. King John (1189-1216) hunted in this area many times and tradition states he met with his huntsmen under the branches of the Larmer Tree.<sup>24</sup>

- Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cranborne Chase</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade II: (12 No) including Rushmore House and historic features within Rushmore Park</li> </ul>
Registered Parks & Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade II: Rushmore Park incorporating a small 17th Century enclosure and parts of a medieval deer park.</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	7 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 bowl barrows and a round barrow</li> <li>The Carrion Tree Rack, a linear boundary</li> <li>Bronze Age enclosure with associated field system and round barrow cemetery</li> <li>Iron Age and Romano-British settlement remains</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> Historic England – Rushmore Park List Entry (1000542) <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000542>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.larmer-tree.co.uk/gardens/history/>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A distinctive combination of the designed parkland landscape within Rushmore Park and the woodland of Chase Woods, the latter having had avenues cut in the 19th century to create views over the wider landscapes.
- Long distance views from the higher ground towards the Dorset coast and beyond.
- Some of the highest levels of tranquillity within the Landscape Partnership Scheme area and wider CC&WWD AONB, there being very few roads and no settlements within the LLCA.
- Habitats of high ecological value, including the ancient woodland of Chase Woods, historic trees and hedgerows.
- A significant number of archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, some of these features still being visible in the landscape.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.3.13 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long distance views from the higher ground.
- Parkland landscapes associated with Rushmore Park including the pleasure grounds of Larmer Tree Gardens.
- Avenues through Chase Woods created by General Pitt-Rivers in the late 19th century and associated views over the wider landscape.
- Footpaths along historic boundaries such as the Shire Rack.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including Rushmore House and the connected features within the garden and parkland (e.g. walled garden, etc), Larmer Tree Gardens and archaeological remains (such as bowl barrows).

### ***Strength of Character***

3.3.14 The strength of character of the landscape in this LLCA is judged to be strong. This landscape exhibits a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, such as the unique combination of dramatic landform, mature parkland within Rushmore Park and survival of the Chase Woods. The presence of individual parkland trees and avenues created within the woodland add to the strong character. Overall the landscape is well managed with much of the area forming part of Rushmore Park.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.3.15 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Decline in coppice woodland due to changing management techniques, and ancient woodland replanting.
- Tree diseases could impact the nature of the woodland or harm specimen trees.
- Loss of hedgerows and mature hedgerow or parkland trees, in addition to poor management of remaining historic hedgerows.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.3.16 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the mature parkland and ancient woodland of this LLCA while retaining its high levels of tranquillity. Elements requiring restoration are estate boundaries and historic hedgerows, and active management of the ancient woodland is required to enhance its ecological value.

3.3.17 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Reinvigorate woodland management within this LLCA. Traditional management techniques such as coppicing should be considered, as should marketing of local wood products, to restore the character of coppice woodland and wood pasture.
- Conserve the parkland character by promoting a programme of tree planting to replace individual and parkland trees as they die.
- Where possible, enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Where appropriate, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing and restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows, especially where these relate to historic estate boundaries.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

## A3 - Stonedown Wood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland

### Key Characteristics

- A generally less eroded and dramatic chalk landscape, sloping gently from north-west to south-east on the chalk dip slope.
- No settlements or major roads, with land use a mosaic of farmland with significant blocks of woodland.
- Quiet, minor roads generally running north-south pass through the LLCA linking settlements in the Chalke Valley to the north with the downland villages.
- A number of promoted routes and footpaths cross the area including the Hardy Way and Shire Rack, the latter following the historic border between Wiltshire and Dorset.
- Significant areas of open access land including Stonedown Wood and Vernditch Chase.
- Wide panoramic views and big skies, particularly notable from the higher ground.
- High quality habitats including deciduous woodland and semi-improved grassland.
- Part of Martin Down National Nature Reserve falls within this LLCA, noted for its calcareous grassland habitats
- High density of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, a Roman road and a medieval boundary bank.

### Location and Boundaries

3.3.18 This LLCA is the easternmost of the Wooded Chalk Downland Character Areas, which forms much of the central part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme Area. Its northern boundary is defined by the LLCA B2 Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment, its western boundary by the edge of Chase Woods (A2) and its eastern and southern boundaries by the change to the LLCA C1 Chettle to Woodyates and C2 Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland landscapes.

### Landscape Character

3.3.19 In overview, the Stonewood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA is an extensively wooded area of chalk downland. Settlement is sparse, comprising of a number of farmsteads and land use between the woodland is predominantly arable farmland. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The character area lies on an undulating chalk plateau, with local deposits of Clay-with-Flints. The chalk is generally less deeply eroded in this LLCA than LLCA (A1), with the landform being less dramatic, sloping gently from north-west to south-east. The highest parts of the LLCA are found along the ridge line in the north, with topography ranging between 225m AOD on the Ox Drove to 105m AOD on the southern side of Stonedown Wood. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** There are no settlements or major roads within this LLCA. Land use is a mosaic of farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland. The farmland is predominantly arable with some pastoral land, with scattered farmsteads, including West Chase Farm, Middle Chase Farm, East Chase Farm, Hut Farmhouse and Hut and Lodge Farm. Minor roads cut generally north south through the area linking villages in the Ebble [Chalke] Valley (e.g. Ebbesbourne Wake, Bowerchalke and Broad Chalke) with downland villages to the south of the LLCA such as Sixpenny Handley and Martin. Rights of Way cross the LLCA following the historic route ways detailed in LLCA A1 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland and LLCA A2 Rushmore Park and Chase Woods Wooded Chalk Downland. Open access land is a significant feature of this LLCA, including 281Ha, or 19.2% of the area. Both Stonedown Wood and Vernditch Chase are dedicated for open access. The Ox Drove track runs along the ridge way in the north of the LLCA, part of which is a Right of Way.
  
- **Tree Cover:** Woodland cover is less extensive in this area than the other two Wooded Chalk Downland character areas. Three large blocks of woodland can be found across the LLCA, these being Stonedown Wood, Vernditch Chase and Knighton Wood. Other smaller blocks of woodland are scattered across the LLCA, such as Denbose Wood, Hill Copse, Chettle Head Copse and Moody's Gore.
  
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** This LLCA is the least tranquil of the all those within the Wooded Chalk Downland character type, although tranquillity is still high when compared to that found near settlements or busier roads within the CC&WWD AONB. The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the higher ground in the north (e.g. Ox Drove) and the surrounding elevated downland. Martin Down NNR is noted for having great views across Cranborne Chase, and the lack of light pollution at night makes it an ideal area for star gazing<sup>25</sup>. The open landscape and skyscape of the downland is vast and windy, with views towards the Dorset coast. Experience of walking in the wooded areas varies dramatically through the seasons, particularly as beech is a dominant species within both Stonedown Wood and Vernditch Chase, demonstrating striking autumn colours.<sup>26</sup>
  
- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation, with some areas of pasture.
  - ❖ Extensive woodland coverage, predominantly broadleaved, but with some small pockets of conifer or mixed woodland. Some of these woodlands are ancient, though parts of

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<sup>25</sup> Martin and Tidpit National Nature Reserve Website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hampshires-national-nature-reserves/hampshires-national-nature-reserves>

<sup>26</sup> Forestry Commission – Stonedown Wood and Vernditch Chase [https://englandconsult.forestry.gov.uk/forest-districts/cranborne-chase-north-dorset-forest-plan/supporting\\_documents/2.1.6%20Cranborne%20Chase%20%20North%20Dorset%20%20Stonedown%20%20Vernditch.pdf](https://englandconsult.forestry.gov.uk/forest-districts/cranborne-chase-north-dorset-forest-plan/supporting_documents/2.1.6%20Cranborne%20Chase%20%20North%20Dorset%20%20Stonedown%20%20Vernditch.pdf)

these ancient woodlands have been subject to widespread replanting, diminishing their ecological value.

- Historic Environment:** Together with LLCAs A1 and A2, this LLCA formed part of the inner area of the historic Cranborne Chase hunting grounds. Two large blocks of Ancient Woodland form a key part of this area – Stonedown Wood and Vernditch Chase. There are several other blocks of Ancient Woodland scattered across the area, also part of the former Cranborne Chase ancient hunting forest. Blocks of Post-1800 Woodland are also present, mainly forming part of Vernditch Chase, these were planted in the second half of the 20th Century. Outside the wooded areas, this LLCA is dominated by 18th and 19th Century fields, with parliamentary enclosure being especially dominant around Stonedown Wood. Only a couple of remnant pre-1800 fields are found within the LLCA, two areas of assarts in the north-west of the area within Knighton Wood and Moody’s Gore. Some 20th Century fields are present on the elevated ground in the north of the area, typically created in the second half of the 20th Century. This LLCA has a high density of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites. There are numerous long barrows, bowl barrows, linear earthworks and part of Bokerley Dyke, a linear earthwork c.5.75km long. A Roman Road between Sorviodonum (Old Sarum) and Vindocladia (Badbury) forms the south-eastern edge of Vernditch Chase. Other Scheduled Monuments include a Bronze Age long barrow and Grim’s Ditch, a medieval boundary bank.
- Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cranborne Chase</li> <li>• Bowerchalke Downs</li> <li>• Chickengrove Bottom</li> <li>• Knighton Downs and Wood</li> <li>• Martin and Tidpit Downs</li> </ul>
National Nature Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin and Tidpit Downs</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	Grade I: (1 No) Cutlers
Scheduled Monuments	20 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 No long barrows, including 2 No within and near to Vernditch Chase</li> <li>• 2 No bowl barrows</li> <li>• Bokerley Dyke and Grim’s Ditch (a medieval boundary bank)</li> <li>• 3 No sections of Roman road between Sorviodunum (Old Sarum) and Vindocladia (Badbury)</li> <li>• Various sections of linear earthworks</li> </ul>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A distinctive, undulating landscape of chalk, although less deeply eroded than that of the Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA (A1). The landscape is covered by a strong pattern of large and small blocks of woodland, together with farmland, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows.
- Wide panoramic views and big skies, particularly notable from the higher ground in the north of the LLCA, such as along the Ox Drove track.
- High levels of tranquillity, and Martin Down National NNR noted for its dark skies.
- Habitats of high ecological value, including chalk grassland and ancient woodland.
- A high density of archaeological remains including prehistoric sites such as Bokerley Ditch, a Roman Road, and a medieval boundary bank (Grim's Ditch). Some of these features are still visible in the landscape.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.3.20 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views from the higher, more open ground.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including large and small blocks of woodland, downland and mainly arable farmland, typically with large geometric fields.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows, particularly in lower lying areas.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including upstanding archaeological remains (such as the Neolithic Bokerley Ditch and medieval boundary bank of Grim's Ditch).

### ***Strength of Character***

3.3.21 The strength of landscape character in this LLCA is judged to be strong. This landscape displays a distinctive pattern, including the mosaic of woodland and farmland/downland, and includes a number of visible remnant historic features including upstanding Bronze Age barrows and ancient woodland, the latter being the eastern part of the historic hunting forest of Cranborne Chase. The condition of the landscape is considered to be predominantly good, as the landscape is well managed, though condition of ecological habitats is variable, with three SSSIs

in a predominantly 'unfavourable recovering' condition, and one (Bowerchalke Downs) in a mainly favourable condition<sup>27</sup>.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.3.22 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Recreational pressure on ancient woodland sites – the two largest of these are open access land.
- Loss of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, in addition to poor management of remaining hedgerows.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- Requirement for sustainable woodland management including traditional maintenance techniques where appropriate to conserve ancient woodlands and surviving areas of wood pasture and coppice.
- Damage to ancient monuments from intensive arable cultivation.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.3.23 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the highly rural, peaceful character and sense of remoteness and isolation of the LLCA; with its land cover of woodland, farmland and downland.

3.3.24 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly on open access land within the LLCA, especially where these also contain sensitive ecological sites.
- During management interventions, opportunities for habitat enhancement should be taken to increase the ecological value of the woodlands and provide connecting habitats for associated species.
- Where possible, enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.

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<sup>27</sup> Natural England – Bowerchalke Downs SSSI.

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportConditionSummary.aspx?SiteCode=S1003230&ReportTitle=Bowerchalke%20Downs%20SSSI>



- Retain and enhance areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encouraging management to increase species diversity. Consider opportunities to extend and link chalk grassland habitats, whilst preserving the biodiversity associated with some of the farmland areas.
- Where appropriate, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of the sense of enclosure, particularly in lower lying parts of the LLCA and along roads and tracks. Restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows where appropriate.
- Where possible, limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

### 3.4 Chalk Escarpment (B)

3.4.1 The escarpments, which often mark the transition between chalk and adjoining rocks, are amongst the most dramatic elements of the chalk landscape. Such escarpments are often formed where the layers of chalk have been compressed to form a fold, or where the chalk has been faulted, resulting in accelerated erosion along the line of weakness. The retreating chalk strata stand as steep escarpments, often towering over the older rocks which are exposed at the base. The old chalk 'surface' remains behind the escarpment as a gently sloping, often highly eroded dip slope.<sup>28</sup>

3.4.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:<sup>29</sup>

- Dramatic chalk escarpments eroded into rounded spurs and deep combs.
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk giving rise to the predominantly calcareous soils.
- Areas of unimproved chalk grassland of international importance on steeper slopes.
- Field systems on the lower slopes, including strip lynchets close to medieval villages sited along the springline.
- Improved pasture and arable fields occupy the shallower, more accessible, slopes where straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure.
- Hanging woodland and sunken lanes are features of the steep, enclosing chalk combs.
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscapes.

3.4.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

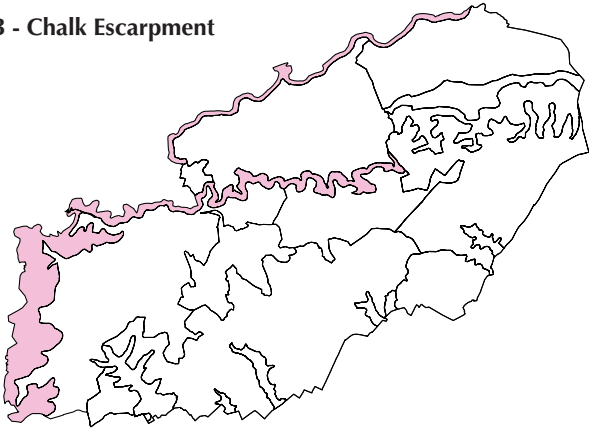
- B1: Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
- B2: Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment
- B3: Donhead St. Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment

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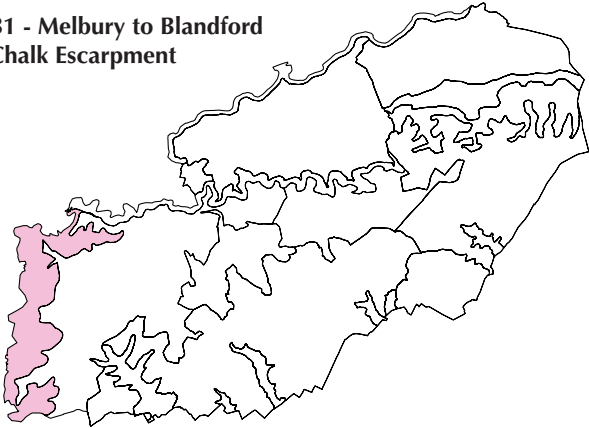
<sup>28</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

<sup>29</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

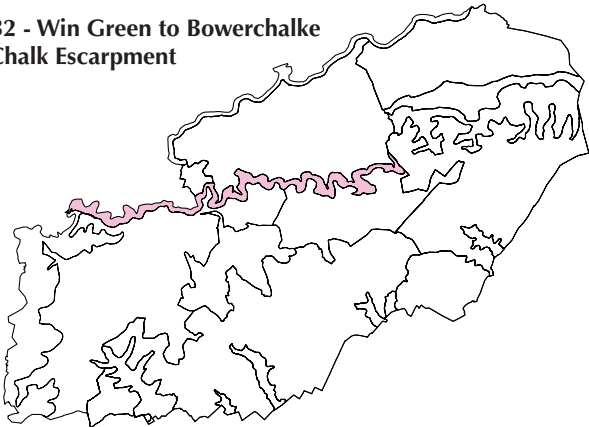
**B - Chalk Escarpment**



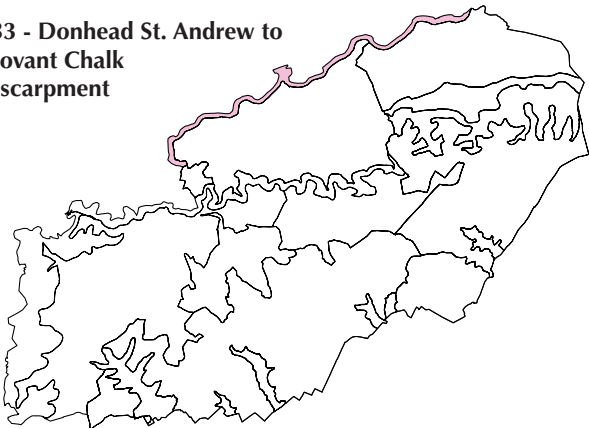
**B1 - Melbury to Blandford  
Chalk Escarpment**



**B2 - Win Green to Bowerchalke  
Chalk Escarpment**



**B3 - Donhead St. Andrew to  
Fovant Chalk  
Escarpment**



## B1 – Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment

### Key Characteristics

- A largely continuous west facing chalk escarpment, eroded into valleys in places, with sharp changes in gradient along the foot and crest of the scarp
- Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, a notable example of unimproved chalk grassland of international importance.
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscape but especially over Blackmore Vale to the west.
- The steep, enclosing chalk combs are clothed in hanging woodland in places and sunken lanes are a feature.
- The Wessex Ridgeway promoted route pass through the LLCA and there is a significant amount of land, especially in the north, designated as open access land.
- There is a strong sense of openness and exposure on the crest of the scarps.

### Location and Boundaries

3.4.4 The Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment LLCA forms the transition from the chalk landscapes of the Wooded Chalk Downland and Open Chalk Downland Landscape Types to the lowland clays of the Stour valley. It is the westernmost of the Chalk Escarpment Character Areas, forming the western boundary of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. Its western boundary is defined by the change in geology and topography, with its edge along the base of the escarpment. The northern boundary is determined by a change in aspect of the chalk escarpment, being predominantly west facing within this LLCA. To the north of Melbury Abbas, near Zig Zag Hill, the escarpment turns east to join LLCA B2 Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment. In the east, the crest of the escarpment marks the boundary of LLCA A1 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland, the transition to this landscape evidenced by the levelling of topography and regular occurrence of woodland.

### Landscape Character

3.4.5 In overview, the Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment LLCA is a largely continuous west facing chalk escarpment. Settlement is generally sparse. Woodland, unimproved chalk grassland and panoramic views are key features. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** This LLCA is strongly defined by its chalk geology, the edge of which forms the scarp. The scarp is largely continuous, though eroded into valleys in places. There are sharp changes in gradient along both the crest and foot of the scarp, defining the edge of the LLCA. The highest parts of the LLCA are found in the north-west, with topography ranging between 263m AOD at the top of Melbury Beacon to 80m around Iwerne Minster. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- Land Use and Settlement:** The steep topography of the escarpment means that settlements are located mainly at the foot of the scarp along the springline. A series of nucleated villages are found at the foot of the escarpment within the LLCA including Iwerne Minster. The scarp provides the backdrop and setting to these springline settlements that lie both within and outside the Landscape Partnership Area. Land use is a mosaic of open downland and farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland. In many cases, there are arable fields on gentler slopes and pastures on steeper slopes, with areas of chalk grassland and woodland on the steepest slopes. This woodland provides connection to the adjacent LLCA A1 Ashmore Wooded Chalk Downland beyond the scarp. Field boundaries are predominantly post and wire fencing, with some hedgerows along roads. The A350 between Blandford Forum and Shaftesbury closely follows the edge of the LLCA on its western boundary, also forming the boundary of the CC&WWD AONB. The B3081 between Shaftesbury and Tollard Royal passes through the very north of the LLCA at Zig Zag Hill. Narrow lanes bordered by high hedges and roadside woodland link the scarp-foot villages to the chalk downs above. This LLCA contains a number of Public Rights of Way (including the Wessex Ridgeway), connecting lowland and upland areas. In the north of the LLCA, between Fontmell Magna and Melbury Abbas, much of the escarpment is owned by the National Trust, offering good public access and parking provision. A large proportion of the LLCA, particularly in the north, is designated as open access land. There is also a significant area of Registered Common Land at Melbury Wood providing open public access.
- Tree Cover:** This LLCA is not heavily wooded, but there are small scattered blocks of woodland in places on steeper slopes. Melbury Wood in the north-east of the LLCA is the largest wood within the LLCA. There are Ancient Woodlands at Higher and Lower Furzehill to the south-east of Iwerne Minster.
- Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the top of the chalk escarpments with views over Blackmore Vale to the west, the Vale of Wardour in the north, over the chalk plateau of Cranborne Chase to the east and towards the Dorset coast in the south. In particular, Spread Eagle Hill, which forms part of the National Trust land in the area, provides a vantage point for panoramic views over the Blackmore Vale and the River Stour. There is a strong sense of openness and exposure, emphasised by the contrast between the enclosed valley bottom below and the downland above.

- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Significant areas of chalk grassland in the north of the LLCA
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation on the lower slopes, with pasture on higher and steeper ground.
  - ❖ Some pockets of woodland, predominantly broadleaved. In the south of the LLCA, some of these woodlands are ancient, though parts of these ancient woodlands have been subject to widespread replanting, diminishing their ecological value.
  
- **Historic Environment:** This LLCA formed the western edge of the historic Cranborne Chase hunting grounds. This escarpment has a distinctive pattern of human settlement, including many remains which date back to prehistory. Scheduled Monuments include cross-dykes, lynchets and barrows that are found along the escarpment and in the narrow valleys. The minor road that runs along the escarpment crest is an ancient ridgeway track. The field pattern is created as a result of enclosure of the previously open chalk downland escarpments. The topography of the escarpments has dominated the form that the newly created fields have taken. Only a couple of ancient fieldscapes (Pre-1800 Fields) are found within the LLCA, a large example to the south-east of Iwerne Minster and one at the foot of Fontmell Down. Large, 20th Century fields dominate the LLCA, especially on the higher downland in the north of the area, typically including new or modified fields created in the second half of the 20th Century. These are interspersed with 18th and 19th Century fields with a mixture of both Parliamentary Enclosure and Planned Enclosure. Planned Enclosure is more common around Iwerne Minster.

*Chase Chatter - Melbury Beacon*

At 263 metres the summit of Melbury Hill, Melbury Beacon, is one of the highest points in Dorset. An Armada beacon sited here in 1588 formed part of the chain of signal beacons stretching between London and Plymouth.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dorset Life, April 2012 <http://www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2012/04/melbury-hill-compton-abbas-and-fontmell-down/>

- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fontmell and Melbury Downs</li> <li>• Sutton Combe</li> </ul>
Special Area of Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fontmell and Melbury Downs</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade I: (2 No) Church of St Mary, Iwerne Minster and Tower of the former Church of St Mary, Iwerne Minster</li> <li>• Grade II*: (1 No) The Chantry, Iwerne Minster</li> <li>• Grade II: (43 No) including Old Manor Farmhouse, Compton Abbas, Primary School, Iwerne Minster</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	9 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 No bowl barrows</li> <li>• Sections of cross-dykes and linear boundary</li> <li>• Melbury Beacon and circular enclosure on Melbury Hill</li> <li>• Medieval strip lynchets</li> <li>• Remains of St Mary's Church, East Compton</li> </ul>
Dorset Garden Trust Local List of Historic Parks and Gardens of County Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Springhead</li> </ul>

### What's Important and Why?

#### **Landscape Qualities**

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that make the area memorable are:

- The scarp is a dramatic feature in the landscape, with a distinctive pattern of woodland, scrub and grassland, providing a striking backdrop and setting to settlements along the foot of the scarp and outside the Landscape Partnership Area to the west.
- Panoramic views from the escarpment across Blackmore Vale to the west.
- High levels of tranquillity and dark skies.
- Chalk grassland of Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC contribute to a range of habitats of high ecological value.
- Important archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, the circular enclosure on Melbury Hill and medieval strip lynchets. Some of these features are still visible in the landscape.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.4.6 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views to the west from the crest of the escarpment.
- Open, remote scarp with unenclosed chalk grassland and woodland, contrasting with the enclosed and managed appearance of the lowland created by denser structure of hedges and the scattering of farms and villages at the foot of the scarp.
- Small woodland blocks, copses and mixed/coniferous blocks.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows, particularly in lower lying areas.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including upstanding archaeological remains.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.4.7 The landscape within this LLCA is judged to have a strong character due to the dramatic escarpment with its distinctive pattern of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland. It has a strong sense of place despite the land cover mosaic having changed as a result of mechanised farming on the scarp. The condition of the landscape is judged to be good. Many features of the historic environment (strip lynchets, barrows, cross dykes and fortifications) have survived the less intensive agricultural practices on the steep scarp slopes and the ecological sites are mostly in 'favourable'<sup>31</sup> condition. The extensive chalk grasslands within the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC make a strong contribution to the character of the LLCA.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.4.8 The key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Loss of chalk grassland as a result of intensive arable agricultural practices
- Reduction or change in grazing practice resulting in encroachment of scrub on previously open landscapes.
- Increased recreational activity as a result of the designated open access land could lead to erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities.
- Pressure for new development at the foot of the scarp which could lead to erosion of the traditional nucleated character of the settlements.
- Demand for construction of tall structures, including communication masts / wind turbines.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

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<sup>31</sup> Natural England – Designated Sites. <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>



## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

3.4.9 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the open, remote scarp with its unenclosed grassland encouraging more effective management of the remaining chalk grassland sites and sustainable recreational use of the open access land. Management of ecologically sensitive sites may need to be more effective including improving interpretation for recreational users.

3.4.10 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Protect the open panoramic views across the Blackmore Vale and views of the uncluttered scarp skylines from inappropriate change.
- Maintain the undeveloped character of the scarp and the contrast with the scarp foot villages. New residential developments should respect the distinct form of these ancient villages and should not extend onto the lower scarp slopes.
- Promote sustainable management and recreational access to open access land and viewpoints
- Regulate grazing and pressure on archaeological sites to prevent damage to monuments.
- Promote appropriate grazing regimes to avoid encroachment of scrub.
- Monitor pressures for erection of tall structures and seek to prevent visual clutter on the escarpment skyline.
- Promote the use of visually permeable boundaries such as post and wire fencing to demarcate field units in order to retain the sense of continuity and openness across the escarpment.
- Seek positive management for areas coming out of active farming, notably opportunities for restoration of chalk grassland. Monitor continued encroachment of scrub on the steepest slopes.
- Conserve the distinct pattern of woodland cover. Further woodland planting is not a key objective for this area, with the aim being to maintain the balance of open land and woodland cover.
- Consider opportunities to soften the edges of coniferous plantations through mixed and deciduous planting. Encourage the use of native species along property boundaries.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

## B2 - Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment

### Key Characteristics

- A sinuous and dramatic, north-facing chalk escarpment, interspersed with deep combs and rounded spurs
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscape but especially over the Vale of Wardour and the River Ebble / Chalke Valley.
- In places deciduous woodland follows the lines of the contours in a sinuous form
- Old ox droves, hill forts, barrows and the many grassy tracks carved into the hill slope reflect past patterns of land use.
- Large areas of land designated as open access land.
- The Hardy Way promoted route passes through the LLCA and there is a large amount of land designated as open access land
- There is a strong sense of openness and exposure on the crest of the scarps.

### Location and Boundaries

3.4.11 The Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment (B2) runs from the Zig Zag Hill in the west of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area to Knowle Hill at Mead End. This LLCA forms a transition from the chalk landscapes of the Wooded Chalk Downland to the Broad Chalk Valley Slopes (E) and Greensand Terrace (flat apron of land with underlying geology of Upper Greensand) Landscape Types to the north. It is north facing in contrast to the west facing aspect of the LLCA B1 Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment. The northern boundary is defined by the bottom of the escarpment that rises steeply from the LLCA E1 Upper Ebble / Chalke River Valley Slopes and Greensand Terrace, with the southern boundary marking the crest of the escarpment and the transition to the Wooded Chalk Downland Landscape Type (A). The topography to the east of Knowle Hill is less elevated and dramatic with the escarpment becoming indistinct from the surrounding Open Chalk Downland Landscape Type (C).

### Landscape Character

3.4.12 In overview, the Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment LLCA is a north facing chalk escarpment with bands of deciduous woodland. Settlement is sparse on the upper slopes of the scarp. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** This LLCA is strongly defined by its chalk geology, the edge of which forms the scarp. Although largely continuous, the scarp is far from straight, the chalk having been eroded into steep valleys, separated by rounded spurs. The highest parts of the LLCA are found in the western part of the LLCA, with topography ranging between 260m AOD on the Ox Drove track at the crest of the scarp to 110-115m

AOD at the foot of the scarp at Mead End. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** The steep topography of the chalk escarpment has prevented settlement on the scarp slopes, although individual farmsteads and nucleated settlements are in many cases located close to its base. No settlements fall within this LLCA and farm buildings are few. This LLCA is predominantly open, often unimproved pasture with cattle, sheep and horses grazing the steep slopes. Gentler slopes towards the foot and crest of the scarp are under arable cultivation. Significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland remain on the steep slopes. Mixed and deciduous woodland is also found throughout this LLCA. There are no major roads within the LLCA but the B3081 between Shaftesbury and Tollard Royal does cross it at Zig Zag Hill. A number of other minor roads cross it too, generally from north to south, with one following a historic Roman road, these linking villages on the downs to those in the Ebble / Chalke Valley. Old ox droves, hill forts (e.g. Winklebury above Berwick St John), barrows and the many grassy tracks carved into the hill slope reflect past patterns of land use. This LLCA contains a number of Public Rights of Way (including the Hardy Way) connecting lowland and upland areas. They are an important recreational feature – being popular due to the extent and nature of views. Rights of Way are generally terraced into the slope and provide good connections to the landscapes on either side. One exception to this trend is the byway of the Ox Drove which follows the line of the ridgeline – providing extensive views near to Win Green. A large proportion of the LLCA, has been designated as open access land. This is especially the case between Charlton Down and Pincombe Down, particularly around Win Green, in the centre of the LLCA. This designation relates to the remnant downland areas and is therefore found on the steepest scarps.
- **Tree Cover:** Deciduous woodland largely follows the lines of the contours in narrow belts. This woodland is a significant landscape feature marking the transition from the steep downland slopes to the intensively cultivated land below. There are notable blocks of Ancient Woodland at East Combe Wood, Elcombe Copse and Goscombe Copse, to the south of Alvediston. The beech woodland aligning Zig Zag hill is a particularly distinctive feature, dramatically restricting views and bringing localised sense of enclosure. Areas of scrubby vegetation are also a characteristic of this landscape.
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the top of the chalk escarpments with views over the Vale of Wardour and the River Ebble / Chalk Valley in the north and north-east, and over the chalk plateau of Cranborne Chase and to the Dorset coast. There is a strong sense of openness and exposure, emphasised by the contrast between the enclosed valley bottom below and the downland above.

- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Significant areas of lowland calcareous grassland especially in the east of the LLCA and around Win Green.
  - ❖ Several areas of good quality semi-improved grassland can also be found, mainly on Elcombe Down and Troy Down.
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation on the lower slopes, pasture on higher and steeper ground.
  - ❖ Some scattered woodland blocks exist on the scarp slopes, predominantly broadleaved (mostly beech and oak) although there is very little ancient woodland within the LLCA.
  
- **Historic Environment:** A number of Bronze Age barrows and prehistoric earthworks are sited on the escarpment. Winklebury Camp and Winklebury Hill Earthworks scheduled monuments also extend into the area. A few ancient fieldscapes (Pre-1800 Fields) are found within the LLCA, with a couple of these to the west of Win Green. Large, 20th Century fields dominate the LLCA, especially on the higher downland typically being new or modified fields created in the second half of the 20th Century. 18th and 19th Century fields are restricted to just a few areas – to the north-west of Zig Zag Hill and on Monk’s Down, both being Planned Enclosure. The creation of these fields involved the enclosure of the previously open chalk downland escarpments. This process began in the 18th and 19th century and escalated during the 20th century.
  
- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bowerchalke Downs</li> <li>• Pincombe Down</li> <li>• Win Green Down</li> <li>• Winklebury Hill</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II: (1 No) Targetts Farmhouse</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 No bowl barrows including Woodhouse Hanging round barrow</li> <li>• Various sections of Cross-ridge dykes</li> <li>• Winklebury camp and Winklebury Hill earthworks</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- The scarp is a dramatic feature in the landscape, due to its height and steepness together with the contrasts to surrounding landscapes.
- Panoramic views over the River Ebbles valley and lower lying landscapes to the north (such as the Vale of Wardour) from the Ox Drove track running close to the crest of the scarp are a feature.
- High levels of tranquillity and dark skies.
- Chalk grassland, a key habitat of high ecological value.
- Important archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, Winklebury Camp and various sections of cross-ridge dykes.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.4.13 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long distance views to the north-west, north and north-east from the crest of the escarpment.
- Open, remote scarp with unenclosed chalk grassland and woodland, contrasting with the enclosed and more managed appearance of the lower lying land below the scarp.
- Mixed and deciduous woodland is found throughout the LLCA, with deciduous woodland largely following the lines of the contours in narrow belts.
- Woodland is a significant landscape feature marking the transition from the steep downland slopes to the intensively cultivated land below.
- The beech woodland aligning Zig-Zag hill at the far west of the LLCA is a particularly distinctive feature. Areas of scrubby vegetation are a characteristic of the LLCA.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including upstanding archaeological remains.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.4.14 The landscape within this LLCA is judged to have a strong character. The escarpment's strength of character comes from its prominent form and scale making it visible from long distances. Much of the traditional (pastoral) land use has survived with some areas but with woodland and scrub also making a significant contribution to character. It has a strong sense of place despite the land cover mosaic having also changed as a result of mechanised farming on the scarp. The condition of the landscape is perceived to be moderate. There is evidence of erosion of the scarp face, as a result of recreational pressures. For example, the condition of the Fovant Badges has suffered from visitor pressure as well as natural weathering. At the foot of the

Fovant escarpment, the landform is scarred from previous quarrying activity. Scrub invasion is evident across the escarpment. The landscape is however well managed in places and the condition of ecological habitats is also good, with four SSSIs in a predominantly 'favourable' condition. Many features of the historic environment (barrows, cross dykes and fortifications) have survived the less intensive agricultural practices on the steep scarp slopes.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.4.15 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Loss of chalk grassland as a result of intensive arable agricultural practices.
- Increased recreational activity as a result of the designated open access land could lead to erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities.
- Reduction or change in grazing practice resulting in encroachment of scrub on previously open landscapes.
- Pressure for new development at the foot of the scarp leading to erosion of the traditional nucleated character of the settlement in places.
- Demand for construction of tall structures, including communication masts / wind turbines.
- Increasing traffic on narrow rural lane network, causing erosion of road verges.
- Damage to ancient monuments from intensive arable cultivation.
- Managing higher visitor numbers – potential effects on the historic landscape and need for supporting infrastructure.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.4.16 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the open, remote scarp with its unenclosed grassland encouraging more effective management of the remaining chalk grassland sites and sustainable recreational use of the open access land. Management of ecologically sensitive sites may need to be more effective including improving interpretation for recreational users.

3.4.17 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Conserve the open views and the clear scarp skylines.
- Maintain the undeveloped character of the scarp and the contrast with the scarp foot villages. New residential developments should respect the distinct nucleated form of these ancient villages and should not extend onto the lower scarp slopes.
- Promote sustainable management and recreational access to open access land and viewpoints.

- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.
- Regulate grazing and pressure on archaeological sites to prevent damage to monuments.
- Promote appropriate grazing regimes to avoid encroachment of scrub.
- Monitor pressures for erection of tall structures and seek to prevent visual clutter on the escarpment skyline.
- Promote the use of visually permeable boundaries such as post and wire fencing to demarcate field units in order to retain the sense of continuity and openness across the escarpment.
- Seek positive management for areas coming out of active farming, notably opportunities for restoration of chalk grassland. Monitor continued encroachment of scrub on the steepest slopes.
- Conserve the distinct pattern of woodland cover. Further woodland planting is not a key objective for this area, with the aim being to maintain the balance of open land and woodland cover.
- Consider opportunities to soften the edges of coniferous plantations through mixed and deciduous planting. Encourage the use of native species along property boundaries.

## B3 - Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment

### Key Characteristics

- North facing, dramatic chalk escarpment.
- LLCA characterised by the significant unimproved chalk grassland cover including Burcombe Down SSSI.
- Panoramic views over adjacent landscapes including the Vale of Wardour and the River Ebbel / Chalke Valley.
- No settlements or major roads within the LLCA, with only minor roads passing through.
- Public rights of way on the crest of the scarp are a significant recreational feature.
- Large areas of land designated as open access land.
- The military badges carved into the chalk on the north side of the escarpment near Fovant are a prominent feature of the landscape.
- There is a strong sense of openness and exposure on the crest of the scarps.

### Location and Boundaries

3.4.18 The Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment (B3) runs from a location just north of Berwick St John and south-east of Donhead St Andrew in the west to Burcombe, on the River Nadder, in the east. The LLCA is wholly within Wiltshire. The northern boundary is defined by the bottom of the escarpment and forms the northern edge of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. The escarpment generally has a north-west facing aspect although this is west facing for roughly 1km near to Berwick St John. The southern boundary is the crest of the escarpment where there is a transition into the Upper Ebbel / Chalke River Valley Slopes LLCA (E1).

### Landscape Character

3.4.19 In overview, the Donhead St. Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment LLCA is a north facing chalk escarpment. Unimproved chalk grassland is a key feature as are the military badges carved into the chalk near Fovant. Settlement is sparse on the upper slopes of the scarp. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** This LLCA is strongly defined by its chalk geology, the edge of which forms the scarp. Although largely continuous, the scarp is eroded in places into steep valleys. The escarpments are among the most dramatic features of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area, forming steep walls of chalk that tower over the adjacent greensand terrace and valley landscapes. The escarpment forming this LLCA is less dramatically curved than the Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment LLCA (B2), extending from Burford in the east following a series of gentle curves around Compton Down, Fovant Down and White Sheet Hill before it ends quite abruptly near Berwick St John. In places the natural landform has been interrupted by mineral extraction - along the



scarp face on Fovant Down, south of Fovant for example. The highest parts of the LLCA are found in the western part of the LLCA, with topography ranging between 235m AOD at the crest of the scarp near to White Sheet Hill to 75m AOD at the foot of the scarp near Burcombe. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** The steep topography of the chalk escarpment has prevented settlement on the scarp slopes, although individual farmsteads and nucleated settlements are in many cases located close to its base. No settlements fall within this LLCA and farm buildings are few. This LLCA is predominantly open, often unimproved pasture with cattle, sheep and horses grazing the steep slopes. Gentler slopes towards the foot and crest of the scarp are under arable cultivation. Significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland remain on the steep slopes. Mixed and deciduous woodland is also found throughout this LLCA. There are no major roads within the LLCA and only two minor roads cross it, one linking Alvediston in the Ebble / Chalke Valley with Ansty to the north of this LLCA, the other from Fifield Bavant. This LLCA contains a number of Public Rights of Way connecting lowland and upland areas. These are an important recreational feature, popular due to the extent and nature of views. Rights of Way provide good connections to the landscapes on either side. A large proportion of the LLCA has been designated as open access land, with designated areas running the complete length of the escarpment. This designation relates to the remnant downland areas and is found on the steepest scarps.
- **Tree Cover:** Deciduous woodland largely follows the lines of the contours. This woodland is a significant landscape feature marking the transition from the steep downland slopes to the intensively cultivated land below. There are small blocks of Ancient Woodland at the bottom of Sutton Down, near Buxbury Hill, the bottom Compton Down, to the south-east of Fovant and 1.6km long block, known as Burcombe Ivers, to the south-east of Compton Chamberlayne. Game coverts, often planted as rectangular blocks of conifers at the foot of the escarpment, are also a feature.
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the top of the chalk escarpments with views over the Vale of Wardour in the west, the greensand terrace and hills to the north and the River Ebble / Chalk Valley to the south. There is a strong sense of openness and exposure, emphasised by the contrast between the enclosed valley bottom below and the downland above.

- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Significant areas of lowland calcareous grassland across the LLCA.
  - ❖ Several areas of good quality semi-improved grassland, mainly on Elcombe Down and Troy Down.
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation on the lower slopes, pasture on higher and steeper ground.
  - ❖ Some scattered woodland blocks exist on the scarp slopes, predominantly broadleaved (mostly beech and oak) although there is very little ancient woodland within the LLCA.
  - ❖ Lowland meadows are found scattered across the LLCA and small area of floodplain grazing marsh is located at the bottom of the scarp near to Burcombe.
  
- **Historic Environment:** A number of Bronze Age barrows and prehistoric earthworks are sited on the escarpment, as well as more modern features, such as the eight regimental badges carved into the chalk scarp marking the former military encampment which straddled the villages of Fovant, Compton Chamberlayne and Sutton Mandeville. These were first cut during World War I. Also on the crest of the scarp are settlement remnants including a large hillfort known as Chiselbury Camp in the east, and part of Swallowcliffe Down settlement to the north of Alvediston. Only one Pre-1800 Field is present in the LLCA – this now containing the sewage works near to Burcombe. Large, 20th Century fields dominate the LLCA typically being new or modified fields created in the second half of the 20th Century. One large 18th and 19th Century field is present to the south-west of Burcombe, it being Parliamentary Enclosure and a smaller one nearby being Planned Enclosure. The creation of these fields involved the enclosure of the previously open chalk downland escarpments. This process began in the 18th and 19th century and escalated during the 20th century. A large, disused, 18th Century quarry can be found to the south-east of Donhead St Andrew.

*Chase Chatter - Chalk Map of Australia*

There is a partially overgrown chalk map of Australia cut into the northern slope of Compton Down. The map, like other chalk hill figures in the area, was constructed by excavating a series of shallow trenches into which chalk rubble was inserted. It was originally cut by troops belonging to the Australian Imperial Force, who underwent training in the locality during August 1916 and March 1917 and took over many of the camps around Fovant from October 1917.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Historic England – Chalk Map of Australia List Entry <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1020133>

- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSI	Burcombe Down
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II: (1 No) Rose Cottage</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	9 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chalk military badges on Fovant Down</li> <li>• Chislebury Camp hillfort, cross dykes and site of turnpike toll house</li> <li>• 2 No round barrows</li> <li>• Cross-ridge dyke on Buxbury Hill</li> <li>• Berwick Coombe ditch</li> <li>• Swallowcliffe Down settlement</li> <li>• Chalk map of Australia near Upper Hurdcott Farm</li> </ul>

### What's Important and Why?

#### **Landscape Qualities**

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A dramatic feature in the landscape, with a distinctive pattern of woodland, scrub and grassland.
- Panoramic views over the Vale of Wardour and other surrounding landscapes which this north and north-west facing escarpment provides.
- High levels of tranquillity and dark skies.
- The chalk grassland of Burcombe Down SSSI contributes to habitats of high ecological value.
- Important archaeological remains including prehistoric sites, Chislebury Camp, and chalk military badges on Fovant Down which are highly visible in the landscape.

#### **Landscape and Visual Sensitivities**

3.4.20 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views to the north-west, north and north-east over the River Ebble valley from the crest of the escarpment.
- Open, remote scarp with unenclosed chalk grassland and woodland, contrasting with the enclosed and managed appearance of the lowland created by denser structure of hedges and the scattering of farms and villages at the foot of the scarp.
- Scattered along the escarpment are a number of small woodland blocks.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows, particularly in lower lying areas.
- Heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including upstanding archaeological remains and the chalk military badges on Fovant Down.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.4.21 The Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment LLCA is a landscape of strong character. The escarpment's strength of character comes from its prominent form and scale making it visible from long distances and distinctive from the adjacent landscapes. Prominent hill markings such as the Fovant Military Badges are points of focus. There are some detracting features, such as block coniferous plantations, and encroachment of arable cultivation has changed the character. Despite the introduction of some elements less characteristic of the landscape type, this landscape still retains a strong sense of place. There is evidence of some erosion of the scarp face, possibly a result of surface water run-off, but also as a result of recreational pressures. For example, the condition of the Fovant Badges has suffered from visitor pressure as well as natural weathering. At the foot of the Fovant escarpment, the landform is scarred from previous quarrying activity. Scrub invasion is evident across the escarpment. The condition of the landscape is perceived to be moderate, despite the condition of Burcombe Down SSSI being 'favourable'<sup>33</sup>.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.4.22 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Loss of chalk grassland as a result of intensive arable agricultural practices.
- A lack of grazing management or change in grazing regime resulting in encroachment of scrub.
- Increased recreational activity as a result of the designated open access land could lead to erosion by walkers and pressure for visitor facilities.
- Pressure for new development at the foot of the scarp which could lead to erosion of the traditional nucleated character of the settlements.
- Demand for construction of tall structures, including communication masts / wind turbines.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

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<sup>33</sup> Natural England – Burcombe Down SSSI.  
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportConditionSummary.aspx?SiteCode=S1002376&ReportTitle=Burcombe%20Down%20SSSI>

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

3.4.23 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the open, remote scarp with its unenclosed grassland encouraging more effective management of the remaining chalk grassland sites and sustainable recreational use of the open access land, including improving interpretation for recreational users.

3.4.24 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Conserve the open views across the Blackmore Vale and the clear scarp skylines.
- Maintain the undeveloped character of the scarp and the contrast with the scarp foot villages. New residential developments should respect the distinct form of these villages and should not extend onto the lower scarp slopes.
- Promote sustainable management and recreational access to open access land and viewpoints.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.
- Regulate grazing and pressure on archaeological sites to prevent damage to monuments.
- Promote the use of visually permeable boundaries such as post and wire fencing in order to retain the sense openness across the escarpment.
- Promote appropriate grazing regimes to avoid encroachment of scrub.
- Seek positive management for areas no longer farmed, including opportunities for restoration of chalk grassland. Monitor and manage as appropriate encroachment of scrub on the steepest slopes.
- Consider opportunities to soften the edges of coniferous plantations through mixed and deciduous planting. Encourage the use of native species along property boundaries.

### 3.5 Open Chalk Downland (C)

3.5.1 A tract of open chalk downland accounts for a large proportion of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. Unlike the often dramatic escarpments which are found along several of the boundaries of the chalk, and which represent the retreating faces of chalk strata, the chalk downs have a much more subdued landform of gently rolling spurs and dry valleys. Only where these valleys come close to an escarpment do they deepen to create convoluted, dividing valley systems. In geological terms, the open downs comprise the dip-slope of the chalk; a gently inclined landform representing the original chalk 'surface'. These uninterrupted rolling hills and gentle slopes give a real sense of openness. The land is now predominantly under arable cultivation but with areas of chalk grassland surviving.<sup>34</sup>

3.5.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:<sup>35</sup>

- Large-scale landform of broad rolling hills intercepted by dry river valleys and a series of Narrow Chalk River Valleys.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, regular field units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure.
- Remnant chalk grassland, ancient broadleaved woodland and Yew woodland are important habitats.
- Main roads cut across the undulating landscape linking major settlements on either side of the CC&WWD AONB.
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views.
- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads and the occasional downland village.
- Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments (in particular the Dorset Cursus) and Bronze Age Barrows, and their settings.
- Later prehistoric and Romano-British ditches and defensive earthworks.

3.5.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

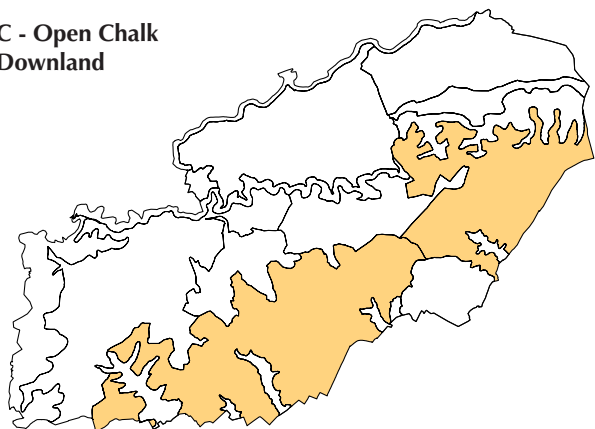
- C1: Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland
- C2 – Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland

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<sup>34</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

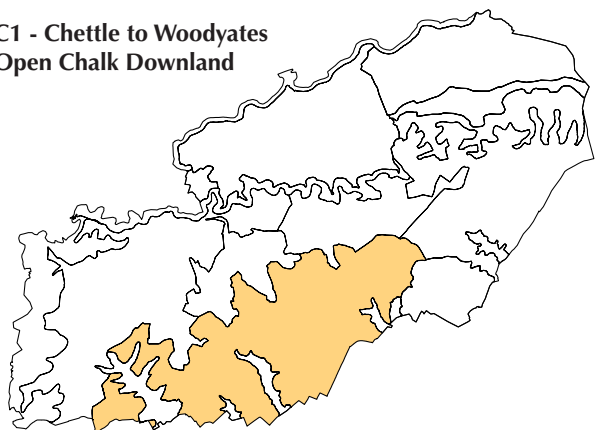
<sup>35</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

**C - Open Chalk  
Downland**



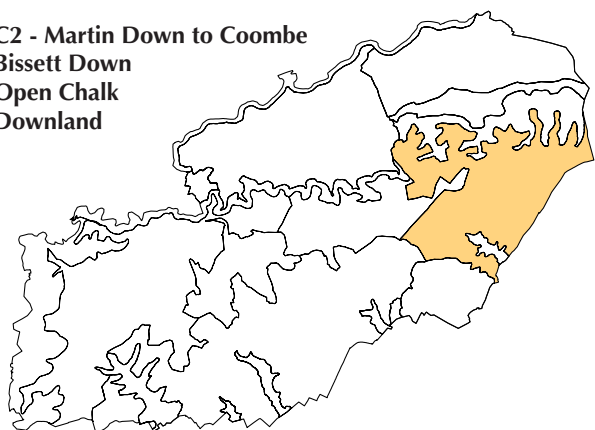
© Clive Perrin

**C1 - Chettle to Woodyates  
Open Chalk Downland**



© Robin Webster

**C2 - Martin Down to Coombe  
Bissett Down  
Open Chalk  
Downland**



© Stefan Czapski

## C1 - Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland

### Key Characteristics

- Large-scale chalk landform of rolling hills with dry river valleys.
- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads and the occasional downland village.
- An intensive agricultural landscape, dominated by arable production and large fields.
- Large, open skies and panoramic views over adjacent landscapes and towards the Dorset coast.
- A number of promoted routes cross the area, including the Hardy Way and the Dorset Jubilee Trail.
- The LLCA is crossed by the main A354 between Salisbury and Blandford Forum, increasing access, but reducing tranquillity.
- A high density of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites (in particular the Dorset Cursus), a Roman road, Romano-British ditches and defensive earthworks.

### Location and Boundaries

- 3.5.4 The Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland LLCA (C1) extends across the southern part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It is bound to the north by both the Wooded Chalk Downland Landscape Type (A), where the land cover becomes more wooded, together with the Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes Landscape Type (E). A number of the LLCAs within the Narrow Chalk River Valley Landscape Type (G) cut through the downland landscape, flowing in a south-east direction. The Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland LLCA (C2) forms the eastern boundary where the landform becomes more elevated and exposed. The Pentridge Hill Downland Hills LLCA (D1) defines the eastern half of the southern boundary. Here the landscape becomes more undulating, wooded and enclosed – marking a distinct change from the open downland slopes.

### Landscape Character

- 3.5.5 In overview, the Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland LLCA is intensively farmed area of open chalk downland, with a few small villages and hamlets. Woodland cover is generally sparse. It has a particularly high density of archaeological remains. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The character area lies predominantly on a gentle chalk dip slope, with local deposits of Clay-with-Flints. Flint is visible in places on the surface soil of ploughed fields. The landform consists of gentle slopes with the overriding feature being the dip slope that gently falls towards the south east. It is cut by a series of distinct river valleys defined as a separate Landscape Type – Narrow Chalk River Valley (G). To the west the land is more undulating with a greater sense of enclosure. The highest parts of the LLCA are in the west, with topography ranging between 160m AOD



near the Wessex Ridgeway south of Ashmore Wood, to around 60m AOD in lower lying areas near the southern boundary of the LLCA (e.g. to the south of Chettle and Sixpenny Handley). There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** Sixpenny Handley is the largest settlement within the LLCA, sitting within a shallow valley on the dip slope. There is a variety of building age and style in this nucleated village. Brick, painted brick and flint with clay or slate tiles are distinctive. The villages of Chettle and Farnham lie at the heads of the Crichel and Gussage, parts of the Narrow Chalk River Valley LLCA (G1). The small village of Pentridge can be found on the north-west side of Pentridge Down. Other small hamlets such as Woodcutts, Dean, Deanend, Deanland and Upwood are found in the northern part of the LLCA. The west of the LLCA is largely unpopulated. This is an intensive agricultural landscape, dominated by arable fields, with limited areas of grassland remaining. Many of these arable fields are very large, often regular in shape, divided by hedges of varying condition. Replacement of hedgerows by post and wire fencing is also apparent in places. This is a predominantly open landscape but small pockets and blocks of woodland do occur such as Little Wood to the south-west of Chettle and Salisbury Plantation to the south-west of Pentridge. The LLCA is crossed by the A354, increasing the access to this area from Salisbury and Blandford Forum. This is a straight road, partly Roman in origin, which joins with a network of minor roads which link the valley villages with the downs above. The B3081 dissects the LLCA passing through Sixpenny Handley and linking Shaftesbury to the north-west, with the A354 and the settlements of Verwood and Ringwood in Hampshire. The LLCA is well served by Rights of Way. The Hardy Way crosses through the area, to the east of Sixpenny Handley; and The Dorset Jubilee Trail, a 142km long distance walk crossing Dorset from border to border also crosses through the LLCA.

*Chase Chatter - Pentridge Village*

The village of Pentridge is believed to have been the real location of 'Trantridge Village' in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* <sup>36</sup>

- **Tree Cover:** There is very little tree cover within the LLCA with only 38Ha of Ancient Woodland, notably Little Wood. Notable woodland includes Salisbury Plantation and Little Wood near Chettle.

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<sup>36</sup> Pentridge, Dorset Website <http://pentridgedorset.co.uk/history/>

- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has many opportunities for long distance views across the rolling downland landscape. To the east of Sixpenny Handley, upstanding archaeology in the landscape such as barrows and banks along the Ackling Dyke Roman Road (accessible as a public right of way) provide visual interest, and a feeling of connection to the history of the landscape. Tranquillity is lower than in some surrounding areas, due to the presence of the A354, but the area still feels peaceful further away from the road.
  
- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation across this LLCA.
  - ❖ Small area of unimproved calcareous grassland on Oakley Down.
  - ❖ There is a large area of good quality semi-improved grassland to the south of Sixpenny Handley.
  - ❖ Very little ancient woodland is found across the LLCA.
  
- **Historic Environment:** The extent of this area moved north-westwards after the disenfranchisement of the Chase in 1829, and up until 150 years ago was a large area of open chalk downland. There are a vast range of monuments and earthworks in this LLCA, including parts of the Dorset Cursus (comprising both upstanding and known buried remains), and numerous round, long and bowl barrows and Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and enclosures contribute to the significance of the setting of the Cursus. Some of these features are very complex, such as the Earthworks on Gussage Down, which includes a multi period landscape with a large settlement enclosure incorporating two banjo enclosures, three bowl barrows and parts of extensive systems of linear boundaries and fields together with a section of the Dorset Cursus<sup>37</sup>. Other significant features include the Ackling Dyke, the remains of a Roman road which originally ran from Old Sarum (Sorviodunum) to the hillfort of Badbury Rings (Vindocladia), a total distance of approximately 22 miles (35km)<sup>38</sup>. Many pre-1800 Fields are scattered across the LLCA. Some small areas of pre-1800 fields in the north of the LLCA are thought to have originated from assarts, whilst for other pre-1800 regular, semi-irregular and curving irregular fields, their previously wooded land use is less certain. The remaining area is a mosaic of 18th, 19th and 20th Century, largely homogenous fields, with 20th Century fields more dominant in the eastern and southern part of the LLCA. The present pattern of medium to large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure, followed by 20th century agricultural intensification where fields were enlarged and modified.

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<sup>37</sup> Historic England – Dorset Cursus List Entry <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1002740>

<sup>38</sup> Historic England – Ackling Dyke List Entry <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1003309>

**Chase Chatter - Banjo enclosure**

A banjo enclosure is a distinctive type of prehistoric settlement, mostly constructed and used during the Middle Iron Age (400-100 BC). Typical banjo enclosures have an oval or sub-rectangular central area, encircled by a broad, steep-sided ditch and an external bank. There is a single entrance, approached by an avenue up to 90m long formed by out-turnings of the enclosure's ditch. The enclosures resemble banjos when viewed in plan, hence their name<sup>39</sup>.

• **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handcocks Bottom</li><li>• Pentridge Down</li></ul>
Listed Buildings	59 No in total including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grade I: (1 No) Chettle House</li><li>• Grade II*: (3 No) Church of St Mary, Chettle, Church of St Lawrence, Farnham and Church of St Mary, Sixpenny Handley</li><li>• Grade II: (55 No) including Sixpenny Handley War Memorial, Old Manor House, Sixpenny Handley, Goddards, Farnham</li></ul>
Registered Parks & Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grade II*: (2 No) Eastbury, situated immediately south-east of the village of Tarrant Gunville and is the principally archaeological remains of early C18 formal gardens and parkland designed by Charles Bridgeman<sup>40</sup>; and St Giles' House (the boundary abuts the LLCA). Country house, possibly incorporating late medieval work in the basements, main body of house begun 1651 for Sir A Ashley-Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury<sup>41</sup>.</li></ul>
Scheduled Monuments	37 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parts of the Dorset Cursus</li><li>• Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and enclosures</li><li>• Numerous round, long and bowl barrows scattered across the LLCA, including a disc barrow</li><li>• Many earthworks including on Thickthorn Down and Gussage Down</li><li>• Bokerley Dyke and Grim's Ditch (a medieval boundary bank)</li><li>• Camp in Mistlebury Wood</li><li>• Parts of Ackling Dyke (Roman road)</li><li>• Parts of Harbin's Park, a medieval deer park pale</li></ul>
Dorset Garden Trust Local List of Historic Parks and Gardens of County Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chettle House Garden</li></ul>

<sup>39</sup> Historic England – Earthworks on Gussage Down List Entry <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1002740>

<sup>40</sup> Historic England – Eastbury, Dorset. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000549>

<sup>41</sup> Historic England – St Giles House, Wimborne St Giles, Dorset <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1120129>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A large scale chalk landscape.
- Gently sloping towards the south-east in line with the dip slope.
- Arable farming is the dominant land use with a range of arable crops and associated seasonal changes.
- Woodland is a more significant feature in the west of the character area where the land becomes more undulating, creating a greater sense of enclosure.
- High levels of tranquillity.
- A very high density of archaeological remains including many prehistoric sites, including the Dorset Cursus and a Roman Road. Some of these features are still visible in the landscape.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.5.6 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views to the Dorset coast from the higher ground.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including farmland, downland and small blocks of woodland.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows, particularly in lower lying areas.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including remnants of the Dorset Cursus, the Roman road between Old Sarum and Badbury Rings and upstanding archaeological remains.

### ***Strength of Character***

The strength of character of this area is judged to be moderate. It is a large scale landscape of broad rolling hills mainly under arable production with woodland occurring on steeper slopes. There are two sites of ecological importance including a range of habitats and both are classed as 'unfavourable recovering'<sup>42</sup>. There is a wealth of archaeological remains within this LLCA. Condition is variable, with hedgerows fragmented, gappy or over-managed in places, with post and wire fencing as infill where hedgerow sections have been lost. The intensively farmed nature of the landscape does result in few areas of under-used or derelict land. Overall landscape condition is moderate.

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<sup>42</sup> Natural England Website <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

### ***Forces for Change***

3.5.7 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- The loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with inconsistent field boundary management.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- Where coniferous blocks of planting have been introduced, these create harsh edges in the landscape.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.
- Diversification into other crops such as biomass crops and diversification of farm businesses into secondary enterprises such as farm house accommodation or commercial shoots. These land uses may result in an increased sense of enclosure as a result of the presence of woodland and biomass crops that would block views across the landscape.
- Pressure for development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.5.8 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the distinct downland landscape of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes whilst improving the condition of many of its characteristic features such as hedgerows, to increase visual unity and sense of integrity and make the combination and pattern of elements more distinct.

3.5.9 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Monitor development along the A354 to ensure planting and built form is both sympathetic and complementary to landscape character.
- Where possible, conserve the distinctive open character and enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Ensure pylons, masts and other vertical elements such as wind turbines are carefully sited and the number restricted to avoid visual clutter and further interruption of the characteristic open views.
- Consider opportunities for extending and linking native habitats, strengthening existing habitat corridors.
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds. This will include retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields plus management of hedgerows.

- Consider opportunities for deciduous planting around the edges of coniferous blocks to reduce their angular, geometric shape.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

## C2 – Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland

### Key Characteristics

- An elevated and exposed, large-scale, chalk landform of broad rolling hills with dry river valleys.
- Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads and the occasional downland village.
- An intensive agricultural landscape, dominated by arable production and large fields.
- Large, open skies and panoramic views over adjacent landscapes and towards the Dorset coast.
- High quality habitats of unimproved calcareous grassland (e.g. Martin Down National Nature Reserve).
- A number of footpaths cross the area, with one following the route of Ackling Dyke Roman road.
- The LLCA is crossed by the main A354 between Salisbury and Blandford Forum, increasing access, but reducing on tranquillity.
- A high density of upstanding and known buried archaeological remains including prehistoric sites and a Roman road.

### Location and Boundaries

3.5.10 The Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland LLCA (C2) extends across the eastern part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It is bound to the north by the Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes Landscape Type (E) and to the west by the Stonedown Wood to Vernditch Chase Wooded Chalk Downland LLCA (A3). The Allen Narrow Chalk River Valley LLCA (G1) cuts through the downland landscape, flowing in a south-east direction. The Chettle to Woodyates Open Chalk Downland LLCA (C1) forms the south western boundary where the landform becomes more enclosed and less elevated and exposed. The Pentridge Hill Downland Hills LLCA (D1) defines the southern boundary. Here the landscape becomes more undulating, wooded and enclosed – marking a distinct change from the open downland slopes.

### Landscape Character

3.5.11 In overview, the Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland LLCA is an elevated area of open chalk downland. Settlement is very sparse, limited to a few farmsteads. There is also very little woodland cover. It has a high density of archaeological remains. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The character area lies predominantly on a gentle chalk dip slope, with local deposits of Clay-with-Flints. Flint is visible in places on the surface soil of ploughed fields. The landform is more elevated and exposed than LLCA (C1), with large, open areas, and consists of gentle slopes with the overriding feature being the dip slope that gently falls towards the south east. It is cut by the Allen Narrow Chalk River Valley LLCA (G1). The highest parts of the LLCA are in the north-west with

topography ranging between 197m AOD on Knowle Hill east of Bowerchalke, to around 60m AOD in lower lying areas near the southern boundary of the LLCA (near to the hamlet of Tidpit). There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** The LLCA is largely unpopulated with no villages within it. Small hamlets and farmsteads make up the settlement that is present (e.g. Martin Drove End). This is an intensive agricultural landscape, dominated by arable fields, with limited areas of grassland remaining, apart from Martin Down. Many of these arable fields are very large, often regular in shape, divided by hedges of varying condition. Replacement of hedgerows by post and wire fencing is also apparent in places. This is a predominantly open landscape but small pockets of woodland do occur (e.g. near to Little Toyd Down). The LLCA is crossed by the A354, increasing the access to this area from Salisbury and Blandford Forum. This is a straight road, partly Roman in origin, which joins with a network of minor roads which link the valley villages with the downs above. The LLCA is well served by Rights of Way. Martin Down is an area of access land, a popular recreational area which is heavily used, particularly in summer.
- **Tree Cover:** There is very little tree cover within the LLCA with no Ancient Woodland present.
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the north, particularly looking northwards from public rights of way on Knighton Hill and Knowle Hill across the Ebble Valley. Martin Down NNR in the west of the LLCA has long distance and panoramic views across the wider landscape, and more locally the archaeological features in the form of ancient banks and ditches and 20th century mounds associated with the wartime rifle range provide visual interest, and a feeling of connection to the history of the landscape. The lack of light pollution at night makes it an ideal area for star gazing<sup>43</sup>. The tranquillity of the area is reduced by the presence of the A354, but in places still feels very tranquil, such as in places on Martin Down where it is possible to hear a range of birdsong.
- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Intensive and widespread arable cultivation across this LLCA.
  - ❖ Areas of unimproved calcareous grassland, including the nationally important Martin Down National Nature Reserve and a large area around Faulston Down in the north-east.

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<sup>43</sup> Martin and Tidpit National Nature Reserve Website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hampshires-national-nature-reserves/hampshires-national-nature-reserves>



- Historic Environment:** The extent of this area moved westwards after the disenfranchisement of the Chase in 1829, and up until 150 years ago was a large area of open chalk downland. There are a vast range of monuments and linear earthworks in this LLCA, including numerous long and bowl barrows, ditches and boundary banks. Grim's Ditch, a prehistoric linear boundary, survives as an earthwork (a bank and associated ditch) and as below-ground archaeological remains. Parts of it now form field boundaries, and also form the county boundary between Hampshire and Wiltshire.<sup>44</sup> Martin Down, which forms the westernmost part of this LLCA, and the surrounding area contain a variety of well-preserved archaeological remains, largely because the area has been unaffected by modern agriculture and development. Partial excavation of a length of Grim's Ditch at Martins Down has indicated that at least part of it is Bronze Age in origin. It is thought to represent some form of land division, although it may have evolved, or been reused, over a lengthy period extending into the Iron Age and even the Romano-British period. Other linear earthworks at Martin Down include Bokerley Dyke, believed to have its origin in the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age<sup>45</sup>. Many pre-1800 Fields are scattered across the LLCA with a particularly large area to the north of Martin near to St Brides and Martinique Farm. The area is a mosaic of 18th, 19th and 20th Century, largely homogenous fields otherwise, with 20th Century fields more dominant in the eastern part of the LLCA. The present pattern of medium to large straight-sided and predominantly arable fields is characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure, followed by 20th century agricultural intensification where fields were enlarged and modified. Only Martin Down remained unenclosed, commoner's rights surviving until the late 20th century.
- Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knighton Downs &amp; Wood</li> <li>• Martin and Tidpitt Downs</li> </ul>
National Nature Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Down</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	14 No in total including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II: (14 No) including Toyd Farmhouse, Martin, Jervoise Farmhouse, Little Toyd Farmhouse, Coombe Bissett</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	19 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bronze Age and Romano-British settlements</li> <li>• Numerous round, long and bowl barrows scattered across the LLCA</li> <li>• Bokerley Dyke and Grim's Ditch (a medieval boundary bank)</li> <li>• Parts of Roman road along the south side of Vernditch Chase and Knighton Roman road</li> </ul>

<sup>44</sup> Historic England - Grim's Ditch: Old Lodge Copse to Toyd Clump <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1003457>

<sup>45</sup> Historic England - Bokerley Dyke, and a section of Grim's Ditch, a section of a medieval boundary bank, and two bowl barrows on and north west of Martin Down <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012135>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A large scale chalk landscape.
- Gently sloping towards the south-east in line with the dipslope.
- Arable farming is the dominant land use with a range of arable crops and associated seasonal changes.
- Woodland is more significant to the west of the character area where the land becomes more undulating creating a greater sense of enclosure.
- High levels of tranquillity, and Martin Down National Nature Reserve noted for its dark skies.
- Habitats of high ecological value, including the chalk grassland of Martin Down National Nature Reserve.
- A very high density of archaeological remains including many prehistoric sites, including Bokerley Dyke, Grim's Ditch and sections of Roman roads. Some of these features are still visible in the landscape.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.5.12 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views to the Dorset coast from the higher ground.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including farmland, downland and small blocks of woodland.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, predominantly enclosed by hedgerows, particularly in lower lying areas.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including Bokerley Dyke, Grim's Ditch and remnants of the Roman road between Old Sarum and Badbury Rings and upstanding archaeological remains.

### ***Strength of Character***

The strength of character of this area is judged to be moderate. It is a large scale landscape of broad rolling hills mainly under arable production with woodland occurring on steeper slopes. There are two sites of ecological importance including a range of habitats and both are classed as 'unfavourable recovering'<sup>46</sup>. There is a wealth of archaeological remains within this LLCA. Condition is variable, with hedgerows fragmented, gappy or over-managed in places, with post and wire fencing as infill where hedgerow sections have been lost. The intensively farmed

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<sup>46</sup> Natural England Website <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

nature of the landscape does result in few areas of under-used or derelict land. Overall landscape condition is moderate.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.5.13 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- The loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with inconsistent field boundary management.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- Where coniferous blocks of planting have been introduced, these create harsh edges in the landscape.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.
- Diversification into other crops such as biomass crops and diversification of farm businesses into secondary enterprises such as farm house accommodation or commercial shoots. These land uses may result in an increased sense of enclosure as a result of the presence of woodland and biomass crops that would block views across the landscape.
- Pressure for development of tall structures, such as communication masts, infrastructure associated with electricity cables and wind energy developments in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.5.14 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the distinct downland landscape of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes whilst improving the condition of many of its characteristic features such as hedgerows, to increase visual unity and sense of integrity and make the combination and pattern of elements more distinct.

3.5.15 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Monitor development along the A354 to ensure planting and built form is both sympathetic and complementary to landscape character.
- Where possible, conserve the distinctive open character and enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Ensure pylons, masts and other vertical elements such as wind turbines are carefully sited and the number restricted to avoid visual clutter and further interruption of the characteristic open views.

- Consider opportunities for extending and linking native habitats, strengthening existing habitat corridors.
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds. This will include retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields plus management of hedgerows.
- Consider opportunities for deciduous planting around the edges of coniferous blocks to reduce their angular, geometric shape.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

## 3.6 Downland Hills (D)

3.6.1 The Downland Hills are formed from the dissected remnants of an older chalk escarpment. Over the millennia, the rivers which once drained the chalk dip slope of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area have cut through eroding the remnants of the escarpment into a series of rounded bluffs. These appear as a series of low 'whale-backed' ridges that stand out from the surrounding downland. The highest hill tops tend to be capped with clay with flints and small areas of Reading Beds. Ploughed slopes and enlarged fields create a vast patchwork of arable land with isolated remnants of chalk grassland and ancient semi-natural woodland that provide significant ecological interest. The range of archaeological remains in this landscape type reflects that of the wider chalk downs, and imparts a similar historic character to the landscape.<sup>47</sup>:

3.6.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:<sup>48</sup>

- A series of prominent knolls and hills.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology giving rise to argyllic brown earths.
- Land cover is predominantly arable, with improved pasture on lower ground towards the River Valleys.
- Dominated by a pattern of medium to large Parliamentary type fields.
- Deciduous and coniferous woodland silhouette against the skyline, clothing the crests of the slopes.
- Low density, dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads.
- The absence of major roads contributes to the feeling of remoteness.
- Part of the ancient woodland complex of Bouldsbury Wood (SSSI).
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, prehistoric and Romano-British enclosures, settlements, field systems and linear boundaries and hillforts contribute to the plethora of visible historic features of the landscape.
- Panoramic views from hill tops.

3.6.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

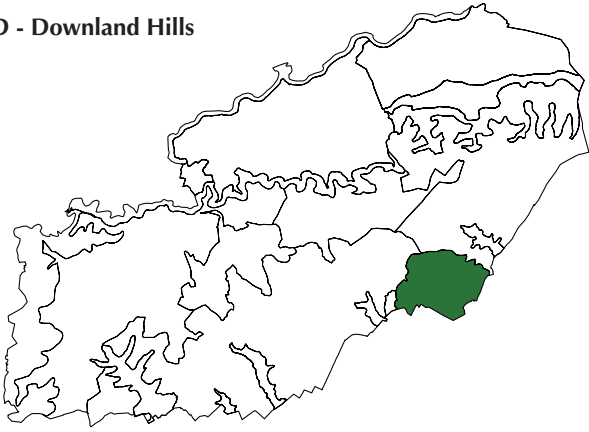
- D1: Pentridge Hill Downland Hills

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<sup>47</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

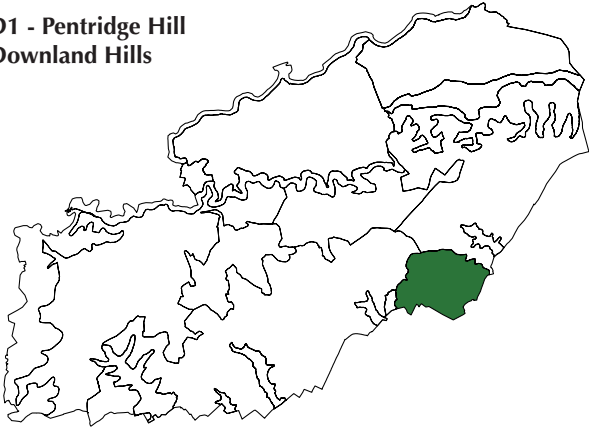
<sup>48</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

**D - Downland Hills**



© Simon Barnes

**D1 - Pentridge Hill  
Downland Hills**



© Adrian King

## D1 - Pentridge Hill Downland Hills

### Key Characteristics

- A landscape of gentle slopes, dominated by the distinctive 'whale back' form of Pentridge Hill.
- Largely unsettled with no hamlets or villages and just a few scattered farms. The absence of major roads contributes to the feeling of remoteness.
- A predominantly arable landscape with some areas of pasture.
- Predominantly wooded skyline.
- High quality habitats including deciduous woodland, lowland calcareous grassland and semi-improved grassland. Remnants of calcareous grassland can be found at Martin and Tidpit Downs and Pentridge Down.
- The northern part of the LLCA is well served by public rights of way with the Jubilee Trail and Hardy Way passing through.
- A range of archaeological features, including Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, prehistoric and Romano-British enclosures, settlements, field systems and linear boundaries and hillforts.
- Panoramic views from the top of Pentridge Hill.

### Location and Boundaries

- 3.6.4 Located in the southeast of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area, this LLCA is bounded to the west by the Crane Narrow Chalk River Valley LLCA and the Open Chalk Downland LLCAs C1 Chettle to Woodyates and C2 Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down to the north and east. Topography strongly defines the area.

### Landscape Character

- 3.6.5 In overview, the Pentridge Hill Downland Hills LLCA is dominated by the distinctive form of Pentridge Hill. Arable farmland is the predominant land use and it is largely unsettled with only a few scattered farms. Woodland dominates the skyline. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The dominant surface geology is chalk (White Chalk Subgroup). The area of highest ground is capped by the sand and gravels of the Lambeth Group resulting in the distinct areas of woodland in these elevated areas. In the areas of highest elevation, Clay-with-Flints caps the chalk, for example on the south east slope of Pentridge Hill. This is a landscape of gentle slopes, becoming steeper toward the west of the LLCA, culminating in the distinctive 'whale back' form of Pentridge Hill. The highest part of the LLCA is Pentridge Hill. Topography ranges between 185m AOD at the top of Pentridge Hill to 80-85m AOD at the base of Pentridge Hill near to Martin Down National Nature Reserve. There are no significant water courses within the LLCA.

- Land Use and Settlement:** The area is largely unsettled with no villages or hamlets and a few scattered farms. Flint and brick walls reflect the occurrence of flint geology in this character area. This is largely an arable landscape, with some areas of pasture, with a combination of post and wire fences and hedgerows for field boundaries. Occasionally shelterbelts form an edge to fields. Land cover is predominantly defined by arable crops with some pasture on the slopes leading towards the river valleys. Remnants of calcareous grassland can also be found at Martin and Tidpit Downs and Pentridge Down. There is a strong wooded character within the south-eastern part of the LLCA, and in places there are forestry plantations. There are no major roads within the LLCA with only a minor road linking Blagdon Farm with Boveridge and Cranborne to the south. Very small lanes link other farms to local roads outside the LLCA. Rights of Way networks are particularly dense through the northern part of the LLCA with the central and southern parts less well served. However, a bridleway runs through Tidpit Common Down to meet Bokerley Ditch providing some access to these areas. The Jubilee Trail, a long distance recreational route, cuts across Pentridge Hill and Bokerley Down from where there are dramatic views across the surrounding area. The Hardy Way also crosses Pentridge Hill. Registered common land lies to the north of Blagdon Hill and a significant cumulative area (273Ha) of areas of open access land can be found within the LLCA, including land to the north west of Pentridge Hill and Tidpit Common linking with the wider Martin Down National Nature Reserve.
- Tree Cover:** 16Ha of ancient woodland exists within the LLCA, notably part of Blagdon Hill Wood which links to a large ancient woodland complex. In addition both coniferous and deciduous woodland occurs on the crests of hills, for example on Blagdon Hill. These woodlands and the occurrence of copses on hill tops are a key feature. Coniferous plantations area also a feature of the landscape, including Blagdon Plantation. Sunken lanes with overhanging trees contribute further to the wooded appearance of this character area.
- Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has wide panoramic views from the higher ground in the north, especially across Pentridge Down. The higher ground is very exposed in places and can be windy. In combination with the open landscape and vast skyscape of the downland, this combines to give a strong feeling of remoteness. Tranquillity is high, particularly along the Jubilee Way across Pentridge Down, and in Martin Down NNR which extends into this LLCA from the north.



- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ The LLCA is dominated by intensive and widespread arable cultivation.
  - ❖ There is an area of predominantly broadleaved ancient woodland in the south of the LLCA, some of which has been subject to widespread replanting, diminishing its ecological value.
  - ❖ Areas of unimproved calcareous grassland exist within the north of the LLCA, including part of the nationally important Martin Down National Nature Reserve.
  
- **Historic Environment:** The range of archaeological remains in this LLCA reflects that of the wider chalk downs to the north. However, the more varied field pattern and the preservation of some extensive areas of woodland, reflects its transitional position between the downs and the valleys. There is a range of prehistoric and Romano-British remains in this area, including Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows, settlements and associated field systems, and linear earthwork boundaries. Grim’s Ditch and Bokerley Dyke extend into this area from the adjacent downland. A small number of ancient fieldscapes (Pre-1800 Fields) are found with the LLCA, a couple of large examples being around Kites Nest Farm and on the south-eastern side of Blagdon Hill. Two more large examples are on the south-eastern and north-western side of Pentridge Hill. Significant blocks of open downland and unimproved grassland still exist in the north of the LLCA and on Pentridge Down. There are series of 18th and 19th Century fields in the southern part of the area and on Tidpit Common Down. The dominant pattern of medium to large straight-sided fields is characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure. Martin Down, remains unenclosed, with commoner’s rights surviving until the late 20th century. The large 20th Century fields to the north of the LLCA around Bokerley Down are new fields created in the second half of the century. This area also used to contain a deer park, Blagdon Park, known to have been in existence by 1324, and was in the possession of the Crown between 1459 and 1585, but it is thought to have been disparked by c.1570<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012135>

- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin and Tidpit Down</li> <li>• Pentridge Down</li> </ul>
National Nature Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Down</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II: (1 No) Blagdon Farmhouse</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	15 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numerous bowl and long barrows</li> <li>• A number of linear earthworks</li> <li>• Iron Age and Romano-British settlement</li> <li>• Penbury Knoll camp on Pentridge Hill</li> <li>• Celtic fields on Pentridge Down</li> <li>• Several complexes of Iron Age and Romano-British settlements</li> <li>• Bokerley Dyke, and a section of Grim's Ditch, a section of medieval boundary bank</li> </ul>

### What's Important and Why?

#### **Landscape Qualities**

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- A landscape of contrast with enclosed areas of woodland opening to out to provide extensive views across large fields.
- The landscape is covered by a pattern of large and small blocks of woodland and predominantly arable farmland.
- Framed views from sunken lanes and open views from hills.
- Predominantly wooded skyline, with mixed woodland occurring alongside coniferous blocks, softening their edges.
- Scattered copses and mature hedgerow trees provide a connection between arable fields and woodland.
- The absence of settlement and transport routes contribute to the remoteness and tranquillity of this landscape.
- Habitats of high ecological value, including chalk grassland and ancient woodland.
- Numerous archaeological remains including prehistoric sites are present, some of which are still visible in the landscape.

#### **Landscape and Visual Sensitivities**

3.6.6 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Long views from the open hills, including Pentridge Hill.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including large and small blocks of woodland, downland and farmland.

- Wooded skyline in places, a key feature in this otherwise open chalk landscape. Scattered copses and mature hedgerow trees are also a feature.
- The summit of Pentridge Hill, known as Penbury Knoll, is distinguished by the gorse bushes and low pines which grow on the clay which covers the hilltop.
- Heritage assets are distinctive features of the landscape including Bokerley Dyke and Grim's Ditch.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.6.7 This is a landscape of strong character. The gently undulating landform with prominent hills, large scale arable land use and significant areas of woodland make this a landscape of contrasts. In particular the contrast of scale and enclosure is felt where the enclosed wooded lanes give way to the open arable fields. These distinctive perceptual experiences add to a strong sense of place.

### ***Forces for Change***

Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Change in levels of recreational activity on the open access land should be monitored to ensure appropriate management and to understand any pressure for associated facilities.
- Demand for construction of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.
- New development along the skyline is an issue in this landscape.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.6.8 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the pattern and contrast of the landscape created by the open areas of arable downland and distinct pattern of woodland, including copses on the summits of the hills and the tracts of ancient woodland that form a backdrop to the open downland.

3.6.9 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Encourage the use of visually unobtrusive field boundaries on the more elevated, open slopes, and where appropriate along roads and tracks.
- Where appropriate, particularly in lower lying parts of the LLCA, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of the sense of enclosure.

- Promote a consistent approach to hedgerow restoration and field boundary management.
- Increase deciduous planting where appropriate and utilise this to soften the outline of coniferous plantations.
- Promote traditional woodland management and consider opportunities for the marketing of woodland products.
- Limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Retain and enhance areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encouraging management to improve species diversity. Consider opportunities to extend and link chalk grassland habitats, whilst preserving the biodiversity associated with some of the farmland areas.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in areas of access land, which contain sensitive ecological habitats.
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds. This will include retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields plus management of hedgerows.
- Ensure pylons, masts, skyline buildings and other vertical elements are carefully sited and the number restricted to avoid visual clutter and further interruption of the characteristic open views.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

### 3.7 Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes (E)

3.7.1 This Landscape Character Type encompasses the valley sides, which enclose broad valleys that tend to follow the weakness in the underlying chalk. The chalk valley sides are frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys and provide a relatively strong sense of enclosure to adjacent valley floor landscapes. The gentler, shallower valley slopes are generally under arable cultivation, whilst steeper slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland, small copses and plantations. Settlement pattern is generally scattered with a series of small linear springline villages, typically situated at the foot of the Valley Slopes, and other isolated buildings and farmsteads. Historic field boundaries and footpaths follow the lines of tracks, drives and hollow ways which took livestock to and from the adjacent Open Chalk Downland in the Medieval period. The river valleys which drain the chalk downs of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area are a key element of the landscape. The Ebble River is the only river in the Landscape Partnership Scheme area that flows from west to east, following a line of weakness in the underlying chalk. All other rivers flow in a south-east direction off the chalk dip slope.<sup>50</sup>

3.7.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are<sup>51</sup>:

- Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys.
- Wide, extensive valley slopes.
- Underlain by chalk geology.
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period.
- A series of linear springline villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes.
- General sense of openness on the Valley Slopes, in contrast to the more enclosed nature of the Valley Floor.

3.7.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

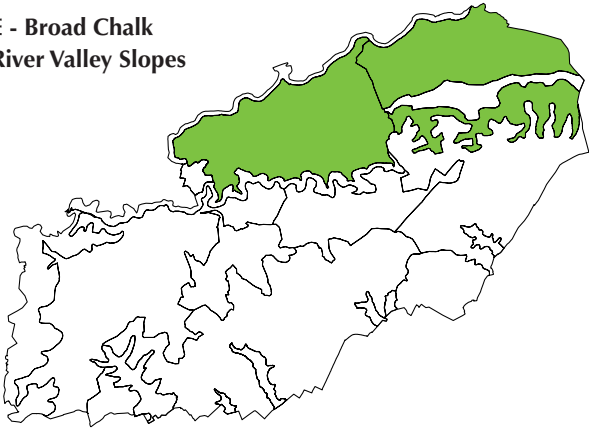
- E1: Upper Ebble / Chalke River Valley Slopes
- E2: Lower Ebble / Chalke River Valley Slopes

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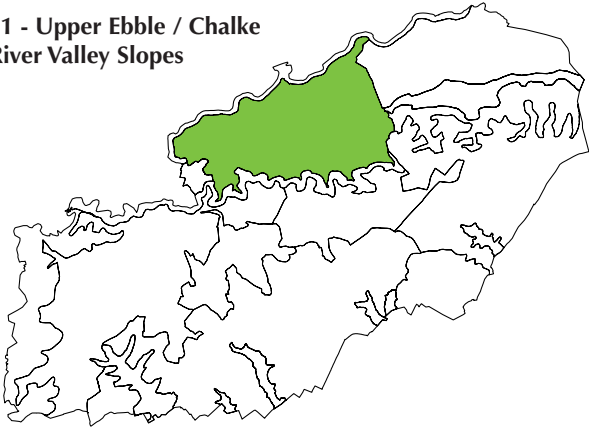
<sup>50</sup> Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, Feb 2008)

<sup>51</sup> Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, Feb 2008)

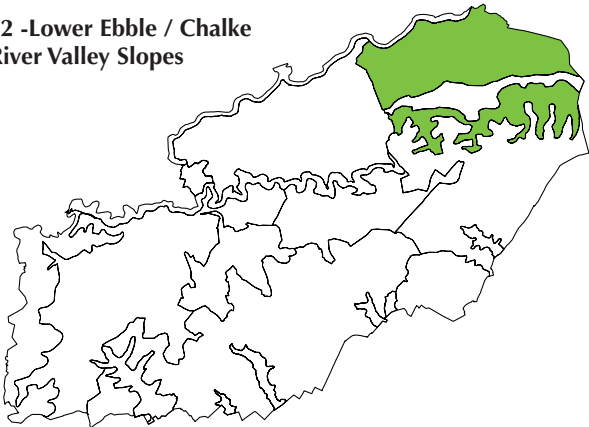
**E - Broad Chalk  
River Valley Slopes**



**E1 - Upper Ebble / Chalke  
River Valley Slopes**



**E2 - Lower Ebble / Chalke  
River Valley Slopes**



## E1 - Upper Ebble/Chalke River Valley Slopes

### Key Characteristics

- Wide, extensive valley slopes, underlain by chalk geology.
- General sense of openness on the Valley Slopes, in contrast to the more enclosed nature of the Valley Floor.
- Bowerchalke is the main settlement within the LLCA with brick and flint being common building materials within the village.
- There are no major roads within the LLCA and with few settlements, the LLCA has a particularly tranquil feel.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect historic trackways.
- High quality habitats including unimproved calcareous grassland. LLCA includes Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve and SSSI.
- High density of archaeological remains, typical of the wider area.

### Location and Boundaries

- 3.7.4 The LLCA is the upper part of the Ebble / Chalke River Valley and is located in the north of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area, bounded to the north and west by the Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment LLCA (B3), to the south by the Win Green to Bowerchalke Chalk Escarpment LLCA (B2) and to the east by the Lower Ebble / Chalke River Valley Slopes LLCA (E2). The southeastern edge is defined by the change in topography that forms the Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland LLCA (C2).

### Landscape Character

- 3.7.5 In overview, the Upper Ebble / Chalke River Valley Slopes LLCA is an area of wide, extensive valley slopes, and a generally flat, very narrow valley floor on chalk geology. Settlement is sparse, consisting of one village and scattered farmsteads. Unimproved chalk grassland habitats are a feature on higher ground, with watermeadows and pastures, together with willow and poplar lining the river corridor. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The broad, shallow slopes of the Ebble River Valley are cut by a series of dry tributary valleys, which create a gently undulating topography. The opposing valley slopes are quite close to each other, resulting from the narrowness of the valley floor, creating a sense of enclosure. The River Ebble follows a largely straight course along a narrow floodplain. Chalk of the White Chalk Subgroup is the predominant bedrock and surface geology although an outcrop of Gault / Upper Greensand exists to the south east of Ebbesbourne Wake and near to Alvediston. There are local superficial deposits of Clay-with-Flints & Head (gravel, sand and clay), the latter occurring mostly on the southern slopes of the LLCA. The highest parts of the LLCA are found in the north-west of the LLCA, with topography ranging between 242m AOD at the top of White Sheet Hill and 85-90m AOD north of Broad Chalke. There are a number of

small streams flowing into the River Ebble within the LLCA, notably the River Chalke that rises in Bowerchalke and joins the River Ebble to the west of Broad Chalke.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** The main settlement in the LLCA is Bowerchalke, located in the south-east and extending up and onto the shallow downland slopes. Ebbesborne Wake and Alvediston are also contained within the LLCA. Brick and flint are common building materials within the settlements, with thatch and slate as characteristic roofing materials. Large-scale arable fields are the predominant land use on the shallow valley sides. In addition, there are some significant areas of improved pasture. Pig farming is also found along the valley. Chalk grassland would once have been much more extensive but is now restricted to the steep sides of tributary valleys. Field boundaries are varied, comprising post and wire fencing in places, hedgerows and a scattering of hedgerow trees. Water meadows are occasional features along the course of the river, but traditional water meadow management is generally no longer practiced. There are no major roads within the LLCA although a series of minor roads connect Berwick St John with villages along the River Ebble, the settlements on the downs to the south of the LLCA, and the greensand terrace and hills to the north. A network of Public Rights of Way cross the landscape. These generally follow a north-south path, the exception being the Old Shaftesbury Drove track (a byway and cycle route) that runs the full length of the character area, east-west, following the line of the adjacent Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment (B3). There are also a number of footpaths following the east-west path of the River Ebble (e.g. between Norrington Pond and Ebbesbourne Wake). A significant number of areas of access land are designated in this LLCA, particularly in the north. These correspond to the areas of chalk downland on the valley sides.

*Chase Chatter - Bowerchalke*

Bowerchalke lies at the head of the Chalke Stream, a tributary of the River Ebble. Reputedly Wiltshire's most haunted village. The village has had a number of other notable residents including internationally renowned violinist Iona Brown, scientist and environmentalist Dr James Lovelock and First World War poet Siegfried Sassoon.<sup>52</sup>

*Chase Chatter - The Church of St Mary, Alvediston*

In the churchyard, with a fine memorial, is the grave of Anthony Eden, 1st Earl of Avon, who served as Prime Minister from 1955 to 1957. His last home was Alvediston Manor; an 18th century house located not far from the church<sup>53</sup>.

- **Tree Cover:** Significant woodland is a fairly uncommon feature of this LLCA with only one sizeable block, to the west of Fifield Ashes. Small blocks of broadleaved and coniferous shelterbelts are scattered throughout the LLCA, and willow and poplar line the course of the river in places.

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<sup>52</sup> Discover Chalke Valley. <http://www.discoverchalkevalley.org.uk/charming-villages/east-knoyle/>

<sup>53</sup> Discover Chalke Valley. <http://www.discoverchalkevalley.org.uk/charming-villages/ansty/>



- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA contains some of the most tranquil areas within the wider CC&WWD AONB<sup>54</sup>. There are opportunities for extensive views over the dry valleys from the extensive network of public rights of way that cross the landscape, such as from the Shaftesbury Drove track in the north and its connections into the valley below. The higher ground is very exposed in places and can be windy. In combination with the open landscape and vast skyscape of the downland, this combines to give a feeling of remoteness. Prescombe Down NNR also provides opportunities to experience the tranquil landscape and connect with nature, with its wild flowers and Adonis Blue butterfly. Along the river, thatched cottages, narrow roads and views to the surrounding valley create a strongly rural feel.

*Chase Chatter - Norrington Manor*

Norrington Manor in the hills above Alvediston is believed to have been built during the reign of Richard II by John Gawen, who purchased the land in 1377. One of the oldest English families, the Gawens had links to Sir Gawain, a knight of King Arthur's Round Table. Norrington Manor underwent rebuilding work in the mid-1600s but the 14th century hall and vaulted undercroft survive as well as a vaulted porch and doorway with a king's head corbel.<sup>55</sup>

- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ The LLCA is dominated by intensive and widespread arable cultivation which is important for farmland birds.
  - ❖ The steeper slopes support important areas of unimproved calcareous grassland including Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve.
  - ❖ Small areas of rough pasture, cress beds as well as remnant water meadows.
  - ❖ Small deciduous woodland blocks and belts can be found on the floodplains of this area.
- **Historic Environment:** There are a range of prehistoric earthworks, particularly on the north side of the Ebble Valley, including numerous round and long barrows, earthworks and Chiselbury Camp Hillfort. Chiselbury Camp Hillfort includes a univallate hillfort<sup>56</sup> known as Chiselbury Camp, the earthwork remains of an adjacent toll house, and two cross dykes or embanked ditches abutting the northern and southern of the hillfort. The function of the ditches is unknown but the manner in which they cut the ridge suggests that they were intended to prevent movement along it<sup>57</sup>. A number of ancient fieldscapes (Pre-1800 Fields) are found across the LLCA. These are predominantly found to the south of the River Ebble but there are assarts to the south-east of Berwick Coombe, north of Berwick St John. There are also examples of Pre-1800 fields at the bottom of Windmill Hill near

<sup>54</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Tranquillity Mapping (July 2010)

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.discoverchalkevalley.org.uk/charming-villages/ansty/>

<sup>56</sup> A hilltop enclosure bounded by a single rampart, usually accompanied by a ditch.

([http://thesaurus.historicengland.org.uk/thesaurus\\_term.asp?thes\\_no=1&term\\_no=68859](http://thesaurus.historicengland.org.uk/thesaurus_term.asp?thes_no=1&term_no=68859))

<sup>57</sup> Historic England - Chiselbury Camp hillfort, cross dykes and site of turnpike toll house <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1020262>

Norrington Pond in the east, several surrounding Alvediston, and along the River Ebble between Fifield Bavant and Knapp. Along the course of the river, post medieval and 19th Century enclosed meadows are a feature. 18th and 19th Century fields (a combination of both Parliamentary and Planned Enclosure) are more dominant to the south of the River Ebble with 20th Century (new, extended or modified) more common on the steeper slopes to the north of the River Ebble. The predominantly large scale fields on the northern dipslope are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure. Agricultural innovations in the post-medieval and modern periods resulted in the enclosure of the open fields adjacent to the villages, and the extension of arable farming onto the adjacent downs, as reflected in the siting of field barns at a distance from the river, in contrast to the valley bottom locations of most of the farms.

- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bowerchalke Downs</li> <li>• Gallows Hill</li> <li>• Prescombe Down</li> </ul>
National Nature Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescombe Down</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	44 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade I: (1 No) Norrington Manor with wall and gate piers</li> <li>• Grade II*: (4 No) Church of St Martin, Ebbesbourne Wake, Church of St John The Baptist, Ebbesbourne Wake, Church of St Mary, Alvediston and Church of Holy Trinity, Bower Chalke</li> <li>• Grade II: (44 No) including The Bell Inn, Alvediston, The Forge, Bower Chalke, Manor Farmhouse, Ebbesbourne Wake, Gurston Manor, Broad Chalke</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	13 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numerous round and long barrows</li> <li>• Chiselbury Camp hillfort</li> <li>• Berwick Coombe and Woodland Down ditch</li> <li>• Various earthworks</li> <li>• Swallowcliffe Down settlement</li> <li>• Whitesheet Hill milestone</li> </ul>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- Broad valley with shallow slopes, dry tributary valleys and the narrow floodplain of the River Ebble, a chalk river with clear, fast-flowing water.
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland.
- The shallow valley sides are under arable cultivation.
- Pastoral land use along the river with small scale fields.
- Villages, typically at the foot of the valley slopes, with the valley used as a transport corridor with road passing alongside the river.
- Seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, marsh and damp woodlands of high ecological value.
- Distinctive features relating to past management of the flood plain such as water meadows.
- Distinctive pattern of settlement of small villages.
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees are a feature of the valley bottom, for example the willows and poplars that line the narrow floodplain in places, with hedgerows and hedgerow trees adding to the enclosed feel of the valleys.
- Field boundaries and footpaths, often following historic tracks and paths.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure.
- Archaeological remains, including isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments and Bronze Age round barrows.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Predominantly arable land use contained with fields that are extensive in size.
- Seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, marsh and damp woodlands, with some areas of rough pasture, largely limited to small grazing pockets on the flood plain or on the steepest valley sides.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including farmland, downland and small blocks of woodland.
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, very often enclosed by hedgerows.
- Tangible heritage assets including upstanding archaeological remains.
- Small distinctive villages built of variety of local materials.
- Peaceful rural landscape away from major roads.

### ***Strength of Character***

The strength of landscape character in this LLCA is judged to be moderate. The gradual change from pastoral to overtly arable character makes the floodplain indistinct though it does contain

a smaller-scale, tranquil rural landscape of pastoral fields bounded by hedgerows, villages built of local materials and ecological interest in its water courses and meadows. The loss of areas of chalk grassland has reduced land cover variety within the valley. Overall the landscape condition is considered to be moderate. Due to the extent of arable farming, much of the landscape is actively managed and in good condition. However, the condition of habitats is not as favourable. Although two of the three SSSIs within the LLCA are assessed as being in a 'favourable' condition, very few areas of semi-natural habitat remain. The loss of features such as hedgerows and the inconsistent management of those that do survive give an unkempt appearance to the landscape in places, and the loss of traditional land management methods such as water meadows has led to decline in ecological value of the wet grasslands alongside the river. There are some elements of the landscape in better condition in the lower parts of the valley, with the chalk river of high water quality and rich biodiversity, a largely intact hedgerow network, riparian woodland and compact well-kept villages.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.7.6 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Decline in grazing may result in further scrub invasion on chalk grassland.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.
- Decline in farm labour and lack of income may result in decline in traditional forms of environmental management such as management of hedgerows and ditches.
- Nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run-off affecting the high water quality and appearance of the streams and rivers.
- Intensification in farming leading to drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation.
- Diversification of traditional agricultural areas such as the Ebble Valley is likely to continue with more agricultural buildings converted to residential or industrial uses and the establishment of secondary enterprises. This may include establishment of commercial shoots or growth of biomass crops which could alter the feel of the valley slopes.
- Increased traffic on the road network, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing which, in places create a more 'urban' character.
- Diminished rural tranquillity due to increased traffic.
- Change in levels of recreational activity on the open access land should be monitored to ensure appropriate management and to understand any pressure for associated facilities.
- Demand for construction of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.
- Development pressures, particularly for new housing which will affect the character of the existing small settlements - villages may appear to coalesce along the valley side roads.

## Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

3.7.7 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve** the character of the landform and **restore** declining features such as chalk grassland, meadows and boundary features such as hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration. This will include maintenance of key features along the river including permanent pasture, wet grassland and riparian woodlands and historic features associated with the water meadows and villages.

3.7.8 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Where appropriate, particularly in lower lying parts of the LLCA and around settlements, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of sense of enclosure, including along roads and tracks. Restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows where appropriate. In particular, the comparatively dense structure of willows should be retained along field boundaries near the course of the river.
- Where possible, enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Where possible, limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Retain and enhance areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encouraging management to improve species diversity. Consider opportunities to extend and link chalk grassland habitats, whilst preserving the biodiversity associated with some of the farmland areas.
- Conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen, marsh and swamp.
- Conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature – and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in areas of access land, which contain sensitive ecological habitats.
- Promote appropriate grazing regimes to avoid encroachment of scrub.
- Resist further dilution of traditional settlement character through establishment and use of building design guidance, including providing guidelines on characteristic planting on the edge of settlements to prevent harsh boundaries between rural and urban areas.
- Ensure pylons, masts and other vertical elements are carefully sited and the number restricted to avoid visual clutter and further interruption of the characteristic open views.

## E2 - Lower Ebble/Chalke River Valley Slopes

### Key Characteristics

- Wide, extensive valley slopes, underlain by chalk geology.
- General sense of openness on the Valley Slopes, in contrast to the more enclosed nature of the Valley Floor.
- The main A354 between Salisbury and Blandford Forum passes through the LLCA reducing tranquillity along its course.
- Beech lined roads are a feature.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect historic tracks and paths.
- High quality habitats including unimproved calcareous grassland, with most of Knighton Down and Wood SSSI falling within this LLCA.
- High density of archaeological remains, typical of the wider area.

### Location and Boundaries

- 3.7.9 This LLCA is the lower part of the Ebble / Chalke River Valley and is located in the north-west of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area, bound to the north by the Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment LLCA (B3). To the south it is bound by the Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down Open Chalk Downland LLCA (C2). The Lower Ebble / Chalke Valley River Valley Floor LLCA (F1) cuts through the LLCA in the centre. The LLCA stretches from Knapp in the west to Coombe Bissett in the east, although these two settlements are actually within the Lower Ebble / Chalke River Valley Floor LLCA (F1).

### Landscape Character

- 3.7.10 In overview, the Lower Ebble / Chalke River Valley Slopes LLCA is an area of wide, extensive valley slopes on chalk geology. While settlement is sparse, the main A354 intersects the area reducing tranquillity along its course. Unimproved chalk grassland habitats are a feature. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The broad, shallow slopes of the Ebble River Valley are cut by a series of dry tributary valleys, which create a gently undulating topography. The opposing valley slopes are quite close to each other, resulting from the narrowness of the valley floor, creating a sense of enclosure. Chalk of the White Chalk Subgroup is the predominant bedrock and surface geology although a significant area of chalk of the Grey Chalk Subgroup exists between Broad Chalke and Bishopstone. Significant areas of Clay-with-Flints occurs on the northern and southern slopes of the valley, close to Broad Chalke, especially on the higher ground. Topography ranges between 194m AOD at the top of Hydon Hill to the north-east of Broad Chalke in the north of the LLCA and 65m AOD at the edge of the River Ebble valley floor near to

Coombe Bissett. The River Chalke passes through the very west of the LLCA before joining the River Ebbles close to Knapp.

- **Land Use and Settlement:** There is very little settlement within the LLCA, with only the southern edge of Coombe Bissett and scattered farmsteads. The edges of other villages on the valley floor also fall into the edge of this LLCA such as Broad Chalke and Stratford Tony. The valley slopes are predominantly used for large-scale arable agriculture. There are some limited areas of smaller-scale pasture in the dry tributary valleys. The main A354 between Blandford Forum and Salisbury passes through the eastern side of the LLCA near to the boundary of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. A number of other minor roads connect the village on the downs to the south with those contained with the valley floor and to the north of the LLCA. These generally run in a north south direction. There are a number of Public Rights of Way in this LLCA, generally following a north-south path. The exception to this is the Old Shaftesbury Drove track (a byway and cycle route) that runs the full length of the character area, east-west, following the line of the adjacent Donhead St Andrew to Fovant Chalk Escarpment (B3). There is a significant area of access land in this LLCA, with a total area of 326Ha, predominantly in the north-west and south. This access land corresponds to areas of chalk downland on the valley sides.
- **Tree Cover:** Blocks of woodland are scattered across the LLCA, predominantly on the northern slopes, with the largest area near Flamstone Farm and Netton Down. No ancient woodland exists within the LLCA.
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** The LLCA has some of the most tranquil areas within the wider CC&WWD AONB. There are views over settlements in the valley below, across the rolling downland closer to the valley floor, and on the higher ground, long distance views across the more steeply incised dry valleys. The higher ground is very exposed in places and can be windy. In combination with the open landscape and vast skyscape of the downland, this combines to give a feeling of remoteness.
- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ The LLCA is dominated by intensive and widespread arable cultivation which is important for farmland birds.
  - ❖ The steeper slopes support important areas of unimproved calcareous grassland.
  - ❖ Significant woodland, is a fairly uncommon feature of this character area, however there are small broadleaved and coniferous shelterbelts present.
- **Historic Environment:** This LLCA contains a variety of historic remains, including round and bowl barrows, part of the Knighton Roman road), and a scheduled field system on

Stoke Down. A couple of ancient fieldscapes (Pre-1800 Fields) are found across the LLCA, a very large example of this to the north of Stratford Toney stretching from the valley road up to the Old Shaftesbury Drove track, with the boundary running along Ackling Dyke Roman road. New large fields created in the 20th Century dominate the steeper slopes while 19th Century fields are more dominant on the shallow slopes near to the valley floor, these typically resulting from Parliamentary Enclosure. The predominantly large scale fields on the northern dip slope are the result of the recent amalgamation of earlier straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure.

- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
SSSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burcombe Down</li> <li>• Homington and Coombe Bissett Downs</li> <li>• Knapp and Barnett's Down</li> <li>• Knighton Down and Wood</li> <li>• Stratford Toney Down</li> <li>• Throope Down</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II: (11 No) including Manor Farmhouse, Coombe Bissett, Reddish House, Broad Chalke , Knighton Manor, Broad Chalke</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	13 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numerous round and bowl barrows</li> <li>• Chiselbury Camp hillfort</li> <li>• Knighton Roman road (stretching from Reddish Gore to reservoir)</li> <li>• Field system on Stoke Down</li> </ul>

### What's Important and Why?

#### **Landscape Qualities**

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- Broad valley of shallow slopes and dry tributary valleys.
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides are under arable cultivation.
- Villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often follow historic tracks and paths.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure.
- Archaeological remains including isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments and Bronze Age round barrows.



### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Predominantly arable land use with fields that are extensive in size.
- Some areas of rough pasture, largely limited to small grazing pockets on the flood plain or steepest valley sides.
- A mosaic landscape pattern, including farmland, downland and small blocks of woodland.
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees, including the beech avenue which rises from Broad Chalke to Knowle Hill.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways, very often enclosed by hedgerows.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including upstanding archaeological remains.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.7.11 The strength of landscape character in this LLCA is judged to be moderate. The gradual change from pastoral to overtly arable character makes the floodplain indistinct, merging into the arable character of the downland valleys sides. The loss of areas of chalk grassland has also reduced land cover variety within the valley. Overall the landscape condition is considered to be moderate. Due to the extent of arable farming, much of the landscape is actively managed and in good condition. However, the condition of habitats is less good. Although three of the six SSSIs within the LLCA are assessed as being in a 'favourable' condition, the other three are 'unfavourable recovering' including Knighton Down and Wood which is the largest. Very few areas of semi-natural habitat remain. The loss of features such as hedgerows and the inconsistent management of those that do survive give an unkempt appearance to the landscape in places.

### ***Forces for Change***

Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- Decline in grazing may result in further scrub invasion on chalk grassland.
- Views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways are being lost through new hedge planting and the reinforcement of recent hedgerows.
- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.
- Decline in farm labour and lack of income may result in decline in traditional forms of environmental management such as management of hedgerows and ditches.
- Diversification of traditional agricultural areas such as the Ebbles Valley is likely to continue with more agricultural buildings converted to residential or industrial uses and the establishment of secondary enterprises. This may include establishment of commercial shoots or growth of biomass crops which could alter the feel of the valley slopes.

- Change in levels of recreational activity on the open access land should be monitored to ensure appropriate management and to understand any pressure for associated facilities.
- Demand for construction of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments in this elevated, open and windswept landscape.

### Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

3.7.12 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and restore** declining features such as chalk grassland, meadows and boundary features such as hedgerows.

3.7.13 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Where appropriate, particularly in lower lying parts of the LLCA and around settlements, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of sense of enclosure, including along roads and tracks. Restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows where appropriate.
- Where possible, enhance public access to views of the landscape, particularly along roads and bridleways, by limiting or carefully siting as appropriate any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Where possible, limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Retain and enhance areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encouraging management to improve species diversity. Consider opportunities to extend and link chalk grassland habitats, whilst preserving the biodiversity associated with some of the farmland areas.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.
- Promote sustainable management of recreation particularly in areas of access land, which contain sensitive ecological habitats.
- Promote appropriate grazing regimes to avoid encroachment of scrub.
- Resist further dilution of traditional settlement character through establishment of building design guidance, including guidelines on characteristic planting on the edge of settlements to prevent harsh boundaries between rural and urban areas.
- Ensure pylons, masts and other vertical elements are carefully sited and the number restricted to avoid visual clutter and further interruption of the characteristic open views.

### 3.8 Broad Chalk River Valley Floor (F)

3.8.1 This Landscape Type encompasses the predominantly flat floodplain of the relatively broad chalk river valley of the River Ebble, running west to east across the landscape, along a weakness in the chalk. The clear, fast-flowing chalk river at the heart of the landscape is a key habitat and landscape feature. The line of the valley floor is often emphasised by the presence of willows and poplars. Small woodland belts and scattered trees are also a feature of the valley floor. The valley floor contains transport corridors in the form of roads. Although there is generally a fairly strong sense of tranquillity throughout, noise and visual intrusion associated with these corridors causes localised disturbance. A series of small settlements follow the course of the river, with historic landscape continuity visible in the form of isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels in the valley floor.<sup>58</sup>

3.8.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are<sup>59</sup>:

- The clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams are a key habitat.
- The relatively narrow floodplain supports watermeadows, cress beds and damp pastures, culminating in a lush character.
- Generally flat valley floor.
- A series of mature trees and a network of mature hedgerows are also defining features.
- Course of the river valley follows a weakness in the underlying chalk.
- Valley floor corridor is often emphasised by the presence of willow and poplar lining the route of the river.
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees are a feature of the valley floor.
- A series of small settlements following the course of the river.
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and watermeadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.
- The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors.
- Generally sheltered character within the valley floor, which contrasts with a greater sense of openness on the Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes.

3.8.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

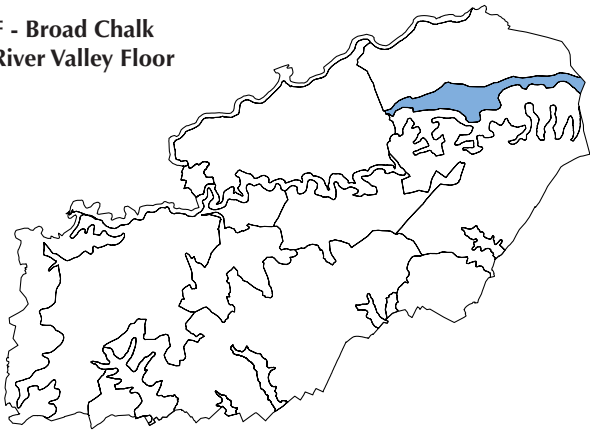
- F1: Lower Ebble / Chalke Valley River Valley Floor

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<sup>58</sup> Salisbury District Local Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, Feb 2008)

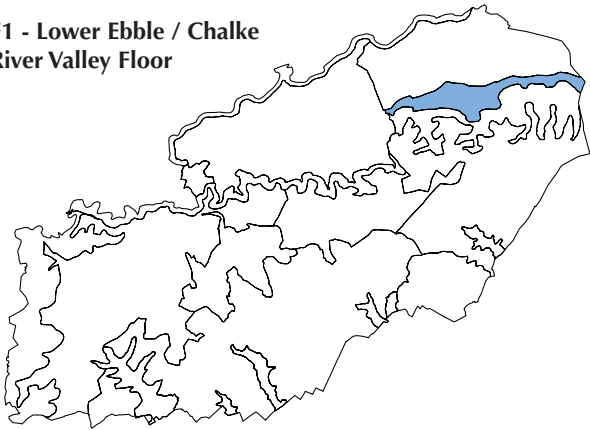
<sup>59</sup> Salisbury District Local Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, Feb 2008)

**F - Broad Chalk  
River Valley Floor**



© Stepan Czapski

**F1 - Lower Ebble / Chalke  
River Valley Floor**



© Ronald Searle

## F1 - Lower Ebble/Chalke Valley River Valley Floor

### Key Characteristics

- Flat river valley floor, underlain by chalk geology.
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees, with willow and poplar lining the route of the river in places.
- The clear fast flowing chalk river is a key habitat although small areas of unimproved chalk grassland and rough pasture are also present. I
- Cress beds (dating from the post-medieval and modern periods) as well as remnant water meadows, woodland blocks and belts can be found on the floodplains of the area.

### Location and Boundaries

- 3.8.4 The LLCA is located within the north-west of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It stretches from the hamlet of Knapp in the west to the village of Coombe Bissett in the east. It is bounded to the north and south by the Lower Ebble / Chalke Valley River Valley Slopes LLCA (E2), to the west by the Upper Ebble / Chalke Valley River Valley Slopes LLCA (E1) and to the east by the boundary of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area.

### Landscape Character

- 3.8.5 In overview, the Lower Ebble / Chalke River Valley River Valley Floor LLCA is a generally flat, river valley floor on chalk geology. Settlement is denser than in the upper valley floor and with greater traffic volume on the roads, it is less tranquil. Watermeadows and pastures are defining features. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** Drift deposits of alluvium, together with river terrace deposits (sand and gravel) are the main surface geology, following the course of the River Ebble, overlying the chalks of the White Chalk and Grey Chalk Subgroup. The River Ebble follows a largely straight course along a narrow floodplain. Topography ranges between 90m AOD around Knapp and 60m AOD on the valley floor around Coombe Bissett. The River Ebble is the main watercourse within the LLCA.
- **Land Use and Settlement:** Settlement within the Ebble River Valley predominantly comprises linear villages and hamlets such as Combe Bissett, Stratford Tony, Bishopstone and Broad Chalke along the course of the river. The shallow slopes along much of the Ebble valley have a predominant land use of arable agriculture, comprising large fields on the valley sides. There are also some significant areas of improved pasture. Water meadows are occasional features, but traditional water meadow management is generally no longer practiced. The overall pattern is of a patchwork of valley floor habitats. There

are no major roads within the LLCA but the minor road following the River Ebble connects villages to the west of the LLCA with those along the River Ebble and the main A354. A number of Rights of Way cross the River Ebble, generally from north to south and there are also a number of footpaths following the east-west path of the River Ebble, allowing access along the river from Broad Chalke to Coombe Bissett and beyond.

- **Tree Cover:** Small woodland belts and scattered trees, and damp pasture are a feature of the valley bottom. There is no ancient woodland within this LLCA.
- **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** This is the less tranquil of the two Broad Chalk Valley Floor LLCAs, especially in the eastern part near to Coombe Bissett. The settlements are larger in the lower part of the valley (including Broad Chalk and Coombe Bissett) and the valley road is busier as a consequence, with the increased traffic noise. Overall there remains a reasonably strong sense of tranquillity, and thatched cottages, narrow roads and views to the surrounding valley create a rural feel to the valley floor. In places the use of historic properties for modern and creative purposes creates a feeling of connection to the history of the area and enables good maintenance of historic buildings, such as the mixed use of the church building in Broad Chalke to include a village store and cafe.

*Chase Chatter - Broad Chalke*

Famous photographer, film and theatre costume designer Cecil Beaton, who resided at Reddish House in the village, is buried in the churchyard. In 1980 Reddish House was bought from Cecil Beaton's estate by Ursula von Pannwitz, once styled the Countess of Chichester from her first marriage to the 8th Earl of Chichester, she kept macaws which flew freely around the village stripping bark from trees.<sup>60</sup>

- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ Small areas of unimproved chalk grassland, rough pasture, cress beds and remnant water meadows
  - ❖ Woodland blocks and belts on the floodplains
  - ❖ Floodplain grazing marsh along the river, to the east of Bishopstone
  - ❖ A traditional orchard, is located within the north-east of Broad Chalke village.

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<sup>60</sup> Discover Chalke Valley Website <http://www.discoverchalkevalley.org.uk/charming-villages/fonthill-gifford/>

- **Historic Environment:** Water meadows created in the 19th Century dominate the LLCA and can be found along the River Ebble. An area of water cress beds still exist next to the river close to Knapp, these also having been created in the 19th Century. A small number of Pre-1800 Fields are present mainly around Bishopstone. Where the valley floor widens between Broad Chalke and Bishopstone, a mosaic of 19th Century Fields, created mainly under Parliamentary Enclosure; and new or enlarged 20th Century Fields also exist, mainly created in the first half of the century.
- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
Listed Buildings	65 No in total including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade I: (4 No) Church of All Saints, Broad Chalke, Church of St Michael, Coombe Bissett, Church of St Mary and St Lawrence, Stratford Toney and Church of John The Baptist, Bishopstone;</li> <li>• Grade II*: (2 No) Kings Old Rectory, Broad Chalke and Dovecote at Faulston House, Bishopstone</li> <li>• Grade II: (59 No) including Mascalls, Broad Chalke, Sudbury House, Bishopstone, Luthers, Coombe Bissett, Packhorse Bridge, Stratford Toney</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	3 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bury Orchard ditch, Broadchalke</li> <li>• Faulston pigeon house, Bishopstone</li> <li>• Packhorse bridge, Coombe Bissett</li> </ul>

### What's Important and Why?

#### **Landscape Qualities**

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- Strongly enclosed valley with a small-scale pattern, contrasting with the surrounding open downland.
- The narrow floodplain of the River Ebble.
- Chalk river with clear, fast-flowing water.
- Pastoral land use along the valley floor with small scale fields contrasts with arable farmland on the valley sides with medium to large geometric fields.
- Seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, marsh and damp woodlands of high ecological value.
- Distinctive features relating to past management of the flood plain such as water meadows and water cress beds.
- Distinctive pattern of settlement of small villages of varied local materials.
- Small woodland belts and scattered trees are a feature of the valley bottom, for example the willows and poplars that line the course of the river in places.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the enclosed feel of the valleys.
- Valley used as a transport corridor with road passing alongside the river.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, marsh and damp woodlands.
- Rich floodplain landscape of small scale grazed pastures, riparian vegetation and damp woodlands.
- Narrow, winding roads often enclosed by hedgerows.
- Small distinctive villages built of rich variety of local materials.
- Peaceful rural landscape away from major roads.
- Remnants of water meadows including a few in active management, together with watercress beds.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.8.6 The landscape within this LLCA has a strong character with its generally narrow, shallow sided landform, small-scale tranquil rural landscape of pastoral fields bounded by hedgerows, villages built of local materials and in traditional patterns and ecological interest in its water courses and meadows. The overall condition of the LLCA is good with its chalk rivers of high water quality and rich biodiversity, its largely intact hedgerow network, riparian woodland and compact well-kept villages. However there are some elements of declining condition: some hedgerows in poor condition and the loss of traditional land management methods such as water meadows has led to decline in ecological value of the wet grasslands.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.8.7 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

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



- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.

### Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

3.8.8 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve** the tranquil, intimate and rural character of the landscape. This will include maintenance, and restoration as appropriate, of key features including pasture, wet grassland and riparian woodlands, hedgerows and historic features associated with the water meadows and watercress beds.

3.8.9 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen, marsh and swamp.
- Where appropriate, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of the sense of enclosure and along roads and tracks.
- Restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows where appropriate including planting of hedgerow trees, and willows should be retained along field boundaries and the course of the river.
- Where appropriate, enhance public access to views of the landscape, by carefully siting any new or reinforcement hedge planting.
- Where possible, limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems and watercress beds that are an important historic landscape feature – and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques.
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and settlement pattern.

### 3.9 Narrow Chalk River Valley (G)

3.9.1 The Narrow Chalk River Valleys that form this Landscape Type are all tributaries of either the River Stour or River Avon. They drain the chalk dipslope and have eroded shallow valleys into the Upper Chalk. Most of the valley sides are shallow and have been exploited for the cultivation of arable crops or improved pasture. However, some of the steeper valley sides still support unimproved chalk grassland or woodland. The narrow floors contain streams marked by poplars and willows. The valleys also provide corridors of movement and support distinctive linear villages of cottages accessed via bridges across the watercourses bordering the village street. These villages contain cottages of locally distinctive materials, most notably red brick and flint with thatch. These valleys provide an intimate landscape with a semi-enclosed character contrasting with the adjacent open chalk downs. The designed landscapes surrounding country houses provide additional interest in the form of avenues, copses, tree clumps and boundary detailing. These valleys are unified by the pattern of linear picturesque villages that occupy the valley floors.<sup>61</sup>

3.9.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are<sup>62</sup>:

- Dipslope streams have eroded shallow valleys into the upper chalk - the upper parts of most of these valleys are dry.
- The shallow nature of the valleys means that they have been exploited either as improved pasture or, more commonly, large arable fields.
- Smaller, narrow fields, in places fossilising old strip patterns, predominate around the villages.
- Mature willows and poplars form a dense ribbon of trees, tracing the course of the river. Withy beds were once characteristic of the valleys and some survive today as features.
- Country houses and their designed parkland contribute features such as avenues, shelterbelts and brick walls.
- Picturesque villages inhabit the valley bottoms, following the course of the river in a linear form - the stream typically runs through the village with cottages reached via small bridges.
- Deserted Medieval villages are marked only by farmsteads or individual houses.
- Red brick, flint and thatch are locally distinctive materials.
- Roads occupy each valley floor.
- The Dorset Cursus, and numerous Bronze Age round barrows and channels of post-medieval water meadows contribute to the visible archaeology.
- This rural area is lush farming country that provides a peaceful and unified environment.

3.9.3 The following Local Landscape Character Areas are found within this Landscape Character Type, and are described below:

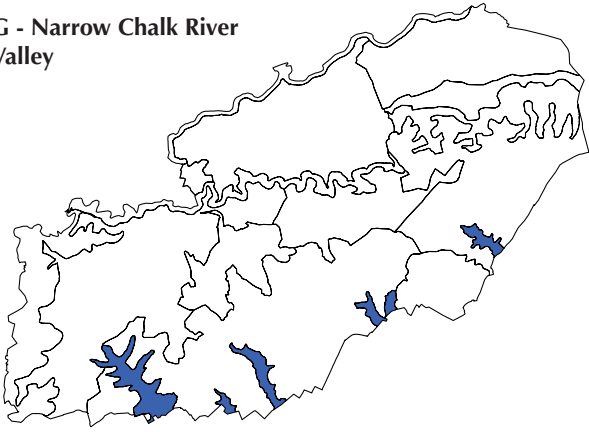
- G1:Tarrant, Crichel, Gussage, Crane and Allen Narrow Chalk River Valleys

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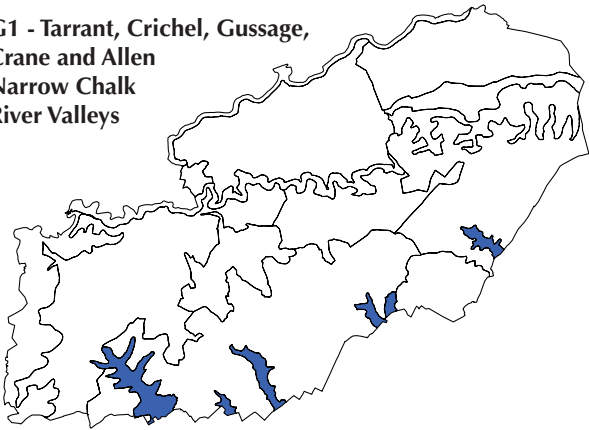
<sup>61</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

<sup>62</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

**G - Narrow Chalk River Valley**



**G1 - Tarrant, Crichel, Gussage, Crane and Allen Narrow Chalk River Valleys**



## G1 - Tarrant, Crichel, Gussage, Crane and Allen Narrow Chalk River Valleys

### Key Characteristics

- Distinctive chalk valleys
- Shallow but unified chalk streams in narrow stream corridors.
- Mature willows and poplars form ribbons of trees along the streams.
- Country houses contribute to the setting and provide important features such as brick walls, shelter belts, woods and mature trees.
- Historic fords and/or bridge crossing points.
- Use of locally distinctive building materials.
- A predominantly rural, intimate and semi-enclosed character.
- High quality habitats include deciduous woodland and semi-improved grassland.

### Location and Boundaries

3.9.4 This LLCA comprises a series of small river valleys located in the south of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. It incorporates the upper reaches of the River Tarrant, River Crichel, River Gussage, River Crane and Allen River. The Crichel and Gussage join the River Allen and drain into the River Stour, and the Tarrant drains directly into the River Stour. The River Crane joins the Moors River to the south. The Allen River ultimately drains into the River Avon to the east. These River Valleys are predominantly bounded by the Chettle to Woodyates (C1) and Martin Down to Coombe Bissett Down (C2) Open Chalk Downland LLCAs, though the Crane is bounded to the east by the Pentridge Hill Downland Hills LLCA (D1).

### Landscape Character

3.9.5 In overview, the Tarrant, Crichel, Gussage, Crane and Allen Narrow Chalk River Valleys LLCA are distinctive chalk valleys typically comprising of a valley floor and slopes. Settlements exist within the valleys and narrow lanes run along the valley floors. Land use is predominantly arable farmland. The key aspects of this LLCA are identified below:

- **Geology, topography/landform and hydrology:** The streams have eroded shallow valleys into the chalk dip slope with local deposits of Head (gravel, sand and clay). Alluvium is the most recent deposit of the streams and the main surface geology along the course of the streams. These areas of alluvium give rise to well-drained, fine, silty soils. The shallow chalk valley sides support shallow, well drained calcareous soils. The solid geology is the chalk of the White Chalk Subgroup. This LLCA is a series of distinctive chalk valleys with a shallow stream running along the narrow valley floor. Today the lowering of the water-table means that the upper parts of some of these valleys are dry. In their upper reaches, most of these valleys lose their narrow, comparatively deep profiles, instead blending into the open downland to the north.

- Land Use and Settlement:** There are a number of small settlements within this LLCA, including Tarrant Gunville on the River Tarrant, Gussage St. Andrew and Cashmoor on the River Gussage, and Martin on the Allen River. There are several historic fords and bridges at these settlement locations which have become key features, and buildings in the villages use locally distinctive materials such as red brick, flint and thatch. The historic churches within some of the villages represent important local landmarks. The valleys are intensively farmed, often right up to the edge of the stream. Generally the fields are medium in scale, though smaller adjacent to settlements and watercourses, and are bounded by hedges in varying condition or replacement wire fencing. Trees and copses, and lines of willows and poplars are found in places along the watercourses. There are low densities of public Rights of Way through these valleys, particularly in the west, though the promoted Jubilee Trail runs through the western areas. The Hardy Way also cuts through the north of the River Crane Valley close to the course of the Dorset Cursus.
- Tree Cover:** Trees and copses, and lines of willows and poplars are found in places along the water courses, with larger wooded areas in places forming key features. These larger wooded areas on the valley floor are often associated with the designed landscapes of large country houses. There is very little ancient woodland within this LLCA. Trees also tend to be concentrated around the settlement fringes.
- Perceptual/Experiential Landscape:** Tranquillity varies across this LLCA, with higher levels of tranquillity away from major roads. The settlements of Martin, East Martin and Tidpit are small hamlets and villages located within the LLCA which contain with many thatched cottages, giving a particularly tranquil and rural feel. In contrast, the main A354 cuts through the LLCA in places in the west, the road is very straight and fast, so traffic noise can be significant. There is a strong sense of history in places as parts of the Dorset Cursus and Ackling Dyke, the Roman road from Salisbury to Dorchester are located within the LLCA, and barrows are visible in places in the landscape.

*Chase Chatter - Gussage St Andrew*

Formerly a little tithing, hamlet and manor 6 miles from Cranborne and two miles from Sixpenny Handley, now essentially consists of a couple of farms and a few outlying cottages. The word 'Gussage' has been formed from two Saxon words, 'gyse' for 'water breaking forth' and 'sic' for 'watercourse', and refers to the gushing stream that rises here and eventually flows into the River Allen.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Dorset OPC – Gussage St Andrew Website <http://www.opcdorset.org/GussageStAndrew/GussageStAndrew.htm>

- **Biodiversity:**
  - ❖ The LLCA is dominated by arable agriculture and improved pasture
  - ❖ There are a number of small woodland blocks, shelterbelts, and trees along the watercourses.
  
- **Historic Environment:** To a large degree the field systems in the valleys mirror those on the adjacent downs, particularly in the north and on the less steep, higher ground. However, while on the downs the process of late 18th /early 19th Century enclosure involved the enclosure of open downland, in the valleys it involved the enclosure of open strip fields, this being evident in the present pattern of small narrow fields around some of the villages, and is particularly noticeable in the pattern of small, narrow fields around Martin. Water meadows are also a feature in places, such as around Gussage St. Andrew. The south of the LLCA is dominated by the designed landscapes of Eastbury Park. This LLCA has less visible archaeology compared to the adjacent Open Chalk Downland, though there are a scattering of barrows in the Crane Valley, and the Dorset Cursus and Ackling Dyke Roman Road also cut through this area.
  
- **Designations:**

Designation Type	Name / Example
Site of Special Scientific Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pentridge Down</li> </ul>
Listed Buildings	70 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade I: (3 No) Eastbury House including attached West Courtyard and Gateway; Church of St Andrew, Gussage St Andrew and Church of All Saints, Martin</li> <li>• Grade II*: (2 No) Church of St Mary, Tarrant Gunville and Manor House and attached wall, Martin</li> <li>• Grade II: (65 No) including The Old Rectory, Tarrant Gunville; College House, Martin and Lower Minchington Farmhouse</li> </ul>
Registered Parks & Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade II*: (1 No) Eastbury. Situated immediately south-east of the village of Tarrant Gunville and is the principally archaeological remains of early C18 formal gardens and parkland designed by Charles Bridgeman</li> </ul>
Scheduled Monuments	6 No in total including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roman villa on Little Barton Hill</li> <li>• Bowl barrow and pillow mound on Earl's Hill</li> <li>• Parts of Dorset Cursus</li> <li>• Barrows in Salisbury Plantation</li> <li>• Part of Ackling Dyke (Roman Road, including Roman Road on Oakley Down</li> </ul>

## What's Important and Why?

### ***Landscape Qualities***

The key features, patterns and intangible aspects that are key qualities of the landscape and make the area memorable are:

- Mature willows and poplars along the watercourses.
- Picturesque villages along the watercourses - the stream typically runs through the village with cottages reached via small bridges.
- Red brick, flint and thatch are locally distinctive materials.
- Roads along the valley floor.
- Tranquility is high in places where there are no major roads.
- Smaller, narrow fields predominate around the villages, with larger arable fields further away.
- Archaeological remains scattered across the area including prehistoric and Roman sites.

### ***Landscape and Visual Sensitivities***

3.9.6 The key positive landscape and visual attributes that, if lost or altered, would change the character of the landscape are:

- Shallow chalk valleys with typically medium to large-scale arable farmland land cover. Some pasture, particularly in smaller fields around the settlements and along watercourses.
- The narrow valley floors contains watercourses, sometimes lined by poplars and willows.
- Distinctive villages, utilising local materials, with cottages accessed via bridges across the watercourses.
- The designed landscapes surrounding country houses provide additional interest in the form of avenues, copses, tree clumps and boundary detailing.
- Narrow, winding roads and routeways often enclosed by hedgerows.
- Tangible heritage assets which are distinctive features of the landscape including upstanding archaeological remains.

### ***Strength of Character***

3.9.7 This is a landscape with a moderate strength of character. Although the combination of streams, transport corridors, small settlements and country houses form a distinct and recognisable pattern, the valley does not have particularly strong valley landform, often merging into the chalk downland to the north. The influence of the downs on this valley (encroachment of large arable fields into the valley) further dilutes the character. The condition of the landscape is considered to be moderate. The working agricultural landscape is fairly well managed, except perhaps for some hedgerows on the valley floor that are in declining condition.

### ***Forces for Change***

3.9.8 Key pressures, trends and threats to the character of the landscape, and opportunities for strengthening landscape character are:

- The uncertainties around funding for agri-environmental schemes once the UK leaves the European Union.
- Decline in farm labour and lack of income may result in decline in traditional forms of environmental management such as management of hedgerows and ditches.
- Traditional agricultural areas may diversify, resulting in the conversion of agricultural buildings for alternative use. This could include a change in crops grown which might alter the sense of enclosure in the valleys.
- Intensive agricultural practices have reduced the quality of habitats within the LLCA, such as hedges, farm pond and field margins. Wet woodland is also now mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow and alder along the immediate river bank.
- While there is little recent development in villages, modern development has sprawled out along the road in a ribbon or become regimented or 'suburban' in character.

### **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

3.9.9 Taking into account the key sensitivities, condition and forces for change, the overall strategy for positive management of the landscape in this LLCA is to:

- **Conserve and enhance** the strong visual unity of these valleys, the pattern of villages and semi-natural habitats, and to restore declining features such as wet woodlands, meadows, chalk grassland, valley side woodlands and boundary features.

3.9.10 Recommended guidelines for actions required to sustain the character of the area in accordance with the above landscape strategy are:

- Encourage traditional management techniques such as fertilising the watermeadows by 'drowning' the floodplain each year and encourage restoration of floodplain habitats (i.e. pasture with an appropriate grazing regime).
- Where appropriate, minimise hedgerow loss and conversion to fencing, which could result in loss of the sense of enclosure along roads and tracks.
- Restore fragmented and poorly managed hedgerows where appropriate and consider re-planting hedgerow trees where these have been lost.
- Retain and restore the comparatively dense structure of willows along field boundaries and the course of the river and consider extending wet woodland on the valley floor.
- Consider opportunities for reversion from arable cropping back to chalk grassland on the valley sides and to watermeadows on the valley bottom.
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and settlement pattern.



- Where possible, limit incremental change to the road network such as that associated with signage and change to road class, which could change the rural peaceful character of the landscape.
- Retain and enhance the condition and experience of remnant archaeological features in the landscape, and consider providing interpretation where appropriate.

### 3.10 Greensand Terrace (H)

3.10.1 The Greensand Terrace landscape type corresponds to the level terraces that lie between the greensand hills and chalk escarpments. The geology has given rise to rich brown earths and these soils support arable crop production. The large rectangular arable fields which dominate the terrace landscapes are characteristic of Parliamentary Enclosure of a probable late 18th/early 19th century date. Calcareous subsoils tend to be found on the edge of the landscape type, closer to the foot of the chalk escarpment and it is here that mixed woodland typically marks the transition and edge of the terrace. The wooded copses provide valuable nesting and feeding habitat for a range of typical farmland bird species, a declining bird group within the UK. Coniferous blocks, planted as game coverts, are typical features of the terrace landscape. Low density, scattered farmsteads characterise settlement and built character.<sup>64</sup>

3.10.2 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are<sup>65</sup>:

- Flat aprons of land from which the dramatic chalk escarpments and hills rise.
- Dominated by arable fields of Parliamentary enclosure.
- Large geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the adjacent Greensand Hills.
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value.
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing.
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment.
- Coniferous belts shelter dispersed farmsteads.
- General absence of prehistoric earthworks.

#### **Berwick St. John and its Landscape Setting**

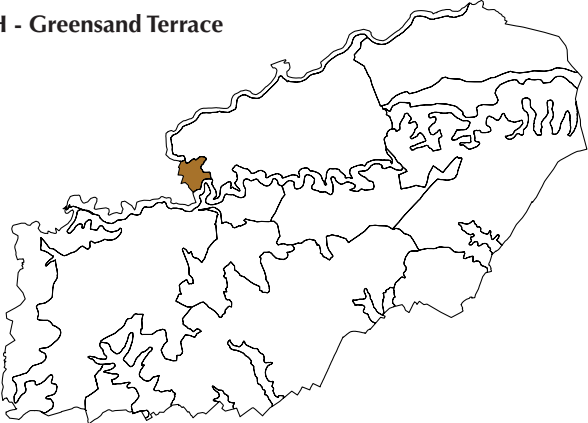
3.10.3 The small, nucleated historic settlement of Berwick St. John has strong historical/cultural links with the Ebble/Chalke Valley to the east and the inner bounds of Cranborne Chase to the south. The north-facing scarp provides a visually dramatic backdrop and skyline to the settlement, reinforcing the sense of connectivity with the Wooded Chalk Downland. Stone and thatch are distinctive building materials, with stone walls and high hedges along the narrow roads on the approach to Berwick St. John. The village has 17 grade II listed buildings, including the Talbot Inn and the Church of St. John built in the 14th century. The parish of Berwick St. John extends southwards and incorporates much of Rushmore Park which lies on the Wooded Chalk Downland. The immediate landscape setting of the village comprises a patchwork of small and medium sized arable and pasture fields, predominantly bounded by hedgerows, with a number of farmsteads close to the edge of the settlement.

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<sup>64</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

<sup>65</sup> Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Agency, June 2003)

H - Greensand Terrace



## **4.0 WHAT MAKES CRANBORNE CHASE & CHALKE VALLEY DISTINCTIVE?**

### **4.1 General**

4.1.1 This final chapter identifies the natural and historic/cultural landscape characteristics and qualities that make the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area distinctive, and are therefore particularly important to conserve and enhance for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. In doing so, it provides further justification for the definition of the Landscape Partnership Area shown on **Figure 1.1** and described in **Section 1.2**.

### **4.2 The Special Qualities of the Landscape Partnership Area**

4.2.1 The Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area is an outstanding chalk downland landscape that in many ways evokes a strong sense of the 'iconic English countryside'. The special qualities and characteristics that give this area its strong sense of place, including its distinctive vibrant villages, profoundly rural character and historic traditions, are highly valued and cherished by local communities, also attracting tourists who contribute to the local rural economy. This is a dramatic and historic landscape where 'voices in the landscape' can still be heard.

4.2.2 It is also a living landscape, which continues to be influenced by those who work with and manage the land and contribute to the local rural economy. The landscape provides important ecosystem services that deliver benefits such as fresh food, water, fuel and clean air, along with less tangible benefits such as inspiration, health and well-being. Conserving and enhancing the tangible and intangible aspects of the landscape that provide these services and benefits is a key challenge and priority for the future sustainable management of land throughout the Landscape Partnership Area.

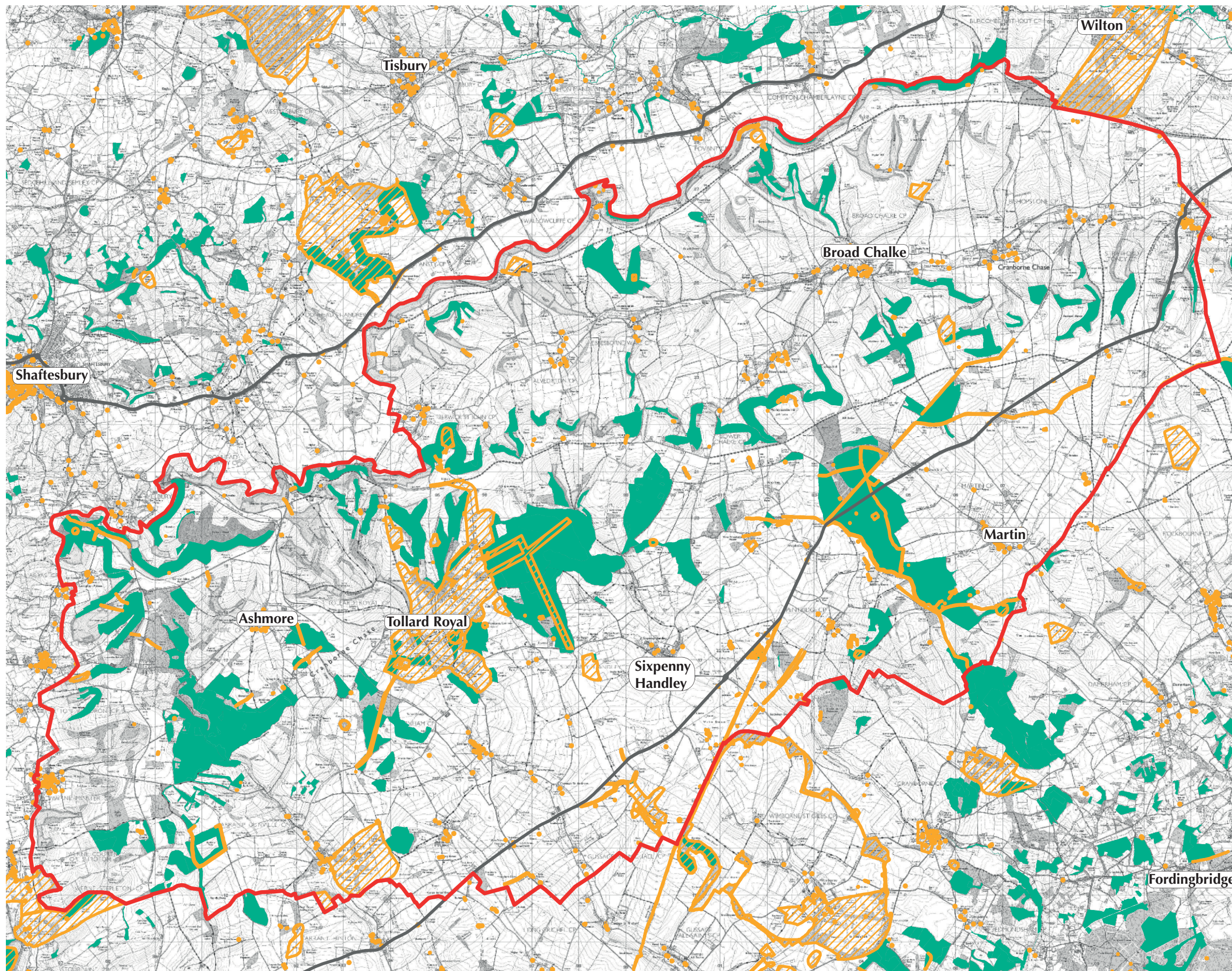
4.2.3 Drawing on the findings of Sections 2.0 and 3.0 of this LCA, the key natural and historic/cultural landscape characteristics and qualities that are considered to make the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area distinctive are highlighted below:

- **The unusual wooded chalk downland of Cranborne Chase** – as the traditional heart of the former Medieval royal hunting grounds, the inner bounds of Cranborne Chase evokes an ancient landscape with a rich patina of stunning, interrelated natural, built and cultural assets.
- **The distinctive Chalke Valley and its string of settlements** – with strong historical, natural and social links to Cranborne Chase as evidenced by the historic Medieval parishes that continue to provide a slice of river bottom, valley sides and open downland grazing beyond.
- **A peaceful, profoundly rural and living landscape** – this is a sparsely populated and largely ‘unspoilt’ area with a strong sense of remoteness, tranquillity and expansive dark night skies, which is maintained as a living agricultural landscape.
- **Grand and dramatic downland landscapes** – the scale of the downland offers wide expansive skies, dominant skylines, dramatic steep escarpments and panoramic views, which combine to create an intense landscape experience.
- **Unity of the underlying chalk geology** - expressed in the distinctive and sometimes dramatically sculpted landforms, open vistas, escarpments and coombes.
- **Woodland and trees** - the landscape is overlain by a woodland mosaic that includes eye-catching hill-top copses, veteran parkland trees and avenues, extensive areas of wooded downland and ancient forest, together with more recent game coverts.
- **High level of survival of habitats** – notably ancient woodland, chalk streams and lowland calcareous grassland (including the second largest area of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain at Martin Down National Nature Reserve).
- **Distinctive settlement pattern** – a largely intact pre 1750 historic settlement pattern of villages with a dense concentration of listed buildings seen along the river valley, on the downland and along the scarp spring line (such as Sixpenny Handley; Tollard Royal; Ashmore; Berwick St John; Broad Chalke; Iwerne Minster; Bishopstone; Coombe Bissett; Tarrant Gunville; Bowerchalke; and Martin).
- **Strong sense of place and local distinctiveness** - represented by the use of local vernacular building styles and materials (knapped flint, brick, cob, clunch, clay tiles and straw thatch) and small-scale vernacular features (such as sunken lanes and distinctive black and white signposts).
- **A landscape etched with the visible imprint of the past** - including earthworks, former settlements, field systems and water meadows, with a high level of survival of Medieval land use patterns, woodland archaeology and a wealth of Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon archaeological sites notable for nationally important monument groups forming ceremonial complexes or monumental landscapes.
- **A rich land use history** – concentrations of ancient enclosure, ancient woodland and former common land with numerous ancient hilltop forts and barrows.
- **A legacy of historic designed landscapes** - a concentration of historic parklands, estates, and manor houses together with Historic Parks and Gardens of national and county importance, including Rushmore Park.
- **Literary, artistic and cultural associations of national distinction** – the area has been celebrated in the works of numerous important artists, archaeologists, scholars and writers.

4.2.4 As illustrated on **Figure 4.1**, the Landscape Partnership Area boundary includes a particularly distinct concentration of significant natural and historic landscape features that are most closely associated with the inner bounds of Cranborne Chase - the “traditional heart” of the Medieval royal hunting grounds. Overall, the extent of the boundary is considered to capture the key natural and historic/cultural landscape characteristics and qualities outlined above that make the Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership Area particularly distinctive.

*‘Artists have found in Cranborne Chase and its hinterland a landscape of inspiration, seclusion and bare-bone beauty and the area has always had an air of isolation which has attracted an exceptional array of artists and writers’.*

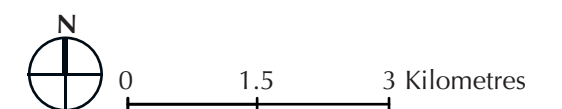
(Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan 2014-2019)



- KEY**
- Landscape Partnership Area
- Significant Features:**
- Heritage Designations\*
  - Ecological Designations\*\*

\* Includes: Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings

\*\* Includes: Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland



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