

**Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

**LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY STUDY
(Final Report)**

May 2007

THE **LANDSCAPE** PRACTICE
CHARTERED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Study Aims
- 1.2 Background and Scope of Study
- 1.3 Concept of Landscape Sensitivity
- 1.4 Overview of Study Approach

2.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS AND SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

- 2.1 Character Area 1A: Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
- 2.2 Character Area 1B: West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment
- 2.3 Character Area 1C: Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpments
- 2.4 Character Area 2A: West Wiltshire Downs
- 2.5 Character Area 2B: Southern Downland Belt
- 2.6 Character Area 3A: Cranborne Chase
- 2.7 Character Area 4A: Martin - Whitsbury
- 2.8 Character Area 5A: Wylve River Valley
- 2.9 Character Area 5B: Ebbie River Valley
- 2.10 Character Area 5C: Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys
- 2.11 Character Area 6A: Fovant Terrace
- 2.12 Character Area 6B: Kilmington Greensand Terrace
- 2.13 Character Area 7A: Donhead - Fovant Hills
- 2.14 Character Area 7B: Penselwood - Longleat Greensand Hills
- 2.15 Character Area 8A: Vale of Wardour

3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 Overall Landscape Sensitivity Profile
- 3.2 Summary and Conclusions

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Project Brief
- Appendix 2: Landscape Character and Visual Sensitivity Evaluation Tables
- Appendix 3: Glossary

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Landscape Character Sensitivity
- Figure 2: Visual Sensitivity
- Figure 3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity
- Figure 4: Sensitivity Mapping Key

PREFACE

The Landscape Practice (TLP) was commissioned in February 2006 by Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Partnership, hosted by Wiltshire County Council, to undertake an AONB-wide assessment to provide information on its inherent landscape sensitivity at the strategic level. The current AONB view is that landscape sensitivity relates to the intrinsic fragility or robustness of a particular landscape to any type of change. This study is not, therefore, focused on any particular development type or proposal, sensitivity to a particular topic, or capacity to absorb a given amount of building. Rather, it identifies and addresses the broad issues and pressures for change within the AONB, and how these might have an impact on the landscape character areas.

The outputs of this study are this report dealing with the concept, methodology, and a statement describing which types of landscape are more resilient to change and which are more sensitive. Where necessary, assessments of special or anomalous localities or cases have been made.

This report is also supported by colour-graded sensitivity maps, which graphically illustrate the spatial relationship and distribution of the various sensitivity classes within the AONB.

Ultimately, it is envisaged that this study would be referred to by practitioners to gain an understanding of the inherent landscape sensitivities of each character area within the AONB and, accordingly, an insight into their broad sensitivity to generic development and land management change. It is also hoped that this study may be referred to as a support document for the delivery of landscape benefits under environmental improvement schemes that reflect the local sense of place. However, in all instances this study would not negate the need for detailed considerations of landscape and visual impact on a case-by-case basis in relation to individual applications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Source Documents and Data:

- AONB G.I.S.
- Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs (2004) AONB - *Management Plan 2004-2009*.
- Land Use Consultants (June 2003) - *Integrated Landscape Character Assessment*.

- The Countryside Agency (Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage (2004) - *Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*.
- The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2002) – *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition)*.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Aims

1.1.1 The study aims and objectives have been derived from the client's brief dated 06/02/06, and for reference the brief is reproduced in full in Appendix 1. The principal aim of this study is to assist the assessment of the impacts of land management and land use activities, incentives and potential changes on the landscapes of the AONB. However, in order to better understand the implications of change, it is first necessary to understand and analyse the significant characteristic elements of the landscapes within the AONB as a basis for gauging their inherent sensitivity.

1.1.2 The objectives of this study are:

- To identify and evaluate the significant landscape characteristics or key sensitivities of each character area.
- To test the attributes of a range of management and development changes against the key characteristics of the landscape to ascertain the fragility or robustness of each landscape character area.
- To alert practitioners about possible threats to landscape character from land use change proposals and provide a basis for influencing decisions at the earliest possible stage.

1.1.3 The study is also intended as a support document for the delivery of landscape benefits that reflect the local sense of place under a range of environmental management and improvement schemes, including:

- Heritage Lottery Fund/ Landscape Partnership Projects
- Rural Development Service Environmental Stewardship Scheme
- Other local schemes such as Sustainable Development Fund and Local Action Fund

1.2 Background and Scope of Study

1.2.1 The core of this study is reviewing, assessing and making professional judgments on the data sets currently held on the AONB GIS and previous landscape character assessments to inform decisions about landscape sensitivity. The principle source document that steered this study is the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment¹ (LCA), undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000. That assessment drew together the physical, cultural, social and economic influences that have combined to create the distinctive and outstanding character of the AONB. The area is characterised by a diversity of landscapes and these variations and differences have been classified and are represented by eight landscape types².

1.2.2 The landscape types have been further sub-divided into component character areas, see Table 1 below. These are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. Each character area has a distinct and recognisable local identity, summarised in its key characteristics.

¹ Land Use Consultants. Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. June 2003.

² Each of the generic landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes including geology, landform, land cover and historical evolution.

- 1.2.3 The identification and mapping of the landscape character areas is the key to the assessment of the landscape sensitivity of the AONB. These areas have been used as the reporting framework for this study.

Table 1: Landscape Classification

Landscape Types	Landscape Character Areas
1. Chalk Escarpments	1A Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
	1B West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment
	1C Fovant and Chalke Escarpments
2. Open Chalk Downland	2A West Wiltshire Downs
	2B Southern Downland Belt
3. Wooded Chalk Downland	3A Cranborne Chase
4. Downland Hills	4A Martin - Whitsbury
5. Chalk River Valleys	5A Wylve Valley
	5B Ebbles Valley
	5C Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys
6. Greensand Terrace	6A Fovant Terrace
	6B Kilmington Terrace
7. Greensand Hills	7A Donhead – Fovant Hills
	7B Penselwood – Longleat Hills
8. Rolling Clay Vales	8A Vale of Wardour

- 1.2.4 The key characteristics or attributes of each character area define and describe the various components of the landscape. The descriptions of landscape character in the LCA set the framework for deciding which aspects of each component are of importance in contributing to landscape character. Although the character area is the reporting framework for the approach, sometimes the character area is too large a scale for reporting anomalous aspects of sensitivity. Thus, wherever possible, we have subdivided these areas to avoid an over-simplification of results.

1.3 Concept of Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.3.1 The concept and approach to assessing the landscape sensitivity of the AONB landscape has drawn heavily on the guidance provided in the published Topic Paper 6³ that is promoted by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 1.3.2 Having considered the published literature, it is concluded that the term landscape sensitivity, or rather **overall landscape sensitivity**, is the inherent sensitivity of the landscape resource, which includes the sensitivity of both its character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to character, and the visual sensitivity of the landscape in terms of available views, visibility, the number and sensitivity of people viewing the landscape and the scope to mitigate visual impact⁴.
- 1.3.3 It follows, therefore, that the measure of landscape sensitivity is constant regardless of any proposed development as the measure refers only to the inherent character of the landscape itself. This differs somewhat from the concept of capacity, which is an impact-based concept, providing a measure of relative levels of acceptable change possible in a particular landscape in relation to the *particular impacting source*.

³ Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. TOPIC PAPER 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. 2004.

⁴ The Landscape Institute/ Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Second Edition 2002.

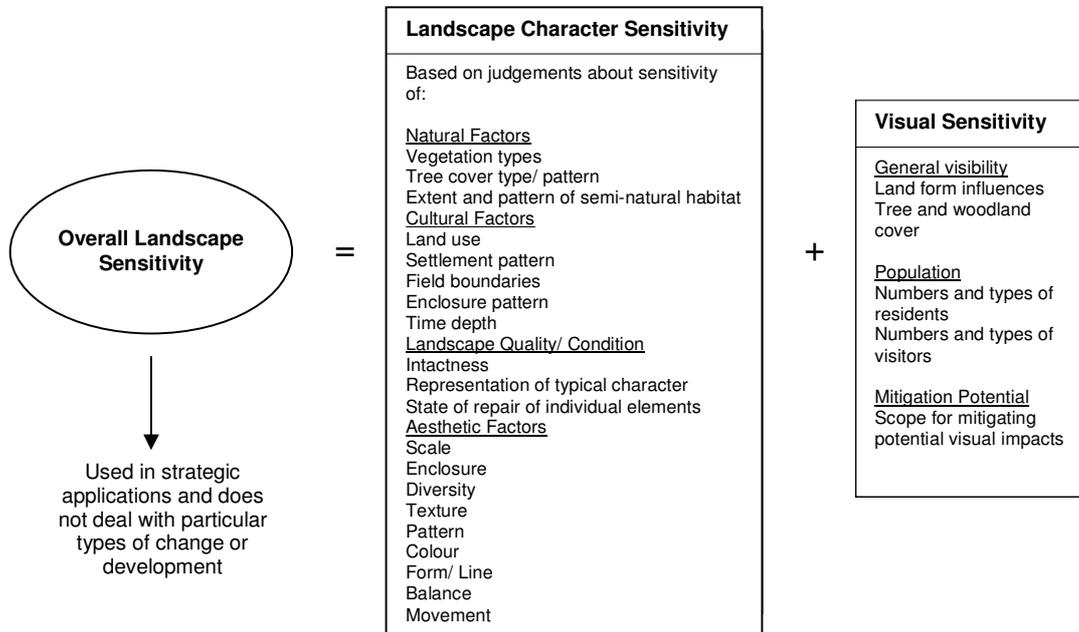
- 1.3.4 A further factor to consider in defining landscape sensitivity '*relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. A landscape with a character of high sensitivity is one that, once lost, would be difficult to restore; a character that, if valued, must be afforded particular care and consideration in order for it to survive.*'⁵
- 1.3.5 Consequently, the sensitivity of a landscape may be viewed or understood as the potential of a landscape to allow change or development without adverse impacts on its character. Thus, a **sensitive** landscape is considered *vulnerable* to change and can be described as one at significant risk of having its key characteristics fundamentally altered by development or land management leading to an irrevocable change in landscape character, i.e. a landscape with a different set of key characteristics. Conversely, a less sensitive or **robust** landscape is considered to be at lower risk of having its key characteristics fundamentally altered by development or land management, leading to a minimal change in landscape character, i.e. a landscape which essentially retains the same set of key characteristics.
- 1.3.6 In terms of assessing overall landscape sensitivity within the AONB, it is useful to differentiate between **absolute** and **relative** sensitivity. As a landscape of national significance, there is a presumption that the component landscapes are of character, high quality and worthy of protection. We are, therefore, of the view that the absolute sensitivity of the AONB *as a whole* is high as a function of its unusual or unique characteristics, its expression of natural beauty and quality of landscape, its heightened sense of tranquillity, and the extent and continuity of these attributes experienced on the ground.
- 1.3.7 However, whilst the inherent sensitivity of the AONB is de facto high, implicit to the study brief is that the sensitivity of the landscapes *within* the AONB may vary, and that certain landscape types or character areas are more robust than others. Furthermore, there may be anomalies or variations in the level of sensitivity within each landscape type or character area. Similarly, Topic Paper 6, in its discussion of the concepts of sensitivity and capacity and at Para 6.5, recognises '*that a valued landscape, whether nationally designated or not, does not automatically, and by definition, have high sensitivity*', and furthermore argues that '*landscapes with high sensitivity do not automatically have no, or low capacity to accommodate change*'.
- 1.3.8 Thus, where assessments of the overall sensitivity of the landscape are made throughout this report, as an amalgam of landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity, the author states the **relative sensitivity** of a landscape character area considered in comparison to other landscape character areas within the AONB, and not its absolute sensitivity at national level.

1.4 Overview of Study Approach

- 1.4.1 The methodology used for this study is based on the Countryside Agency's Topic Paper 6 and Hampshire County Council's (HCC) Paper entitled Strategic Landscape Sensitivity. To summarise, the terminology and the types of factors which are considered in judging the overall landscape sensitivity of the AONB are derived from Figure 1 (a) of Topic Paper 6, which is reproduced overleaf.

⁵ Chris Bray. Worcester County Council. Unpublished paper on a County Wide Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity. 2003.

Figure 1: Summary of factors to consider in judging overall landscape sensitivity, (reproduced from Topic Paper 6, Figure 1a)



1.4.2 To assess the **overall sensitivity** of the landscape it is thus necessary to give consideration to two aspects:

- in judging **landscape character sensitivity**, the sensitivity of the landscape as a whole is evaluated, in terms of its character, its quality and condition, the aesthetic and experiential aspects of its character, e.g. consistency, variety, depth, framing, texture, form, colour and seasonality, and the sensitivity of the individual landscape elements, and,
- to evaluate the **visual sensitivity** of the landscape, the general visibility and the potential to mitigate the visual effects of any change is broadly assessed, including a reflection of the number of people who are likely to perceive any changes that occur in it.

1.4.3 In making a cumulative assessment of these factors on the basis of professional experience and judgement, it is possible to make a statement regarding the landscape sensitivity of each character area within the AONB. The aim, however, is to ensure that overall landscape sensitivity is measurable and comparable and is not solely value based. The stages which have been undertaken to arrive at such an outcome are outlined below.

Stage 1 - Landscape Character Sensitivity

1.4.4 To assess the landscape character sensitivity of any given character area, it is necessary to make professional judgements about the degree to which that character area is robust. Hence decisions have to be made with regard to the liability of loss of a landscape's key attributes, whether or not they could be restored, and whether important aesthetic aspects of character would be likely to change. Importantly, consideration should be given to the introduction of new elements, whose attributes may have a significant impact on landscape character.

- 1.4.5 To enable these decisions to be made, the following factors require unambiguous and consistent thought:
- the key landscape elements or characteristics that contribute to character and an assessment of their significance and robustness;
 - the overall quality and condition of the landscape in terms of its strength of character and state of repair of individual landscape elements; and,
 - the aesthetic aspects of landscape character including scale, form, line, texture and pattern of the landscape.
- 1.4.6 Different methods have been used to judge landscape character sensitivity in recent work. In response to the methodology presented in HCC's working paper on assessing Strategic Landscape Sensitivity⁶, for each character area landscape attribute tables have been drawn up to identify and evaluate the key attributes or components of each theme. The **themes** of landscape character sensitivity as derived from HCC's Paper are:
- the **physical landscape**, including landform, soils and land cover;
 - **biodiversity**, with reference to common and rare habitats and their designations;
 - the **historic/cultural environment**, addressing archaeology, built environment and the historical landscape; and,
 - the **experiential landscape** including ruralness and tranquillity, and aesthetic factors.
- 1.4.7 The key attributes or components of each theme for this AONB are derived from the LCA, as identified in the key characteristics table presented at the beginning of each character area description. On the basis of the current data sets held on the AONB GIS and within the LCA and, where necessary, augmented by 'site-truthing' exercises in the field, each key attribute within each theme was broadly assessed against three indicators to inform professional judgements on the extent of their inherent sensitivity:
- **Significance** is determined by judging how representative or rare the attribute is and how apparent that attribute is in defining landscape character. It is also used to gauge how dominant the attribute is and how it contributes to landscape setting. For example, in determining the significance of a particular landform, questions were asked as to how unusual or dominant that landform is within the landscape character area, and its perceived influence on the essence of character. With regard to biodiversity, designated sites of international or national importance are considered to be more significant than those of local conservation value as a function of their rarity.
 - **Robustness** expresses an attribute's vulnerability and fragility in the context of the likely threats as identified in the LCA. In this instance, vulnerability relates to the likelihood of the identified threat occurring and fragility to the scale or extent of likely change. Furthermore, robustness explores how repairable or replaceable an attribute is and its timescale for restoration. Thus ancient woodland, for example, would be considered less robust than both conifer plantation and arable farmland. Similarly, the historic environment is a finite, non-renewable resource, and cannot be replaced or replicas made that have value in terms of historical meaning. This

⁶ Hampshire County Council. Strategic Landscape Sensitivity – A paper on the working methodology for the Peer Group Workshop. 20th July 2005.

somewhat complex interaction of factors indicates the likelihood of an attribute being irrevocably changed or reverting to its former state.

- **Condition** will provide an indication of how well preserved or conserved an attribute is. It principally evaluates an attribute's intactness on the ground, from visual, functional and ecological perspectives, and identifies the presence or absence of detracting features.

1.4.8 Significance and robustness are recorded on a matrix to give a numeric evaluation on a scale of 2 to 6, from least to most sensitive. Condition is recorded as poor, moderate, or good and is scored out of 3, as shown below. Overlaying condition on significance and robustness, the scores for each attribute are aggregated to inform a numeric evaluation on a scale of 3 to 9, from least to most sensitive.

Figure 2: Significance and robustness matrix, and condition categories

Significance	High (3)	Moderate (4)	Moderate-High (5)	High (6)
	Medium (2)	Moderate-Low (3)	Moderate (4)	Moderate-High (5)
	Low (1)	Low (2)	Moderate-Low (3)	Moderate (4)
		High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)
		Robustness		
		Poor (1)	Moderate (2)	Good (3)
		Condition		

1.4.9 The factors that are considered in the assessment of significance, robustness and condition of each attribute have been drawn from the HCC working paper, and are outlined in Appendix 2. However, to assist a potentially complex assessment, the factors that are considered in the analysis of significance, robustness and condition of each landscape attribute have been carried over into a set of criteria against which each element could be measured. These are listed for each of the four themes under each of the five **sensitivity classes** and are presented in Tables 3a-d, Appendix 1.

1.4.10 Once information is gathered on the sensitivity for all attributes, the results are averaged to inform a level of sensitivity for each theme on a five point scale of sensitivity ranging from:

- **Low (1)**
- **Moderate- Low (2)**

- **Moderate (3)**
- **Moderate-High (4)**
- **High (5)**

1.4.11 Similarly, through a structured and repeatable process of professional judgment, the findings for each of the four themes are combined and aggregated to establish a level of landscape character sensitivity for each character area on a five point scale ranging from:

- **Low (4-6)**
- **Moderate-Low (7-9)**
- **Moderate (10-14)**
- **Moderate-High (15-17)**
- **High (18-20)**

In general, the most sensitive areas occur where several sensitive themes overlap.

1.4.12 To avoid an over simplification of the findings however, anomalous areas of landscape character sensitivity, or sub-areas of each character area, have been plotted on the sensitivity maps. In general these areas are designated landscape elements or features, which have an overriding significance or value for their biodiversity or visible archaeological resource, and are accorded the highest level of sensitivity.

1.4.13 The landscape character sensitivity classes are assigned a colour and mapped to show their spatial relationship and distribution within the AONB, as shown on Figure 1, 'Landscape Character Sensitivity'.

1.4.14 The tabular analysis of the landscape attributes, in conjunction with a written statement summarising the most salient aspects of the landscape character sensitivity of each character area, is presented in section two of this report.

Stage 2 - Visual Sensitivity

1.4.15 Topic Paper 6 refers to visual sensitivity as a key area of study within landscape sensitivity. Thus the visual sensitivity of each character area has been broadly assessed, using a combination of desk top studies and survey in the field, to establish five classes or levels of visual sensitivity on the basis of the following criteria⁸:

- **Enclosure or Openness** is evaluated by assessing the range of views and the degree of inter-visibility in the landscape as a function of its type of landform and landcover.
- **Local Prominence** refers to landform which protrudes from its surroundings both locally and over a wide area.
- The number of **people** likely to perceive changes in the landscape, including their activity, was broadly assessed.

⁸ A further explanation of these criteria in setting visual sensitivity levels is presented in Table 3 (e), Appendix 1.

- **Potential for Visual Mitigation** refers to landform and land cover, and how these combine or may be enhanced to reduce the visual effects of change or development.

1.4.16 Whilst the analysis of visual sensitivity is a broad and sometimes subjective topic, it is felt that the four criteria above are sufficient to inform judgement at this level of analysis. For example, an essentially open landscape with dramatic and conspicuous landforms with little tree and woodland cover, affording panoramic views over an extensive area and attracting many tourists and locals alike, is considered highly sensitive irrespective of the type and nature of development or land management changes. Furthermore, any type of development or change would be difficult to integrate into its landscape setting through mitigation planting, as this would introduce disparate visual characteristics.

1.4.17 However, with further study it soon became apparent that one might incorrectly assume that the more enclosed landscapes are less visually sensitive than their more open counterparts, irrespective of the value or quality of their enclosing attributes. Rather, it is more accurate to assert that the visual sensitivity of these landscapes lies in their enclosure; namely their strength of landform and intact field and woodland pattern. Therefore, in order to evaluate objectively all the factors that contribute to visual sensitivity, the visual strength of character of a landscape was also taken into account, i.e. how distinct and recognisable the pattern of elements is that defines the character of the landscape.

1.4.18 In order to compile a composite value for visual sensitivity, visual sensitivity is broken into four categories:

- visibility which is scored out of 6 on a matrix;
- visual receptors perceiving change which is scored out of 3;
- mitigation potential which is scored out of 3; and,
- visual strength of character which is scored out of 3.

Figure 3: Combining visual sensitivity criteria to achieve a final visual sensitivity score

Landform	Sloping (3)	Moderate (4)	Moderate-High (5)	High (6)
	Undulating (2)	Moderate-Low (3)	Moderate (4)	Moderate-High (5)
	Low-lying (1)	Low (2)	Moderate-Low (3)	Moderate (4)
		Large woods (1)	Small woods (2)	Un-wooded (3)
Landcover				

Few people (1)	Moderate No. people (2)	Many people (3)
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Visual Receptors Perceiving Change

Good (1)	Moderate (2)	Poor (3)
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Mitigation Potential

Weak (1)	Moderate (2)	Strong (3)
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Visual Strength of Character

These are combined to give a numeric evaluation for visual sensitivity on a scale of 5 to 15, from least to most sensitive:

- **Low (5-6)**
- **Moderate-Low (7-8)**
- **Moderate (9-11)**
- **Moderate-High (12-13)**
- **High (14-15)**

1.4.19 Each visual sensitivity class was assigned a colour and mapped to show their spatial relationship and distribution within the AONB, as shown on Figure 2, 'Visual Sensitivity'.

Stage 3 - Overall Landscape Sensitivity

1.4.20 Concurrent with guidance in Topic Paper 6, the individual assessments of the constituent elements of landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity are then combined to give overall landscape sensitivity. Figure 3 (a) of Topic Paper 6, which is reproduced in Figure 3 below, illustrates this process for two hypothetical combinations in a matrix. In this instance, if a landscape scores a HIGH for landscape character sensitivity, then, irrespective of the level of visual sensitivity, it automatically qualifies overall as a highly sensitive landscape.

Figure 4: Combining landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity to give overall landscape sensitivity, reproduced from Topic Paper 6, Figure 3 (a).

Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
	Medium	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
	Low	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
		Low	Medium	High
<i>Visual Sensitivity</i>				

1.4.21 However, for the purposes of this study it was felt that this broad level of analysis was rather too simplified and may be potentially misleading. Thus, to enable the combination of landscape character and visual sensitivity on a five point scale, the matrix has been refined to give a numeric evaluation on a scale of 2 to 10, from least to most sensitive, as presented in Figure 4 below. The scores were assigned sensitivity ratings as follows:

- **Low (2)**
- **Moderate-Low (3-4)**
- **Moderate (5-6)**
- **Moderate-High (7-8)**
- **High (9-10)**

Figure 5: Overall landscape sensitivity

Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	Moderate (6)	Mod-High (7)	Mod-High (8)	High (9)	High (10)
	Mod-High	Moderate (5)	Moderate (6)	Mod-High (7)	Mod-High (8)	High (9)
	Moderate	Mod-Low (4)	Moderate (5)	Moderate (6)	Mod-High (7)	Mod-High (8)
	Mod-Low	Mod-Low (3)	Mod-Low (4)	Moderate (5)	Moderate (6)	Mod-High (7)
	Low	Low (2)	Mod-Low (3)	Mod-Low (4)	Moderate (5)	Moderate (6)
		Low	Mod-Low	Moderate	Mod-High	High
		Visual Sensitivity				

1.4.22 In general terms, where areas of high landscape character and visual sensitivity overlap, the most sensitive areas are identified, and all individual assessments are combined on the basis of professional judgement.

1.4.23 As with landscape character and visual sensitivity, each overall landscape sensitivity class was assigned a colour and mapped to show their spatial relationship and distribution within the AONB, as shown on Figure 3, 'Overall Landscape Sensitivity'.

1.4.24 In conjunction with the matrix analysis of the landscape attributes of each respective landscape character area and the broad assessment of visual sensitivity, the project brief called for the identification of a range of characteristics or features of change to guide and 'test' the evaluation of a landscape's overall sensitivity to generic change. These generic attributes of change have been drawn from a range of development and land management changes that are discussed in the Management Plan and the LCA, for example forestry, biomass cropping and residential/ agricultural development, and

are presented in Table 2 below. It should be noted that for the purposes of this study these attributes are non-specific and focus on the aesthetic and experiential factors of change.

Table 2: Attributes of Change

<i>Aesthetic Factors</i>	<i>Attributes of Change</i>
Enclosure	Introduction of volumes and masses of buildings or woodland blocks creating enclosure and intimacy.
	Felling of woodland blocks creating spaces/ views and exposure.
Scale	Actual and perceived scale of introduced elements, whether they are small or large.
Diversity	Introduction/ removal of simple, complex or diverse built elements or landcover.
Form/ Line	Introduction/ removal of horizontal, vertical, sloping, angular or sinuous elements, for example telecommunication masts, and their relation to the physical form and line of the landscape.
Colour, Texture and Pattern	Introduction/ removal of coloured and reflective surfaces and volumes, for example rendered house walls or glasshouses.
	Introduction/ removal of rough, textured or smooth elements, for example, coniferous plantations or elephant grass.
	Introduction/ removal of random, organised, or regular elements, for example orchards.
Movement	Introduction/ removal of activity and movement, for example road corridors.
Balance	Introduction/ removal of harmonious, discordant or chaotic elements, for example road signage.

1.4.25 Whist scoring overcomes the difficulty of how individual assessments of each aspect of sensitivity are combined and arguably makes the process relatively transparent, it does, however, lead to an emphasis on quantitative aspects of such work. Unfortunately the original data wasn't always presented in the source documents for this study, but rather reformulated as a series of professional judgments. Furthermore, as a relatively embryonic AONB in terms of preparing a Management Plan, gathering all the relevant data together, specific to the AONB as a whole, has still to be achieved.

1.4.26 Thus, on the basis of professional judgment, the above assessment is concluded by assessing each character area against a series of criteria that broadly summarise the essential landscape sensitivities that a landscape might exhibit within their respective sensitivity class⁹. These criteria have been used to provide a structure for the written justification of why a landscape character area is considered sensitive, and to what extent.

Limitations

1.4.27 It is important to note that this study is essentially a desk based exercise using the published LCA and aerial photographs to establish the inherent sensitivity of the landscape. Time allowed for only 2 full days in the field to validate the essential

⁹ See table 4, Appendix 2

attributes of each character area as described in the LCA, and to assess the broad level of visibility or range of views, principally from roads.

- 1.4.28 It must also be acknowledged that it has not been possible to assess the significance, robustness and condition of all landscape attributes within this study, as it is inevitable that data is not always available to underpin a decision, and would necessarily entail recourse to extensive survey work or consultations with other professionals. It is thus envisaged that possible further tiers of study might consider in detail other issues which would influence decisions, e.g. impacts on ecology, archaeology, noise etc. The condition of the physical attributes, and to a limited extent, biodiversity, has been derived from the judgements made within the LCA. It must also be noted that condition is often highly variable, and thus only a broad overview can be made.
- 1.4.29 It has been necessary to rely on professional judgement to supplement any decisions which are informed by the information presented in the LCA and the AONB GIS. In particular, the tabular analysis of each character area's attributes has highlighted gaps in landscape related information, which hopefully will be refined at a further tiers of study. However, to avoid straying beyond the limit of one's own professional knowledge, it has not been possible to make highly accurate assessments of the sensitivity of those elements which demand expertise within a specific field, for example, the sensitivity of the archaeological resource. In these instances, the attribute has been classified as highly sensitive on the basis of its national designation.

2.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS AND SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

The analysis of the key characteristics and hence the inherent landscape sensitivities, of the character areas are summarised in tabular format below. For a definition of technical terms, please refer to the glossary in Appendix 3. In conjunction with the tabular analysis and colour graded sensitivity maps, this section presents a written statement of each character area's landscape character and visual sensitivity, and how these factors combine to define an area's overall sensitivity to change. Please note that blanks in the indicator columns are where base data has not been available for this study.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: CHALK ESCARPMENTS

2.1 Character Area 1A: Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Escarpment (Spurs and Combes)	H	G	H	Most significant in the north of the area; elevated and uninterrupted.
	Soils	Rendzina	MH		MH	Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients.
		Brown Earth	ML		ML	Associated with tributary valleys; not sensitive.
	Land Cover	Arable	ML	M	ML	Predominant landcover on gentler slopes and at top of scarp.
		Improved pasture	M	M	M	Predominant landcover on steeper slopes.
		Woodland block/coppice	MH	G	H	Mixed woodland and coniferous plantations.
		Hanging woodland	H	G	H	Concentrated on steepest slopes, and characteristic of area.
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H	G	H	Concentrated on steepest slopes and characteristic north of area.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H	G	H	Designated SSSI or SAC – Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC highly sensitive.
		Woody species-rich scrub	H	G	H	Scrub mosaics typically associated with unimproved chalk grassland.
		Mixed woodland blocks	MH	G	MH	Important at the local level.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Round Barrow	H		H	Along escarpment edge – condition difficult to assess.
		Cross Ridge Dyke	H		H	
		Strip Lynchet	H		H	Close to Fontmell Magna and Iwerne Minster
	Field	Parliamentary	H	G	H	Predominantly straight

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
	Pattern/ Boundaries	inclosure				sided; most sensitive areas (strip lynchets) close to medieval villages located along springline.
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead, Spring-line Village	H	G	H	Located at foot of scarp – of the local vernacular and would be sensitive to inappropriate development.
	Land Use	Intensive agriculture				Particularly on the shallower slopes at the foot of the scarp.
		Tele-communications				Communications masts frequently occur on areas of highest ground.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/ Recreational Path	H		H	Wessex Ridgeway and Jubilee Trail; walkers considered to be highly sensitive receptors.
		Public Access	H		H	Conservation walks and bridle paths at Littlecombe Bottom; user information provided.
		Horse riding				Gallops at Littlecombe Bottom
		Open Countryside	H		H	Large areas of access land on the steepest scarps. Registered Common land at Melbury Wood/ Compton Down. Melbury Down and Hill are open to the public by permission of the National Trust.
		Tranquillity			H	Sense of remoteness away from A350; remote and undeveloped on scarp, hence sensitive to human intervention.
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic Factors	H		H	Land form of escarpment is dramatic and convoluted with a richly textured mosaic of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland - most sensitive in north of area.
	Sensitivity of theme: HIGH					

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.1.1 The combination of the landscape's distinctive landform and land cover pattern of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland imparts a strong sense of place and character to the area, in particular to the north in the vicinity of Melbury Hill, Melbury Down and Fontmell Down where strength of landform is particularly significant. This is reflected in

the assessment of the area's strength of character as being *strong*. The physical attributes of the area's landscape character are judged as being in *good* condition, principally because the area's archaeological attributes are still intact, and the ecological condition of the scarp's internationally and nationally designated habitats is considered good. While the escarpment is almost totally devoid of settlement, the series of nucleated villages at the foot of the scarp exhibit the local vernacular and have a very strong sense of place. The character area is judged to have **high** sensitivity as it is unlikely to accommodate change without extensive degradation of character and value.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.1.2 The west-facing slopes of the chalk escarpment are prominent in views across the Blackmore Vale and ensure that the escarpment is a dramatic landmark for miles around. Although the convoluted appearance of the scarp gives rise to enclosing deep combs and associative hanging woodland, these areas are still elevated and prominent in views. The area's network of footpaths and bridleways, including the Wessex Ridgeway, affords good access between lowland and upland areas, and is much frequented by tourists and ramblers alike. A large proportion of the escarpment has been mapped as Access Land under the Countryside Right of Way Act 2000. Any built development or change in land use is likely to be visually intrusive and have a particularly widespread influence. This landscape is therefore **highly** sensitive to change.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.1.3 The element of the escarpment landscape which is most vulnerable to change is the open and predominantly undeveloped skyline of the escarpment ridge. It is important that skylines are uninterrupted by vertical and enclosing elements such as buildings, telecommunication masts and power lines, as being viewed against an open horizon their perceived scale would be very much exaggerated. The predominantly open prospect and sense of exposure experienced on the ridge is a dramatic characteristic of this landscape and must be retained. It is thus assessed that most forms of development or land use change in this location would be prominent and would readily impact on many sensitive landscape and visual receptors as recorded in the LCA and Management Plan.
- 2.1.4 On the lower scarp slopes and at the foot of the scarp, modern farm buildings, badly-sited fence lines and the creation of enclosures can all detract from the harmonious and open qualities of this landscape. Changing patterns of land use on the chalk escarpment should aim to minimize intensive arable farming and its associated hard edges, and to encourage large-scale, unified swathes of chalk grassland. The distinct mosaic patterning of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland should be maintained. The planting of coniferous plantations with their pointed forms and angular boundaries would be discordant with the sinuous lines of the escarpment and is to be strongly resisted. For these reasons this character area is evaluated as being **highly** sensitive to change.

2.2 Character Area 1B: West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Escarpment (Spurs and Combes)	H	H	H	A fragmented landform but has a strong presence above Greensand Terrace; steepest parts to the north and south.
		Outlying Hills	H	H	H	Provide a strong contrast in relief standing proud of Greensand Terrace.
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients.
		Brown Earth				Well drained and commonly supports woodland.
	Land Cover	Grassland	MH	H	H	Extensive areas play a key role in defining the character of the area.
		Semi natural/ ancient woodland	H	H	H	Brimsdown Hill, Bidcombe Hill, Whitecliff Down and Bidcombe Down.
		Woodland	L	H	M	Small-scale and confined to combes.
Unimproved chalk grassland		M	H	MH	Very little remains and doesn't influence character.	
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	Significance and robustness reflected in biodiversity related designations and action plan priorities. Highly sensitive, but condition difficult to assess.
		Woody species-rich scrub	H		H	
		Yew Woodlands	H		H	
		Ancient ash, oak and birch woodland	H		H	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic long barrow	H		H	Cold Kitchen Hill
		Bronze Age round barrows	H		H	
		Strip lynchets	H		H	In the proximity of Mere, Kingston, Monkton Deverill
		Romano-British linear ditches and defensive earthworks	H		H	On the scarp slope north of the River Wylve
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure				Late 18 th / early 19 th century parliamentary inclosure.
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead	L		L	Absence of settlement.
	Land Use	Pastoral				Grazing of improved and unimproved pasture.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	Public Access	MH		MH	Number of footpaths and bridleways
		Open Countryside	H		H	Large proportion of escarpment mapped as access land.
		Tranquillity			H	Very few roads and remote qualities.
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic	H	H	H	The experience of openness, expanse and remoteness provides a strong sense of visual unity and intactness.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.2.1 Its experiential characteristics of remoteness, tranquillity, ruralness and generally its undeveloped character make this an attractive landscape to 'escape to'. The relationship of its physical, ecological and historical characteristics, which are concentrated to the south of the character area and the outlying hills to the north of the River Wylye, creates a strong sense of place. The condition of this landscape character is perceived to be *good*, thus making it inherently **highly** sensitive to change.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.2.2 The pronounced form of the escarpment and outlying hills rising above the *Kilmington Greensand Terrace* character area makes it very evident in the landscape. The availability of far ranging views over the neighbouring terrace from the escarpment, much of which is Access Land in the vicinity of Mere and Warminster, and conversely, the wide-scale visibility of the escarpment from the road and public rights of way network on the terrace, means that it can be viewed from long range by a large number of people with the expectation to take in the high quality landscape. The experience of openness and the magnitude of landscape are exaggerated by the simplicity of its land cover, and all contribute to its strong sense of visual unity and intactness thus making it **highly** sensitive to change.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.2.3 In accordance with the recommendations of the published LCA, it is imperative that the overriding sense of openness, the smooth undeveloped ridge, and the simplicity of the scarp landform are all preserved. Thus, the introduction of built elements that are, complex or garishly coloured, even small-scale would be perceived as being particularly prominent and unsympathetic in this landscape. Moreover, the prominent character of the scarp is likely to foster demand for the construction of tall structures, including communication masts and possibly wind turbines. However, the sense of openness, non-appearance of vertical elements and the general absence of visual clutter on ridgelines would make this landscape highly sensitive to this type of change.

2.2.4 The identification of extensive areas of Access Land within the character area may generate pressure for the creation of ancillary facilities, which could erode the relatively remote qualities of the landscape. The monitoring of land use change is also essential to ensure that the present system of grazing management of grassland is upheld to maintain the smooth, open and expansive character of the scarp. Equally, the creation of alien enclosures on the upper slopes of the scarp or the growing of biomass crops, which would truncate views, dissipate the sense of scale and introduce rough textures into the landscape, is to be strongly resisted. For these reasons the character area is judged to be **highly** sensitive to change.

2.3 Character Area 1C: Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpments

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Escarpment	H	M	MH	Dramatic due to sheer scale and elevated nature of scarp.
		Ridge	H	M	MH	Visible from the Vale of Wardour and downland to the north.
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients.
	Land Cover	Grassland	MH	M	MH	Extensive areas play a key role in defining the character of the area.
		Semi natural/ ancient woodland	H	M	MH	
		Beech Woodland	H	M	MH	Distinctive feature in landscape.
		Woodland (mixed and coniferous)	H	M	MH	Occurring across the escarpment in distinctive patterns locally known as 'Ivers'.
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H	M	MH	Significant tracts across the scarp.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	Significance and robustness reflected in biodiversity related designations and action plan priorities. Highly sensitive, but condition difficult to assess.
		Woody species-rich scrub	H		H	
		Beech and Oak Woodlands	H		H	
		Ancient ash, oak and birch woodland	H		H	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Bronze Age round barrows	H		H	
		Hill Fort	H		H	Winkelbury Hill
		Romano-British linear ditches and defensive earthworks	H		H	

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure	M	M	M	Late 18 th / early 19 th century parliamentary inclosure – predominantly straight.
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead	L	M	ML	Absence of settlement on scarp, but isolated farmsteads and villages at base.
	Land Use	Pastoral	H	M	MH	Grazing of improved and unimproved pasture.
		Game coverts	ML	ML	ML	Often planted as rectangular blocks of conifers at the foot of the escarpment.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	Public Access	H		H	Important recreational feature – popular due to extensive views.
		Open Countryside	H		H	Large proportion of escarpment mapped as access land.
		Hill Figures	H		H	The 'Fovant Badges' are a recognised landmark.
		Tranquillity			H	Very few roads and remote qualities
		Ruralness			H	Pronounced
		Aesthetic	H		H	Prominent and distinctive landform, with simple land cover and characteristic patterns of woodland at its base.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.3.1 The strength of character of the character area is considered to be *strong*, and is principally derivative of the prominent and distinctive expression of landform, which makes it instantly recognisable from adjacent landscapes. The scarps are characterised by significant tracts of unimproved chalk grassland, with a total of five statutory nature conservation sites falling wholly or partly within the area. Ancient woodland also makes a considerable contribution to its ecological value. Rights of Way, its many visible historic components and the famous Hill Figures adorning the scarp slopes in the vicinity of Fovant are important cultural features, thus overall making this character area **highly** sensitive to change.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.3.2 The two escarpments are very visible and dominant in the landscape and make a substantial contribution to the character of the AONB as a whole. Furthermore, they are exposed to view along the busy A30 and any changes on the scarp face would be easily seen and readily apparent. Panoramic views from the ridgetops provide a stunning overview of the surrounding landscapes and the escarpment itself is a dominant

landscape feature in views throughout the Vale of Wardour. The visual sensitivity of this landscape is thus **high**.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.3.3 The overriding landscape attributes which are most sensitive to change include the large-scale, open character of the escarpments, its sinuous and rounded landform, the distinctive pattern of woodland at the foot of the scarp, its high ecological value and its sense of tranquillity and remoteness. Hence, development or land management changes which introduce unfamiliar attributes into the landscape, for example large-scale volumes and masses of building or woodland blocks, complex or diverse elements, strongly vertical structures and the introduction of coloured or reflective surfaces would be particularly detrimental to landscape character.
- 2.3.4 In particular, the character area is highly sensitive to unsympathetic coniferous and game covert planting, with the geometric shapes and non-changing colours being highly incongruous in the chalk landscape. New woodland planting should only take place on a small-scale and following careful visual and ecological assessment to ensure that the visual continuity of the open escarpment is maintained and that ecologically important chalk grassland sites are not jeopardised.
- 2.3.5 The context of the escarpment landscape is particularly important: the quality of views out from the ridge has a strong influence on the character of the escarpment landscape itself. Any large-scale development within the visual envelope of the ridge would have a strong negative visual impact. Furthermore, the absence of settlement on the escarpments highlights their sense of isolation, thus any new structures would be highly evident. As with all chalk escarpments within the AONB, it is imperative to maintain the open character of their ridgelines and the avoidance of visual clutter is to be firmly upheld. This character area therefore has a **high** sensitivity to change.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 2: OPEN CHALK DOWNLAND

2.4 Character Area 2A: West Wiltshire Downs

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Broad rolling hills	H	M	MH	Most significant landform in this area and susceptible to effects from type of landcover
		Dry River Valley	MH	M	MH	Particularly apparent to the east where a series of dry valleys on the dipslope drain from north to south.
		Plateau	H	M	MH	To the north of Cow Down, Whitten Hill and to the west of Rodmead Hill
		Ridgeline	H	M	MH	Discernible ridgeline to the east of White Sheet Hill
		Chalk escarpment	ML	M	ML	Landform feature at Fonthill Bishop
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
	Soils	Brown Earth				erosion on steep gradients Well drained and commonly supports woodland (Great Ridge and Grovely Wood)
		Arable	MH	M	MH	Extensive areas of crop production play a key role in defining the character of the area.
	Land Cover	Semi natural/ ancient woodland	H		H	Grovely Wood and Great Ridge
		Conifer plantation	L	M	ML	
		Copse/ tree clump	H	M	MH	Distinctive feature crowning a number of hilltops
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	More common to the north of the character area
	Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH					
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	Designated SSSI or NNR – concentrated in northern edge of character area.
		Woody species-rich scrub	H		H	Designated SSSI or NNR - typically associated with unimproved chalk grassland.
		Ancient oak woodland	H		H	Great Ridge and Grovely Wood
		Arable	MH		MH	Significant in terms of extent
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic enclosure	H		H	Earliest at Whitesheet Hill
		Bronze Age Burial Mounds	H		H	Numerous
		Hill Fort	H		H	String of hill forts overlooking Wylve Valley
		Dyke	H		H	Focused on Stockton Earthworks
		Lynchet	H		H	
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Roman Road	H		H	From Old Sarum to the Mendips
		Parliamentary inclosure				Circa 1810 downland was fully enclosed
	Settlement Pattern	Large-scale, geometric				Predominant pattern today; large field units and lack of field boundaries are a product of 20 th century agricultural intensification
		Farmstead, Downland Village	M	M	M	North of area settlement largely absent; in the south settlement is more common
	Land Use	Intensive agriculture	MH	M	MH	Intensive, mechanised arable production
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/ Recreational path	H		H	Wessex Ridgeway, Monarch's Way
		Public Access	M		M	Popular with walkers, rambles and horse riders.
		Open Countryside	M		M	Grovely Wood is Registered Common Land. Adjacent sites of Access land.
		Tranquillity			H	Sense of remoteness away from the A303.
		Ruralness			H	Generally strong
		Aesthetic Factors	H	MH	MH	Large-scale landscape with simple land cover, but with a rich colour variation; feeling of exposure and expanse.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.4.1 The ecological richness and surviving archaeological features are generally concentrated towards the northern and western extent of the character area, and the relatively high density of sensitive landscape features would indicate constraints that are likely to arise in more detailed site selection studies. The strength of character is judged to be *strong*, deriving from the large-scale, smooth rolling landform and its strongly exposed character. The experiential qualities of the landscape are generally stronger in the north and west of the area, and broadly coincide with the more elevated, upland topography of the area. The absence of roads in the northern half of the area is distinctive and accentuates its sense of remoteness and lack of human presence. To the south however, the fast moving corridor of the A303 running across and through the landform in cuttings and on embankments partially reduces the sense of isolation. For these reasons, the character area is adjudged as **highly** sensitive in the north and west, and of **moderate-high** sensitivity in the south, where the more subdued landform and the presence of settlement marginally reduces sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.4.2 The rolling chalk downland has a denuded, exposed character and a vast, sweeping scale. Even relatively small elements in the landscape, such as hedgerows or isolated barns, are visible over long distances. The northern extent of this character area has been evaluated as **highly sensitive** principally on account of its upland characteristics and far-ranging inter-visibility. The south facing dipslope, by reason of its lower elevation and relationship to the head of the River Nadder tributary valleys, is slightly more enclosed and thus adjudged as having **moderate-high** sensitivity. Though it should be noted that this landform forms the landscape setting to the dispersed hamlets and villages nestled within its slopes.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.4.3 The characteristic open, expansive qualities of this landscape make it highly sensitive to most forms of development and land management changes, as the introduction of new

characteristics into the landscape would be readily perceptible in most views. Bar the extensive areas of ancient woodland of Grovely Wood and Great Ridge, woodlands and hedgerows are not typical, and where they do occur, they tend to be a visual focus and therefore have only very limited screening potential. The typical rolling chalk 'upland' relief ensures that this landscape has few concealed corners and areas which appear relatively well hidden from one viewpoint are likely to be fully exposed from another.

2.4.4 It follows that development or land management changes that introduce volumes and masses in garish colours or reflective surfaces, and elements of a vertiginous, angular or highly textured nature will be highly visible and discordant in the landscape, particularly on the more elevated ridge tops. Although it may be possible to integrate small-scale development into the more settled south-facing dipslope, any development should be carefully sited to avoid interrupting the broad and convex landform. Development of tall structures, for example communication masts and wind energy developments would be conspicuous in this landscape, and may jeopardise the setting of important archaeological earthwork features.

2.4.5 Thorough, detailed visual analysis is therefore essential before any form of development or land use change takes place and opportunities should be sought for reducing the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements in the landscape, for example the unsympathetic ribbon development and associated planting along transport corridors. In general, the sensitivity of the landscape is **high** in the west and north of the character area, and **moderate-high** in the south.

2.5 Character Area 2B: Southern Downland Belt

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments	
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure		
PHYSICAL	Landform	Broad rolling hills	H	M	MH	Most significant landform in this character area and susceptible to effects from type of landcover.	
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients.	
		Brown Earth				Well drained and commonly supports woodland.	
	Land Cover	Arable		MH	M	M	Extensive areas of crop production play a key role in defining the character of the area.
		Semi natural/ ancient woodland		H	M	MH	Chetterwood complex of ancient woodland most prominent.
		Conifer plantation		L	M	ML	Gain unusual prominence; 'alien' harsh edges.
		Unimproved chalk grassland		H	M	MH	Very little remains and doesn't influence character.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE							
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	Significance and robustness reflected in biodiversity related designations and action plan priorities.	
		Woody species-rich scrub	H		H		

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Yew Woodlands	H		H	12 SSSIs in area, 10 of which >10ha. Highly sensitive, but condition difficult to assess.
		Ancient oak woodland	H		H	
		Arable	M		M	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic burial and ritual monuments	H		H	Wor Barrow, Knowlton henge Complex and the Dorset Cursus
		Bronze Age Burial Mounds	H		H	Wyke Down, Oakley Down
		Hill Fort	H		H	Badbury Rings, Buzbury Rings
		Romano-British linear ditches and defensive earthworks	H		H	Grim's Ditch, Bokerley Dyke
		Roman Road	H		H	Ackling Dyke between Old Sarum and Badbury Rings
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure				Late 18 th / early 19 th century parliamentary inclosure; martin Down remains unenclosed.
		Large-scale, geometric				Predominant pattern today; large field units and lack of field boundaries are a product of 20 th century agricultural intensification
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead, Downland Hamlet and Village	ML	M	ML	Extreme east and south of area is largely unpopulated; downs characterised by low density scattered farms and hamlets.
	Land Use	Intensive agriculture				Mechanised arable production predominant.
		Parkland				Kingston Lacy
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trails				Jubilee Trail
		Public Access	M		M	
		Open Countryside	M		M	Martin Down is an area of Registered Common Land.
		Tranquillity			H	East and south of area particularly rural.
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic	MH	M	M	Large-scale landscape with simple land cover, but rich colour variation; feeling of exposure and expanse.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.5.1 The sensitivity of the area is broadly adjudged as being **moderate**. Site truthing in the field has confirmed that the expression or strength of character, as adjudged by the LCA, is reduced to moderate. Although the landscape elements making up the character of the landscape are still recognisable, their combination and patterning is generally less consistent than the *West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland*, and is therefore less distinctive.
- 2.5.2 However, the character area does have a high density of significant ecological and cultural elements, including numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments, and large groupings of Bronze Age round barrows. These landscape attributes, all of which are statutory designations, are inherently sensitive and it is thus imperative that their landscape setting is conserved. The area also accommodates several examples of large country houses and their parkland settings. The parkland elements, for example avenues, often extend beyond the immediate setting of the house into the open countryside. These 'anomalies' are thus accorded a **high** level of sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.5.3 This is a large-scale landscape of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes, with a large 'skyscape' and panoramic, distant views to the west. Woodlands and hedgerows are not typical, and where they do occur, for example the Chetterwood complex of ancient woodland which occupies high ground between the River Tarrant and Allen, they tend to be a visual focus and therefore have only a very limited screening potential.
- 2.5.4 Development or land use change of any scale would be difficult to mitigate as new screen planting would reduce the landscape's characteristic sense of openness and long ranging views. The visual sensitivity of this character area is thus evaluated as **moderate-high**.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.5.5 There is evidence of pressure for built development along the busy transport corridors, e.g. the A354, where conifer planting as a visual screen often appears highly alien in this landscape. The angular or spiky forms, non-changing colours and truncating effects are incongruous in this exposed, rounded landscape which exhibits a rich and seasonal colour variation. In general this character area is largely devoid of settlement, as settlement is closely associated with the dipslope valleys. Therefore there is little scope for the area to accommodate residential development of any scale without introducing a different set of attributes that are to the detriment of its inherent sense of ruralness and tranquillity.
- 2.5.6 The LCA has identified potential pressures on the arable sector to diversify into other crops such as biomass crops and the diversification of farm businesses into farm house accommodation or commercial shoots. The visual effects of these land uses would be an increased sense of enclosure resulting from the presence of woodland and biomass crops which would impede views across the countryside. In addition, the rough textures, regularity and non-changing colours associated with these crops would be particularly detrimental if experienced from the network of country roads.
- 2.5.7 There could be pressure for the development of tall structures, including communication masts and wind energy developments in this elevated and open landscape. However, this landscape does not have a particularly strong landform and is open or exposed with few man-made features. It is often inter-visible with adjacent landscapes and exhibits a moderate-high density of sensitive landscape features. On this basis therefore, the sensitivity of this landscape to change is judged to be **moderate-high**.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 3: WOODED CHALK DOWNLAND

2.6 Character Area 3A: Cranborne Chase

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Chalk ridge	H	H	H	Elevated downland landscape; sensitive.
		Combe Valley	H	H	H	Dramatic deep chalk combes of Quarry Bottom, Ashcombe Bottom and Malacombe Bottom
		Plateau	H	H	H	Remnants of the chalk plateau stand as gently rounded hills
		Ridgeline	H	H	H	Discernible open ridgelines
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients
		Paleo-argyllic brown earth				Cap the Clay-with-Flint
	Land Cover	Arable	M	M	M	Extensive areas of crop production
		Semi natural/ ancient woodland	H	H		Prominent woodland cover gives the LCA a distinctive character reflecting the origins of Cranborne Chase as a royal hunting ground.
		Conifer plantation	L	M	ML	A discordant element in the landscape.
		Parkland copse/ tree clump	H	H	H	Distinctive feature crowning a number of hilltops and extend the parkland landscapes, e.g. Rushmore into the surrounding countryside.
		Beech avenue	H		H	Dramatic seasonal colour change.
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	More common to the north of the character area.
	Sensitivity of theme: HIGH					
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	Designated SSSI or NNR
		Woody species-rich scrub	H		H	Designated SSSI or NNR - typically associated with unimproved chalk grassland
		Ancient ash/ field maple and oak/ hazel/ ash woodland	H		H	Commonplace throughout the character area.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic burial monuments	H		H	
		Bronze Age round barrows	H		H	Large numbers particularly around Tollard Royal
		Iron- Age hill fort	H		H	Caesar's Camp

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Linear ditch and bank boundaries	H		H	Grim's Ditch
		Medieval park pale	H		H	Royal hunting ground
		Roman Road	H		H	Between Badbury Rings and the Nadder valley
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Park pale	H		H	Partial survival of the park pale of the Inner Bounds of the Chase
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Large-scale, straight-sided, irregular form.				Pattern of medium to large straight-sided fields dates from the inclosure of land post 1829, the year in which the Chase was disenfranchised.
	Settlement Pattern	Village, hamlet, farmstead	H	H	H	Comparatively densely settled; Ashmore is one of only a few hill-top settlements; dispersed hamlets, farmsteads and lodges in the local vernacular.
	Land Use	Woodland	H	H	H	
		Arable/ improved pasture	M	M	MH	Arable is a discordant feature on highly visible bluffs.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	Public Access	H		H	Well served by rights of way; dense network of lanes, tracks and footpaths.
		Public Gardens	H		H	The Larmer Tree gardens; collection of Colonial and Oriental buildings, Roman temple, Open Air Theatre and 18 hole golf course.
		Open Countryside	H		H	Breeze Hill is an area of Registered Common Land. Number of areas of downland proposed as access land.
		Tranquillity			H	Strong, comparatively untouched by modern development.
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic factors	H	H	H	The landscape exhibits a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements: principally the dramatic landform and the Chase Woods that form a series of outdoor rooms.
	Sensitivity of theme: HIGH					

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.6.1 The bold patchwork of arable farmland, open parkland and ancient woodland, combined with strongly undulating relief, forms a particularly diverse landscape with many contrasts of texture and form. The overall impression is one of well-balanced, harmonious rural scenery, where views are unpredictable and constantly changing; panoramas from high points such as Win Green are particularly important in understanding the overall setting and form of the area in relation to its surroundings. The landscape of the enclosed wooded chalk downland seems all the more diverse and secluded because it contrasts so dramatically with the bleaker, exposed open chalk downland to the south.
- 2.6.2 The chalk grassland and extensive ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats. Hundreds of years of management have left many traces, from ancient earthworks to medieval Royal hunting grounds, defined by surviving park pale, and the Rushmore Estate with the Larmer Tree Gardens. It all adds to the intrigue, mystery and rich variety of local interest which characterise this landscape. On this basis, the area is judged to be of **high** sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.6.3 The northern extent of the character area comprises elevated downland, deeply eroded to create a series of combe valley and ridges with a distinctive 'upland' character. There are panoramic views from Win Green, a notable and much frequented viewpoint by visitors, overlooking the adjacent escarpment and low-lying terrace and valley landscape.
- 2.6.4 The central and southern margins of this character area are generally more wooded, creating a series of enclosed spaces. The sense of enclosure is particularly heightened in and around Tollard Royal, where the combination of the incised topography, woodland and the extensive parkland landscapes associated with the Rushmore Estate all serve to limit views.
- 2.6.5 However, despite the local variations in openness or enclosure, it is the overriding strength of visual character, principally derived from the area's unique combination of dramatic landform and the survival of the Chase Woods, coupled with the good condition its attributes, which make this landscape **highly** sensitive.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.6.6 The relatively wooded character of this landscape gives it limited capacity to absorb change without reducing its overall visual integrity. However, the broad, rolling form of the chalkland relief ensures that most of the landscape is highly visible, since any one area might be viewed from a number of different aspects. This complexity and diversity, and an associated sense of unpredictability, combine to make a significant contribution to local character. Detailed visual analysis, which takes account of the full range of possible viewpoints, is therefore an essential prerequisite to any form of built development and should also be considered in relation to changing patterns of land use related to forestry and agricultural practice.
- 2.6.7 In general terms, small-scale changes can be accommodated in this area if they are carefully sited and designed so that they are closely integrated with the pattern, enclosure and scale of the local landscape. The introduction of vertical, angular, complex, brightly coloured/ reflective volumes and built elements in this landscape would be particularly detrimental, especially on the 'upland' areas located in the north of the character area. Similarly, the composition of the 'outdoor rooms' created by the pattern of woodland blocks, tree clumps and shelter belts, and the historic field pattern

would all be sensitive to the felling or planting of new woodland blocks. This area is one of the most visited in the AONB, and is popular for recreation. Hence most forms of development and land management changes are likely to impact on a high concentration of landscape and visual receptors. The character area is therefore **highly** sensitive to change.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: DOWNLAND HILLS

2.7 Character Area 4A: Martin - Whitsbury

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Knolls and hills	H	H	H	Most significant landform in this LCA; appear as a series of 'whale-backed' ridges.
	Soils	Argylic Brown Earth				Well drained and commonly supports woodland (Great Ridge and Grovely Wood)
		Clay with flints				Clay caps on areas of highest elevation
	Land Cover	Arable	M	M	M	Extensive areas of crop production play a key role in defining the character of the area
		Semi natural/ ancient woodland	H	H	H	Strong wooded character in southern part of LCA
	Land Cover	Conifer plantation	M	M	M	Deciduous and coniferous woodland on crests of hills
		Copse/ mature hedgerow trees	H	H	H	Provide a connection between arable fields and wooded hilltops; copses are a key feature on downland hills.
Unimproved chalk grassland		H		H	Located on downland hills.	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	Designated SSSI or NNR – Martin and Tidpit Downs and Pentridge Down.
		Ancient oak woodland	H		H	Martin Wood, Bouldsbury Wood and Burwood
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic long barrows	H		H	Plethora of visible historic features.
		Bronze Age round barrows	H		H	
		Hill Fort	H		H	
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary enclosure				Medium to large straight sided fields predominant pattern today
Large-scale, geometric					Expansive geometric fields of regular pattern resulting from 20 th century intensification	

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Assart Inclosure	H		H	Small irregular fields around Crendell, near Cranborne
	Settlement Pattern	Farmsteads, Village	M	H	MH	Low-density scattered farmsteads; Whitsbury is the only principal village.
	Land Use	Intensive agriculture				Predominantly arable with improved pasture on lower ground.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/ Recreational Path				Jubilee Trail
		Public Access	H		H	Rights of Way networks are dense through woodland areas and around Whitsbury
		Open Countryside	H		H	Access land at Blackbush Down, Bokerley Down, Tidpit Common Down and Pentridge Hill.
		Tranquillity			H	Absence of major roads and settlement heightens feeling of remoteness.
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic Factors	H	H	H	The contrast of scale and enclosure are distinctive perceptual experiences that add to a strong sense of place.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.7.1 The contrasting perceptual attributes of this landscape, through variations in landform and land cover, add to a strong sense of place and landscape character. The area has retained significant ecological interest and includes substantial areas of designated chalk grassland and ancient semi-natural woodland, principally located at Martin and Tidpit Downs, Pentridge Down, Ashmore Copse and Bousbury Wood. The experiential qualities of tranquillity and remoteness are defined by an absence of major roads and settlement. Character sensitivity is accordingly judged to be **high** in the vicinity of Pentridge Hill, and **moderate-high** elsewhere.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.7.2 The sense of scale and enclosure is very variable and localised deriving from an undulating and shelving landform and scattered woodland. There are panoramic views from the prominent knolls and hill tops, which contrast with the more enclosed landscapes experienced from the sunken lanes in the valleys. This spatial contrast is typified along the road from Cranborne to Tidpit where dense woodland opens out into distant views across downland.

2.7.3 The area is highly visible from the A354 transport corridor and shares inter-visibility with the *Southern Downland Belt* and *Cranborne Chase* character areas. The visual sensitivity of this area is generally high and in particular the woodland blocks which crown the higher ground. Public accessibility to these areas is also good, as the public Rights of Way networks are particularly dense through the woodland areas and around Whitsbury. The visual sensitivity of this area is thus overall judged to be **moderate-high** with the most prominent parts of Pentridge Hill evaluated as **highly** sensitive.

Sensitivity to Change

2.7.4 Tracts of the downland on Blackbush Down, Bokerly Down, Pentridge Hill, and Tidpit Common Down have been designated as Access Land, and thus visitor numbers may increase and the pressure for associated facilities. These areas are also the most ecologically and visually sensitive, hence it is important that visitor numbers and movements are managed to avoid deleterious effects on landscape character.

2.7.5 There may also be pressure for tall structures on the more exposed hilltops. However, as discussed above, these areas are open or exposed with a remote character and an absence of man-made features. They are often highly visible from adjacent landscapes and exhibit a high density of sensitive landscape features. For these reasons, the most elevated parts of this area are **highly** sensitive to change.

2.7.6 Elsewhere, the farmland landscape is relatively open but hedgerows, small woodlands, and in particular the rolling landform, allow some scope for screening small-scale changes, provided it is carefully sited in sheltered locations and that associated planting is designed to integrate closely with the surrounding landscape pattern. Sensitivity is thus judged to be **moderate-high**.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 5: CHALK RIVER VALLEYS

2.8 Character Area 5A: Wylve River Valley

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	River valley	H	M	MH	Most significant landform in this character area.
		Dry tributary valley	ML	M	ML	Strongly enclosing valley sides.
		Floodplain	H	M	MH	Flat valley floor forming a corridor 1km wide.
		Ridgeline	H	M	MH	Steeply enclosing valley sides to the skyline.
		Chalk river	H	H	H	
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients
		Loam				Found in valley bottoms and at risk of flooding.
	Land Cover	Arable	M	M	M	Located on less steep valley sides to the north and south of the valley.
		Hanging woodland	H	M	MH	More common on the steepest valley sides.

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Water meadow	H	M	MH	Typical on the valley floor
		Copse/ plantation	MH	M	MH	Distinctive feature crowning a number of hilltops and rounded bluffs on valley sides.
		Tree lines	H	M	MH	Lines of willows and poplars follow field boundaries and the course of the Wylde and its tributaries.
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H	M	MH	More common on the steepest valley sides.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	River Wylde	H	H	H	Part of the River Avon System SAC; aquatic communities and wet woodland.
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H	M	MH	Designated SSSI or NNR – Edsbury Down, Starveall and Stony Down, Stockton Wood and Down, Wylde and Church Dean Downs.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic long barrows	H		H	Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments and Bronze Age barrows contribute to the visible archaeology.
		Bronze Age round barrows	H		H	
		Norman motte and bailey earthworks	H		H	
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure				Open field cultivation on valley sides overlain by regular straight-sided fields that followed late 18 th / early 19 th century parliamentary inclosure.
		Post-medieval water meadows and channels				Still visible components of the valley landscape.
	Settlement Pattern	Village				High density of linear or nucleated medieval villages along the valley; all focused on parish churches or manor houses.
	Land Use	Grazing				Sheep grazing typical on steep valley sides; cattle grazing on valley floor.
		Arable cultivation				On shallow valley sides
		Road corridor	ML		ML	A36 trunk road between Salisbury and Warminster a major detractor.
		Fishing				Langford Lakes
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/ Recreational Path	MH		MH	Wessex Ridgeway
		Public Access	M		M	Low density of footpaths. Trekking centre at Codford
		Open Countryside				Access Land within the chalk downland on the valley sides.
		Tranquillity		M	MH	Peacefulness thwarted to some degree by busy transport corridors.
		Ruralness			M	Valley floor is a rural landscape.
		Aesthetic factors	MH	H	H	Distinctive valley landform, sense of visual unity and consistent character throughout.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.8.1 The strength of character within the valley has been assessed as *strong*, and is closely associated with the valley floor, where there is the greatest concentration of remaining pastoral attributes. The inherent landscape sensitivities include the water meadows and cress beds, some of which still express the linear pattern of post-medieval water channels, the now diminishing bands of riparian vegetation, the extensive areas of grazed pasture and parkland trees, and a settlement pattern of linear and nucleated villages strung along the river terraces which underscores the valley's primal relationship to the River Wylde. Despite the urbanising influence of the A36 transport corridor, the floodplain still retains a peaceful quality. It has been evaluated that these attributes all combine to afford the valley floor a **moderate-high** level of sensitivity.
- 2.8.2 On the valley sides, the erstwhile smooth and unenclosed grassland that is typical of the chalk scarps and slopes has been lost and replaced with arable fields and their geometric boundaries, which has a somewhat detracting and diluting influence on character. However, remnant areas of chalk grassland remain, and these present pockets of highly sensitive habitats within a wider area judged to be of **moderate** sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.8.3 Visual sensitivity within the valley is variable and is principally a function of the distinct valley landform changes. The Wylde Valley is a deep valley that is enclosed by steep chalk slopes and this engenders a semi-enclosed character on the valley floor, which in conjunction with the landscape framework of hedgerows and trees and sinuous belts of riparian vegetation, gives rise to an intimate sense of scale. On the valley floor there is a comparatively low density of public rights of way. In terms of historic and cultural assets in the area, a series of springline villages and manors lie at the foot of the valley slopes, and impart a strong parkland character. Visual sensitivity on the valley floor is thus adjudged as **moderate**.

2.8.4 On the shallow valley sides, and particularly the enclosing ridgetops, sensitivity is heightened by the greater sense of openness and scale arising from the greater elevation of landform coupled with the intensive system of arable cultivation, which has resulted in the loss of field boundaries. Visual sensitivity is thus judged to be **moderate-high**.

Sensitivity to Change

2.8.5 Pressures for residential development are likely to be particularly intense within the springline villages at the foot of the valley slopes. Whilst there is scope for new woodland planting, which can strengthen the existing landscape pattern, while at the same time partially screen and integrate development, it is important to note that the landscape is sensitive to the effects of ill-conceived development. For example, more recent residential developments have introduced the volumes and masses of housing in more open locations, some of which are close to the floodplain, and this has weakened the settlement pattern of tight knit villages.

2.8.6 The presence of major transport corridors, particularly the A36 trunk road, has brought pressures for development and the associated urbanising elements of amenity planting and signage. The transport corridor has also impacted on the field pattern by splicing the small, sinuous and irregular fields that occupy the valley floor. The sensitivity of this area is thus judged to be **moderate-high**.

2.9 Character Area 5B: Ebble River Valley

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	River valley	H	M	MH	Large scale, undulating broad river valley
		Dry tributary valley	MH	M	MH	Incised combe valleys on the south-eastern side of the valley.
		Floodplain	M	M	M	Open flat floodplain; broader towards the eastern extent of the valley.
		Ridgeline	H	M	MH	Distinctive sharp slopes and hills to the skyline
		Hills	H	M	MH	Elevation range from 80 to 200+m AOD
		Chalk river	H		H	
	Soils	Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients
		Paleo-argyllic brown earths				Support a localised area of woodland NW of Broad Chalke
	Land Cover	Arable	M	M	M	Valley dominated by intensive arable production.
		Copse/shelterbelt and avenues				Distinctive features in an open landscape.
		Tree lines	MH	M	M	Tree lines of willows and poplars on the floodplain

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
						provide a strong enclosing character.
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H	M	MH	Restricted to the tributary valley sides.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE-HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Unimproved chalk grassland/ mixed calcareous scrub.	H		H	Designated SSSI or NNR – includes nine nationally important sites.
		Arable farmland	M		M	Of local value
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Neolithic long barrows	H		H	Whitesheet Hill
		Bronze Age round barrows	H		H	Numerous
		Hill fort	H		H	Chiselbury
		Roman Road	H		H	Ackling Dyke
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure	M		M	Large scale fields on the northern dip slope are the result of the amalgamation of straight-sided fields characteristic of late 18 th / early 19 th century parliamentary inclosure.
		Post-medieval water meadows and channels	H		H	Still visible components of the valley landscape as at Broadchalke.
	Settlement Pattern	Village, hamlet	M	M	M	Linear villages and hamlets occur regularly along the course of the river.
	Land Use	Grazing	M	M	M	Improved pasture for intensive pastoral farming.
Arable cultivation		M	M	M	On shallow valley sides	
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	Public Access	H		H	Recreational character of valley - footpaths, bridleways, byways and cycle routes cross the landscape.
		Open Countryside	MH		MH	Access land on the valley sides.
		Tranquillity			H	Absence of major roads and settlement.
		Ruralness			H	Strong
		Aesthetic factors	H	M	MH	Distinctive valley landform still prevalent but agricultural intensification has diluted the distinction between the former pastoral character of the valley floor and agrarian character of the valley sides.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.9.1 The strength of character in the valley is variable, but is generally *stronger* towards its western extent. Farther east, where the valley landform is broader and shallower, the extension of arable land on to the valley floor has diluted the distinction between the former pastoral character of the floodplain and the arable character of the downland valley sides, which now visually coalesce. The strength of character at this location is thus assessed as *moderate*. Conversely, to the west, the strongly enclosed valleys, riparian woodlands and the strong field pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the lush and enclosed feel of the valley, and define a *strong* strength of character. Sensitivity thus varies from **moderate** to **moderate-high**.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.9.2 The *Ebble Chalk River Valley* is a broad valley of shallow slopes and contrasting deep chalk combs which are particularly sensitive to landscape change since their relatively open character and simple landscape pattern would be easily disrupted by inappropriate development or changing land uses and because the entire landscape of the valley is highly visible in views from the adjacent enclosing ridge tops. This visual relationship is particularly prevalent to the east of Broad Chalke. The exception to this rule is on the valley floor, where the locally enclosing elements of riparian woodland, shelter belts, mature hedgerows and tree-lines of willow and poplar following the course of the river, all serve to limit views and invoke a semi-enclosed character. Sensitivity has thus been assessed as **moderate-high** on the valley sides and **moderate** on the valley floor.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.9.3 The principle pressures for change result from the increasingly intensive farming practices and piecemeal residential development. In the past, intensive arable farming has resulted in the substantial loss of small-scale, grazed valley pastures and water meadows, and the decline of riparian vegetation and wet woodland, all of which are defining attributes in this area. Thus it is imperative that wherever these landscape elements remain, their conservation is of paramount importance. Thus all development or land management changes that result in an enlargement in the scale of the field-pattern or the removal of textured and diverse landscape elements is to be resisted. Equally the introduction of large scale, vertical structures or elements of an organized or regular pattern would be discordant in this landscape.
- 2.9.4 Although the small distinctive villages and manors built of a rich variety of local materials are still largely intact, some modern development is less sympathetic to traditional form, scale and layout. This is also a peaceful rural landscape located far away from the major roads, thus most forms of development would have a deleterious effect on the experiential attributes of this area. The sensitivity of this area is thus judged to be **moderate-high**.

2.10 Character Area 5C: Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Tributary valley	H	M	MH	Shallow valleys with narrow valley floors.
		Dry tributary valley	M	M	M	In their upper reaches most of the valleys lose their narrow, comparatively deep profiles and blend into the adjacent downland.
		Dipslope stream	M	M	M	Tributaries of the Stour and Avon
		Rendzina				Would be susceptible to erosion on steep gradients
	Soils	Silty soils on alluvium				Lower reaches of tributary streams
	Land Cover	Arable	M	M	M	Shallow valleys dominated by intensive arable production.
		Wet pasture/watermeadows	M	M	M	In the valley bottoms
		Avenues	H		H	Distinctive features associated with designed parkland.
		Tree lines	M	M	M	Tree lines of willows and poplars on the narrow valley bottom provide a strong enclosing character
	Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE					
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Arable land	M		M	Important for farmland birds
		Woodland blocks and shelterbelts	M		M	Enhance ecological value at the local level
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						
HISTORIC/CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Valley bottom medieval Manors	H		H	Manors, farms and settlements reflect pattern of Anglo-Saxon settlement.
		Roman Villa	H		H	Rockbourne
	Field Pattern/Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure				Late 18 th / early 19 th century parliamentary inclosure of open strip fields.
		Post-medieval water meadows and channels	MH		H	Still visible components of the valley landscape as at Damerham.
	Settlement Pattern	Village, hamlet	H		H	Linear villages and hamlets are a characteristic feature of these dipslope valleys.
		Country houses and parkland estates	H		H	Highly visible and their influence extends into the countryside in the form of copses, avenues and delineating shelterbelts.
	Land Use	Grazing	M	M	M	Improved pasture for intensive pastoral farming.

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Arable cultivation	ML	M	ML	On the shallow valley sides
		Transport corridor				
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trails				Jubilee Trail
		Public Access	ML		ML	Low densities of public Rights of Way; essentially a working landscape.
		Open Countryside	M		M	Two areas of Registered Common Land at Hinton Parva and High Hall
		Tranquillity			M	Variable – differs from valley to valley.
		Ruralness			H	Strong
		Aesthetic factors	M	M	M	Landscape pattern still recognisable. However, the landform of the valleys is not particularly strong, and the encroachment of arable fields into the former pastoral character of the valley bottom further dilutes their character.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.10.1 Each of these valleys has a distinct character and sense of identity, as illustrated by the ‘families’ of villages. The attributes of the built environment are generally positive, and often exhibit a sensitive assimilation of built form and landscape through a rich ‘treescape’ of mature, native trees. The settlement pattern typically reflects that which emerged in Saxon and Medieval periods, with a linear form and vernacular that heightens the visual experience. Unfortunately, increasingly large volumes of traffic use these valleys as transport corridors which can interrupt their sense of tranquillity and remoteness.
- 2.10.2 The landform of these valleys varies from strongly enclosing, for example in the vicinity of Gussage All Saints, to the relatively open and shallow profiles of the lower reaches of the Allen Valley. Away from the valley floor, the shallow nature of the valleys is utilised for intensive farming resulting in a large-scale mosaic of arable fields and improved pasture. This practice has diluted the former distinction in character between the valleys and the surrounding open downland, which now extends into the immediate setting of several of the villages. Furthermore, this practice has impacted on the ecological environment. These factors combine to make the valley floor of **moderate** sensitivity.
- 2.10.3 Although the strength of character within the valleys has been judged as moderate, the presence of several country houses and their designed parkland scattered throughout the area does give rise to pockets of higher sensitivity. For example Eastbury, a razed country house with a remnant historic garden of some significance. Typically, the

landscape setting of these properties, which often includes the historic core of their villages, would be sensitive to small-scale changes that might upset their picturesque composition of landscape elements. The character sensitivity of these areas has been judged as **high**, whilst the smaller areas of pasture land that reflect the former pastoral qualities of the valley floor are deemed to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.10.4 The detailed visual composition of this landscape is particularly important because views are generally contained within the valleys and are relatively short, from one side of the valley to the other. There is therefore an overriding sense of enclosure in these valleys, particularly where the building line runs parallel to main village street. However, to the north of the downland hills, in their upper reaches, most of these valleys lose their narrow, comparatively deep profiles and merge into the open downland. The sense of openness in the landscape is thus reasserted.
- 2.10.5 Contrary to one's expectations, there are only low densities of public Rights of Way in the area, the most important recreational route being the Jubilee Trail, and hence many of the valleys are inaccessible except by road. Furthermore, there is little Common Land and the large country houses and parkland tend to be in private ownership and are not open to the public. This character area is thus judged as having generally **moderate** sensitivity, though this does vary where the valley floor is more open and less defined, and within the visual sphere of the historic parkland landscape.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.10.6 Pressures for development are likely to be particularly intense within these chalk valleys. Tree cover typically increases on the valley floor and they have limited capacity to absorb some small-scale built development of the local vernacular if it is carefully integrated into the characteristic landscape pattern of each valley. In some villages modern development has not respected the local settlement pattern and vernacular, often becoming suburban in character, which has served to dilute the character of the built environment.
- 2.10.7 Woodlands on the upper slopes of the valleys offer relatively little potential for screening as even small clearings will be highly visible from one side of the valley to the other. Any development on the upper valley slopes would be highly visible and cannot be integrated into the landscape. The valley crests are therefore of **moderate-high** sensitivity.
- 2.10.8 Within the valley landscapes, changing land uses have an important visual influence. Smaller, narrow fields, in places fossilising old strip patterns, predominate around the villages and are particularly vulnerable to pressures related to intensive arable farming. There are many examples of small valleys where the large arable fields of the adjacent chalk uplands have swept down into the valley, disrupting the visual structure and integrity of this landscape. The valleys also provide a sheltered environment for country houses and their designed parkland, and it is important that their landscape setting is preserved. These landscapes are of **high** sensitivity.
- 2.10.9 The sensitivity of this character area to change is thus judged to be quite variable ranging from **moderate** through to **highly** sensitive. In general, small-scale development should be concentrated on the valley floor, within the visual sphere of existing settlement.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 6: GREENSAND TERRACE

2.11 Character Area 6A: Fovant Terrace

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments	
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure		
PHYSICAL	Landform	Terrace	M	M	M	Flat, open landscape. More undulating in the west where tributaries have eroded into the terrace.	
	Soils	Brown earth				High agricultural value – arable crop production.	
	Land Cover	Arable		M	M	M	Extensive areas of crop production, particularly east of Swallowcliffe.
		Improved pasture		M	M	M	More prevalent to the west.
		Woodland		H	M	MH	Belts of woodland along boundary with chalk escarpment – ‘Ivers’. Cover increases towards the west.
		Conifer plantation		ML	M	ML	A discordant element in the landscape.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE							
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Ancient woodland	M	M	M	Occasional small blocks remain.	
		Woodland	M	M	M	Scattered throughout the landscape.	
		Arable	M	M	M	Important at local level	
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE							
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Roman Road	ML		ML	General absence of visible archaeology.	
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure	M	M	M	Probable late 18 th / early 19 th century; field boundaries run at right angles to escarpment.	
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead Nucleated village	ML	M	ML	Low density and scattered.	
	Land Use	Arable/ improved pasture		M	M	M	Majority of land under intensive agriculture.
		A30 transport corridor					Dominant influence
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE							
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/ Recreational Path	H		H	Wessex Ridgeway	
		Public Access	MH		MH	Well served by rights of way; follow routes of the ancient drove roads.	
		Public viewpoints	H		H	Viewing points and visitor information along A30 about the historic hill figures.	
		Tranquillity			M	Remoteness disturbed by the busy A30 transport corridor.	
		Ruralness			H	Essentially rural.	

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Aesthetic factors	M	M	M	Open, flat and expansive landscape with a large-scale, geometric field pattern and simple land cover.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.11.1 The character of this landscape has been evaluated as *strong* and is derivative of the flatness of its landform, which stands in stark juxtaposition to the adjacent chalk escarpment, and the simplicity of its land cover. Bar the small woodland blocks, including ancient woodland to the north of the A30 in the vicinity of Fovant, its ecological and historical attributes are very much reduced by the dominance of intensive arable production. Some areas are further fragmented and weakened in character through the influence of nearby settlement and transport corridors. In general, the sensitivity of this landscape's characteristics is **moderate**, though where the landform becomes more complex and the aesthetic factors accordingly more diverse, the sensitivity of the landscape is considered to increase to **moderate-high**.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.11.2 This is generally a flat and open landscape with uninterrupted views of the adjacent chalk escarpment from the A30 and the local public rights of way. Views to the Fovant Badges provide visitor interest and link this landscape to the chalk escarpment. Intensive arable farming has resulted in substantial hedgerow removal and their replacement with post and wire fencing creates an open and expansive character. The sensitivity of this landscape is therefore judged to be **moderate-high**.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.11.3 It is imperative that the simple, flat, open character of the landscape and the important undeveloped physical and visual relationship between the terrace and *Fovant-Chalke Escarpment* is conserved. In general, the sensitivity of the landscape lies in its openness and simplicity of land cover. Built elements or 'alien' land cover often exert a strong influence, for example, the profiles and volumes of modern farm buildings are a noticeable element and coniferous plantations intrude on the character of deciduous woodland and on the visual relationship between terrace and scarp. Generally, it would be difficult to mitigate development or land management change of moderate scale without impacting on the character of the terrace and moreover, development would be highly visible from the escarpment and would have a detrimental influence on the character of views. The sensitivity of this character area is therefore judged to be **moderate-high**.

2.12 Character Area 6B: Kilmington Greensand Terrace

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Terrace	H	M	MH	Flat, open landscape. Gently undulating.
	Soils	Brown earth				High agricultural value – arable crop production.
	Land Cover	Arable	M		M	Dominant
		Woodland	ML	M	M	Sparse and confined to individual trees.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Woodland	M	M	M	Occasional shelter belts of recent broadleaved plantation of small extent.
		Remnant hedgerows and trees	M	M	M	Scattered throughout the landscape.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Bronze Age round barrows	MH		MH	Close to the River Wylde west of Kingston Deverill.
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Parliamentary inclosure	M	M	M	Probable late 18 th / early 19 th century; predominant in the NE.
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead Nucleated village	MH	M	M	Nucleated villages strung along the River Wylde.
	Land Use	Arable/ cropping	M	M	M	Majority of land under intensive agriculture.
		Improved pasture	ML	M	M	Not dominant
		Transport corridor				A350 – short north-south section near Longbridge Deverill
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	Public Access	M		M	Number of public RoW crossing the terrace and connecting with adjacent landscape types.
		Tranquillity			M	Remoteness disturbed by the busy A350 transport corridor.
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic factors	MH	M	MH	Open, flat and expansive landscape with a large-scale, geometric field pattern and simple land cover.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.12.1 The strength of character of this landscape has been evaluated as moderate. This is a reflection of the intensity and expansion of arable farming which has reduced both its ecological value and resulted in the loss of archaeological features. The overall landscape condition, as adjudged by the LCA, is considered to be moderate and

presumably reflects the declining condition of the landscape's elements but the good condition of settlement. In general, the sensitivity of this landscape's characteristics is **moderate**.

Visual Sensitivity

2.12.2 Although this is not an elevated landscape, the general absence of tree cover and the unremitting arable landscape, contribute to an overall sense of openness. Any form of change would cause a probable likelihood of visual intrusion, which would be difficult to mitigate without altering the intrinsic visual qualities of the landscape. This landscape is therefore of **moderate-high** sensitivity.

Sensitivity to Change

2.12.3 The sensitivity of this landscape lies in its sense of openness and the uniformity of its land cover, which evokes a simple, uncluttered character. It is therefore evident that any land use change or development will have a moderate to substantial impact on landscape character, in particular changes that introduce substantial volumes or vertical elements thus creating enclosure and intimacy. For example, its sensitivity to tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments, would be high as they would be perceived against a relatively open horizon. This landscape does not have a strong landform, is open and exposed and has few man-made features, thus most forms of development would contribute to the erosion of its sense of tranquillity. Moreover, it is highly inter-visible with the adjacent character areas, in particular the West Wiltshire Downs Escarpment, which it buffers.

2.12.4 Changes in farming practice, for example diversification into biomass crops triggered by a fall in the profitability of the arable sector, would pose major threats to the inherent landscape character of this area. Biomass crops would have a strong visual presence in this landscape, through the introduction of textured elements, greater diversity and a sense of enclosure. Changes in forestry practice, in particular the loss of the narrow woodland belts at the foot of the scarp and the creation of coniferous plantations, have already had a detrimental influence on its visual and ecological character. The non-changing colours and spiky, angular forms of most conifer plantations are incongruous in a landscape that exhibits a marked change in colours through the seasons.

2.12.5 It is therefore adjudged that the sensitivity of this landscape to change is **moderate-high**.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 7: GREENSAND HILLS

2.13 Character Area 7A: Donhead - Fovant Hills

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Hill	H	H	H	Undulating band of hills between 80 and 200m AOD.
		Valley (combe)	H	H	H	
	Soils	Loam				Prone to water erosion
	Land Cover	Permanent pasture	M	M	M	Towards valley bottoms
Woodland		H	H	H	Mixed with fen on the valley	

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
						floors. Acidic woodland on hilltops.
		Ancient woodland	H	H	H	Compton Wood
		Conifer plantation	M	M	M	Predominate on hills
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Ancient woodland	H		H	Hang Wood and Dutch Common
		Fen meadow	H		H	Lower Coombe and Ferne Brook Meadows
		Neutral meadow	H		H	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Iron Age hill fort	H	H	H	Wick's Ball Camp, Castle Ditches and Castle Rings
		Castle	H	H	H	Wardour
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Assart	H	H	H	Irregular indented outline of woodland areas.
		Pre-Parliamentary inclosure	H	H	H	Small fields with irregular boundaries – predominant in west.
		Large-scale, geometric	M		M	Rationalisation of an earlier field system
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead Hamlet Village	H	H	H	Well settled
	Land Use	Permanent pasture	MH		H	Mosaic of pasture and woodland
		Commercial woodland	MH	M	MH	Coupes on hillsides – clear felled and replanted.
		Country Estate/parkland	H	H	H	Fonthill Abbey, Phillips House, Dinton
	Recreation	Country Houses	H		H	Important visitor resource
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/Recreational Path	H		H	Wessex Ridgeway – crosses ridge west of Beacon Hill.
		Public Access	MH		MH	Network of ancient sunken lanes in valley bottoms provide links to surrounding landscape types.
		Tranquillity			H	
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic factors	H	H	H	Enclosed landscape of intimate spaces within the valleys and contrasting panoramic views from the hill tops.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

2.13.1 As described in the LCA, this landscape has a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements with rounded knolls clothed in woodland and crowned by ancient fortifications, with villages and ancient sunken lanes hidden in the shelter of combes. The aesthetic factors making up this landscape are thus particularly rich and diverse. The attributes of all four themes are judged as sensitive, and given their good condition or quality in defining a strong landscape character, promote a **highly** sensitive landscape.

Visual Sensitivity

2.13.2 Visual experiences within this landscape are highly variable and contrasting. Upstanding hills afford commanding views over adjacent lowlands, namely, the *Vale of Wardour*, a settled landscape with potentially a large number of visual receptors, and with which the *Donhead-Fovant Hills* share inter-visibility. Conversely, tight valleys, sunken lanes and extensive woodland cover enclose and frame views giving rise to a strong sense of enclosure. This is an important recreational landscape with a many public Rights of Way and country houses with areas of parkland open to the public.

2.13.3 Although views within this area sharply contrast between enclosed and open, and thus making this area difficult to assess in terms of general visibility, it is considered that the landscape's inherent sensitivity to the cumulative impact of small-scale changes, together with the likelihood of visual intrusion, makes it **highly** sensitive.

Sensitivity to Change

2.13.4 As recorded in the LCA, past development or land use change hasn't always been sensitive to inherent qualities of this landscape. For example, conifer plantings within the ancient deciduous woodland are visually intrusive, especially on skylines, as they express a different set of attributes in the landscape. Moreover they constitute rapid change in a landscape which expresses a strong time depth or history.

2.13.5 Equally, in some places agricultural improvement has resulted in the rationalisation of an early field system of small, irregular fields, typical of early enclosure and assart incursions, into larger, more geometric units. To some degree, this has distorted the former sense of intimacy and compositional balance on the hills. The intricate landscape pattern should be carefully conserved to ensure that important variations in scale and character within the area are retained. The small-scale landscape pattern would indicate landscape sensitivity to large scale-scale structures and in determining their most suitable configuration, and accordingly, this character area is considered to be **highly** sensitive to change.

2.14 Character Area 7B: Penselwood - Longleat Greensand Hills

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Hill	H	H	H	Series of eroded hills creating a sinuous escarpment. Cley Hill is a prominent outcrop of Upper Chalk.
		Valley (combe)	MH		MH	

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
	Soils	Clay Loam				Seasonally waterlogged
		Fine Loam				
	Land Cover	Permanent pasture	H	H	H	Important element – wooded pasture provides a setting for landscaped parkland.
		Broadleaf Woodland	H	H	H	
	Conifer plantation	MH	M	M	Major woodland type	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	Ancient woodland	H		H	Designated SSSI and SAC
		Unimproved chalk grassland	H		H	
		Neutral hay meadow	H		H	
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Iron Age hill fort	H		H	Cley Hill, Park Hill Camp and Castle Wood, Stourton and Roddenbury Hill.
		Castle	H		H	Motte and bailey earthworks at Coneygore and Zeals Row (south) and Woodhouse Castle and Hale's Castle (north).
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Pre-Parliamentary inclosure	MH		MH	Irregular and small-scale, particularly to the west.
		Straight-sided, irregular	M	M	M	19 th century or later rationalisation of earlier inclosed fields
		Limestone walls	H		H	Associated with estates and villages
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead Hamlet Village Country House	H	H	H	Significant parts remain unsettled, but dense pockets along minor lanes.
	Land Use	Permanent pasture	H	H	H	Mosaic of pasture and woodland
		Commercial woodland	MH	M	M	Coupes on hillsides – clear felled and replanted. Sawmills and stacked wood.
		Country Estate/ parkland	H	H	H	Contribute to scenic beauty of area.
		Historic estates/ Landscape parks	H	H	H	Important visitor resource, including Longleat Holiday Village and National Trust properties, notably Stourhead.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trail/ Recreational	H		H	Macmillan Way/ Leland Trail, Stour Valley Way,

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
		Path				Monarch's Way.
		Public Access	H		H	Network of ancient sunken lanes in valley bottoms provide links to surrounding landscape types.
		Tranquillity			H	Peaceful
		Ruralness			H	
		Aesthetic factors	H	H	H	Enclosed landscape of intimate spaces within the valleys and contrasting panoramic views from the hill tops. Forestry and parkland are strong unifying features across the area.
Sensitivity of theme: HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

2.14.1 All themes of character sensitivity score highly. The area has significant ecological and nature conservation interest at the national level with a wide range of habitat types including unimproved chalk grassland, neutral hay meadow, ancient and wet woodland and a small section of the River Avon System. The area's historic and cultural environment is also notably rich, with an abundance of earthworks and the ruins of hill forts and castles, strategically located on the hilltops. Landscape parks and historic estates, including Stourhead, the Longleat Estate and Centre Parcs Holiday Village provide important visitor attractions. Despite the visitor pressure and potential impacts on landscape character, the experiential qualities of the landscape are still intact with significant parts of the area being largely unsettled and conveying a strong sense of tranquillity and ruralness. Generally, the sensitivity of this character area is thus judged to be **high**.

Visual Sensitivity

2.14.2 In resemblance to the *Donhead - Fovant Greensand Hills*, the range of views is highly variable and contrasting between enclosure in the deep valleys and openness or a sense of exposure on the hilltops, with the panoramic views from the top of Cley Hill being particularly noteworthy. The most sensitive parts of this landscape are the elevated hills which are prominent in the local landscape and, despite their being clothed in woodland, most scales of land use change or development would give rise to visual intrusion. A notable exception is the Centre Parcs holiday village which has been successfully integrated into its woodland setting through appropriate design, i.e. an emphasis of landscape character, re-creation of key character elements and features.

2.14.3 Historic parkland landscapes form an important element within the *Penselwood - Longleat Greensand Hills* more than in any other part of the AONB. They impose another layer of complexity on the landscape pattern, adding to its amenity, diversity and character wherever they occur. The historic parklands are highly sensitive to change, as any alteration to their individual composition of landscape elements would alter their intrinsic character. In addition to these larger parklands there are numerous

smaller manor houses, farms and mills, all with a contrived, generally secluded landscape setting and a distinctive character. The landscape resource is thus a fundamental concern for the generation of tourism in the region, and is well-frequented by people with the expectation to take in a landscape of great scenic beauty. The character area is therefore **highly** sensitive to change.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.14.4 Change is inevitable in this character area as areas of woodland, particularly those planted for commercial forestry, are felled, replanted, coppiced and thinned. The impacts of felling in the past have been highly visible, and compounded by the replanting of blocks of conifers, which introduce uncharacteristic spiky forms and regular lines on a sinuous escarpment. Coupes should therefore be small in scale and replanting should comprise a deciduous species mix appropriate to the landscape type.
- 2.14.5 Large numbers of visitors have exerted pressures on the landscape in the form of traffic generation and the urbanisation of rural roads, and the requirement for ancillary services, facilities and accommodation. At a superficial level, the wooded parts of the landscape would seem well-suited to absorbing built development and changing land use patterns without obvious detrimental effect. However, the woodland, in conjunction with the mosaic of parkland and pasture, is an integral element of the area's character, and their conservation and management is of paramount importance in this wooded landscape. The landscape also has a very special sense of remoteness and mystery which would be easily eroded by piecemeal development. The boundary with the *Greensand Terrace* to the east is defined by a sharp change in elevation and associated woodland cover to the *Greensand Hills*. This landscape buffer is important to conserve to retain the distinction between the two landscape types.
- 2.14.6 The sensitivity of the character area to change is judged to be **high**.

LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: ROLLING CLAY VALES

2.15 Character Area 8A: Vale of Wardour

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
PHYSICAL	Landform	Vale	H	M	MH	Broad and shallow valley in the west.
		Valley	MH	M	MH	Narrow, deep valley in the east.
	Soils	Stagnogley				Most common
		Brown Rendzina				
		Pelo-alluvial gley				Risk of flooding
	Land Cover	Arable	M		M	Mixed agricultural landscape dominates area.
		Pasture	MH		M	
		Semi natural/ ancient woodland	MH	M	M	North of Upper and Lower Chicks Grove; south of Fonthill Ridge.
		Wood/ copse	M	M	M	Larger swathes at base of Greensand Hills; broadleaf woodland to the west is more fragmented, whilst

Theme	Sensitivity of:	Attribute	Indicators			Comments
			Significance Robustness	Condition	Overall Measure	
						woodland to the east is more regular and geometric in form.
		Shelterbelt	M	M	M	Align rural roads; field boundaries.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
BIODIVERSITY	Habitats	River Nadder	MH		MH	Designated SAC (12km stretch).
		Cave/ Quarry	H		H	Designated SSSI or SAC
		Unimproved meadows, pasture	MH		MH	
		Field hedgerows and trees	H	M	MH	Important at the local level
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						
HISTORIC/ CULTURAL	Visible Archaeology	Bronze Age round barrow and field system	H		H	East of Fonthill
		Enclosure	H		H	Baverstock
	Field Pattern/ Boundaries	Channelled water meadow	MH	M	MH	Catherine Ford Bridge
		Pre-Parliamentary inclosure	MH	M	MH	Small, irregular fields reflecting medieval settlement patterns and post-medieval agricultural improvement.
	Settlement Pattern	Farmstead Hamlet Village Town	MH	M	MH	Quite a settled area including Tisbury the only town with the AONB. Located on valley sides.
	Land Use	Arable/ improved pasture	MH	M	M	An agricultural landscape defined by crop production and grazing.
		Parkland	MH	M	MH	Pythouse
		Quarrying				Past land use
	Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE					
EXPERIENTIAL	Countryside Access	National Trails/ Recreation Paths	H		H	Wessex Ridgeway
		Public Access	MH		MH	Large number public RoW associated with the course of the River Nadder
		Open Countryside	M		M	Small areas of registered Common Land around Semley.
		Tranquillity			MH	Strong sense of ruralness
		Ruralness			MH	
		Aesthetic factors	H	M	MH	Rolling clay vale with a settled and semi-enclosed character.
Sensitivity of theme: MODERATE HIGH						

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- 2.15.1 The character of the rolling clay valley is distinctly different to the chalk landscapes which are so prevalent in the AONB. Contained by the greensand hills to the north and south, it is a relatively discrete and settled landscape unified by the frequent occurrence of its key attributes across the area.
- 2.15.2 Woodlands are perceived as sensitive landscape elements as they are typically associated with large country houses and historic parkland, and perform a valuable connective role in linking the Vale with the landscape of the Greensand Hills. An area of particular note is the manor house at Teffont Manor, where the enclosing elements of the valley landform, woodland and parkland trees combine to create a highly picturesque scene.
- 2.15.3 The historic components of the landscape make an important contribution to the area's strength of character. These inherent landscape sensitivities include the pattern of small to medium scale irregular fields, principally concentrated in the west of the area and signifying early assart of woodland and inclosure, the water meadows on the valley floor; the medieval settlement pattern; and the large country houses and landscaped parkland. The sensitivity of this landscape lies in its enclosing elements, which are of moderate habitat value. For example, the variety of woodlands including ancient woods plus scattered trees, and the water courses of high ecological value edged with alder and willow. Overall this area is judged to have **moderate-high** sensitivity.

Visual Sensitivity

- 2.15.4 Overall, a sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding landscape of the *Fovant Greensand Hills*, which are widely visible throughout the area. The undulating landform of the area accordingly contributes to the variable sense of enclosure, which is often underscored by land cover and land use practices. For example, the narrow, deep valley in the east is typically more wooded and pastoral in character, and gives rise to a semi-enclosed character. Farther west the valley widens to form a broad, open vale, which in places has a distinctly arable character and an inherent sense of openness, derivative of the absence of tree cover and a large-scale field pattern defined by mechanically trimmed hedgerows or post and wire fencing.
- 2.15.5 This is a settled landscape, with a concentration of public rights of way along the course of the River Nadder and Tisbury, and some sections of Common Land in the vicinity of Semley which provides local recreational access for residents. Although there are no major roads within this character area, the main line railway from Exeter to London Waterloo traverses the valley floor.
- 2.15.6 Overall, the visual sensitivity of the character area is considered to be of **moderate-high** sensitivity. Although this might lessen to a **moderate** level of sensitivity on the valley floor, where the landform is more subdued and there is greater potential for visual mitigation, it is considered that the relatively high concentration of visual receptors and the visual condition of the pastoral attributes and historic settlement generally outweighs these factors.

Sensitivity to Change

- 2.15.7 The LCA concludes that the principle source of change is likely to be further pressure for new residential development within the picturesque villages and the redevelopment of agricultural buildings to residential, amenity or industrial uses. It is imperative that new development, which might be accommodated within the more enclosed and settled landscapes of the vale floor, should be sympathetic to the traditional character and form of settlements to avoid the erosion of their character. The more open areas of this

landscape are inherently more sensitive to change, thus for example the introduction of large-scale built elements or vertical structures in bright colours or reflective surfaces would be prominent and highly discordant.

- 2.15.8 The greater commercialization of farming practices resulting from the depression in commodity prices, might give rise to the further loss of hedgerows due to field enlargement or a lack of management. For example, this might have greatest impact on the small-scale field pattern surrounding Semley, and may lead to the many scattered trees becoming over mature and stag-headed.
- 2.15.9 The urbanization of the rural roads has also had a deleterious effect on character, compounded by the physical decline of the traditional black and white wooden signposts at cross roads and junctions. Overall the sensitivity of this character to change is judged to be **moderate-high**.

3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall Landscape Sensitivity Profile

3.1.1 The assessments of landscape character and visual sensitivity, and their combination to give overall landscape sensitivity, are arranged below to provide a profile of the landscape sensitivity of the character areas within the AONB.

Table 3: Landscape Sensitivity Profile

Landscape Character Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Sensitivity ¹¹
1A Melbury to Blandford	H	H	H
1B West Wiltshire Downs	H	H	H
1C Fovant and Chalke	H	H	H
2A West Wiltshire Downs	MH and H	MH and H	MH and H
2B Southern Downland Belt	M and H	MH	MH
3A Cranborne Chase	H	H	H
4A Martin - Whitsbury	MH and H	MH and H	MH and H
5A Wylve Valley	M and MH	M and MH	MH and H
5B Ebble Valley	M and MH	M and MH	MH
5C Stour & Avon Tributary Valleys	M and H	M and H	M and H
6A Fovant Terrace	M and MH	MH	MH
6B Kilmington Terrace	M	MH	MH
7A Donhead – Fovant Hills	H	H	H
7B Penselwood – Longleat Hills	H	H	H
8A Vale of Wardour	MH	M and MH	MH

Key: H = High; MH = Moderate-High; M = Moderate; ML = Moderate-Low; L = Low

3.1.2 The profile provides some insights into the landscape sensitivity of the landscape types and component character areas within the AONB:

- At the character area level of analysis, there are no areas of the AONB of less than moderate-high landscape sensitivity. It is considered that all areas score consistently high in all five themes to warrant inclusion within the upper two classes of sensitivity. This finding is consistent with their inclusion within the AONB boundary.
- The most sensitive areas of the AONB are predominantly located where the landform is generally more prominent, bare and dramatic, for example the Chalk Escarpments. In most instances, development and land use change would be very exposed and highly visible. The concentration of biodiversity and historic landscape character resources in these areas is high and are vulnerable to change.
- Although the sensitivity of the Chalk River Valleys might be broadly evaluated as moderate given their sense of enclosure, reduced inter-visibility and impaired tranquillity, it is considered that the overriding quality of the biodiversity and historic landscape character resources generally outweigh these factors. The visual sensitivity of the open valley sides is an important factor in limiting change, as these areas often share inter-visibility with adjacent landscape types, and the effects of development would be difficult to mitigate. However, subject to more detailed field survey, one might feasibly qualify pockets of reduced sensitivity.

3.2 Summary and Conclusions

- 3.2.1 According to inherent level of landscape sensitivity to change in the AONB, it is important that all proposals for change in any of the landscape area types must be subject to detailed assessment and scrutinised by professional landscape practitioners at the earliest possible opportunity.

Type 1: Chalk Escarpments

- These represent some of the most sensitive landscapes in the AONB, as their levels of landscape character and visual sensitivity, and thus their overall sensitivity have scored consistently high.
- The inherent landscape sensitivities include the open scarp slopes and their far-ranging inter-visibility from lowland landscapes; the panoramic views from the scarp tops and strong skylines; the nature and extent of semi-natural vegetation and its high ecological value; the historic environment and their value as a local recreational resource, and their experiential qualities derived from their enhanced sense of place, tranquillity and remoteness.
- Generally, all scales of land use or land management change would be highly visible, especially on exposed ridgelines and the upper slopes of the scarp, resulting in a significant impact on their landscape character.

Type 2: Open Chalk Downland

- The landscape sensitivity of this landscape type is broadly divided between the two character areas: the northern *West Wiltshire Downs* being of high sensitivity, and the *Southern Downland Belt* being of moderate-high sensitivity. The reason for this is that the character of the *West Wiltshire Downs* is more distinctive and its more elevated and pronounced landform affords greater visibility, and hence sensitivity.
- The inherent landscape sensitivities of the landscape type are the open, rolling downland with its large 'skyscapes' and far-ranging inter-visibility; the strong skylines and scarp tops are particularly visually sensitive; the remnant habitats of chalk grassland of high nature conservation value; clumps of beech trees crowning hilltops which form a landscape feature; the rich pre-historic environment and the general sense of tranquillity and isolation.
- Throughout this landscape type, the large-scale, open landscape, with its simple land cover and lack of settlement would render most scales of land use or land management change visible in the landscape. In particular, this landscape type would have an inherent sensitivity to multitudes of small-scale structures, which would look discordant in the landscape. The surviving historic monuments are sensitive to intensive agricultural practice.

Type 3: Wooded Chalk Downland

- The landscape character of the *Cranborne Chase* is particularly distinctive and its experiential qualities and rich aesthetic factors make it one of the most remarkable landscapes of the AONB. Its level of sensitivity is consistently high throughout the area, irrespective of its variable sense of enclosure.
- Its inherent landscape sensitivities include the elevated, open downland and its far-ranging inter-visibility, in particular from Win Green; the widespread ancient woodlands and Medieval Royal hunting grounds which contribute to the distinctive estate and parkland character; its abundant nature conservation habitats including ancient woodland and chalk grassland; and the rich historic environment of barrows and hill forts.

- Generally, all scales of land use or land management change would be visible, especially in areas of elevated, unenclosed downland, resulting in a significant impact on their landscape character. In the more wooded parts of the character area, detailed visual analysis, which takes account of the full range of possible viewpoints, is an essential prerequisite to any form of built development or land use change.

Type 4: Downland Hills

- The character of this area is strong reflecting its rich 'vocabulary' of aesthetic factors, its contrasting spatial qualities and its pronounced sense of tranquillity and remoteness. These attributes are particularly concentrated in the more elevated parts of the landscape, which have been accorded the highest level of sensitivity. However, in many parts of this landscape, intensive arable farming has introduced a large-scale field pattern with inconsistent boundaries, which mars its general quality.
- The inherent landscape sensitivities of this landscape include its prominent knolls and hills, which are often wooded and afford panoramic views over lowland areas; its nature conservation value in relation to the ancient woodlands and remnant chalk grassland; the general absence of man-made features, and the range of archaeological remains which impart a rich historic character to the landscape.
- The most elevated parts of this landscape, namely the wooded hilltops are the most sensitive and should be conserved. Elsewhere, given the complexity of its enclosure, detailed visual analysis, which takes account of the full range of possible viewpoints, is an essential prerequisite to any form of built development or land use change.

Type 5: Chalk River Valleys

- This landscape type is a key element of the AONB landscape, and contrasts markedly from most other areas being the most settled, and is generally more enclosed than other types. Although these attributes might suggest inherently lower levels of sensitivity, the quality of their settlements and built environment, and the role of the valley landscapes in defining a landscape setting to the many picturesque villages and large country houses, elevates their sensitivity.
- The inherent landscape sensitivities of this landscape include the small scale enclosed landscape; the rich ecological value of the chalk rivers and floodplain, including their riparian vegetation and damp woodlands; the valley crests which are visually sensitive; and the country houses and designed parklands that typically pervade the historic and feudal character of the villages.
- The detailed visual composition of this landscape is particularly important because views are generally contained within the valleys and are relatively short, from one side of the valley to the other, and define a landscape setting for many of the prized villages. Thus detailed visual analysis, which takes account of the full range of possible viewpoints, is an essential prerequisite to any form of built development or land use change. In general, the smaller scale landscapes in the vicinity of the villages would have a greater sensitivity to large scale structures.

Type 6: Greensand Terraces

- Although their inherent landscape character has been evaluated as moderate, the openness of these landscapes, and their role in buffering the highly sensitive Chalk escarpments, elevates them to a moderate-high level of sensitivity.

- The inherent landscape sensitivities include the open landscape with extensive views to and from the prominent Chalk escarpments; the isolated blocks of ancient woodland; and the medieval villages and Bronze Age remains near the course of the River Wylde.
- Generally, all scales of land use or land management change would be visible and, moreover, would have a negative impact on the character of views from the top of the Chalk escarpments. For this reason, all proposals for change must be subject to detailed assessment and scrutinised by practitioners in the planning system at the earliest possible opportunity. In particular, this landscape type would have an inherent sensitivity to multitudes of small-scale structures, which would look discordant in this simple landscape.

Type 7: Greensand Hills

- This landscape type is renowned for the enhanced survival of its cultural pattern, expressed through its abundant fortifications, landscape parks and historic estates, earthworks and hill forts. The distinctive undulating and wooded landform provides a wide variety of viewing experiences, and despite the large numbers of visitors accommodated within its bounds, remains a tranquil and rural environment.
- The inherent landscape sensitivities of this landscape include its distinctive, undulating landform; the extent of its semi-natural vegetation comprising ancient and wet woodland and chalk grassland; its intricate and small-scale field pattern; the rich historic and cultural landscape; and its heightened experiential qualities and value as a national recreational resource.
- Generally, the small-scale landscapes typical in these areas would have a greater sensitivity to large scale structures. Given the complexity of its enclosure, detailed visual analysis, which takes account of the full range of possible viewpoints, is an essential prerequisite to any form of built development or land use change. The Center Parcs development is a useful precedent in examining the capacity of this environment in accommodating change generated by the tourism industry.

Type 8: Rolling Clay Vales

- The rolling clay vale is distinctly different to the predominant Chalk landscapes of the AONB. Although it is a settled landscape with a semi-enclosed character, its strength of character is derivative of a pastoral system of mixed farming and an 'organic' settlement pattern, and is thus sensitive to rapid and ill-conceived change.
- The inherent landscape sensitivities include the medium to small scale field pattern; the hedgerows and hedgerow trees; the scattered woodland blocks, some of which are of ancient origin; the narrow and twisty rural lanes and characteristic black and white signage; and the scattered farmsteads and nucleated settlements built in the local vernacular.
- Generally, the small-scale landscapes typical in these areas would have a greater sensitivity to large scale structures. Given the complexity of its enclosure, detailed visual analysis, which takes account of the full range of possible viewpoints, is an essential prerequisite to any form of built development or land use change.

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT BRIEF DATED 06/02/06

**Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
Landscape Sensitivity Study
Project Outline and Invitation to Submit a Proposal**

Background

1. The aim is to implement this study for the whole AONB in financial year 2006/07
2. Following the Planning Topic Group meeting on 24th January it was agreed that a limited landscape sensitivity study would be a step forward in making the Landscape Character Assessment more useful. In that context, it is acknowledged that the evaluation sections of that study were a late, additional element, and may not be as robust as they might be under rigorous examination. The Landscape Character Assessment is available on our web site www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk
3. This study is aimed at the landscape character type and area levels of detail. It is not intended to produce sub-area or site sensitivity assessments.

Purpose

4. The study is aimed at assisting the assessment of the impacts of land management and land use activities, incentives, and potential changes on the landscapes of the AONB.

Rationale

5. The view within this AONB is that landscape sensitivity relates to the inherent fragility or robustness of a particular landscape to any type of change, be it land management or development.
6. The study is not focussed on any particular development type or proposal, sensitivity to a particular topic, or capacity to absorb a given amount of building. This is, therefore, not a capacity study.
7. The AONB team is aware that a “do nothing” or “benign neglect” approach can lead to landscape changes that may be as substantial as changes in agricultural crops or forestry practices. Historically villages and communications have developed organically with locally available materials and in scale with the economic viability of the locality.
8. In order to provide generic assessments of inherent robustness or fragility of landscapes it is envisaged that consultants will need to identify landscape attributes and test the impacts of a range of management and development changes on each landscape character type.
9. In relation to landscape management issues it is likely that the characteristics or features of change [such as the introduction or removal of forestry blocks, enclosing spaces or opening views, providing protection or creating exposure, and modifying the form and texture of the landscape] will need to be judged against the scale, form, openness, simplicity, complexity etc of a particular landscape type or area. In a similar way, potential developments could introduce volumes and masses of buildings [domestic or agricultural], reflective or coloured surfaces, vertical or horizontal features, and a variety of textures, shapes, and movement. The AONB Management Plan provides guidance about issues of particular, and public, concern.
10. So, whilst the consultants may wish to use specific types of potential developments to test against the fragility or robustness of a particular landscape, it is really the attributes

- of these potential developments that would be tested. This methodology should provide a more generic approach that could be applied, in principle, to any change by simplifying the specific proposal to the attributes it would introduce, or remove, from a particular landscape.
11. It is suggested that the consultants should consider and assess the extent and scale of physical changes separately from perceived changes. For example, the former might be fairly small, but, because the change is in a key or obvious location, the perception is quite large.
 12. The project budget [provided by the AONB Partnership and the Countryside Agency] is currently in the order of £10k, and it recognised that this is likely to be the equivalent of a landscape professional plus a graduate assistant for about 20 days.

Process and Outputs

13. Inherent in this study is the understanding that all landscapes have character. However, the distinguishing features or criteria are more obvious, or easily read, in some landscapes than others.
14. It is envisaged that the study will clarify the characteristics that make a particular landscape character type distinct and give landscape character areas their sense of place.
15. The AONB team are conscious that terminology will need to be precise and understandable without the need for further interpretation. For example, whilst a feature or change may be visible within a landscape it does not automatically follow that it, or the landscape, is visually sensitive.
16. It is envisaged that the data gathered from previous landscape character assessments will be used rather than undertaking yet another field survey. That does not preclude 'site truthing'.
17. The data on the AONB GIS will be available to the successful consultant.
18. This is not envisaged as a long study although it may be necessary for a team member to spend a little time at the AONB office accessing data and inputting the results of the study.
19. The study methodology should be reproducible and transparent. Where professional judgement is involved, this should be explicit.
20. The report should set out the concept of sensitivity and the study methodology.
21. The outputs from the study are likely to be a report dealing with the concept, methodology, and which types of landscape are more resilient to change and which are more sensitive, together with assessments of special or anomalous localities or cases. Sensitivity plans are likely to be part of the outputs.
22. Three copies of the draft report will be required along with three hard copies of the final report. The final report will also be required in electronic form suitable for producing further copies of the report and display material.
23. Consultants should allow for a progress meeting, the production of a draft document, a meeting to discuss it, and a final presentation.

24. Collaboration between consultants is permissible but the AONB will deal contractually with one, and not deal directly with sub-consultants.
25. Copyright of the material produced will pass to the AONB. However, the consultants will be free to use the material, with appropriate acknowledgement, for promotional and training purposes.
26. The participating consultants from the discussion and debate stage become the select list for bidding for this project:
 - Diacono Associates,
 - LDA Design,
 - Sue Sutherland,
 - The Landscape Practice.
27. The selected consultants are invited to set out what they would propose to do to provide the sensitivity study described above. The personnel to be involved should be identified, with their qualifications and relevant experience. The proposal should state when the work could be undertaken and the time period over which it would be done.
28. In the event that additional work associated with the project is required by the AONB Partnership, or members of the Partnership, consultants should set out their rates and terms for undertaking such work.
29. Proposals should be submitted to:

The AONB Manager
AONB Office
Castle Street
Cranborne,
Dorset BH21 5PZ

to arrive by noon 28th February 2006
30. Questions or queries may be submitted to:

Richard Burden
Landscape and Planning Advisor
at the above address or by e-mail richardburden@cranbornechase.org.uk
Queries and responses will be made available to all consultants.
31. Consultants are asked to note that most of the AONB team are part-time so responses may not be immediate.
32. Any contract will be with the host authority for this AONB, which is Wiltshire County Council.

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APPENDIX 2

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL SENSITIVITY EVALUATION TABLES:

Table 3 (a): *PHYSICAL*

Table 3 (b): *BIODIVERSITY*

Table 3 (c): *CULTURAL*

Table 3 (d): *EXPERIENTIAL*

Table 3 (e): *VISUAL*

Table 4: *OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY*

Summary of factors in the consideration of significance, robustness and condition in Tables 3a-b

THEME 1 - PHYSICAL
Landform Analysis
<p><i>Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How unusual/ dominant the landform is • Perceived influence on character
<p>Robustness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of erosion • Susceptibility to the effect of the type of landcover
<p><i>Condition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison with the desired vision as set out in the LCA
Soils Analysis
<p><i>Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundance as proportion of area • Rarity • Functional capacity
<p><i>Robustness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of erosion • Likelihood of inappropriate use/ management • Vulnerability to general development
Landcover Analysis
<p><i>Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association with landscape type • Consistency
<p><i>Robustness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of dependence on management • Ease of replication
<p><i>Condition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of intactness/ fragmentation by insensitive development
THEME 2 – BIODIVERSITY
Habitats Analysis
<p><i>Significance and Robustness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflected in their designations • Significance qualified by a habitats rarity and definition of landscape character • Arable recognised as a key habitat, but a pastoral mosaic of unimproved pasture, hedgerows and woodland generally considered more sensitive.
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflected in their designations and statement within Management Plan

Summary of factors in the consideration of significance, robustness and condition in Tables 3c-d

THEME 3 – HISTORIC/ CULTURAL
Cultural Landscape and Settlement Analysis
<p><i>Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of designated sites • Rarity and value (reflected in their designation) • Perceived influence on character/ general visibility in the landscape
<p><i>Robustness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of dependence on management • Ease of replication • Vulnerability to change that will destroy them
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflected in their designations and statement within Management Plan • Degree of intactness and representation of time-depth
THEME 4 – EXPERIENTIAL
Ruralness and Tranquillity Analysis
<p><i>Broad-scale judgement approach:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEFRA Rural definition and map • Degree to which the landscape is unspoilt by urban influences
Countryside Access Analysis <i>(Broad-scale judgement approach)</i>
<p><i>Significance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to settlement • Level of visitor facilities available • Notable or famous landscape with far reaching views
<p><i>Robustness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability – presence and density of the definitive rights of way network • Presence of open access land
Aesthetic Factors Analysis
<p><i>Broad-scale judgement approach:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength of character – how distinct and recognisable the pattern of elements is that defines the character of the landscape.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL SENSITIVITY EVALUATION TABLES

Table 3 (a): *PHYSICAL*

Sensitivity Class	Criteria
High:	• Landform highly dominant in the landscape and influences its character to a strong degree. Particularly susceptible to effects in a change of land cover.
	• Very large proportion of vegetation types/ land cover associated with the character area, and which is consistent or dominates the landscape.
	• Great proportion of land cover dependent on regular intervention and/or difficult to replicate if destroyed.
	• Landform and land cover is in outstanding condition; i.e. intact and not fragmented/ modified by insensitive development and an absence of man made features. Appropriate management for land use and land cover.
	• Soils at very high risk to erosion or mismanagement.
Moderate - High:	• Landform significant in the landscape and influences its character to a great degree. Highly susceptible to effects in a change of land cover.
	• Large proportion of vegetation types/ land cover associated with the character area, and which is consistent or dominates the landscape.
	• Substantial proportion of land cover dependent on regular intervention and/or difficult to replicate if destroyed.
	• Landform and land cover is in good condition; i.e. intact and not substantially fragmented/ modified by insensitive development and infrequent man made features.
	• Soils at high risk to erosion or mismanagement.
Moderate:	• Landform easy-to-read in the landscape but influences its character only to a modest degree. Reasonably susceptible to effects in a change of land cover.
	• Reasonable proportion of vegetation types/ land cover associated with the character area, and which is sometimes variable or subdued in the landscape.
	• Fair proportion of land cover dependent on regular intervention and/or difficult to replicate if destroyed.
	• Landform and land cover is in mediocre condition, i.e. reasonably intact and only slightly fragmented/ modified by insensitive development and some man made features.
	• Soils at some risk to erosion or mismanagement.
Moderate - Low:	• Landform subdued in the landscape and influences its character to a minor degree. Predominantly resilient to effects in a change of land cover.
	• Low proportion of vegetation types/ land cover associated with the character area, and which is variable or subdued in the landscape.
	• Low proportion of land cover dependent on regular intervention and/or difficult to replicate if destroyed.
	• Landform and land cover is in poor condition; i.e. a lack of management and intervention has resulted in degradation and some detracting features.
	• Soils at low risk to erosion or mismanagement.

Table 3 (a) cont'd.

Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landform muted and lacking defined vertical/ horizontal or undulating features in the landscape and influences its character only to a very small degree. Landform masked by land cover or resilient to effects in a change of land cover.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low proportion of vegetation types/ land cover associated with the character area, and which is inconspicuous in the landscape.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small proportion of land cover dependent on regular intervention and/or difficult to replicate if destroyed, i.e. land cover is robust and easy to replicate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landform and land cover is in poor condition; i.e. substantially fragmented/ modified by insensitive development and man made features
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soils at very low risk to erosion or mismanagement.

Table 3 (b): BIODIVERSITY

Sensitivity Class	Criteria
High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of fragmentation: habitats represented as large blocks generally 10 ha or more in size and can act as refugia for key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of representation: areas with widespread designated habitats (of international or national importance) supporting abundant key habitats and key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear features: strong and interconnected landscape framework of hedgerows, stream corridors and verges allowing a high mobility of characteristic species.
Moderate - High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of fragmentation: areas with clusters (groups of patches) of habitats in close enough proximity to allow for movement of key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of representation: areas with frequent designated habitats (of international or national importance) supporting many key habitats and key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear features: interconnected landscape framework of hedgerows, stream corridors and verges allowing movement of characteristic species.
Moderate:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of fragmentation: areas with patches of habitats less than 10 ha in size within a matrix of habitat that is resistant to the free movement of key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of representation: areas with frequent habitats (of regional or county importance) supporting some key habitats and key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear features: moderate and partially interconnected landscape framework of hedgerows, stream corridors and verges allowing movement of characteristic species.
Moderate -Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of fragmentation: areas with fragments of habitats which are too small to have an ecological function at landscape scale.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of representation: areas with occasional habitats (non-designated) supporting a very low density of key habitats and key species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear features: poor and fragmented landscape framework of hedgerows, stream corridors and verges allowing limited movement of characteristic species.
Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of fragmentation: areas with fragments of habitats which are too small to have an ecological function at landscape scale.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of representation: areas with occasional/ general absence of non-designated habitats supporting no key habitats or species.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear features: weak and highly fragmented landscape framework of hedgerows, stream corridors and verges allowing very little movement of characteristic species.

Table 3 (c): HISTORIC/ CULTURAL

Sensitivity Class	Criteria
High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread archaeological sites, highly visible in the landscape, and highly characteristic of the area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong evidence of medieval field systems and areas of historical land management, for example park pales, which give a rich sense of 'time-depth'.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent historic houses and parkland landscapes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A distinctive settlement location and pattern which is highly characteristic of the terrain, conveys the local vernacular and with numerous Listed Buildings, and evokes a strong sense of place. Typically a designated Conservation Area.
Moderate - High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent archaeological sites, often visible in the landscape and characteristic of the area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent evidence of medieval field systems and/ or areas of historical land management, for example park pales, which give a sense of 'time-depth', but sometimes in declining condition and/ or modified through 20th century agricultural intensification.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional historic houses and parkland landscapes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A settlement location and pattern which is characteristic of the terrain and the local vernacular with some listed buildings and an overall strong sense of place, but evidence of some piecemeal 'modernisation'.
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably frequent archaeological sites, often moderately visible in the landscape, and the area forms part of their landscape setting.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence of medieval field systems and/ or areas of historical land management, for example park pales, which give a sense of 'time-depth', but often in declining condition and/ or modified through 20th century agricultural intensification.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional historic houses and parkland landscapes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A settlement location and pattern which is broadly characteristic of the terrain and expresses the local vernacular, but whose sense of place is partially thwarted by 'modernisation'.
Moderate – Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional archaeological sites or widespread areas which do not form part of a historical landscape setting.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of medieval field systems and/ or areas of historical land management, for example park pales. Landscape pattern modified through 20th century agricultural intensification with a weak sense of 'time-depth'.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A settlement location and pattern which is not characteristic of the terrain or vernacular, and has little sense of place.
Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No or very few visible archaeological sites.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scant evidence of medieval field systems and/ or areas of historical land management, or little sense of 'time-depth'. Field systems predominantly large-scale through 20th century agricultural intensification.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A settlement location and pattern which is highly uncharacteristic of the terrain, and does not respect the local vernacular or promote a sense of place.

Table 3 (d): EXPERIENTIAL

Sensitivity Class	Criteria
High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of landform and land cover.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of remoteness and no detracting features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundant public rights of way, including national trails and land managed for public access by public bodies or trusts. Famous public viewpoints with far reaching views typically promoted through tourism offices, with a very good level of facilities for visitors and countryside recreation.
Moderate - High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and land cover are still intact and evident.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely unspoilt by urban influences and only occasional detracting features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent public rights of way, including national trails and land managed for public access. Local viewpoints with far reaching views, and a good level of facilities for visitors and countryside recreation.
Moderate:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguishable landscape structure, characteristic patterns, and combinations of landform and land cover are sometimes masked by land use.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some urban influences and some detracting features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite a few public rights of way and some land managed for public access. Few viewpoints with far reaching views, and only an acceptable level of facilities for visitors and countryside recreation.
Moderate – Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate landscape structure, characteristic patterns, and combinations of landform and land cover are often masked by land use.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent urban influences and some detracting features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional rights of way and little land managed for public access. Very few viewpoints with far reaching views, and an inadequate level of facilities for visitors and countryside recreation.
Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak landscape structure, characteristic patterns, and combinations of landform and land cover are masked by land use
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of urban influences and frequent detracting features
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practically an absence of public rights of way and no land managed for public access. No recognised public viewpoints and no facilities for visitors or countryside recreation.

Table 3 (e): VISUAL

Visual Sensitivity	Criteria	Sensitivity to Change
High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of distant views (7km+) and far ranging inter-visibility. • Very prominent landform which stands out both locally and over a wide area of the AONB. • Widespread sensitive receptors or important viewpoints. • Strong visual character and very good condition of landscape elements. • Poor potential for minimising adverse visual impacts of disturbance through mitigation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great likelihood of visual intrusion. • Landscape very sensitive to the cumulative impact of small-scale changes. • Presumption against development that significantly alters the visual character and fabric of important views. • Further area assessment essential.
<p>These areas are typically elevated, expansive downland landscapes with long ranging views uninterrupted by woodland or tall hedgerows. Other areas are characterised by prominent landform, e.g. chalk ridges, with the potential to be highly inter-visible with their surroundings. These areas are well frequented by people who have the expectation to visit and 'take in' the high quality landscape from recognised viewpoints. Development would have an overriding detrimental effect on visual character.</p>		
Moderate – High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of mid to long distance views (3-7km) and inter-visibility. • Prominent landform which stands out locally. • Frequent sensitive receptors. • Strong to moderate strength of visual character. • Limited potential for minimising adverse visual impacts of disturbance through mitigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probable likelihood of visual intrusion. • Landscape sensitive to the cumulative visual impact of small-scale changes. • Presumption against development that significantly alters the visual character and fabric of important views. • Further area assessment a priority.
<p>These areas typically buffer core areas of high sensitivity. Although they share many of the characteristics of the most sensitive landscapes, visibility is lessened by the absence of one or two key criteria. These areas typically comprise the undulating chalk downland which gives a diversity of views near and far, as predominantly experienced from the road network. Although these areas often have a sense of openness, they do not share the dramatic 'upland' views of the more elevated and sensitive landscapes. Middle distance views are typically interrupted by woodland blocks and/or shelter belts</p>		

Table 3 (e) cont'd:

<p>Moderate:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of mid distance views (1.5-3km). • Landform of some local prominence. • Some sensitive receptors. • Moderate strength of visual character. • Some potential for minimising adverse visual impacts of disturbance through mitigation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some likelihood of visual intrusion. • Landscape fairly sensitive to the cumulative visual impact of small-scale changes.
<p>Visibility is lessened by enclosing landform and/or a strong landscape framework of hedgerows and trees. These areas typically comprise the valley floors of the less dramatic chalk river valleys. Although experienced by a greater number of people (transport corridors, residential areas) these landscapes are typically more influenced by human intervention. Local views are typically interrupted by hedgerows.</p>		
<p>Moderate – Low:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of short distance views (<1.5km). • Subdued landform of some local prominence. • Low frequency of sensitive receptors. • Moderate to weak strength of visual character. • Good potential for minimising adverse visual impacts of disturbance through mitigation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low likelihood of visual intrusion. • Landscape reasonably resilient to the cumulative visual impact of small to medium scale changes.
<p>In terms of general visibility and range of views these areas typically buffer areas of moderate and low visibility, and have a strong sense of enclosure. Typically this class is rare within the AONB, as no character areas within the AONB are classified as having a low strength of character and/or low visual condition.</p>		
<p>Low:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least general visibility. Predominance of local views (< 0.5 km). • Least locally prominent landform. • Low frequency of sensitive receptors. • Strong potential for minimising adverse visual impacts of disturbance through mitigation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least likelihood of visual intrusion. • Landscape resilient to the cumulative visual impact of small-scale changes. • Potential for sensitive development to enhance the visual character and fabric of important views.
<p>These areas have a strong sense of enclosure derived from the combination of landform and vegetation. However, to qualify under this class, an area should exhibit weaker visual character and/ or low visual condition, coupled with a strong potential for mitigation measures to enhance views. Typically, this class is not found in the AONB.</p>		

OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

Table 4: OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Sensitivity Class	Criteria
High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These landscapes typically have a prominent landform, may be open or exposed with a remote character and an absence of man-made features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are often highly visible from adjacent landscapes, and the effects of development would be very difficult to mitigate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They exhibit widespread sensitive landscape features or elements, many of which can't be replaced or substituted. In enclosed landscapes, the screening elements typically define a small-scale or irregular field pattern.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a strong character or sense of place and are in good condition.
Moderate - High:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These landscapes may have a prominent landform, may be essentially open or exposed with a distinctly rural character and occasional man-made features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They often share inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes, and the effects of development would be difficult to mitigate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They exhibit abundant sensitive landscape features or elements, many of which can't be replaced or substituted, or at least not within a short time frame.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a strong character and are in moderate condition.
Moderate:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These landscapes are likely to have a more subdued landform with a land cover that partially reduces visibility, and some man-made features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They share some inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes, and the effects of development would be relatively difficult to mitigate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They exhibit some sensitive landscape features or elements, some of which can't be replaced or substituted, or at least not within a short time frame.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a moderate strength of character and are in moderate condition.
Moderate - Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These landscapes have a subdued landform, a sense of enclosure that reduces sensitivity, and are already likely to be affected by man-made features leading to reduced tranquillity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have little inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes, and the effects of development would be possible to mitigate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They exhibit occasional sensitive landscape features or elements, but the majority of elements can be replaced or substituted within a short time frame.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a moderate to weak character and are in moderate to poor condition.
Low:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These landscapes are likely to have the least prominent landform, a strong sense of enclosure that reduces sensitivity and are already affected by man-made features with much reduced tranquillity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have no inter-visibility with adjacent landscapes, and the effects of development would be relatively easy to mitigate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They exhibit a low density of sensitive landscape features or elements, the majority of which can be easily replaced or substituted within a short time frame.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a weak character and are in poor condition.

APPENDIX 3
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GLOSSARY

Absolute sensitivity The composite sensitivity of the landscape types and character areas within the AONB.

Attribute A component part of the landscape. Normally derivative of a landscape character area's key characteristic.

Biodiversity The variety of life and forms an intrinsic link with natural beauty. It encompasses the entirety of habitats and wildlife in all its forms.

Capacity The ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type.

Character the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place and is identified through the process of characterisation which classifies maps and describes areas of similar character.

Condition The physical state of a landscape element or feature on the ground, from visual, functional and ecological perspectives.

Landscape characteristic Combinations of landscape elements that make a particular contribution to the area, including the patterns of topography and field boundaries and experiential characteristics such as tranquillity and wildness.

Landscape character area Discrete sub-areas of a landscape type with a distinct and recognisable local identity or sense of place.

Landscape character sensitivity The sensitivity of the landscape resource including its natural factors, cultural factors, landscape quality and condition and aesthetic factors.

Landscape effect Change in the elements, characteristics, character and quality of the landscape as a result of development. These effects can be positive or negative.

Landscape element The individual elements that make up the landscape, including features such as hills, valleys, woods, trees and hedges, ponds, buildings and roads.

Landscape type A landscape with broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern discernible in maps and field survey records. These are generic descriptions and the types can repeat across the study area without being specifically related to geographical location.

Overall landscape sensitivity Refers to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape irrespective of the type of change being considered. It is defined as the combination of landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity.

Relative sensitivity The sensitivity of a landscape character area measured and considered in comparison to the other component landscape character areas of the AONB.

Robustness The inherent vulnerability and fragility of an attribute or component part of the landscape.

Significance The occurrence of a landscape element or characteristic on the ground and how apparent that element or characteristic is in defining landscape character.

Theme One of five distinct subjects that are encompassed by the term landscape: the physical landscape, biodiversity, historic environment, the experiential landscape and visibility.

Visual effect Change in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive or negative.

Visual sensitivity The sensitivity of the landscape in terms of its general visibility, the scope to mitigate any visual effects of any change, and the numbers and activities of people who are likely to perceive the landscape and any changes in it.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY

FIGURE 2 – VISUAL SENSITIVITY

FIGURE 3 – OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

FIGURE 4 – SENSITIVITY MAPPING KEY