



Planning and the AONB

Sustaining Landscape Character

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

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Planning and the AONB – Sustaining Landscape Character

AONBs are designated for their outstanding natural beauty. This has not, however, been defined in the legislation that relates to AONBs. The Government did confirm, in June 2000, that the landscapes of National Parks and AONBs are of equal quality. They are, however, living and working communities, not preserved reservations.

Before the requirement for AONBs to have Management Plans to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, the constituent Local Planning Authorities sought to protect them from inappropriate development via policies and development control decisions. Whilst this had some success, it tended to promote a view that the AONB designation was a millstone that meant no development would be likely to be allowed. The commonly held view that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' fuelled opinions that planning decisions were being made on a subjective, and potentially biased, basis.



From Zig-Zag Hill towards Shaftesbury

Landscape Character Assessment is a structured and repeatable analysis which provides a greater understanding of the landscapes around us. It informs planning and land management options, policies, and decisions. The Countryside Agency sponsored an initial assessment, which led to the production of a popular booklet about the landscapes of this AONB, in 1995. A more detailed assessment was completed in 2003, and that is available on our web site www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk. A summary is included in the Management Plan.

The Planning Topic Group of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has recently been expanded to include transportation issues and personalities. The Partner authorities of this AONB have endorsed a Planning Protocol which covers both policy formulation and significant development proposals. Clearly landscape character and the objectives of the Management Plan are matters that feed into the operation of the Protocol.

The Landscape Character Assessment helps identify key characteristics, local distinctiveness, and sense of place. This information helps tailor policies and the assessment of proposals to the characteristics of locations and areas. Not everyone is familiar with the process or use of landscape characterisation so this booklet seeks to provide both an introduction and sufficient details to identify, and work with, the landscapes of this AONB.

Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment seeks to present a fully integrated view of the landscape incorporating all the features and attributes that contribute to the special and distinctive character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

These include the physical, ecological, visual, historic and cultural forces that have shaped the present day landscape. It also recognises the AONB today as a living and working landscape and considers the social, economic and recreational characteristics that contribute to its current character.

For the substantive project report the consultants brought together a number of different studies, including studies into the socio-economics of the AONB, the agricultural character, historic character, recreational characteristics, ecological characteristics of the AONB and visual information based on survey work conducted in the field. The evaluative stage teases out the key issues affecting the AONB, proposes a broad management objective and a number of aims for each landscape character area.

Landscape Character Types and Areas

The physical, cultural, social and economic influences have combined to create the unique and distinctive character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The area is characterised by a diversity of landscapes and these variations and differences are represented by eight landscape types.

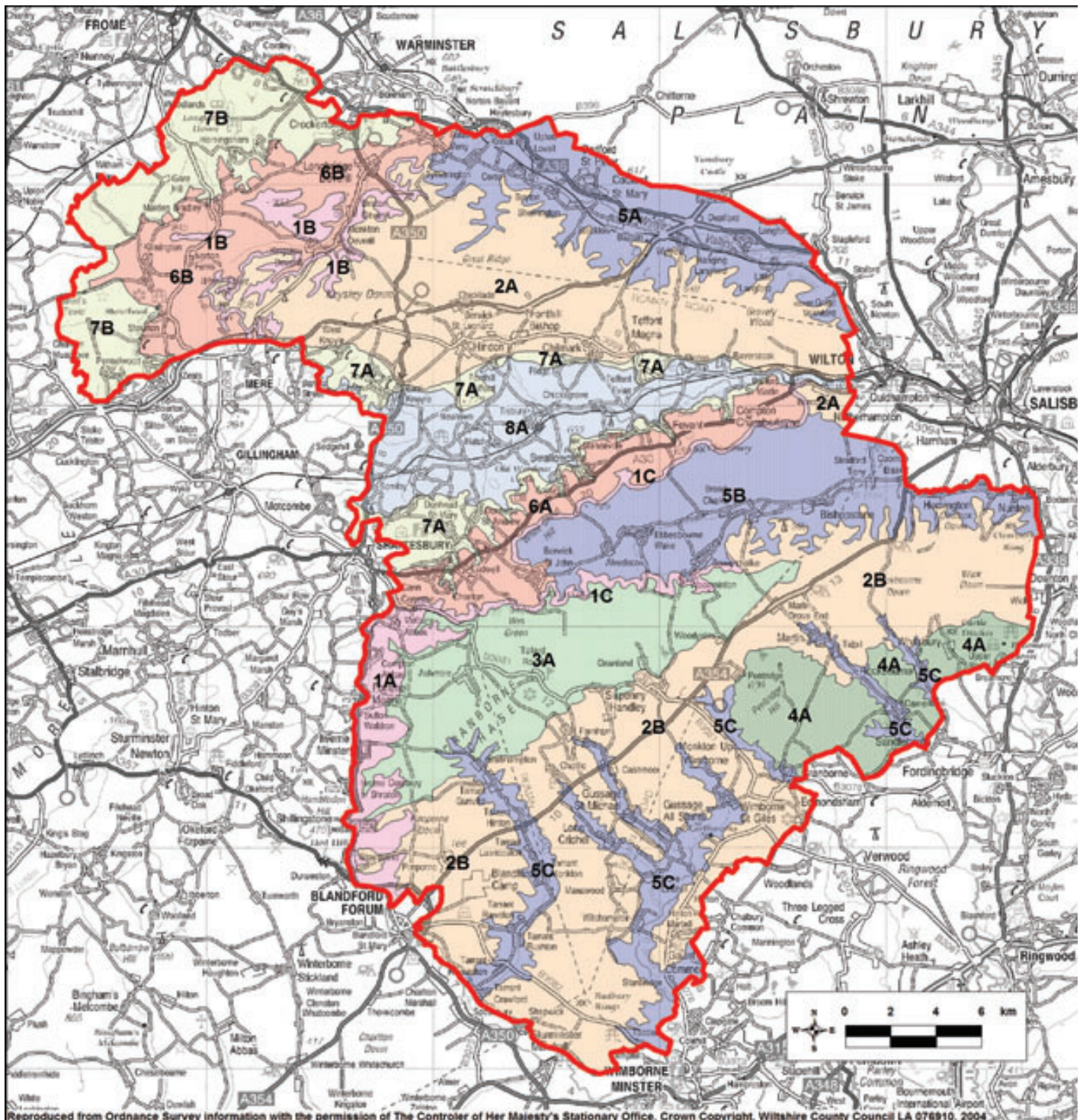
- 1: Chalk Escarpments
- 2: Open Chalk Downland
- 3: Wooded Chalk Downland
- 4: Downland Hills
- 5: Chalk River Valleys
- 6: Greensand Terrace
- 7: Greensand Hills
- 8: Rolling Clay Vales

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.

The landscape types can be further sub-divided into component landscape character areas. 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.

The landscape classification for the AONB is illustrated on the map opposite. The relationships between landscape character types and character areas are listed in the key to the map. The maps are on the AONB Geographic Information System (GIS), with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000. It should be noted that there are subtle differences between and within the individual landscape types and character areas. The boundaries illustrated therefore usually indicate transitions rather than hard or sharp changes on the ground.

The Landscape Character Areas



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CHARACTER AREA MAP	Type 3 - Wooded Chalk Downland	Type 6 - Greensand Terrace
Type 1 - Chalk Escarpments	3A Cranborne Chase	6A Fovant Greensand Terrace
1A Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment	Type 4 - Downland Hills	6B Kilmington Greensand Terrace
1B West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment	4A Martin - Whitsbury Downland Hills	Type 7 - Greensand Hills
1C Fovant and Chalke Calk Escarpments	Type 5 - Chalk River Valleys	7A Donhead - Fovant Hills
Type 2 - Open Chalk Downland	5A Wylde Chalk River Valley	7B Penselwood - Longleat Hills
2A West Wiltshire Downs	5B Ebbel Chalk River Valley	Type 8 - Rolling Clay Vales
2B Southern Downland Belt	5C Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys	8A The Vale of Wardour



Landscape Type 1 – Chalk Escarpments

Description

The escarpments, which often mark the transition between chalk and adjoining rocks, are amongst the most dramatic elements of the chalk landscape. Such escarpments are often formed where the layers of chalk have been compressed to form a fold, or where the chalk has been faulted, resulting in accelerated erosion along the line of weakness. The retreating chalk strata stand as steep escarpments, often towering over the older rocks which are exposed at the base. The old chalk 'surface' remains behind the escarpment as a gently sloping, often highly eroded dip slope. These are large scale landscapes where repeating patterns of rounded spurs and deep coombs cast strong shadows in strong sunlight. The scarps frequently support

internationally important nature conservation sites and ancient field systems, some which are still dramatic features of the landscape today. Recreational opportunities are mainly limited to public footpaths, although the scarps contain large areas of 'Open Country' as mapped by the Countryside Agency. There are three distinct areas of chalk escarpment within the AONB.

Key Characteristics

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



Chalk Escarpments

Visual Character

The escarpment is a dramatic feature in the AONB landscape, in part because of its steep, convoluted appearance - its repeating pattern of rounded spurs and deep coombs - and in part due to the effect of the distinctive pattern of woodland, scrub and grassland. This area forms a transition from the chalk landscapes of Cranborne Chase and the Southern Downland Belt to the lowland clays of the Stour valley. The open, remote scarp with its unenclosed chalk grassland and woodland contrasts with the enclosed and more domestic appearance of the lowland created by the denser structure of hedges and the scattering of farms and villages. The panorama, which the escarpment provides over the vale, is as impressive as the barrier that the scarp represents when seen from the west.

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic chalk escarpment on the western edge of the AONB with rounded spurs and deep coombs.
- Underlying geology of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk giving rise to the predominantly calcareous soils.
- Areas of unimproved chalk grassland of international importance on steeper slopes interspersed with broken areas of scrub.
- Arable crop production and improved pasture on the shallower slopes.
- Hanging woodland and sunken lanes are features of the steep, enclosing chalk coombs.
- Beech copses, Scot's pine and hanging woodland enhance the sense of woodedness, increase enclosure and act as focal points.
- Elevated and uninterrupted landform, provides panoramic views over adjacent landscapes.
- Round barrows and cross-ridge dykes along the escarpment edge.
- Field systems on the lower slopes, including strip lynchets close to medieval villages sited along the spring line.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure.

Settlement and Built Character

While the escarpment is almost entirely devoid of settlement, a series of nucleated villages are found at its foot, enjoying both the shelter provided by their lower altitude and, perhaps more importantly, springs which are found along the junction of the chalk and underlying clays. Iwerne Courtney, Iwerne Minster, Fontmell Magna and Compton Abbas are typical of such villages, tucked tightly into the foot of the scarp, or almost hidden in the chalk coombs, their stone or red-brick cottages clustered around small parish churches. At Melbury Abbas, Compton Abbas and Fontmell Magna, cottages tend to be built from Shaftesbury stone – a glaucanitic sandstone that matures to a pleasant grey-green colour. Further south towards Iwerne Minster, chequerboard flint and sandstone, white render, tudor style properties and thatch roofs are found, typical of river valley landscapes.

The historic importance of the chalk downs and the valley pastures to these villages is reflected in their relative proximity (often little more than a kilometre apart) and the alignment of parish boundaries to encapsulate a 'slice' of downland and lowland. Narrow lanes bordered by high hedges and roadside woodland link the scarp-foot villages to the chalk downs above. The east-west alignment of many of the roads reflect the historic relationship between settlement and the downs.

The pattern of settlement along this escarpment is quite distinctive, with sparsely settled areas along the escarpment itself contrasting with the spring line villages which cluster at its foot. The physical and visual separation of these villages has been maintained and, for the most part, new development has respected both the nuclear layout of the villages and the use of local building materials.

Compton Abbas



Visual Character

Although not as conspicuous as other escarpments within the AONB, its pronounced form above the Greensand Terrace gives it strong presence. This is a large-scale landscape – a vast chalk escarpment with associated outlying hills that stand proud of the Kilmington Greensand Terrace (6B) landscape - providing a strong contrast in relief.

The escarpment, formed where layers of chalk have been compressed comprises a surface geology of Lower and Middle Chalk. These older chalk strata have been uncovered due to fluvial processes and high levels of erosion of the River Wylye (and its tributaries) whose course has followed fault lines to break through the chalk and thus interrupt the continuity of the landscape, creating a fragmented escarpment and a small series of chalk hills (Brimsdown Hill, Little Knoll and Long Knoll). The processes of riverine erosion over millions of years has led to deep incisions – forming coomb valleys.

The escarpment provides commanding long distance views over the neighbouring Kilmington Terrace (6B) and conversely it can be viewed from long range. The magnitude of this landscape is seemingly exaggerated by the simplicity of its land cover. Predominantly comprising grassland, there is a sense of uniformity or consistency of character that adds to the experience of openness, expanse and remoteness and provides a strong sense of visual unity and intactness.

Key Characteristics

- Fragmented, eroded chalk escarpment broken by the course of the River Wylye marking the boundary between the Greensand Terrace landscape to the north and the Chalk Downland to the south.
- Sculpted, convoluted landform comprising deeply incised coomb valleys that create surprise views and dramatic shadows in strong sunlight.
- Dominated by a Lower and Middle Chalk surface geology giving rise to calcareous soils.
- Strong sense of continuity and consistency due to the absence of boundaries and the grazed, smooth nature of the grassland cover with scattered scrub.
- A pastoral landscape with sheep and cattle grazing the steep slopes.
- Extensive tracts of SSSI designated chalk grassland.
- Straight-sided fields representing late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure are highly visible where they cut across the contours.
- Woodland swathes associated with the break of the slope, following the line of the contours and delineating the contrast between the escarpment and adjacent Open Chalk Downland landscape.
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, particularly on the outlying chalk outcrop north of the River Wylye.
- Later prehistoric/Romano-British landscape divisions incorporating long bank and ditch earthworks and associated cross-ridge dykes.
- Strip lynchets near the medieval settlements at Mere, Kingston and Monkton Deverill.

Settlement and Built Character

The absence of settlement along the escarpment is one of its most striking features of this landscape forming a strong contrast with the adjacent Kilmington Greensand Terraces (6B), where settlements occur, following the course of the River Wylye nestled at the base or break of the escarpment slope. The Deverills are a good example – Kingston, Monkton and Brixton Deverill located where the Wylye has cut through the chalk. The Deverills are considered in more detail under character area 6B Kilmington Greensand Terrace.



Mere Strip Lynchets

Character Area 1C Fovant and Chalke Chalk Escarpments

Visual Character

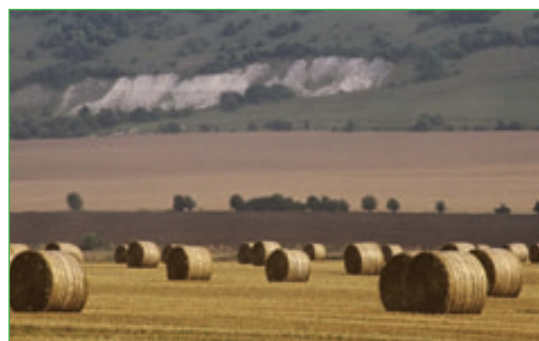
These two escarpments are dominant features in the landscape and make a substantial contribution to the character of the AONB as a whole. In part, their value is derived from their height, steepness and continuity together with the contrasts between open chalk grassland and the cultivated land on the Fovant Greensand Terrace (6A). The escarpments are very visible - appearing as a range of stark hills dominating the more domestic landscapes of the Vale of Wardour, the skyline punctuated by the copses and woodland blocks along the crest. The scarp also provides the location for fine views over immediate surrounding landscapes, the Vale of Wardour (8A) and towards the West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland (2A).

Key Characteristics

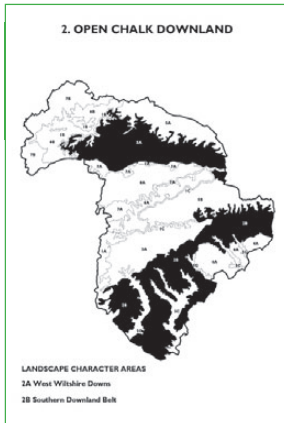
- Two distinct escarpments (Fovant and Chalke) separated by and bounding the Ebbles River Valley (5B).
- Lower and Middle Chalk strata defining surface geological character and giving rise to calcareous, shallow and well drained soils.
- Dramatic landform - due to the sheer scale and elevated nature of the escarpment – looming over adjacent landscapes.
- A largely pastoral landscape comprising both unimproved and improved pasture but with introduction of arable cultivation associated with the upper and lower reaches of the scarp.
- Significant tracts of unimproved chalk grassland, with a total of five statutory nature conservation sites falling wholly or partly within the character area.
- Wooded character in places with broadleaf (some of ancient origin), mixed and coniferous woodland occurring across the escarpment in distinctive patterns.
- Distinct distribution of Bronze Age burial monuments along the edges of the escarpments.
- Chalk hill figures, in particular the Fovant Badges, are highly visible landmark features.
- Panoramic views across the surrounding landscapes.
- Absence of settlement heightening a sense of isolation.

Settlement and Built Character

The Fovant and Chalke Escarpments (1B) are largely devoid of settlement. However, old ox droves, hill forts (e.g. Winklebury above Berwick St John), barrows and the many grassy tracks carved into the hill slope reflect past patterns of land use. Even farm buildings are few, limited to the intensive agricultural units that are sited along the crest of the scarp near Fovant and screened by coniferous planting.



Swallowcliffe



Landscape Type 2 Open Chalk Downland

Description

Two large tracts of open chalk downland, divided by the Vale of Wardour, account for a large proportion of the AONB area. Unlike the often dramatic escarpments which are found along several of the boundaries of the chalk, and which represent the retreating faces of chalk strata, the chalk downs have a much more subdued landform of gently rolling spurs and dry valleys. Only where these valleys come close to an escarpment do they deepen to create convoluted, dividing valley systems. In geological terms, the open downs comprise the dip-slope of the chalk;

a gently inclined landform representing the original chalk 'surface'.

These uninterrupted rolling hills and gentle slopes give a real sense of openness. The land is now predominantly under arable fields but with areas of chalk grassland surviving. Open Chalk Downland occurs in two extensive areas making it the most significant landscape type in terms of area covered.

Key Characteristics

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



Chalk Downland



The West Wiltshire Downs

Visual Character

The character area defined as the West Wiltshire Open Chalk Downland (2A) is a distinctive, large scale landscape covering an extensive area. With a surface geology of Upper Chalk, the landscape is typically characteristic of the Open Chalk Downland landscape type, farming, the intensive agricultural land use brings with it a simple land cover (vast tracts of arable production with few field boundaries). The landscape is not simple in terms of colour variation with the cultivation, growing, and harvesting of arable crops bringing much seasonal change.

Woodland, both large and small scale makes an important contribution to character – adding a sense of scale and distinctive visual interest. Although woodland interrupts some long distance views, there is a feeling of exposure and expanse across the entire landscape. This heightens the sense of remoteness as well as providing wide open views and the impression of being in an upland landscape. This is a quality enjoyed by many walkers and riders using the extensive network of rights of way that cross the downs.

With the exception of small hamlets and a village in the south of this character area, settlement is largely absent and this adds to the sense of remoteness and simplicity although this is disturbed by the visible movement along the main transport corridors – the A303 and A350.

Key Characteristics

- A large-scale landscape of broad rolling hills and undulating land separated by dry river valleys.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- Grovely Wood Royal forest, and Stockton Wood, reflecting clay-with-flint soils.
- Straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large-scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.
- Settlement pattern comprising small villages, dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads. Villages tend to be located on the south facing slopes where the landform offers increased shelter.
- Broad leaved copses and clumps (round stands) are eye catching features on the hilltops.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, and Bronze Age round barrows are visible in this ancient landscape.
- Series of Iron Age hillforts and defended enclosures overlooking the Wylve Valley, including the localised preserved prehistoric/Romano-British landscapes at Whitesheet Hill, Stockton Wood and Hamshill Ditches.
- Prehistoric/Romano-British landscape divisions such as Grim's Ditch re-used as a parish boundary, and cross-ridge dykes.
- The Roman road between Old Sarum and the Mendips follows the top of the downs.
- Fast moving transport corridors, A303 and A350, running across and through the landform in cuttings and on embankments.

Settlement and Built Character

In the north of the character area, built form and settlement are notably absent with the exception of the occasional farmstead concealed within small copses which also act as windbreaks. The occasional dew-pond, man made ponds lined with puddled clay, point to the historic importance of water, both for people and their animals. This low density settlement can be attributed to the bleak, exposed nature of the landscape and the lack of water supplies. To the south, settlement is much more common and relates to the sheltered conditions on the south facing dip slope and proximity to water. Here the village and hamlets of Hindon, Fonthill Bishop, Chilmark and Teffont Magna sit at the head of the River Nadder tributary valleys. With the exception of Teffont Magna these settlements have a nucleated form, growing around crossroads on the B3089. Hindon was established around 1220 following a contemporary trend in establishing new boroughs as commercial ventures with a market, fair and associated church. The weekly market was laid out along the line of the present wide High Street, with market stalls in front of the cottages and burgage plots behind.

The open downs are characterised by agricultural buildings of red brick and flint with red clay tiles. The southern villages are characterised by the local limestone (Chilmark Stone), such as Teffont Magna, with thatch, slate or red clay tile roofs

Visual Character

The Southern Downland Belt (2B) is a large scale landscape with a solid geology of Upper Chalk giving rise to shallow well-drained calcareous silty soils. Gentle slopes and the convex profile of the shallow ridges allow intensive arable farming which is the dominant land use. The uniformity of arable fields creates a simple land cover, however in terms of colour the landscape is rich with a range of arable crops and associated seasonal changes.

Woodland is more significant to the west of the character area where the land becomes more undulating creating a greater sense of enclosure. When they occur, coniferous blocks and shelterbelts gain unusual prominence - their presence making a stark contrast to the gently sloping landscape.

The scarcity of settlement and uniformity of landcover emphasises the open character of the landscape. Villages are located only where the landform provides more shelter, such as below the Hill Fort at Whitsbury. Otherwise, the only buildings evident are occasional agricultural barns scattered at low density throughout the area.

Key Characteristics

- A large-scale landscape of broad rolling hills and gentle slopes cut to the south by a series of distinct river valleys.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, regular field units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th / early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure.
- Mixed woodland is a significant feature to the west where the land is more undulating.
- Settlement is scarce (predominantly dispersed farms to the east and south) emphasising the remoteness of the landscape.
- The A354 runs in a north east direction from Blandford Forum to Salisbury and is a prominent feature creating a corridor of movement.
- Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments, such as the Wor Barrow, the Knowlton henge complex and the Dorset Cursus, and large groupings of Bronze Age round barrows, as on Wyke Down and Oakley Down.
- Later prehistoric and Romano-British earthworks including Badbury Rings and Buzbury Rings hillforts, linear ditches and defensive earthworks, such as Grim's Ditch and Bokerley Dyke.
- Roman road from Old Sarum to Badbury Rings forms a straight line in the landscape.
- A large skyscape and panoramic, distant views to the west.

Settlement and Built Character

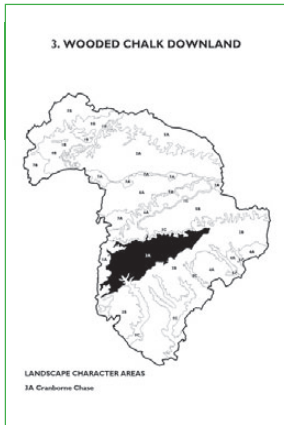
The extreme east and south of the character area is largely unpopulated; farms, hamlets and villages favouring the sheltered, watered locations of the valleys that form the deeper folds of the dip slope.

The villages of Chettle and Farnham lie at the heads of Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys. Sixpenny Handley, Blandford Camp and Pimperne are the only other settlements in the area.



There is a variety of building age and style in the nucleated village of Sixpenny Handley. Brick, painted brick and flint with clay or slate tiles are distinctive. Pimperne is also a nucleated settlement but is dominated by post 1960s development of bungalows. Blandford Camp is a military base on the downs above Blandford Forum – military vehicles and aircraft are apparent.

Near Long Cichel



Landscape Type 3 Wooded Chalk Downland

Description

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

one area of wooded chalk downland in the AONB - Cranborne Chase.

Key Characteristics

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



Ashmore Down

Visual Character

Cranborne Chase Wooded Chalk Downland is one of the most remarkable landscapes of the AONB, comprising a mixture of dramatic chalk valleys, ridges and plateaux, diverse woodland, copses, shelterbelts and parkland trees, together with villages, parklands and estates found throughout the area. It is a landscape which shows strong human influences, not only in the archaeological remains, but in the managed forests, woodlands, copses and avenues along with the parklands and gardens. Together these create a classical English landscape.

Key Characteristics

- An elevated downland, deeply eroded to create a dramatic series of coomb valleys and ridges.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.
- A mosaic of both pastoral and arable land uses with arable dominating to the south and east.
- Medieval Royal hunting grounds, defined by surviving park pale, with large areas of surviving managed woodland.
- Shelterbelts, copses, clumps and parkland trees, contribute to distinct estate and parkland character, particularly around the Rushmore Estate.
- Beech avenues and beech hedgerows provide dramatic seasonal colour change.
- Chalk grassland and ancient woodland provide important nature conservation habitats.
- Neolithic long barrows and numerous Bronze Age round barrows, particularly concentrated around Tollard Royal.
- Surviving earthworks indicating late prehistoric to Romano-British settlements and field systems, cross-ridge dykes and linear earthworks, such as Grim's Ditch and Bokerley Dyke.
- Low density settlement pattern with few villages and dispersed farmsteads, with 19th century enclosure.
- Panoramic views from Win Green over adjacent escarpment and low-lying terrace and valley landscapes.

Settlement and Built Character

In contrast to the areas of downland which surround it, Cranborne Chase is comparatively densely settled owing to the presence of Tollard Royal and Ashmore. Tollard Royal, traditionally at the heart of the Chase and site of the house where King John would stay when he hunted there, lies in the southern part of Ashcoomb Bottom at the point where the valley deepens.

Red brick and flint and white render typify the character of buildings, with thatch, clay and slate tiles common roofing materials. Estate railings define the approach to Tollard Royal. Ashmore is semi-nucleated, its buildings grouped around a large pond which is said to date back to Roman times. It is also one of the few hill-top settlements in the AONB, sited on a rounded plateau and is thought to be the only village in Dorset dating to pre Roman times. Between these villages lie dispersed hamlets, farms and lodges.

Cranborne Chase is comparatively untouched by modern development. Although the busy A354 runs close to its southern edge, the Chase itself is crossed only by the winding B3081 between Sixpenny Handley and Shaftesbury.



Rushmore Estate



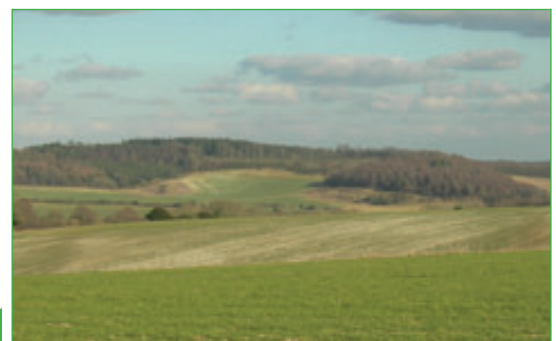
Landscape Type 4 Downland Hills

Description

The Downland Hills are formed from the dissected remnants of an older chalk escarpment. Over the millennia, the rivers which once drained the chalk dip slope of the AONB have cut through eroding the remnants of the escarpment into a series of rounded bluffs. These appear as a series of low 'whale-backed' ridges that stand out from the surrounding downland. The highest hill tops tend to be capped with clay with flints and small areas of Reading Beds. Ploughed slopes and enlarged fields create a vast patchwork of arable land with isolated remnants of chalk grassland and ancient semi-natural woodland that provide significant ecological interest. The range of archaeological remains in this landscape type reflects that of the wider chalk downs, and imparts a similar historic character to the landscape. There is just one area of this landscape type in the AONB, the Martin-Whitsbury Downland Hills (4A).

Key Characteristics

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



Pentridge

Visual Character

This is a landscape of contrast with enclosed areas of woodland opening out to provide extensive views across large fields. Both framed views from sunken lanes and open views from hills can be enjoyed. Arable crop production is the dominant land cover with some improved pasture on the slopes approaching the Stour and Avon Tributary Valleys (5C). Woodland crowns the tops of slopes – mixed woodland occurs alongside coniferous blocks softening their edges. Scattered copses and mature hedgerow trees provide a connection between arable fields and the wooded hilltops.

Pentridge Hill, Dunberry Hill, Damerham Knoll and Penbury Knoll are chalk protrusions that add visual interest. The absence of settlement and transport routes contribute to the remoteness and tranquillity of this landscape. However, extensive tracts of large fields and the inconsistency of field boundaries create a sense of over-intensive agricultural land.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating and shelving landform with prominent knolls and hills.
- Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology giving rise to argyllic brown earths.
- Land cover is predominantly arable, with improved pasture on lower ground towards the River Valleys.
- Small irregular fields east of Cranborne indicate early assart enclosure, but elsewhere a pattern of medium to large Parliamentary type fields dominates.
- Deciduous and coniferous woodland silhouette against the skyline, clothing the crests of the slopes.
- Visual contrasts typified along the road from Cranborne to Tidpit where dense woodland opens out into distant views across downland.
- Low density, dispersed settlement of scattered farmsteads. The village of Whitsbury is an exception.
- The absence of major roads contributes to the feeling of remoteness.
- Neolithic and Bronze Age burial monuments, prehistoric and Romano-British enclosures, settlements, field systems and linear boundaries, including Grim's Ditch and Bokerley Dyke, and the Whitsbury Castle hillfort contribute to the plethora of visible historic features of the landscape.
- Breamore Manor House provides visitor interest.

Settlement and Built Character

The area is largely unsettled with the exception of Whitsbury, a linear village located in the north east of this area. Grass verges and beech hedges align the approach to the village with red brick walls marking the entrance to the village.

Red brick and thatch are common material with white render and cob also featuring. Flint and brick walls reflect the occurrence of flint geology in this character area.



Damerham



Landscape Type 5 Chalk River Valleys

Description

The river valleys which drain the chalk downs of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB are a key element of the landscape. In contrast to the often unsettled downland, villages tend to be concentrated in these valleys, sited at the spring line, just above the water meadows and floodplain. In physical terms, these valleys can be divided into two groups.

First there are the river valleys which follow lines of weakness in the underlying chalk, often associated with retreating escarpments to the south. Such valleys tend to flow 'across' the chalk landform, from west to east. The Wylze and Ebble fall into this category.

The second group of river valleys consists of those which drain the dipslope of the chalk, tending to flow 'down' the landform, from north to south. Along the southern dipslope a series of active rivers, the Tarrant and Allen that drain into the Stour and the Crane and Allen that drain into the Avon, have eroded valleys as they drain towards the south east.

Key Characteristics

- Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys.
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation.
- The clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams are a key habitat.
- The floodplains support water meadows, cress beds and damp pastures.
- The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads and railways.
- Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period.
- A series of linear spring line villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.
- The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors.



Langford Lakes

Visual Character

The Wylve Valley has carved a deep valley through the chalk so that it is enclosed by steep chalk slopes. The steepest valley sides support unimproved chalk grassland and hanging woodland while the less steep valley sides, have been exploited for the cultivation of arable crops or improved pasture. The valley floor is a rural landscape where sheep and cattle graze the floodplain within irregular fields bound by intermittent hedgerows. The Langford Lakes, once exploited for gravel extraction, now provide areas of open water. The valley provides a corridor for movement with the Salisbury-Warminster railway line and A36 trunk road running along the gravel terraces either side of the floodplain. Attractive linear or nucleated villages are scattered along these east-west routes, their 'chequerboard' buildings of stone and knapped flint a distinctive feature. Despite the relatively large-scale landform of the valley, this is an intimate landscape with a semi-enclosed character. Its variety in texture, colourful villages and country houses provide visual interest. Although characterised by busy transport corridors, both along and across the valley, the floodplain retains a peaceful quality.

Key Characteristics

- The Wylve Valley has carved a deep valley through the chalk following a line of structural weakness along a geological fault.
- Strongly enclosing chalk valley sides have been eroded by a series of tributaries to form dry tributary valleys.
- The River Wylve meanders across a flat valley floor forming a corridor which maintains a constant width of about 1 kilometre.
- The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland.
- Water meadows and cress beds on the valley floor, surrounded by straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with larger scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.
- A series of spring line villages and manors lie at the foot of the valley slopes on the gravel river terraces where they are protected from flooding.
- Major transport routes use the valley as an east-west corridor between Warminster and Salisbury and the rural landscape is interrupted by large volumes of traffic.
- Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period.
- The shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation while the steeper valley sides have remained wooded or grazed by sheep.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.

Settlement and Built Character

There is a very high density of villages along the valley. Parishes (each focused on a village) cut across the valley, taking in an area of water meadow, valley sides and downland. Villages such as Tytherington, Corton and Boyton are often little more than a kilometre apart, linked by narrow lanes which run along the valley, but which rarely cross it. Several of the villages are of a linear design, others are nucleated, but all are focused on small parish churches or manor houses - the spires of these churches are prominent elements in the landscape.

Cottages, churches and larger houses are typically built of grey or honeycoloured stone, often with slate or thatch roofs. The shortage of building stone is reflected in the popular 'chequerboard' patterns of stone and knapped flint (the church at Little Langford illustrates this building style). Some, more recent, cottages are built of red bricks. Another feature is the high 'cob' walls, often rendered in pale yellow or grey and topped with thatch or tiles, that surround the larger houses. Although there has been some more recent development around existing settlements, many of these villages retain their distinctive character - the product of building styles, materials, size and layout.

There are also a handful of modern residential developments in more open locations, some perilously close to the floodplain. These weaken the settlement pattern of the villages and undermine the structure of the valley with the essential visual and physical gaps between settlements.

Visual Character

The Ebble Chalk River Valley (5B) is a broad valley of shallow slopes and dry tributary valleys. The River Ebble follows a largely straight course along a narrow floodplain, with picturesque hamlets and villages sited regularly along its length. The lush character of the valley floor is emphasised by the presence of willow and poplar along the route of the River Ebble. The visual connectivity to the landscapes of open chalk downland is emphasised by the predominant arable land use contained within fields that are extensive in size, the previous pastoral land use having given way to arable crop production. Pasture is largely defined by improved ley and is intensively grazed. Some areas of rough pasture also survive but are largely limited to small grazing pockets on the flood plain or steepest valley sides.

Key Characteristics

- Narrow course of the fast flowing River Ebble flows in a large scale, undulating, broad river valley.
- Tributary valleys that have deeply eroded the chalk slopes are now dry.
- Valley is dominated by intensive arable production contained within a system of extensive field units, enlarged during the 20th century.
- Smaller areas of unimproved chalk grassland and rough pasture on steeper slopes and floodplain including nine nationally important grassland sites.
- Remnant water meadows and cress beds on the valley floor dating from the postmedieval and modern periods.
- Small remnant woodland blocks and belts occurring on the floodplain with willow and
- poplar following the course of the river.
- Many tumuli, a hill fort at Chiselbury and Ackling Dyke Roman road between Old Sarum and Badbury rings contribute to the visible archaeology.
- Linear hamlets and villages are sited on the valley bottom spaced at close intervals along both sides of the river.
- Brick, flint, thatch and slate are common building materials and typify settlement character.

Settlement and Built Character

Settlement within the Ebble River Valley predominantly comprises linear villages and hamlets such as Coombe Bissett, Stratford Tony, Bishopstone, Broadchalke and Ebbesborne Wake which occur regularly along the course of the river. Some of the settlements extend up and onto the shallow downland slopes. Elsewhere, within this landscape settlement is notably absent. Evidence of rural diversification is present where converted farm buildings are being let for business.

Brick and flint are common building materials within the settlements. Broadchalke and Bowerchalke for example contain stone and flint chequer boarding, red brick, and black weatherboarding whilst thatch and slate are characteristic roofing materials. New development is occurring within the villages. Settlement edges are often defined by concrete roadside kerbs – changing the rural character.

River Ebble



Visual Character

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

Key Characteristics

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

Settlement and Built Character

Settlement is a characteristic feature of these dip slope valleys, often comprising linear villages such as Rockborne or Martin. Often the stream runs through the village with cottages reached via small bridges. A variation on this pattern is found at Wimborne St Giles and elsewhere, where the village spreads along parallel lanes separated by the open water meadows and river. Bridges at either end link the two halves of the village. Some of these villages tend to straggle-off with farms and Victorian Villas extending the influence of the settlement along the valley.

These villages tend to sit easily in the landscape. In part, this reflects the fact that there has been comparatively little recent development and that many of the villages have a rich 'treescape' of mature native trees together with ornamentals associated with some of the large parklands that are found in the valleys. From Rockbourne church, for example, the village blurs into the woodland, plumes of smoke from chimneys signalling the presence of settlement in the valley. And although the overall layout of the village is linear (reflecting the shape of the valley and the influence of water and communications), many cottages and farms tend to be sited behind the main line of



Red brick, flint and thatch are locally distinctive building materials.

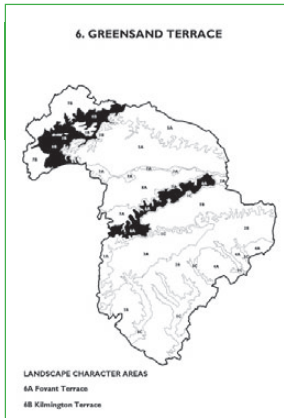
buildings, reached by footpaths or stony tracks off the lane. This ad hoc appearance is part of the character, preventing them falling into a simple, ribbon-like plan.

Many of the individual buildings have a distinctive character, some built right at the edge of the road, others at right angles or set back a few metres. Cottages are timber framed with render or brick infilling and with thatched roofs. Equally important are the larger houses and associated parklands which are found in many of the valleys. Examples include Crichel House, High Hall, Gaunts House, Wimborne St Giles and Cranborne Manor. Parkland estates tend to be highly visible because of the ornamental trees and specific patterns of planting (avenues etc) which are more formal and structured than the surrounding landscape. In many cases, their influence extends beyond the immediate garden and surrounding parkland, into the countryside in the form of avenues, copses and delineating shelterbelts. Perhaps the most impressive of these is the belt of woodland which surrounds Wimborne St Giles.

Each of these valleys has a distinct character and sense of identity. This is best illustrated by the 'families' of villages, linked by the rivers and lanes that occupy the valley floor. Eight villages take their name from the Tarrant River, for example, ranging from Tarrant Gunville in the north, through Tarrant Hinton, Launceston, Monkton, Rawston, Rushton, Keyneston to Tarrant Crawford. Other families include the two Wimbornes, three Gussages and two Crichels.



Stockton (Area 5A)



Landscape Type 6 Greensand Terrace

Description

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

Key Characteristics

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



Field scale is large and patterns are geometric

Visual Character

The Fovant Terrace (6A) is a flat, open landscape providing impressive views to the adjacent Fovant and Chalke Escarpment (1C) which rises above the open terrace and offers a sense of containment. Arable farming is the dominant land use with large fields and the presence of many new farm buildings a key feature.

Mixed woodland nestles at the foot of the adjacent chalk escarpment forming a transitional belt and marking the distinctive change in landform at the edge of the terrace. Coniferous block planting at the junction with the escarpment, by comparison provides a more abrupt contrast. Localised changes in landform are most marked towards the settlement of Charlton, where the land becomes more undulating and tree cover increases – evoking a more enclosed character.

Settlement pattern is dispersed and characterised by scattered farmsteads. The sense of remoteness in this landscape is disrupted by the busy A30 transport corridor that runs along the full length of the terrace.

Key Characteristics

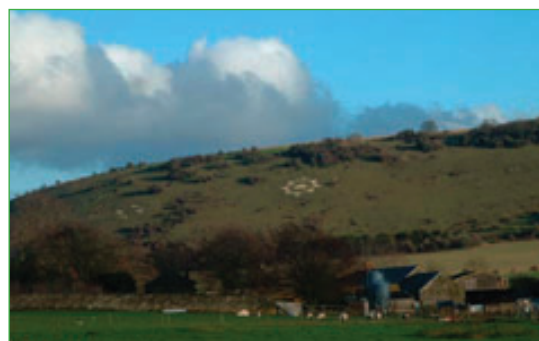
- A flat terrace of arable fields at the foot of the imposing Fovant and Chalke escarpment.
- Large geometric fields and open skies contrast with the smaller scale, enclosed landscape of the Greensand Hills to the north.
- Upper Greensand geology giving rise to rich brown earth soils that have a high agricultural value.
- Land use is predominantly agricultural, including cereal cropping, grass rotations, dairy farming and stock rearing.
- Mixed woodland runs in discontinuous belts along the base of the chalk escarpment.
- Coniferous shelter belts run at right angles to the escarpment cutting across the contours.
- Settlement is sparse - dispersed farm buildings are dotted along the route of the A30, a busy transport corridor.
- Uninterrupted views of the adjacent chalk escarpment from the terrace. Views to the Fovant Badges provide visitor interest and link this landscape to the Chalk escarpment.

Settlement and Built Character

Settlement is sparse in comparison with the adjacent Greensand Hills – mainly comprising farms that are dispersed along the main A30. These typically comprise of stone farmhouses with recent additions of modern farm buildings.

At Berwick St John, a nucleated settlement, stone and thatch are the key building materials. Stone walls, laurel and beech hedges are notable along the roadsides marking the approach to the village. In some places villages traditionally associated with the adjacent Greensand Hills have extended south onto the terrace – Swallowcliffe, Fovant and Compton Chamberlayne for example.

*Farm buildings are scattered along the terrace.
The Fovant Badges adorn the adjacent scarp.*



Visual Character

The Kilmington Greensand Terrace is an open, largely treeless landscape dominated by arable crop production. The character of this landscape is well defined by its relationship with the adjacent West Wiltshire Downs Chalk Escarpment (1B) forming a prominent backdrop. This is a simple landscape, appearing uncluttered and offering few distinguishing features – the large scale regular field units reinforcing the sense of openness. Settlement is a key feature – the attractive nucleated settlements of the Deverills villages for example found towards the east of the area clustered along the upper Wylie valley.

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating and shelving terrace of Upper Greensand in the north-west of the AONB.
- The chalk escarpment to the south-east provides a dramatic backdrop to the terrace.
- Brown earths have a high agricultural value and support arable crop production.
- Medium to large scale field units reflect intensive farming of arable crops. Some smaller fields characterise remaining areas of (largely improved) pasture.
- Absence of tree cover contributing to the sense of openness.
- Presence of Bronze Age round barrows close to the River Wylie reflect the survival of remnant areas of pasture.
- Medieval settlements including the deserted medieval village at Yarnfield.
- Upper reaches of the River Wylie cross the Greensand terrace, following the line of two geological faults.
- Settlement is focussed around the River Wylie (The Deverills and Sutton Veny).
- Well served by transport routes with the main A350 and a number of secondary roads criss-crossing the terrace.

Settlement and Built Character

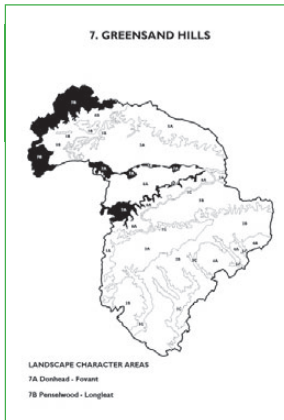
Compared with the Fovant Greensand Terrace (6A) this landscape contains a significant amount of settlement. Kingston Deverill, Monkton Deverill, Brixton Deverill, Hill Deverill and Longbridge Deverill are a series of villages strung along the River Wylie – collectively known as ‘The Deverills’.

Kingston Deverill - the most southerly of the villages has a scattered linear form, consisting of cottages and farms that align the rural lanes. Heading northwest, the next village is Monkton Deverill - a compact village of nucleated form - its central church now standing redundant. North from Monkton Deverill is Brixton Deverill, a nucleated village with a number of attractive thatch and stone cottages surrounding the church - St Michael's - that dates back to the 13th Century. Hill Deverill is found further north along the B3095 and contains only a few houses. These dwellings form a dispersed ribbon of development along the B3095, which gives the impression that Hill Deverill is now attached to the next village - Longbridge Deverill which extends along the B3095 from the other direction. A significant industrial estate occupies a prominent position on the terrace between Longbridge Deverill and Sutton Veny.

Other settlements within this character area are Kilmington – a linear and dispersed settlement lying to the far west of the character area and Maiden Bradley - a settlement of nucleated form abutting the Penselwood - Longleat Hills (7B) character area. Chert, greensand and red brick are the most common building materials within this character area, with clay tiles and thatch characterising the roofs.



The flat landform of the terrace contrasts strongly with the adjacent chalk escarpment.



Landscape Type 7 Greensand Hills

Description

The transition from the clay lowlands to the elevated chalk beyond is marked by a series of greensand hills. These run along the north and south sides of the Vale of Wardour (8A) and along the north-western boundary of the AONB between Penselwood and Warminster. Although composed of Upper Greensand, tributaries of the major rivers have eroded the Greensand to expose underlying older deposits. These hills are characterised by tight valleys, sunken lanes and are typically covered in woodland. The patterns of settlement are also distinctive. Villages are hidden among these hills, focused on the spring line at the junction of the Chalk and Greensand, tucked into the valleys. The hills have historically provided desirable locations for siting large houses and parklands as well as providing strategic sites for fortified settlements and buildings where they have commanding views over the adjacent lowlands. Views vary between enclosed and framed to open and panoramic.

Key Characteristics

- Upper Greensand is exposed as a band between the older clays and younger chalk.
- The Greensand typically forms upstanding hills that have been eroded by tributaries of the major rivers into a series of rounded knolls and deep valleys.
- Hills support a large proportion of woodland, both deciduous and coniferous.
- Country houses and estates, set within landscaped parkland contribute to the scenic beauty of the area.
- Distinctive patterns of settlement include villages hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys.
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hill tops.
- Ancient sunken lanes wind their way through the hills.
- Small and irregular fields characterise areas of agricultural land use.
- Meadows and wet woodland are typical of the valley floors.



The wooded ridges of the Greensand Hills stand out above the Vale of Wardour

Visual Character

The Donhead-Fovant Hills is a landscape with a distinctive undulating landform. Its tight valleys, sunken lanes and high proportion of woodland cover all contribute to an enclosed landscape of intimate spaces. Stone villages contain picturesque cottages that lie nestled within the tight valleys, sheltered by landform and woodland. The strong silhouette of the Fovant and Chalke Escarpment (1C) forms a skyline beyond the hills to the south. This is a landscape of contrasts, between the shaded sunken lanes and the open and exposed hill tops - providing a range of viewing experiences from strongly framed views down the enclosed sunken lanes to the panoramic views over the Vale of Wardour (8A).

Key Characteristics

- The Donhead-Fovant Hills occur as exposures of Upper Greensand around the anticline of the Vale of Wardour (8A).
- The Upper Greensand has been eroded into a series of rounded knolls by tributaries of the River Nadder, many of which have carved deep valleys (or coombs) into the Greensand.
- Steep slopes are clothed in woodland, both deciduous and coniferous.
- Irregular and indented outlines around many of the areas of woodland indicate early assart incursions and enclosure of fields.
- Villages are hidden in the shelter of the deep valleys, or coombs, which cut through the Upper Greensand.
- Fortifications are strategically located on the hill tops overlooking the Vale of Wardour.
- Ancient sunken lanes, enclosed by high banks and shaded by trees, produce strongly framed views.
- Historic estates and parkland are typical, including Fonthill Abbey and Phillips House.
- Woodlands and meadows are important nature conservation habitats.
- A peaceful landscape with great variety at the small scale, but with an overall unified character.

Settlement and Built Character

The Donhead-Fovant Hills are surprisingly well settled. Along the south side of the Vale of Wardour (8A) a series of villages are hidden in the deep valleys, or coombs, which cut through the Upper Greensand. Ansty, Swallowcliffe and Fovant, for example, are almost triangular villages set at the heads of the valleys which separate the rounded greensand hills. Although roads between the Fovant Greensand Terrace (6A) and Vale of Wardour (8A) pass through these valleys and the villages within them, the villages are generally well concealed when viewed from the surrounding landscape. The location of villages would have provided water together with access to the downs (reflected in their names e.g. Fovant Down and Swallowcliffe Down) and the pastures of the Vale of Wardour to the north. The hills also provided defensible sites as indicated by Castle Ditches Fort and Wardour Castle.

Around Donhead St Mary and Donhead St Andrew the valleys carved by the headwaters of the Nadder are laced with narrow lanes. Cottages and farms are scattered along these lanes, furthering the impression of an intimate, settled landscape.

A similar, though less obvious, pattern of settlement is found along the north side of the Vale of Wardour (8A). Villages such as Teffont Magna, Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop are sited at the heads of shallower valleys which drain through the greensand to the valley below. Although these villages are hardly visible within the wider landscape they do have a particular character, reflecting their unusual valley-head location and the use of local building materials (such as the local Chilmark stone) and styles. Clay tiles and thatch are the dominant roof materials.



Stone villages are sheltered within the steep-sided valleys.

Visual Character

The Penselwood-Longleat Hills is a landscape with a steeply undulating landform - it is a landscape of secretive valleys and exposed hills where the sunken lanes high proportion of woodland cover contribute to an enclosed character. Picturesque villages lie sheltered by landform where mature oaks and stone walls provide a sense of history and permanence. Views vary between enclosed and framed to the open and panoramic. Extensive woodland, forestry operations and designed parkland provide a unifying feature across the area and form a strong contrast to the open character of adjacent farmed landscapes. This area remains peaceful and rural despite the large number of visitors that are accommodated within its bounds.

Key Characteristics

- A series of eroded Upper Greensand hills creating a sinuous escarpment containing some deep valleys.
- Fluvial erosion of the Frome and Stour tributaries has exposed older rocks.
- The hills are clothed in deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations.
- Neatly laid hedges, tree clumps, avenues and grazing animals associated with private estates contribute to the scenic beauty of the area.
- Fields are predominantly small and of an irregular form - indicative of early enclosure.
- Extensive landscaped parks surrounding large country houses at Longleat and Stourhead.
- A wide range of habitat types including wet woodland, unimproved chalk grassland and ancient woodland, with five designated nationally important wildlife sites.
- Pockets of dense development occur in the shelter of the deep valleys that cut through the Upper Greensand.
- Earthworks and ruins of hill forts and castles are strategically located, on the hill tops.
- Landscape parks and historic estates provide important recreation attractions including Centre Parcs Holiday Village, Longleat Estate and National Trust properties.
- A peaceful landscape with great variety at the small scale, but with an overall unified character.

Settlement and Built Character

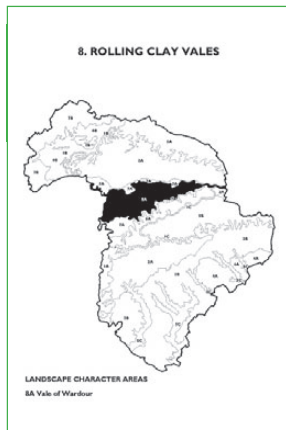
Significant parts of the Penselwood-Longleat Hills remain unsettled, reflecting both the gradient and the dominance of forestry. However, pockets of dense development occur along the minor lanes that access the hills, for example around Penselwood/Zeals and Crockerton, and around Stourhead and Longleat.

The historic houses, their immediate gardens and parkland surrounds, together with estate woodland and farmland make a very positive contribution to the character and quality of the landscape. Their influence extends well beyond the strict confines of the estates. There are also a handful of hamlets, such as Gasper and Gare Hill, often comprising little more than a row of houses and a telephone box. Typical building materials are red brick and limestone with clay tile roofs.



Many of the hills are densely wooded,

Landscape Type 8 Rolling Clay Vales

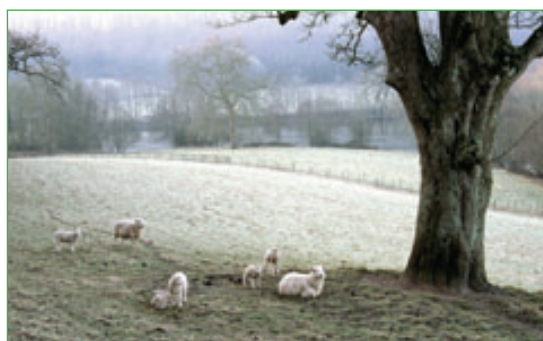


Description

Millions of years ago complex geomorphological processes created a series of east-west faults where the Chalk beds were vertically sheared from one another. These east-west anti-clinal axes allowed further erosion to cut through the Chalk and into the older Jurassic rocks that underlie it (Upper Greensand, Portland Stone and Kimmeridge Clay). The result of this process gave rise to wide open vales exhibiting a number of different geological exposures. These vales provide a contrast to the adjacent upland chalk downland and are characterised by a pastoral valley of small scale fields divided by lush hedgerows and scattered with woods and copses - both mixed and deciduous. The layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of medieval settlement, clearance and farming, and the post-medieval process of agricultural improvement and estate development. Within the AONB there is only one Rolling Clay Vale, known as the Vale of Wardour.

Key Characteristics

- Vale occupying a geological anti-clinal between the chalk.
- Varied underlying geology with many different geological exposures.
- Pastoral landscape of small scale fields divided by lush hedgerows and scattered with woods and copses.
- Layout of fields, farms and villages illustrate the pattern of medieval settlement, clearance and farming.
- Rivers and their tributaries meander through the vale.
- A sense of enclosure is provided by the surrounding upland landscapes.
- A mixed agricultural landscape of lush improved pastures and arable production with water meadows on the valley floor.
- Wooded character with broad leaf and mixed woodland (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale.
- Villages dispersed over the floor of the vale.



Fonthill Estate

Visual Character

The Vale of Wardour is a rolling clay valley defined by mix of pastures and arable crops – distinctly different from the chalk landscapes which dominate elsewhere in the AONB. Contained between the greensand hills to the north and south, it is a settled landscape of farms, hamlets and villages that sit within the folds of the valley bottom. The River Nadder and its tributary, the Sem, flow west to east seemingly contradicting the shape of the vale which appears to mature (and widen) in the opposite direction. The changing landform from deep valley to wide open vale provides a variety of viewing experiences but the repetition of key features across the landscape provides a unified character.

Key Characteristics

- Varied landform character - a deep and narrow valley to the east widening to form a wide and open vale in the west.
- The River Nadder and its tributary The Sem wind their way across the floodplain.
- A varied underlying geology with Clay, Gault, Portland and Purbeck Stone predominating.
- Soils varying from loamy to calcareous reflecting changes in underlying geology.
- A mixed agricultural landscape comprising improved pastures and arable cropping.
- Strong wooded character with broad leaf and mixed woodland (some of ancient origin) scattered across the vale.
- A sense of enclosure provided by the surrounding landscape of the Fovant Greensand Hills (7A).
- A settled landscape containing Tisbury – the only town within the AONB.
- Nationally important geological (fossil beds) and biological (bat roosting) SSSIs.
- Visible historic components displaying evidence for past settlement and agriculture.

Settlement and Built Character

This is quite a settled area, including Tisbury, the only town within the AONB, and a number of hamlets and villages such as Semley, Newtown and Upper and Lower Chicks Grove. Settlements are largely of a nucleated form. A dense network of lanes links the many farms which are found within the valley.

Settlements are generally located on the sheltered valleys sides of the tributary rivers close to the water, for example Teffont and Fovant, with many centred around a pond or village green such as Semley. Traditional stone cottages are common, with clay roof tiles characterising the varied pitches and rooflines. Stone walls mark the approach and form attractive entrances to many settlements.

The largest settlement – Tisbury - is a mix of old and new development displaying a range of materials but with red brick and stone predominating. Some modern small scale housing estate developments on the edge of the town are less sympathetic to the traditional built form and character.



Teffont Evias



Your Notes.

Designed by East Dorset District Council
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