



POSITION STATEMENT

Number 4

Historic Landscape Characterisation

Background

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are nationally designated areas of especially fine landscape. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has been established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area. Natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage, and it is also recognised that in relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are equally important aspects of the nation's heritage and environmental capital.

The European Landscape Convention, which came into force in the UK on the 1st March 2007, defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. Historic and archaeological aspects of the landscape are clearly, therefore, very significant elements which need to be considered in any holistic view of landscape.

Historic Landscapes and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

The historic and archaeological aspects of landscape are key components of this AONB's natural beauty. This is recognised and supported by the AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 which has as Objective G: “The historic, archaeological and cultural elements of the landscape of the AONB are conserved and enhanced”.

Policy G1 adds to this and seeks to “Promote and develop the Historic Landscape Characterisation study as a tool for managing the historic and cultural environment of the AONB, providing a framework for policy making, planning decisions and research agendas”.

The AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation

The AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation is an evidence base of the historic character of the present day landscape which can be used to make better informed management, planning, and policy decisions.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is comprised of a dataset, and accompanying report, which maps and defines the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. **The main features of the HLC are outlined in Fact Sheet No.4.**

The HLC can be used to provide an enhanced understanding of the landscape context of individual sites. This can be used to gauge whether any management

activities or developments are in keeping with the historic character of an area, location or neighbourhood. It can also be used to inform the contents of other documents such as Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guides, Management Plans and Development Plans. The Historic Landscape Characterisation is an authoritative aid for development control decisions.

Uses of the Historic Landscape Characterisation

The AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation provides a context for existing site based data such as local, regional and national records and registers of designated ancient monuments, parks and gardens, conservation areas and buildings, as well as the county based Historic Environment Records. HLC demonstrates the importance of the whole historic landscape and not just the individual 'special' sites and locations within it.

It is within this framework that the AONB is concerned about:

1. Conservation, enhancement and management of the archaeological/historic aspects of the whole landscape
2. The effects of development on the historic character of the whole landscape including the special, the unique, the commonplace and the locally distinctive.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset and report provide an important new evidence base which focuses on a different dimension of the landscape of the AONB. It can be used separately, but is most effective when used in combination with other landscape scale studies such as the AONB Landscape Character Assessment.

The Partnership for this AONB recommends, and encourages, all its Partners to:

- a) Work with the AONB Team, English Heritage and others to establish consistent policies for the historic landscape across the whole of the AONB.
- b) Encourage and promote the use of the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation as an evidence base to inform planning and policy decisions, as well as management activities.
- c) Promote understanding and appreciation of the information available within the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset.
- d) Develop the use of Historic Landscape Characterisation alongside other evidence bases such as Landscape Character Assessment.
- e) Recognise the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation Dataset and report as an evidence base within the Local Development Framework.
- f) Adopt policies to recognise, conserve, and enhance the historic landscape of this AONB such as:

“The identification, conservation, and enhancement of the whole of the historic landscape will be sought and facilitated using datasets such as Historic Landscape Characterisation, where available, as a key evidence base to inform decisions”

In connection with development proposals the Partnership **recommends** the following policy to its Local Planning Authorities, and encourages them to adopt it:

When preparing Local Development Documents and when determining applications for consent to undertake development the Local Planning Authority will take into account the likely impacts of development upon the local and landscape scale historic character, distinctiveness, and key characteristics of the locality where development is proposed. In doing so the CC&WWD AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation will be used as a core reference document to inform and guide the scoping and definition of the context, character and local distinctiveness of development setting. Any development proposals should then, after reference to the Historic Landscape Characterisation, include full and detailed proposals of appropriate protection, conservation measures, landscape management, design and construction techniques and materials to be used in order that the development achieves harmony with, and enhancement of, the local context in which it is set.

At its meeting on the 22nd October 2009 the AONB Partnership Panel endorsed the Position Statement and said:

The Partnership Panel recommends, and encourages, all its Partners, Local Planning Authorities, and relevant organisations to work together with the AONB Team to recognise, conserve, and enhance the historic aspects of the AONB landscape using the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation as a key evidence base as set out in Position Statement Number 4.