

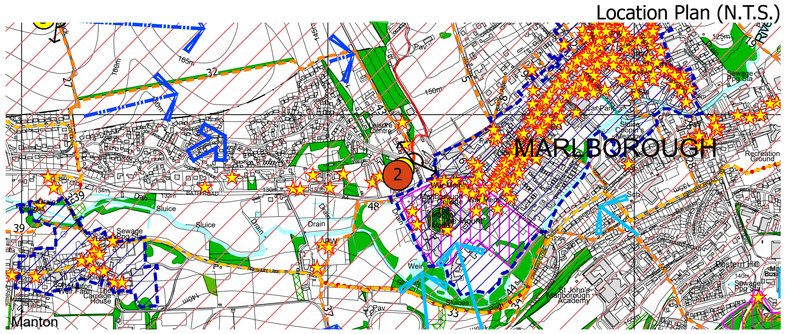
This panorama is not to scale. For contextual information only

Site Context Photograph 2: View [North-East], from College Fields

90° Horizontal field of view extract



Location Plan (N.T.S.)



Easting / Longitude:	418279 / 51.418323°	Date Taken:	17/05/2023
Northing / Latitude:	168843 / -1.73853°	Camera:	Canon 6D (Full Frame Sensor)
Elevation:	139.8 (AOD)	Lens:	50mm fixed lens
Distance to the Site:	3.5m		
Visualisation Type:	Type 1 Annotated Viewpoint Photograph	Drawn By:	DW
Enlargement Factor:	100%	Checked By:	IK
Projection:	Cylindrical	Approved By:	DD

Project Number: 35174
Project Name: Marlborough College

Site Context Photographs

View at a comfortable arm's length @A1

Stantec



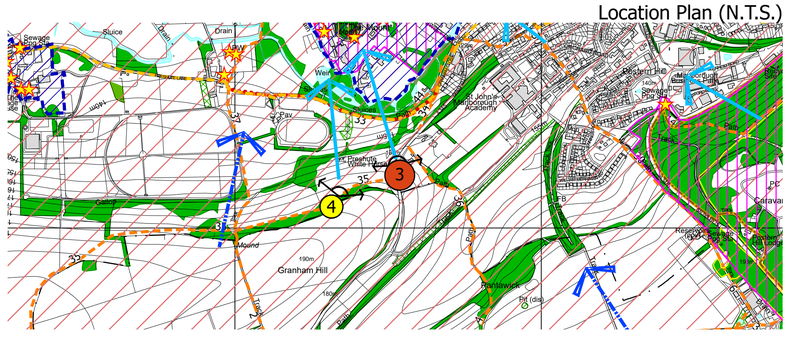
This panorama is not to scale. For contextual information only

Site Context Photograph 3: View [North-West], from Grantham Hill (A345)

90° Horizontal field of view extract



Location Plan (N.T.S.)



Easting / Longitude:	418531 / 51.412565°	Date Taken:	17/05/2023
Northing / Latitude:	168204 / -1.734938°	Camera:	Canon 6D (Full Frame Sensor)
Elevation:	172 (AOD)	Lens:	50mm fixed lens
Distance to the Site:	620m		
Visualisation Type:	Type 1 Annotated Viewpoint Photograph	Drawn By:	DW
Enlargement Factor:	100%	Checked By:	IK
Projection:	Cylindrical	Approved By:	DD

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Project Name: Marlborough College

Site Context Photographs

View at a comfortable arm's length @A1

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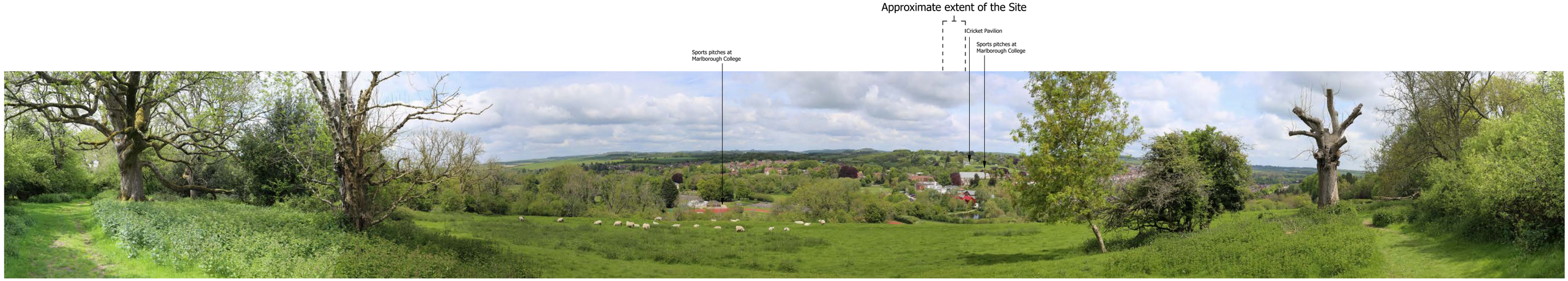


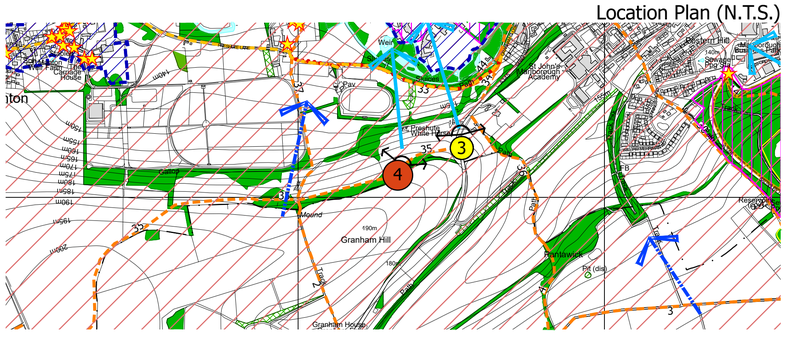
This panorama is not to scale. For contextual information only

Site Context Photograph 4: View [North], from the Wansdyke Path (PRoW MARL35)

90° Horizontal field of view extract



Location Plan (N.T.S.)



Easting / Longitude:	418338 / 51.411667°	Date Taken:	17/05/2023
Northing / Latitude:	168103 / -1.737724°	Camera:	Canon 6D (Full Frame Sensor)
Elevation:	184.3 (AOD)	Lens:	50mm fixed lens
Distance to the Site:	698.7m		
Visualisation Type:	Type 1 Annotated Viewpoint Photograph	Drawn By:	DW
Enlargement Factor:	100%	Checked By:	IK
Projection:	Cylindrical	Approved By:	DD

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Project Name: Marlborough College

Site Context Photographs

View at a comfortable arm's length @A1

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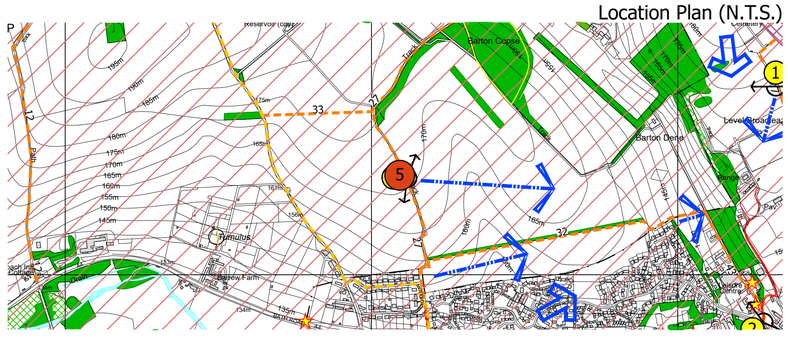
Site Context Photograph 5: View [South-East], from the White Horse Way(PRoW PRES27)

90° Horizontal field of view extract



Location Plan (N.T.S.)



Easting / Longitude:	417117 / 51.4226°	Date Taken:	17/05/2023
Northing / Latitude:	169315 / -1.755228°	Camera:	Canon 6D (Full Frame Sensor)
Elevation:	167.7 (AOD)	Lens:	50mm fixed lens
Distance to the Site:	1090m		
Visualisation Type:	Type 1 Annotated Viewpoint Photograph	Drawn By:	DW
Enlargement Factor:	100%	Checked By:	IK
Projection:	Cylindrical	Approved By:	DD

Project Number: 35174
Project Name: Marlborough College

Site Context Photographs

View at a comfortable arm's length @A1

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Appendix A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

Appendix A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

A.1 Introduction

The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment" Third Edition (GLVIA 3), 2013, notes in Chapter 1 that landscape and visual impact assessment relates to:

> ***"...the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity"***

The methodology employed in carrying out the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the Proposed Development has been drawn from guidelines set out in GLVIA 3 and Natural England landscape character guidance. The guidelines are not intended as a prescriptive set of rules, and the approach has been adapted to the specific project.

LVIAs are undertaken by professionals who are also typically involved in the design of the landscape and the preparation of subsequent management proposals. This can allow the assessment to proceed as an integral part of the overall scheme design. Judgements are based on training and experience, and supported by clear evidence and reasoned argument.

The purpose of LVIAs is to identify the potential for, and assess the likely effects of change resulting from development. Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. A distinction is made between:

- landscape - landscape character and the elements and features that contribute to it (landscape receptors); and
- visual - people who experience views within the landscape (visual receptors).

An LVIA is typically accompanied by illustrative material, including baseline mapping and photographs of the Site itself and from the wider context.

There are typically four key stages to LVIA, as follows:

- Baseline Studies;
- Design;
- Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects; and
- Cumulative Assessment (should this be required).

A.2 Baseline Studies

The purpose of baseline studies is to record the existing landscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced and potential visual receptors. The following are typically undertaken as part of the baseline studies:

Identification of the extents of the study area. This is based on professional judgement and may vary depending on the type of development proposed and the landscape context.

A desktop study of patterns and scale of landform, land use and built development, relevant current planning policy (including landscape designations) and landscape character publications. Further localised character assessments may also be undertaken to supplement published assessments.

Where such additional assessments are undertaken, these are based on principles set out in published guidance, including the Natural England 2014 publication: An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Factors typically considered may include the following, as relevant:

- Landform and hydrology;
- Land use and settlement;
- Pattern/texture/line;
- Scale;
- Historical development/time depth;
- Activity/cultural association;
- Spatial structure and built form;
- Infrastructure;
- Movement and connectivity;
- Green Infrastructure;
- Enclosure/views; and
- Tranquillity.
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) modelling to assist in identifying potential viewpoints, should this be deemed necessary, dependent on professional judgement of the visual envelope of the Site/Proposed Development.
- Identification of potential representative viewpoints within the study area.
- Site/context Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) visit.

Where relevant, the future baseline of the Site and its context is also considered, in order to account for ongoing change in the landscape, for example developments that are under construction and which will have altered the landscape context to the Site by the time the Proposed Development would be likely to be initiated.

A.3 Design and Mitigation

LVIAs are undertaken by professionals who are also likely to be involved in the design of the landscape, site design, and the preparation of subsequent management proposals. The design and assessment stages are iterative, with stages overlapping in part.

Mitigation measures are embedded within the design of the Proposed Development (for an outline application this comprises the development parameters) as a result of the desk-based study and LVA field work. These measures, such as the building layout, massing and height; and arrangement of open spaces and new structural planting, are termed 'Primary Mitigation'. Effective Primary Mitigation strategies avoid or reduce adverse effects by ensuring the key principles of the design of the development, as noted above, are sympathetic with the existing baseline.

Where the design process does not enable mitigation to be embedded within the Proposed Development, additional recommended measures to reduce adverse effects are termed 'Secondary Mitigation.' These may be illustrated in material accompanying the proposal, including the Design and Access Statement.

Typical Secondary Mitigation strategies can include:

- Additional design detail including building materials or landscape design approaches, including indicative species;
- A Landscape and Biodiversity Management Strategy to secure ongoing enhancement of landscape features;
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan to minimise effects arising during the construction process, typically including tree protection in line with BS5837:2012; and
- A programme of appropriate monitoring, agreed with the regulatory authority, so that compliance and effectiveness can be readily monitored and evaluated.

These secondary measures contribute to the assessment of residual effects.

The contribution made by areas of planting introduced as part of the Proposed Development is also considered in terms of the effects at year 1 and the residual effects (allowing for growth of planting over time), and the height of this planting for assessment purposes is assumed to be as follows (based on an average growth rate of 1m in 3 years – the rate of growth varies according to species):

- Planting at Year 1: typically 0.7-4.5 metres; and
- Planting at Year 15: typically 5.5-9.5 metres.

In addition, measures may be taken to offset or compensate for adverse effects, if these are not already built into the design proposals. Typical compensation measures are the replacement of felled trees with new trees or off-site provision of public amenity or access where this may be lost within the Site.

A.4 Enhancement

Whilst not specifically related to mitigation, enhancement may be achieved through the Proposed Development (e.g. the creation of a new landscape or public amenity/access; enhancement in character or view; or improved management of existing landscape features secured through the Proposed Development). The beneficial changes resulting from these measures are incorporated into assessment of landscape and visual effects.

A.5 Assessment of Landscape Effects

GLVIA 3 Paragraph 5.1 states that:

> ***"An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource."***

The significance of landscape effects is derived from a combination of assessments of the **sensitivity** of the landscape receptor and the **magnitude** of effect (change) experienced as a result of the Proposed Development.

A.6 Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is a combination of the **value** of the landscape receptor and the **susceptibility** (in other words 'vulnerability') of the landscape receptor to the type of change proposed, using professional judgement.

A.6.1 LANDSCAPE VALUE

The assessment of value is based on a combination of the importance of landscape-related planning designations and the following attributes (reflecting those set out in GLVIA 3, Box 5.1):

- Landscape quality (condition): the measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical landscape character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements;
- Scenic quality: the extent that the landscape receptor appeals to the visual senses;
- Perceptual aspects: the extent that the landscape receptor is recognised for its perceptual qualities (e.g. remoteness or tranquillity);
- Rarity: the presence of unusual elements or features;

- Representativeness: the presence of particularly characteristic features;
- Recreation: the extent that recreational activities contribute to the landscape receptor; and
- Association: the extent that cultural or historical associations contribute to the landscape receptor.

Landscapes, including their character and features, may be designated for their landscape and visual qualities at a range of levels (national, county and local level).

The overall value for each landscape receptor is categorised as either High, Medium, Low or Very Low.

Table 1.1: Landscape Value

Level	Criteria
High	Landscape area of distinctive components and characteristics which may also be nationally designated for scenic beauty. A landscape feature which makes a strong positive contribution to landscape character e.g. a mature tree or woodland.
Medium	Landscape area of common components and characteristics which may be designated at county or borough level for its landscape and visual qualities. A landscape feature which makes some positive contribution to landscape character.
Low	Landscape area/feature of inconsequential components and characteristics, undesignated and with little or no wider recognition of value, although potentially of importance to the local community.
Very Low	Landscape area or feature that is undesignated and providing no positive contribution to the landscape.

A.6.2 LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY

The susceptibility of the landscape is a measure of its vulnerability to the type of development proposed, without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation. Landscape character/features of low susceptibility would have a high capacity to accommodate change, and landscape character/features of high susceptibility would have a low capacity to accommodate change. The following criteria are taken into consideration in the assessment of the susceptibility of landscape character, although not all criteria are equally applicable or important within a given landscape / type of development proposed:

- Landform;
- Pattern/Complexity;
- Composition;
- Landcover;

- Relationship of a given landscape area to existing settlements or developments; and
- Potential for appropriate mitigation within the context of existing character and guidelines.

With regard to landscape features, susceptibility relates to the potential for loss/retention of the relevant features in relation to the type of development proposed (for example trees within a Site are potentially highly susceptible to construction of an industrial shed, where they might not be to construction of residential units, as the latter provides more scope to mitigate by design); and the facility with which such elements may be replaced, where appropriate.

Susceptibility of landscape character/ features is categorised as High, Medium or Low, as set out in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Landscape Susceptibility

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	The receptor is likely to have little scope to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue consequences upon its overall integrity.
Medium	The receptor is likely to have some scope to accommodate the type of development proposed without undue consequences upon its overall integrity.
Low	The receptor is likely to be able to accommodate the type of development proposed with little or no consequences upon its overall integrity.

Based on the combination of value and susceptibility, an assessment of landscape sensitivity is reached, defined as High, Medium or Low. Typically a high value and high susceptibility would result in a high sensitivity; and a low value and low susceptibility would result in low sensitivity.

A.6.3 LANDSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT (CHANGE)

The landscape magnitude of effect (change) is informed by judgements about the precise nature of the change brought about by the Proposed Development both in terms of the existing landscape character and landscape elements / features and the addition of new landscape elements / features, and its duration and reversibility, as set out in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Landscape Magnitude of Effect (Change)

Magnitude	Criteria
Large	Pronounced change to the existing landscape receptor that may affect an extensive area. The change may be long-term or may be irreversible.
Medium	Partial change to the existing landscape receptor that may affect a relatively extensive area. The change may be medium-term or may be irreversible.
Small	Limited change to the existing landscape receptor that may affect a relatively limited area. The change may be short-term or reversible.

Magnitude	Criteria
Very Small	Very slight change to the existing landscape receptor that may affect a limited area. The alteration may be short-term or reversible.
None	No change to the existing landscape receptor.

A.7 Assessment of Visual Effects

GLVIA 3 Paragraph 6.1 states that:

> ***"An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity."***

The significance of visual effects is derived from a combination of assessments of the **sensitivity** of the visual receptor and the **magnitude** of effect (change) experienced as a result of the Proposed Development.

A.7.1 VIEWPOINT SELECTION

In order to assess the effects on visual receptors, a selection of publicly accessible viewpoints is made. This could include representative viewpoints (e.g. representing views of users of a particular footpath) and specific viewpoints (e.g. a key view from a specific visitor attraction).

Views may be categorised as either near distance, medium distance or long distance with the relevant distances dependant on the size and nature of the development, based on professional judgement.

The type of view is typically described as transient (i.e. experienced when moving) or fixed (i.e. from a static location). It is also described in terms of the degree of screening or openness (e.g. open or uninterrupted; partial (including where partially screened or filtered) by vegetation or other structures; or curtailed by intervening land form, built form or vegetation) and the angle of view (e.g. frontal or oblique).

Photographs of representative viewpoints are taken at eye level, using a digital SLR camera, and presented in accordance with the Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 'Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment'.

A.7.2 SENSITIVITY OF VISUAL RECEPTORS

The sensitivity of a visual receptor is a consideration of the **value** of the view and the **susceptibility** of the visual receptor, the latter being primarily based on consideration of the extent to which a visual receptor is focused on appreciation of the landscape. Professional judgement is used to determine these factors, based on considerations set out in Table 1.4 and Table 1.5.

Table 1.4: Value of Views

Value	Criteria
High	View of/from a location that is likely to be of national importance, either designated or with national cultural associations.
Medium	View of/from a location that is likely to be of local importance, either designated or with local cultural associations.

Value	Criteria
Low	View of/from a location that is not designated, with minimal or no cultural associations.

Table 1.5: Susceptibility of Visual Receptor

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	People at their place of residence; People engaged in outdoor recreation, including users of Public Rights of Way (ProW), whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape; and People travelling along recognised scenic routes or where their appreciation of the view contributes to the amenity experience of their journey.
Medium	People engaged in outdoor sport and recreation, where their appreciation of their surroundings is incidental to their enjoyment; and People travelling on secondary roads or country lanes, rail or other transport routes.
Low	People travelling on major roads. People at their place of work.

The sensitivity of a visual receptor results from the combination of value and susceptibility and is rated as high, medium or low. Typically a high value and high susceptibility would result in a high sensitivity; and a low value and low susceptibility would result in low sensitivity.

A.7.3 VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT (CHANGE)

In the evaluation of the effects on views and the visual amenity of the identified receptors, the magnitude of visual effect (change) is typically described with reference to:

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition. Factors contributing to this include:
    - The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
    - The distance of the viewer from the Proposed Development; and
    - The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.
- Whether or not the view is experienced in fixed or transient views and, in the latter, whether it is intermittent/glimpsed or continuous; and
- The duration of the change, whether temporary or permanent.

The criteria for magnitude of visual effect (change) are set out in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6: Visual Magnitude of Effect (Change)

Magnitude	Criteria
Large	The proposals will cause a pronounced change to the existing view, resulting in the loss or addition of features that will substantially alter the composition of the view. The change may be long-term or may be irreversible.
Medium	The proposals will cause a noticeable change in the view, resulting from the loss or addition of features in the view and will noticeably alter the composition of the view. The change may be medium-term or may be irreversible.
Small	The proposals will cause a limited change in the view, which would not materially alter the composition of the view. The change may be short-term or reversible.
Very Small	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change in the view. The change may be short-term or reversible.
None	No change discernible in the view.

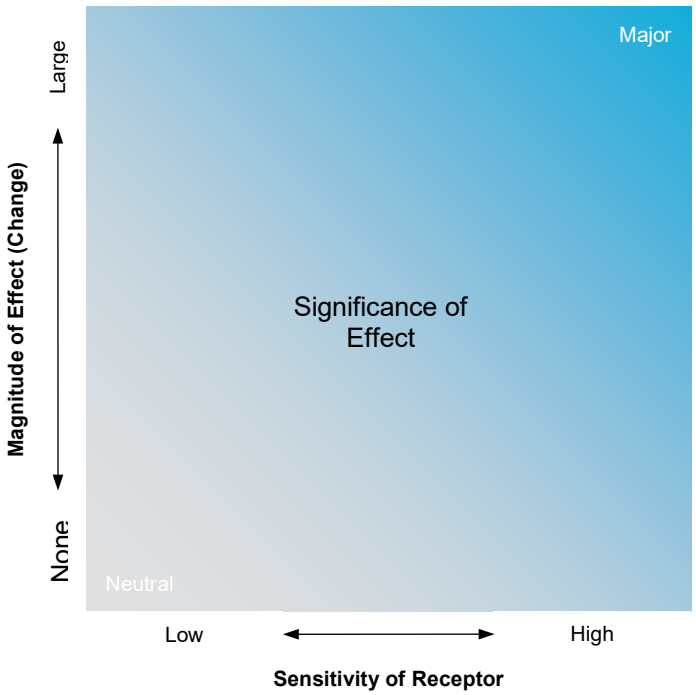
A.8 Significance of Effects

In order to draw conclusions about the significance of landscape or visual effects, the combination of the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of effect (change) are considered for the Proposed Development at Year 1 of operation; and, depending on the assessment, also at a point where planting associated with the Proposed Development will be establishing e.g. Year 15. In certain circumstances, it may also be appropriate to consider effects at construction and on decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

Significance of effects are rated on a scale of Neutral to Major.

Assessment of significance of effects is subject to professional judgement but in broad terms, where a receptor of high sensitivity experiences a large magnitude of effect (change) as a result of the Proposed Development, the significance of effect is likely to be major. Conversely, where a receptor of low sensitivity experiences a very small magnitude of effect (change) as a result of the Proposed Development, the significance of effect is likely to be negligible.

Figure 1.1: Significance of Effects



Where it is considered that there is potential for both beneficial and adverse changes, these magnitudes of effect (change) are noted and the balance of these considerations used to inform conclusions on significance of effect.

The assessment of residual effects refers to the likely effects of the Proposed Development that will remain once Secondary Mitigation measures are applied and also considers the growth of planting introduced within the Proposed Development (including where this is part of Primary or Secondary Mitigation).

For schemes subject to Environmental Impact Assessment, as governed by the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU), an assessment of whether or not the effect is considered 'significant' is required. This is relative to each scheme but, in general, effects of Major or Moderate (adverse/beneficial) significance are deemed 'significant'.

Table 1.7: Significance of Landscape Effects – Criteria

Significance of Landscape Effect	Criteria
Major Beneficial	Alterations that would be substantially characteristic and result in a pronounced improvement of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be restored or reintroduced as part of the Proposed Development.
Moderate Beneficial	Alterations that result in a partial improvement of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be partially restored or reintroduced.
Minor Beneficial	Alterations that result in a limited improvement of the existing landscape resource. Characteristic features would be restored to a limited degree.
Negligible Beneficial	Alterations that result in a very slight improvement to the existing landscape resource, not uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape.
Neutral	Neither beneficial nor adverse effects on the existing landscape resource.
Negligible Adverse	Alterations that result in a very slight deterioration to the existing landscape resource, not uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape.
Minor Adverse	Alterations that result in a limited deterioration of the existing landscape resource. Characteristic features would be lost to a limited degree.
Moderate Adverse	Alterations that result in a partial deterioration of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be partially lost.
Major Adverse	Alterations that would be substantially uncharacteristic and result in a pronounced deterioration of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be wholly lost.

Table 1.8: Significance of Visual Effects – Criteria

Significance of Visual Effect	Criteria
Major Beneficial	Alterations that typically result in a pronounced improvement in the existing view.
Moderate Beneficial	Alterations that typically result in a noticeable improvement in the existing view.
Minor Beneficial	Alterations that typically result in a limited improvement in the existing view.
Negligible Beneficial	Alterations that typically result in a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view.
Neutral	Neither beneficial nor adverse effects on the existing view.
Negligible Adverse	Alterations that typically result in a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view.
Minor Adverse	Alterations that typically result in a limited deterioration in the existing view.

Significance of Visual Effect	Criteria
Moderate Adverse	Alterations that typically result in a noticeable deterioration in the existing view.
Major Adverse	Alterations that typically result in a pronounced deterioration in the existing view.

Appendix B Extracted Published Landscape Character Assessments

National Character Area profile:

116. Berkshire and Marlborough Downs

Supporting documents



NATURAL ENGLAND

www.gov.uk/natural-england

Key characteristics

- Uplifted mass of Chalk dipping south-east into the London Basin and edged by an extensive, complex escarpment. Rolling hills of the dip slope defined by the River Kennet valley and its tributaries, many of which are dry 'combes'.
- Sarsen stones are prominent in prehistoric monuments, in historical buildings and in the countryside.
- Chalk rivers, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland in the major chalk valleys, supported by groundwater. River Lambourn displays exemplary chalk river ecology.
- Woodland and hedgerows concentrated on clay-with-flint soils of the lower dip slope where Savernake Forest is the nucleus of ancient woodland. Isolated beech clumps and shelterbelts stand out on the hills.
- Huge arable fields managed in very large holdings stretch across the chalk soils of the uplands, bounded by post-and-wire fencing and grass baulks. In the valleys and around Savernake, agriculture is more mixed and boundaries are irregular and hedged, often with oak trees. Savernake farmsteads are small scale.
- Gallops and stables of large horse-racing establishments, with a nucleus in the Lambourn Valley.
- Small areas of species-rich chalk grassland scattered on the scarps and steep slopes of dry valleys display colourful and rare plants such as early gentian.
- Mosaic of farmland habitats supports established populations of farmland birds, arable plants, harvest mouse and brown hare.
- High density of monuments, many being prominent landmarks across the arable uplands including stone circles, hill forts, barrows, chalk-cut horse figures and historic routeways. Avebury World Heritage Site is internationally significant.
- Traditional building materials include thatch, red brick, flint and sarsens.
- Settlement is sparse on the high Downs, offering experiences of tranquillity, dark skies and far-reaching views. Villages cluster in valley bottoms and near springs, often associated with historical mills, watercress beds and watermeadows, and farmsteads at low densities.
- Recreation focused on limited areas of open access land, well-known heritage features including Avebury and historic routeways, including the Ridgeway National Trail and Kennet and Avon Canal. Private fishing interests dominate access to chalk streams.
- The Vale of Pewsey is a low-lying corridor of Upper Greensand enclosed by chalk escarpments. Villages are densely scattered across high-grade agricultural land supporting mixed agriculture.

SEO 3: Across the open expanses of the Downs, identify and manage natural and man-made landmarks and associated viewpoints valued by local communities and visitors in order to maintain sense of place and history and also so that they act as focal areas for engaging people in the conservation and sustainable enjoyment of the wider area. As well as high-profile landmarks such as Avebury, consider exposed scarp landforms, downland pasture, beech clumps, ancient monuments, historic buildings and sarsen stones.

For example, by:

- Planning for landscape restoration, creation and enhancement activities with reference to the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- Planning for landscape management and enhancement activities that contribute to the protection and enhancement of the attributes of outstanding universal value of the Avebury World Heritage Site.
- Building on existing stakeholder groups and strategies involved in managing landmarks including, for example, green infrastructure strategies and the Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan[19].
- Working with local communities, visitors and other stakeholders to understand what landmarks (designated and non-designated) are valued by them and where potential user group conflicts might lie. Integrate this understanding with knowledge of formally designated features.
- Building understanding and guidance around the management of landmarks of interest particularly where there is potential for conflicting demands or management recommendations. Good examples might include a busy multi-user access route such as a byway and also a landmark beech clump planted on a barrow monument.
- Demonstrating best practice integrated management and a landscape-scale approach at landmarks, particularly those accessible to the public. Ensure that all landmarks are under appropriate conservation management and delivering ecosystem services. Manage landmarks to maintain sense of place and history but also, where possible, to provide habitat for biodiversity, to provide recreation opportunities, to conserve soils and to filter pollutants.
- Building information about valued landmarks, particularly where information and public understanding is lacking, for example periglacial landforms. Develop interpretation and education materials and activities to engage landowners and the public in increasing their understanding and enjoyment of these landmarks.
- Raising awareness of valued landmarks and views of these landmarks, particularly among stakeholders who influence their future use and management, including landowners and managers, relevant planning authorities, developers and the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- Tailoring management to conserve the distinctiveness of landmarks. This may require innovative management practices and bespoke projects.

Continued on next page...

[19] http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/artsheritageandlibraries/museumhistoryheritage/worldheritagesite/aveburyworldheritagesitemanagementplan.htm.

SEO 3: Across the open expanses of the Downs, identify and manage natural and man-made landmarks and associated viewpoints valued by local communities and visitors in order to maintain sense of place and history and also so that they act as focal areas for engaging people in the conservation and sustainable enjoyment of the wider area. As well as high-profile landmarks such as Avebury, consider exposed scarp landforms, downland pasture, beech clumps, ancient monuments, historic buildings and sarsen stones.

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- Supporting local stakeholder networks and building capacity as appropriate and particularly for landmarks only valued at a local level. For all landmarks, draw on local involvement to support conservation, including volunteer practical work parties and fundraising events.
- Securing positive management of Scheduled Monuments that are landmarks, endeavouring to ensure that none are listed on the Heritage at Risk Register. Work with landowners and managers to establish a management regime of Scheduled Monuments that is sustainable over the long term.
- Working on a landscape scale with neighbouring landowners to tackle burrowing animals causing damage to landmarks.
- Managing historic monuments under grass to deliver benefits for biodiversity and to conserve soils. In cultivated contexts, encourage minimum tillage and explore potential for arable reversion in order to conserve historic features above and below ground as well as conserve soils.
- Maximising the contribution that landmarks make to the mosaic of habitat across the farmed landscape, supporting farmland birds and species such as brown hare.
- Managing landmarks to conserve and increase areas of priority habitats as well as deliver other ecosystem services. This includes the conservation, enhancement and expansion of species-rich chalk grassland which can also be managed to provide habitat for wildlife species; to provide recreation and education opportunities; to conserve soils; to regulate water quality; and to conserve heritage features including Scheduled Monuments.
- Conserving historic buildings, including farmsteads, that are valued as landmarks in order to maintain sense of place and history. Continue to build understanding around traditional building styles and the sourcing and use of traditional, local building materials. Draw on information and best practice developed by English Heritage and the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- Confirming the best practice for managing landmark trees on earthworks, conserving veteran trees and succession planting.
- Conserving sarsen stones as rare natural landmarks in the countryside, particularly where there is a long history of limited or no disturbance.

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SEO 3: Across the open expanses of the Downs, identify and manage natural and man-made landmarks and associated viewpoints valued by local communities and visitors in order to maintain sense of place and history and also so that they act as focal areas for engaging people in the conservation and sustainable enjoyment of the wider area. As well as high-profile landmarks such as Avebury, consider exposed scarp landforms, downland pasture, beech clumps, ancient monuments, historic buildings and sarsen stones.

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- Considering how to recognise and preserve the setting of landmarks. Restore and strengthen historic links, including historic routeways. Provide ecological links such as field margins linking a landmark into a wider network that provides hunting ground for mammals and birds of prey. In cultivated settings, manage soil and water movement by positioning buffer strips strategically in relation to landmarks. Draw on best practice developed at Avebury World Heritage Site and in the North Wessex Downs AONB in relation to setting.
- Managing scrub and woodland cover to avoid obscuring landmarks and impeding public access. Chalk-cut white horses, earthworks and landforms are vulnerable.
- Avoiding creating or conserving features that negatively impact on the setting or backdrop of a landmark. Changes within intervening space and upon skylines are significant, for example.
- Building understanding around the threats and risk relating to valued landmarks, including impacts relating to climate change, change of land management and development. Identify landmarks in poor or declining condition and work with the relevant stakeholders to identify suitable remedies.
- Identifying and increasing understanding of the vulnerability of landmarks to visitor pressure, particularly in light of potential increases in visitor numbers and climate change impacts. Draw on best practice developed at Avebury World Heritage Site in relation to the conservation of heritage features. Reduce pressure upon well-visited sites by drawing visitors to new places, distant viewpoints and routes into the wider landscape.
- Managing visitors and visitor impacts, particularly where there are concerns about deteriorating tranquillity and where the condition of landmarks is declining, for example the erosion of monuments and their settings at Avebury.

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SEO 3: Across the open expanses of the Downs, identify and manage natural and man-made landmarks and associated viewpoints valued by local communities and visitors in order to maintain sense of place and history and also so that they act as focal areas for engaging people in the conservation and sustainable enjoyment of the wider area. As well as high-profile landmarks such as Avebury, consider exposed scarp landforms, downland pasture, beech clumps, ancient monuments, historic buildings and sarsen stones.

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- Building an understanding about landmarks as part of a story about the wider landscape and as a collective group that tells a shared story about this landscape over time.

- Engaging people in enjoying and understanding landmarks and their place in the wider landscape and in the wider 'story', through interpretation and education at landmarks which are co-ordinated with other related landmarks, viewpoints and along public access routes. Focus work initially at destinations that are already popular with visitors and near to settlements. Draw on existing landscape-scale interpretation such as the Avebury World Heritage Site, White Horse Trail and Ridgeway National Trail.

- Identifying the public access needs and opportunities relating to all valued landmarks. At key sites such as country parks and National Nature Reserves, enhance provision of visitor facilities, public access, education and interpretation as appropriate and where this supports sustainable recreation. Recognise the limitations and constraints in an unsettled, rural landscape but support appropriate enterprises which benefit visitors at a strategic scale, such as designated visitor parking areas and farms providing accommodation and refreshments. Consider how these locations should be promoted to the public.



The escarpment provides a backdrop to the adjacent vales. The 'Vale of the White Horse' gets its name from the chalk-cut figure at Uffington.

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

Technical Report













NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AONB

INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TECHNICAL REPORT

Prepared for The Countryside Agency
by
Land Use Consultants

March 2002

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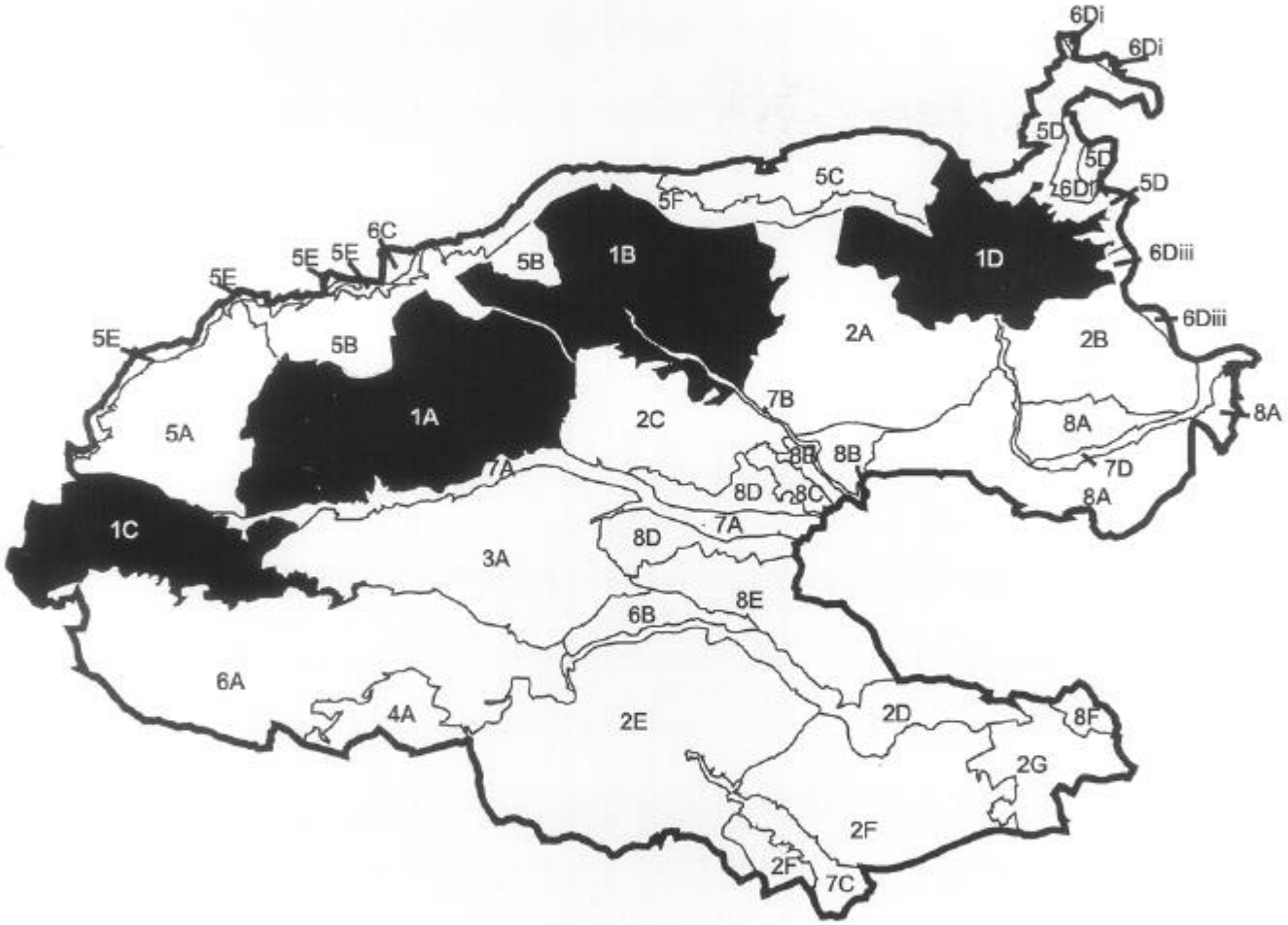
Landscape Type 1 - Open Downland



8. LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: OPEN DOWNLAND

Location and Boundaries

8.1. The landscape type encompasses a number of distinct downland blocks from the Marlborough Downs (1A) and Horton Down (1C) in the west running through to the Lambourn Downs (1B) and Blewbury Downs (1D) in the east. Boundaries are mainly defined by topography and the Upper Chalk geology, and in the north relate to the top of the Scarp (landscape type 5). To the south, the edge of the chalk similarly forms a distinct boundary.

Overview

The Open Downlands are the remote heart and core of the North Wessex Downs, with the dramatic landscapes created by the underlying chalk rocks being one of the defining features of the AONB. The subtle curves and undulations of the landform are revealed by the uniform clothing of cropped grass or cereals creating a landscape with a simple and elemental quality, accentuated by vast skies. The open, expansive views are punctuated by distinctive beech clumps crowning the downland summits, forming prominent and highly visible landmarks.

Sparsely populated, the downlands possess a strong sense remoteness and isolation. Predominantly in arable cultivation these are landscapes of great seasonal variation, with muted browns and greys of the chalk and flinty soils in the ploughed autumn fields, giving way to fresh greens of the emerging crops in winter and spring and sweeping yellows and golds of summer. The characteristic close-cropped springy downland turf of the surviving herb-rich chalk grassland provides an important habitat and this landscape type contains the largest areas of designated chalk grassland in the AONB, with 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Under sympathetic management, the arable landscape also supports a diversity of wildlife. Rare and colourful arable weeds such as dense flowered fumitory, slender tare and shepherd's needle survive in less intensively managed field margins and farmland birds that include stone curlews, skylark, grey partridge, lapwing and corn bunting populate the vast skies.

The ancient resonance of the Open Downlands emanates from a wealth of archaeology, including dramatic and highly visible prehistoric monuments. Numerous long and round barrows and distinctive sarsen stones create a powerful sense of antiquity. The carved White Horses, etched into the scarp slopes, are highly distinctive features and provide a strong visual link from the past to the present day importance of the Open Downlands for the horse racing industry.

Together, the elevation, open and spacious topography, subtly receding horizons and long views all contribute to the sense of remoteness and solitude. The expansive skies and contrasting patterns of weather, clouds and light create an important temporal dimension to landscape character.

Key Characteristics

- an elevated plateau formed by the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. Soils are predominantly thin light, free draining calcareous and nutrient poor black or brown soils;
- open, smoothly rolling downland, dissected by a network of dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps. Strong sweeping skylines;
- a landscape largely devoid of water due to the porosity of the chalk bedrock;
- dominated by intensively managed arable farmland with a few hedgerows and occasional wooded areas. Woodlands are virtually absent apart from the occasional linear shelterbelt and distinctive beech clumps crowning the summits;
- varied field patterns including 'ladder' fields and large rectangular fields;
- fragmented and isolated blocks of chalk grassland survive along the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides and together these form an important component of the chalk grassland resource of the AONB;
- very sparsely populated - generally restricted to scattered farms and equestrian establishments - contributing to strong sense of isolation;
- varied built character including traditional knapped flint and brick, timber framed weather-boarded aisled barns and large scale modern farm buildings;
- recreational opportunities are characterised by the numerous tracks, byways, green lanes and footpaths plus open access associated with archaeological sites and nature reserves;
- closely associated with the race horse industry, with horse gallops being a distinctive feature;
- strong cultural resonance – visible features from many periods of history, but with particularly strong associations with the prehistoric in the form dramatic visible field monuments;
- remote, isolated settlements characterised by low service levels, resulting in a reliance upon access to the private car with consequent impact on traffic. Population levels increasing slightly;
- overall a very strong sense of remoteness and solitude.

Physical Influences

8.2. **Geology and Soils:** The Cretaceous Middle and Upper Chalk form the main elevated plateau of the Downs. Rising from the steep northern escarpment, the landform dips gently to the south and east and the underlying Lower Chalk outcrops occur in some areas on the edges of the landscape type. Superficial deposits of Clay-with-Flint overlie the Upper Chalk in a limited number of locations on high points and ridges, although this is not a characteristic feature, as in the Downland with Woodland (landscape type 2). Soils are predominantly thin light, free draining calcareous and nutrient poor black or brown soils, with deeper soils in coombes and dry valleys.

8.3. **Landform:** The Open Downland are defined by their elevation, rising to heights of between 200m-300m AOD, with notable gently rounded or flat-topped summits. The characteristic landform comprises a high plateau of open, smoothly rolling downland, dissected with a network of dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps. It is a landscape largely devoid of water due to the porosity of the chalk bedrock.

Biodiversity

8.4. The most ecological significant habitat is the surviving unimproved chalk grassland, which mainly occurs as small fragmented blocks. The dominant habitat is arable farmland. Other habitats, such as woodland and water are virtually absent.

8.5. The Open Downland landscape type contains the largest area of designated chalk grassland in the AONB, with some 15 SSSI's covering some 1012.3ha (approximately 5% of the area). The designated chalk grassland is mainly distributed towards the west, although throughout the area chalk grassland survives within small fragmented and isolated blocks on the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides. This herb-rich turf is a rich ecological resource and supports outstanding populations of downland butterflies including the adonis blue and Duke of Burgundy. Some steep slopes retain tiny patches of woodland (characteristically ash-maple) and regenerating scrub, including distinctive chalkland species such as wayfaring tree, privet, whitebeam, ash and occasionally juniper.

8.6. The dominant habitat is open arable farmland with few hedgerows and sparse woodland cover. The farmland is largely managed under intensive systems, although nevertheless may still support a characteristic range of wildlife and in some areas production and biodiversity objectives are being successfully integrated through agri-environment schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship. Rare and colourful arable weeds, such as fumitories, slender tare and shepherd's needle, which are dependent on a regular cropping regime and survive in the less intensively managed field margins. The open downs also supports an important range of farmland birds. Spring-tilled arable crops on stony chalk soils, provide essential breeding sites for stone curlew. Skylark and yellowhammers remain relatively common and widespread, while grey partridges, lapwings, turtle doves and corn buntings can also still be found.

Historic Environment

8.7. The Open Downland landscape of today is a product of 5000 years of human activity. Many of these past layers of human settlement and land use have a strong resonance in the landscape. It is in this landscape type; perhaps more than anywhere else in England, where prehistoric settlement and land use can be most easily appreciated. Evidence of the prehistoric survives in the form of dramatic visible field monuments that contribute much to character of the landscape today and creating a very strong sense of antiquity. The principal surviving historic features are summarised below.

8.8. **Prehistoric Monuments:** The western part of the landscape type (Marlborough Downs and Horton Down) is a major site of prehistoric activity, focused on the massive Neolithic henge and stone circles at Avebury. There are numerous long and round barrows. The great majority of the latter are in clusters or groups of three or more. These monuments are typically situated on high ground, along the skyline, often on spurs and are meant to be seen from below. By contrast, the character of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age occupation would appear to have been different on the Lambourn Downs, with far less emphasis on long mounds and communal monuments such as henges.

8.9. **Field Patterns:** One of the key characteristics of the landscape type today is the extent of enclosure across the downs. This is largely a legacy of the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries when continuing advances were being made in agriculture and farming techniques. The most notable and obvious change was the enclosure of open arable fields and the extension of arable cropping over large areas of former downland. Two types of field pattern seem to have emerged; the first appears to represent the creation of fields by the simple expedient of using existing roads, tracks and paths as their boundaries. This is particularly apparent on the Lambourn and Blewbury Downs. In some cases these 'ladder' fields are associated with tracks leading up to or over the downs - sometimes linking the valley floor to the downland through a series of parallel tracks. The second main field pattern is represented by a formal landscape of large rectangular fields with straight edges (often single species hedgerows). Such fields, particularly prominent on the Marlborough Downs, were carefully planned by professional surveyors and were the culmination of the long gradual piecemeal enclosure, the majority of which was undertaken during the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815), under the impetus of high corn prices.

8.10. **The 'Corn-Sheep Cycle':** Significant agricultural improvements occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At this time corn was the major cash crop on the chalklands - and the whole pattern of farming on the downs was geared to the production of corn crops and the maintenance of the fertility of the thin chalk soils by folding the sheep flocks on them. Yields could only be increased by keeping larger sheep flocks and one of the most important and dramatic advances was made with the invention and rapid spread of artificially watered meadows along the valley bottoms (see landscape type 7) which stimulated early growth providing feed for lambs and ewes.

Settlement and Building Character

8.11. The Open Downlands are generally very sparsely populated, containing only scattered isolated farms or small hamlets. Occasionally and notably in the eastern part of the AONB small village settlements shelter in the folds of the downs at valley heads. Equestrian establishments, associated with the racehorse industry are also common within the landscape type. Built form varies considerably and includes traditional knapped flint and brick. Traditional farm buildings including timber framed weather-boarded aisled barns are a feature of the downs, with large-scale modern buildings, for example for grain storage, also prevalent.

Recreation Character

8.12. The Open Downland landscape type is characterised by the linear tracks, byways, green lanes and footpaths that cross the landscape, including the Ridgeway National Trail which runs along the northern edge, plus several long distance bridleway routes promoted by the British Horse Society. Together, these provide an extensive network for informal recreation. There are a large number of archaeological sites, which allow open access as well conserving important areas of chalk grassland, and are valuable visitor recreation sites. A number of the chalk grassland nature reserves also provide open access opportunities. Often strategically located along high points on the scarps these sites often provide spectacular views out across the surrounding lower lying landscapes. Much of the arable land is managed through Countryside Stewardship and this may also provide opportunities for permissive access in association with management of field margins, and access to areas of archaeological interest, although its full extent of this access is not known. The open

access legislation of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 provides for open access to downland and may result in recreation opportunities. However, the exclusion of cultivated land means that the impact of this legislation will be limited in the North Wessex Downs, where arable land is the overwhelmingly dominant land use on the downs.

Social and Economic Character

8.13. The Open Downlands landscape type is sparsely populated, with the majority of settlements comprising small remote scattered isolated hamlets and single farmsteads with few villages. In general population levels are increasing slightly - an interesting trend given that many of the parishes in the landscape type have poor facilities with heavy reliance on transport to enable access to basic services. Ultimately, this is based around access to the private car to access shops, banking facilities, healthcare and purchase fuel in the nearby market towns of Wantage, Hungerford or Marlborough. Employment is largely focussed in the urban centres outside the AONB, although farming also remains an important source of local employment. High car ownership is leading to some pressures on the rural lane network and urbanising effects in the form of erosion of verges and kerbing. In summary, the impression of an almost 'empty' uninhabited landscape with very little social or economic activity in its own right apart from the racehorse industry, which has a very visible landscape expression in the form of equestrian centres and gallops.

Key Issues

- in the past, intensification of farming leading to **loss of environmental assets** including biodiversity (e.g. chalk grassland/farmland birds), archaeological features and landscape character through the creation of large fields;
- impacts of the intensive agricultural economy on the social character of the AONB - declining employment, fewer larger farms with **pockets of rural deprivation** masked by relative affluence of estates and larger farm units;
- future restructuring within agriculture - which in this landscape type is likely to result in the amalgamation of holdings with large areas being managed as a single block resulting in further **homogenisation of the landscape** plus requirement for large grain storage buildings;
- further **reduction in livestock** (impact of foot and mouth), so that there is no longer the means to maintain existing areas of pasture. Some **marginal areas** are regenerating with scrub;
- **climate change** - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and possible future demands for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and infrastructure;
- impact of England Rural Development Programme Schemes (ERDP) - woodland planting and **new types of crops**, e.g. energy crops;
- requirements for new **large scale farm buildings** plus a other farm units becoming redundant with potential for conversion;

- future potential demand for **chalk extraction**;
- impact of **tall structures** - communications masts and transmitters plus future renewable energy developments (wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the strong sweeping skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness.

Key Management Requirements

8.14. The overall management requirement is to conserve the character of the Open Downlands with their special sense of remoteness and isolation. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- surviving chalk grassland habitats, including opportunities for habitat restoration to extend and link isolated and fragmented sites;
- the unique collection of archaeological sites;
- sparse settlement pattern and absence of development;
- the clear ridges and strong skylines.

Character Areas

8.15. The Open Downlands landscape type is divided into four geographic character areas. These comprise.

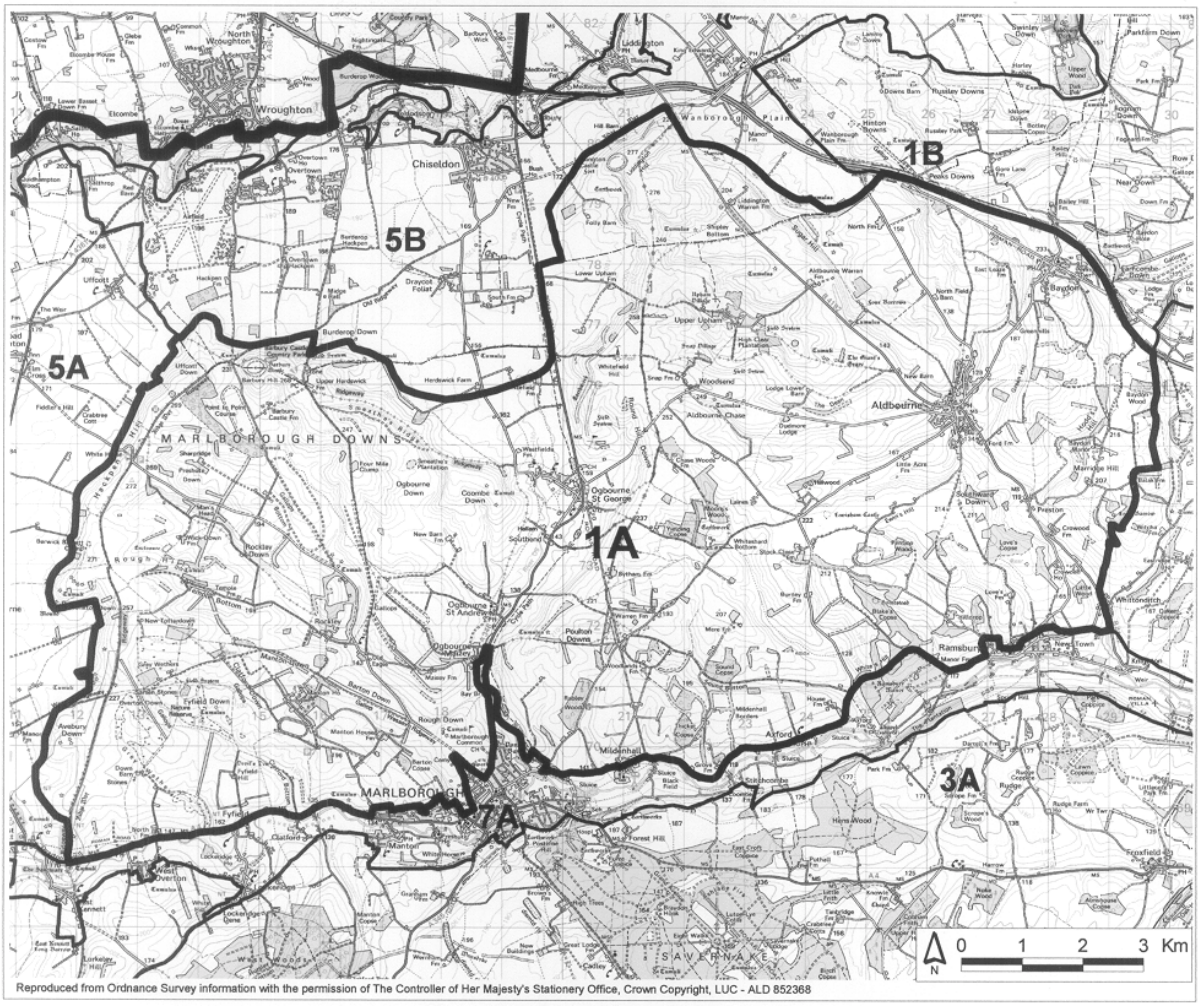
1A: The Marlborough Downs

1B: The Lambourn Downs

1C: Horton Downs

1D: Blewbury Downs

CHARACTER AREA 1A: MARLBOROUGH DOWNS



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1. **Location and Boundaries:** The Marlborough Downs are a distinct topographical unit in the north west of the AONB. The boundaries of the character area are defined to the west and north by the base of a prominent, steep chalk scarp at an elevation of approximately 200m. To the south the boundary is formed by the River Kennet (7A) with the boundary running along a contour on the valley side. The eastern edge forms the divide with the Lambourn Downs (1B) and to the south-east a subtle change in geology with the increase in Clay-with-Flint marks a transition to the lower dipslope of Lambourn Wooded Downs (2C).

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Landscape Character Description

2. The elevated chalk plateau of the Marlborough Downs forms an open expansive landscape of smoothly rolling downland, mostly under arable cultivation. Internally, the landform is topographically complex and includes the dramatic long sinuous scarps of Hackpen and Smeeths Ridge, interlocking gently rounded summits such as Overton Down and Ogbourne Down, with the intersecting valleys of the Og and Aldbourne creating further diversity. Barbury Hill (268m) and other elevated points along the top of the northern escarpment provide distant views across the adjacent lower lying Vale that extends beyond the AONB boundary.

3. Arable farmland dominates throughout, and is an almost exclusive land use on the high land in the north and west of the area, for example around Upper Upham and Ogbourne Down. This results in a very open landscape with long views, revealing the subtle curves and undulations of the underlying landform. The absence of field boundaries and woodland, combined with the elevation, creates a remote character that varies according to the weather from exposed and bleak to dramatic and exhilarating. To the east of the Og valley land cover is more diverse with scattered woodland blocks within arable farmland including ancient oak and ash woods on the slopes dipping down to the River Kennet creating a more enclosed landscape. The valleys of the Og and Aldbourne also have a more intimate character with their attractive settlements and remnant areas of valley floor pasture and hedged fields. Distinctive features include the beech clumps which crown the open summits as well as linear shelterbelt plantations such as at Mans Head.

4. The Marlborough Downs are a landscape with a very strong cultural resonance visibly expressed by the sarsen stones, round barrows and hill forts. Prominent Bronze Age round barrows occur following the lines of ridges and the scarp top and the Iron Age hill forts at Liddington Castle and Barbury Castle are strategically located along the scarp summit. The sarsen stones, scattered across the landscape at Fyfield Down and Overton Down are an outstanding feature. Surviving areas of permanent pasture are concentrated along the scarp slopes to the north and west of the area, with some sections of the scarp slope beginning to be covered by regenerating scrub. Although unimproved pasture is scarce and fragmented, Fyfield Down (SSSI and NNR) on the western edge of the Marlborough Downs is an important intact area and contains a range of grasslands ranging from acidic on Clay-with-Flints through to neutral and chalk grassland. It is also an important geomorphological site and displays the best assemblages of sarsen stones in Britain, supporting a nationally important lichen flora.

5. Several small attractive linear settlements shelter in the valleys of the Marlborough Downs and are an important feature of the character area. The small villages of Ogbourne St. George, Ogbourne St. Andrew and Ogbourne Maizey are located at regular intervals along the Og valley. Aldbourne nestles at the head of the Aldbourne Valley, while Baydon is on a scarp edge in the north-east part of the Downs. The tiny clustered hamlets of Rockley and Upper Upham shelter in dry valleys. Outside the valleys settlement is very sparse and limited to occasional isolated farms, with a concentration of equestrian establishments and gallops on the western part of the downs. Traditional building materials include brick, flint, sarsen and clunch with roofs of thatch or clay tile.

December 2005

Wiltshire
Landscape Character Assessment

FINAL REPORT







Prepared on behalf of
Wiltshire County Council
By Land Use Consultants

ISBN 0-86080-508-5

LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: OPEN DOWNLAND





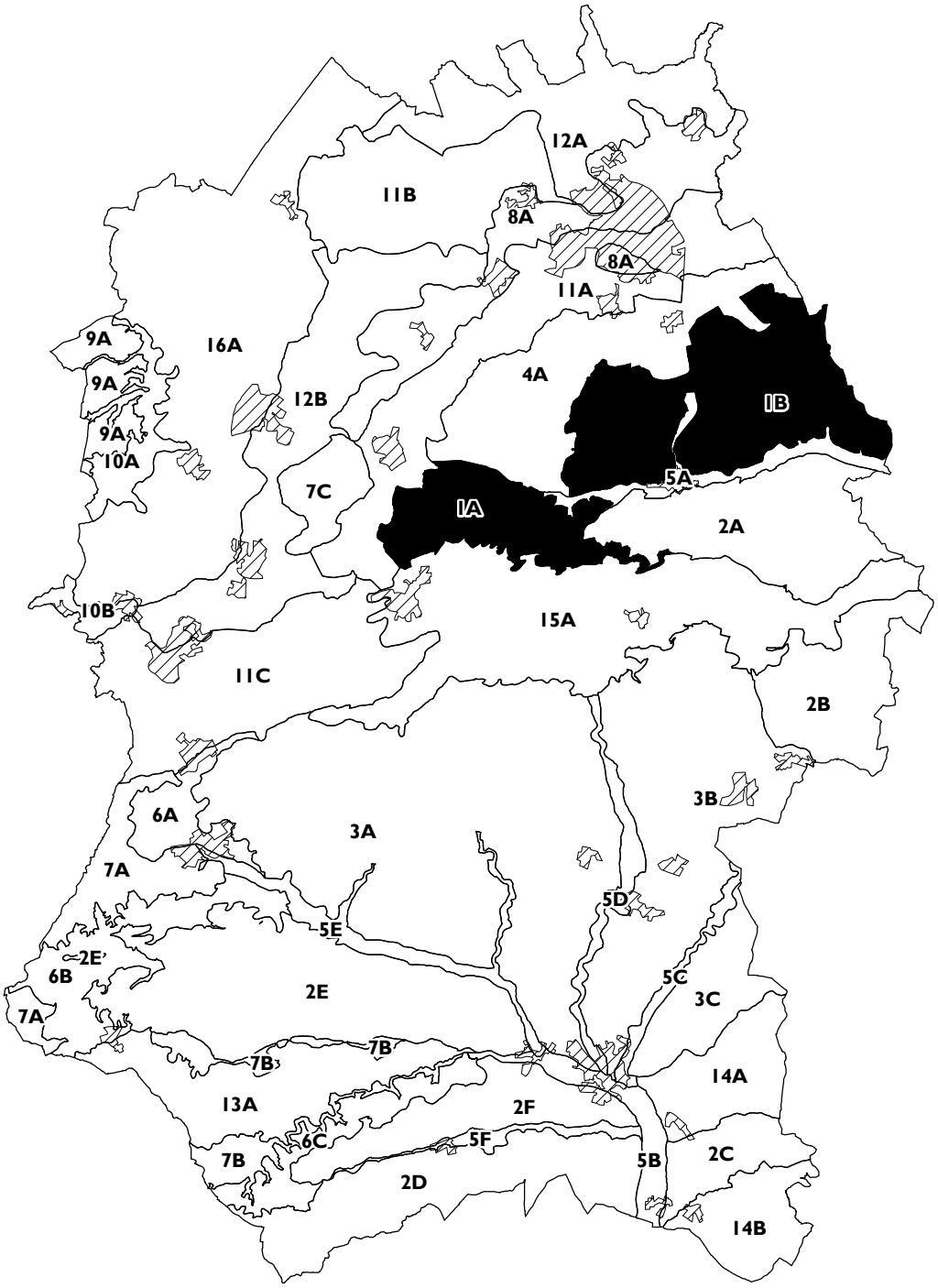








1: OPEN DOWNLAND



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

1A Horton Downs
1B Marlborough Downs
Urban Area

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TYPE 1: OPEN DOWNLAND

DESCRIPTION

Location and Boundaries

The *Open Downland* Landscape Type is an expansive area forming a high, undulating chalk plateau extending northeast from central Wiltshire, with boundaries defined by the elevated topography and Upper Chalk geology. Within this landscape type, there are two geographically distinct character areas. Area *1A: Horton Downs* rising above the Vale of Pewsey and the *1B: Marlborough Downs* extending north of the Kennet River Valley.

The *Open Downland* forms part of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Key Characteristics

- Elevated plateau formed by the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. Soils are predominantly thin light, free draining calcareous and nutrient poor black or brown soils.
- Open, smoothly rolling downland, dissected by a network of dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps.
- Sarsen stones are a locally distinctive feature.
- An expansive and simple rural landscape, with strong sweeping skylines with a strong sense of exposure and remoteness.
- A landscape largely devoid of water due to the porosity of the chalk bedrock.
- Dominated by intensively managed arable farmland with a few hedgerows and occasional wooded areas. Woodlands are virtually absent apart from the occasional linear shelterbelt and distinctive beech clumps crowning the summits.
- Varied field patterns including 'ladder' fields and large rectangular fields.
- Extensive, isolated blocks of chalk grassland survive along the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides.
- Very sparsely populated, generally restricted to scattered farms and equestrian establishments contributing to strong sense of isolation.
- Varied built character including traditional knapped flint and brick, timber framed weather-boarded aisled barns and large scale modern farm buildings.
- Numerous tracks, byways, green lanes and drove roads.
- Strong cultural resonance with visible features from many periods of history, but with particularly strong associations with the prehistoric in the form of dramatic visible field monuments.

Physical Influences

The *Open Downlands* are defined by their elevation, with steep scarp slopes rising abruptly to form an expansive rolling plateau at 200-300m AOD. Cretaceous Middle and Upper Chalk form the main body of the plateau. Isolated deposits of Clay with Flint overlie the higher outcrops, such as Hackpen Hill, and Alluvium forms the base of the many of the dry valleys that dissect the area.

Soils are predominantly thin light, free draining calcareous and nutrient poor with deeper soils in coombes and dry valleys. It is a landscape largely devoid of water due to the porosity of the chalk bedrock.

Sarsen stones occur across the *Marlbourough Downs* and are particularly outstanding at Fyfield and Piggledene, which have been designated SSSIs.

Biodiversity

The *Open Downlands* are predominantly under arable cultivation. Despite this significant ecological interest has been retained, including ecologically rich arable land, together with a number of nationally important and numerous locally important calcareous grassland and woodland sites.

Extensive areas of chalk grassland characterise the steep uncultivated slopes.

Pewsey Down is considered one of the finest examples of chalk downland in southern England. It has been designated a SSSI and a SAC, holding a very significant population of the scarce early gentian (*Gentianella anglica).* Four other areas of chalk grassland have been designated SSSIs at: Morgan's Hill; Roundway Down & Covert; Calstone and Cherhill Downs and King's Play Hill.

Fyfield Down an SSSI and Piggledene SSSI are designated due to their unique combination of geomorphological, biological and archaeological features. The sites have the finest collection of sarsen stones in Britain, supporting a rich lichen and moss flora. Many of these lichen species are very rare in southern Britain, and some are found only on this particular type of stone. Fyfield Down also supports a range of grassland communities; the majority of these are neutral, but pockets of both calcareous and acid grass occur throughout the site.

County Wildlife Sites include three grassland sites: Cherhill Down, a large field adjacent to Cherhill Hill monument with areas of species rich chalk grassland - chalk indicator species present include Lady's bedstraw and Chalk milkwort; Barbury Castle North, the site of a hill fort covered with rank grassland that is known for Adonis Blue and Chalkhill Blue butterflies; and Knoll Chalk, unmanaged chalk grassland that supports a good range of chalk loving butterfly species such as Adonis Blue. A woodland County Wildlife Site is Blakes Copse, secondary woodland and plantation with mature oak/ash over derelict hazel and maple coppice with a rich ground flora that includes Greater stitchwort and Enchanter's nightshade.

Historic environment

The *Open Downlands* have numerous sites of historic and archaeological interest. This landscape type is particularly notable for its concentration of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments. Long mounds and round barrows, forming part of the wider Avebury complex,

are located on the higher ground, clearly visible on the skyline. However many monuments have been ploughed flat and although visible on aerial photographs, they are no longer a recognisable landscape feature. There are also standing stones at Down Barn.

Throughout the Bronze Age the Downs landscape witnessed intensification of occupation resulting in widespread deforestation and enclosure. Concentrations of ancient field systems survive on the downs and are visible as slight earthworks. Iron Age activity included the construction of several hill forts such as at Barbury Castle, Liddington Castle, Oldbury and Martinsell Hill, all strategically located at the summit of the scarps commanding panoramic views and visible as skyline features.

Important examples of medieval archaeology include the deserted medieval settlements at Shaw, Upham and Snap, and the remains of smaller settlements such as Raddun on Overton Down. On Fyfield Down, there is also evidence of ridge and furrow, which is relatively rare on chalk downland and here the example is associated with a medieval settlement.

One of the most remarkable features of the chalk landscape, the date of which is unknown, is the many chalk figures. Several chalk horses have been drawn on the steep scarp slopes.

Today the *Open Downland* is characterised by its very open landscape, created by formal, post-medieval Parliamentary enclosure fields. There are also many recent gallops and rides established over parts of the downs.

Settlement and built character

There is very little settlement in the *Open Downlands* landscape type with development limited to a scattering isolated farmsteads and a handful of remote rural villages located on winterbournes. Building materials and styles are varied with brick and flint and brick and sarsen common. There are also several horse gallops and stables associated with the horse racing industry on the higher ground.

CHARACTER AREAS

1A: Horton Downs

Horton Down comprises a relatively simple chalk upland landform of open rolling downland dissected by dry valleys and coombes. It is a large scale landscape of extreme openness with strong ridgelines and wide expansive skies. The southern scarp above the Vale of Pewsey is a dramatic feature with scalloped steep slopes towering above the vale, crowned by hills with a distinctive rounded profile. Landcover is almost exclusively arable apart from the extensive areas of important herb rich calcareous grassland on the steep scarp slopes. The area is rich in sites of historic interest, including numerous Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows on the higher ground, with hillforts strategically located on the scarp summit overlooking the Vale of Pewsey. There are also dramatic White Horses such as the one cut into the scarp edge overlooking the Vale of Pewsey and another located on the western scarp slope. The Ridgeway and Wansdyke are both important historic linear features originating on Morgan's Hill on the western edge of the area. Settlement in the areas is limited to a scattering of isolated farmsteads, and the small village of Calstone Wellington. Roads tend to pass through the area rather than lead into it, such as the A361, which crosses the downs and the A4, which defines the northern edge of the character area, both of which are visually and audibly intrusive.

1B: Marlborough Downs

The *Marlborough Downs* forms an expansive landscape of smoothly rolling downland, mostly under arable cultivation. Internally, the landform is topographically complex and includes the dramatic long sinuous scarps interlocking gently rounded summits such as Overton Down and Ogbourne Down, with the intersecting valleys. Barbury Hill (268m) and other elevated points along the top of the northern escarpment provide distant views across the adjacent lower lying vale.

This is a very open landscape with long views, revealing the subtle curves and undulations of the underlying landform. The absence of field boundaries and woodland, combined with the elevation, creates a remote character. To the east of the Og valley land cover is more diverse with scattered woodland blocks within arable farmland. Distinctive features include the beech clumps which crown the open summits. The Marlborough Downs have strong cultural resonance visibly expressed by the sarsen stones, round barrows and hill forts. The sarsen stones, scattered across the landscape at Fyfield Down and Overton Down are an outstanding feature. Surviving areas of permanent pasture are concentrated along the scarp slopes to the north and west of the area, with some sections of the scarp slope beginning to be covered by regenerating scrub.

The Ridgeway, an important prehistoric route runs along the top of the northern escarpment. The downs are very sparsely settled with Baydon on a scarp edge in the north-east part of the Downs and the tiny clustered hamlets of Rockley and Upper Upham sheltering in dry valleys. The larger nucleated settlement of Aldbourne is isolated, nestled at the head of a winterbourne valley. Elsewhere settlement is limited to occasional isolated farms, with a concentration of equestrian establishments and gallops on the western part of the downs. Traditional building materials include brick, flint, sarsen and clunch with roofs of thatch or clay tile.

EVALUATION

Positive landscape features of significance

- Large scale open landscape with little settlement and sweeping skylines
- Strong sense of remoteness and isolation
- Important tracts of chalk grassland along the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides, several of which have been designated SSSIs
- Numerous sites of immense historic interest with field monuments particularly relating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age
- Dramatic chalk-cut white horses
- Distinctive beech clumps
- Occurrence of Sarsen stone, with important lichen and moss colonies.

Forces for change

- In the past intensive arable agriculture has resulted in loss of biodiversity (chalk grassland) and ploughing up of important historic monuments. Schemes such as the Environmental Stewardship Scheme aim to make farming techniques more sustainable.
- Further reduction in livestock, so that there is no longer the means to maintain existing areas of pasture. Some marginal areas are regenerating with scrub.
- Requirements for new large scale farm buildings plus other farm units becoming redundant with potential for conversion.
- Demand for new crops and land uses which would break up the simple open landscape.
- Climate change may affect the distinctive beech clumps crowning the open summits with changes in the level of the water table impacting on the health of these shallow rooted trees.
- Potential impact of tall structures - communications masts and transmitters plus future renewable energy developments (wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the strong sweeping skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness.
- Small scale incremental development (signage, fencing, road improvements) that would impinge on the simple, open character.

Condition

The *Open Downlands* are an intensively managed landscape type, with vast swathes of arable farmland. There are however several extensive surviving areas of chalk grassland, which have been recognised for their importance and designated as SSSIs. There are also numerous sites of historic interest; several protected as scheduled ancient monuments, although in the past a number of sites have been lost though ploughing and are not visible on the ground. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be **moderate**.

Strength of character

This is a landscape of **strong** character. The steep scarps rise up to form an extensive plateau of rolling chalk downland. The distinctive landform, simple arable land cover, absence of settlement and large skies create a landscape with a sense of remoteness and exposure. The strong character also relates to the historic associations visible in the form of dramatic field monuments, extensive areas of chalk grassland and special features such as the chalk cut figures and concentrations of sarsen stones.

Inherent landscape sensitivities

- The sense of remoteness and isolation.
- Areas rich in arable biodiversity, unimproved chalk and neutral grassland found on the steeper slopes which are an important ecological and landscape resource.
- Clumps of trees crowning the hilltops forming prominent landscape features.

- Surviving historic monuments are sensitive to intensive agricultural practices
- The openness of the downland plateau and long views have a high visual sensitivity to change
- Strong skylines and scarp tops are also particularly visually sensitive

Strategy

The overall strategy *Open Downland* Landscape Type is to **conserve** the inherent remoteness, isolation and simplicity of the downland landscape and its important ecological, historic and geological features.

Broad Management Objectives

- Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development.
- Conserve the areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encourage management to improve species diversity and prevent scrub encroachment. Consider opportunities for extending and linking chalk grassland along the scarps and dry valley sides, and creating mosaics of chalk grassland and ecologically rich arable land.
- Manage gallops to favour chalk grassland species and minimise the use of intrusive fencing or signage.
- Protect the remaining sites of historic interest and above ground archaeological features. Consider opportunities for extending areas of pasture around archaeological monuments.
- Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the simple open character of the landscape.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

The character of the Wiltshire landscape has already been investigated in a number of studies as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.

The Kennet District Council Landscape Character Assessment describes the *Open Downland* Landscape Type through areas '2: Horton Down' and '4: Marlborough Down'

The North Wessex Down AONB describes the *Open Downland* Landscape Type through type '1: Open Downland' and the character areas '1C: Horton Downs' and '1A: Marlborough Down'.