The slopes of the downs, if they have general form, are continually changing and interchanging in localities, assuming new and strange shapes, charming and surprising with their grace and exquisiteness, for ever reflecting the mood of the heavens.

Alfred Williams

The North Wessex Downs is a visibly ancient landscape of great diversity and size. It embraces the high, open arable sweeps of the Marlborough Downs with their beech-top knolls and narrow, sheltered chalk river valleys, the intimate and secluded wooded areas of Chute and Savernake Forest, and the low-lying land of the Thames Basin Heaths with a rich mosaic of woodland, pasture, heath and common land. It is a predominantly chalkland landscape with dramatic scarp slopes and moulded dip slopes that reflect the underlying chalk geology.

The North Wessex Downs have inspired many works of literature. The Saxon name Wessex was revived by Thomas Hardy, who used the area as the setting for his novel Jude the Obscure. More recently Richard Adams provided a vivid evocation of part of the area in Watership Down. An Historic Landscape Characterisation of the North Wessex Downs has been completed that helps to identify some of the oldest landscapes in the area and improves our understanding of the evolution of the landscape. This is discussed under the Historic Environment.

North Wessex Downs AONB Geodiversity Resource

The majority of the AONB is underlain by chalk resulting in the beautiful gentle rolling topography which is so characteristic of the North Wessex Downs. The area records sedimentary deposition in the Wessex Basin which extended to the east (as far as London). The basin underwent periods of uplift and tilting which created the small anticlines (upward folds) of the Vale of Pewsey, Vale of Harn and Kingsclere Inlier, exposing the older Upper Greensand enclosed by younger Chalk. Overlying the chalk are patches of Palaeogene and Quaternary sediments which contrast with the chalk scenery by producing more acidic soils.

Lower Cretaceous: 145-99 million years ago
Only the topmost part of the Lower Cretaceous (the Gault Clay and the Upper Greensand) are found in the AONB. The Gault Clay is restricted to a narrow band marking the foot of the Downs on the northern margin. This blue-grey mudstone has historically been extracted from the Swindon and Devizes area for brick making. The junction between the Gault Clay and the overlying Upper Greensand is marked on the northern edge of the AONB by a spring line which gave rise to the development of villages such as Cherhill and Uffington. The sands and silts of the Upper Greensand are rich in a mineral called glauconite, giving them their green colour. As well as tracing the northern scarp of the AONB the Upper Greensand is also seen at the surface in the Vale of Pewsey, as a result of the uplift of the basin. Towards the top of the Upper Greensand is a bed known as the Malmstone. This is a hard sandstone composed of siliceous sponge spicules held together with a silica rich cement.

Upper Cretaceous: 99-65 million years ago
The Upper Cretaceous chalk dominates the solid geology of the AONB as well as much of its landscape. Although there is a 200 metre thickness of chalk in the AONB, it is thought that as much again has been removed from the top as a result of erosion during the last 65 million years or so when the basin was uplifted and tilted. The formation of flint in the chalk is not well understood. It is thought that it forms as a result of the concentration of silica (dissolved from the skeletons of silicious animals such as sponges and some plankton).

Palaeogene: 65-23 million years ago
The deposits of the Palaeogene in the North Wessex Downs are unconsolidated sediments which provide no distinctive landscape feature other than the development of neutral to acidic soils leading to the establishment of heath types.

vegetation and are extremely poorly exposed. The most common of the Palaeogene rocks are the sarsens. These scattered blocks of hard sandstone are one of the most... geodiversity. They are the remains of the unconsolidated Palaeogene sediments which have been variably cemented by silica.

Quaternary Deposits:
2 million years ago to present
Although much of England was covered by advancing ice at some point during the last 2 million years, there is no evidence in the North Wessex Downs that the ice ever covered this part of southern England. There is evidence that the area suffered periglacial conditions. In the AONB there are three principal types of Quaternary deposit. There are the river terrace deposits, alluvium (modern day river sediments) and a deposit known as clay-with-flints. It is thought that the river terrace sediments were deposited during the cold periods and not during the warmer interglacial periods of the Quaternary. As ice sheets grew, sea level fell. This rejuvenated rivers and increased their erosive power so they cut deep into the relatively soft bedrock. The terrace sediments are predominantly gravels with sand, though some clays and muds are also preserved. The terrace development reflects the successive cutting of ancient floodplains, the older terraces being the highest ones preserved. Terraces and their sediments have been preserved in all the major modern day river valleys in the AONB. Alluvium is the modern day deposits of rivers. It is mainly silt and clay but can also contain sand and gravels from flood events.

Unlike the terrace deposits and the alluvium, the clay-with-flints is not the result of river channel activity. It is thought more likely to be the remains of the Cretaceous chalk after the effects of intense weathering. It can often be mapped by the presence of woodland, particularly in the central and southern parts of the AONB.

Landscape character types
The overall diversity of landscape is revealed through the landscape assessment for the AONB published in 2002. This recognises eight Landscape Character Types and a total of 35 Landscape Character Areas across the North Wessex Downs, each with its own distinct sense of place. The study draws out the special qualities of the landscape, traces its evolution over the centuries and identifies the main issues which will need to be addressed to conserve its special character and outstanding qualities.

The eight Landscape Types are briefly described below. The ‘Key issues’ and ‘Key management requirements’ are those proposed in the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, Technical Report. It is now proposed to review the issues and management actions by developing a Landscape Management Strategy.
About the land

Open Downland

The Open Downland forms the backbone of the North Wessex Downs as an elevated plateau of the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. The landscape is of open smoothly rounded downland dissected by dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps, devoid of surface water. Tree cover is limited to occasional linear shelter belts and distinctive beech clumps crowning summits. This is a landscape of panoramic views where the earth meets the sky. The dominant land use is vast sweeping arable fields with small remnant patches of chalk grassland on steeper slopes. Habitation is extremely sparse and limited to scattered farmsteads and race horse stables.

Key issues

- In the past, intensification of farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity, 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.

Key management requirements

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;
- 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 with 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 would be particularly intrusive on the strong sweeping skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness.
- loss of hedgerow boundaries and particularly ancient and semi natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of wood pasture.
- climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats with requirement for irrigation of arable land - including possible future demand for construction of reservoirs and infrastructure.
- impact on woodlands with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow) on dry chalk soils.

Downland with Woodland

This landscape is distinctly different from the Open Downland. It is of lower elevation and has a thick capping of clay with flints over the chalk. It has softer contours and considerably greater woodland cover. The scale is smaller with field patterns made up of a mixture of small irregular Medieval enclosures and larger regular Parliamentary enclosures. Hedgerows and a mosaic of woodland cover, notably on the clay summits and as sinuous hangers along steeper slopes, create a sense of containment. There are also considerable areas of wood pasture and parkland. Agricultural land use is more varied with an intermixing of arable and pasture. Small villages nestle in sheltered valleys or are strategically located on ridgetops with widespread scattered farmsteads.

Key issues

- In the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity, archaeological features and landscape character.
- 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.
- localized visual intrusions notably tall structures including pylons and masts.
- potential future demand for wind turbines on the downland summits and skylines, which would impact on the secluded rural character.
- increased traffic on the rural lane network, plus road improvements including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, in places, creates a more urban landscape.
- intense development pressures particularly for new housing - potential effect on the character of the small nucleated hamlets and villages, plus demand for housing stock leading to inflated prices and absence of affordable housing.
- decline in local services and facilities with many villages becoming empty commuter villages by day.
- impact of all of the above leading to a loss of special qualities of tranquility and peacefulness within this quiet rural landscape.

Key management requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the secluded rural character of the Downland with Woodland landscape type and its special qualities of peacefulness and tranquility. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- chalk grassland habitats with opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement;
- the pattern and character of woodland and hedgerows, through appropriate and sustainable management, including reintroduction of coppicing and hedgerow management and restoration of hedge boundaries;
- the distinct character and pattern of settlement of small hamlets and villages assimilated within the landscape and scattered farms;
- the downland summits, strong skylines and open panoramic views, which are particularly vulnerable to large scale/tall infrastructure.
- archaeological sites, historic field patterns, historic parkland, and the historic lane network, including the characteristic sunken lanes;
- the unique collection of archaeological sites;
Wooded Plateau
Centred on the woodland tracts of Savernake Forest and West Woods, the extent of this largely wooded area reflects the bounds of the Medieval royal hunting forest of Savernake, established by the time of the Domesday survey. Throughout this gently dipping plateau a thick covering of clay with flints and tertiary deposits masks the solid chalk and results in damp and heavy soils. Today the forest consists of extensive tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland, wood pasture with majestic veteran trees, and 18th and 19th century beech plantations, as well as more modern coniferous plantations. Reflecting its origins as a royal hunting forest, settlement is limited to a concentration of villages in the valley of the River Dun - Great Bedwyn and Little Bedwyn.

Key issues
- Intensification in farming and creation of large open fields led to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity and archaeological features.
- Need for woodland management, particularly areas of ancient and semi-natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and as wood pasture.
- Loss of hedgerow boundaries and mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.
- Climate change - potential impact on woodland and parkland including increase in non-native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow).
- Intense development pressures, notably for new housing in the villages in the eastern part of the area, which have good rail links to London - potential harmful effect on views to the scarp top and nucleated hamlets and villages, plus demand for housing stock leading to inflated prices and absence of affordable housing.
- Loss of tranquillity.

Key management requirements
The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the character of the Wooded Plateau with its extensive woodlands and farmland mosaic, special qualities of peacefulness and seclusion, and wealth of sustainable recreation opportunities. Key features to be conserved and enhanced include:
- the extensive woodland blocks at Savernake Forest and West Wood, plus the numerous ancient and semi-natural woodlands of great biodiversity value;
- the corridor of the Kennet and Avon Canal and associated features;
- intimate mosaic of woodland and farmland, particularly the intact pattern of hedgerows and smaller woodland blocks;
- remnant areas of heathland, with opportunities for management and habitat restoration;
- areas of open access, woodland walks and recreational paths;
- historic parkland and formal designed landscapes of Tottenham Park and Littlecote Park, with their permanent pasture, parkland trees, avenues and rides;
- the distinct pattern and character of the settlement with a remote uninhabited western plateau and small hamlets and villages in the east;
- the quiet, rural character of the plateau, which in the more open areas is particularly vulnerable to large scale or tall infrastructures.

High Chalk Plain
This makes up the northern-most tip of Salisbury Plain. The open rolling landform of the Upper Chalk creates a bleak, spacious landscape devoid of settlement and under arable production, with long views and a strong sense of remoteness and isolation. A dramatic escarpment forms the northern boundary, as at Pewsey Hill and Fyfield Down, and provides panoramic views across the Vale of Pewsey immediately to the north.

Key issues
- In the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity, archaeological features and landscape character with creation of large ‘prairie’ fields.
- Unsympathetic tree and woodland planting in the form of irregular blocks and linear plantations of ornamental species.
- Climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and requirement for irrigation of arable land - including potential future demand for construction of reservoirs and infrastructure.
- Vulnerability to development, particularly large scale or tall structures and potential impact in views to the scarp top from the Vale of Pewsey.

Key management requirements
The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the expansive character of the High Chalk Plain with its openness, isolation, remoteness and absence of settlement. Key features to be conserved and enhanced include:
- isolated fragments of chalk grasslands with opportunities for restoration to extend and link habitats;
- the field pattern, with opportunities to restore hedgerows;
- importance as a habitat for declining farmland bird species – with a mosaic of arable land and chalk grassland;
- the unsettled character, clear ridgelines and horizons and absence of development, particularly along the open scarp above the Vale of Pewsey.
Downs Plain and Scarp

The landscape of the Downs Plain and Scarp extends along the entire length of the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs. The plain is formed by the eroded surface of the Lower Chalk, creating a low surface extending as a wide ledge at the foot of the high Open Downland. The distinctive northern scarp plunges down from this chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a recognisable horizon when viewed from the north. This area is characterised by two of the most emblematic features of the North Wessex Downs – the Ridgeway, the oldest road in England, running along the top of the scarp – and Avebury on the open Downs Plain, forming part of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. The Downs Plain is characterised by vast arable fields, lack of surface water and a general absence of settlement. Conversely the dramatic scarp slope, cut by springs, creates a convoluted edge alternately under woodland and pasture, including significant areas of remnant chalk grassland.

Key issues

• In the past, agricultural intensification leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity, archaeological features and landscape character.
• Changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some marginal areas on the scarp slope no longer being grazed leading to scrubs encroachment, most notably on the steeper scarp slopes.
• Loss of hedgerow boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows. This is a particular concern on the Plain, where field boundary loss has resulted in some very large open landscapes.
• Lack of appropriate woodland management particularly the small ancient and semi natural woodlands of the scarp formerly managed by coppicing.
• Climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and requirement for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and intrusive infrastructure. Impact on woodland and parkland with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow).
• Intensive recreational pressures around ‘honeypot’ sites.
• Vulnerability to large scale development, particularly tall structures (e.g. masts or turbines) on the scarp summit and re-use of redundant military infrastructure on the Plains, with associated impacts, e.g. traffic generation.
• Pressures for housing and peripheral development of attractive springline villages along the scarp - potential loss of local vernacular character, and decline in rural services.
• Impact of development on the edge of the AONB, for example at Wantage, Swindon, Harwell, Didcot - visual impact plus increased pressures on housing, roads, etc.
• Vulnerability to impact of development (e.g. skyline structures) within the adjacent 'borrowed' landscape of the downland scarp which form prominent boundaries to the Vales.

Key management requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the distinctive and contrasting character of the Downs Plain and associated Scarp. This includes:

• the distinct landform and clear skylines;
• the mix of landcover including woodland, pasture and historic parklands;
• the Ridgeway and unique collection of archaeological sites including management of recreational pressure around key sites;
• attractive spring line villages along the base of the scarp and the contrasting open, uninhabited plain;
• areas of chalk grassland and opportunities for habitat recreation to extend and link sites;
• the hedgerow pattern and woodland planting, particularly on the plain.

Consideration should also be given to the impact of development on the boundary of the North Wessex Downs on views from the higher ground of the Downs Plain and Scarp.

Vales

The Vale of Pewsey separates the two main upland chalk blocks that dominate the North Wessex Downs. The towering shapes of the adjacent chalk scarps contain and enclose this Greensand Vale. Numerous streams issue from the chalk and Greensand where the water table comes to the surface and meander across the Vale floor. Rich loamy and alluvial soils create a productive agricultural landscape with a mix of arable and pasture now replacing a once predominantly pastoral scene important for dairying – hence the saying ‘chalk and cheese’. The concentration of settlements is a defining feature of the Vale, including compact nucleated villages and hamlets with widespread scattered farmsteads.

Key issues

• In the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets particularly biodiversity with drainage and cultivation of the Vale floor pasture and widespread loss of hedgerows and archaeological features.
• Potential changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some remaining Vale pastures no longer being grazed, with scrub encroachment.
• Loss of hedgerow boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.
• Climate change - potential impacts including drying out of wetland habitats, requirement for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and intrusive infrastructure. Impact on woodland and parkland with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow).
• Localised intrusion of roads, overhead power lines and pylons all of which are highly visible in the context of this flat low lying landscape.
• Increased traffic on the rural lane network, plus road improvements including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, in places creates a more urban landscape.
• Intense development pressures, particularly for new housing, affecting the character of the villages and their edges so that settlements are less assimilated into the landscape.
• Impact of development on the edge of the AONB, for example at Devizes and Swindon - visual impact plus increased pressures on housing, roads etc.
• Vulnerability to impact of development (e.g. skyline structures) within the adjacent ‘borrowed’ landscape of the downland scarp which form prominent boundaries to the Vales.

Key management requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the distinctive rural, agricultural character of the Vales. This includes the pattern of hedgerows, streams and remnant waterside pastures, wet meadows and woodlands and concentration of small compact settlements. There are opportunities for hedgerow restoration and re-creation of pasture and riparian woodlands alongside watercourses. The objective should be to maintain the pattern of discrete villages set within a quiet rural landscape, with opportunities for management of traffic on the rural lanes that connect the settlements. The views to the clear skylines of the surrounding downland slopes should be conserved.
River Valleys

The chalk rivers that cut through the chalk uplands form very distinct linear landscapes, characterised by a rich mix of grazed pastures, water meadows, wetland and woodland. The valleys are enclosed by steeply rising slopes, limiting views and creating an intimate and enclosed character. Historically, the main settlements of the chalk were concentrated in these river valleys (as the only source of accessible water in an otherwise dry downland landscape without the benefit of a capping of clay with flints). These settlements took a long linear form, following the bottom of the valley, and this remains the dominant pattern to this day.

The chalk uplands are also cut by numerous dry valleys, which sometimes contain ephemeral ‘winterbournes’ which only flow when the chalk water table rises to the surface during the winter and early spring.

Key issues
- In the past, low flows in the chalk rivers have been a major cause for concern, particularly with increased abstraction requirements. More recently flooding within the valleys has been an issue for local residents.
- Maintenance of high water quality in the streams and rivers, particularly affected by the nutrient pollution from reversible arable land plus road and urban run-off.
- Intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets, particularly drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation.
- Potential changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some remaining valley pastures and meadows no longer being grazed, with consequential scrub encroachment.
- Maintenance of traditional valley features including watercress beds and historic features - water meadow systems, mills and leats.
- Loss of hedgerow boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.

Climate change - potential impacts including increased abstraction and low flows, as well as autumn/winter flooding, concentrated levels of water pollution and drying out of wetland habitats. Potential impacts on woodland and parkland include increases in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow).

Localised intrusion of roads (M4 and A4), overhead power lines and pylons all of which are highly visible in the context of the small scale enclosed, intimate valley landscape.

Increased traffic on the road network, plus improvements to the lanes including leaping, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more ‘urban’ character.

Potential future demand for aggregate extraction altering the form and character of the valleys.

Development pressures, particularly for new housing, affecting the character of the small settlements - discrete villages may appear to coalesce along the valley side roads.

Loss of rural tranquillity, resulting from the combination of the above factors.

Key management requirements
The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the River Valley landscapes with their intimate, pastoral and tranquil character. This includes:

- the chalk streams and rivers with their characteristically clear, fast-flowing waters;
- the adjacent seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, marsh, damp woodlands and historic parklands.

The small-scale character of the valleys mean that they are potentially sensitive to any development, including large scale farm buildings, new housing and communication infrastructure. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement with discrete villages, hamlets and two market towns.

Lowland Mosaic

Concentrated around the ‘Newbury bight’ this is a landscape of largely Medieval origins. The varied geology of low lying clays, silts and sands gives rise to a diverse mix of soils and, in turn, a small-scale and intimate landscape with a mosaic of ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland areas. Lanes are frequently overhung by deep grassy and wooded banks, heightening the sense of seclusion. The network of ancient semi-natural woodland, connecting hedgerows, areas of parkland, including small-scale and intimate trees, create considerable ecological interest. Former Medieval deer parks are a particular feature as at Englefied, Highclere and Hampshead, with a number of these having been re-fashioned in the 18th Century as formal designed landscapes. This is one of the most densely inhabited areas of the North Wessex Downs with large manor houses, a network of hamlets, and lines of houses and villages that have grown along the network of lanes.

Key issues
- Intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets particularly conversion of permanent pasture to arable.
- Decline in the extent of heathland vegetation through conversion to forestry or lack of management with scrub invasion and development of woodland.
- Potential changes in farming practices may include further loss of livestock with an increase in areas managed as ‘hobby farms’ or as horse paddocks - characterised by rank weedy grassland and poorly managed boundaries.
- Lack of appropriate management of woodlands particularly ancient and semi natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of woodland.
- Loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows by flaking so that hedgerow trees are often no longer present. Also need for management of adjacent grass verges.
- Climate change - potential impacts on habitats including drying out of wet heathland and increased fire risk on dry heaths. Requirement for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and intrusive infrastructure. Potential impacts on woodland and parkland include an increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow).
- Localised intrusion of roads (M4, A34 and A343), which have a high impact in this quiet, rural landscape.
- Increased traffic on the road network, plus road improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, in places creates a more ‘urban’ character.
- Potential future demand for aggregate extraction altering the form and character of the valleys.
- Development pressures, particularly for new residential development including suburbanising influence of built development and roads (fencing, signing, lighting and planting).
- Decline in local services and facilities with many villages becoming empty commuter villages by day.
- Loss of tranquillity, resulting from a combination of the above.

Key management requirements
The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the distinctive small-scale and enclosed landscape of the Lowland Mosaic with its secluded, rural and tranquil character. This includes conservation and enhancement of the key assets, namely:

- the ancient and semi-natural woodlands;
- field patterns and hedgerows, particularly through ensuring appropriate management to allow regeneration of hedgerow trees;
- the hedgerows and grass verges which line the rural lanes;
- heathland;
- historic parkland.

There are opportunities for restoration of the fragile lowland heathland resource, through management and habitat restoration to extend and link isolated areas. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive patterns of settlement and prevent the gradual expansion, merging and coalescence that will result in a more suburban character. Consideration should be given to measures that could lessen the impact of the roads and reduce high traffic levels on the rural lanes.