

North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment

LCT 2

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

July 2025

LCT 2 Downland with Woodland

Figure 5.28: Rolling chalk uplands with strong woodland coverage



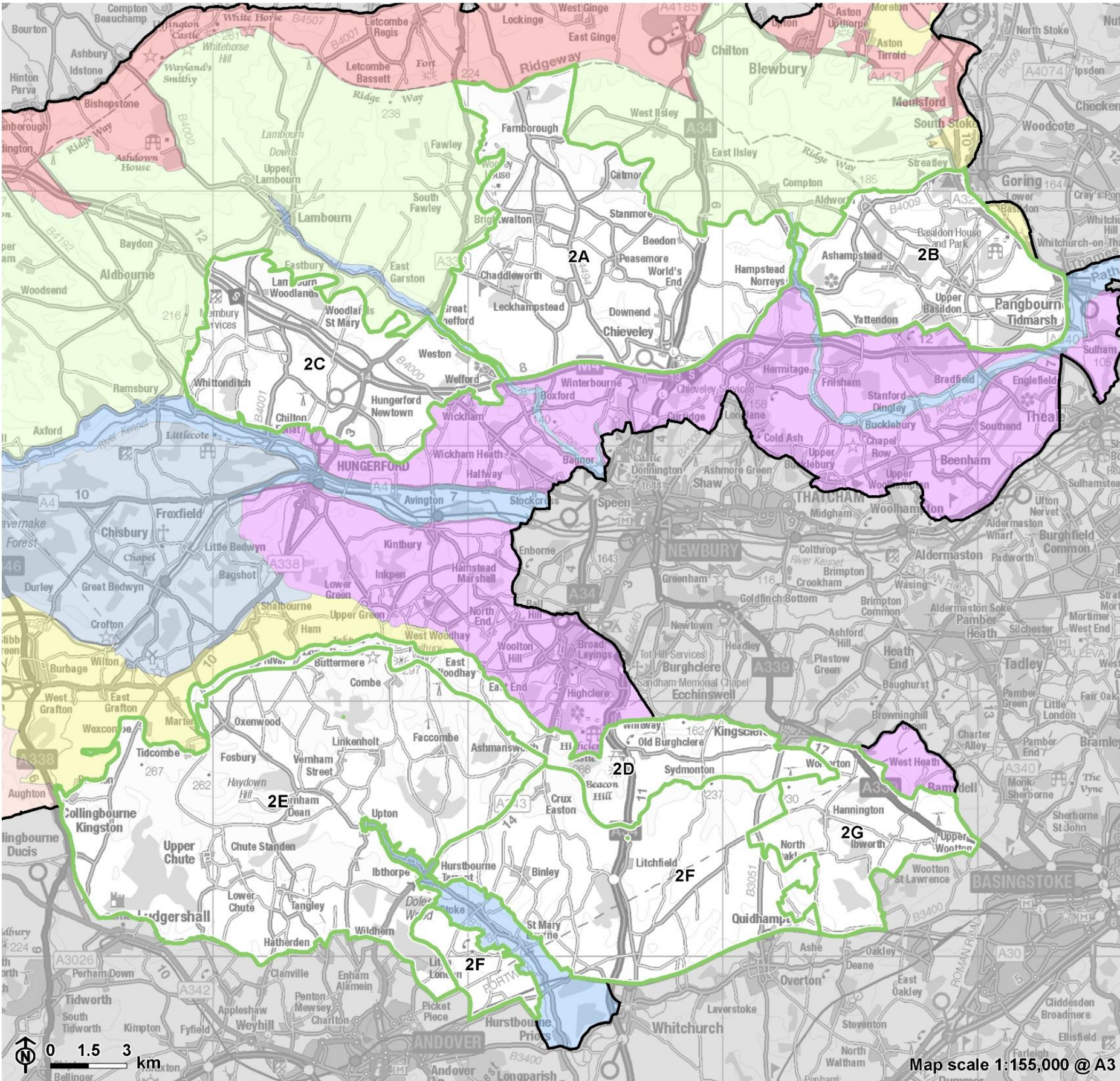
Location and overview

5.107 Downland with Woodland occurs in two main blocks: on the dipslope north of the River Kennet; and as an escarpment south of the Kennet. The southern escarpment forms the beginning of the main chalk upland running south and east as part of the Hampshire Downs. Boundaries are mainly defined by geology and relate to the landscape transition where clay-with-flint becomes more dominant, marked by an associated increase in woodland cover. The southern block of Downland with Woodland is clearly defined by the base of the distinctive linear escarpment that rises from the intervening clay lowlands.

5.108 The Downlands with Woodland landscape type is divided into seven geographic character areas. These comprise.

- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
- 2B: Ashampstead Downs
- 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2E: Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs
- 2F: Litchfield Downs
- 2G: Hannington Downs

Figure 5.29: Location of Downland with Woodland LCT



North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape

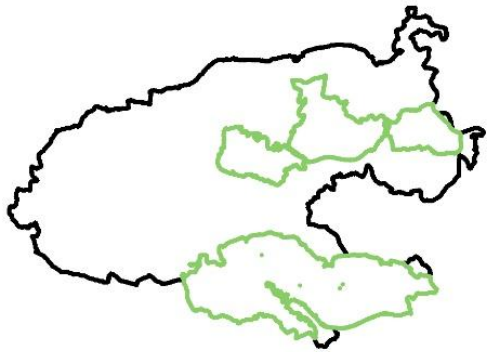


LCT 2 - Downland with Woodland

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Landscape Character Type

- 2: Downland with Woodland
- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
- 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
- 2F: Litchfield Downs
- 2G: Hannington Downs



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey License Number AC0000817126.

12859_001_NWD_LCA_Figures/
12859_r1_001_NWD_LCT_A3LA - 26/06/2025

5.109 The Downlands with Woodland are defined by contrast; of open rolling downland and enclosed woodland, of light and shade, and of prospect and refuge. The typical chalk landform has a strongly rolling topography, rising to gently domed hilltops and dissected by dry valleys. A thick mantling of clay-with-flint differentiates this landscape type from LCT 1 Open Downlands. The geology produces softer contours on the summits and creates heavy moist soils, which have retained their woodland cover. Sinuous woodlands cling to the steep slopes and, with the interconnected hedgerow network, create a strong framework and sense of enclosure in some areas. Ridgetop woods are a particular feature and form dark wooded horizons providing containment to the views. These enclosed areas are juxtaposed with contrasting more open arable and pastoral summits, and those areas where remnant chalk grassland survives on the steep slopes of the dry valleys and scarps. Bronze Age and Iron Age hill forts, strategically located on high summits, are a notable feature of the landscape type and command panoramic views over the surrounding countryside.

5.110 Ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows are an important ecological resource. Wooded commons and deer parks are a particular feature originating from medieval deer parks enclosed from areas of Royal Forest. A number of these deer parks were refashioned in the eighteenth century and are now important designed landscapes.

5.111 A dispersed settlement pattern with numerous isolated farms and small clustered hamlets and villages sheltering in folds in the chalk topography or exposed on the ridge tops. Evidence from the Domesday Survey of 1086 suggests that many of these were created during the early medieval period, typically with a church or manor house. Common vernacular includes redbrick, flint, weatherboard and clay tile. The settlements are connected by an intricate network of narrow winding lanes, many originating as medieval droveways, sunken into the chalk with a dense overhanging woodland canopy and high grassy banks.

5.112 The Downland with Woodland remains a deeply rural landscape, with a strong sense of peacefulness and tranquillity.

LCT 2 Wooded Downland: Key Characteristics

- Elevated chalk upland, distinguished by a thick capping of clay-with-flint. The reddish-brown clay creates heavy, sticky loams.

- A strongly rolling landform with gently domed hill tops, dry valleys and notable scarp and dipslope topography.
- A sheltered landscape with a diverse range of woodlands including on the clay summits, sinuous hangers on the steep slopes, shelterbelts, wooded pasture and parkland.
- Remnants of chalk grassland survive, including two of the largest areas of protected chalk grasslands in the North Wessex Downs.
- Arable farmland dominates, with strong hedgerow boundaries contributing to the mosaic of woodland cover. Medieval enclosure patterns of assarts are set against more open Parliamentary enclosure fields.
- Distinctive Bronze Age and Iron Age hill forts are prominent features on hill tops.
- Numerous historic parks and designed landscapes, many originating as medieval deer parks.
- Small villages nestled in sheltered valleys with widespread scattered farmsteads and hamlets. Varied vernacular built form includes redbrick, flint and render, weatherboard, plus roofs of tile and thatch.
- Intricate network of rural lanes, including characteristic sunken lanes overhung by deep grassy banks and woodland.
- High density of footpaths, bridleways and byways, which provide access to the attractive villages, woodlands, archaeological sites, and historic houses.
- A peaceful, tranquil and secluded rural landscape, with sheltered enclosed woodland areas contrasting with more open, remote summits.

LCT 2 Downland with Woodland: Evaluation

Forces for change

5.113 The following are identified as forces for change common to the Downland with Woodland as a whole:

- Decrease in livestock so that some marginal areas of pasture may no longer be grazed leading to alternative uses e.g. as horse paddocks/training gallops or neglect/scrub encroachment.

- Lack of appropriate management for woodlands, particularly ancient and semi-natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and as areas of wood pasture.
- Loss of hedgerow boundaries and poor management of remaining hedgerows, including hedgerow trees.
- The increased popularity in field sports, especially of shooting, impacts the management of both small-scale woodland and of nearby arable fields. This includes the planting of large blocks of maize as a cover crop to feed the young birds, complimenting grant-aided conservation plots such as wild bird seed mixes. The incremental associated infrastructure including platforms for shooting and pens for birds can have an impact on landscape character.
- An increase in visually intrusive larger agricultural barns disturbs the open horizon and interrupts the sinuosity of the smooth downland landscape.
- Development pressures within settlements both within the Downland with Woodlands and in adjacent landscapes may alter the landscape character, including the expansive skyline and panoramic views.
- Development in the setting to the National Landscape including large-scale and /or tall development on the edges of Andover, Basingstoke, Newbury, and Reading. These affect panoramic views from the downland and its wider setting, as well as the sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Pressure for tall structures such as communications masts, transmitters and renewable energy developments (potentially wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the strong sweeping skylines and could have a negative impact on the sense of remoteness.
- High traffic levels on the rural lane network impact on the rural character of the lanes, and make them less attractive for walking and riding. Cumulative impact of small-scale incremental change for road upgrades e.g. signage, fencing, kerbing of rural lanes on the remote qualities of the chalk upland landscape.
- The Downland with Woodland landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:
 - Changes in rainfall patterns including wetter winters and drier summers may lead to different types of crop being grown (e.g. maize, grape vines, soya), which would change the appearance of the landscape.

- Wetter winters and increased flash flooding on the thin arable soils will cause erosion and impact the winter crop sowings and also decrease the water quality for livestock on the downs.
- Hotter, drier conditions in the summer will put more pressure on water resources, which may result in a change in crops to less water-reliant plants, and to increase the heat stress of livestock.
- Drier summers and wetter winters will cause increased tree mortality and die-back from drought and stress and waterlogging, affecting the distinctive pattern of woodlands.
- Drier and hotter summers increase fire risk affecting grassland habitats and the recreational resource of the landscape.
- Hotter temperatures may result in increased competition from invasive species and greater numbers of insect and mammal pests. This could impact the choice of crops grown, and the appearance of the landscape.
- More extreme weather events leading to a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees, which could affect the ancient woodlands.
- Deciduous woodlands are facing decline due to warmer winters, altered rainfall patterns, drier summers and increased frequency of extreme events. There may be a shift in vegetation type and composition, increased competition from invasive species, greater numbers of insect and mammal pests, a greater risk of infection by various soil and waterborne pathogens, and a greater risk of wind-throw and loss of mature trees. It could also lead to the die-back of certain hedgerow tree species, and increased storm activity may lead to the loss of mature and veteran trees within hedgerows.

Landscape guidance

5.114 The following are identified as guidelines for protecting and enhancing valued characteristics of the Downland with Woodland, taking into consideration the forces for change which are affecting, or which are expected to affect, this landscape:

- Manage the small areas of distinctive chalk grassland to enhance their biodiversity value; ensure best practice management through suitable grazing regimes and avoiding agrochemical and fertiliser inputs.
- Consider opportunities to increase the area of chalk grassland through restoration around existing areas, extending and linking existing sites.

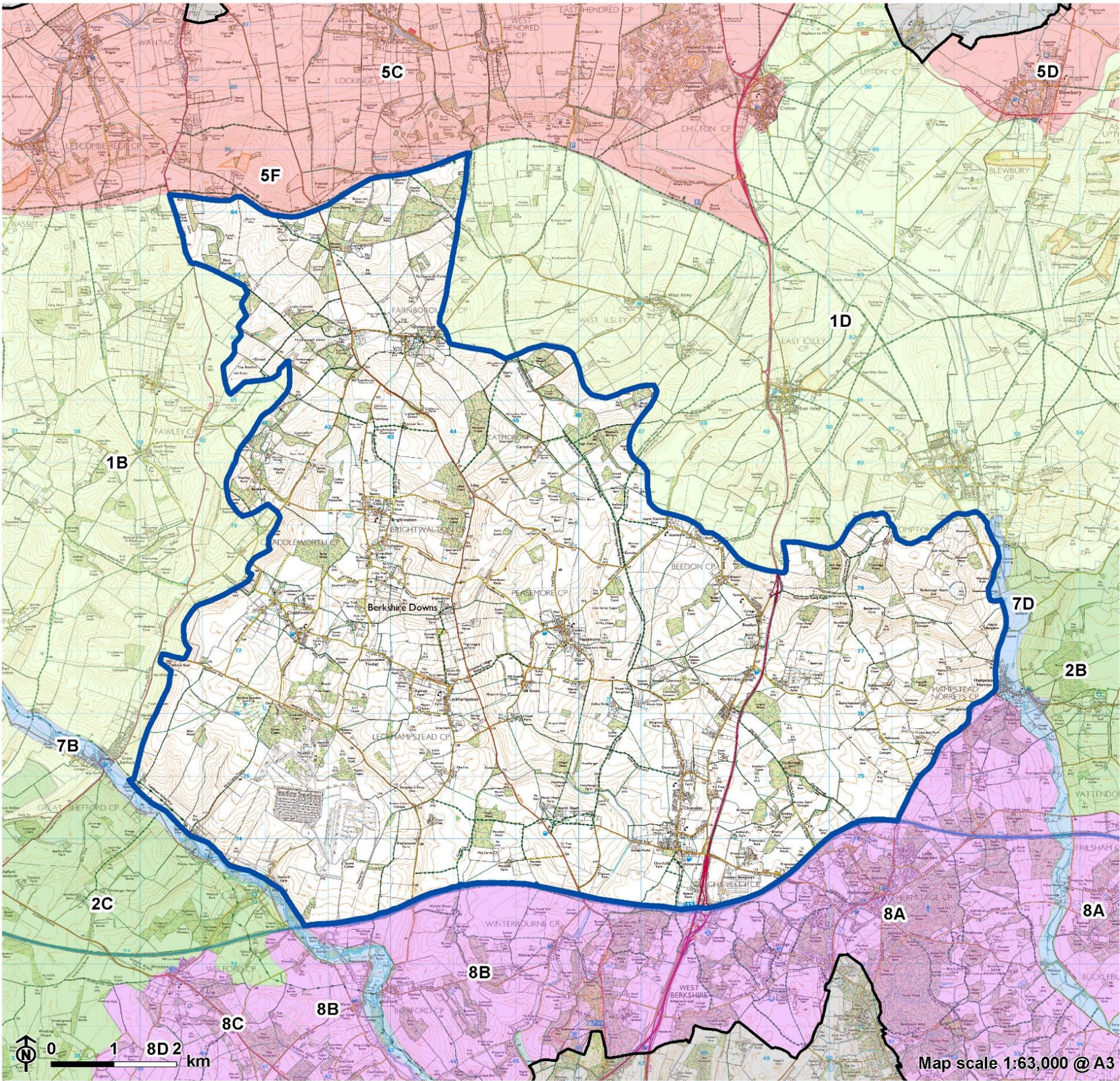
- Ensure that areas that might act as refugia from climate change (such as areas with north facing slopes, complex micro-topography and/or low nitrogen levels) are under optimal management.
- Focus on woodland areas that have been degraded to improve biodiversity and ecosystem health. Where appropriate, expand the extent of existing woodland through targeted restoration projects.
- Develop and implement woodland management plans that balance conservation and sustainable use by traditional practices including coppicing and selective thinning to maintain healthy woodlands.
- Carry out consistent management and restocking of hedgerows and nurture new hedgerow trees to maintain stock and enhance the historic hedgerow network. Where possible avoid replacing hedgerows with fencing.
- Consider the cumulative impact of incremental changes as a result of field sports and bird shoots. Minimise the size and extent of these structures where possible, using the existing woodland as screening where possible.
- Retain the sparse settlement pattern. Consider the cumulative impact of incremental changes to the small villages through extensions, which may change the character of the settlements.
- Conserve the rural roads and lanes, minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing and kerbing, or improvements to the road network which could change their character. Promote the use of traditional signage features, using local styles and materials. Ensure any road lighting schemes retain the experience of dark night skies within the wooded downland.
- Conserve the expansive open views from higher ground. Consider the impact of any tall structures on views from within this landscape, and in views from outside the landscape.
- Protect the tranquil character of the wooded downland. Consider the siting and colours used for any new agricultural barns or equestrian development so they do not disturb the open horizon and sinuosity of the smooth downland landscape as little as possible.
- Conserve the dark skies and minimise lighting with new lighting only introduced where necessary. Consider the impact of lighting on night-time views from lower ground as well as within the locality.

LCA 2A: Brightwalton Downs

Figure 5.30: Rolling open downland outside Farnborough



Figure 5.31: LCA 2A: Brightwalton Downs: Location

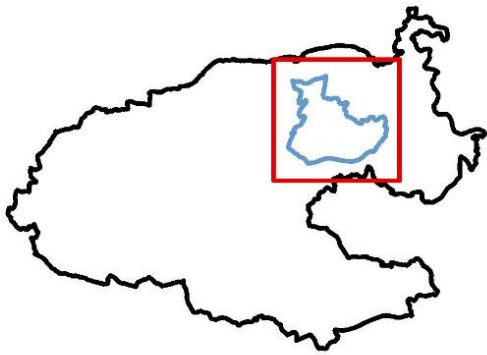


North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2A: Brightwalton Downs

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
 - 1B: Lambourn Downs
 - 1D: Blewbury Downs
 - 2B: Ashampstead Downs
 - 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
 - 5C: Hendred Plain
 - 5D: Moreton Plain
 - 5F: Liddington - Letcombe Open Scarp
 - 7B: Lambourn Valley
 - 7D: Pang Valley
 - 8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons
 - 8B: Winterbourne Farmland
 - 8C: Wickham Wooded Heath
 - 8D: Hungerford Farmland



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey License Number AC0000817126.

Figure 5.32: Open Fields and woodland near Lockinge



Figure 5.33: Fields outside Hillgreen



LCA 2A: Brightwalton Downs: Description

5.115 The Brightwalton Downs are a discrete area of Downland with Woodland occurring on the dipslope, between the more open downland areas of Lambourn Downs (LCA 1B) to the west and Blewbury Downs (LCA 1D) to the east. The boundaries are broadly defined by the transition in drift geology, at the point where the surface clay-with-flint deposits become dominant as a capping on the summits. The southern boundary is effectively formed by the M4, separating this area from the Lowland Mosaic (Landscape Type 8).

Natural Influences

Landform, geology, water and soils

5.116 The Brightwalton Downs, underlain by the Upper and Middle Chalk, maintain the essential landform characteristics of the chalk. Clay-with-flint overlies the chalk, forming gentler contours and a softer and less intricate topographical pattern. The area forms part of the dipslope, and slopes gently towards the lower lying clay pastures and river gravel deposits surrounding the Kennet Valley.

Biodiversity

5.117 The clay-with-flint has resulted in heavier clay soils which retain a high proportion of woodland cover as well as areas of pasture that have not been brought into cultivation.

5.118 The woods are very diverse and include recent mixed plantations and shelterbelts as well semi-natural woodlands of ancient origin. The latter include formerly coppiced woods of ash, maple and hazel with oak standards. They support many plants typical of old coppiced woodland including spiked star-of-Bethlehem, Solomon's seal and carpets of bluebell. The traditional management of coppice woodlands has been abandoned at many sites, which has resulted in woodlands developing a dense, more enclosed structure. Ashridge Wood is the only SSSI in the LCA, notified for its ancient coppiced woodland. Standard oaks (*Quercus robur*) occur throughout the site, with other woody species including wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), cherry (*Prunus* sp) and whitebeam (*Sorbus aria* agg.).

5.119 Other distinctive features include the carefully positioned tree clumps, which draw the eye to the higher ground, plus a repetitious pattern of linear shelterbelts, for example around Catmore. Together, the tree and woodland features combine to create a softer, sheltered character.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.120 A large scale, undulating mixed farmed landscape of pasture and arable fields, enclosed by hedgerows. Hedgerows frequently contain mature oak and ash hedgerow trees, although the boundaries are often denuded with gaps or intensively flailed.

5.121 The wooded copses on valley sides and steeper slopes show signs of assarting that may be late medieval or post-medieval in date. There are also some sinuous boundaries running north-south or north-east south-west that may reflect late medieval or post-medieval 'ladder' fields, the result of informal 17th or 18th century enclosure, with fields laid out between existing tracks or droveways. Chaddleworth and Beedon parishes, in particular, contain many of these. The defining feature of the modern landscape is the large, regular field pattern resulting from formal eighteenth and nineteenth century Parliamentary enclosure. In some cases, further boundaries have been removed in recent years to create very large fields.

5.122 Former RAF Welford lies in the south-west of the LCA. The airfield was constructed in 1941 and was used by the American Air Force (USAAF) from 1943. It has remained in use by the USAAF as an ammunition store. The barbed wire and small storage sheds are generally screened from view.

Historic features

5.123 The survival of prehistoric archaeology is limited on Brightwalton Downs. There are a few isolated Bronze Age round barrows on ridgelines and Perborough Castle is an Iron Age hillfort. There are later prehistoric field systems on Woolley Down and Cow Down. Grim's Ditch, running along the northern edge of the scarp, is a Saxon linear earthwork.

5.124 Brightwalton has a medieval moated manor and it is likely that routes such as Old Street Lane and Hangman's Stone Lane may be old medieval or post-medieval droveways. Most of the small villages are mentioned in the Domesday Survey and the Dunmore Pond at Brightwalton can be traced back to 937.

Settlement pattern

5.125 The area is well settled with a large number of individual farmsteads, larger houses and manors, plus a regular distribution of small villages, often surrounded by woodland and set within folds in the landform. They include

loosely clustered hamlets/small villages at Chaddleworth, Peasemore, Brightwalton and Farnborough. The linear settlements of Leckhampstead, Downend and Chieveley are located on low ridges, rather than in valleys. Red brick, mixed red and blue brick, clay tile, weatherboard and thatch are the most common vernacular building materials. Overall, this is a quiet, rural landscape.

Principal settlements

5.126 Chieveley has a rich history, with the Iron Age hillfort south at Bussock Camp indicating early settlement in the area. The name "Chieveley" is believed to derive from "Field of Chives", with historical records noting the presence of chives in the area as far back as 951. The village has been a primarily agricultural community with farming playing a central role in the local economy. The High Street is designated as a Conservation Area and features several listed buildings including Chieveley House, a Grade II* listed Queen Anne style house. St Mary's Church is a Grade II* listed dating to the 13th century, although a church has probably stood on the site since the Saxon era. The village retains its linear settlement pattern concentrated on the High Street, although has been expanded to the north in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Figure 5.34: Centre of Chieveley at the High Street and School Lane



5.127 Chieveley lies to the east of the Winterbourne Stream valley. The setting of the village is dominated by the A34 to the east and the M4 to the south. The area is further affected by the large junction where these two roads meet along with the motorway service station which sits alongside it.

Communications and infrastructure

5.128 An extensive network of interconnected rural lanes serves the settlements. These lanes, which are often deeply incised and overhung by grass banks, hedges and mature hedgerow trees contribute to the rich and intimate scale of the landscape. Public rights of way provide access between the settlements as well as links to the open downlands and scarp to the east, west and north. The rural lanes in combination with the numerous rights of way result in a high degree of permeability through the area. The M4 is a prominent feature along the LCA's southern boundary, while the A34 cuts through the east.

Perceptual Influences

5.129 Large ridgetop woodland blocks form dark wooded horizons providing visual containment. Much of the Brightwalton Downs is made up of open fields with a significant lack of hedgerows, creating an open arable character. Internally, there are no prominent local landform features, however excellent views can be obtained at the northern edge, from which the escarpment (LCA 5F) drops steeply. Views also exist to the east and west, with views to undeveloped skylines marked by woodlands. In some places where woodland is less prevalent, the landscape has a more open arable character.

5.130 Dark night skies are common across the LCA, with light pollution concentrated at RAF Welford and junction 13 of the M4 south of Chieveley. The LCA also has a good experience of tranquillity across the landscape. The M4 motorway forms a prominent feature along the LCA's southern boundary with the A34 cutting up from junction 13 northward towards Didcot. These roads create both an audible and visual intrusion, although this is localised.

LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs: Evaluation

Brightwalton Downs valued qualities

5.131 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs are:

- Gentle contours forming part of the dipslope, linking the escarpment and Kennet river valley create a clear sense of place.
- Undulating mixed farmland interspersed with variety of woodland, some of ancient origin, including Ashridge Wood SSSI.
- Isolated distinctive prehistoric features including Bronze Age round barrows and Perborough Castle Iron Age hillfort.
- Historic settlement pattern of small villages set within the folds of the landform, loosely clustered or linear in form.
- Strong local vernacular of red brick, mixed red and blue brick with clay tile, weatherboard and thatch also common, creating a coherent character.
- Sunken rural lanes provide good level of access throughout the landscape, combined with a high density of public rights of way connecting the LCA to the escarpment and river valley.
- Quiet, rural landscape with good experience of dark night skies.
- Woodlands and tree clumps on higher ground create a soft, sheltered character, with long wooded views possible from higher ground to the north, east and west.

Brightwalton Downs local forces for change/issues

5.132 In addition to the forces for change identified at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2A Brightwalton Downs are:

- A small section of 11kV wood pole overhead line is due to be dismantled and undergrounded near Beedon. This will reduce the visual impact of the electricity distribution network on the National Landscape.
- Pressure for new employment developments centred on the M4 and A34 junction and their corridors would extend the impact of development further into the undeveloped areas of the National Landscape.

Brightwalton Downs strategy and local guidelines

5.133 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Brightwalton Downs:

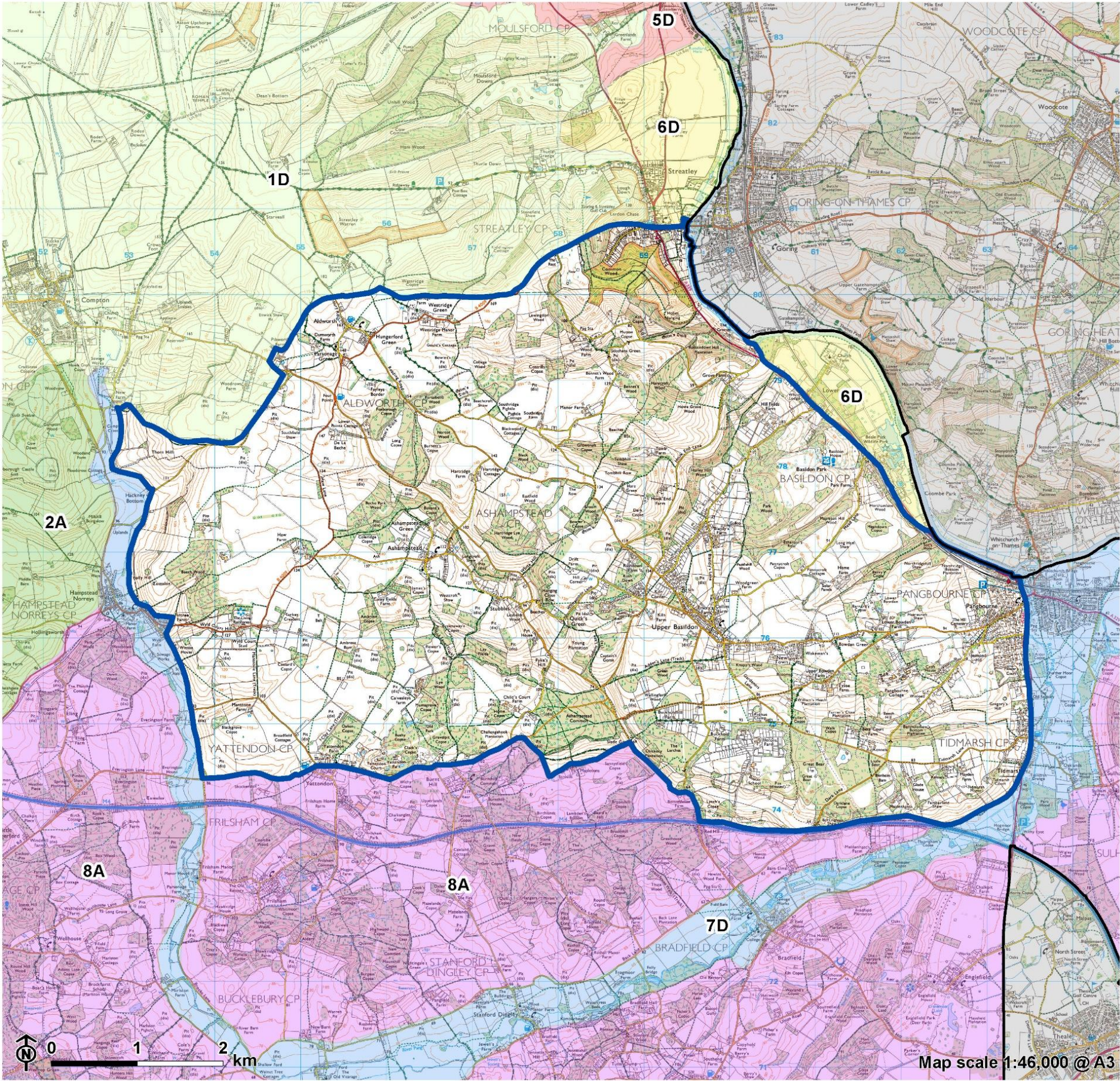
- Ensure any new developments associated with the major road network are carefully sited to avoid undue visual impact on the landscape. Aim to group any developments so they do not ‘straggle’ along the M4 or A34.

LCA 2B Ashampstead Downs

Figure 5.35: Arable farmland with hedgerows and woodland blocks



Figure 5.36: LCA 2B: Ashampstead Downs: Location

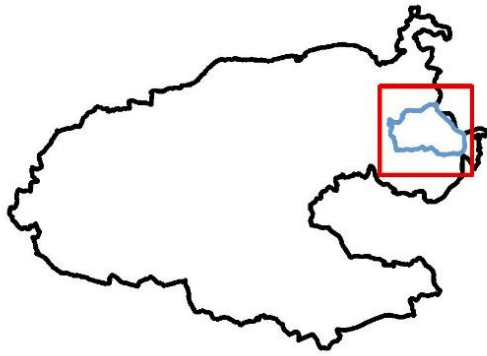


North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2B: Ashampstead Downs

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 2B: Ashampstead Downs
- 1D: Blewbury Downs
- 2A: Brightwalton Downs
- 5D: Moreton Plain
- 6D: Thames Floodplain
- 7D: Pang Valley
- 8A: Hermitage Wooded Commons



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey License Number AC0000817126.

Figure 5.37: Arable fields with views to the wooded Chiltern hills



Figure 5.38: Rolling arable fields with good public access



LCA 2B: Ashampstead Downs: Description

5.134 The Ashampstead Downs are located on the eastern edge of the chalk upland of the National Landscape. The eastern boundary is formed by the River Thames, which cuts through the Goring Gap, separating the North Wessex Downs from the Chilterns. The northern boundary is defined by the top of a ridge at a height of approximately 165 metres AOD at the transition to the higher more open Blewbury Downs (LCA 1D). The Pang Valley (LCA 7D) marks the boundary to the west, with the southern boundary being formed by the change in geology and topography to the gravel and clay lowlands of Hermitage Wooded Commons (LCA 8A).

Natural influences

Landform, geology, water and soils

5.135 The Ashampstead Downs form part of the chalk dipslope. The highest points in the north reach 170 metres AOD. The chalk dips gently southwards towards the Kennet Valley and is incised by several dry valleys systems running east-west leaving pronounced escarpments. At the Goring Gap the ridges between these east-facing valleys are truncated creating a series of bold headlands above the Thames Valley. The Ashampstead dry valley system is a particularly distinctive physical feature and runs south to west from near Aldworth towards the Pang Valley. The chalk is overlain by a thick deposit of clay-with-flint, which forms brown clay loamy soils. Areas of better-drained calcareous soils occur to the east of the area and support arable production.

Biodiversity

5.136 The area is characterised by its extensive woodland cover forming a dense mosaic with the arable farmland. Significant portions of the woodlands are ancient and semi-natural in origin and contain a diverse range of species including beech, oak, ash, cherry, and whitebeam. There are, in addition, larger more regular blocks of commercial coniferous plantation, particularly along the southern edge of the dipslope. The generally large blocks of woodland are often inter-connected creating a strong sense of enclosure throughout the area. Sinuous woodlands cling to the steep sides of some of the escarpments, such as at Harley Hill Wood and Rotten Hill Plantation.

5.137 Holies Down on the steeper slopes of the escarpment and dry valley floors is a nationally important grassland site, designated as a SSSI for its species-rich chalk grassland communities.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.138 The area is very densely wooded, concentrated on the valley sides and steeper slopes. Many of these woods show evidence for assarting, probably informal seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century intakes. Some field boundaries in the area are quite sinuous or irregular, and these may represent informal late medieval or post-medieval enclosure. Some of these might have been laid out between existing tracks. The regular, straight-edged fields are probably the result of formal eighteenth or nineteenth century Parliamentary enclosure.

5.139 Pasture is also concentrated on the steeper slopes, particularly along the escarpments or along the dry valley floors and include Holies Down, designated as an SSSI for the quality of its unimproved chalk grassland. Basildon Park, with its pasture and ornamental planting provides a more formal element in the north-east.

Historic features

5.140 There are few surviving prehistoric remains within this area, apart from one Bronze Age round barrow surviving as an earthwork on Folly Hill. Grim's Ditch, probably dating from Roman or early Medieval period, runs across the area in several interrupted sections.

5.141 Proximity to Reading and the Thames resulted in a number of small estates within the LCA. Basildon House and its associated parkland and gardens (designated as Grade II Registered Park and Garden) represents 'polite' landscape features dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown designed the kitchen garden, and possibly advised on the park planting. The estate is now owned by the National Trust.

5.142 The manor house at Bere Court was founded in the 13th century, with alterations in the 16th and 18th centuries. It was once owned by Reading Abbey and then later by the Elizabethan mathematician Sir John Davies. Pangbourne College was built by John Belcher in 1897-98, in a redbrick William and Mary style. It was opened as The Nautical College, Pangbourne in 1917 to prepare boys for careers in the Merchant Navy.

Settlement pattern

5.143 A less-well populated LCA, with hamlets and small villages often focussed around crossroads or a small green. Ashampstead is a traditional

village which occurs on a spur overlooking the dry valley while Pangbourne, as the name suggests, is set on the valley sides of the Pang. Conservation Areas are designated at Ashampstead, Aldworth, Pangbourne and Yattendon. Outside of the villages, red brick farmhouses are common.

Principal settlement

5.144 Pangbourne is a rural service village of approximately 3,300 inhabitants set on the valley sides of the River Pang. The Roman road between Silchester and Dorchester ran through the area, and is likely that a Romano-British settlement existed here. A settlement is first recorded in the 9th century, and two mills are mentioned in the Domesday Book. The introduction of the Great Western Railway in 1870 connected the village directly to Reading, and increased residential development. 20th and 21st century development has further expanded the village, which has spread west up the valley sides into the Ashampstead Downs and further east along the River Pang floodplain (LCA 7D). It has also expanded south along the A340.

Figure 5.39: Pangbourne



5.145 Pangbourne is located at the confluence of the River Thames and the River Pang. This creates a scenic riverside setting with wide meadow and wetland areas on the eastern edges of the village. In contrast, the west of the village climbs the valley sides of the Pang and is set among semi-natural woodland. This coupled with the local rural lanes and dense hedgerows help to

create a sense of enclosure and tranquil atmosphere to the area around Pangbourne.

Figure 5.40: The River Pang is an important part of the village's setting



Communications and infrastructure

5.146 An intricate network of winding rural lanes cuts through the wooded landscape, often following the lines of the dry valleys. The M4 motorway forms a short section of the south-eastern edge, on an embankment. Electricity infrastructure crosses the landscape and forms prominent skyline features above the otherwise undeveloped, wooded skylines.

5.147 A good network of tracks and footpaths provides recreational access. Ashampstead Common is a former deer park which now contains open mixed woodland with ancient yew trees. The Common is crossed by a network of footpaths and bridleways, and is a popular recreation spot, especially for birdwatching. The Living Rainforest at Hampstead Norreys is also popular with visitors.

Perceptual Influences

5.148 The Ashampstead Downs have strong topographic variation which, in combination with the high amount of woodland, creates an intimate, enclosed landscape with restricted views. The area is generally remote and tranquil; there

is a good experience of dark night skies, with the only light pollution from Pangbourne in the south-east.

5.149 Modern intrusions are limited and their impacts tend to be localised, for example noise and visual impact of the M4 in the south-east.

LCA 2B Ashampstead Downs: Evaluation

Ashampstead Downs valued qualities

- Distinctive chalk landscape with pronounced escarpments due to the incision of dry valley systems, including the dramatic Goring Gap, where the River Thames has cut down through the chalk.
- Extensive woodland cover, including areas of ancient woodland, which create an intimate and enclosed character.
- Small historic villages set around crossroads or village greens and estates at Basildon Park, Bere Court and Pangbourne provide a sense of time depth.
- Steep, winding rural lanes, tracks and public rights of way are distinctive features and provide a good level of access.
- Sparse settlement character combined with the topographic variation and woodland results in strong sense of tranquillity and a remote character.

Ashampstead Downs local forces for change/issues

5.150 In addition to the forces for change set out at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2B Ashampstead Downs are:

- Some unsympathetic plantation woodlands, used for growing Christmas trees, are not in keeping with the deciduous woodland character of the landscape.
- Development pressure from Pangbourne, which may further climb the downland. Ribbon development along the A340 threatens the coalescence of Pangbourne and Tidmarsh.
- Localised visual and noise impact of the M4 which forms part of the southern boundary.

Ashampstead Downs strategy and local guidelines

5.151 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Ashampstead Downs:

- Plantation woodlands should be sympathetically managed to avoid intrusion on visual character. Selective felling should be adopted to utilise natural regeneration and reduce the landscape impact. Where new

plantations are created, the use of single-species planting or exotic conifers should be minimised.

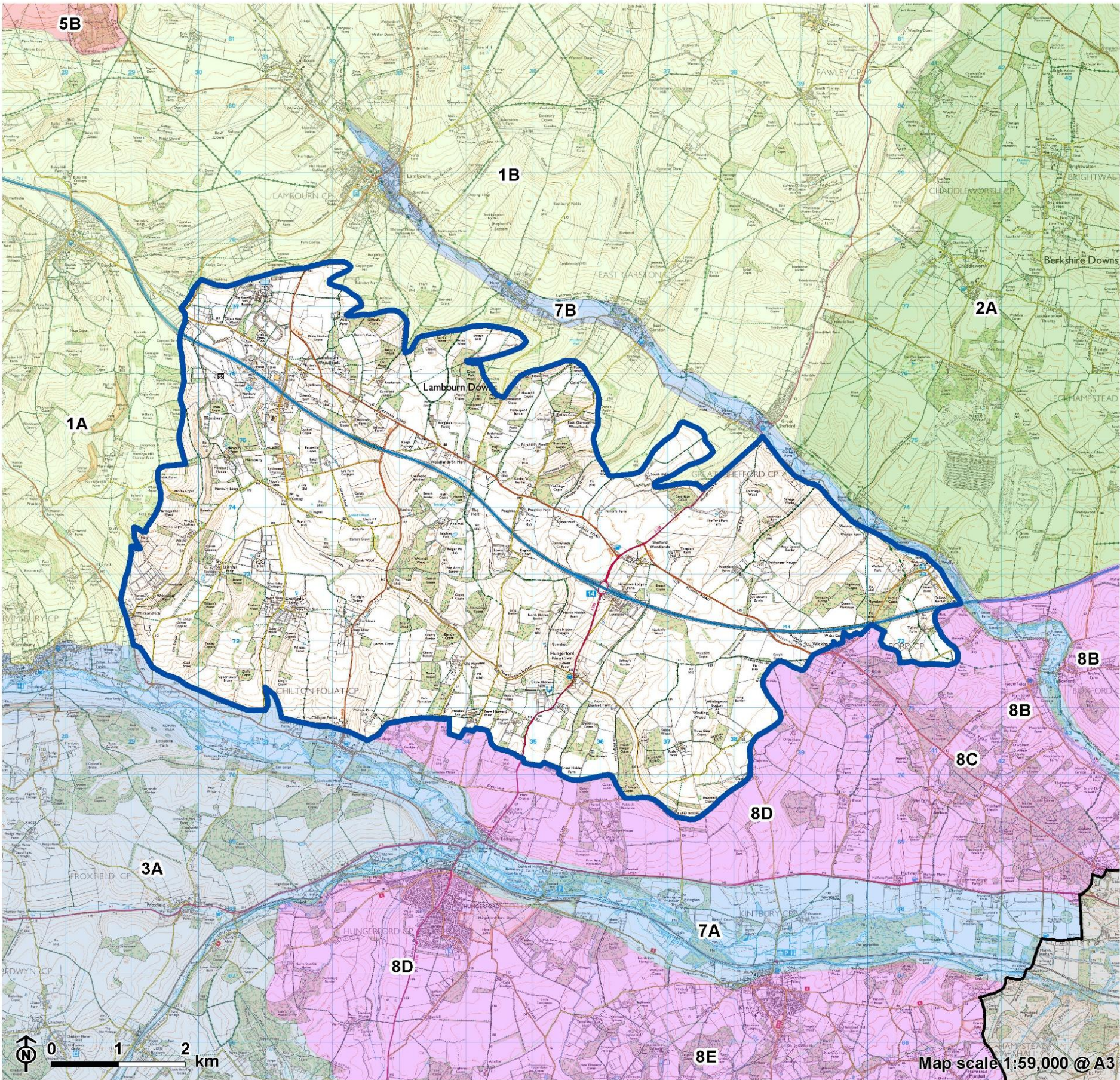
- Carefully manage existing veteran and ancient trees, and support succession of veteran tree habitat by pollarding, including the creation of maiden pollards, and identification and management of future veterans within the parklands, especially at Basildon Park Registered Park and Garden.
- Ensure that any future development along the A340 retains a sense of separation between Tidmarsh and Pangbourne.

LCA 2C Lambourn Wooded Downs

Figure 5.41: Rolling grazed downland with woodland blocks



Figure 5.42: LCA 2C Lambourn Wooded Downs: Location



North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 2C: Lambourn Wooded Downs
 - 1A: Marlborough Downs
 - 1B: Lambourn Downs
 - 2A: Brightwalton Downs
 - 3A: Savernake Plateau
 - 5B: Chiseldon - Wanborough Plain
 - 7A: Kennet Valley
 - 7B: Lambourn Valley
 - 8B: Winterbourne Farmland
 - 8C: Wickham Wooded Heath
 - 8D: Hungerford Farmland
 - 8E: Highclere Parklands

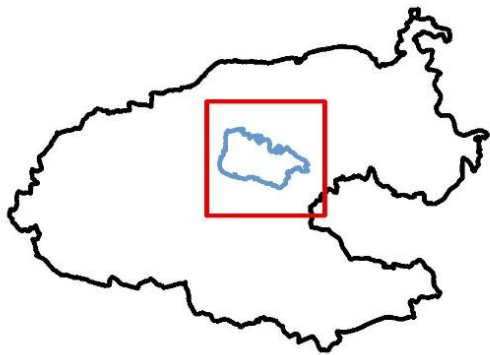


Figure 5.43: Farm converted to industrial uses close to Membury



Figure 5.44: Rolling arable fields with wooded skylines



LCA 2C Lambourn Wooded Downs Description

5.152 Lambourn Wooded Downs are centrally located within the National Landscape, with the high open downland of Lambourn (LCA 1B) to the north and Marlborough Downs (LCA 1A) to the west. The area forms part of the gentle dipslope, which falls southwards to the Kennet Valley (LCA 7A).

Natural Influences

Landform, geology, water and soils

5.153 This area is underlain by the Upper and Middle Chalk, incised by a number of dry valleys, including the impressive system that runs from Lambourn Woodlands, through Old and New Hayward Bottom to Hungerford Newtown and beyond. This creates the characteristic strong rolling plateau landform. The overlying clay-with-flint deposits cover the higher sections of the plateau, producing predominantly clay loamy soils with variable flint content. Around Hungerford Newtown a smaller area of well-drained calcareous silty soil follows the dry valley system of Old and New Haywood Bottom. The gently undulating landform slopes southwards with the highest point in the north occurring at Membury earthwork at 200 metres AOD and the lowest point in the south at 100 metres AOD as it transitions to the Kennet river valley and lowland landscapes.

Biodiversity

5.154 This is a well wooded landscape with the pattern of woodland largely relating to the distribution of clay-with-flint deposits, with a particular concentration on ridges and in the west. There is a substantial amount of ancient semi-natural woodland as well as more recent conifer plantations.

5.155 Unimproved grassland is restricted to steep slopes and includes nationally important chalk grasslands at Westfield Farm Chalk Bank and Cleeve Hill, both designated as SSSIs.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.156 Large scale fields are interspersed with woodlands to create a woodland mixed arable and pasture farmland mosaic, with fields bounded by hedgerows and thick shelterbelts. The chalk dipslope to the east is characterised by more open arable farmland. Local variations in the landscape pattern include the

regular rectilinear fields and ridge top woodlands in the area around Woodland St Mary and a more enclosed area dropping to the Lambourn Valley, where deeply incised lanes run between high grassy banks overhung with oak, hazel and holly.

5.157 A more recent land use is the conversion to equestrian use. Equestrian centres, stud farms and pony paddocks are common, particularly in the north associated with the Lambourn Valley (within LCA 1B).

5.158 Many of the small copses and 'hanger' woods on valley sides show evidence for assarting. Some of the irregular modern field boundaries also represent assarts or intakes into woodland during the later medieval or post-medieval periods. Much of the landscape is still very open and must have remained open grazing or commons until the post-medieval period. Chilton Foliat parish is characterised by its parallel, sinuous roads and field boundaries running north to south or north-east to south-west, many following ridgelines or valley bottoms. Many of these boundaries represent 'ladder' fields running for several kilometres over the uplands. Although some may reflect medieval boundaries, most probably result from informal post-medieval enclosure, sometimes in between existing tracks and droveways. More regular, straightedged fields represent eighteenth and nineteenth century formal, Parliamentary enclosure.

Historic features

5.159 There is comparatively little evidence for the early use and management of this landscape, apart from isolated individual Bronze Age round barrows on ridgelines. The large Iron Age hillfort at Membury is a prominent feature. Ermin Way, a Roman road from Corinum (Cirencester) to Calleva (Silchester) ran across the area, and its route survives as the B4000.

5.160 Kingswood House with its stables and gallops represents more 'polite' post-medieval or early modern landscape features. while Welford Park (Grade I listed) is a 17th century country house set in a small landscaped park.

Settlement pattern

5.161 There are no villages within this landscape; the settlement pattern is characterised by regularly spaced farmsteads and loose collections of buildings (for example Woodland St Mary and Lambourn Woodlands) along the B4000 (former route of Ermin Way Roman road). There are a large number of equestrian centres and stud farms, as well as farmsteads that are now in use as

business centres. Redbrick, flint and render, weatherboard, tile and thatch are all common building materials.

Communications and infrastructure

5.162 A dense network of winding lanes, byways, tracks and footpaths connects settlements, often running between banks and hedges, and contributing to the intimate scale of the landscape. These contrast with the busy M4 which cuts east-west across the landscape, and has a large junction with the A138 in the east.

5.163 Membury Airfield was constructed in 1942 and used by the American RAF (USAARF) until 1947 before being privately owned and operated. Part of the site is now used as the Membury motorway service station, while a 17MW solar farm has been constructed on another part of the airfield. The solar farm is well-placed and screened, and so has little visual impact on the wider landscape.

Perceptual Influences

5.164 The landscape as a whole is affected by the intrusion of noise generated by traffic on the visually prominent M4 motorway which winds through the landscape from east to west. Away from Membury services and junction 14 of the M4, the landscape has a good experience of dark night skies.

5.165 The distinctive ridge top woodlands create strong wooded horizons and provide an enclosed and often intimate character. Sunken rural roads create a strong sense of enclosure. This contrasts with expansive open views from higher ground where woodland allows.

5.166 Welford Park is a well-used filming location, including for a number of seasons of the Great British Bake Off.

LCA 2C Lambourn Wooded Down: Evaluation

Lambourn Wooded Downs valued qualities

5.167 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 2C Lambourn Downs are:

- Chalk plateau landform incised by extensive dry valley systems create a strong, rolling landscape, especially the dramatic Goring Gap.
- Well wooded character, particularly along ridges and in the west. Many woodlands are of ancient origin, and combined with hedgerows and conifer plantations create an enclosed and intimate landscape.
- Remnant chalk grassland habitats, including the nationally important Westfield Chalk Bank and Cleeve Hill SSSI.
- Mosaic landscape pattern formed of arable and pasture farmland interspersed with the woodlands.
- Sparse settlement pattern with small historic landscape parks at Kingswood House and Welford Park.
- The open, largely uninhabited high downs offer vast skies, panoramic views, often of strong, wooded horizons, and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Experiences of tranquillity are high except along the M4.

Lambourn Wooded Downs local forces for change/issues

5.168 Local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2C Lambourn Wooded Downs are:

- Membury Camp Scheduled Monument is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register due to the decline of woodland management on the earthwork.
- Increase in equine land uses. Although the racehorse industry is characteristic of the landscape, the incremental associated infrastructure such as car parking, outdoor lighting and welfare buildings on farms, can have an impact on landscape character.
- Pressure for further incremental changes to farmsteads to accommodate businesses and commercial endeavours, reducing the rural character of the area.

- The potential for further commercial development along the M4 corridor especially near Membury airfield and service station where there is already a strong commercial presence.
- Visual and aural intrusion of the M4, which cuts across the area, and severs access.

Blewbury Downs strategy and local guidelines

5.169 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Lambourn Downs with Woodland:

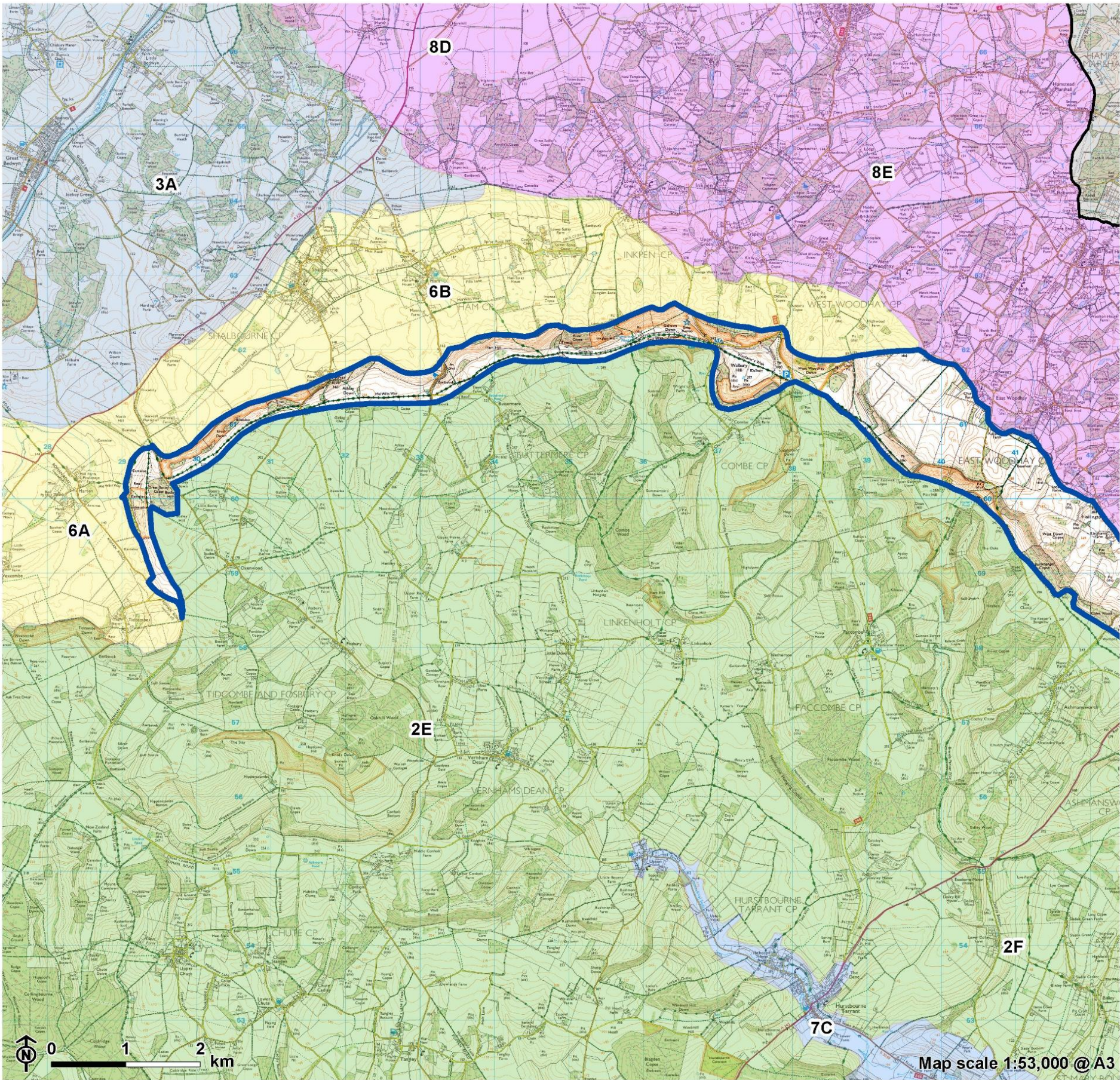
- Conserve, manage and seek to implement suitable woodland management regime to consolidate the status of Membury Camp Scheduled Monument which is on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register.
- Consider the cumulative impact of incremental changes through the addition / expansion of equine facilities, which may change the character of the Lambourn Wooded Downs.
- Consider the cumulative impact of incremental changes to farmsteads in visual terms, encouraging the sympathetic reuse of farm buildings.

LCA 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp

Figure 5.45: Beacon Hill looking north to Highclere along the A34



Figure 5.46: LCA 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp: Location (west)



North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
(west)

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
- 2F: Litchfield Downs
- 3A: Savernake Plateau
- 6A: Vale of Pewsey
- 6B: Shalbourne Vale
- 7C: Bourne Valley
- 8D: Hungerford Farmland
- 8E: Highclere Parklands

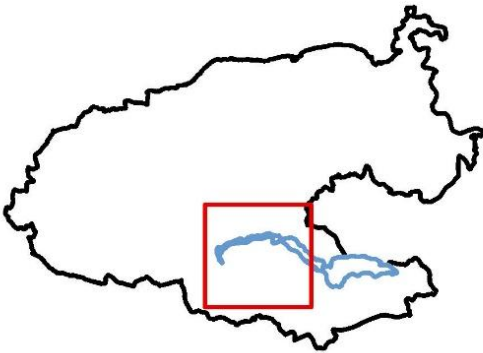
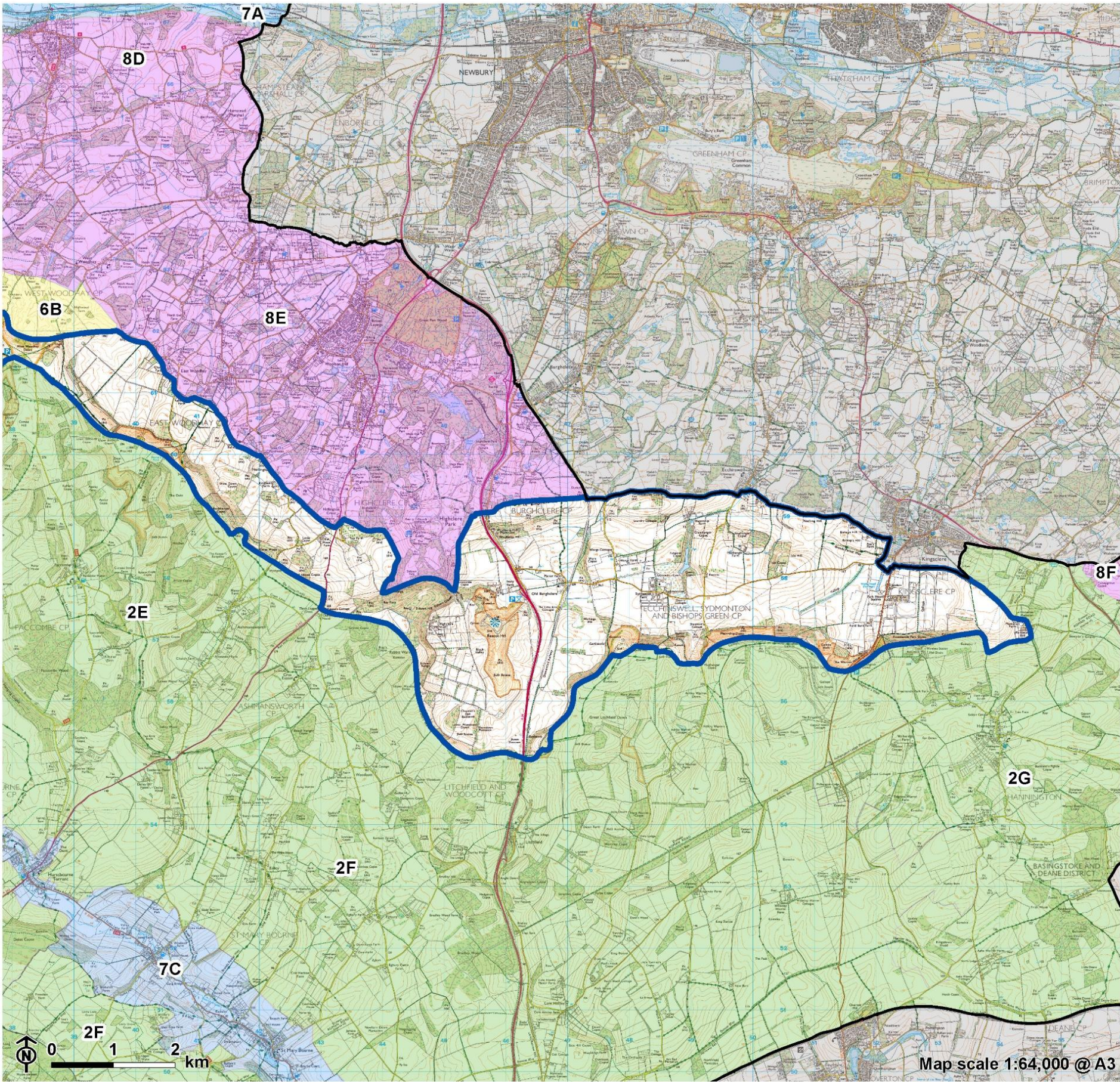


Figure 5.47: LCA 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp: Location (east)

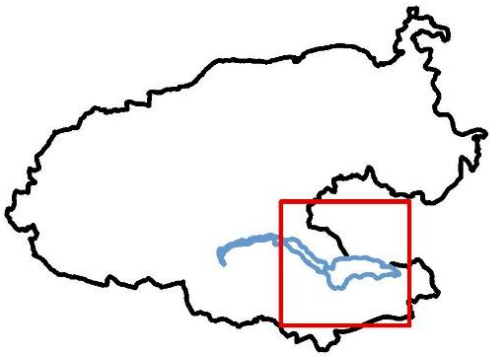


North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



**2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
(east)**

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
- 2F: Litchfield Downs
- 2G: Hannington Downs
- 6B: Shalbourne Vale
- 7A: Kennet Valley
- 7C: Bourne Valley
- 8D: Hungerford Farmland
- 8E: Highclere Parklands
- 8F: Ewhurst Parklands



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey License Number AC0000817126.

12859_001_NWD_LCA_Figures/
12859_r1_001_NWD_LCAs_A3LA - 26/06/2025

Figure 5.48: West along the scarp at Combe Gibbet



Figure 5.49: Horse gallops from Watership Down



LCA 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp: Description

5.170 Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp is a very distinct linear character area formed by the scarp slope, which marks the beginning of the southern chalk upland block of the North Wessex Downs. The northern boundary is formed by the base of the scarp slope, marking the transition to the foothills and lowlands of Shalbourne Vale (LCA 6B) and the Highclere Lowlands and Heath (LCA 8E). To the east near Kingsclere the boundary is concurrent with the National Landscape boundary. The southern boundary generally follows contours at the top of the north facing scarp slope (generally around 250 metres) at the point where the land begins to fall more gently as the dipslope to the south.

Natural Influences

Landform, geology, water and soil

5.171 The hard Middle Chalk, creates a dramatic scarp slope, forming an impressive backdrop to the low-lying land to the north. Unlike the escarpment that defines the northern edge of the National Landscape, it is not linked to a level plain of lower chalk. However, in the east between Kingsclere and Burghclere a narrow belt of sand and sandstone is exposed creating a strongly undulating landform protruding as the foothills of the scarp. Unlike other escarpment character areas the spring line occurs 1 km – 2 km away from the main scarp slope to the north. The scarp is cut by numerous dry valleys and coombes, for example at Watership Down, creating in places a highly convoluted landform. In other areas it presents a sheer cliff face, for example at Inkpen Hill. Along the top of the scarp are numerous high rounded summits, which offer long views, such as Beacon Hill and Walbury Hill, which at 297 metres, is the highest point in the National Landscape.

Biodiversity

5.172 Land cover is mainly pastoral on the steep slopes, with some arable land on the shallower fringes intermixed with extensive blocks of semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Woodland cover is diverse, ranging from oak woodland, beech hangers and coombe woodlands, for example on the lower slopes at Watership Down, and substantial areas of scrub regeneration. These woodlands provide important local habitats and offer food and shelter to a number of birds and mammals.

5.173 The area is extremely rich in chalk grassland, which survives in abundance on the steep slopes. Many of these sites are of national importance and designated as SSSIs, as for example at Walbury Hill, Burghclere Beacon, and West Woodhay Downs. Ham Hill SSSI is a good example of these chalk grassland areas, where notable plant species include twayblade (*Listera ovata*), fragrant orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) and autumn gentian (*Gentianella amarella*). These grasslands are a valuable habitat for butterflies, and support species such as the green hairstreak and chalk hill blue.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.174 Large regular, straight-edged fields in the west of the character area around East Woodhay are characteristic of eighteenth and nineteenth century formal Parliamentary enclosure. Small irregular shaped fields in the east in Ecchinswell parish represent assarts or intakes into woodland during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

5.175 An 'apron' of sandstone forms the undulating foothills of the scarp west of Kingsclere. This area is characterised by its arable farmland, ornamental parkland at Sydmonton and an area of horse gallops creating a more managed landscape. This area also contains the only settlements, at Sydmonton and Old Burghclere.

Historic features

5.176 The area contains significant prehistoric monuments, demonstrating the long human presence. The Neolithic long barrow of Combe Gibbet on Inkpen Hill is a significant monument. Bronze Age remains in the landscape include lynchets and linear earthworks such as those on Ladle Hill. Remnant field systems (soilmarks and lynchets) are preserved on the southern slopes of Beacon Hill, and at Ladle Hill. The scarp top route is reputed to be of Roman origin.

5.177 The medieval village of Burghclere (now called Old Burghclere) which was owned from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries by the Bishops of Winchester, is an example of a shrunken village. Its depopulation and desertion was influenced by a change from arable to pasture farming that occurred on episcopal estates in the later medieval period. Woodland still survives as numerous small copses, especially on steeper slopes. Historically this is part of

a region that was formally known as 'The Woodlands' and in 1848 was described as 'very heavy strong wet land' (Dodd 1987, 242).

5.178 The parkland of Highclere Park (Grade I Registered Park and Garden) extends into this LCA at Sidown Hill.

Settlement pattern

5.179 The steepness of the topography has resulted in a virtual absence of settlement. Settlement within the LCA is limited to isolated farm buildings in the east. Large manor houses with large estates are also found in the east, for example Highclere Park (Highclere Castle lies to the north in LCA 8E), Old Burghclere and Symonton.

Communications and infrastructure

5.180 The scarp top route Wayfarer's Walk / Test Way / Mid Wilts Way provides the only access to the west. Two car parks are located on prominent scarp-top locations and a panoramic viewpoint is also provided. Much of the scarp is also open access land, and popular with hang gliders, paragliders and radio enthusiasts.

5.181 A small number of narrow lanes climb the escarpment, as for example at West Woodhay Down. Sunk deeply into the landform, with steep earth banks and overhung by a tunnel of woodland; travelling through these lanes is a memorable experience. The dual carriageway A34 in the east is a more modern feature. The route of a disused railway, part of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton line, is still visible in the landscape as a tree-lined route. Overhead electricity pylons ascend the slopes to the west of Watership Down.

Perceptual Influences

5.182 High rounded summits along the scarp top, including Walbury Hill and Beacon Hill provide outstanding views across the adjacent low-lying landscapes and into the wooded dipslope. Highly visible archaeological features, including the long barrow at Combe Gibbet and the Iron Age hillforts that crown the summits along the scarp, are defining features of the character area. Conversely, the scarp top is visible from many of the surrounding landscapes, forming a dramatic and distinctive skyline.

5.183 The LCA has a very good experience of dark night skies, with the only light pollution emanating from Kingsclere to the north-east. The limited settlement and road access provides a strong sense of remoteness. This is

reduced in close proximity to the A34 in the east. Although the road is largely screened by planting, it has an audible impact on the otherwise peaceful landscape.

5.184 Combe Gibbet has cultural and romantic associations – a replica gibbet at the top of Combe Gallows marks where George Broomham and Dorothy Newman were gibbeted in 1676 after their execution for murdering Broomham's wife Martha and son Robert.

5.185 The micro-geography of this area (Nuthanger Farm) and the adjacent scarp provides the setting for the epic journey described in Richard Adams' novel *Watership Down*.

LCA 2D Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp: Evaluation

Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp valued qualities

5.186 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 2D Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp are:

- Dramatic and prominent north-facing chalk scarp slope which has sinuous and sculptural qualities, and includes Walbury Hill, the highest point in the North Wessex Downs.
- Beech hangers, coombe woodlands and ancient oak woodlands provide a richly wooded character.
- The steep slopes host calcareous grassland; a nationally rare priority habitat supporting many priority species, including two nationally designated SSSIs.
- Prominent scarp top archaeological remains including long barrows, hillforts and earthworks provide evidence of early human occupation and provide popular attractions for visitors.
- Highly rural and remote landscape, accessed by narrow sunken lanes and a network of public rights of way including the ancient trackway Wayfarer's Walk.
- Spectacular panoramic views from the elevated scarp top summits, with big skies and a sense of tranquillity.

Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp local forces for change/issues

5.187 In addition to the forces for change set out at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2D Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp are:

- Intense recreation pressures at key sites including Beacon Hill, resulting in erosion of the fragile chalk grassland and damage to archaeology.
- Localised visual intrusions, notably the pylon route at Watership Down, plus potential future demand for tall structures, e.g. wind turbines/masts on the scarp summit and skyline, which would have a significant impact in views to the area.
- Visual and noise intrusion from the A34 and A343.

Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp strategy and local guidelines

5.188 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp:

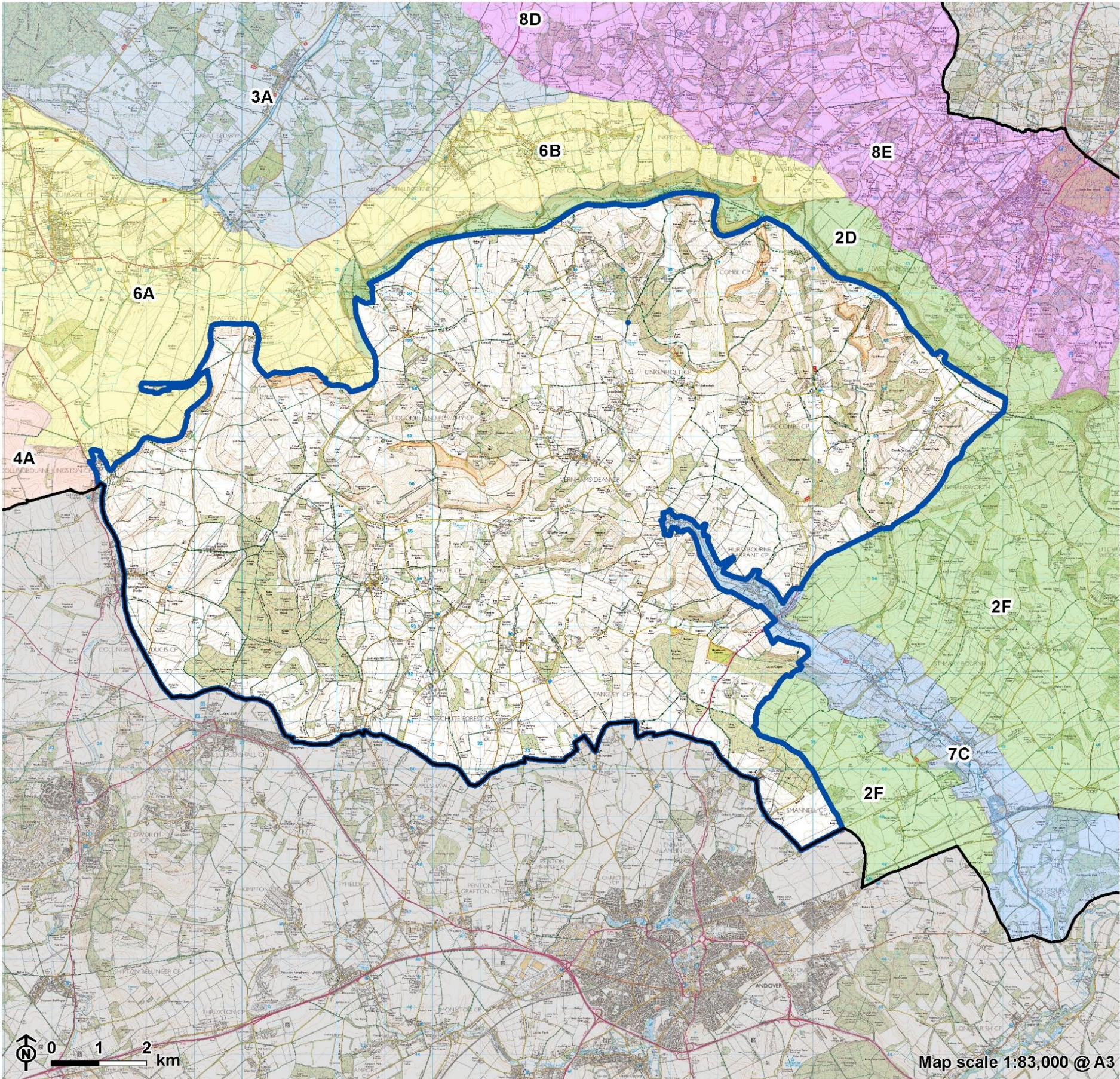
- Conserve and enhance the chalk grasslands and extend and connect isolated chalk grassland habitats along steeper slopes. Seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Encourage restoration of areas eroded by visitor pressure and seek sensitive design solutions to minimise the local impacts of recreation facilities.
- Carefully site any potential tall infrastructure to minimise impacts on the open skyline and sensitive scarp ridge.

LCA 2E: Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs

Figure 5.50: Rolling downland and woodland blocks, Linkenholt



Figure 5.51: LCA 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe Downs: Location



North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2E: Chute Forest - Facombe

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
 - 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
 - 2F: Litchfield Downs
 - 3A: Savernake Plateau
 - 4A: Salisbury Plain
 - 6A: Vale of Pewsey
 - 6B: Shalbourne Vale
 - 7C: Bourne Valley
 - 8D: Hungerford Farmland
 - 8E: Highclere Parklands

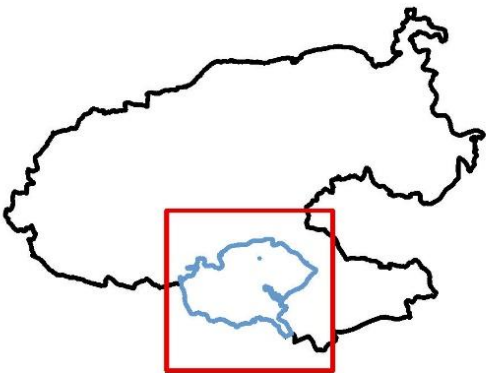


Figure 5.52: Rolling arable fields, woodland and tall infrastructure near Linkenholt



Figure 5.53: Electricity pylons cross arable fields



LCA 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe Downs: Description

5.189 The Chute Forest - Facombe LCA forms a distinct character area on the Wiltshire-Hampshire border. It is part of the southern block of chalk upland, which includes Salisbury Plain (LCA 3A) to the west and continues through the Hampshire Downs to the east. Boundaries are defined to the north by the escarpment rising from the Vale of Pewsey/Shalbourne Vale (LCA 2D) and to the south by the National Landscape boundary. The boundary to the east is less distinct and is marked by a transition to the more open arable farmland that characterises the downs around Litchfield (LCA 2F).

Natural Influences

Landform, geology, water and soils

5.190 The underlying solid geology of the area is almost exclusively formed by Upper Chalk, with Middle and Lower Chalks outcropping only in narrow bands, for example along the scarp above the Vale of Pewsey and steep slopes around Ashmansworth. Deposits of clay-with-flint occur across the central and higher parts of the area, forming heavier clay soils.

5.191 Landform is typical of chalk upland with a rolling topography, dissected by valleys, with the central part of the area cut through by the steep sided valley of the River Bourne* (LCA 7C). The high-rolling hills are cut by a number of dry valleys running parallel to each other into the Bourne valley. Scarps and dramatic coombes are also characteristic, for example at Verham Dean, the swelling steep sided form of Haydown Hill (258 metres) in the north-west, and the distinct steep slopes around Ashmansworth. The escarpment extends from Collingbourne Kingston in the west to Botley Down, near Marten, in the east. Although less distinct compared to the adjoining Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp (LCA 2E), is nevertheless a clear landform feature.

5.192 * There are two Bourne Valleys, a minor river on the boundary to the west adjacent to Salisbury Plain and more prominent valley which cuts through the character area. The latter has a distinct character and is described separately (LCA 7C).

Biodiversity

5.193 The area is characterised by the extensive and connected woodland cover, which occurs in association with the clay-with-flint covered summits. This produces a distinct landscape pattern comprising large blocks of woodland on

the higher areas and long sinuous hangers clinging to the slopes of the steep combs where they are intermixed with pasture.

5.194 The woodlands are varied ranging from areas of ancient woodland to more recent mixed plantations and shelterbelts. The vast Combe Wood and Linkenholt Hanging SSSI in a sheltered valley to the north is a good example of an ancient woodland and incorporates small areas of relict chalk grassland. This site forms an extensive area of ancient and secondary woodland located in a sheltered valley close to the point where the counties of Berkshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire meet. The site also supports small areas of chalk grassland and scrub, which are relicts of open downland. The woodland itself has developed good structural diversity and this together with its humid, sheltered position provide excellent conditions for epiphytic lichens and bryophytes.

5.195 Ash/field maple dominate the more calcareous soils, whilst the acidic clays support birch/pedunculate oak. The landscape pattern is repeated at Faccombe Wood and Netherton Hanging Copse. Sidley Wood is a further woodland SSSI of ancient hornbeam coppice.

5.196 The steep slopes also retain important areas of chalk grassland, such as at Hogs Hole SSSI. The SSSI at Rushmore and Conholt Downs contains what has been noted as possibly the oldest known juniper population found on English chalk.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.197 Much of the woodland shows signs of assarting. The fields are often small and irregular in these locations, with sinuous edges, and some may reflect medieval and early post-medieval boundaries (fifteenth/sixteenth centuries to the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries). In some cases the sequence of field intakes can be established, and some fields appear to have been piecemeal enclosures set out in between droveways or tracks formed by the clearance of woodland to create arable fields. Many of these tracks may also have medieval origins. Late medieval and postmedieval informal enclosure resulted in the medium to large sized regular fields with wavy or sinuous boundaries, typical of the open, more elevated chalk. This enclosure took place from the late fifteenth century but was especially common during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More formal enclosure in the nineteenth century produced regular, rectangular fields.

5.198 The farmland woodland mosaic also includes areas of arable land on high ground enclosed by intact hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees plus smaller assarted fields, such as around Chute and Faccombe. These contrast with areas of more open arable land on the slopes dropping down towards both valleys of the River Bourne. Areas of parkland and estate farmland provide further variation as at Conholt Park.

Historic features

5.199 Neolithic long barrows located at Tow Barrow, Fairmile Down and Smay Down are prominent features in the west. 'Celtic' fields visible as prominent terraces or lynchets on the scarp edge around Highdown and Hitchen had their origins during the late Bronze Age. Other Bronze Age remains include isolated round barrows, which survive as at Doles Copse, and Tringley Wood with a further group to the west of Heath Copse. Aerial photographs and excavations have shown that there were once many more round barrows in the area that have since been ploughed.

5.200 During the Iron Age, this was a densely occupied landscape with individual farmsteads concentrated on ridges and hilltops, with access to water, summer grazing and the other resources of the wetter valleys. This legacy is reflected in today's landscape in the form of several prominent monuments from the period, such as the hill fort of Fosbury, situated on Knolls Down, with associated field systems located nearby. Iron Age enclosures also survive as earthworks at Bevisbury, Tangley Clumps and near Upton Manor. At Blagden Copse, the northernmost of two earthworks enclosures may be a ritual shrine dating to the first centuries BC and AD, commanding views southwards down to Andover. Romano British settlements were concentrated along the river valleys and lower slopes of the chalk downs, with several villas and farmsteads clustered round Andover. The Roman Icknield Way, preserved in the modern line of Hungerford Lane, runs across the area. At Haydown Hill the road follows a curved route around the landform, an example of how Roman Roads sometimes have to deviate from their course. To the south at the foot of the more elevated chalk downland, the road met the Portway, the Roman road that ran to Calleva (Silchester), with the settlement of Leucomagus or Andover developing as a minor market town at the junction.

5.201 Following the disruptions of the fifth century, many areas may have reverted to scrub or woodland, and these became part of the Saxon Royal Forest of Chute. The fact that pre-Saxon earthworks such as those in Blagden Copse survive today suggests that many woodland pockets are remnants of this forest. Place names such as Doiley, Doiley Wood, Doles Wood and Doles

Copse may all be derived from the Old English word *Digerleah* meaning ‘thick wood’. Netherton in the north was a late Saxon manorial complex, and there was a small Saxon settlement and an early Saxon cemetery just north of Andover. The linear earthwork known as Grim’s Ditch may date to the late fifth century AD, and may have protected the approaches to Silchester. It is visible today running through Sawyers Wood and into Netherton Hanging Copse. The linear earthwork known as Devil’s Ditch may also be from this period.

Settlement pattern

5.202 The area is fairly sparsely populated, with a low settlement density comprising small villages and hamlets sheltering in the folds of the chalk topography particularly on the south facing slopes, for example the Chutes, Tidcombe and Vernham Dean. Scattered isolated farmsteads and mansions (Conhault). Ashmansworth and Linkenholt are located on ridgelines. The small village of Collingbourne Kingston is located in the Bourne Valley to the west.

5.203 Vernacular buildings in the area are predominantly of brick and flint, roofed with tile. Harder chalk was sometimes used in walls, and some older buildings retain timber framing, chalk cob and thatch.

5.204 Settlements include the now shrunken medieval village at Brunton. Biddesden was a separate manor to Ludgershall, and was owned by the Benedictine monastery (later a priory) of Amesbury. The medieval village at Netherton, was established on the earlier Saxon site, however, after the demise of the manor house in the fourteenth century, Netherton shrank as nearby Facombe expanded. Villages such as Vernham Dean were linear developments along central roads, but there were also scattered hamlets and individual farms.

5.205 A particular feature of the area is the large manors and houses. Facombe Manor, Tangle Manor, Biddesden House, Netherton House, Ibthorpe House and Upton House all had medieval beginnings, but in the eighteenth century were refashioned by the gentry, with associated gardens and polite landscape features. Biddesden House is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, designated for its 18th and 19th century park and garden from the early 1930s.

Communications and infrastructure

5.206 An intricate network of rural lanes winds across the area linking settlements, often following the lines of dry valleys such as the lane along Doiley Bottom. There are few main roads except the A343, connecting Andover

to Newbury. Two overhead electricity lines cross the landscape, and there is a single wind turbine north of Faccombe.

5.207 Many Public Rights of Way, including the promoted routes the Test Way and Brenda Parker Way, provide a good level of access across this LCA, linking the high downs to the Bourne Valley, lowlands to the north and vale to the west.

Perceptual Influences

5.208 The limited settlement pattern and intricate network of rural lanes creates a remote and tranquil rural character despite proximity to Andover, Ludgershall and the garrison town of North Tidworth.

5.209 The diverse landscape pattern creates experiences ranging from intimate and enclosed to dramatic and open depending on the particular combination of landform and land cover. Taken as a whole the rolling, elevated plateau combined with the distinct and repetitive patterns of woodland cover provides a strong degree of cohesiveness and unity to the area.

LCA 2E Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs: Evaluation

Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs valued qualities

5.210 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 2E Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs are:

- Dramatic landform of rolling hills, scarps, combes and dry valleys creates a distinctive sense of place.
- Woodland coverage including sinuous wooded hangers on coombe slopes, ancient and semi-natural woodlands.
- Remnants of unimproved chalk grassland are nationally important, as demonstrated by the SSSI designations of Hogs Hole and Rushmore and Conholt Downs.
- Strong sense of time-depth from prehistoric earthworks including Neolithic long barrows and Iron Age hill fort at Fosbury, along with historic field pattern with evidence of assarting, and large manors with associated parks, including Grade II Registered Biddesden House.
- Intricate network of winding rural lanes, with characteristic sunken lanes overhung by deep grass banks and trees creates an enclosed, tranquil character.
- Peaceful, unspoilt and tranquil landscape with long-reaching views from the higher ground towards wooded horizons and skylines.

Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs local forces for change/issues

5.211 In addition to the forces for change at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2E Chute Forest - Faccombe Downs are:

- Lack of appropriate management for the extensive woodland cover of the ancient and semi natural woodlands of Chute Forest.
- An existing single wind turbine has recently gained permission to be extended in height. This may create pressure for new, taller wind turbines and other large infrastructure which could be very visible within this landscape.

Chute Forest - Facombe Downs strategy and local guidelines

5.212 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Chute Forest - Facombe Downs:

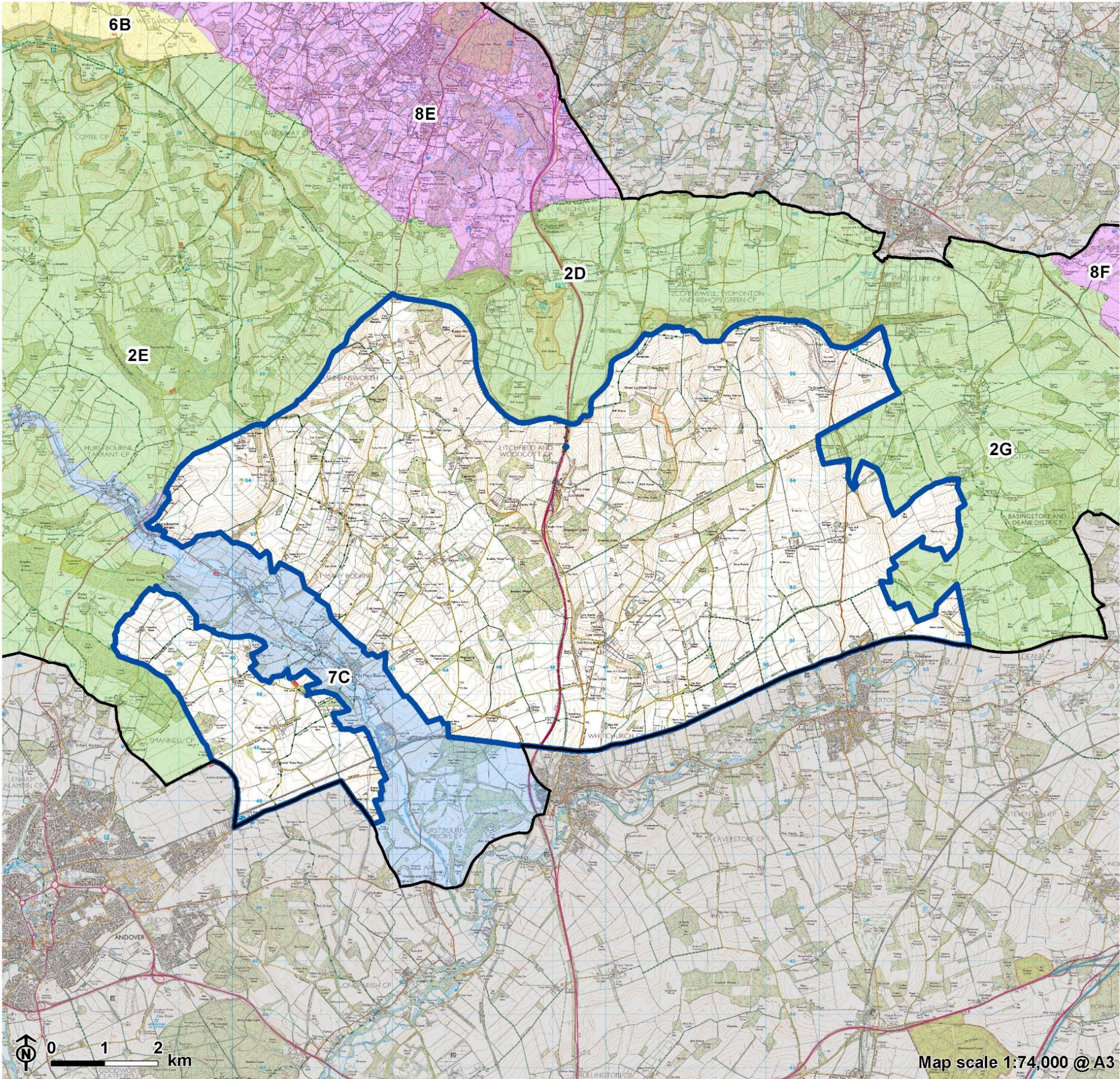
- Develop and implement woodland management plans for Chute Forest that balance conservation and sustainable use by traditional practices including coppicing and selective thinning to maintain healthy woodlands. Where appropriate, consider new planting to link woodland areas, and convert conifer plantations to appropriate native deciduous woodlands.
- Carefully consider future applications for tall infrastructure including wind turbines within this landscape, and applications in adjacent landscapes which would be intrusive.

LCA 2F: Litchfield Downs

Figure 5.54: Open arable fields with wooded horizon near Woodcutt



Figure 5.55: LCA 2F: Litchfield Downs: Location

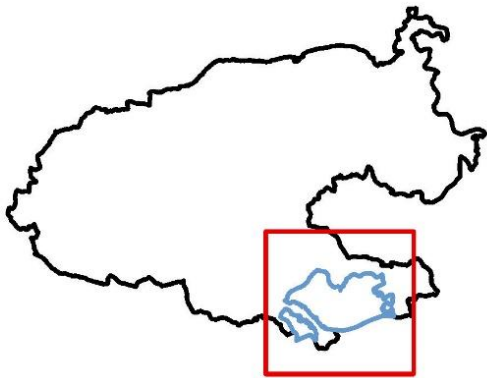


North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2F: Litchfield Downs

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area**
- 2F: Litchfield Downs
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2E: Chute Forest - Facombe
- 2G: Hannington Downs
- 6B: Shalbourne Vale
- 7C: Bourne Valley
- 8E: Highclere Parklands
- 8F: Ewhurst Parklands



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey License Number AC0000817126.

Figure 5.56: Undulating arable fields with strong woodland blocks



Figure 5.57: Woodland provides a backdrop to Litchfield



LCA 2F: Litchfield Downs: Description

5.213 The Litchfield Downs form a transitional unit between the heavily wooded enclosed landscape of Chute Forest - Faccombe (LCA 2E) to the west and the distinct elevated clay plateau around Hannington (LCA 2G) to in the east. A small part of the west of the LCA is separated by the Bourne Valley (LCA 7C). The dramatic steep Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp (LCA 2D) marks the northern boundary, with the character area extending to the National Landscape boundary in the south.

Natural Influences

Landform, geology, water and soils

5.214 The area is underlain by the chalk beds, which are masked in places by the capping of clay-with-flint on summits. The area is dissected by dry valleys. In the north, backing the escarpment there is distinct area of elevated topography, with a strongly articulated landform which extends southwards through the area to Willesley Warren. Elsewhere the land slopes more gently as the dip slope to the south, rolling down to the valleys of the Bourne and the Test.

5.215 The area essentially falls into two distinct parts with the more wooded and enclosed downs to the west and the strongly articulated sweeping landform of open arable downs to the east. It forms a transition between the enclosed wooded landscape to the west and the distinct elevated clay plateau at Hannington to the east. Unifying features are provided by strong sweeping chalk topography with its smooth rounded summits such as at Woodcroft Down, Great Litchfield Down and Willesley Warren and long sinuous dry valleys.

Biodiversity

5.216 Scattered woodlands include a mix of ancient semi-natural formerly coppiced copses, and some small hangers on steep slopes, although these are not as extensive or continuous as the area around Faccombe (LCA 2E). There are also some larger areas of plantation forestry. To the east, woodland cover is limited to occasional smaller regular shelterbelts. The linear planting of Caesar's belt marking the line of the Portway Roman Road creates a distinctive feature.

5.217 The steep slopes host small remnant areas of lowland chalk grassland, although none are designated.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.218 Land cover comprises arable farmland, which to the west is combined with a distinct pattern of woodland. Around Litchfield, for example, the large arable fields are bound by a strong hedgerow structure interspersed with frequent woodland blocks and shelterbelts to create a semi-enclosed landscape with low intervisibility. This is in sharp contrast to the area to the east, for example around Great Litchfield Down and Ashley Warren which has very large open arable fields and a comparatively weak hedgerow structure.

5.219 Some of the boundaries represent 'ladder' fields, characterised by parallel and sinuous boundaries often running for several kilometres over the uplands. These probably result from 17th and 18th century informal enclosure. More regular, straight-edged fields represent post-medieval formal Parliamentary enclosure. There has been extensive removal of field boundaries in the twentieth century to create a much more open landscape in contrast to the scarp to the north and the wooded area to the west.

5.220 Parkland is an important feature in this landscape. Hurstbourne Park incorporates a medieval deer park (established in 1332) and an early designed landscaped park.

Historic features

5.221 Bronze Age remains in the landscape include numerous isolated round barrows occurring on ridges and hilltops. Field systems, which may also date back to this period, are visible as lynchets on Great Litchfield Down. The Harrow Way track, which crosses the southern part of the character area may have originated in the later prehistoric period, and it is still used today. The Roman Road Portway, which may have predated the Roman occupation of Britain, ran between Silchester (Callewa Atrebatum) and Old Sarum (Sorbiodunum).

Settlement pattern

5.222 The landscape is sparsely populated, with settlement concentrated in small hamlets to the west including Litchfield and small scattered farms. Settlement is even sparser in the east with infrequent, but generally large-scale farmsteads dispersed across the area, with few roads. The larger settlements of Whitchurch and Overton are located on the National Landscape boundary to the south.

Communications and infrastructure

5.223 Narrow, hedgerow-bound rural lanes cross the area, contrasting with the dual carriageway the A34 which runs north-south in the centre of the LCA. The A34 is in cutting for much of its length, with considerable tree-coverage along its route. The West of England Main Line railway runs along the southern boundary of the LCA. The railway route is largely lined by woodland, restricting its visual influence on the landscape.

5.224 Public Rights of Way provide access into the landscape, including the Test Way, Brenda Parker Way, and an old railway line north of Whitchurch. However, there are considerable areas with no public access, adding to the sometimes remote character of the landscape.

5.225 A number of overhead electricity routes cross the LCA, and the pylons are noticeable vertical features in an otherwise largely undeveloped landscape.

Perceptual Influences

5.226 The limited settlement and access means that the area retains a quiet rural character, with a good experience of dark night skies. Areas of light pollution are recorded close to Andover in the south-west and Overton in the south-east.

5.227 In much of the LCA the extensive woodland cover, shelterbelts and strong hedgerow structure create an enclosed landscape with limited long-distance views. In contrast, the absence of woodland and hedgerows in the east around Hannington, creates a sweeping elevated landform, which brings a strong sense of exposure and expansiveness, with long views. Watership Down is clearly visible, as is the tower of Highclere Castle to the west.

5.228 Woodcutt House was built on land owned by the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem (better known as the Knights Hospitaller) until the Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. The 20th century house has a garden designed by renowned landscape designer Gertrude Jekyll.

LCA 2F Litchfield Downs: Evaluation

Litchfield Downs valued qualities

5.229 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 2F Litchfield Downs are:

- Strong sweeping chalk topography with smooth summits, dissected by dry valleys, creates a distinctive sense of place.
- Scattered woodlands, some of ancient origin, combined with small hangers on steep slopes plantation forestry and a strong hedgerow network create a wooded character.
- The linear planting along the Portway Roman Road and historic Harroway Belt are distinctive features in the landscape.
- Sparsely populated landscape, limited to small hamlets and scattered farms.
- Quiet, rural character with high levels of dark night skies. Some areas of limited access create a remote character.
- Contrast between generally enclosed and intimate views due to woodland cover, with panoramic longer distance views to the east, which have a strong sense of exposure and expansiveness.

Litchfield Downs local forces for change/issues

5.230 Local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2F Litchfield Downs are:

- Pressure for new developments at Whitchurch, immediately south of the National Landscape including new residential development and a new railway station car park may locally alter the rural character of the area.

Litchfield Downs strategy and local guidelines

5.231 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Litchfield Downs:

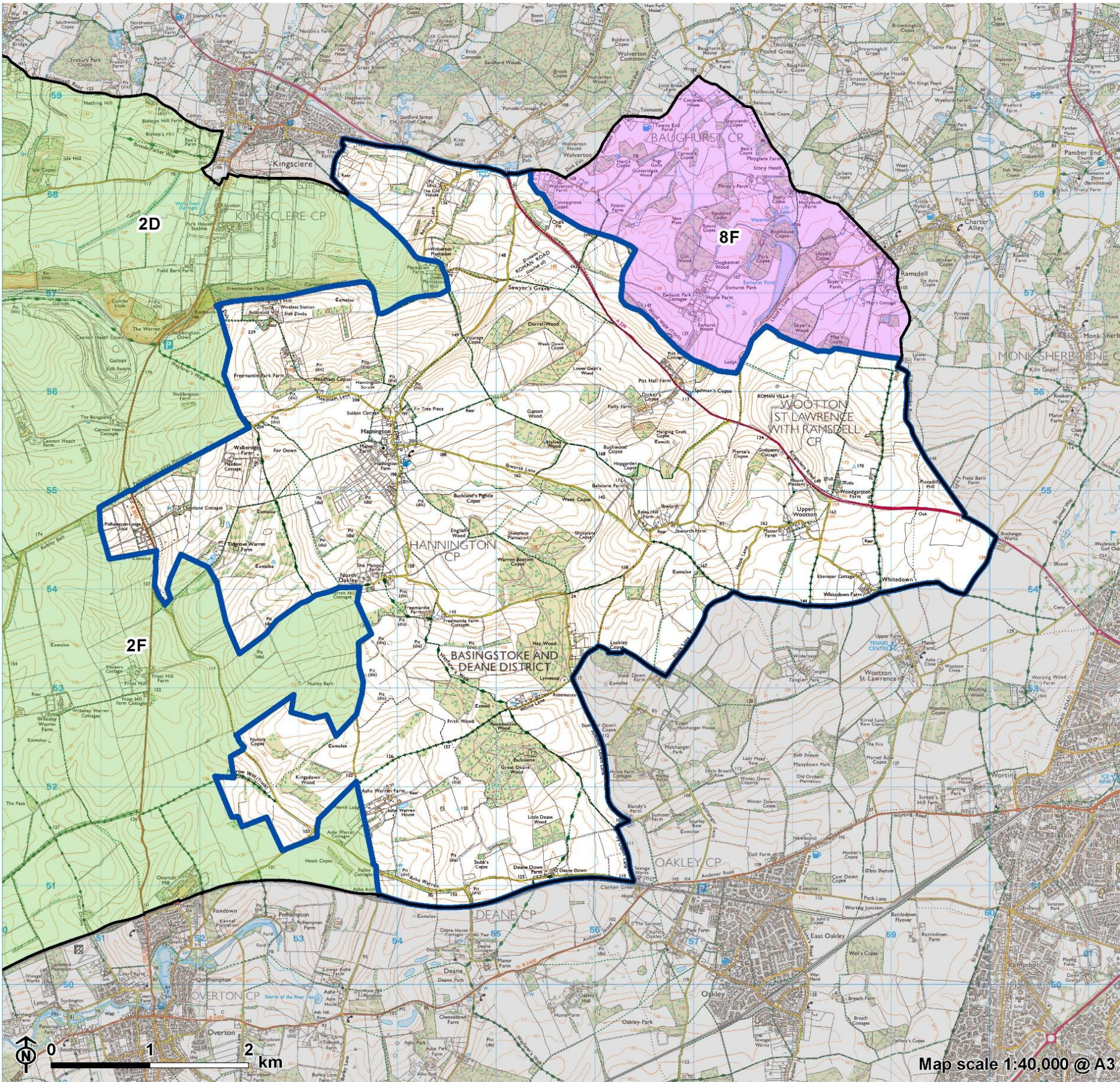
- Ensure any new lighting associated with the proposed car park extension north of Whitchurch is appropriate and retains the area's good experience of dark night skies.

LCA 2G: Hannington Downs

Figure 5.58: Open views from the Hannington plateau



Figure 5.59: LCA 2G: Hannington Downs: Location

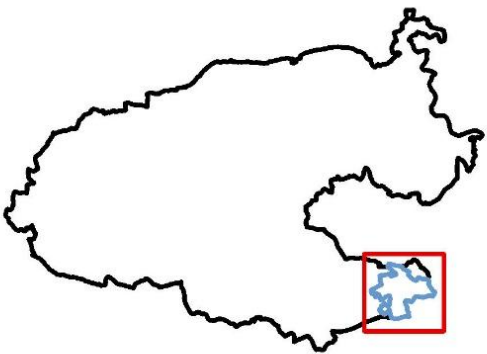


North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



2G: Hannington Downs

- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- Landscape Character Area
- 2G: Hannington Downs
- 2D: Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp
- 2F: Litchfield Downs
- 8F: Ewhurst Parklands



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey License Number AC0000817126.

Figure 5.60: Open arable fields with woodland blocks



Figure 5.61: Brick and tile vernacular at Hannington



LCA 2G: Hannington Downs: Description

5.232 The Hannington Downs lie in the south-east of the National Landscape. The boundaries of the LCA are defined by the change in geology and relief to the north and west. The northern boundary is formed by the top of the Walbury Hill - Watership Down Scarp (LCA 2D) following a contour at a height of approximately 190 metres AOD. The western edge marks the transition to the more open landscape of the Lichfield Downs (LCA 2F). Ewhurst Parklands (LCA 8F) lie to the north-east of the area with a distinct boundary being defined by the lower lying land and change in the geology and soils. The southern edge is formed by the National Landscape boundary.

Natural Influences

Landform, geology, water and soils

5.233 Underlain by the rocks of the Upper Chalk, the area is distinguished by its thick and continuous clay capping which forms a distinctive elevated open plateau landscape. The internal landform is varied with a number of indentations formed by dry valleys, and hills to the north of the area, which add to visual diversity. A series of hills form the highest points to the north of the area including high points on the plateau at Hannington (200 metres AOD) and Cottington's Hill, on the edge of the scarp, at 225 metres AOD. Soils are mainly silty, well drained and flinty. The character area is dry with no springs or watercourses.

Biodiversity

5.234 Mature hedgerow trees and woodland create a more enclosed landscape on the slopes to the east which are characterised by blocks of semi natural woodlands of varying size and shape. These include a number of extensive woodland blocks, such as Hay Wood and Great Deane Wood, many of which are recorded as semi-natural ancient woodland.

5.235 Tidgrove Warren Farm in the north-west is an important site that is managed for biodiversity, and contains chalk grassland, scrub and wooded margins.

Cultural Influences

Land use and field patterns

5.236 Land cover is a mix of open and semi-enclosed arable farmland and woodland mosaic, resulting in a changeable degree of intervisibility. The plateau top and west of the area are predominantly open with large arable fields, sometimes divided by low hedgerows and occasional small linear plantations.

5.237 There are numerous pockets of woodland which show signs of assarting, and the surrounding fields are often small and irregular in these locations, with sinuous edges, and some may reflect medieval and early post-medieval boundaries. In some cases the sequence of field intakes can be established, and some fields appear to have been piecemeal enclosures set out in between droveways or tracks. Many of these tracks may also have medieval origins. Large scale Parliamentary enclosure fields predominate over much of the plateau today, with areas where there has been extensive boundary removal.

Historic features

5.238 Several isolated round barrows occur on ridges and hilltops across the area, such as around Willesley Warren Farm, Tidgrove Warren Farm and Ashe Warren Farm. The site of a Roman villa lies to north of Upper Wootton, while the Portway Roman road crosses the north of the LCA. The course of the road runs NE-SW across the LCA (and continues west into LCA 2F), although it is only reflected in the present-day landscape as a road near Polhampton Lodge Stud.

5.239 A motte at Woodgarsten Farm is evidence of the Norman Conquest, while a moated manor site survives at Wyeford Farm, and Cottington's Hill is a deserted medieval village with fishponds and field systems surviving as earthworks. Other earthworks in the area are also derived from medieval fields. The medieval nucleated plateau-top village of Hannington is the principal settlement in the area.

Settlement pattern

5.240 Settlement is concentrated in the nucleated village of Hannington, centrally located on the plateau top. Hannington developed around a central village green, with later growth along the road to the north and south. The majority of the village is covered by a Conservation Area. Outside of Hannington there are a number of small hamlets such as North Oakley and Ibworth, and

scattered farms. The local vernacular of brick and clay tiles is apparent, with older buildings often of brick and timber-frame.

Communications and infrastructure

5.241 An intricate network of narrow winding rural lanes connects Hannington and the smaller outlying settlements to the larger towns outside the National Landscape boundary. The A339T, cutting across the north-east, is the only major road that runs through the area. The West of England Main Line railway runs along the south-west of the LCA. The railway route is largely lined by woodland, restricting its visual influence on the landscape.

5.242 Public Rights of Way including the promoted Wayfarer's Walk and Harrow Way provide access through the area and connect the rural lanes. There is less access within this LCA than others.

Perceptual Influences

5.243 Cottington's Hill (225 metres AOD) and high points on the plateau at Hannington (200 metres AOD) provide panoramic views, which are reduced in slightly lower lying, more enclosed areas. The round barrows are distinctive horizon features.

5.244 Within the more open exposed area, north of Hannington, long views are a feature and the mast at Cottington Hill and line of overhead electricity pylons are visually intrusive elements.

5.245 The limited settlement pattern, limited access and absence of new development allows the area to retain a quiet unspoilt rural character. There is a good experience of dark night skies, with the only light pollution coming from Kingsclere and Oakley to the north and south outside of the National Landscape.

LCA 2G Hannington Downs: Evaluation

Hannington Downs valued qualities

5.246 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 2G Hannington Downs are:

- Distinctive open plateau landscape with visual diversity from dry valleys and hills in the north, including Cottington's Hill.
- Scattered extensive woodland blocks, many of ancient origin, which create enclosure on the slopes in the east and provide a wooded landscape mosaic.
- Isolate round barrows on ridges and hilltops provide time-depth and are distinctive landmarks on the horizon.
- Limited settlement, concentrated in the historic plateau top village of Hannington which has a strong local vernacular.
- Narrow, winding lanes create a rural character.
- Tranquil, sometimes remote character due to limited access, with a good experience of dark night skies.

Hannington Downs local forces for change/issues

5.247 In addition to the forces for change set out at the LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 2G Hannington Downs are:

- Lack of appropriate woodland management particularly ancient and semi natural woodland areas historically managed by coppicing at Warren Bottom Copse.
- Planned new development of Manydown on the north-eastern edge of Basingstoke (outside of NWD National Landscape) may affect the setting of the character area as well as the wider North Wessex Downs.

Hannington Downs strategy and local guidelines

5.248 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Hannington Downs:

- Develop and implement woodland management plans for woodlands that balance conservation and sustainable use by traditional practices including coppicing and selective thinning to maintain healthy woodlands. Where

appropriate, consider new planting to link woodland areas, and convert conifer plantations to appropriate native deciduous woodlands.

- Ensure the Manydown development does not extend up the downland slopes and retains a sense of separation between Basingstoke and the Hannington Downs.