



North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape

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North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment

The Front End

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

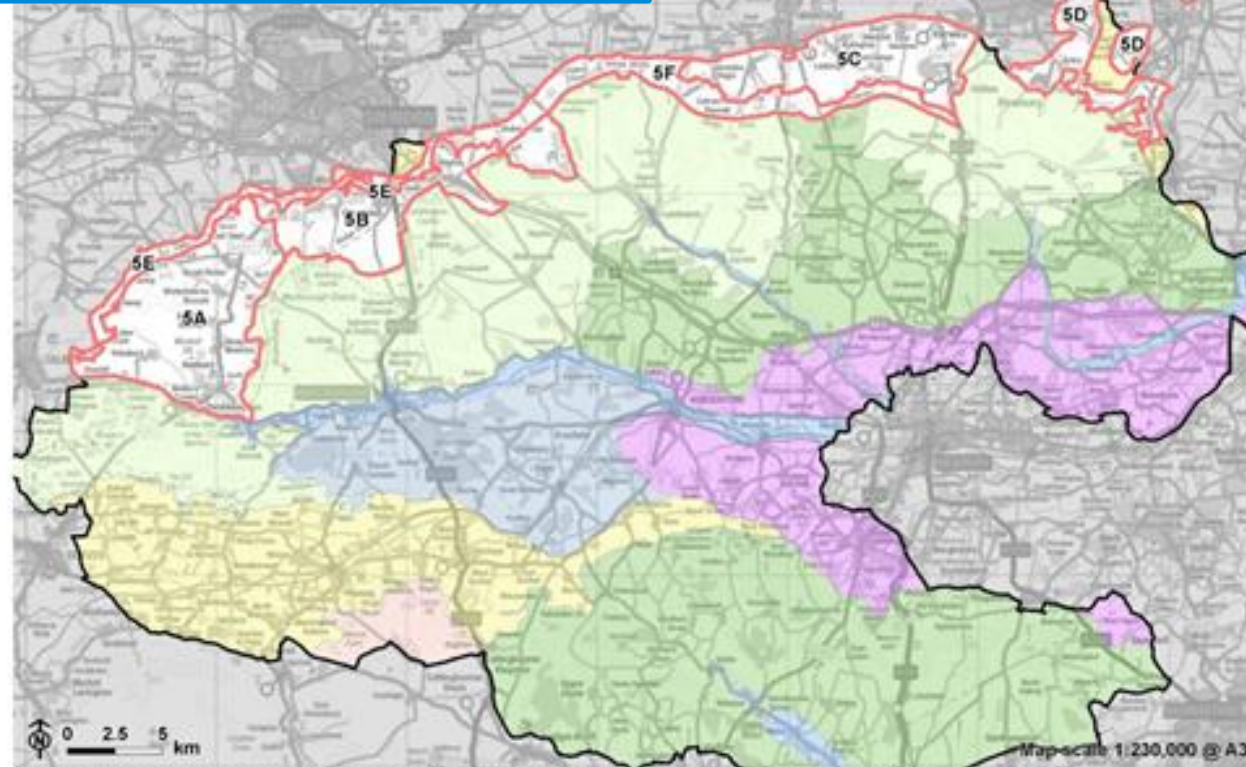
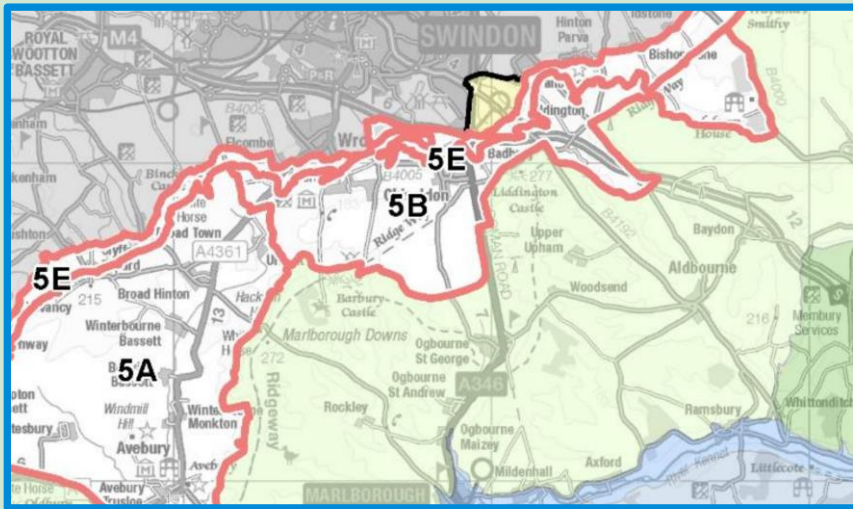
Final report
Prepared by LUC
August 2025



Landscape Character Assessment 2025

Meeting the brief

- To review the existing LCA and provide a comprehensive and up to date LCA for the land within and bordering the boundary of the North Wessex Downs
- To create a positive tool for the management of the landscape in identifying areas that could be enhanced
- Consider how dark skies play a role in the landscape
- Recognise that climate change has and will play a role in changing the landscape
- Ensure that there is some correlation between the LCA and the existing HLC
- Restructuring and repackaging the LCA in a clear and accessible way



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North Wessex Downs
Landscape Character Assessment
North Wessex Downs National Landscape



LCT 5 - Downs Plain and Scarp

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Landscape Character Type

- 5: Downs Plain and Scarp
- 5A: Avebury Plain
- 5B: Chiseldon - Wanborough Plain
- 5C: Hendred Plain
- 5D: Moreton Plain
- 5E: Clyffe Pypard - Badbury Wooded Scarp
- 5F: Liddington - Letcombe Open Scarp



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LCT 5 Downs Plain and Scarp: Key Characteristics

- A chalk landscape of the level plain linked to the distinctive scarp slope which falls sharply to the Vale to the north, creating a dramatic and characteristic landform.
- Incised combes from numerous springs issuing at the junction of the greensand and clay create a distinctive landform, and influences settlement pattern of attractive springline villages clustered along the scarp.
- The western scarp is extensively wooded with linear hanger woods and estate land with many trees. Tree clumps on hills and ridges are a distinctive feature.
- An abundance of herb-rich chalk grasslands including numerous nationally designated sites.
- An open landscape dominated by arable land uses. Large fields without enclosure or hedges create an open landscape with panoramic and extensive views available from the scarp top.
- Parkland and estates are a particular feature of the scarp, where their strategic position offers extensive views. Springs and streams are frequently incorporated into designed landscape schemes.
- Airfields and former military sites are a particular feature across the landscape.
- Strong sense of time-depth, with internationally and internationally important prehistoric sites in elevated positions.
- The prehistoric route of the Ridgeway running along much of the scarp top remains well used to this day as a National Trail. It links many archaeological sites, which are all important visitor 'honeypot sites'.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies.

LCT 5 Downs Plain and Scarp: Evaluation

Forces for change

5.308 The following are identified as forces for change common to the Downs Plain and Scarp LCT as a whole:

- Farmer-led groups throughout the Downs Plain and Scarps are delivering environmentally friendly farming practices at a landscape scale. Many Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier schemes are operating across the LCT, including nectar rich buffer strips and organic management schemes.
- Changes in farming practices, including some grasslands not being grazed, leading to scrub encroachment on chalk grassland and open downlands. Grazed pasture is essential as a landscape setting for the prehistoric archaeological monuments.
- Potential change in character from diversification of crops, including vineyards becoming more economically viable due to the changing climate.
- An increase in recreational users of the Ridgeway and visitor numbers to the many famous prehistoric sites generates higher levels of traffic along rural lanes impacting on their character. There may also be pressure to increase car parking availability to allow access.
- Increase in renewable energy development outside the boundary of the National Landscape, particularly solar farms, influencing the setting of the National Landscape. The glint and glare of the PV panels in the lower-lying vale is clearly seen from the Downs Plain and Scarp.
- Pressure for tall structures (such as telecommunications masts, electricity pylons and wind turbines) both in the LCT and in areas outside of the National Landscape. These structures would be particularly clear in views from the elevated Downs Plain and Scarp.
- Development in the setting to the National Landscape including large-scale and /or tall development on the edges of Didcot, Wantage, Swindon, Calne, and Wallingford. The increase in development affects the panoramic views from the escarpment and its wider setting, as well as the sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- The Downs Plain and Scarp landscapes are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including:



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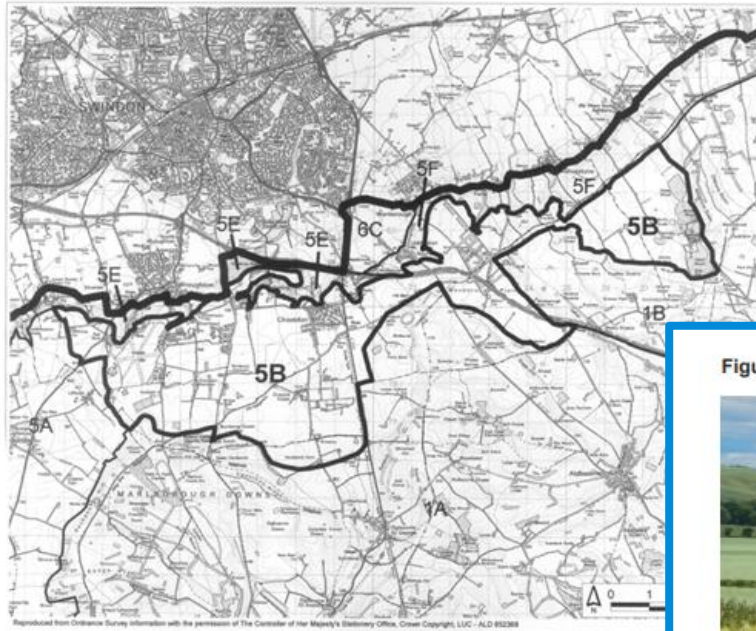
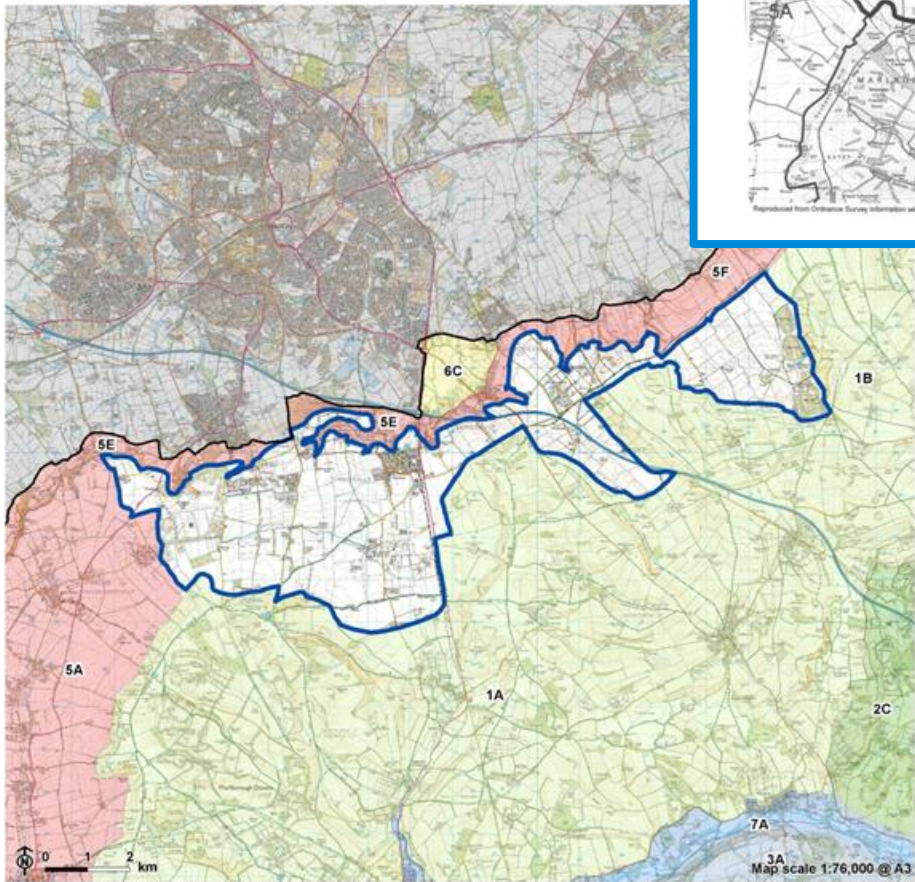


Figure 5.86: B4192 looking east towards the M4



Figure 5.87: Solar farm at former RAF Wroughton seen from Barbury Castle



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- Created an online hub, consulted with LA officers and Parish Councils to seek their thoughts on the existing LCA and for input into
- Valued qualities
- Issues
- Experience of the environment

Figure 5.88: Thatched stone cottages and sunken lane along Turnball



LCA 5B Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain: Evaluation

Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain valued qualities

5.353 The key valued qualities identified for LCA 5B Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain are:

- The level uniform land surface which forms a distinctive character, and a strong contrast to the adjacent scarp.
- Historic village of Chiseldon, with a strong local vernacular of rubble or chalk stone, orange brick and thatched roofs.
- Ashdown Park Registered Park and Garden and manor house, ancient woodland, wood pasture and parkland and sarsen stones (designated as a SSSI) are important ecological and tourism features.
- Recreational access on the former Midland and South-West Junction railway and the ancient Ridgeway route.
- The views to and from the escarpment and across the high Downs are defining features of the area.
- The northern margin of the high plain in combination with the downland scarp (LCT 5E and 5F) forms a distinctive setting to Swindon.

Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain local forces for change/issues

5.354 In addition to the forces for change identified at LCT level, local forces for change and issues affecting LCA 5B Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain are:

- Development pressures including the lateral expansion of the scarp top village of Chiseldon and pressures for re-use of redundant military structures.
- Development of the Great Western Hospital at Swindon has changed the views from the highest ground in this landscape, particularly Charlbury Hill.
- Large-scale development proposed to the south and east of Swindon as part of the New Eastern Villages Development with 8,000 new homes, new schools, employment spaces and community and leisure facilities will be visible from inside the National Landscape and will affect its setting and its relationship with the edge of Swindon.

Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain strategy and local guidelines

5.355 In addition to the guidelines set out for the Downland with Woodland LCT, the following guidelines are of particular relevance to the Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain:

- Conserve, manage and seek to enhance the long-range views both across the LCA and north out of the National Landscape by ensuring all future solar farms are appropriately sited to reduce their visual impact.
- Carefully consider views from the Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain when planning the planting and landscaping strategies of the New Eastern Villages Development, to avoid the sense of the town expanding upwards on the downs.