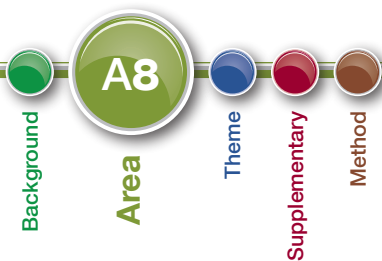




Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# Historic Environment Action Plans

Area 8: Chalk Escarpments










This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.

The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These summaries are divided into two groups:

1. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by area
2. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by theme

These core documents are accompanied by documents which provide background information, supplementary information and detail on the methodologies used to create these documents.

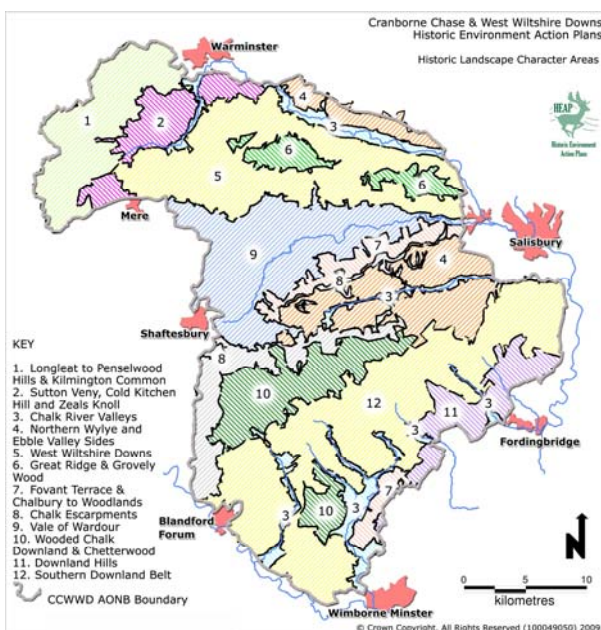
A series of icons help you navigate this suite of documents:

-  **Background** - Provides an introduction to the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans and provides background information on the history and archaeology of the landscape **(B1 to B10)**
-  **Area** - Summarises key characteristics of discrete geographical areas within the AONB, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each area and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(A1 to A12)**
-  **Theme** - Summarises key characteristics of historic environment themes, each document then sets out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each theme and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(T1 to T14)**
-  **Supplementary** - A series of documents which explore supplementary issues of relevance to the Historic Environment Action Plans **(S1 to S2)**
-  **Method** - Introduces the methodology behind the production of the Historic Environment Action Plans **(M1 to M3)**

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**Introducing the Historic Landscape Character Areas**



Twelve distinct Historic Landscape Character Areas have been identified in the AONB. The attributes used to identify the Historic Landscape Character Areas was based on information in the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation. The HLC provided two key pieces of information:

1. The present day historic landscape character present in the AONB.
2. The surviving evidence of the historical development of the area.

The following descriptions aim to provide an overview of each area

which encapsulates the main features of the Historic Environment present and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent.



The process through which the Historic Landscape Character Areas were identified, and mapped, and the sources of information used to create these descriptions is documented in the methodological statement 'Creating and Describing Historic Character Areas'.

**Location, Geology, Land Use and Topography**

There are three areas which all form the steep escarpment edges of chalk downland:

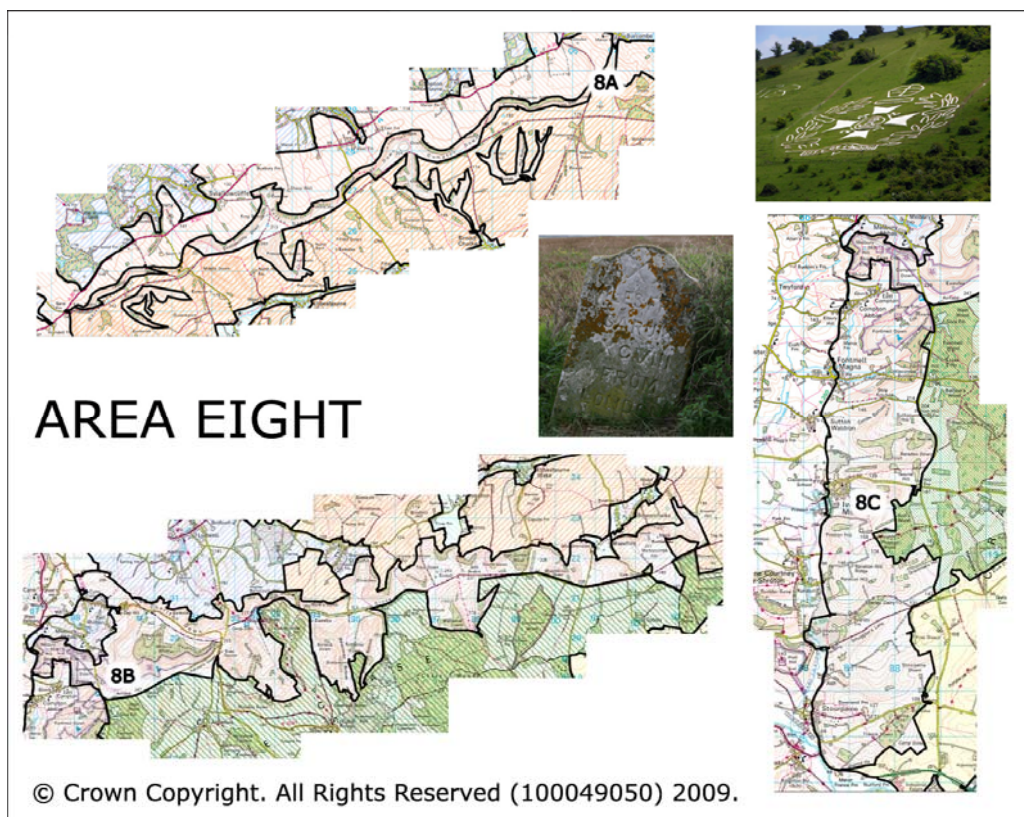
Area 8A forms the east-west Fovant escarpment which runs between Burcombe and Berwick St John. This area rises steeply from the lower lying Fovant Greensand

**A7** Terrace (see Area 7A). It is separated from the Chalke escarpment (see Area 4B). The escarpment is a very steep sinuous escarpment scalloped in places but with few incised valleys. The landscape is dominated by pasture and significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland remain on the steep slopes.

Area 8B forms the east-west Melbury to Winkelbury Hill escarpment, sometimes referred to as the Chalke escarpment, which extends from HLCA 8C to Knowle Hill at Mead End. It rises steeply from the Vale of Wardour (see HLCA 9) and its southern edge makes the transition to the Wooded Chase Downland (see HLCA 10A). A dominant feature in the landscape forming steep high chalk walks that tower over the adjacent valley landscapes. The landscape is dominated by pasture and significant areas of unimproved chalk grassland remain on the steep slopes. Blocks of mixed and deciduous woodland are a common feature of this escarpment.

Area 8C forms the wider north-south Melbury to Blandford escarpment forming the western boundary of the AONB between Shaftesbury and Blandford Forum. The area is bounded to the east by the Wooded Chase Downland (see HLCA 10A) and further south by the Southern Downland Belt (see HLCA 5B). The escarpment begins as a comparatively gentle slope at its southern end growing in scale and drama as it runs north. The length of the escarpment has been eroded into steep valleys or combes. The top and edge of the scarp is dominated by chalk grassland which has been converted to arable though areas of unimproved chalk grassland and woodland remain. In contrast the lower slopes are formed of more densely enclosed blocks of arable land with pasture on steeper slopes.

## Location Map



**Summary****Summary of Key Characteristics**

- *A notable feature is their steep sloping topography. They are primarily formed of semi-enclosed chalk grassland.*
- *The Melbury to Blandford escarpments is less steep in some locations and is wider and demonstrates a greater range of historic landscape types.*
- *Notable features are the Fovant Chalk Badges*
- *Only area 8C is settled and even then sparsely. The settlement focus is along the lower undulating slopes of the escarpment and forms a series of nucleated pre 1800 settlements.*
- *Veteran woodland is located within the combes of the escarpment and plantations are often situated along their crests.*
- *Ancient routeways run across the edge of the escarpments. These are connected to the wider landscape by parallel droveways and bridleways.*
- *The known archaeological record is dominated by prehistoric archaeology including Bronze Age round barrows and Iron Age hillforts.*

**Summary of Statement of Significance**

- *Highly significant large scale expanses of chalk grassland. These are important because they represent a once much more widespread historic landscape type and because of the archaeological earthworks which have survived along with them.*
- *Important patterns of historic routeways*
- *Settlement pattern at the bottom of escarpment 8C includes coherent historic settlement plan and nationally important built heritage*
- *Nationally important historic park and garden*
- *Surviving archaeological earthworks have significant historical and evidential value.*

**Summary of Forces for Change**

- *Changes in Agriculture and Farming*
- *Changes in Climate*
- *Changes in the Natural Environment*

### Summary of State of the Historic Environment

- *The coherence of this landscape is derived from the visibility of the remaining areas of unimproved chalk grassland and the time depth evident from the archaeological monuments which survive along their lengths.*
- *The strength of this area is under threat from scrub encroachment and the potential loss of built heritage.*
- *The surviving Fovant Chalk Badges are in active management*







### Summary of Historic Environment Actions

- *ACTION 1: Provide an AONB wide synthesis of the distinctive character of historic settlements.*
- *ACTION 3: Identify and record components of historic highways*
- *ACTION 6: Gain AONB wide coverage of mapping and interpretation of archaeological features from aerial photographs*
- *ACTION 10: Gain greater understanding of historic farm buildings and farmsteads*
- *ACTION 11: Enhance appreciation of the Prehistoric archaeology of the area*
- *ACTION 12: Widen knowledge of ways and means of maintaining historic farm buildings*
- *ACTION 13: Enhance appreciation of the military history and archaeology*
- *ACTION 15: Increase understanding of Medieval landscape elements of the AONB by academics, teachers and public.*
- *ACTION 17: Improve management of historic boundaries and ensure they are retained*
- *ACTION 19: Coordinate advice on historic parks and gardens management*

### Linkages to other Historic Landscape Character Statements

This statement forms one of 12 Historic Landscape Character Area statements which cover the whole of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These are accompanied by AONB wide Historic Landscape Character Theme statements. These documents together build up a picture of the key characteristics of the Historic Environment of the AONB at a landscape scale.

Other Historic Landscape Character Areas adjacent to this area are:

-  Area 3: Chalk River Valleys
-  Area 4: Northern Wylve and Ebble Valley Sides
-  Area 7: Parliamentary Patterns on the Fovant Terrace and between Chalbury and Woodlands
-  Area 9: Vale of Wardour
-  Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood
-  Area 12: Southern Downland Belt

Historic Landscape Character Themes (HLCT) of particular relevance to this area are:

-  Theme 3: Fields in the Landscape
-  Theme 6: Industry in the Landscape
-  Theme 7: Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence
-  Theme 8: Landscapes of Prehistory
-  Theme 9: Open Land

## History and Context

The creation of the fields on the side of the chalk escarpments began in the 18th and 19th century, and escalated during the 20th century. The topography of the escarpments has very much dominated the form that the newly created fields have taken. They are very steep and sinuous in nature, with curving and semi-irregular boundaries at the top and bottom of the slope. In contrast, the boundaries which divide the escarpments into discrete parcels and run up the slopes tend to be completely straight and spaced evenly apart.

This suggests that while the top and bottom of these escarpments has been enclosed by default of the land either side being enclosed, an organised effort has been made to further subdivide this land into a series of individual regular land parcels. This form of enclosure can be characterised as forming the final stage of the enclosure of the open chalk grassland and downland which was once a dominating component of this landscape. Given the steepness of the escarpments in question it is not surprising that these areas were not enclosed until recently. In general the boundaries are formed of

fences and the escarpments are still composed of rough grazing and scrub and thus maintain much of their previous open nature. Indeed, from a distance the dividing straight boundaries make little impact on the appearance of the escarpment. This feeling of openness is often emphasised by the fact that they are sandwiched between the intensively enclosed valley bottom below and the ploughed downland above.

The survival of grassland in these areas has resulted in the retention of the range and variety of archaeological earthworks which can be seen in this landscape.

The bottom of the north-south Melbury to Blandford Escarpment hosts a number of historic settlements which are situated on the spring line, emanating from the bottom of the chalk.



*See Background Paper 2 for an overview of the archaeology and history of the AONB by time period.*



*See Background Paper 6 for an overview of the key historical figures associated with the AONB.*



*See Background Paper 7 for an overview of Major historical events trends and fashions and their impact on the AONB.*

### Key Secondary Sources

The main source of detail on the historic landscape is the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation report available from [www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk)

The main archaeological record for the area is the county based Historic Environment Record in Dorset and the Sites and Monuments Record in Wiltshire.

Information on the listed buildings in the area is available from English Heritage's Listed Buildings Online <http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk> .

Information on historic farm buildings in the area is only available at the scale of National Character Area as part of English Heritage's preliminary characterisation of historic farmsteads.

The Wiltshire Community pages on the Wiltshire Council Website provide a wealth of information on the parishes in Wiltshire in the area. This is complemented by descriptions of parishes in the Victoria County History of Wiltshire which are organised by Hundred.

Rolland Gant's book *Dorset Villages* (1980) provides a useful potted history of the villages in this area in Dorset.

Nearly all parishes in the AONB have had parish histories created for them and these are available from the relevant county reference library.

Information on nationally important historic parks and gardens in the AONB are available from the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Information on the woodland in the area can be found in the AONB booklet 'A landscape view of trees and woodland' (2010).



The National Trust has produced a regional archaeological strategy 2008-2011 which includes land holdings at Wyn Green and Melbury Down.

B10

*A full list of References is provided in Background Paper 10.*

## Landscape Scale Characteristics and Components

### Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership

- The ancient shire boundary crosses the top of the Melbury Abbas escarpment.
- All the escarpments are subdivided by cross dykes.
- The Fovant escarpment marks the northern boundary of the Chalke Hundred.
- The droveway along the top of the Fovant escarpment forms an east west parish boundary of ancient parishes which slice across the landscape, In contrast the Melbury to Winklebury escarpment is in the centre of large parishes which are much more irregular in shape.
- The Melbury to Blandford escarpment is divided into long thin east-west parishes which take a slice of valley, escarpment and downland.
- Shaftsbury Abbey exerted a great influence over the northern half of the Melbury escarpment in the Medieval period.

T1

*See 'Ancient Boundaries and Landownership' for more information on this theme*

### Farms and Farming in the Landscape

- Chalk grassland still predominates and the escarpments are only semi-enclosed.
- Pre 1800 farms are only associated with the bottom of the Melbury to Blandford escarpment and include 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century barns as well as farmhouses. They are built in local material, including flint, as well as weatherboarding. The top of this escarpment is also associated with 19<sup>th</sup> century outbarns and farms none of which are listed.

T2

*See "Farms and Farming" for more information on this theme.*

### Fields in the Landscape

- The known archaeological record is dominated by the remains of field systems on the escarpment edges, including strip lynchets
- The tops of the escarpment are formed characterised by a mixture of 20<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century fields which enclosed the former open downland. The escarpments themselves are semi-enclosed by fences
- The Melbury to Blandford escarpments include pockets of parliamentary enclosure and parkland. Some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fields present also contain traces of earlier fields.

T3

*See 'Fields in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.*

### Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape

- There is one 18<sup>th</sup> century historic park at Iwerne Minster.

T4

See 'Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Hunting Landscapes

- The chalk escarpments are within the Medieval hunting area of the Cranborne Chase.
- There tops are planted with rectangular game cover crops.

T5

See 'Hunting Landscapes' for more information on this theme.

### Industry in the Landscape

- The escarpment faces are dotted with small chalk quarries.
- There is a stone quarry at Melbury Abbas.
- There are battery chicken sheds on the Fovant escarpment.

T6

See 'Industry' in the Landscape for more information on this theme.

### Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence

- Notable features are the Fovant Chalk Badges. These form the largest group of chalk figures in the UK and are both a SAM and a military monument.

T7

See 'Landscapes of Militarism, Commemoration & Defence' for more information on this theme.

### Landscapes of Prehistory

- Associated with a back ground scatter of Prehistoric flint tools.
- There are two Neolithic long barrows on the Fovant escarpment and one on the Melbury to Winkelbury Hill Escarpment.
- High concentration of visually prominent round barrows along the top of the escarpments. There are less round barrows at the southern end of the Melbury to Blandford escarpment.
- Iron Age hillforts occur on the Fovant escarpment and the Melbury to Winkelbury Hill Escarpment. The former is also associated with archaeological evidence for Iron Age settlement.

T8

See 'Landscapes of Prehistory' for more information on this theme.

### Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century activity in the Landscape

- There is a private airfield on the Compton Abbas escarpment.

### Open Land

- These escarpments are characterised by unimproved chalk grassland which has been subdivided with fences running up the escarpment face and fencing in the top and bottom. These are an ecologically important resource. A larger area of open chalk grassland exists at Fontmell and Melbury Down and a smaller outlier at Wyn Green, all of which are in National Trust ownership. These preserve the character of what was once a much more common historic land type.



See 'Open Land' for more information on this theme.

### Routeways in the Landscape

- Running east west along the top of the Fovant escarpment is a byway forming the route of an ancient droveway known as the Salisbury Way. This was turnpiked in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but was superseded by the turnpike along the modern A30 on the terrace to the north. The droveway is joined at right angles by bridleways and byways providing access from the downland parishes to the south and clay vale to the north.
- The Melbury to Winkelbury escarpment also has an ancient droveway along its length – the Ox Drove. This is joined at right angles by footpaths and bridleways from the clay vale to the north, and paths leading into the wooded downland of the heart of the Chase to the south.
- In contrast the north south Melbury to Blandford escarpment is bounded by two modern roads, both former turnpikes, running between Blandford and Salisbury. One on the higher ground to the east and one on the valley floor to the south. These are joined by east west parallel roads, tracks and footpaths. These are much more numerous than on the other escarpments.



See 'Routeways in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Settlement in the Landscape

- There is no settlement on the Fovant escarpment and Wyn Green Escarpment.
- Only area 8C is settled and even then sparsely. The settlement focus is along the lower undulating slopes of the escarpment and forms a series of nucleated pre 1800 settlements. Building materials are commonly greensand and red brick, with estate style dominating around Iwerne Minister. There are also Early Medieval finds from Compton Abbas.
- The expansion into downland areas is also characterised by the presence of a series of 19<sup>th</sup> century farms on the top of the escarpments
- There are three Conservation Areas.



See 'Settlement in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Water in the Landscape

- The settlement along the bottom of the Melbury to Blandford escarpment is situated on the springs emanating from the bottom of the chalk.

T12

See 'Water in the Landscape' for more information on this theme.

### Woodland and Trees in the Landscape

- Veteran woodland is located within the combes of the escarpment and plantations are often situated along their crests.
- On the Melbury to Blandford escarpment there seems to have been a much more stable pattern of woodland cover than seen in other areas of the AONB. However the patterns in the retraction and expansion of scrub, a characteristic feature of these escarpments, are unknown.
- Woodland is particularly characteristic of the Melbury to Winkelbury Hill Escarpment. The predominantly broadleaved, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, woodlands are found on the Berwick St John – Alvediston north facing escarpment. There is a good deal of older, possibly Medieval in origin, woodland locally named 'ivers' that follow the contours in a sinuous form, and this is most apparent where they line the base of the escarpments, in some places stretching to mid-slope. They are a significant landscape feature marking the transition from the steep downland slopes to the intensively cultivated land below.
- On the Melbury to Blandford escarpment woodlands dating before 1750 are scattered throughout the area, but particularly at the base of the escarpment, while woodlands established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or later tend to be on the top of the slope. Most of the woodland is broadleaved; the steepest slopes are often covered by areas of thorn and hazel scrub woodland.

T13

See 'Woods and Trees in the Landscape' for more information about this theme'

## Statement of Significance

### Introduction

The area is very significant both in terms of the coherence and history of the historic landscape character present, and the presence of Prehistoric and later earthworks. There are a high number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the area has a strong evidential historical value. Surviving blocks of open grassland are significant both as a historic landscape type and due to the archaeological earthworks they contain.

### Coherence, Local Distinctiveness, Rarity, and Time Depth

The wider historic landscape character of this area is extremely coherent; and includes landscape scale blocks of chalk grassland. These represent remnants of a historic landscape type which was formerly much more common across the landscape. These are visually dominant and distinctive to the chalk escarpments. The historic patterns of routeways across these grasslands are very prominent.

Built settlement evidence is generally sparse but the villages along the edge of the Melbury to Blandford Escarpment are associated with a distinctive vernacular architecture using local building materials

The designed landscape on the Melbury to Blandford Escarpment is a visually dominant and coherent feature in the landscape which contributes immensely to the sense of place. It is associated with nationally important built heritage which include their own distinctive estate style.

Time depth in the wider landscape is also displayed where Prehistoric and later, archaeological earthworks are visible in the landscape, especially in the form of Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age hillforts and Medieval strip lynchets.

### Typical surviving components of the area

- Ancient parish boundaries.
- Remains of field systems on the escarpment edges, including strip lynchets.
- A mixture of 20<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century fields which enclosed the former open downland on the tops of the escarpments. The escarpments themselves are semi-enclosed by fences.
- Iron Age hillforts.
- High concentration of visually prominent round barrows.
- Open chalk downland.
- Droveways and turnpikes.
- Sparse settlement with a series of nucleated pre 1800 settlements along the bottom of the Melbury to Blandford Escarpment.

### Nationally Protected Heritage



See Background Paper 8 'Designated Heritage Assets' in the AONB for an introduction to nationally designated heritage.

There are a high number and high density of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (62) compared with other areas. The majority of these are located along the Fovant Escarpment. They include field settlements and Prehistoric and Roman settlement, Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age hillforts and linear features such as cross dykes.

There are 58 listed buildings, a medium number compared to other areas in the AONB. These are associated with the historic settlements located along the bottom of the Melbury to Blandford Escarpment. There are two Grade I listed buildings Stepleton House and the Church of St Mary, and two grade II\* listed buildings, comprising one church and one chantry.

There is 1 registered park and garden, a grade II 18<sup>th</sup> century pleasure ground and park at Stepleton.

There are three Conservation Areas.

## Archaeological Fieldwork in the AONB



See Background Paper 3 'History of Archaeological Discovery in the AONB' for more information on this topic.

N/A

## Evidential Value

There has been no systematic study of archaeological fieldwork in this area. Where information is available the county Historical Environment Records amongst other sources indicate features including:

- Archaeological sites:
  - Two Neolithic long barrows.
  - Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements.
  - Two Iron Age hillforts.
  - Cross dykes.
  - Extensive Iron Age field systems.
  - Extensive Medieval strip lynchets and trackways.
  - Post Medieval limekilns.
  - Undated trackways.
  - Undated circular features and enclosures.
  - Extensive undated field systems.

Many of these sites exist as earthworks due to the survival of chalk grass land in this area.

- Forty-six recorded find spots including Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman finds.
- Ancient droeways and historic turnpikes.
- Historic settlement pattern and buildings in area 8C including:
  - Local vernacular architecture.
  - Historic churches and churchyard monuments.
  - Pumps.
  - Crosses.
  - Farmhouses and farm buildings.
  - Stepleton House and its unique estate style.
- Fovant Cap Badges

The key to the unique historic landscape character of the area is the survival of historic chalk downland, and the archaeological earthworks.

## Historical Value

### *Illustrative Value*

Prehistoric monuments, Iron Age hillforts, field systems and settlement sites existing as visible earthworks.

Small number of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century out-farms surviving on the downs can be used to provide linkages to the sheep/corn system of agriculture.

Chalk Cap Badges provide a visible link to the First World War.

#### *Associative Value*

Iwerne Courtney is associated with the Frekes, a substantial local family during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Springhead, Fontmell Magna is associated with Rolf Gardiner (1902-1971) one of the pioneers of the organic farm movement and a founder of the Soil Association. Fontmell Magna is also associated with John Eliot Gardiner (1943- ) an English conductor.

#### **Aesthetic Value**

The aesthetic value of this area is derived from the large sweeping vistas of open chalk grassland with the visible archaeological earthworks on their slopes and along their edge.

#### **Communal Value**

The villages in this area are strong vibrant communities. A snapshot of heritage which is valued by local people can be seen from available local parish plans.

Iwerne Minister Parish Plan (2006) identifies the importance of the evidence for a long standing history of this community including Roman and Early Medieval history of occupation and the connection with Shaftesbury Abbey. The parish church of St Mary has one of only three Medieval spires in Dorset.

### **State of the Historic Environment**

#### **Introduction**

The coherence of this landscape is derived from the visibility of the remaining areas of unimproved chalk grassland and the time depth evident from the archaeological monuments which survive along their lengths. The strength of this area is under threat from scrub encroachment and the potential loss of built heritage.

#### **Current Knowledge**

Individual features surviving on the chalk escarpments may have been subject to archaeological investigation but there has been no systematic survey of these features.

The chalk cap badges have been researched by both the Fovant Badge Society and the Fovant Historical Interest Group.

The importance of the chalk grassland to biodiversity is recognised but these areas are less appreciated as survivals of a formerly much more widespread, landscape type.

### Existing Levels of Protection and Heritage at Risk

Twenty-one of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments are at high risk. The SAMs in this area are under threat from arable ploughing, vehicle damage, and scrub and tree growth (English Heritage at Risk Register 2009). This is indicative of the risk to the wider known archaeological record.

None of the Conservation Areas in the area have appraisals.

### Loss and Condition

The chalk escarpments have been subdivided by fencing but the chalk grassland in this areas have survived while it has been mostly lost from the downland beyond.

The Fovant Badges Association is active in the management of the Fovant Chalk Badges. Unfortunately several chalk badges have been lost due to the cost of maintaining these monuments.

Historic settlement on area 8C has seen piecemeal additions eroding the historic pattern of settlement. The state of the wider built heritage in the area is unknown, but as many of the known listed features are within the Conservation Areas, and are in active management as residential buildings, it can be postulated that the condition of most buildings is good. The main risk being to any redundant farm buildings and features with high maintenance costs, such as churches and monuments.

The nationally important designed park at Stepleton House is in active management.



*See Background Paper 4 for an overview of the change in land use patterns in the AONB.*

### Coherence

This area has a very visually coherent historic landscape character. This coherence extends to the archaeological earthworks surviving on the escarpments which become especially prominent in low winter light. The surviving chalk cap badges are very prominent features. The historic features of the built environment associated with the historic settlements along the base of the Blandford to Melbury Escarpment are very visible, as is the historic parkland of Stepleton House.

### Forces for change

#### *Overview of the sensitivities of the landscape area to change*

The elements of the escarpment landscapes which are most vulnerable to change are the open and predominantly undeveloped skyline of the escarpment ridge, the sinuous and rounded landform and the distinctive pattern of woodland at the foot of the scarp. While the escarpment is almost totally devoid of settlement, the series of nucleated villages at the foot of the scarp exhibit the local vernacular and have a very strong sense of place. The area is judged to have high sensitivity as it is unlikely to accommodate change without extensive degradation of character and value.



For more information see “Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Landscape Sensitivity Study 2007”.

#### *Overview of forces for change operating on the historic environment*

##### Theme 1: Agriculture and Farming

- Changes in stocking densities and grazing regimes have the potential to rapidly affect the appearance of this historic landscape. Small scale historic field patterns beyond downland areas could see changes in management and be merged. In addition archaeological monuments on surviving grassland need carefully planned grazing regimes if they are to remain free of scrub.
- Increased positive management of elements of the historic environment by landowners until 2013 as an increasing number of farmers enter agri-environment schemes for a 10 year period. Maintenance of current levels of agri-environment scheme monies would increase the numbers of land holdings undertaking positive management of historic environment assets. However the likely possibility of reduced levels of agri-environment money post 2013 could have a major impact on the positive management of archaeological sites and the wider historic landscape in the future.

##### Theme 2: Climate Change

- Construction of new renewable energy infrastructure, wind turbines and wind farms could, if insensitively located, compromise significant landscapes, the visual settling of important sites and buildings, or the integrity of the wider historic environment.

##### Theme 5: Natural Environment

- Increased water extraction has potential impact on buried archaeological remains and, in particular, those that are currently waterlogged.
- Potential for major erosion of important archaeological sites on the top of chalk escarpments especially where ploughing is occurring. Loss or impoverishment of soil will affect viability of agricultural businesses, with knock-on affect on patterns of agricultural exploitation and thus on historic landscape character.
- Closer dialogue between historic and natural environment interests should lead to the design of initiatives that have mutual benefit. A better understanding of long term historical change may suggest potential for more innovative schemes that could include some reversion of intensively used land.



*For more information see supplementary document “Forces for change operating on the historic environment of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB at a landscape scale and their past, current and future impacts”.*

#### **Summary of Key Threats**

- Archaeological monuments are at risk from scrub encroachment.

- Potential loss of historic farm buildings and other historic built features not in active management.
- Erosion of historic landscape character in key historic settlements lacking Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Survival of Fovant Cap Badges reliant on the ongoing work of the Fovant Badge Society.

## Historic Environment Actions



See Background paper 9 for a full list of Historic Environment Actions.

### **ACTION 1: Provide an AONB wide synthesis of the distinctive character of historic settlements.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** – Guiding change within the AONB’s numerous historic villages is done best when there is an informed understanding of their particular development and character. Over half of the Conservation Areas in the AONB do not have a Conservation Area Appraisal, and there are only three Village Design Statements. Only one District has a design guide. This means that there is no easily available information source identifying the distinctive character of either individual settlements or the rural settlements of the AONB overall.

**The Potential Mechanism** – Characterisations of local settlements could be prepared to provide an accessible source of information on the historic characteristics of individual settlements and the range of characteristics found in the AONB’s settlements as a whole to inform planning decisions and ensure that the distinctive character of the AONB settlements is conserved and enhanced.

### **ACTION 3: Identify and record components of historic highways**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The historic highways of the AONB are an under appreciated component of the environment of the AONB and there is no coherent approach to their management and maintenance. The forms of the numerous routeways that thread through the AONB’s countryside, and the lines they take, reveal much about their complex history. They are often the means by which people still move around and appreciate the Area’s landscape, but like all other parts they are subject to change and the erosion of character and fabric can lead to a loss of historic meaning. Although individual historic features associated with ancient highways, such as milestones, are recorded, the way that these features relate to each other, and the setting of the historic highways, is often ignored. This action would increase understanding, appreciation and knowledge of historic highways and by doing so ensure that their key features are retained and appropriately managed. This action is intended to draw attention to the issues at the same time as realising the potential of routeways to enhance people’s enjoyment of the AONB.

**The Potential Mechanism** - attention could be focused initially on the droveways of the AONB as these represent some of the oldest routeways and are served by a good

Rights of Way network. One possible Mechanism could be through the creation of self-guided trails.

#### **ACTION 6: Gain AONB wide coverage of mapping and interpretation of archaeological features from aerial photographs**

**The Threat and the Opportunity:** The buried or surviving archaeology of the AONB has never been systematically recorded from crop marks or earthworks displayed in aerial photographs. This means that there is potential for important archaeological sites to be damaged or inappropriately managed because they have not yet been recognised.

**The Potential Mechanism** - A mapping project for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB could fill gaps in knowledge of plough damage sites, uncover new sites (through crop marks, earthwork patterns etc.), and spatially link known buried archaeology. The aim of English Heritage's National Mapping Programme (NMP) is to enhance the understanding of past human settlement, by providing primary information and synthesis for all archaeological sites and landscapes visible on aerial photographs, or other airborne remote sensed data.

#### **ACTION 10: Gain greater understanding of historic farm buildings and farmsteads**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Historic farm buildings and farm complexes are a key feature of the locally distinctive vernacular architecture of the AONB. There is, however, a lack of information on the location and character of historic farm buildings in the AONB, including their types, ages, typical components, materials, the ways buildings and spaces like yards work together within farmsteads, and the ways they have changed in the last few decades.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The national farmstead characterisation work championed by English Heritage could be built on to fill gaps in our knowledge of historic farm buildings and thereby help to ensure that they are properly conserved and enhanced in the future, or to ensure that any reuse is undertaken sensitively and on the basis of full understanding of the original form and function of the structures and spaces. One approach would be to:

- Collate existing information and make it accessible
- Undertake additional research & survey

#### **ACTION 11: Enhance appreciation of the Prehistoric archaeology of the area**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Although the Cranborne Chase is widely accepted in academic circles as containing internationally important complexes of Prehistoric archaeology, this is not widely appreciated by local people and visitors.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of the AONB's Prehistoric archaeology could be combated through the establishment of a series of self guided trails through which people could explore different aspects of the Prehistoric archaeology of the AONB.

**ACTION 12: Widen knowledge of ways and means of maintaining historic farm buildings**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The Historic Environment Action Plan Steering Group identified that although there had been some good examples of schemes which had reused historic farm buildings, while still maintaining their historic characteristics, these were not widely known.

**The Potential Mechanism** - Good examples of the maintenance and reuse of historic farm buildings could be celebrated and shared with Local Planning Authorities and land owners thereby helping to inspire the conservation and enhancement of other historic farm buildings and farmsteads.

**ACTION 13: Enhance appreciation of the military history and archaeology**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The military history and archaeology of the AONB landscape is an under appreciated component of the story of the AONB. This includes the camps established for Kitchener's new armies in 1914, Second World War camps and airfields, and Cold War sites, including RAF Chilmark.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of surviving military remains in the AONB could be combated by making information on the military historic and archaeology of the AONB more accessible and by identifying private collections of information which will shed light on these important aspects of the historic environment of the AONB. Individuals who have drawn together historic material could be encouraged to become involved in a study of surviving remains. An event could be organised to coincide with the centenary of WW1 in 2014.

**ACTION 15: Increase understanding of Medieval landscape elements of the AONB by academics, teachers and public.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - There is perceived to be a lack of appreciation of the Medieval components of the AONB's landscape: settlements, buildings, castles, fields, pastures, woodlands, roads, mills, hunting chase, parks, etc, all of which contribute greatly to the fabric and character of the AONB as it survives today.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of the Medieval components of the AONB landscape could be combated by a seminar and the creation of a research framework that encourages and sets out a range of achievable goals for further research in the area.

**ACTION 17: Improve management of historic field boundaries and ensure they are retained**

**The Threat** - The historic fieldscapes of the AONB are key characteristics of the AONB landscape which are not at present subjected to integrated and holistic management. There has consequently been loss and gradual removal of the historic patterns of pre 1800 boundaries, including the distinctive pattern of small curving irregular fields around the Donheads. Elsewhere older field boundaries have not been maintained and are either degrading or, if originally hedgerows are becoming overgrown.

**The Potential Mechanism** - This action would aim to halt the decline in the condition of particular field boundaries and the legibility of historic field patterns by providing training for agri-environment and other land management advisors. There is already much advice available on historic field boundary conservation (including implementation of the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations) and management, often generated via the HECAS officers mentioned under Action 5, but most of this is specific to the region's where it was generated. However, this material can be reviewed and tailored to suit the needs of the AONB once a clearer understanding has been gained of the character and needs of the field boundaries within the Area.

This material should then form the basis of training sessions for farmers and land managers working within the AONB. Involvement in such an initiative might be attractive to partners such as FWAG, the National Trust, Natural England and the local Wildlife Trusts.

#### **ACTION 19: Coordinate advice on historic parks and gardens management**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - Historic parks and gardens are a key characteristic of the landscape of the AONB but some historic parks and gardens are under threat from lack of resources and inability to become involved in management schemes to conserve and enhance their key features.

**The Potential Mechanism** – An initial approach to this issue might be to provide the owners and managers of historic parks and gardens with advice and a readily accessible source of information on achievable best practice. Such material is available elsewhere in southern England (often generated by HECAS officers and usually based on carefully constructed Conservation Management Plans). This could be reviewed and tailored to the needs of the AONB as a whole and to particular parks and gardens as required. Registered Parks and Gardens and those that contain assets subject to other forms of designation (Scheduling, Listing, SSSIs, etc) should ideally be subjected to the preparation of a fully and carefully considered management plan.



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	A6	Great Ridge and Grovelly Woods
	A7	Fovant Terrace and the Area Between Chalbury and Woodlands
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Supplementary	S1	Planning and Historic Landscape Character: A Guide for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
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Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## Historic Environment Action Plans

[www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk)

This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans, or HEAPs for short. The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics.



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