

**Capturing the archaeological and historic characteristics  
of a rural road on the Dorset Wiltshire border.  
The example of the B3081 Historic Landscape Appraisal**



## Preface

The section of the B3081 that was studied runs from the junction between Boynes Lane and Shaftesbury Lane at Cann Common near Shaftesbury southwards to the junction with the A354 at Handley Hill. It is an attractive rural road which crosses the Wiltshire – Dorset border. It is located entirely within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. See Map Two for the route of the B3081.

In 2009 the AONB commissioned The Landscape Practice convert a driver's eye view into a landscape appraisal of the view from the road. This entailed an assessment of the landscape characteristics of the route and a record of its current condition (The Landscape Practice 2009). In 2010 the AONB undertook an addition to that project which focused on providing an assessment of the key historic landscape characteristics of the B3081. The results of which are presented in this report.

The new study aims to demonstrate how the AONB wide Historic Landscape Characterisation and Historic Environment Action Plans can be used to provide a deeper understanding of the archaeological and historical aspects of rural roads across the landscape of the AONB.

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Study Aims

This new study provides an appraisal of the historic and archaeological characteristics of the B3081. This includes the historic characteristics of the routeway itself and the characteristics of the wider historic landscape in which it sits.

The study was especially interested in demonstrating the information which can be derived from Historic Landscape Characterisations and Historic Environment Action Plans of relevance to the characterisation and enhancement of rural roads.

### 1.2 Overview of study

This report draws on evidence available from the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation and the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans as well as information held by external partners including the county Historic Environment Records, and English Heritage's National Monument Record.

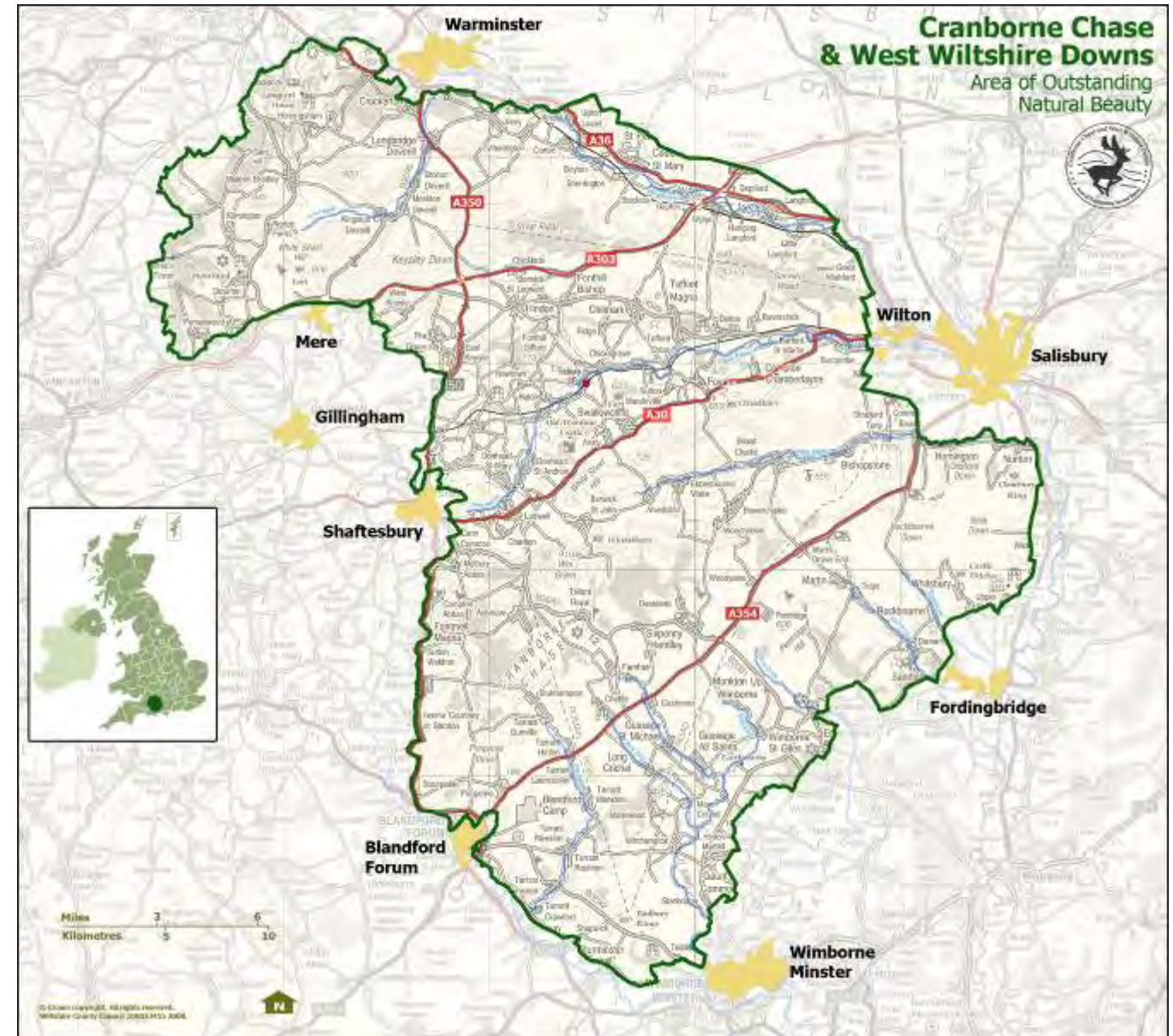
The new study has been desk based and has used the photographic and video footage prepared for the original B3081 Landscape Appraisal.

The study should not be regarded as a fully comprehensive survey of all the archaeological and historical features of the B3081 rather it provides an overview of the key archaeological and historical characteristics of the routeway at a landscape scale.

## 2. Context

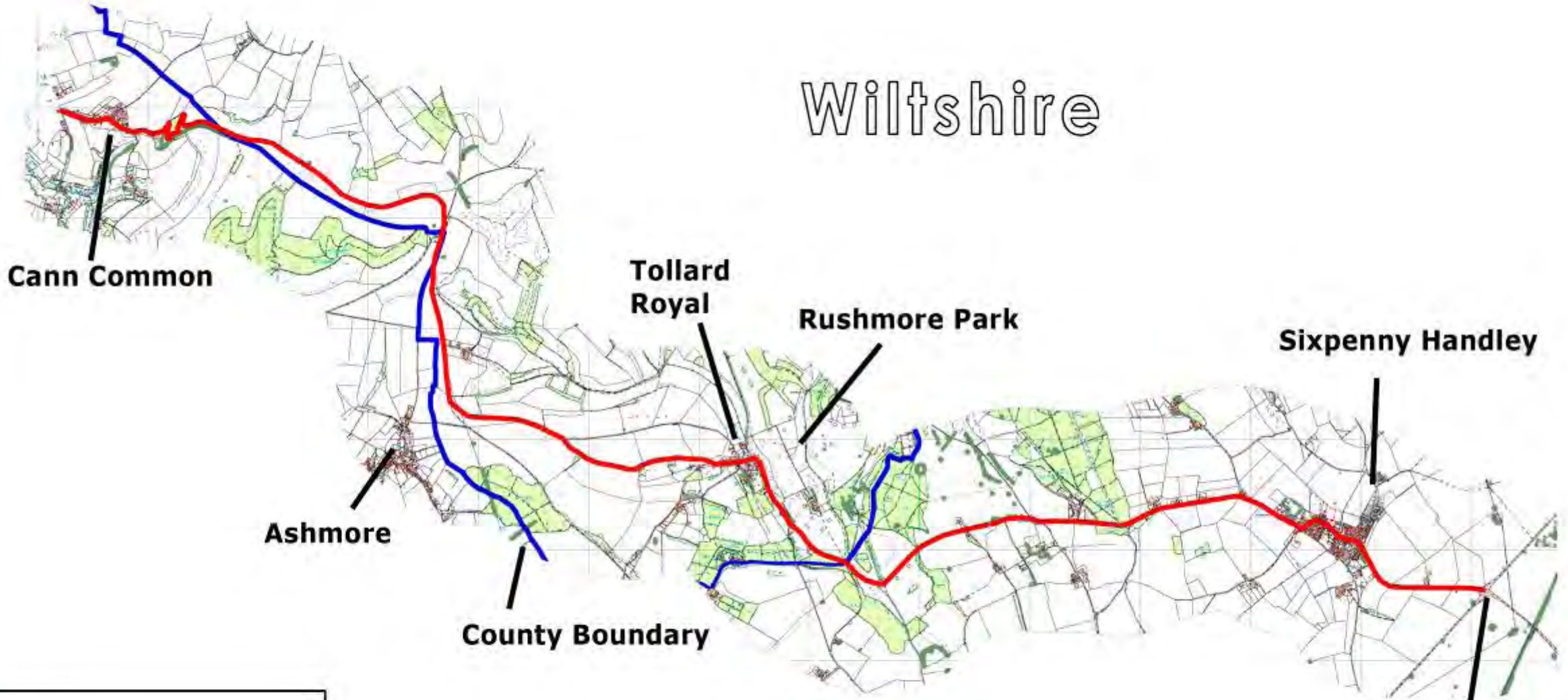
### 2.1 The Location of the AONB

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB covers 981 square kilometres of Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. See Map One.





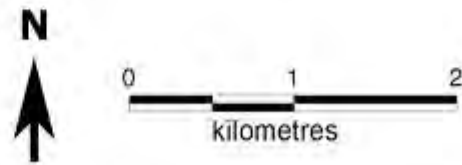
Map One: Location of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

# Route of the B3081



**Key:**

-  Route of the B3081
-  Modern County Boundary



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Map Two: Route of the B3081

The B3081 runs through the middle of the AONB running northwest – southeast from Shaftesbury via Tollard Royal and Sixpenny Handley across the heartland of the Cranborne Chase. It is rural in character and in places it is very narrow with sharp bends and restricted views while in other places it is very open, offering sweeping views across the landscape.

## 2.2 AONB Landscape Character Assessment

An initial Landscape Character Assessment was carried out for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB in 1995 and a more detailed assessment was completed in 2003 (Land Use Consultancy 2003). This is discussed in more detail in the Landscape Appraisal produced by The Landscape Practice. The B3081 between Cann Common and Handley Hill crosses three distinct landscape character areas. It starts south from Cann Common by climbing the steep escarpment of the western edge of the Fovant and Chalke escarpment (LCA 1C), it then traverses the wooded chalk downland of the Cranborne Chase (LCA 3A) before entering the southern chalk downland belt (LCA 2B) which stretches across the AONB between Salisbury and Blandford Forum.

## 2.3 Road corridor character

The Landscape Appraisal has identified six distinctive broad character types along the road. These were:

1. Semi Urban
2. Village
3. Parkland
4. Woodland
5. Open low lying pastureland
6. Exposed downland

## 2.4 AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation

In 2008 the AONB Landscape Character Assessment was complemented by an AONB wide Historic Landscape Characterisation. This is a desk based archaeological study used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. It provides an overview of the complexity of the historic landscape in a given area.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation split the AONB into a series of land parcels which were assigned a Current Historic Landscape Type and up to three Previous Historic Landscape Types which together built up a picture of the evidence for the history of land use in the AONB which survives in the present day.

The results of the project consist of an interactive GIS dataset and a written report describing each of the Historic Landscape Types identified in the AONB landscape, both of which are available via the AONB Historic Landscape Website – [www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk).

Map Four provides an overview of the present day historic landscape character of the AONB derived from the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation. The B3081 crosses an area of diverse historic land use, including formerly open downland enclosed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

ancient woodland, woodland clearance, enclosure and the pre 1800 settlement. These characteristics are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

## 2.5 Historic Environment Action Plans

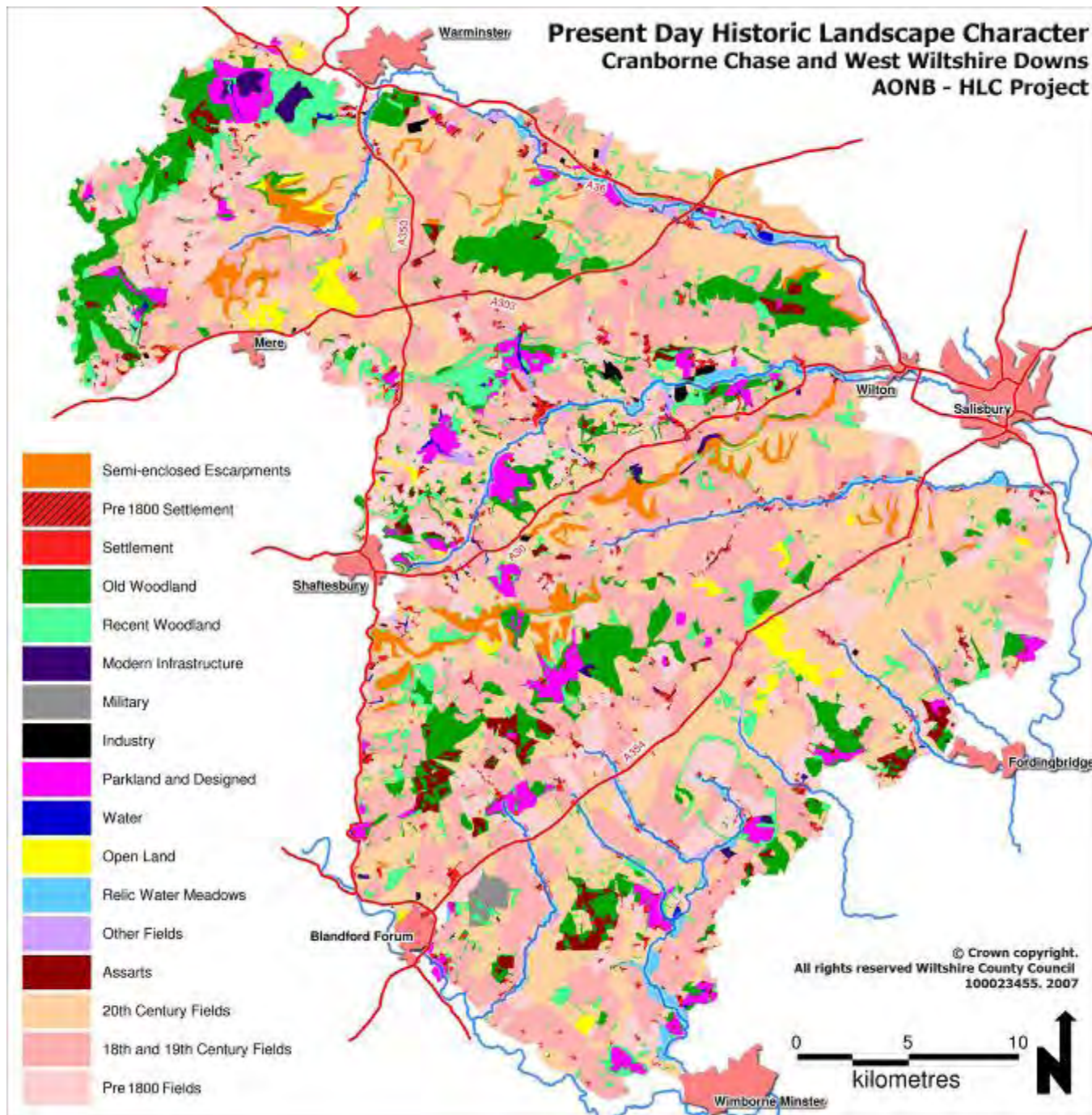
The AONB wide Historic Environment Action plans built on the Historic Landscape Characterisation and identified the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB for a series of Historic Landscape Character Areas (akin to Landscape Character Areas), see Map Four, and a series of 11 Historic Landscape Themes. See [www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk).

The Historic Landscape Character Area descriptions of relevance to the B3081 are:

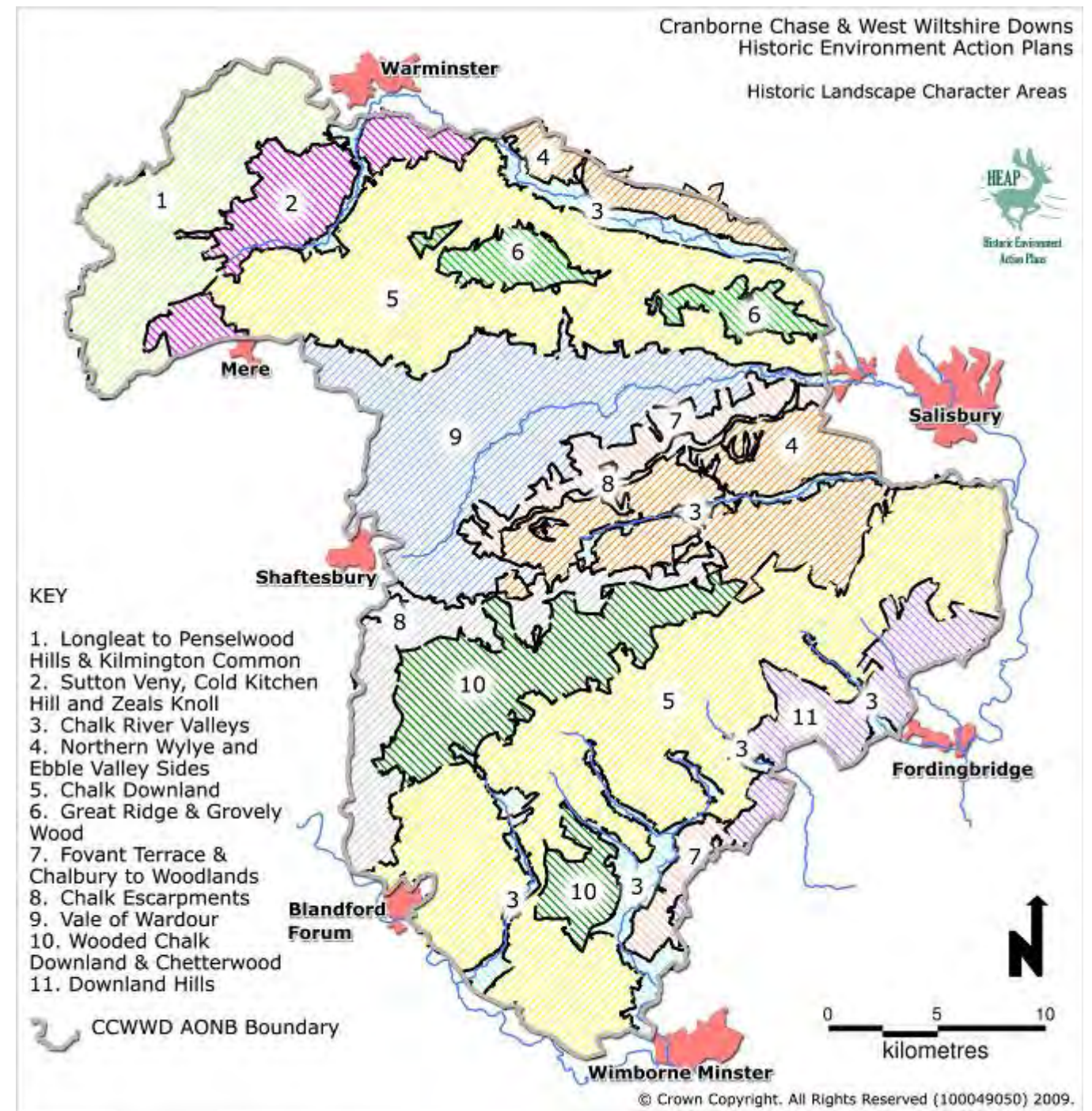
- HLCA 5: Chalk Downland
- HLCA 8: Chalk Escarpments
- HLCA 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood

The Historic Landscape Character Theme descriptions of particular relevance to the B3081 are:

- HLCT 1: Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership
- HLCT 4: Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape
- HLCT 5: Hunting Landscapes
- HLCT 10: Routeways in the Landscape
- HLCT 11: Settlement in the Landscape



Map Three: AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation



Map Four: Historic Landscape Character Areas

### 3. Historic Character of the road

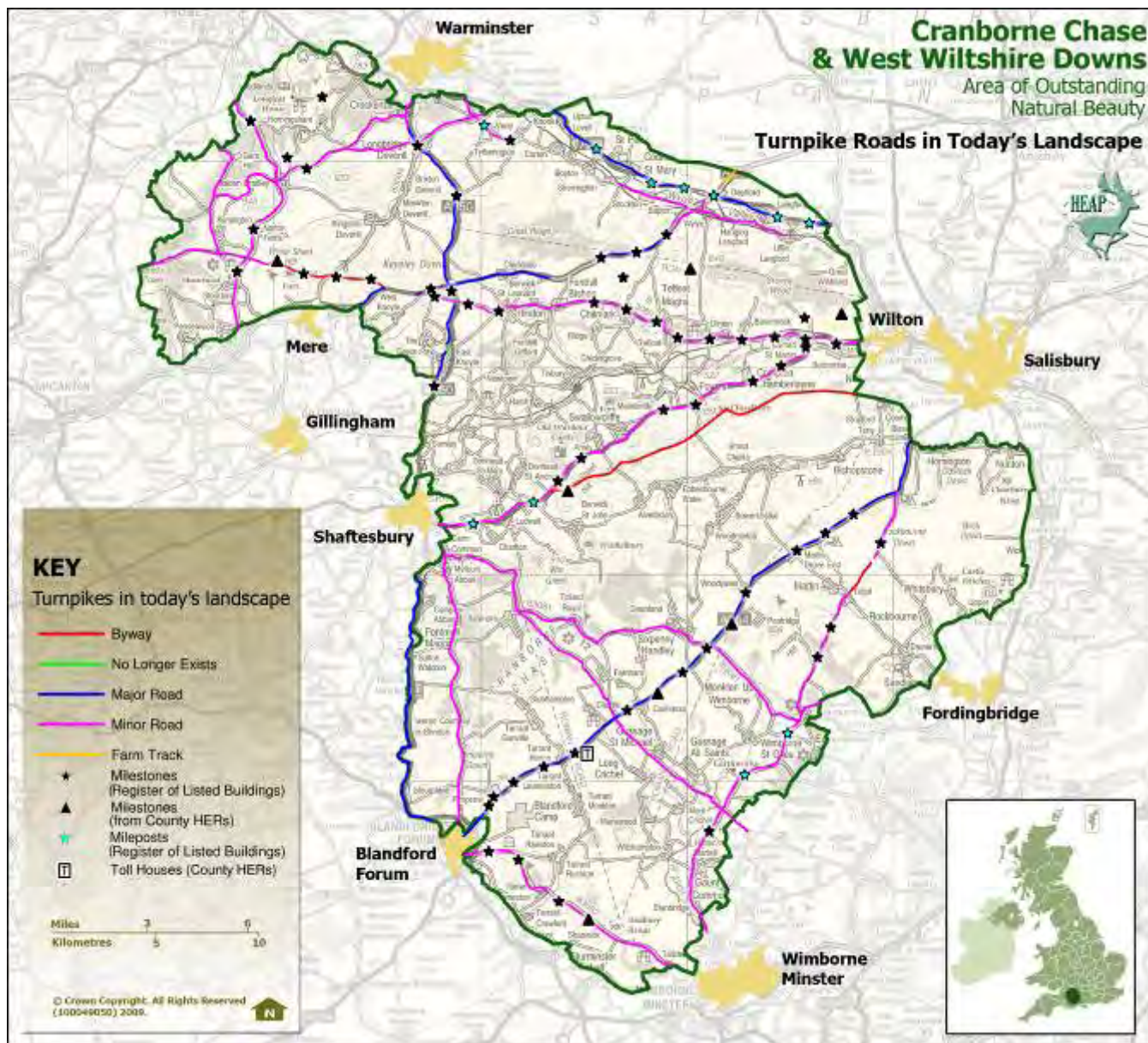
The B3081 as it exists today provides a transportation corridor across the Chase between Shaftesbury and the A354 to the south and beyond to the villages of Wimborne St Giles and Cranborne.

Routeways are notoriously difficult to date, however the origins of routeways can be traced backwards through time using modern and Historic Ordnance survey maps, enclosure maps and awards, and tithe maps. The route of the B3081 is present on the earliest of the available county maps. However the reason why this particular route has become a modern B-road is because it was made into a turnpike by the Cranborne Chase and New Forest Trust in 1832.

Turnpikes represent the first systematic creation of 'made' roads across the country since Roman Roads. Map Five shows that the B3081 comprised one of a series of turnpikes which crisscrossed the AONB. The turnpike meets the Shaftesbury and New Road to Blandford Turnpike established in 1764 at Cann Common and crosses the 1756 Poole Turnpike at Handley Hill. A separate southern branch of the Cranborne Chase and New Forest Turnpike joins the B3081 to the north of Rushmore which still forms a well used road junction on the route to this day. See Map Six.

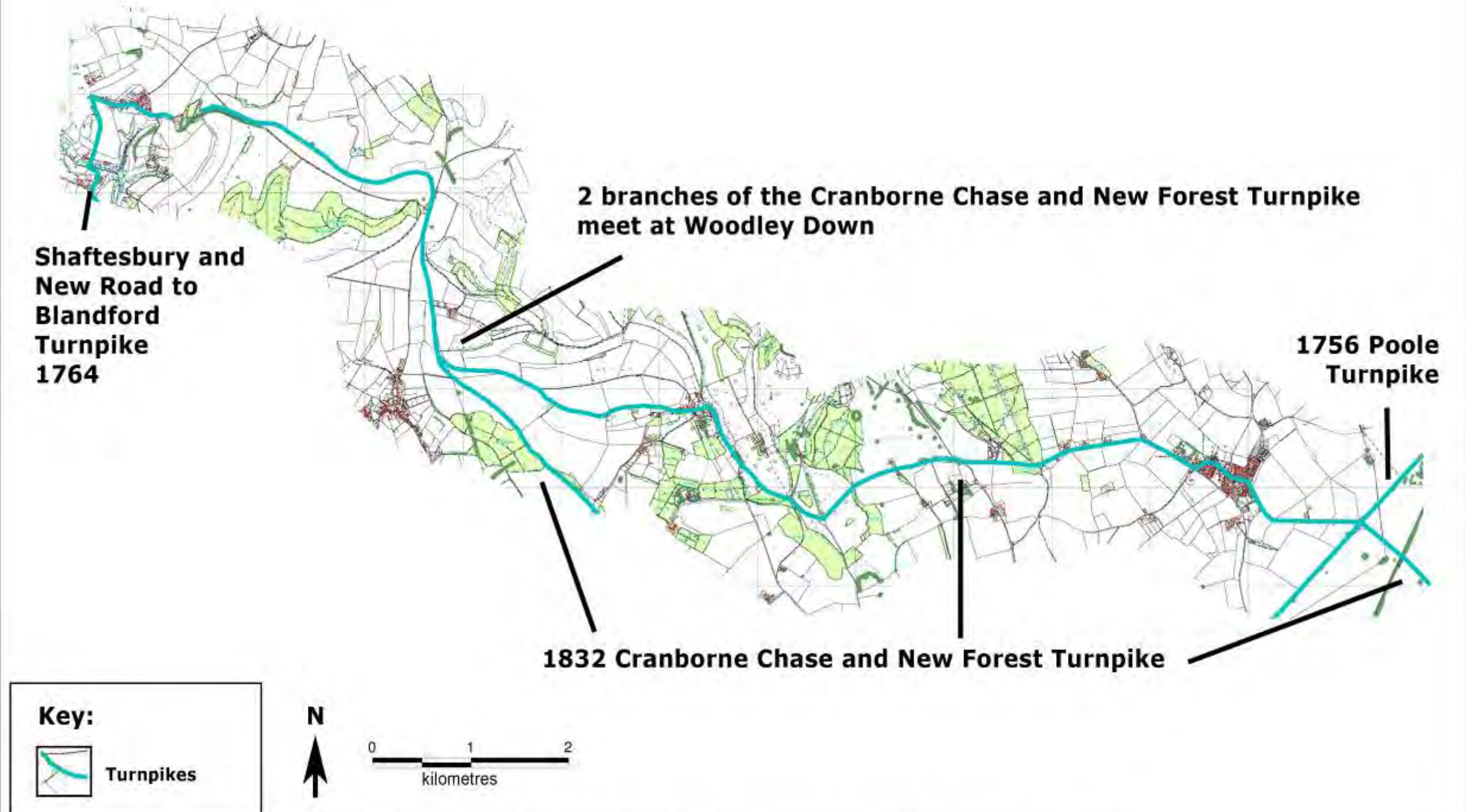
All turnpikes were created by Act of Parliament and although the structure of the B3081 differs enormously from the gravel and stone surface of the turnpike, the line of this road was set and fixed by the Turnpike Act. It was this same road which was subsequently adopted by the County Council in 1878. The Act of Parliament also stipulated that turnpike trusts should maintain a network of milestones along their length and they were also associated with turnpike cottages at which the tolls were collected. However, as Map Five shows the B3081, unlike other roads in the AONB, it is not associated with any recorded milestones or turnpike cottages. It is, however, possible that milestones were not maintained for this particular route as its creation as a turnpike came at the end of the period where turnpikes were viable, as the coming of the railways to the AONB in the 1850s transformed the transportation network. However, some roads used alternatives to milestones such as the Salisbury Way, which used trees as mile markers. It is not outside the realms of possibility that unrecorded milestones exist along this route or that important ancient trees marked the route.

More information on the landscape scale impact of turnpikes in the AONB can be found in Historic Landscape Theme 10: Routeways in the Landscape.



Map Five: Turnpikes in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

## Route of Historic Turnpikes (Source: AONB HEAP)



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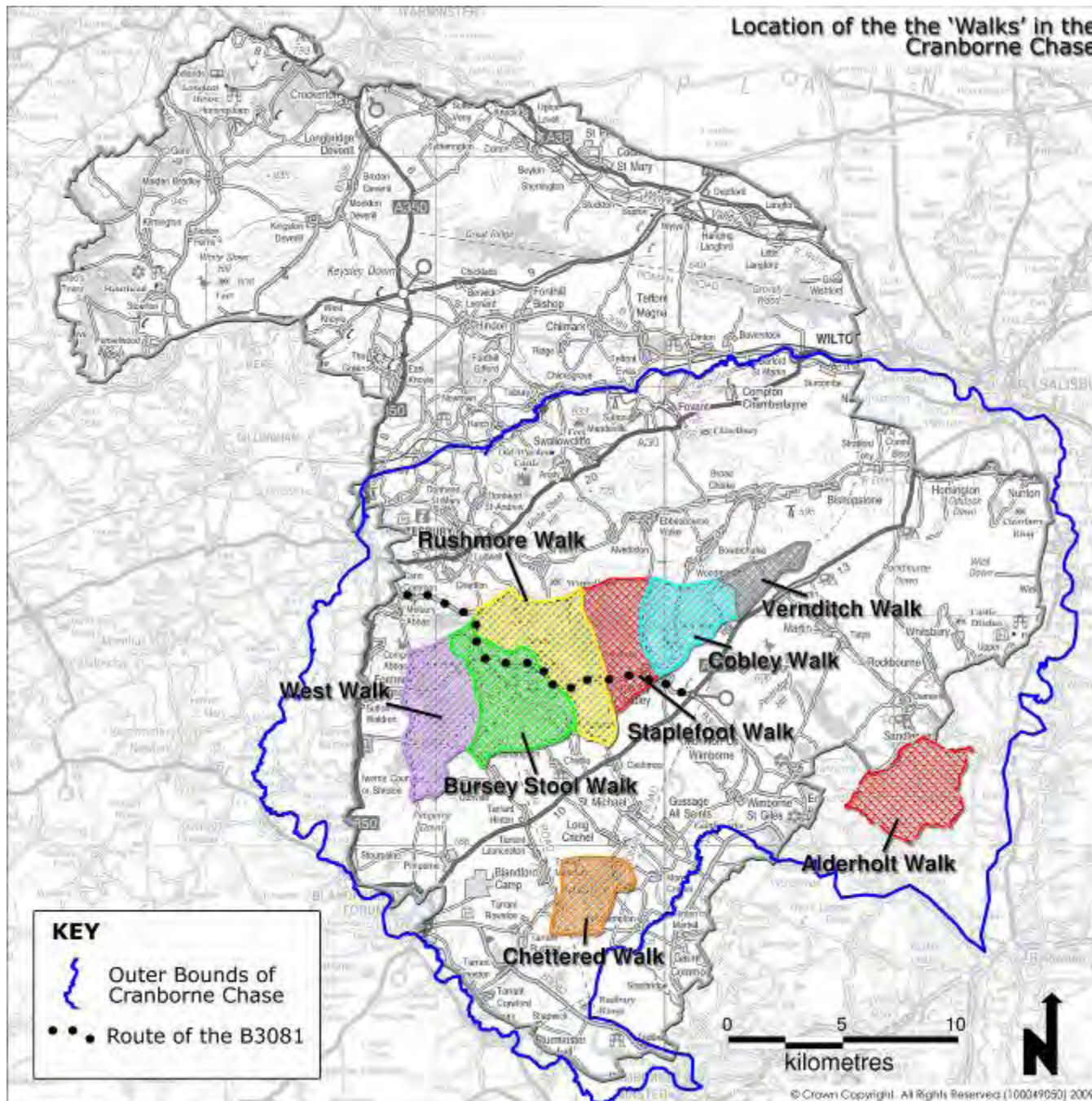
Map Six: Historic Turnpikes and the B3081

#### 4. Wider Historic Landscape Context of the B3081

The route of the B3081 across the landscape was influenced by the structure and history of the Cranborne Chase. This Medieval hunting forest was not disenfranchised until 1829 and placed major restrictions on land use across the area it covered and particularly within its inner bounds, see Map Seven. The B3081 traverses the Inner bounds of the Chase. Travel was more strictly controlled within the area and individuals were sometimes required to pay tolls to cross the Chase, especially during the breeding season for deer.

The restrictions on travel imposed by Chase rights seem to have influenced the position of the main thoroughfare south and east from Salisbury and thus how the B3081 connects with roads to the north and south. The route of B3081 also avoids the main area of the Chase woodlands. The influence of the Chase on the historic landscape context of the B3081 is dealt with in more detail in Section Five. For more information see Historic Landscape Character Theme 5: Hunting Landscapes.

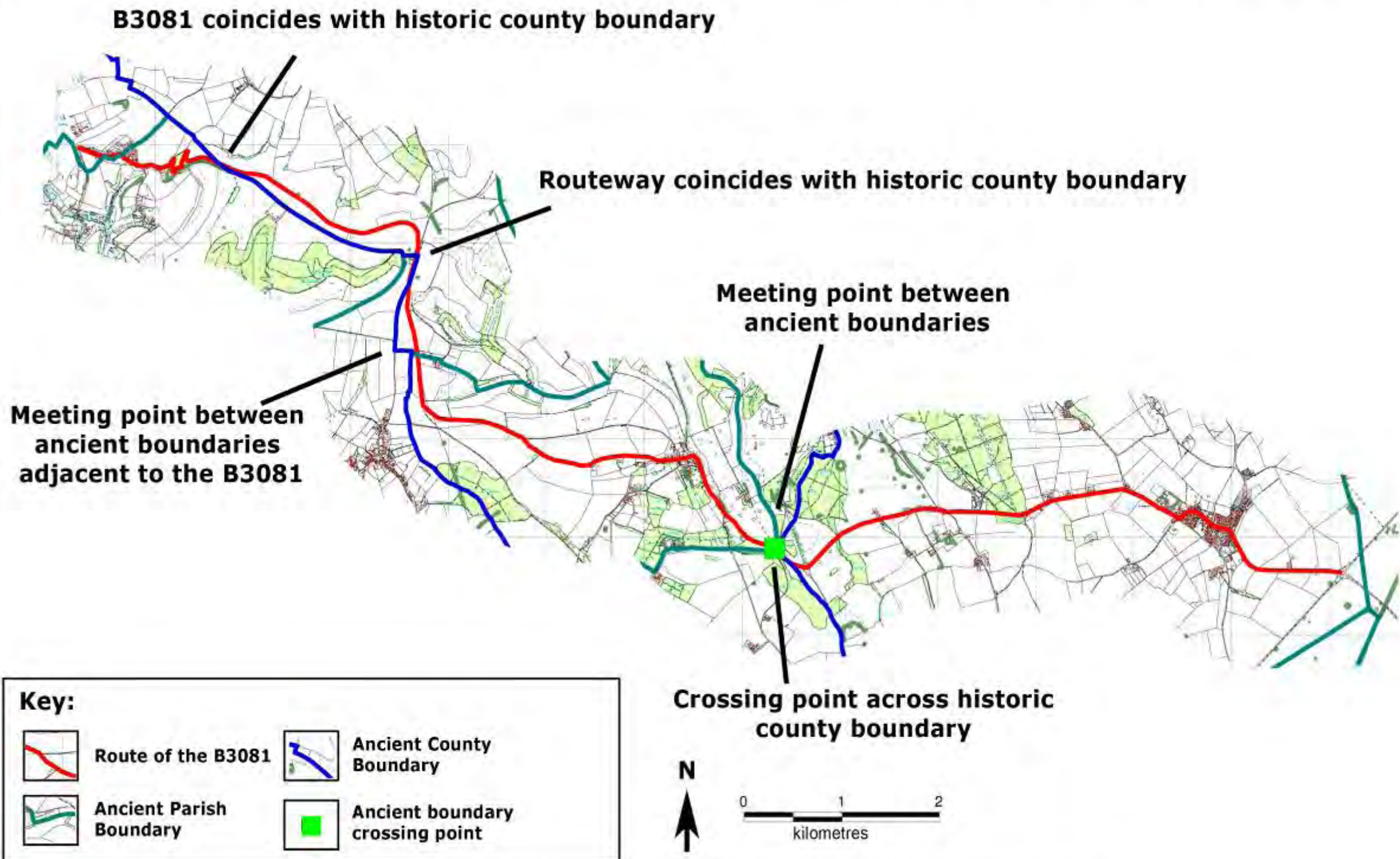
The Cranborne Chase occupied a marginal position straddling the ancient boundaries of Wiltshire and Dorset. The B3081 crosses several historic boundaries including ancient parish and the ancient shire (county boundary), see Map Eight. It is important to note that the route of these boundaries can differ from modern administrative boundaries. This includes the county boundary which crosses the B3081 near Rushmore Park, the modern boundary turns west (see Map Two) while the ancient county boundary continues south. These boundaries are associated with large and veteran trees including large coppice stools, and often prominent banks, and sometimes ditches. In several places along the route of the B3081 there are meeting points between these ancient boundaries, crossing points across the ancient boundary and one section coincides with the historic county boundary between Wiltshire and Dorset, see Map Eight. The sides of the road may demonstrate these boundary features. For more information see Historic Landscape Character Theme 1: Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership.



Map Seven: Location of the Inner and Outer bounds of the Cranborne Chase



## Relationship between Routeway and Ancient Boundaries (Source: AONB HEAP)



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Map Eight: Relationship between the B3081 and ancient boundaries

## 5. Wider Present Day Historic Landscape Context of the B3081

The AONB wide Historic Landscape Characterisation allows us to place the route of the B3081 in its wider context (Rouse 2008). The historic landscape character of the present day landscape can be split into seven distinct zones along the route of the road (see Map Nine).

These seven zones are described travelling west to east along the course of the road.

Zone 1 is characterised by a complex pattern of pre 1800 historic land use around the vicinity of Cann Common, including historic settlement, pre 1800 sinuous fields, fishponds and water meadows. The northern part of the area nearest the road is characterised by small more regular 19th century fields. The views of this area are restricted as the route travels past hedged fields and settlement leading to the former common land to the west. However some occasional panoramic views are afforded over low hedgerow towards Melbury Down, providing a striking illustration of the contrast between the enclosed landscapes of zone 1 and the open landscapes of zone 2.

Zone 2 charts the route of the B3081 as it climbs the chalk escarpment and travels across the open downland at the top of the escarpment. The roadside features wide grass verges and open fences. There are open, expansive, wide views northwards to the pre 1800 fields in the Vale of Wardour while the ridge blocks views to the south. This is an open unfenced landscape of semi-enclosed escarpments with unimproved chalk grassland at the edge of the escarpment to the north, and large irregular 19th and 20th century fields to the south which are under arable cultivation. This character can be readily appreciated from the road. There are also pockets of post 1800 woodland.

Zone 3 is entered as the road descends towards Tollard Royal where the route enters hedgerows on top of roadside banks bordering regular medium sized 18th and 19th century planned enclosure, marking a much more controlled and regulated area of landscape. The field boundaries are tight to the road and there is a lack of verges (with the exception of the north west section).

Zone 4 becomes apparent as the B3081 enters the village of Tollard Royal. The historic landscape character changes again, the route is funnelled through the historic village of Tollard Royal the location of a royal Medieval hunting lodge. The buildings are all historic in character featuring locally distinctive red brick and flint, with white render with thatch, clay and slate roofs. The road takes a sharp bend at the historic pond, a focal point in the linear village. The influence of the Rushmore estate can also be seen. The road then travels through the 19th century Rushmore Park with a similarly strong historic landscape character. The road is bounded by distinctive railings with grass verges and low banks alongside the road which make a strong visual impact and there are extensive views at the south east end of the zone northwards across the parkland, dominated by large parkland trees.

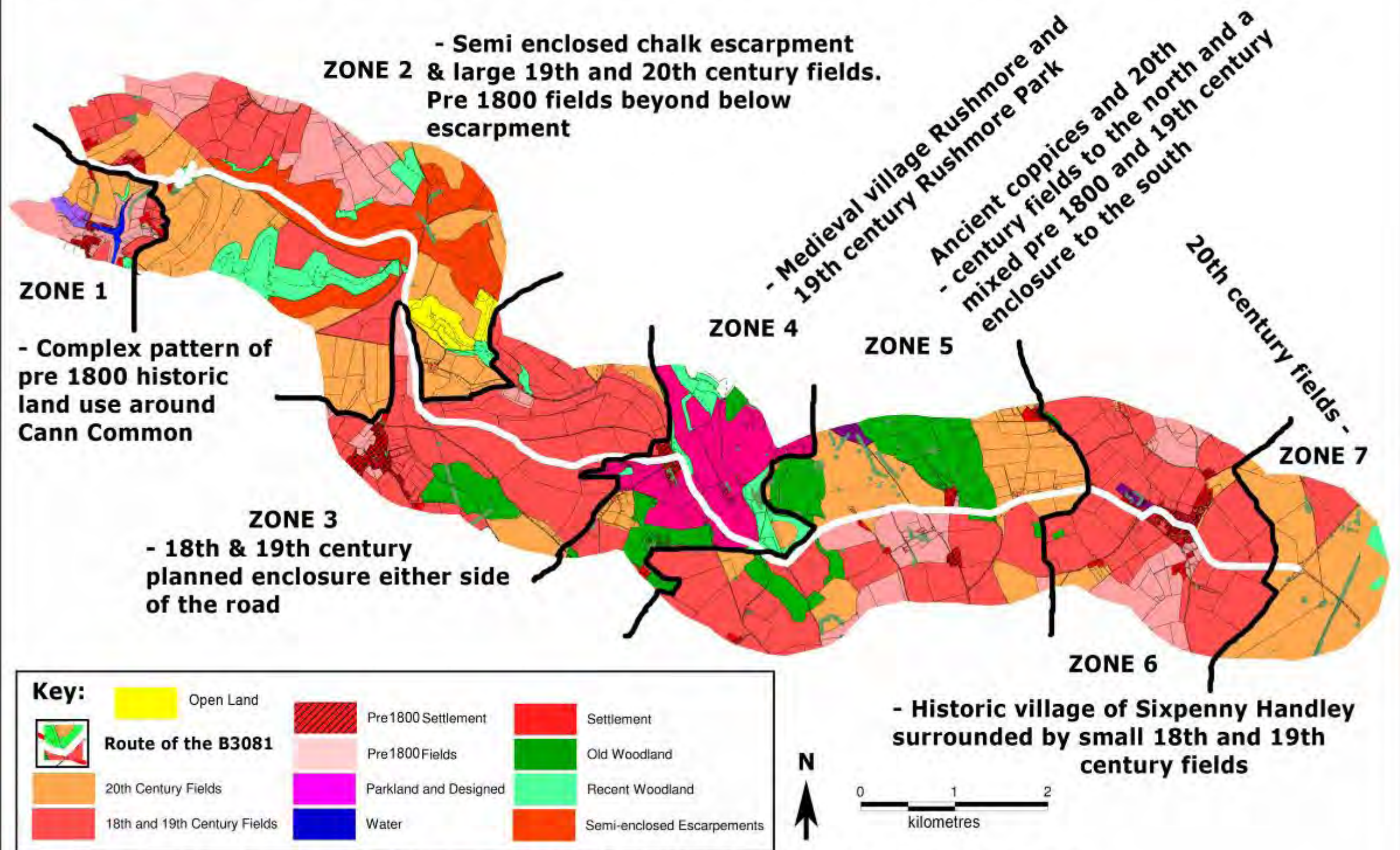
Zone 5 is characterised by a marked shift in historic landscape character between the north and south of the road. Northwards the landscape is dominated by ancient woodland associated with the heartland of the Cranborne Chase, historically dominated by coppices interspersed with 20th century fields. These have been increasingly subdivided in the direction of Sixpenny

Handley. The 20th century fields to the north are often fenced providing intermittent views across this historic landscape type towards the ancient woodland beyond. Southwards is characterised by a more mixed pattern of historic land use, including small irregular pre 1800 and 19th century fields. The road boundary here is hedged with narrow verges and views into this area are limited. The road travels through the southern tip of the Chase Woods known as Greatstone Coppice. The road here is unenclosed by fences and hedges and the ancient coppice stands form a tunnel along which the road travels.

Zone 6 is comprised of the village of Sixpenny Handley and the small 18th and 19th century fields surrounding it. The village has seen greater expansion in the 20th century evident through the expansion of the village at its edges. The great fire in the village in 1892 destroyed many of the historic timber framed thatch buildings and the built character of the village is dominated by brick sometimes with flint, late 19th and early 20th century buildings. There is a notable view back across to the heartland of the Cranborne Chase as a traveller enters the village from the east.

Zone 7 is on the very edge of the route under discussion, as the B3081 approaches Handley Hill it enters a much more open landscape dominated by 20th century fields. The road moves from a hedged landscape with wide grass verges to a more open panoramic open landscape affording views across extensive fenced fields. Prehistoric archaeology, including Bronze Age round barrows, are dominant features set aside as grazed land, forming islands within the large arable fields.

# Historic Landscape Character in the present day landscape (Source: AONB HLC)



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Map Nine: Dominant historic landscape character in the present day landscape

## 6. Historic Landscape Time Depth Surrounding the B3081

The AONB historic landscape characterisation is not just a useful tool in providing an understanding of the dominant character of the historic landscape in the present day. It also allows insight into time depth in the landscape and identifying where traces of previous historic land use survive, See Map Ten. The same seven zones described in Section 5 also have distinctive and contrasting evidence of time depth in the landscape.

These seven zones are described travelling west to east along the course of the road.

Zone 1 as discussed in Section 5 is characterised by a complex pattern of pre 1800 historic land use around the vicinity of Cann Common. The more regular 19<sup>th</sup> century fields nearest to the road also preserve the fossilised boundaries of earlier pre 1800 irregular fields.

Zone 2 - The open character of unfenced landscape of semi-enclosed escarpments with unimproved chalk grassland and large irregular 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century fields to the south, all mark the traces of a former area of open unenclosed chalk grassland which survived in places up until 50 years ago.

Zone 3 marks the transition between the open downland and Parliamentary enclosure. The regular medium sized 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century planned enclosure in the south of the area have erased any traces of earlier land use.

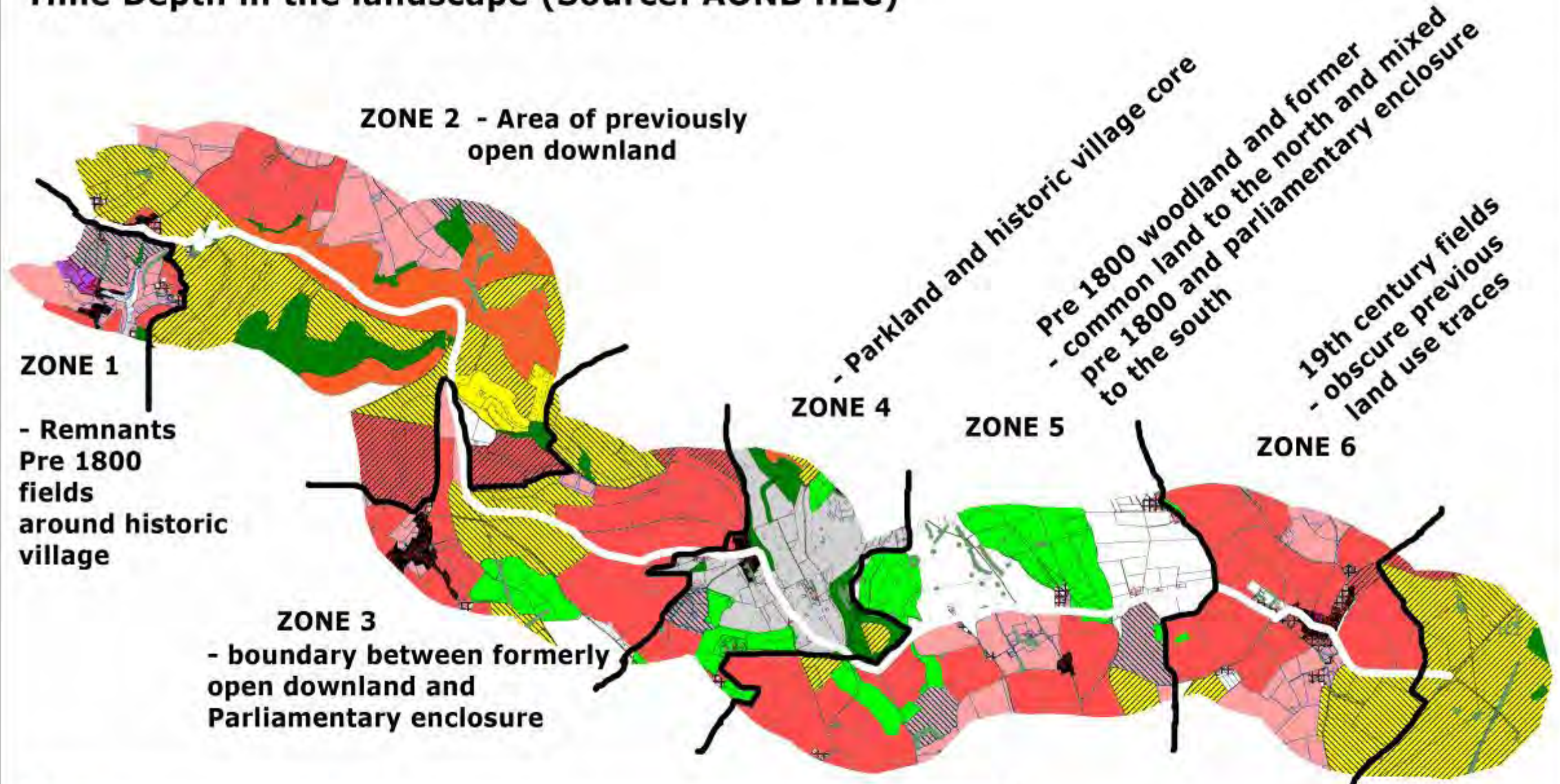
Zone 4 - The dominant characteristics are the historic settlement and 19<sup>th</sup> century parkland which have obscured earlier historic land use traces.

Zone 5 is characterised by a marked shift in historic landscape character between the north and south of the road and there is a similar difference in the expression of time depth in the landscape. The 20<sup>th</sup> century fields mark enclosure of former open grazed common land which was formerly sandwiched between the ancient woodland to the west and the fields around Sixpenny Handley to the south. Today this history is primarily marked by place name evidence. A few of the 19<sup>th</sup> century fields to the south of the road contain evidence of former older field boundaries but in general the formal 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure has obscured previous land use.

Zone 6 is comprised of the village of Sixpenny Handley and the small 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century fields surrounding it. Here there are few traces of earlier fields except on the eastern edge where the fields were enclosed from downland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

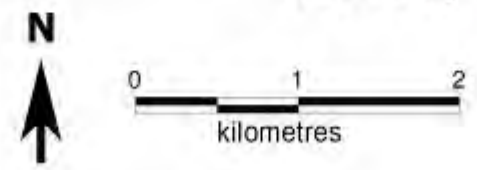
Zone 7 is on the very edge of the route under discussion, as the B3081 approaches Handley Hill it enters a much more open landscape dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century fields. These were created from open grazed chalk grassland which is the basis of the open nature of this landscape and the lack of mature hedged field boundaries.

# Time Depth in the landscape (Source: AONB HLC)



**Key:**

Route of the B3081	Pre 1800 Fields modified 19th and 20th century	Former pre 1800 common land
Downland	Parkland	Post 1800 Settlement
Downland Escarpment	Post 1800 Woodland	Downland Enclosed 19th Century
Pre 1800 settlement	19th Century Fields	19th Century fields modified 20th Century
	Woodland clearance 19th and 20th century	Pre 1800 Fields
	Water Meadows	Pre 1800 Woodland
	Downland Enclosed 20th Century	



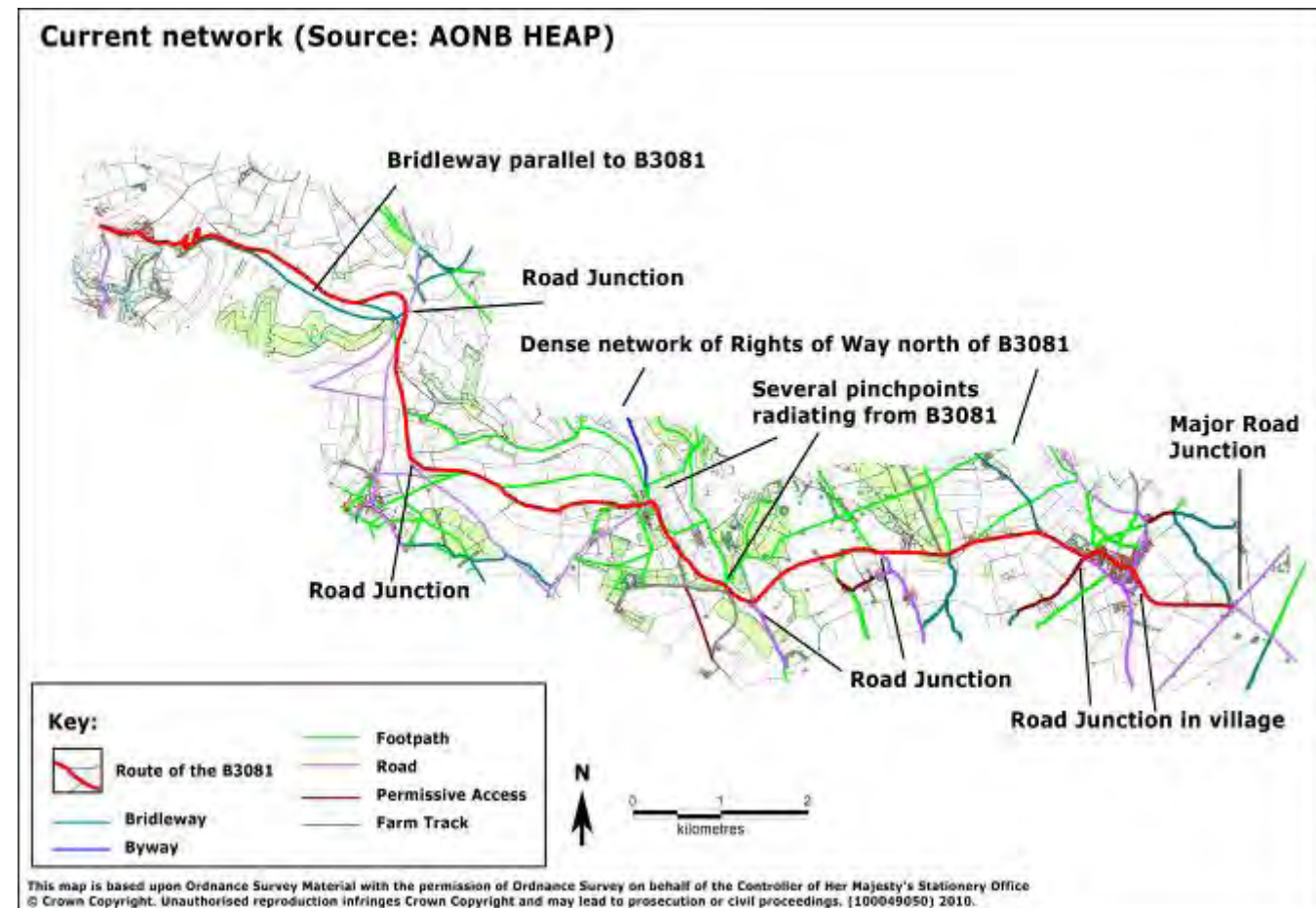
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Map Ten: Time depth in the landscape

## 7. Historic Character of the Surrounding Network

The route of the B3081 is just one of a series of routeways along which people historically travelled through the landscape.

The modern network of roads and Rights of Way surrounding the B3081, see Map Eleven is associated with an irregular system of footpaths. A network of permissive routes has supplemented the Rights of Way in the vicinity of Rushmore Park. Roads tend to lead southwards away from the B3081, with the exception of the minor road descending the chalk escarpment in the direction of Ludwell. At the same point the B3081 crosses the byway of the Ox Drove at the top of the chalk escarpment.



Map Eleven: Current network of roads, footpaths, bridleways and tracks around the B3081

The Rights of Way network reflect those routeways that were claimed at Registration. For example the former routes across the open downland used to be much more numerous. The understanding of this pattern is greatly enhanced by an understanding of the historic origins of these routeways, see Map Twelve.

Travelling from west to east along the B3081, leaving Cann Common as the road climbs the chalk escarpment, it coincides with the route of the ancient drove way known as the Ox Drove.

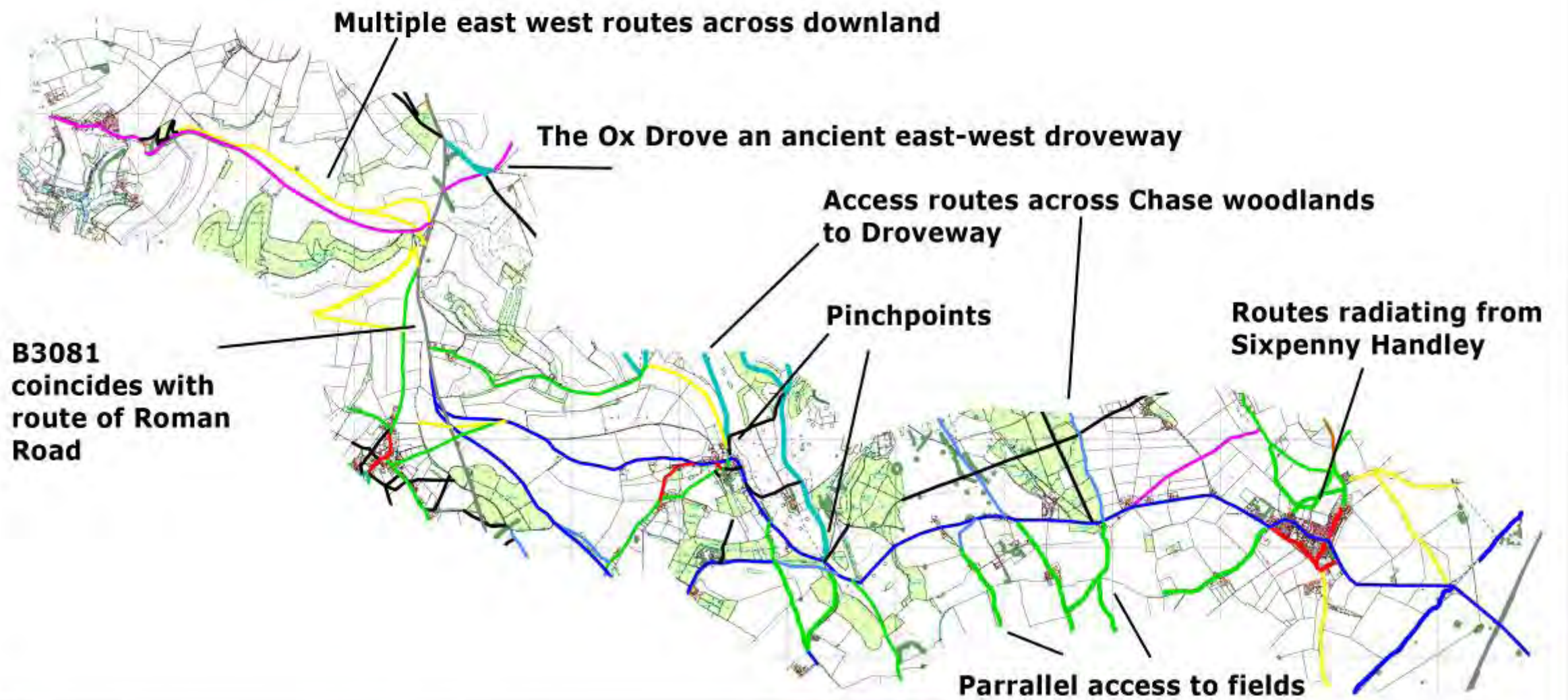
The hairpin bends at Zigzag Hill were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to avoid the deep channel this ancient routeway had carved down the hill. The road then runs parallel with the drove way along the top of the escarpment representing one of many former routes which weaved their way along the open chalk grassland. A notable feature of the north south section of the B3081 between where it swings southwards parting ways with the Ox Drove and where it swings eastwards towards Rushmore, is that it coincides briefly with the projected route of the Roman Road between Badbury Rings and Cold Kitchen Hills. It is unknown what buried archaeological remains of this road may survive here. See Historic Landscape Character Area 8: Chalk Escarpments for more details.

The central section of the B3081 is associated with the irregular system of north south routeways associated with the inner bounds of the Cranborne Chase. These funnel into access routes, or pinch points, into the Chase woodlands. These are at least Saxon in origin, providing key crossing points across the shire boundary. This pattern has been infilled by modern permissive paths and Rights of Ways along the county boundary and earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century roads created when the fields were enclosed running east west. South of the Chase woodlands a series of access paths lead southwards from the B3081 into the enclosed fieldscapes to the south. See Historic Landscape Character Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood for more details.

A complicated series of routes radiate outwards from Sixpenny Handley into the surrounding fields. The eastern edge of the B3081 crosses the modern route of the A354 entering the former downland area where there was formerly a myriad of possible trackways. At the far east of the area under discussion the road crosses the line of the Ackling Dyke, the Roman Road between Badbury Rings and Old Sarum.

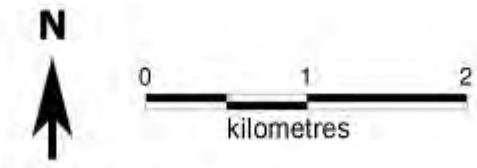
Further details about the Roman Roads and ancient drove ways of the AONB are available from Historic Landscape Character Theme 10: Routeways in the Landscape.

**Historic Origin of Routeways around B3081 (Source: AONB HEAP)**



**Key:**

 Route of the B3081	 Droveway	 Roman Road
 Did not exist	 Field Track	 Droveway Access
 Open Downland	 Historic Access	 Village Road
	 Historic Highway	
	 Open Commonland	



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Map Twelve: Historic origins of Routeways around the B3081

## **8. Built Environment Context of the B3081**

The historic character of the settlement through which the B3081 passes is discussed in Section 5.

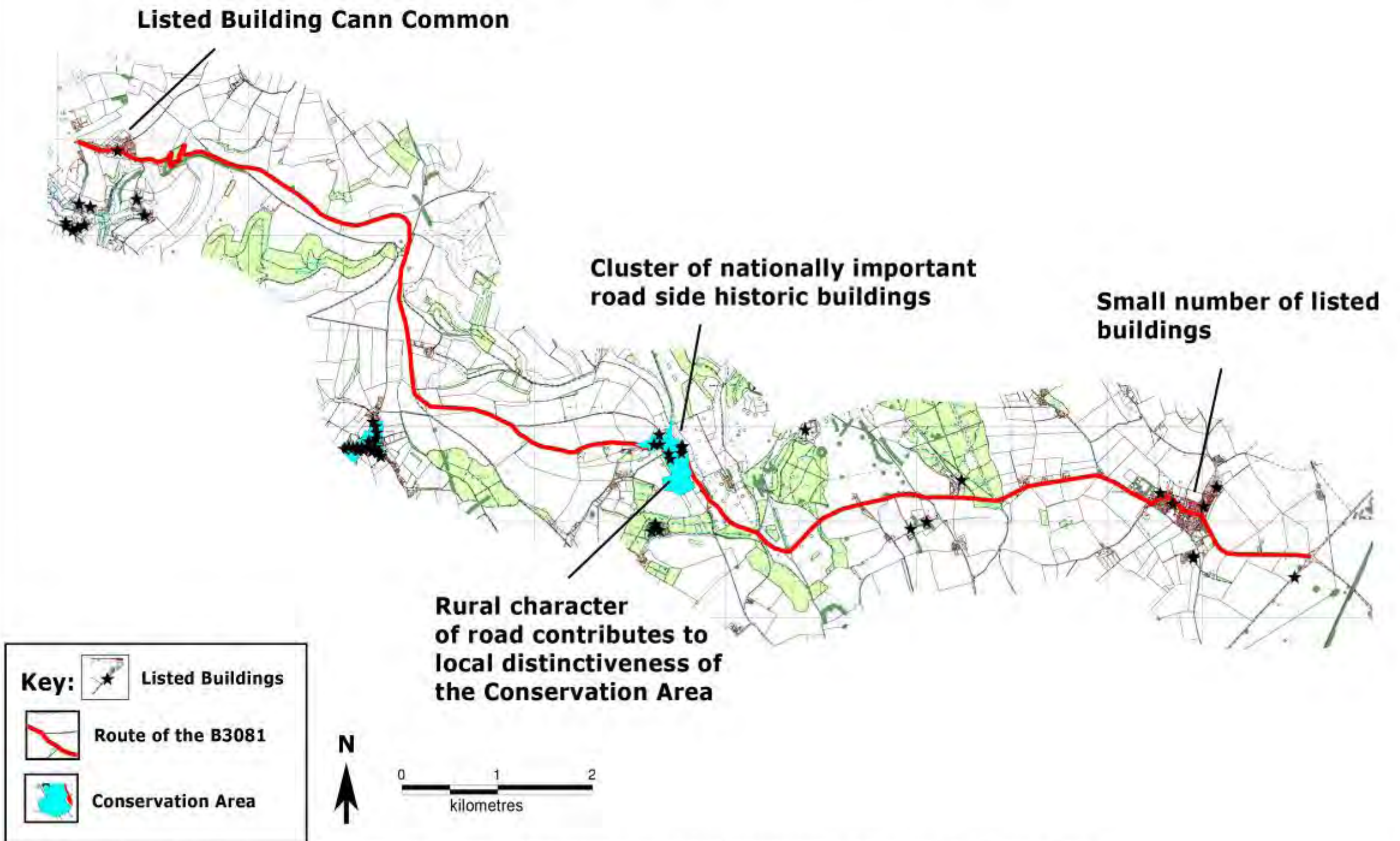
This section looks at the nationally important built heritage associated with the B3081. See Map Thirteen. The road passes through one Conservation Area, Tollard Royal, and plays an important part of the character of the village. The road is narrow with no pavements and many of the historic house fronts abut the road. The road makes a sharp bend at the pond and there is one narrow lane leading away to Tollard Green. The village is associated with a notable concentration of listed historic buildings.

Sixpenny Handley is of a similar antiquity to Tollard Royal but the 19<sup>th</sup> century fire destroyed many buildings leading to a small number of listed buildings and as a result the village is not a Conservation Area. However the road again is a crucial part of the streetscape with the locally distinctive houses on the narrow high street abutting the road with no separating pavements.

Along the rest of the route houses are rare, punctuating the rural nature of the road. There is only one other listed building adjacent to the road at Cann Common.



## Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Source: English Heritage)



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Map Thirteen: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas around the B3081

## **9. Archaeological Context of the B3081**

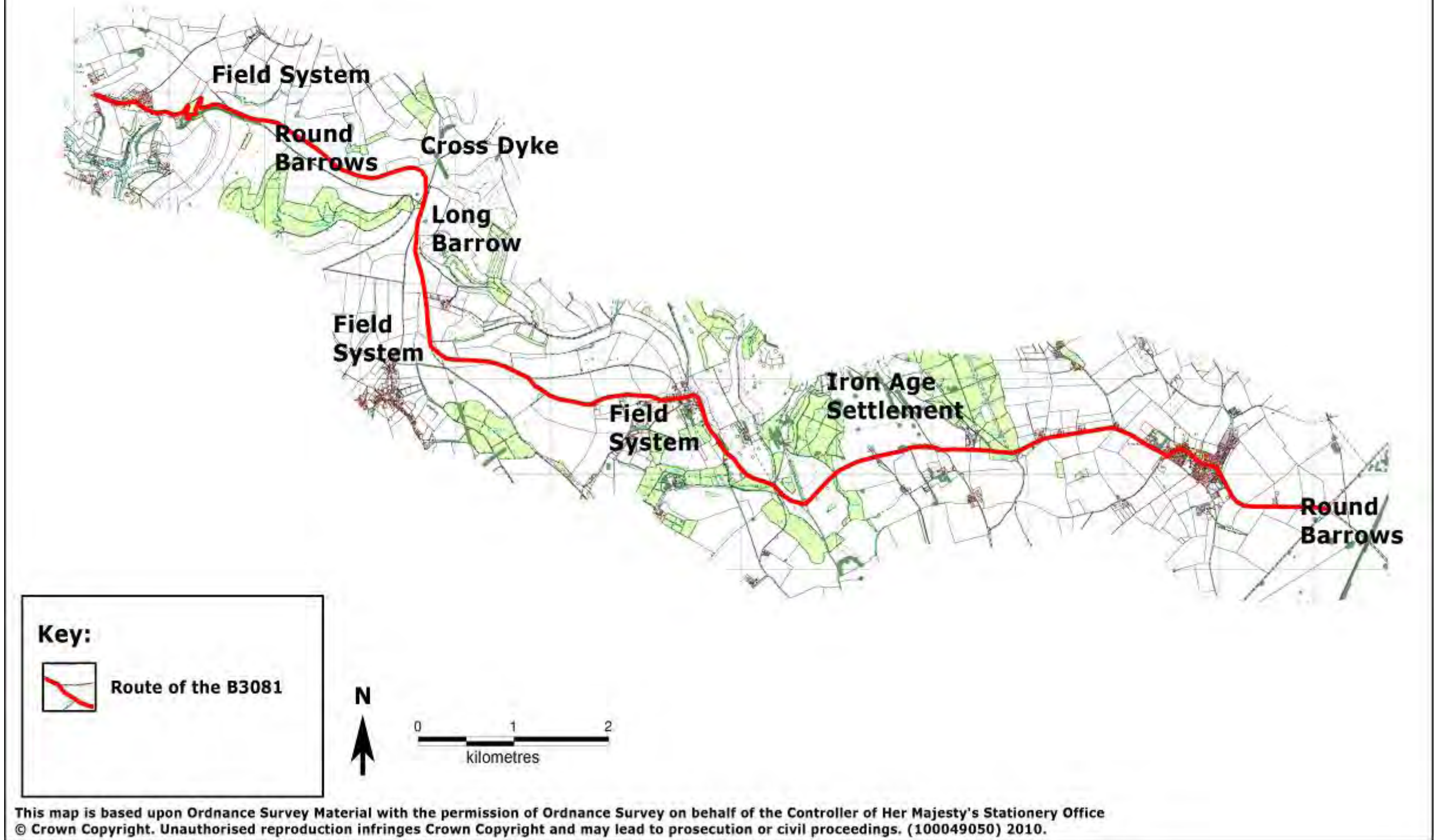
This section does not constitute a comprehensive archaeological survey of the known archaeological sites or features adjacent to the B3081. Rather it presents a picture of the character of the archaeological features associated with the road not discussed elsewhere in the document. See Map Fourteen.

The areas of formerly open downland at the eastern and western ends of the road are in particular associated with a wealth of archaeological monuments, including evidence for field systems, cross dykes and other linear earthworks, many of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. These are extensive, and in some cases, landscape scale features and it is likely that the modern road has cut across these features.

The potential for unknown archaeology in close proximity to the road is also possible, for example, the ancient woodland which the road passes by has never been subject to systematic archaeological survey. In addition the Iron Age settlement of Woodcutts lies to the north of the road and there are a series of banks and ancient earthworks emanating from the site which may stretch as far as the modern road.

Archaeological earthworks can also be key positive visible attributes to the landscape character of a road. These include large numbers of Bronze Age round barrows. Such features were identified by the Landscape Character Appraisal of the road undertaken by The Landscape Practice.

## Sample of Archaeological Sites close to the B3081 (Source: County HER)



Map Fourteen: Sample of archaeological sites close to the B3081

## 10. Conclusion

This study has provided an historic landscape appraisal of the B3081 between Cann Common and Handley Hill. This complements an earlier Landscape Appraisal by the Landscape Practice undertaken for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

It has characterised the key historic and archaeological characteristics of this stretch of the B3081 including the historic character of the road, wider historic landscape context including the present day historic landscape character and time depth, character of the surrounding network and finally the built environment and archaeological context.

This study demonstrate how the AONB wide Historic Landscape Characterisation and Historic Environment Action Plan can be used to provide a deeper understanding of the archaeological and historical aspects of rural roads across the landscape of the AONB.

## 11. References

- Land Use Consultants (2003) *The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment*. CCWWD AONB, Cranborne.
- Rouse, E. (2008) *The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation*. CCWWD AONB, Cranborne.
- The Landscape Practice (2009) *B3081 Landscape Appraisal. Sixpenny Handley to Cann Common*. CCWWD AONB, Cranborne.

Full details of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans and Historic Landscape Characterisation can be found at [www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk)

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March 2010