

# THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-2019



We are grateful to all those who have assisted in the preparation of this Management Plan. In particular; the expertise of **Alison Cross, Andrew Bennett, Henry Oliver, Moira Hankinson, Paul Harris, Rowan Whimster, Sarah Wright** and **Tim Parry** who helped to edit thematic chapters; **Megan Cameron, Dennis Gower** and **Duncan Coe** who oversaw the process as part of the project board; Members of the **Management Working Group**, led by **Richard Broadhead**, who gave guidance; **Paul Tiplady** who assisted with the clarity of language used in the Plan; **Charlotte Riggs, David Bibby, Dominic Lamb** and **Sophie Horsley, Garry King, Ian Brown, Paul Hendry** and **Paula Amorelli, Vicky Fletcher** and **Nick Mottram** and **Steve Preston** for their assistance in gaining adoption by our partners.

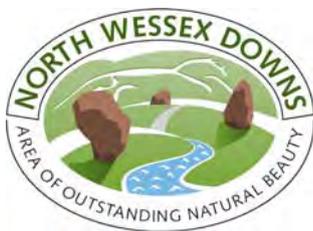
We would also like to thank **Byron Carron**, Chairman of the Council of Partners 2010-14 for his leadership and support.

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# North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-19



Prepared on behalf of the Council of Partners

This document is the statutory Management Plan for the nationally designated and protected landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. It is a plan for all those that have a responsibility to look after this precious and treasured landscape.

Following informal consultation in May 2013, an initial draft was published for comment between August and October 2013. Public events were held in each local authority area. Specialists reviewed the comments we received and brought their recommendations to a special meeting of the North Wessex Downs Management Working Group.

The North Wessex Downs Council of Partners and relevant local authorities have approved this plan for publication.

This Management Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Landscape Character Assessment can all be found on the North Wessex Downs website:

**[www.northwessexdowns.org.uk](http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk)**

Enquiries about these documents or any other aspect of the review process can be made to the North Wessex Downs team through the website or by telephone: 01488 685440.

## Foreword on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is

maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rupert de Mauley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

**Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for natural environment and science**



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## Introduction by Chairman of the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners



This statutory plan has been drawn up after wide consultation and sets out objectives for the next five years. As well as informing the work of the AONB unit, we hope it will guide the relevant activities of local authorities, agencies, businesses and individuals.

The North Wessex Downs landscape and the AONB Partnership face greater pressure than ever before. As the restrictions on public finances tighten, it is important that we do our utmost to protect the huge benefit that such a high quality landscape brings. Our society benefits from its influence on our good health and the cultural value that it represents. The economy relies on the processes performed by the natural environment and benefits from it being an attractive place in which to do business.

Through our Management Plan, the AONB Partnership and unit are actively involved in a range of delivery projects. Over the past five years, the North Wessex Downs AONB has increased the amount of non-government and local authority funding by almost 600%. We have found significant benefit in partnerships with other protected landscapes, joining bids such as the Our Land project, promoting tourism in the AONB and 1SW, which aims to increase access to the countryside. We retain a Sustainable Development Fund that has distributed £0.5m in small grants to over 150 local projects to date, bringing match contributions in excess of £1.5m.

The North Wessex Downs LEADER programme 2009-13 was hosted by the AONB. It awarded £1.419m to 65 different projects - to farmers, foresters, small businesses and rural communities across the North Wessex Downs. The grants have facilitated a total investment in the area of more than £3 million since 2009. Money awarded will help grow the economy, developing business, creating and supporting jobs, improving competitiveness and sustainability and encouraging tourism.

We have worked with landscape-scale conservation projects including the successful farmer-led Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area and the Stepping Stones Project and Winning Ways for Wildlife projects. We also contributed to the development of county-based Local Nature Partnerships where we have been working more closely with nearby AONBs.

This commitment to conservation of the natural environment has led the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to re-affirm the Category V status of the North Wessex Downs as “an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value”.

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed to the work of the North Wessex Downs Partnership and the development of this Plan, in particular our nine local authority partners. I hope that everyone who reads this Plan will be able to contribute in some way to its success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Byron Carron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. There is a small dot at the end of the signature.

**Byron Carron, Chairman of the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners**

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## 1. A Vision for the North Wessex Downs

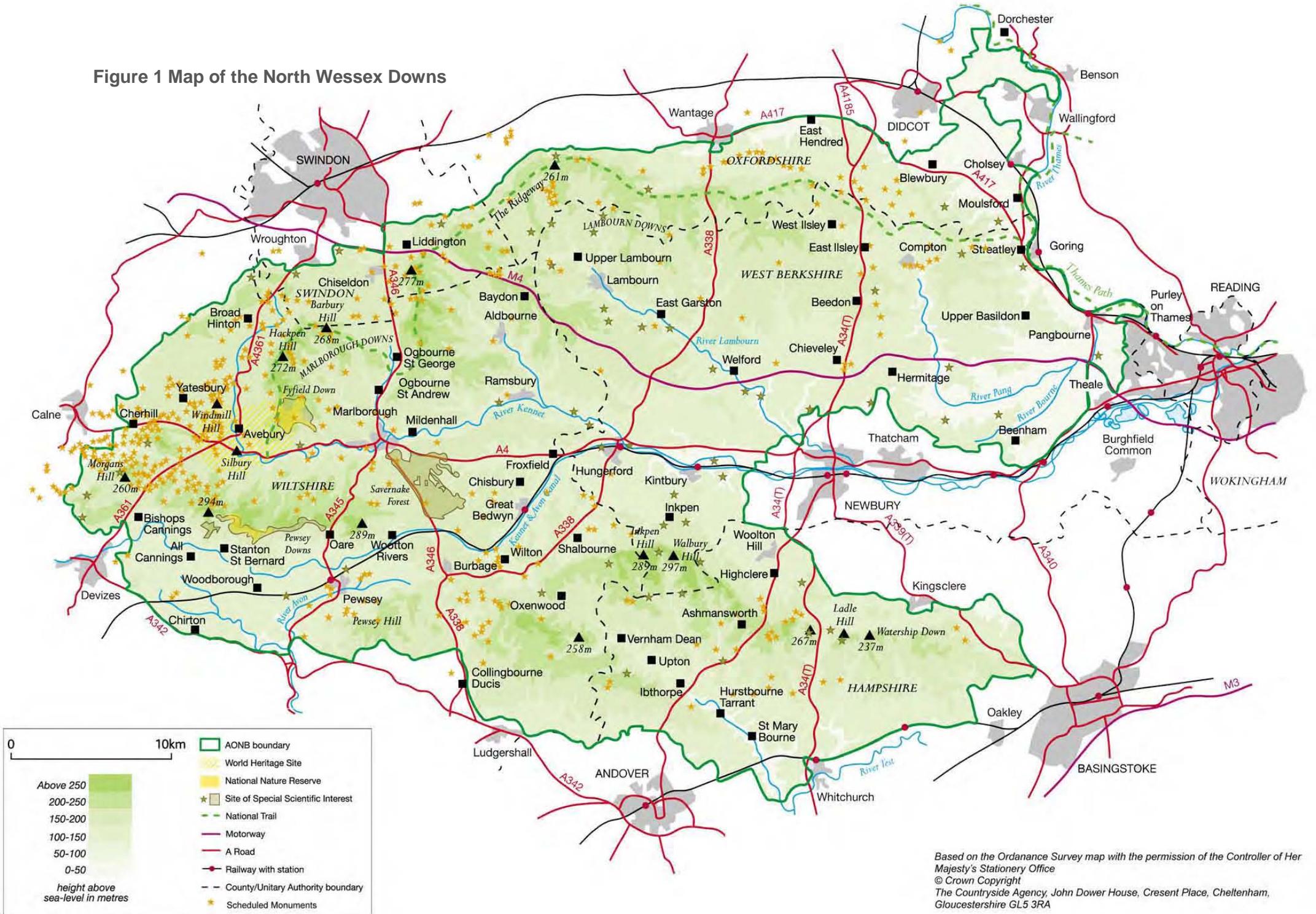


*Vast dramatic, undeveloped and distinct chalk downlands with nationally significant areas of semi-natural chalk grassland, contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable lands and intimate and secluded valleys, all rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage; a national landscape that stands apart from the increasing urban pressures that surround it; where people live, work and relax; and where visitors are welcomed and contribute to a vibrant rural economy.*

***We seek to make the North Wessex Downs:***

- A place where actions meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and where people have the skills and energy to adapt to change in ways that respect the unique qualities of the North Wessex Downs and deliver wider environmental, economic and social benefits.
- A place where the highest environmental quality is seen as a key economic driver and where all economic activity is in harmony with maintenance of the landscape. New buildings and other forms of development display high quality design worthy of one of England's finest landscapes.
- A place with thriving land based and other rural enterprises where the sustainability of the North Wessex Downs is core to the business. Ensuring a countryside rich in wildlife and recreational opportunities while producing high quality products, including sustainable farming that benefits the local economy and surrounding countryside.
- A place with high quality habitats reflecting the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs and stable and recovering populations of key species. Landscapes that are protected, expanded, linked and under beneficial management better able to respond to the pressures of climate change.
- A place with a rich and conserved cultural landscape where iconic monuments, designated heritage, archaeological sites and historic landscapes such as the Avebury World Heritage Site remain as indelible footprints in an evolving scene, managed to the very highest standards.
- A place where the integrated management of land conserves unpolluted soils and high quality water resources whilst retaining the distinctive seasonal winterbourne flows.
- A place whose character and tranquillity are recognised in development decisions around it, so that the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs is protected
- A place where development is low-impact and affordable with a distinctive but subtle vernacular building style that combines the best of the old with the best of the new.
- A place where the integrated approach to transport and travel satisfies local needs and minimises negative effects on the environment. Where the dominance of roads and clutter are reduced.
- A place with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity; where vast night skies can thrill the eye, unaffected by light pollution.
- A place with vibrant and balanced rural communities, with villages and market towns meeting the needs of local people and visitors where there is great local pride and positive local contribution to the management of the landscape.
- A place that is a nationally recognised centre for sustainable tourism and the responsible enjoyment of the countryside, developed and promoted in ways that are in harmony with the high environmental quality and community needs of the area, helping to underpin the land based and broader rural economy.
- A place with wide public recognition in the AONB and surrounding communities of the protected status and special qualities of the North Wessex Downs. All responsible bodies understanding and respecting the protected status of the AONB in their plans and proposals.

Figure 1 Map of the North Wessex Downs



Based on the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office  
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 The Countryside Agency, John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL5 3RA

## 2. Introduction



The first part of this Plan sets out a vision for the North Wessex Downs and illustrates the special qualities for each of the themes that make this landscape unique: Landscape, Land Management, Biodiversity, Natural Resources, Historic Environment, Development, Communities and Leisure and Tourism.

Key issues for the AONB have then been identified, with policies for our partners to follow. Details of how stakeholders can contribute are outlined and any technical terms explained in a glossary at the end of the document. The Management Plan sits alongside a business plan that defines the priorities for action, which will be updated each year.

### 2.1 About the North Wessex Downs

From their western tip at Calne in Wiltshire, the North Wessex Downs reach across the southwest and southeast of England in a broad arc through Swindon, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. They lie next to the Chilterns AONB along the River Thames, before sweeping south, encircling Newbury, to encompass the northern reaches of the rolling chalk hills of the Hampshire Downs. They then reach back towards Devizes, across the high chalk upland of Salisbury Plain and the low-lying Vale of Pewsey.

The area is the third largest AONB in the country, covering 1730 sq km, or 668 sq miles. Its resident population is only 125,000 people. Hungerford and Marlborough are the two largest settlements, with a combined population of 14,000<sup>1</sup>. Yet around the North Wessex Downs, there are the significant urban centres of Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke, Andover, Swindon and Didcot. Together, these have a population of over 1.2 million people within 20 minutes drive of the AONB. The M4 crosses the area from east to west and the A34 crosses from north to south.

Designation of the North Wessex Downs as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was in 1972, under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949. Following the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the government confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent. The protection given by the land use planning system to natural beauty in both types of area should be equivalent.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Countryside Agency (2002) The North Wessex Downs Landscape: A landscape assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CA7).

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, paragraph 21, HMSO 2004.

The North Wessex Downs take in 173 parishes. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty straddles the boundaries of two counties, three unitary authorities and four district / borough councils (see figure 3). The boundaries of South East and South West England bisect the area. Roughly, half of the area falls into each region.

The North Wessex Downs do not stand alone but form one of a family of nationally protected landscapes across England made up of 33 AONBs and ten National Parks. Together, this family of protected landscapes covers over 23% of the country.

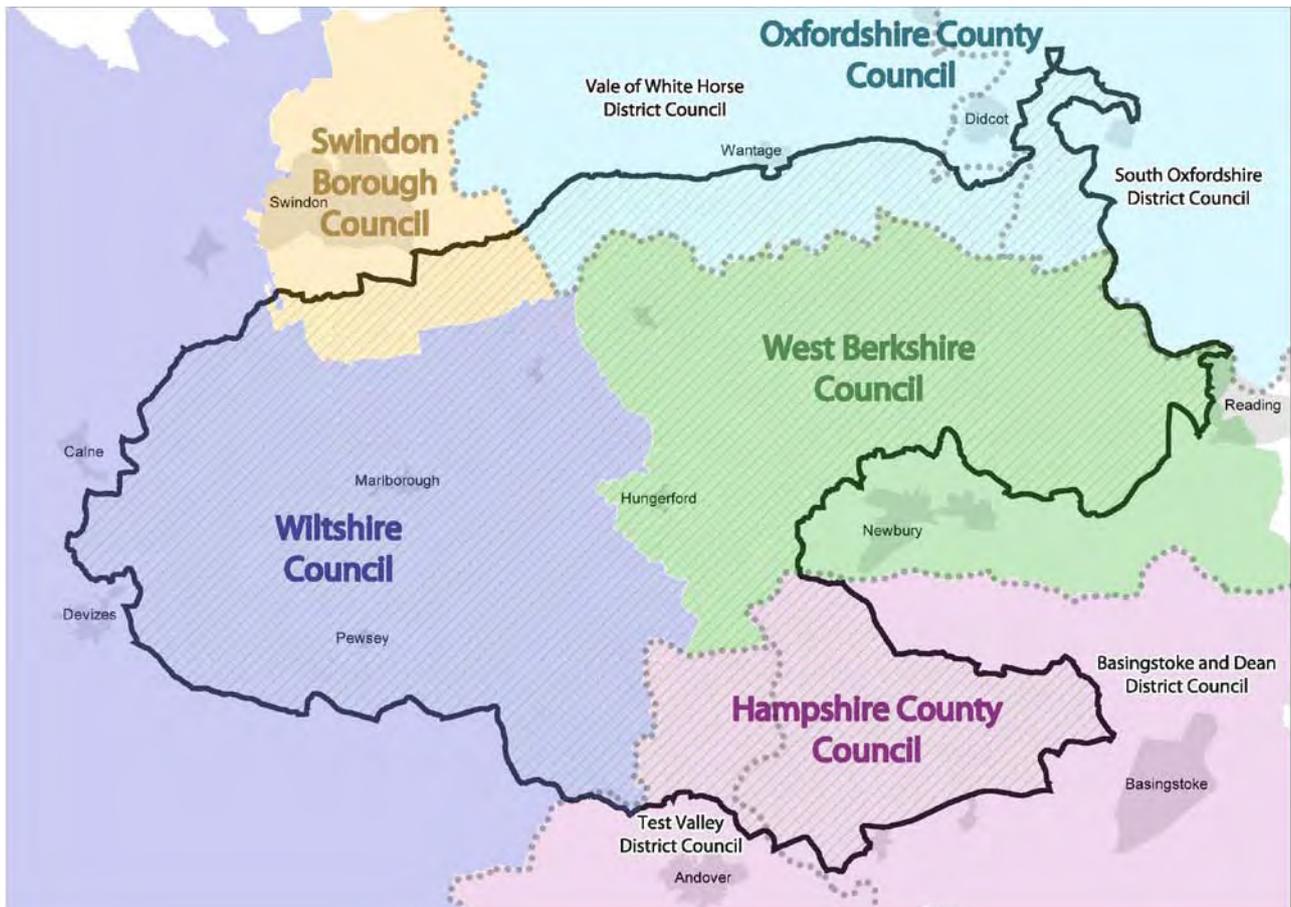
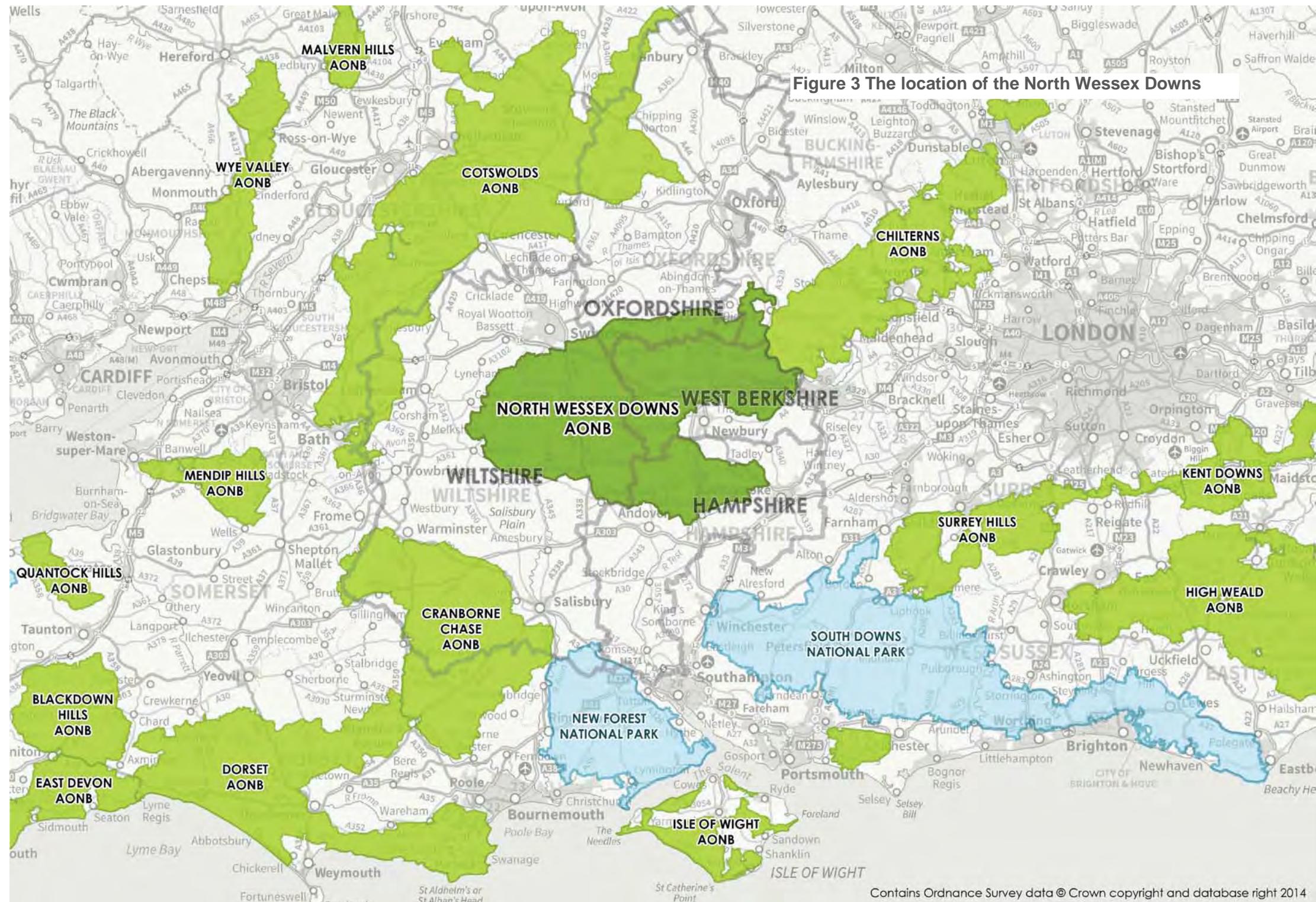


Figure 2 Local Authority Boundaries

Figure 3 The location of the North Wessex Downs



## 2.2 Definition of Natural Beauty

The primary purpose of AONB designation is '*conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area*'<sup>3</sup>.

'In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.'<sup>4</sup>

The area's landscape is also of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)<sup>5</sup>. It is an evolved cultural landscape, managed and nurtured by people over millennia. Those who manage the land are central to the future of this landscape. The North Wessex Downs Partnership is committed to long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values in the protected landscape, as part of a network of terrestrial and marine protected areas. It is inevitable and appropriate that this cultural landscape will continue to develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its special qualities.

Section 114 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 states that "references to the preservation or conservation of the natural beauty of an area shall be construed as including references to the preservation or, as the case may be, conservation of its flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features". This definition was further refined by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. In section 99 of that Act, it is stated that natural beauty can "include land used for agriculture or woodland, as a park or any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape".

## 2.3 Why is this Management Plan important?

This Management Plan presents an agreed agenda for the North Wessex Downs. It sets out objectives and policies for AONB partners that are realistic and achievable in the next five years. Working together, the partners can realise these targets to the benefit of the landscapes and communities of this nationally designated area.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 requires local authorities to prepare an AONB Management Plan and review it every five years. The North Wessex Downs Council of Partners prepared this plan on behalf of the constituent local authorities of the AONB<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, section 82

<sup>4</sup> Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991

<sup>5</sup> Protected Areas Category V, [IUCN Website](#)

<sup>6</sup> For a current list of membership, please contact us or visit the [North Wessex Downs website](#).

The Partnership includes representatives of:

- the constituent local authorities;
- the local communities;
- the farming and rural business community;
- nature conservation, heritage and landscape interests; and
- recreation interests.

**The Management Plan 2014-19 will:**

- seek to support a viable rural economy, so as to provide resources for those who manage the area's landscapes;
- outline the principles of our response to development that may affect the beauty and tranquillity of the North Wessex Downs;
- identify priorities for resources, including staff and money, that will maximise conservation and minimise damage; and
- inform people about the unique landscapes of the area and how best to enjoy these beautiful landscapes and support their conservation.

Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, it is a legal duty for all relevant authorities to "have regard to" the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area in exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the area<sup>7</sup>. These relevant authorities include all statutory bodies and all tiers of government, including parish councils and holders of public office.

In addition, the European Landscape Convention was ratified by the UK on the 1 March 2007<sup>8</sup>. The Convention is a Treaty devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The Convention seeks to ensure enhanced landscape planning, protection and management through quality objectives and an effective policy framework.

The convention highlights the need to:

- recognise landscape in law
- develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes
- establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies

The Convention encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies. There is a particular emphasis on the need for co-operation when administrative boundaries are crossed. The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan is a significant contribution to the achievement of the aims of the Convention.

Successful implementation of this Management Plan is beyond the resources of the Council of Partners and AONB team alone. It will require the active collaboration and participation of all those

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<sup>7</sup> [Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads; Guidance Note](#). DEFRA. 2005.

<sup>8</sup> [Guidelines for Implementing the European Landscape Convention](#). Natural England. 2014.

involved in its scope. This is a plan for the geographic area of the North Wessex Downs and not for any single organisation within it. Implementation needs the support and involvement of the many organisations and individuals who play key roles in the future of the area. Many of these have been involved in drawing up the plan.

One way of satisfying the 'Section 85' duties placed on Government and other public bodies is by supporting the implementation of this plan. Local parish councils, statutory agencies and local bodies acting individually or through partnerships can all contribute to fulfilling the Management Plan vision.

This Management Plan forms part of a number of plans and strategies being prepared at the national and local level. National and local climate change policy is likely to affect most aspects of daily life, business and methods of land management. Sustainable development will continue to rise in importance. Agricultural support under the Common Agricultural Policy has moved away from subsidies for agricultural production and towards incentives for environmental management. Implementation of the Water Framework Directive will require significant changes to land management. Forestry policy now clearly focuses on supporting the wide range of benefits that woodlands can provide. There is a particular emphasis on the conservation of our ancient woodland resource. Where appropriate, there is either a description of, or a link to, these and other plans under the individual Themes.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a statutory process<sup>9</sup>. A formal SEA is required for new plans and programmes that are likely to have significant effects on the environment. SEA aims to provide protection of the environment at a strategic level and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

An SEA was completed for the previous plan (2009-14). This was undertaken in consultation with Natural England, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, the local authorities and partner organisations. An Environmental Report is available that assesses that plan's environmental impact. An Environmental Statement has also been published which explains how the plan has been influenced by the SEA process. As an update, it has been agreed that a full SEA is not required for this plan.

The Partnership also published an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impact of the Management Plan (2009-14) on the conservation objectives of sites of European importance for nature conservation affected by the plan<sup>10</sup>. Natural England has confirmed that the assessment complies with legislative requirements for the current plan.

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<sup>9</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment". Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the "SEA Regulations"),

<sup>10</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Statutory Instrument No. 490 as amended by the 2012 amendment regulations (Statutory Instrument No. 1927).

## 2.4 Monitoring Strategy

Monitoring is needed to assess the effectiveness of this Management Plan. A distinction needs to be drawn between:

- **Monitoring**, which is the process of collecting data to describe condition and, when collected over time, change.
- **Indicators**, which are the elements of data collected during a monitoring programme to focus the monitoring activity and measure change.
- **Evaluation**, which is the consideration and use of the collected data to assess the effectiveness of the Plan and its delivery in meeting the AONB objectives and enhancing natural beauty.

The effectiveness of this Management Plan will be monitored against:

- the condition of the North Wessex Downs and the extent to which the **objectives** are being achieved as they focus on whether the quality of the area is being maintained and enhanced. Data is provided on an annual basis by Natural England.
- monitoring the extent to which the **policies** identified in the Delivery Plan are achieved. These will be monitored as an ongoing assessment of activity, which will be pulled together in quarterly or annual reports as a part of the AONB Business Plan.

Further indicators of outcomes or condition were defined as part of producing the State of the North Wessex Downs AONB report, with the first edition published in 2012<sup>11</sup>. In some cases these are 'proxy indicators' i.e. measures that do not directly reflect the condition of the North Wessex Downs but from which judgements about their condition can be inferred.

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<sup>11</sup> North Wessex Downs AONB (2012). [State of the North Wessex Downs](#) Report.

### 3. The Landscape



The North Wessex Downs is a visibly ancient landscape of great beauty, diversity and size. It embraces the high, open arable sweeps of the chalk downs and dramatic scarp slopes with their prehistoric monuments and beech knolls, the moulded dip slopes, sheltered chalk river valleys; intimate and secluded wooded areas and low-lying heaths with a rich mosaic of woodland, pasture, heath and commons. The North Wessex Downs form a surprisingly remote, expansive and tranquil landscape in the heart of southern England.

*“The slopes of the downs, if they have general form, are continually changing and interchanging in localities, assuming new and strange shapes, charming and surprising with their grace and exquisiteness, forever reflecting the mood of the heavens” Alfred Williams 1877 – 1930<sup>12</sup>*

The depth of history can still be seen in these landscapes, including the World Heritage Site of prehistoric Avebury; the royal hunting forest of Savernake, the Uffington White Horse, and the Ridgeway – the oldest road in England. The built environment makes a strong contribution to the beauty of the landscape, with historic towns and villages, churches, spectacular barns, manor houses with their parks and gardens, and the industrial heritage of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Saxon name of Wessex reveals the area’s literary connections, revived by Thomas Hardy and used as the setting for many of his novels. More recently, Richard Adams provided a vivid evocation of this area in *Watership Down*.

#### 3.1 Geology, Landform and Land Use

Geology, landform and the uses that humans have made of the land have together created the distinctive and beautiful landscapes of the area. The chalk forms an arc of high ground – the northern, western and southern parts of the AONB, cut through by the Vale of Pewsey to the west, and including, at Walbury Hill, the highest chalk hill in southern England. From this great rim, the land generally falls down the dip slope of the chalk, to the central basin of the east-flowing Rivers Kennet, Lambourn and Pang<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Williams, A. quoted in Watts, K *The Marlborough Downs* (West Country Landscapes Series) 1993

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from the Oxford Geology Trust, Draft Local Geodiversity Action Plan for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, January 2007

The greater part of the area is underlain by chalk, resulting in the dramatic scarps and beautiful gentle rolling topography so characteristic of the North Wessex Downs. The steep scarp slopes of the chalk and Upper Greensand, with their expansive viewpoints, and the gentle rolling open chalk plateau are very obviously influenced by the underlying geology. These chalk landscapes were traditionally in sheep grazing – the wool being the source of much of England’s historic wealth. However, much of the chalk grassland has since been ploughed, and the resulting extensive, open arable land is now the most frequent land use and landscape of the chalk downs. Herb-rich chalk grassland remains in fragments on the steeper scarps.

Where the chalk has a thick capping of clay-with-flints, the topography is softer, with smaller hedged fields and much greater woodland cover – a very different, enclosed and intimate, landscape from the open sweep of the downs. Overlying the chalk are patches of more recent sediments, particularly in the lower part of the basin. These contrast with the chalk scenery by producing more acidic soils, with their associated heathland landscapes.

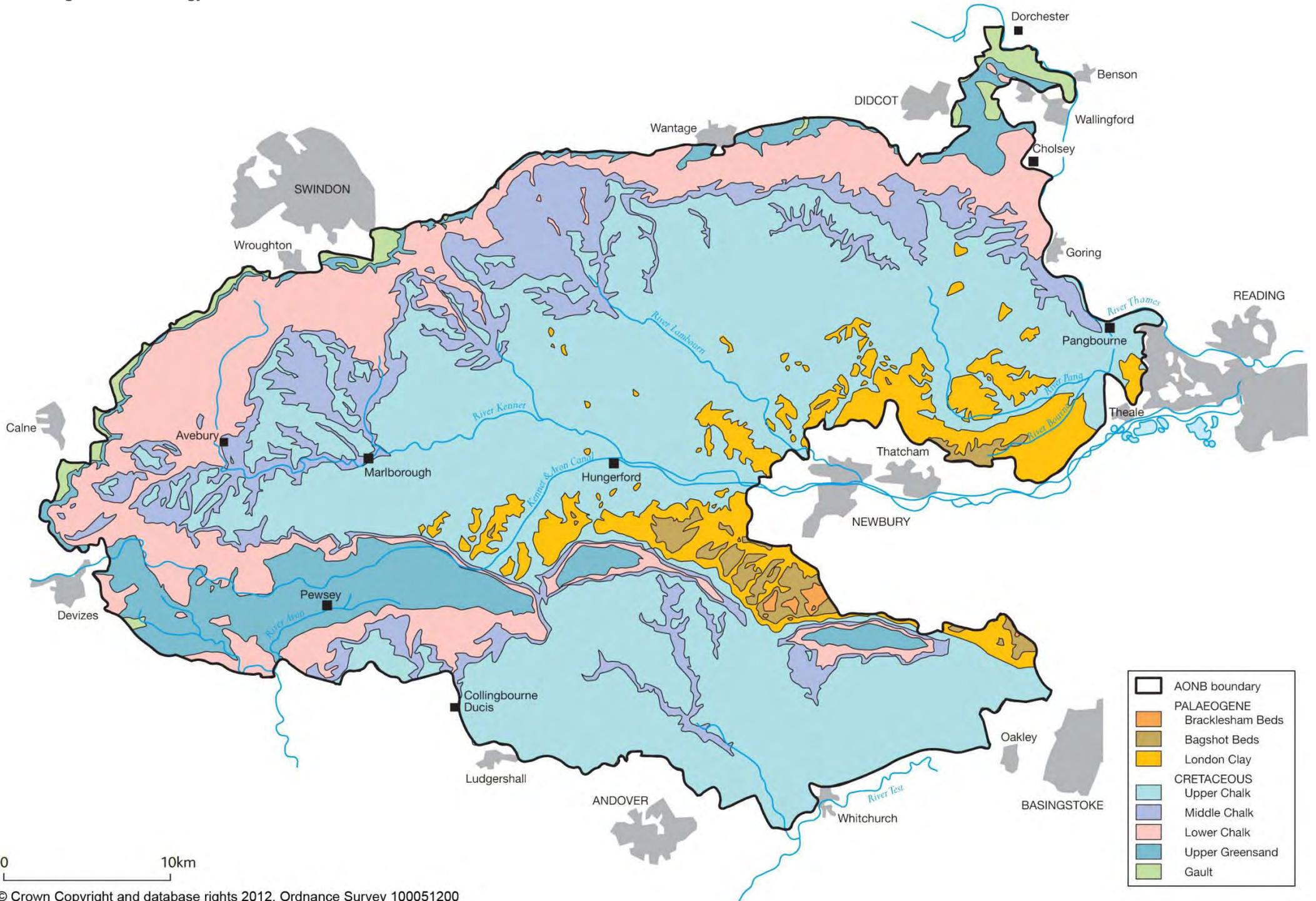
Some of the more impressive features of the landscape are the dry valleys or coombes, found across the chalk plateau and often forming deep rounded valleys. They are the result of torrents of water flowing over the surface of the chalk during cold periods when permafrost (frozen ground) made the chalk impermeable. The coombes are often associated with terrace features along the valleys, such as those at White Horse Hill in Oxfordshire. These result from the movement downhill of frost-shattered chalk during times of partial thaw. Large amounts of material moving down the slope of the valley can accumulate in the valley bottom, forming a deposit known as head. Sarsen stones are one of the most identifiable and well-known features of the North Wessex Downs, forming the great stone circle and avenues at Avebury and the fields of ‘grey wethers’ (because they look like sheep) at Fyfield Down. Sarsens are silica-cemented sand or pebble deposits, often moved by natural processes a considerable way from their source.

Whilst many of the chalk valleys are dry, some have characteristic ‘bournes’, generally dry, but flowing when the ground water is high. England has 85% of the world’s chalk streams and a large proportion of these are within or near the North Wessex Downs. These have a rich and highly characteristic ecology, and frequently support rich biodiversity.

Settlement is also strongly related to the underlying physical setting. The high, dry chalklands have no water to support settlement, so have remained open, remote, and tranquil, with farmsteads and villages on the spring lines and in the more sheltered and fertile valleys. Traditional building materials include bricks from local clays, flints, Melbourn Rock, Chalk Rock (not the soft chalk), cob, sarsens, thatch, and timber from the forests.

Further information regarding the geological history of the area can be found on the [North Wessex Downs website](#).

Figure 4 The Geology of the North Wessex Downs



### 3.2 Landscape Character Types

Designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty recognises the character, value and quality of the North Wessex Downs. The National Planning Policy Framework gives the highest level of protection to the overall diversity of landscape and scenic beauty of the area<sup>14</sup>. The North Wessex Downs are of high scenic quality and with their wildlife and cultural heritage an integral part of their character and value. Although almost entirely a chalk landscape, character differs markedly across the area, depending on local surface geology, soils, landform, land use, vegetation and settlement patterns. The greatest contrast, for example, is between the open arable chalk downs and the acid heathlands of the lower river valleys. Natural England has set out a methodology for formally identifying what it is that makes one landscape different from another. This is known as landscape character assessment<sup>15</sup>. A landscape assessment for the North Wessex Downs was published in 2002<sup>16</sup>. This identifies the overall diversity of the landscape, recognising eight Landscape Character Types across the North Wessex Downs, each with their own distinct sense of place. The study draws out the special qualities of the landscape, traces its evolution over the centuries and identifies the main issues that will need to be addressed to conserve its special character and outstanding qualities.

The eight landscape types are briefly described below. These are also reflected in the National Character Areas prepared by Natural England<sup>17</sup>. The North Wessex Downs spans five National Character Areas: Berkshire and Marlborough Downs, South Wessex Downs, Hampshire Downs, Thames and Avon Vales, and London Basin.

For further information, or to download the full North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment please visit the [North Wessex Downs website](#).

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<sup>14</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 115

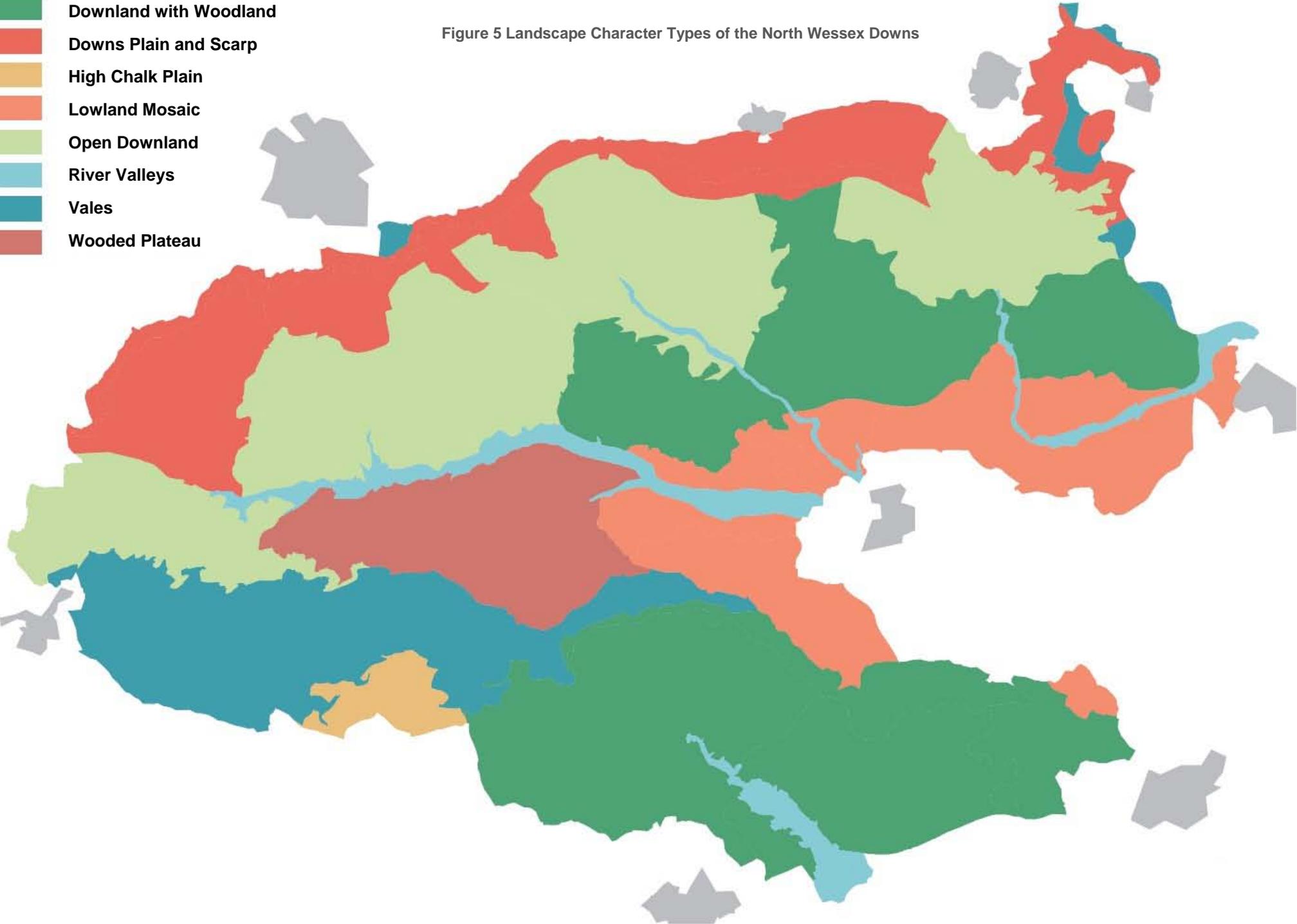
<sup>15</sup> The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, (2002) *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*,

<sup>16</sup> Countryside Agency (2002) *The North Wessex Downs Landscape: A landscape assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CA7)*.

<sup>17</sup> Natural England (2013). National Character Areas – defining England's natural boundaries. <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca>

Figure 5 Landscape Character Types of the North Wessex Downs

- Downland with Woodland
- Downs Plain and Scarp
- High Chalk Plain
- Lowland Mosaic
- Open Downland
- River Valleys
- Vales
- Wooded Plateau



## Downs Plain and Scarp



The landscape of the Downs Plain and Scarp extends along the entire length of the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs. The plain is formed by the eroded surface of the Lower Chalk, creating a low level surface extending as a wide ledge at the foot of the high Open Downland.

The distinctive northern scarp plunges down from the chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognisable horizon when viewed from the north.

This area is characterised by some of the most emblematic features of the North Wessex Downs: the Ridgeway, the oldest road in England – running along the top of the scarp; the Uffington White Horse on the scarp face; and Avebury on the open Downs Plain, forming part of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. The Downs Plain is characterised by vast arable fields, lack of surface water and a general absence of settlement. Conversely the dramatic scarp slope, cut by springs, creates a convoluted edge alternately under woodland and pasture, including significant areas of remnant chalk grassland. This is a landscape that feels as though it has hardly changed over the centuries, although it is increasingly affected by development at its foot, outside the AONB boundary.



The key issues for the Plan period will be ensuring that development beyond the boundary does not visually damage these critical scarp landscapes; management of users of the Ridgeway to maximise enjoyment and minimise conflicts; and maintenance and, where possible, extension of the chalk grassland habitats. A major ambition is to enhance prominent views of and within the area by reconnecting fragmented remaining grassland along the length of these chalk ridges. Much former grassland has been ploughed or overtaken by scrub and secondary woodland. Priorities include arable reversion, scrub clearance and reintroduction of grazing, carefully targeted to restore key views.

## Open Downland



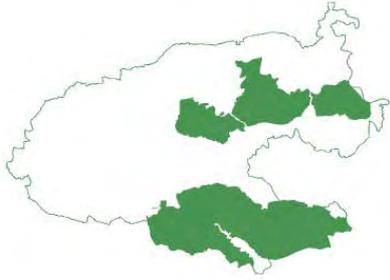
The Open Downland forms the backbone of the North Wessex Downs as an elevated plateau of the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. The landscape is of open, smoothly rounded downland dissected by dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps, and is devoid of surface water. Tree cover is limited to distinctive Beech clumps crowning summits and occasional linear shelter belts.

This is a remote, tranquil landscape of panoramic views where the sky forms a key part of the landscape, including the effect of cloud shadows on the ground and the wind creating swells through the crops. The dominant land use is of vast sweeping arable fields with small remnant patches of chalk grassland on steeper slopes. Settlement is extremely sparse and limited to scattered farmsteads and racing stables.



The key issues for the Plan period will be ensuring that the remoteness and expansive open scale of these core landscapes is maintained; that viable agriculture continues; that the internationally-important archaeological sites have sufficient resources for management and understanding; and that where possible chalk grassland habitats are restored, reconnected and extended.

## Downland with Woodland



This landscape is distinctly different from the Open Downland. It is of lower elevation and has a thick capping of clay-with-flints over the chalk. It has softer contours and considerably greater woodland cover.

The scale is smaller, with field patterns a mixture of small irregular medieval enclosures and larger regular Parliamentary enclosures.

Hedgerows and a mosaic of woodland cover, notably on the clay summits and as sinuous hangers along steeper slopes, create a sense of containment. There are also considerable areas of wood pasture and parkland. Agricultural land use is more varied, with an intermixing of arable and pasture. Small villages nestle in sheltered valleys or are strategically located on ridge tops, with widespread scattered traditional farmsteads.



The key issues for the Plan period will be to maintain the remote, secluded and relatively undeveloped character of these wooded downs, including the character of the lanes; to support woodland management, including the viable use of timber products, particularly for fuel; and to ensure that large-scale developments outside the AONB boundary do not damage the scale and intimacy of these landscapes.

## Wooded Plateau



Centred on the woodland tracts of Savernake Forest and West Woods, the extent of this largely wooded area reflects the bounds of the medieval royal hunting forest of Savernake, established by the time of the Domesday survey.

Throughout this gently dipping plateau, a thick covering of clay-with-flints and Tertiary deposits mask the solid chalk and results in damp and heavy soils.

Today, the Forest consists of extensive tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland, wood pasture with majestic veteran trees, and 18th and 19th Century Beech plantations, as well as more recent coniferous plantations. Reflecting its origins as a royal hunting forest, the countryside remains undeveloped, with settlement limited to villages in the valley of the River Dun – Great and Little Bedwyn.



The key issues for the Plan period will be to support woodland management, including the viable use of timber products, particularly for fuel, consistent with the heritage and nature conservation value of the forests; to maintain the remote and tranquil character of these historic landscapes, including encouraging restoration of wood pasture landscapes, husbandry and ecology and ensuring future veteran tree succession; to support maintenance and use of the Kennet and Avon Canal, and to encourage recreational enjoyment of the extensive woodland areas.

## High Chalk Plain



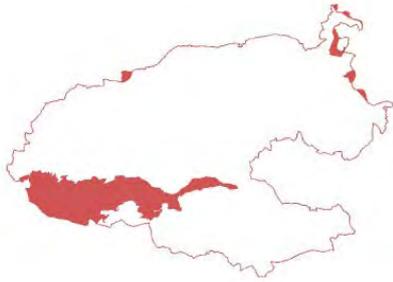
This is the northernmost tip of Salisbury Plain. The open rolling landform of the Upper Chalk creates a bleak, spacious landscape under arable production and devoid of settlement, with long views and a strong sense of remoteness and isolation.

A dramatic escarpment forms the northern boundary, as at Pewsey Hill and Fyfield Down, and provides panoramic views across the Vale of Pewsey to the north.



The key issues for the Plan period will be to maintain the open, remote and empty landscapes of the plain and scarp, including ensuring that developments beyond the AONB boundary do not cause visual damage; and to support land managers in maintaining the land as habitat for key species, including threatened arable plants, invertebrates and farmland birds.

## Vales



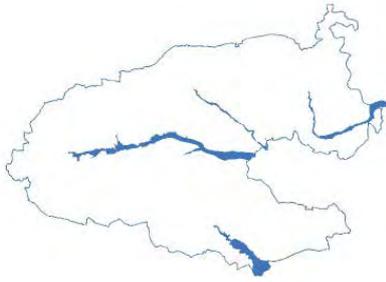
The Vale of Pewsey separates the two main upland chalk blocks that dominate the North Wessex Downs. The towering shapes of the adjacent chalk scarps contain and enclose this Greensand vale. Numerous springs issue from the chalk and Greensand boundary where the water table comes to the surface, their streams meandering across the Vale floor.

Rich loamy and alluvial soils create a productive agricultural landscape with a mix of arable, orchards and pasture now replacing a once predominantly pastoral scene important for dairying – hence the saying ‘chalk and cheese’, identifying the very different landscapes of the downs and the vale. The concentration of settlements is a defining feature of the Vale, including compact nucleated villages and hamlets, with widespread scattered farmsteads. The ‘Vales character type also occurs at the north-eastern edge of the North Wessex Downs, with the sections of the Thames valley floor that lie within this AONB. The eastern part of the Thames valley floor here lies within the adjoining Chilterns AONB.



The key issues for the Plan period will be to maintain the pattern of discrete villages set within a quiet rural landscape and ensure that the views to the surrounding dramatic scarps are undamaged.

## River Valleys



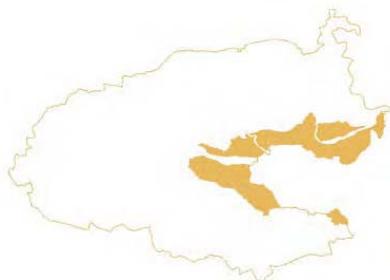
The chalk rivers that cut through the chalk uplands form very distinct linear landscapes, characterised by a rich mix of grazed pastures, water meadows, wetland and woodland. The valleys are enclosed by steeply rising slopes, limiting views and creating an intimate and enclosed character.

Historically, the main settlements of the chalk were concentrated in these river valleys, as the only source of accessible water in an otherwise dry downland landscape. These settlements took a long linear form, following the bottom of the valley, and this remains the dominant pattern to this day. The chalk uplands (in other character areas) are also cut by numerous dry valleys, which sometimes contain ephemeral 'winterbournes' only flowing when the chalk water table rises to the surface during the winter and early spring.



The key issues for the Plan period will be ensuring the maintenance of water quality and quantity in the rivers, supporting river managers in river course improvement for fisheries and wildlife; and maintaining and enhancing the adjacent seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, damp woodlands and historic parkland.

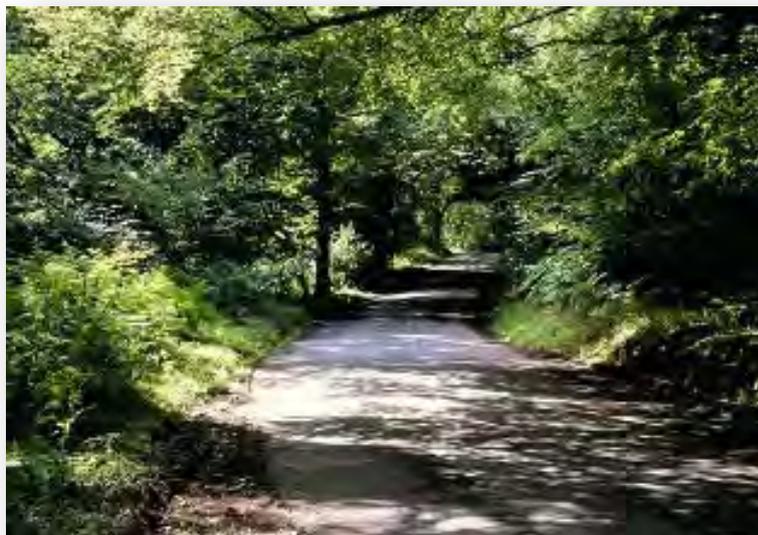
## Lowland Mosaic



This is the lowest part of the 'bowl', curving around Newbury and the lower Kennet valley. This landscape, of largely Medieval origins has a varied geology of clays, silts and sands giving rise to a diverse mix of soils and, in turn, a mosaic of ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland areas.

This is a small-scale and intimate landscape, where lanes are frequently overhung by deep grassy and wooded banks, heightening the sense of seclusion. There are some limited longer views, as at Bucklebury Upper Common. The network of ancient semi-natural woodland, connecting hedgerows, areas of parkland, including wood pasture and veteran trees, create considerable ecological interest.

Former Medieval deer parks are a particular feature, as at Englefield, Highclere and Hampstead, with a number of these having been re-fashioned in the 18th Century as formal designed landscapes. This is one of the most densely inhabited areas of the North Wessex Downs, with large manor houses, a network of hamlets, and lines of houses and villages that have grown along the network of lanes.



The key issues for the Plan period will be conserving and enhancing the small-scale, secluded and rural character of the area, including the fragile lowland heaths. Merging of small settlements or encroachment by larger settlements will be strongly resisted.

### 3.3 Special Qualities: Landscape

- The distinctive northern **Downs Plain and Scarp** plunges down from the chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognisable horizon.
- **Open Downland** extending from Roundway Down near Devizes to Lardon Chase overlooking the Thames at Streatley is dissected by dry valleys and long steep scarps, with limited tree cover and sense of remoteness and tranquility.
- **Downland with Woodland** on the dip slope descending to Kennet Valley and south across the Hampshire Downs; offering softer contours, woodland cover and a mix of field patterns.
- Centred on Savernake Forest and West Woods, the **Wooded Plateau** consists of extensive tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland, wood pasture with majestic veteran trees, and 18th and 19th Century Beech plantations, as well as more recent coniferous plantations.
- At the northernmost tip of Salisbury Plain, the open rolling landform of the **High Chalk Plain** creates a bleak, spacious landscape under arable production and devoid of settlement, with long views and a strong sense of remoteness and isolation
- The **Vales** of Pewsey and sections of the Thames Valley floor adjoining the Chilterns AONB offer productive loamy and alluvial soils where springs issue from the chalk and compact settlements contrast with scattered farmsteads.
- The **River Valleys** of the Kennet, Lambourn, Pang and Bourne form very distinct linear landscapes, characterised by a rich mix of grazed pastures, water meadows, wetland and woodland. Steeply rising slopes create an intimate and enclosed character
- The **Lowland Mosaic**, curving around Newbury and the lower Kennet valley has a varied geology of clays, silts and sands giving rise to a diverse mix of soils and, in turn, a mosaic of ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland areas where sunken lanes heighten the sense of seclusion.

## 4. Land management



Farmland and woodland dominates the landscape of the North Wessex Downs. Changes in these land uses have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area. Land-based enterprises play a significant role in acting as stewards of the landscape and contributing to an economic balance for communities. Additionally, equine activities and field sports are significant in terms of land use and management.

*"I like to look at the winding side of a great down, with two or three numerous flocks of sheep on it, belonging to different farms; and to see, lower down, the folds, in the fields, ready to receive them for the night."* William Cobbett 1763-1835 <sup>18</sup>

### 4.1 Agriculture

The North Wessex Downs cover 1,730 sq km, or 668 sq miles. Approximately 84% of the land is classified as farmland, with over 60% under arable cultivation. Agriculture is the dominant land use and the major influence on landscape character and quality. According to a study in 2005, the North Wessex Downs is the most strongly agricultural of the South East AONBs. It found that the North Wessex Downs had 2,787 people working in agriculture (total farm labour), representing 5.9% of the total workforce. The average proportion for the South East was 1.3%<sup>19</sup>.

Agricultural statistics since 1990<sup>20</sup> show that the area of land in agricultural management appears to be fairly stable, with a slight net loss over time. This could be due to development but also changes in holding distributions may represent a move to other land uses not classified as agricultural. The total number of farms is also falling. The highest proportion of farms are over 100 hectares, a number that has steadily increased over the last decade.

Defra defines farm types for a holding as the crop or livestock enterprise (or group of enterprises) that contributes more than two thirds of the total standard gross margin for the holding. The North Wessex Downs have quite large areas of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, a high proportion of

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<sup>18</sup> Cobbett, W. (1823). From Dover to the Wen (English Journeys)

<sup>19</sup> Tantram, D, Shorten, J, Fecht, D, Briggs, D, Cole, L & Deane, R. (2005). Socio-economic profiles for protected landscape areas in South East England. Report to Countryside Agency. Terra Consult, Guildford.

<sup>20</sup> Defra agricultural census 1990 - 2011

which is put down to potatoes and field scale vegetables around the Pewsey Vale. The most common farm type is *other* followed by *cereals* with some *cattle and sheep* (grazing livestock).

Farm profitability varies significantly by farm type and by farm size within farm type. The area has a high proportion of large holdings and a great many cereal farms. Though these are likely to remain profitable under current conditions, the proportion of farms specialising in cereals is slowly declining. So has the proportion of dairy farms. Pig and poultry farming have fluctuated over time, both by proportion of farms and number of animals. The proportion of 'other' farms has increased greatly, probably reflecting increased levels of specialisation and diversification, but also representing non-classifiable holdings. This category may be growing through an increase in specialist horses or specialist forage to support the horse racing industry in the area.

Profitable agriculture can sustain the natural resources that have created rich diversity and natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. Support for an efficient farming sector is an important means of securing landscape management, as demonstrated through the North Wessex Downs Partnership support for initiatives such as the RDPE funded LEADER programme.

Trends identified in the previous plan appear to have continued, with a decline in livestock farming and greater sensitivity of arable production to prices of inputs. As with other sectors, consolidation will lead to larger farms and larger herd sizes to seek increases in efficiency. There have also been positive changes driven by the implementation of targeted agri-environment schemes. The North Wessex Downs has a higher take up of these schemes than the UK average.

The reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the introduction of new agri-environment schemes in the UK are affecting farming, with a greater emphasis on wildlife conservation. The de-coupling of support payments from production is requiring farmers to respond more readily to world market conditions. Fluctuations in commodity prices and input costs are making future arable profitability hard to predict. There is a risk that such market influences may thwart initiatives designed to improve natural resource protection and environmental enhancement. An example in the North Wessex Downs has been the difficulty in promoting arable reversion to chalk grassland under higher-level stewardship schemes in the light of fluctuating, and occasionally very high, cereal prices. Issues concerning animal movement and the loss of skilled graziers compound this.

Coupled with the drive for sustainability, food and energy security considerations are likely to become major influences on land management over the next 10 to 20 years. Climate change may affect the types and varieties of viable crops. There are implications for sowing dates, irrigation, pests, diseases and soil erosion. Increased productivity needs careful management to maintain landscape character and the opportunity to expand wildlife habitats. There may also be diversification into novel crops and farming systems or related activities, such as equestrian businesses and leisure.

## 4.2 Forestry

The area of woodland within the North Wessex Downs is around 23,300 hectares, or 13.5% of the area. Just under a half of this woodland has some form of wildlife designation and a little over a third is Ancient Woodland. Broadleaf trees dominate (62%)<sup>21</sup>. The long-term decline in the market for UK timber has had a pronounced effect on the area's woodlands, with many suffering from a lack of management. The ageing Beech woodlands no longer produce significant volumes of timber and are more valuable as places for recreation than as a productive part of the rural economy. The promotion of wood as a renewable fuel may stimulate improved management of some woodlands.

A survey of local woodland professionals indicated that only 10,230 hectares (or 44%) of the woodland area was being managed<sup>22</sup>. The timber quality of a lot of the woodland area within the AONB is not high; many of the woodlands are extremely small; a number of the woodlands comprise crops for which there is no longer a viable market. Consequently, the economics of forestry operations are problematic. There is a role for energy production in helping to manage small woodlands and partners have made progress in supporting the forestry sector through initiatives such as the RDPE LEADER programme, ahead of an anticipated rise in demand for wood fuel and associated products<sup>23</sup>.

The priority is to maintain the existing woodlands rather than establish new woodland areas. Any new woodland should meet the objectives of the North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy. This values woodland designated for their nature conservation interest, and all ancient and semi-natural woodland. New woodlands can act as a buffer to protect this resource and create wildlife links between woodlands. The Partnership encourages woodland owners to undertake Management Plans and will promote the accreditation of woodlands under the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Scheme.

The dangers to woodland from pests and diseases is growing, with Ash Dieback (*Chalara Fraxinea*) and Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) two of the most recent examples. The damage caused by increasing numbers of deer, squirrels and other species is an ever-increasing problem. This highlights the need for the collaborative landscape-scale protection of our woodlands. The North Wessex Downs Partnership is working with the Forestry Commission and woodland owners and operators to raise awareness and, where appropriate, prevent or mitigate the effects of activity.

Climate change may lead to drought and lower summer rainfall. This is likely to affect the North Wessex Downs woodlands. For example, the shallow rooting Beech does not thrive on dry soils and is likely to decline but small leaved lime needs warmth to set seed and will probably increase. Veteran trees of all species are more likely to be felled by storm force winds. However, in woods the impact of these storms can be positive, creating glades that species adapted to sunlight can occupy. The recreational value may increase as people seek shade in the hottest months.

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<sup>21</sup> Matthews, R (2005) North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy, September 2005

<sup>22</sup> Matthews, R (2005) North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy, September 2005

<sup>23</sup> Forestry Commission (2007), A woodfuel Strategy for England

### 4.3 Horse Related Activity

Horse owning and riding is an increasingly popular activity across the South of England. Owners of horses have an important role to play in keeping the North Wessex Downs a beautiful place. How horses are cared for and the developments associated with keeping a horse can have a significant impact on the character and quality of the North Wessex Downs landscape. 'Horses, the Landscape and You', published in collaboration with Protected Landscapes in the South West, contains helpful guidance to make sure horses are well cared for and make a positive contribution to our landscape.

The Lambourn area and other racing yards make the North Wessex Downs second only to Newmarket in their importance as a centre of activity for the horseracing industry. It is a significant employer and economic contributor to the local economy. About 10% of Britain's racehorse trainers and approximately 3,700 racehorses are in the North Wessex Downs. The core businesses employ approximately 1,370 Full-Time Equivalent staff. That represents just over 20% of employment in the agriculture and entertainment sectors in the area. A survey identified 103 businesses within the area directly involved and a further 49 businesses associated with the racing industry<sup>24</sup>. The horseracing industry contributes between £16-38 million per annum of direct Gross Value Added to the local economy; its total economic output is up to £70 million per annum.

### 4.4 Field Sports

The rise of large-scale commercial shooting in recent years has had a significant influence on the landscape, especially in the downland. Much of the management of some small-scale woodland has been motivated by shooting whilst the downs and valleys, notably the steep scarps, provides an ideal landscape for Partridge shooting. This has led to the planting of large blocks of maize and complemented grant-aided conservation plots such as wild birdseed mix. Shooting brings in substantial income to the rural economy, and is thus beneficial to the area, but changes to the landscape may be viewed with mixed opinions. However, there is no doubt that the management of land for shooting brings significant benefits to wildlife in general.

Commercial fishing is also an important feature of the AONB, especially the world famous chalk streams, such as the Kennet and Lambourn. The income from let fishing helps to support the conservation of the rivers.

Further information regarding the influence of land management can be found in the Biodiversity and Natural Resources chapters.

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<sup>24</sup> Smiths Gore (2007) A study of the key effects of the horseracing industry on the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

#### 4.5 Special Qualities: Land Management

- A landscape under the influence of **agricultural management** with typically large farmed estates, a high proportion of which are subject to agri-environment agreements.
- **Varied field patterns**; the open downlands are characterised by large regular fields, largely the product of 18th Century parliamentary enclosure, with more recent boundary removals creating vast fields, as on the Marlborough Downs. By contrast, the Vale of Pewsey in the south west of the AONB is the product of Medieval clearance which created numerous, small, irregularly-shaped fields or assarts.
- Stock fencing and extant **hedgerows** in the vales and river valleys containing some mature trees.
- A growing forestry sector and different **types of woodland**, many with public access. Although Oak and Ash are the main forest canopy species there is a wide range of stand types including Hornbeam coppice, Oak/Ash stands, Hazel/Oak stands, and Birch and Ash/Wych Elm coppice.
- **Equestrian activity**, including the 'Valley of the Racehorse' in the Lambourn area that attracts visitors and businesses.
- Significant land management for **field sports**, including highly valued game fishing which supports the native Brown Trout.

## 5. Biodiversity



*“At length the snow ceases and the wind drops to a whisper; then over the hill-top the lapwings start up again and wheel in phantom flight, shrieking their weird night call.”* Edward Thomas 1878-1917 <sup>25</sup>

The breadth of ecological diversity reflects the varied landscape character of the North Wessex Downs. It is the product of centuries of human influence and active management. Within the area, there are seven Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), part of the internationally important network of European Natura 2000 sites. Both Pewsey Downs SAC and Fyfield Downs SSSI are also National Nature Reserves. They have an outstanding chalk grassland flora and fauna that includes nationally important populations of rare species, including the endemic Early Gentian. The North Wessex Downs contains 66 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) covering 3,330 hectares (or 2% of the area).

The most ecologically important habitats within the North Wessex Downs are:

- the remnant chalk grasslands;
- semi-natural broadleaf woodlands and wood pasture;
- chalk rivers and associated wetlands; and
- arable farmland managed for conservation.

A wide variety of other habitats characterise particular parts of the area. These range from remnant heathland on river gravel deposits in the east, including areas of semi natural acidic grassland in the area around Inkpen, to the wide grassy verges of the driveways crossing the downs. At a local level, the hedgerow network, springs, remnant cressbeds, road verges and dew ponds also provide important refuges and habitats. Chalk cuttings having magnificent displays of Primrose and Cowslip each year. This mosaic of habitats is especially important for bats. They may commute many miles from their roosts in old trees or outbuildings to forage over a range of habitats including wetland, farmland, woodland and grassland.

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas, E (1897). The Woodland Life.

## 5.1 Chalk Grassland

Chalk grassland is one of the most biologically rich and diverse habitats in the UK. Over 40 species of flowering plants are found in a single square metre of the best quality turf. Around 9% of the UK's chalk grassland resource lies within the area. Traditionally grazed by sheep, cattle and rabbits, the area's chalk grassland supports important populations of the Early Gentian. This is a scheduled protected species and one of Britain's few endemic plants. Unimproved chalk grassland is also important for the survival of many scarce invertebrate species such as the Wart-biter Cricket and the internationally threatened Marsh Fritillary Butterfly. Other scarce chalk grassland butterflies include the Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue and Small Blue whilst bird species include the Skylark.

Of the 66 SSSIs in the North Wessex Downs, 29 have a chalk grassland component, amounting to 1,421 hectares (0.8% of the area). In addition, 249 Local Wildlife Sites (known also as County Wildlife Sites or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) have a chalk grassland component. The total area of these sites amounts to 2,163 ha or 1.3% of the area. Unfortunately, the absolute figure for chalk grassland within the local sites is not available.

Nationally, areas of chalk grassland are a shadow of their extent in the 1900s. In the North Wessex Downs, there was a 32% decline in the area of chalk grassland between 1968 and 1998<sup>26</sup>. The remaining areas are suffering increasing fragmentation. Today small isolated blocks of chalk grassland are largely restricted to the steep scarp slopes, dry valleys and areas maintained as pasture around archaeological sites. The total area of remaining chalk grassland within the area is not known but it is estimated that the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs Natural Area (which covers roughly two-thirds of the North Wessex Downs) supports at least 1,250 hectares (or 3-5%) of the total English resource of chalk grassland.

## 5.2 Woodland

According to the Woodland Trust, the North Wessex Downs contain two nationally important 'major concentrations'<sup>27</sup> of ancient woodland, centred on the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs and the Hampshire Downs; and areas of forest such as Savernake. In the area:

- less than 0.1% of the total woodland area is designated as a National Nature Reserve;
- 0.5% is designated as Special Areas for Conservation;
- 7.5% is a Site of Special Scientific Interest; and
- 42.3% is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

The diverse woodland types that make up these ancient woodlands include significant areas of wood pasture and support a wide range of species, with roosting sites for a number of bat species. Of particular importance are the calcareous woodlands that support a range of rare plants including Herb-Paris and Green Hellebore and provide home to a high proportion of the world's population of Bluebells.

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<sup>26</sup> RSPB (January 2001) Agricultural Change in the North Wessex Downs AONB between 1968 and 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Woodland Trust (2002) Space for Nature: Landscape-scale action for woodland biodiversity.

### 5.3 Chalk Rivers and Streams

The spring-fed fast flowing streams and rivers of the North Wessex Downs support an extremely diverse range of plant and animal communities. Pea Mussel, freshwater White Clawed Crayfish and internationally rare floating vegetation of River Water-dropwort can be found along their reaches. In turn, the rivers irrigate adjacent areas creating the distinctive valley landscape with its remnant fens and water meadows. The Summer Snowflake, a Red Data Book species, survives in seasonally flooded sites along the River Kennet. In recognition of their outstanding nature conservation value the Lambourn, Kennet and Hampshire Avon rivers are all designated SSSIs, while the River Lambourn, the Hampshire Avon, and the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain (a series of discrete sites supporting the Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) are SACs.

### 5.4 Enclosed Farmland

Arable cultivation is the dominant land management activity in the area (see chapter on Land Management). The North Wessex Downs support a wide range of nationally and regionally important species associated with arable farmland. They are adapted to colonise disturbed land achieved through tillage. They include farmland birds such as Stone-curlew and Tree Sparrow; rare arable plants such as Corn Buttercup and Shepherd's Needle; and mammals such as Brown Hare and Harvest Mouse. Many of these species are listed as Priority Species of Importance<sup>28</sup> and form targets for Biodiversity 2020. An Arable Strategy was prepared in 2008 to help protect and enhance the nationally important arable biodiversity found within the North Wessex Downs<sup>29</sup>.

Although the downlands are essentially a large-scale landscape, traditional areas of mixed farming, responding to the underlying geology, have resulted in a range of habitats (grassland, scrub and arable lands) co-existing in close proximity. This interlinking range of habitats provides some of the most favourable conditions for the characteristic birds and mammals of the North Wessex Downs, such as the Brown Hare, Skylark, Lapwing, Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Linnet and Grey Partridge. Increased cover, nesting opportunities and a wider abundance of food supply occur where arable margins meet up with wildflower and insect rich downland and scrub. This allows bird and other species typical of arable and unimproved grassland to be present together. The North Wessex Downs Farmland Bird Project has helped to target agri-environment resources to benefit these species.

Changes to climate will alter the composition of the natural communities that are characteristic of chalk downland, woodland, streams and arable fields. Diverse natural communities of plants and animals are most likely to survive on soils and in streams with low nutrient status and in large patches of habitat. Given the pressures of climate change and the need for species migration, habitat corridors along rights of way and habitat networks are of increasing value.

For further information regarding the special habitats and species that can be found in the North Wessex Downs, please [visit our website](#).

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<sup>28</sup> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

<sup>29</sup> Smart et al (2008). A Strategy for Arable Biodiversity in the North Wessex Downs AONB.

## 5.5 Protecting Biodiversity

A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network, chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS was published in September 2010<sup>30</sup> and later adopted as policy<sup>31</sup>. The authors describe the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as having great potential "to establish a coherent and resilient ecological network".

To make space for nature we need more, bigger, better and joined up sites to create a sustainable, resilient and more effective ecological network for England. The North Wessex Downs Partnership encourages activities that:

- improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management.
- increase the size of current wildlife sites.
- enhance connections between or join up sites either through physical corridors, or through 'stepping stones'.
- create new sites.
- reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites.

These actions will help to establish an ecological network that meets the needs for wildlife and people today, and one that is more resilient to the future. There are trade-offs between these actions: the more we do to improve the quality of existing sites or to enhance the wider environment, the less we will need to do to create new sites. Our actions need to be adaptive, adjusting to what works as we progress.

"Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services"<sup>32</sup> outlines the strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea. Outcomes will be delivered through actions in four areas:

- a more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea;
- putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy;
- reducing environmental pressures;
- improvement of knowledge.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment as a core principle for planning. It makes clear that Local planning authorities are to actively plan for the creation and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure (paragraph 114). Green infrastructure is a coherent network of multifunctional green spaces providing for recreation, biodiversity, health and wellbeing. It helps address and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BDAs) are those areas with best opportunities for habitat creation, connectivity and biodiversity enhancements.

The North Wessex Downs Partnership is contributing to a more joined up approach through its involvement in and support for local landscape scale conservation projects. The Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area, Stepping Stones (based around Salisbury Plain) and Winning

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<sup>30</sup> Lawton et.al. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.

<sup>31</sup> DEFRA (2010), *Natural Environment White Paper*.

<sup>32</sup> DEFRA (2011). *Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*

Ways for Wildlife (North Hampshire) are such examples. The North Wessex Downs has 33 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) within or partly within its boundary. BOAs have been identified and mapped at county level. They are considered to provide the best opportunities for targeted biodiversity enhancements and habitat creation at the landscape scale.

## 5.6 Special Qualities: Biodiversity

- Designated wildlife sites that are home to rare habitats and species, including:
- A nationally significant area of **chalk grassland** including rare flora such as Field Fleawort, Bastard Toadflax, Musk Orchid and Burnt Orchid; invertebrate species such as the Wart-biter Cricket and important butterfly populations including: Adonis Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Chalkhill Blue, Small Blue, Silver Spotted Skipper and Duke of Burgundy Fritillary;
- **Arable habitats** home to rare and colourful arable weeds, such as dense flowered-fumitory, slender tare and shepherd's needle, which are dependent on a regular cropping regime. A large number of other scarce plant species survive in the less intensively managed field margins including; Early Gentian, an Eyebright (*Euphrasia pseudokernerii*), Chiltern Gentian, Dwarf Mouse Ear, Tuberos Thistle and Round-headed Rampion; Arable land use also provides feeding and breeding habitat for a number of rare and declining farmland birds including Skylark and Stone-curlew;
- **Broadleaved Woodland and Wood Pasture**, including a significant concentration of ancient woodlands which provide roosting and/or feeding sites for bats species including Bechstein's, Barbastelle, Greater Horseshoe and Noctule; long rotation Hazel coppice provides important habitat for mammals such as Dormice; concentrations of calcareous Bluebell woods; and a number of nationally scarce moss species;
- Rare **chalk streams and rivers** with a high diversity of aquatic plants, and invertebrate species including those that are nationally scarce, such as the White-clawed Crayfish; supporting nationally and locally scarce bird species; nationally declining mammals such as the Water Vole and Otter; and healthy fish populations including Brown Trout, Salmon, Grayling, Perch, Chub and Dace;
- A rich mosaic of associated **wetland habitats** creating distinctive valley landscapes including fens, floodplains, water meadows, carr and wet woodland. The Red Data Book Summer Snowflake survives, for example in seasonally flooded woodlands along the Kennet Valley.
- Opportunities for landscape scale conservation projects, working across a significant area and political boundaries.

## 6. Historic environment



The North Wessex Downs is an ancient man-made landscape. This cultural heritage makes a fundamental contribution to the present-day landscape. Bill Bryson neatly sums up the powerful impact of that landscape on our own lives in the introduction to the book *The English Landscape* (2000):

*“What is truly remarkable about the White Horse [at Uffington] is not that people at some time in the ancient past took the trouble to cut it into the hillside... but that continuously for over twenty centuries others have made the effort to maintain it. Whatever religious or ritualistic significance the White Horse may have had to its creators has long since faded away. For most of its existence – through plague, war and famine... the White Horse has been preserved simply because people liked it. I think that is splendid.”* Bill Bryson 1951-<sup>33</sup>

In the three thousand years since the White Horse was carved the landscape of the North Wessex Downs has constantly evolved to serve the changing needs of the successive generations of the people who have lived and worked here. What we see today is a rich and many-layered patchwork of features that record different stages in its evolution. Together they contribute an irreplaceable sense of time and personality to the present day scene. Past human influence is etched in every facet of the landscape – in the shape of fields and woods, the alignment of tracks and lanes, the form and texture of villages and hamlets. In years to come the landscape of the North Wessex Downs will continue to evolve, but hopefully in ways that will allow the ingrained reminders of its past to add meaning and value to the lives of its future residents and visitors.

The importance of the historic environment is clearly recognised in the planning system. The National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that significance of heritage assets lies not only in their interest and value to people today but also to future generations (paragraph 17). That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. The significance of an asset derives not only from physical presence, but also from its setting – in other words, its relationship to nearby historic places and within the wider landscape.

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<sup>33</sup> Bryson, B (2000). *The English Landscape*.

## 6.1 Features of the North Wessex Downs

A wide range of features of differing scale, visibility and significance make up the historic environment. Many of the area's archaeological sites have national or even international recognition. The landscape that includes the complex of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments centred on Avebury (but including Silbury Hill, West Kennet long barrow, the causewayed enclosure on Windmill Hill, dozens of Bronze Age barrows and many other important sites) is of such significance that it has been inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site<sup>34</sup>.

Altogether, the North Wessex Downs are home to more than 520 Scheduled Monuments, one of the densest concentrations in the country. These include:

- Neolithic long barrows of Waylands Smithy high on the chalk ridge overlooking the Thames Valley and Adam's Grave above the Vale of Pewsey;
- Bronze Age barrow cemeteries such as the Lambourn Seven Barrows;
- the Uffington White Horse and its adjacent Iron Age hillfort, (one of a string of major late prehistoric defensive sites that occupy prominent positions on the higher downs);
- the small Roman town at *Cunetio* near Mildenhall and Roman villas such as Littlecote; and
- the medieval motte and bailey castles at Hamstead Marshall and Marlborough College.

One Registered Battlefield is included within the North Wessex Downs: Roundway Down, near Devizes was the location of a major encounter fought in July 1643 when a Parliamentarian army was heavily defeated by a significantly smaller Royalist force.

In addition to designated archaeological features, the local Historic Environment Records (HERs) maintained by the County Councils in Hampshire and Oxfordshire and the unitary authorities in Wiltshire and Swindon and West Berkshire, contain records of more than 11,000 sites, monuments and finds of archaeological and historic interest that lie within the boundary of the North Wessex Downs. Even though they may not yet have been designated as scheduled monuments, many of these sites are of national importance. Many others are of local significance and make a real contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. The information contained on the HERs is a vital part of the jigsaw of information that allows us to understand how our communities have developed and our landscapes have evolved over more than six millennia.

Another important part of the local heritage is the extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and byways, including the ancient ridgeway paths along the Marlborough Downs to the Chilterns and beyond. These historic communication routes are now a valuable recreational resource.

The built environment also makes a fundamental contribution to the landscape. The North Wessex Downs contain over 4,000 Listed Buildings. More than 250 of these are listed at Grade I or II\*, the two highest levels of importance. Buildings protected through listing take many different forms and reflect nearly a thousand years of human settlement. As well as grand country houses, the area's market towns are enriched by the town houses of wealthy merchants and its villages by many splendid medieval parish churches. Listed buildings in the North Wessex Downs also include some spectacular and very early barns; locks and other structures associated with the Kennet and Avon

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<sup>34</sup> Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Site World Heritage Site (UNESCO 2013)

Canal; milestones, roadside pumps and signs related to turnpike roads; and pillboxes built as part of the planned defence of Britain in the early phase of the Second World War.

The North Wessex Downs include 15 Registered Parks and Gardens. One of these, Highclere Castle, is registered at Grade I, and four examples, Tottenham House, Purley Hall, Ashdown House and Inkpen House, are registered at II\*. Although not on the national Register, many other areas of designed landscape, including historic parkland, gardens and cemeteries add significant local value, especially within and around some of the AONB's towns and larger villages.

As with the archaeological resource, many local buildings and structures remain unprotected through the listing mechanism. None the less, they contribute to the landscape or to our understanding of historic events or processes. Some of these lie within the 109 Conservation Areas designated by local authorities in settlements of particular historic character or significance. Many others, especially isolated structures or farm buildings, receive little or no formal protection.

## **6.2 Historic Landscape Character**

Defining and mapping the Historic Landscape Character Areas for the North Wessex Downs has provided new insights in to the evolution of the landscape and the historic processes that have influenced the countryside. Historic landscape characterisation (HLC) is a way of analysing and recording how several millennia of human interaction with the land produces the rural landscape of today. It is nationally recognised as a means for understanding and managing the entire landscape and not just the isolated archaeological sites and buildings traditionally protected by scheduling or listing.

All Historic Landscape Characterisation Projects undertaken are underpinned by a series of guiding principles: -

- Present not past: it is the present-day landscape that is the main object of study
- Landscape as history not geography: the most important characteristic of landscape is its time-depth; change and earlier landscapes exist in the present landscape
- Landscape not sites: HLC-based research and understanding are concerned with area not point data
- All aspects of the landscape, no matter how modern, are treated as part of landscape character, not just 'special' areas
- Semi-natural and living features (woodland, land cover, hedges etc.) are as much a part of landscape character as archaeological features
- Characterisation of landscape is a matter of interpretation not record, perception not facts; understand 'landscape' as an idea, not purely as an objective thing
- People's views: it is important to consider collective and public perceptions of landscape alongside more expert views
- Landscape is and always has been dynamic: management of change, not preservation is the aim
- The process of characterisation should be transparent, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used
- HLC maps and text should be easy to understand, jargon free and easily accessible to users

- HLC results should be integrated into other environmental and heritage management records e.g. Sites and Monument Records (SMRs) or Historic Environment Records (HERs)

The main aims of the Historic Landscape Characterisation are to help the North Wessex Downs AONB to:

- Better understand the historic elements of the whole landscape of the AONB
- Raise awareness and understanding of the unique cultural heritage of the area amongst local people, visitors and the wider population
- Provide a tool for managing the historic environment and the integrated management of the landscape as a whole
- Inform planning decisions
- Provide a framework for policy making and research agendas
- Enhance the county based SMR/HERs

Whilst confirming that the landscape of the North Wessex Downs has always been predominantly rural, HLC has begun to show how its detailed character has changed over time. One of the most significant statistics concerns the loss of open chalk downland. Of the 18% of the area that could be characterised as unploughed pasture in 19<sup>th</sup> century just 3% survives today.

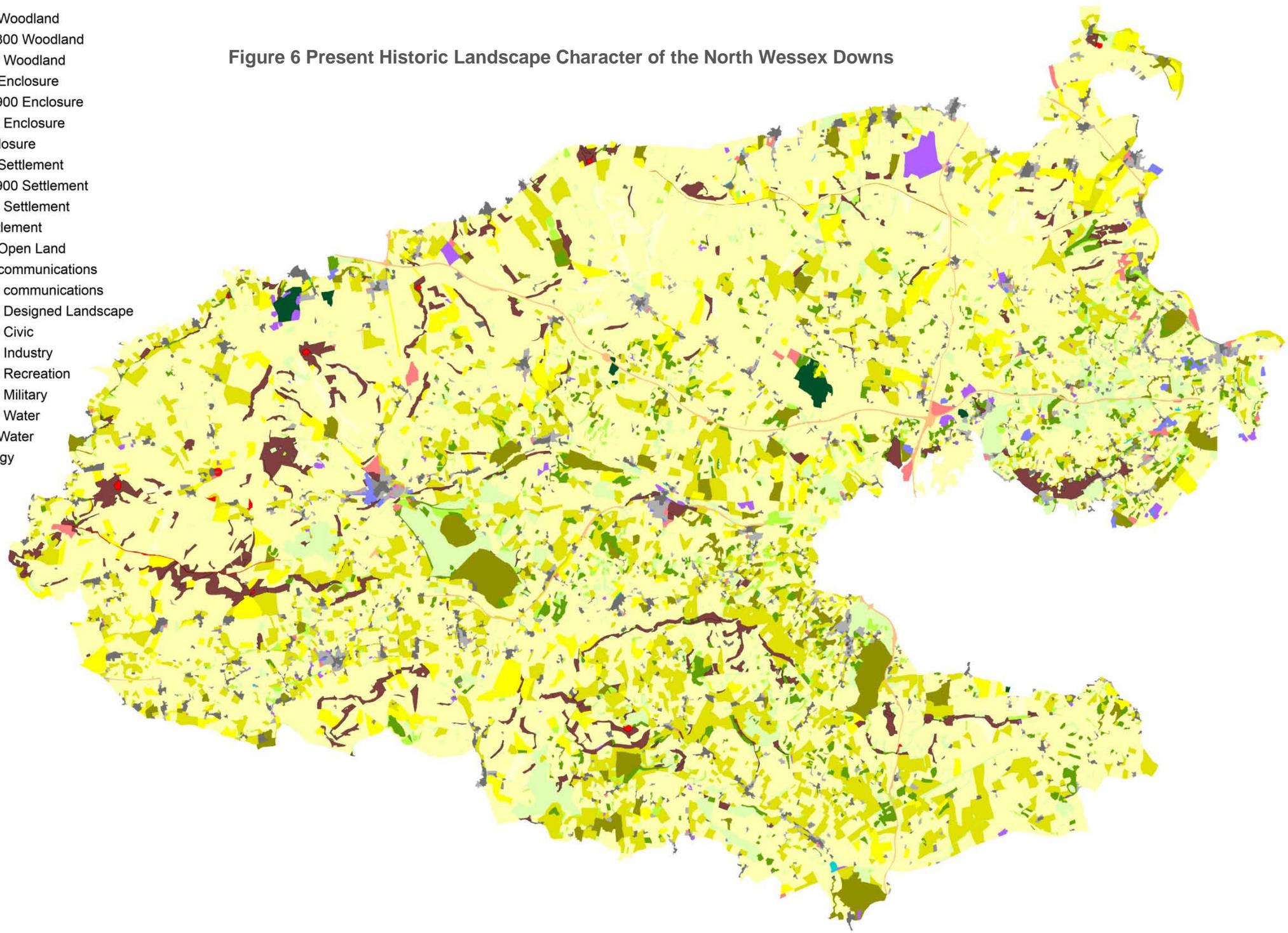
The rate of agricultural change is also illustrated by the fact that around 75% of pre-18th century field enclosures have been lost during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, some two-thirds of medieval assart enclosures (woodland clearances) have been lost or significantly modified in the same time.

A full analysis of the Historic Landscape Characterisation of the North Wessex Downs was published in 2014. For further information please contact the [North Wessex Downs office](#).

KEY

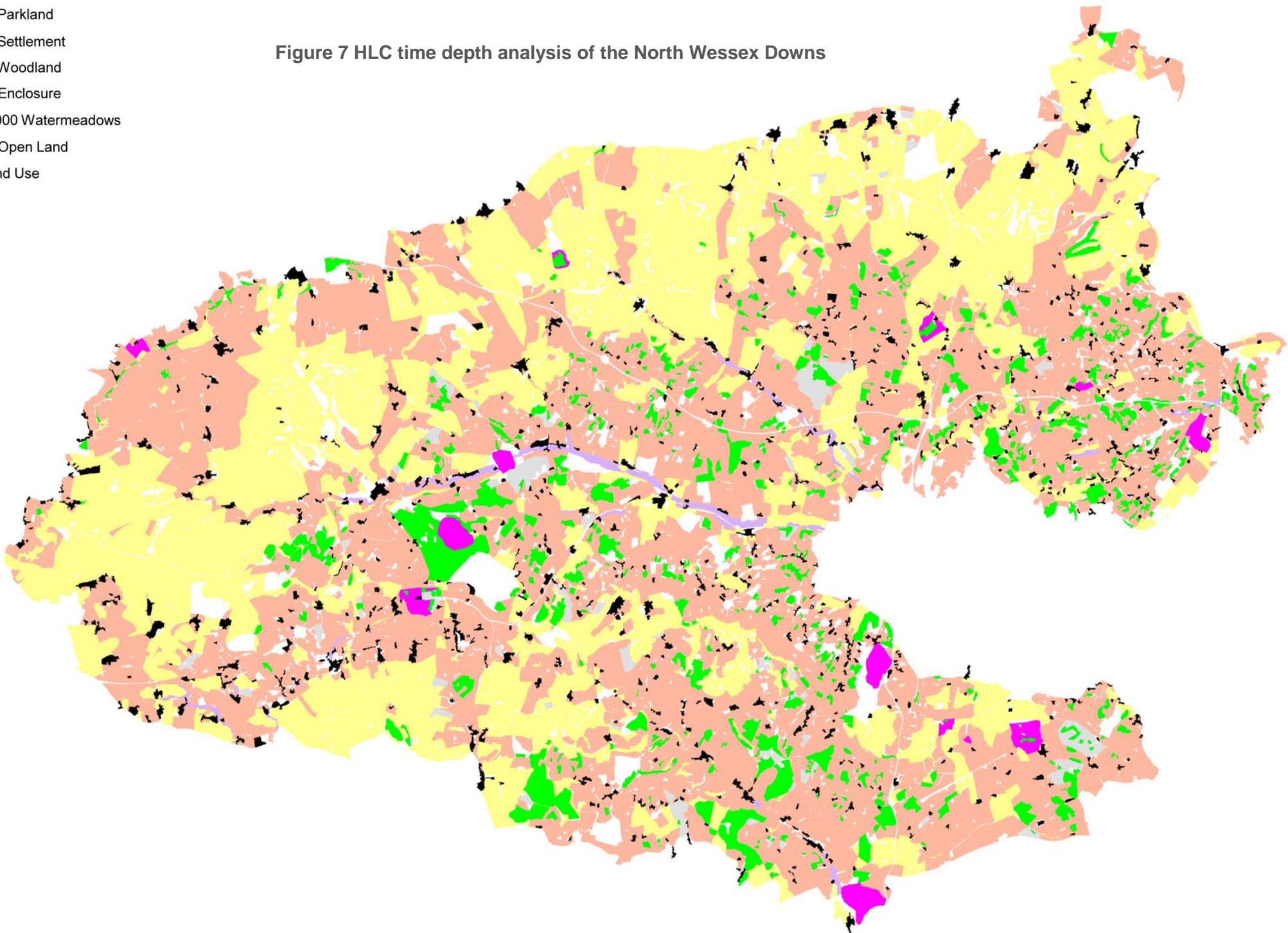
- Pre 1600 Woodland
- 1600 to 1800 Woodland
- Post 1800 Woodland
- Pre 1700 Enclosure
- 1700 to 1900 Enclosure
- Post 1900 Enclosure
- Other enclosure
- Pre 1700 Settlement
- 1700 to 1900 Settlement
- Post 1900 Settlement
- Other Settlement
- Pre 1700 Open Land
- Pre 1750 communications
- Post 1750 communications
- Post 1700 Designed Landscape
- Post 1800 Civic
- Post 1800 Industry
- Post 1800 Recreation
- Post 1900 Military
- Post 1800 Water
- Pre 1900 Water
- Archaeology

Figure 6 Present Historic Landscape Character of the North Wessex Downs



- KEY**
- Pre 1700 Parkland
  - Pre 1700 Settlement
  - Pre 1600 Woodland
  - Pre 1700 Enclosure
  - 1700 to 1900 Watermeadows
  - Pre 1700 Open Land
  - Mixed Land Use

**Figure 7 HLC time depth analysis of the North Wessex Downs**



### 6.3 Settlement Pattern

The pattern and distribution of settlement within the North Wessex Downs has evolved over millennia of human occupation. However, most of the current towns, villages, hamlets and farms are likely to have originated in medieval or post-medieval times. Some of the most characteristic features of the 'Downland' and 'Downland with Woodland' landscape character areas are the long linear settlements of the river valleys – the main concentrations of population in otherwise open uninhabited downland. Characteristically, these are loosely strung along a road on the first contour above the winter flood level, with the winterbourne or river forming an integral feature of the village. Examples are at St Mary Bourne in Hampshire, Collingbourne Kingston in Wiltshire and Hampstead Norreys in Berkshire.

The pattern in the 'Lowland Mosaic' landscape character area is distinctly different. This reflects its medieval origins in a network of hamlets, lines of houses and villages along roads. Some villages have a clear nucleus, typically associated with a village green or church, while others have a more dispersed pattern, typical of post-medieval squatter settlements. This pattern is also reflected in the 'Downland with Woodland' landscape type, which has small clustered hamlets and villages sheltering in folds in the chalk, as in the Chutes in Wiltshire, or exposed on ridgetops, as at Faccombe in Hampshire. Evidence from the Domesday Survey of 1086 suggests that the creation of many of these settlements were during the Early Medieval (Saxon) period.

Another distinct settlement type of the North Wessex Downs is the string of attractive, small, springline villages that developed along the base of the lower north-facing scarp. Examples are Clyffe Pypard, Clewancy, Liddington, Letcombe, Ashbury and Bishopstone.

### 6.4 Special Qualities: Historic Environment

- **Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments** including Knap Hill and Windmill Hill causewayed enclosures; West Kennet and Wayland's Smithy chambered tombs; Silbury Hill; Avebury stone circle and its surrounding ceremonial landscape; Bronze Age round barrows including Seven Sisters and Seven Barrows groups.
- **Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman defences and settlements**, including Oldbury, Barbury Castle and Uffington Castle; Cunetio (Mildenhall) Roman town, Littlecote villa and the Roman road through Savernake Forest; Fifield and Overton Down field systems; Wansdyke, Grim's Ditch and Devils Ditch linear earthworks.
- **Medieval and post-medieval settlements and buildings**, including castle earthworks; tithe barns; parish churches; the layouts and historic buildings of Marlborough, Hungerford, Ramsbury and many smaller villages.
- **Country houses and landscaped parks and gardens** such as at Basildon Park, Highclere Castle, Tottenham House and Ramsbury Manor and Savernake Forest, many originating as medieval deer parks.
- **Post-medieval buildings and infrastructure** including the Kennet and Avon Canal; extant and former railway lines and tunnels; watermills, windmills and pumping stations; water meadows; 18th–19th-century planned farmsteads; First and Second World War airfields, pillboxes, ammunition dumps and practice trenches.

## 7. Natural resources



*“Our wealth as a nation and our individual well-being depend critically upon the environment. It provides us with the food, water and air that are essential for life and with the minerals and raw materials for our industry and consumption. Less obviously, it provides the processes that purify air and water, and which sequester or break down wastes. It is also in our environment where we find recreation, health and solace, and in which our culture finds its roots and sense of place”.* UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2011) <sup>35</sup>

Whether we live in towns or in the countryside, we are part of and rely upon natural systems. The benefits or services which society obtains from the natural environment are commonly referred to as ‘ecosystem services’ or ‘natural benefits’. These natural benefits are grouped into four categories:

- Supporting – e.g. soil formation, nutrient cycling, primary production by plants.
- Provisioning – e.g. Woodland that provides timber for fuel, construction and manufacturing, or farmland that provides insects to pollinate crops, providing food to eat
- Regulating – e.g. Soils that absorb rainfall to prevent flooding, and filter water to give us healthy rivers and aquifers, where we get our water
- Cultural – landscapes, wildlife and heritage that give us our identity, support tourism, offer recreation and learning opportunities and delight the soul.

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<sup>35</sup> UK National Ecosystems Assessment (2011). , UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge.

## 7.1 Accounting for Natural Benefits

The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2011) identified that a contributing factor to the degradation of ecosystems was inadequate consideration full range of natural benefits in decision-making. While we pay for some ecosystem services, like food and fibre, we are often unaware of the importance of others, such as natural water or air purification. We would be alarmed at the cost of providing these artificially. This under-estimation of the value of natural processes means that we take poorly informed decisions on how to use these resources. The result is pollution, the loss of species and ecosystems and damage to the processes we need. There are real costs to either recover them or provide artificial alternatives.

Just as there are costs to degrading ecosystems, there are benefits and savings from a healthy natural environment.<sup>36</sup> Degraded ecosystems present risks to businesses in terms of security of raw materials, waste disposal, insurance rates and brand image. In the North Wessex Downs, there are obvious direct links between ecosystems and the business activities of land-based industries such as farming, forestry and rural tourism. Associations can be less obvious or indirect for other businesses and relate, for example, to supply chains and investment choices.

In the rural landscape, sustainable agriculture and forestry could deliver widespread positive impact upon ecosystems in the area. Grants and advice can support sustainable approaches amongst farmers and foresters. For example, through agri-environment schemes, woodland grant schemes and LEADER.

The table below shows the natural benefits delivered by the natural environment of the North Wessex Downs, as they relate to the area's special qualities.

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<sup>36</sup> UNEP (2010). Mainstreaming the Economics of Nature: a synthesis of the approach, conclusions and recommendations of TEEB

**Figure 8 Goods and Services Provided by the North Wessex Downs**

Adapted from the UK National Ecosystems Assessment (2011)

Theme	Ecosystem Service	Provisioning				Regulating								Supporting				Cultural					
		Food	Raw materials	Fresh water	Medicinal resources	Local climate and air quality	Carbon sequest. and storage	Moderation of extreme events	Water treatment	Erosion prev. and soil fertility	Pollination	Biological control	Habitats for species	Genetic diversity	Soil Formation	Nutrient Cycling	Primary Production	Tourism	Recreation and health	Aesthetic and inspiration	Education and knowledge	Spiritual experience	
Special Qualities	Open Downland																						
	Downland with Woodland																						
	Wooded Plateau																						
	Downs Plain and Scarp																						
	Vales																						
	River Valleys																						
	Lowland Mosaic																						
Land Management	Agricultural management																						
	Varied field patterns																						
	Hedgerows and field boundaries																						
	Forestry activity																						
	Equestrian activity																						
Biodiversity	Chalk grassland																						
	Arable habitats																						
	Broadleaved woodland																						
	Chalk Streams and Rivers																						
	Wetland habitats																						
Historic Env.	Neolithic and Br'Age monuments																						
	Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman																						
	Medieval and post-Medieval																						
	Country Houses and Parks																						
	Post-Medieval infrastructure																						

Theme	Special Qualities	Ecosystem Service	Provisioning				Regulating							Supporting				Cultural								
			Food	Raw materials	Fresh water	Medicinal resources	Local climate and air quality	Carbon sequest. and storage	Moderation of extreme events	Water treatment	Erosion prev. and soil fertility	Pollination	Biological control	Habitats for species	Genetic diversity	Soil Formation	Nutrient Cycling	Primary Production	Tourism	Recreation and health	Aesthetic and inspiration	Education and knowledge	Spiritual experience			
Natural Resources	Geological resources																									
	Soil types																									
	River gravel beds																									
	River channels																									
	Clean air																									
	Clear natural water																									
Development	Remoteness and tranquillity																									
	Distinctive architectural styles																									
	Sparse road network																									
	Traditional economy																									
Communities	Dispersed population																									
	Economic activity																									
	Influence of Armed Forces																									
	Good access to wider area																									
	Well resourced farming industry																									
	Strong Sense of Identity																									
	Affinity with the Landscape																									
Leisure and Tourism	Cultural landscape																									
	Historic attractions																									
	Picturesque market towns																									
	Rich archaeology																									
	Country houses																									
	Rights of Way Network																									
	Centre for Antiques																									

## 7.2 Conserving Resources and Maintaining Ecosystem Function

Protecting natural resources and the natural benefits arising from them by operating in a way that minimises damaging impacts is part of sustainable development. There is a particular need to conserve soil, water and clean air.

### Soils

Soils are cultivated to produce essential items of food, clothing and fuel. Soils also deliver natural benefits – they manage water; store carbon, and support biodiversity and ecosystems<sup>37</sup>. The government strategy for England's soils sets out a case for protecting our soils from three main threats – erosion, compaction and decline of organic matter.

Chalk forms the underlying structure to the North Wessex Downs but the overlying soils influence vegetation cover and land use. Each of the types of soil in the area has their own management requirements.

### Sustaining Water Resources

The main rivers flowing through the Downs – the Pang, the Lambourn and the Kennet – drain eastward to the Thames. Watercourses flowing off the northern escarpment into the vales also feed the Thames catchment. The separate catchments of the Hampshire Avon and the Test flow southward, draining the Vale of Pewsey and Hampshire Downs respectively. The escarpment in the west around Calne falls into the Salisbury Avon catchment that flows westwards.

The state of surface waters and groundwaters in terms of quality, availability and flow is important to biodiversity and to people. The North Wessex Downs Partnership is committed to supporting Catchment Partnerships, water companies, planning authorities and other interested groups to help assess, protect and enhance these important assets.

One in six residential and commercial properties in England is at risk from flooding<sup>38</sup>. In the North Wessex Downs, there has been localised flooding of villages in the river valleys in the winter. This is often associated with rising groundwater and springs rather than with river flooding. Flood alleviation and flood risk management may include the provision of sustainable measures to alleviate future flood risk (e.g. Sustainable Drainage Systems and flood plain management).

In summer, some rivers suffer from lack of flows because of water abstraction. This may then lead to a reduction in water quality and ecological diversity (through lack of dilution and silt deposition). Pressure for abstraction from the chalk aquifers that feed these rivers is directly related to the rising demand for water, including from new development. Drainage structures and other features modify natural flow regimes. Climate change, the deterioration of assets, as well as continuing pressure to build in areas at risk of flooding, will contribute to increased flood and coastal erosion risk in England<sup>39</sup>.

The waters of the chalk aquifers and rivers are a major source of potable water. Ground waters from within the river catchments are abstracted for public water supply (the main source of

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<sup>37</sup> DEFRA (2009), Safeguarding Our soils – A Strategy for England

<sup>38</sup> Environment Agency (2009), Investing for the future – flood and coastal risk management in England

<sup>39</sup> Environment Agency (2009), Investing for the future – flood and coastal risk management in England

demand) and for industry, agriculture and aquaculture (water cress and fish farms). The level of abstraction and effect on river flows varies across the area. The Lambourn has a near natural flow regime with minimal abstraction<sup>40</sup>. Conversely, in the 1980s the Pang was one of 40 rivers in England identified as suffering from low flows caused by over abstraction (from a groundwater source at Compton). Despite abstraction ceasing in 1997 (as a result of increased nitrate levels), the Environment Agency is continuing to monitor the flow characteristics of the river<sup>41</sup>.

In the case of the Kennet, there are numerous groundwater abstractions but these only amount to 5% of the available resource. The largest single abstraction adjacent to the river is at Axford (between Marlborough and Hungerford), with 70% of the water exported out of the catchment. Modelling indicates that this abstraction is having a detrimental impact on river flows.

At the same time, the operational requirements of the Kennet and Avon Canal have an effect on the Kennet. Between Bath and the summit at Crofton Pumping Station the Canal is fed by the Bristol Avon; between the summit and Kintbury by the River Dun (a tributary of the Kennet); and between Kintbury and Reading by the Kennet. In-flows into the Canal from these river sources can result in less than optimum flows in the rivers, particularly in the summer months and in drier years. This also has a severe effect in reducing the water quality of the river, particularly by increasing the turbidity (Environment Agency 2000). However, it is a clear objective of British Waterways to optimise the use of water resources in the Canal and to use back-pumping to conserve water in the 'artificial' section between Bath and the Canal summit.<sup>42</sup>

Under the Nitrates Directive<sup>43</sup>, the majority of the North Wessex Downs is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. Within these zones, farmers are required to limit the application of manures and nitrogen fertilisers, subject to a closed season for the application of certain manures. They are also required to keep records of cropping, stocking and the application of nitrogen fertilisers and manures.

Further control of diffuse pollution comes from the Water Framework Directive<sup>44</sup>. This legislation requires river basins to be managed as an entity to deliver good environmental outcomes in both surface and groundwater. Agriculture is one of the main sources of diffuse pollution and Defra<sup>45</sup> wishes to encourage Catchment Sensitive Farming. This manages land in a way that is sensitive to the ecological health of the water environment. Farming is not the sole cause of these problems but it does contribute approximately 60% of nitrates, 25% of phosphorus and 70% of sediments entering our waters, amongst other pollutants.

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<sup>41</sup> Environment Agency (2000) Kennet and Pang Local Environment Agency Plan Periodic Review.

<sup>42</sup> British Waterways (2000) Kennet and Avon Canal Conservation Plan.

<sup>43</sup> Council Directive 91/676/EEC introduced in December 2002

<sup>44</sup> The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive England and Wales) Regulations 2003.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf/index.htm>

## Maintaining Air Quality

A variety of air pollutants have known or suspected harmful effects on human health and the environment. In most areas of Europe, these pollutants are principally the products of combustion from space heating, power generation or from motor vehicle traffic. Pollutants from these sources may not only prove a problem in the immediate vicinity but can travel long distances, chemically reacting in the atmosphere to produce secondary pollutants such as acid rain or ozone<sup>46</sup>. The nearest monitoring site to the North Wessex Downs is at Harwell. Other sites are in Reading Town Centre, Newbury, Thatcham, Bath and Oxford. Pollution is low but there may be local issues, such as environmental quality relating to traffic pollution.

## 7.3 Climate

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>47</sup>, the UK Government and local authorities now regard a changing global climate as an indisputable fact. People's activities are the principal cause. We are being encouraged by government to change the way we generate and use energy, and conduct other activities that release greenhouse gases. The precautionary principle is promoted. There is a broad consensus on the likely changes to the climate of Southern England over the next few decades<sup>48</sup>. These changes will be gradual and may not be noticeable within the life of this plan but strategies are needed now because of the long lead-in time for actions to be effective. The changes are likely to be that summers will become warmer and drier; winters will become milder and wetter; and extreme weather conditions will become more frequent.

Climate change may give rise to more rainfall in winter deluges, when the ground is already saturated. An increase in soil erosion can be expected, resulting in damage to historic features and more silt, nutrients and pesticides washing into rivers. These inputs come predominantly from arable farmland and already have a significant impact on water quality and freshwater biodiversity. Drought and lower summer rainfall is likely to result in a contraction of the chalk stream network. Freshwater species will be lost from some of the winterbournes while some perennial streams will become seasonal winterbournes. There may be an increase in the popularity of streamside recreation as people seek shade in the hottest months.

Other significant changes also have the potential to affect the landscapes, wildlife and communities of the AONB. Woodlands may be dominated by Oak and Ash, which cope better than Beech with the likely changes in climate. The range of crops grown by farmers will change and there may be more growing of bio-fuels. We have already seen increases in agricultural disease including *African Horse Sickness*, *Blue Tongue* and *Schmallenberg Virus* that can be attributed in part to climate change, Water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic. Habitats may expand, contract or migrate. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that may be detrimental to 'native' species. Tourism pressures could increase as

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<sup>46</sup> [www.airquality.co.uk](http://www.airquality.co.uk) and Defra, Air Quality Strategy 2007

<sup>47</sup> The authoritative reference source for all climate change calculations and prediction is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) <http://www.ipcc-data.org>

<sup>48</sup> Natural England (2009), Character Area Climate Change Project NE116R - Responding to the impacts of climate change on the natural environment: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase Character Area

more people decide to holiday in the UK. All of these factors would affect which flora and fauna can flourish in the area.

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Programme are two initiatives that define these impacts. They are based on predictions put forward by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09). The North Wessex Downs Partnership is keen to refine its understanding of the impacts of climate change and develop strategies for adaptation to these effects.

“Making Space for Nature” outlined four key ways that we can adapt our ecological networks to a changing climate.

- Ensure that all parts of the network are in the best possible management.
- Increase the population sizes of vulnerable species.
- Reduce the risks of local extinction.
- Provide colonists for new sites.

To do this we must:

- Allow species to migrate naturally to stay within their preferred climate envelope by increasing connectivity (stepping stones, corridors and a more benign matrix).
- Enhance the chances of species staying within their climate envelope through small-scale local movements rather than longer-distance dispersal by promoting landscape level heterogeneity within the AONB.

#### 7.4 Special Qualities: Natural Resources

- Cretaceous, Tertiary and Quarternary **geological history**, with features such as Sarsen Stones.
- This geology in turn influences the main **soil types** of the North Wessex Downs;
  - Thin chalk soils of the open downland, now primarily under arable production.
  - The capping of Quaternary Clay with Flints over the chalk found as pockets of reddish brown clay containing flint pebbles. These areas are particularly characteristic of the Downland with Woodland and Wooded Plateau Landscape Types.
  - Quaternary Coombe deposits found where accumulated frost-weathered debris was carried down slope by melt waters at the end of the last glaciation. These have created till deposits in the dry valleys of the downs providing richer pockets of soil, often under arable production.
  - Deep well-drained loamy soils over Greensand and river alluviums in the Vale of Pewsey, traditionally under pasture with large areas forming winter flood meadows.
  - A mixed soil mosaic to the east of Newbury with nutrient-poor acidic soils over plateau gravels intermixed with fertile loamy soils overlying the London Clay, characterised by the Medieval landscape of the Lowland Mosaic Landscape Type.
- Carbon storage in the characteristic habitats of the North Wessex Downs such as chalk grassland and broadleaved woodland.
- **Clean air**, with low measurements of pollution.
- Rivers with shallow sloping banks, clean shallow 'washed' **river gravel beds** (riffles) contrasting with deeper shaded pools.
- Often a complex pattern of **river channels** (as on the Kennet downstream of Marlborough) reflecting the past use of the river to supply water to an extensive network of water meadows and mills, most of which are now disused. Upper winterbourne sections and winterbourne tributaries, flowing only during winter and spring when groundwater levels are at their highest.
- **Clear natural water** fed from the chalk aquifer by springs which issue in the valleys of the chalk dip slope at the point where the water table comes to the surface. Limited fluctuations in water temperature throughout the year, resulting from the filtration of groundwater as it percolates through the chalk.

## 8. Development



*“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.” National Planning Policy Framework (2012)*

The North Wessex Downs are a sparsely populated landscape. Its population density is 72 people per square kilometre. (This compares to an average for West Berkshire of 205 people per square kilometre). The open, uninhabited uplands retain a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, a very special perceptual characteristic within this densely populated part of southern England. Attractive villages nestle in the river valleys of the Pang, Bourne, Kennet and Lambourn and cluster in the low-lying land to the east of the AONB. High environmental quality makes strong direct and indirect contributions to the wider regional economy.

Despite the relatively low density of population, there are particular development pressures on the North Wessex Downs. This is due in part to its location within the South East of England and its proximity to London. There is a need to manage these pressures with sensitivity both within and in the setting of the area in order to maintain a balance in promoting economic and social viability whilst retaining the character of the North Wessex Downs. Communities need to be economically viable and have adequate housing, amenities and facilities. However, the primary purpose of designation needs to be paramount when considering such issues.

There is also a need to ensure a consistent approach across the North Wessex Downs. The area lies across nine different local authority areas. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the North Wessex Downs looks to its constituent local authorities to consider the designation within their Local Plans. This is set out in the CRow Act 2000 and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). To assist its local authority partners the North Wessex Downs Partnership will:

- actively engage in the policy making process;
- provide advice on specific planning applications and appeals; and
- provide guidance through its Management Plan and Position Statements.

## 8.1 Relationship with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>49</sup> provides specific guidance for plan makers and decision takers in relation to AONBs. It confirms that “great weight” should be given to conserving their landscape and scenic beauty; and that they have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. In relation to major development, the NPPF (paragraph 116) states that planning permission should be refused in AONBs, except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. The North Wessex Downs Partnership will define “major development” as set out in Statutory Instrument 2010 No.2184<sup>50</sup>. It will then decide whether paragraph 116 is relevant in terms of impact on the area based on local context. Particular attention drawn to is paragraph 14 footnote (9) of the NPPF that restricts the “presumption in favour of sustainable development” in AONBs.

A core principle of the NPPF (paragraph 17) is that the planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in the framework. Paragraph 156 confirms that local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for their areas within Local Plans. They should deliver the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. Paragraph 157 requires Local Plans to contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

The NPPF states that local authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on, or affecting, protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged (paragraph 113). Local Plan policies should clearly differentiate between land within and outside AONBs. Recognition of the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs by local authority partners will strengthen Local Plans. The North Wessex Downs Partnership will:

- advise their local authority and neighbourhood planning partners in the preparation of plans;
- advise on forming decisions on planning applications and appeals; and
- monitor objectives of Local Plans and development management decisions.

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<sup>49</sup> DCLG (2012). National Planning Policy Framework. Department for Communities and Local Government.

<sup>50</sup> Statutory Instrument 2010 No.2184 - The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2010)

## **8.2 The Approach to Development in AONBs**

The North Wessex Downs Partnership supports pre-application discussions from applicants and with the relevant Local Planning Authorities. The area is a “sensitive area” under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2011). Some forms of development may require an Environmental Impact or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

## **8.3 The Local Economy and Rural Business**

The North Wessex Downs Partnership believes that promoting and supporting local enterprise is a key part of conserving and enhancing the character and special qualities of the area. Local businesses are likely to:

- employ local people;
- provide services to improve the local quality of life;
- spend money locally;
- promote community cohesion; and
- have a smaller environmental footprint (by reducing the transportation of goods from across communities).

People like to live in a high quality environment. This attracts some businesses as it helps them retain staff. Support for small local businesses will provide local jobs and enhance the rural economy. For example, fast broadband is crucial for a healthy rural economy and we will work with relevant agencies to secure such infrastructure.

Significant employment areas exist within the area, for example the Harwell Campus which includes the UK national synchrotron facility. This is part of ‘Science Vale’ in Oxfordshire, which has a national profile as a centre for science and innovation, in particular space technology. As a large previously developed area, partly designated as Enterprise Zone, opportunities exist here for redevelopment and intensification of the site.

## 8.4 Additional Guidance

When preparing plans and planning applications, those responsible should make reference to<sup>51</sup>:

- the Management Plan;
- relevant North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statements and Guidance Notes;
- the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment; and
- the Historic Landscape Character Assessment.

### Planning Conditions, Community Infrastructure Levy and Mitigation

It may be possible to overcome a planning objection to a development proposal by imposing a condition on the planning permission or by entering into a planning obligation (Section 106 Agreement). Where this is appropriate, we may recommend planning conditions or a Legal Agreement to secure control over development and or forms of mitigation. This will accord with the tests of Government Circular 11/95 and will be secured by our local authority Partners in forming decisions on planning applications.

We will seek additional Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates or Section 106 contributions from new development where appropriate. local authority Partners should include these in their CIL Charging Schedules. Financial contributions should be raised to:

- highlight the increase in value for new houses being located in the area<sup>52</sup>;
- reflect the likely lower numbers of new houses due to local constraints and more expensive supply of key services to more dispersed rural areas; and
- specifically support identified landscape, ecological, community, Green Infrastructure and environmental projects.

### Remoteness and tranquillity

The sense of remoteness and tranquillity is fundamental to the character of the North Wessex Downs. It is central to the enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape. Darkness at night makes the countryside so different from surrounding urban areas. Darkness allows the majesty of the skies and stars to be seen away from the orange glow of our major urban areas. Light pollution can impact on wildlife. In some parts of the area there is already an ambient level of noise associated with transport networks and machinery. A certain level of activity and noise will always be expected within a largely farmed landscape and within the urban areas of the area.

These special perceptual qualities are a fragile resource and under threat from a combination of factors, including major development, such as wind turbines, intruding into the open downland. Concerns raised by local residents and users of the landscape over loss of these special perceptual qualities will inform decisions on particular development proposals. New uses or new developments that individually or cumulatively result in a material increase in lighting, noise and or activity into the countryside are likely to be opposed.

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<sup>51</sup> Please visit the [North Wessex Downs AONB Website](#) for planning guidance and position statements.

<sup>52</sup> buyers on average pay an additional 9% in value for all houses in English AONBs *“that reflects the quality of life benefits associated with living in some of our most idyllic beauty spots”* – Lloyds TSB 2012

## **Sensitivities and constraints of the landscape to wind turbines**

The North Wessex Downs Partnership commissioned a study to identify the sensitivities and constraints of the landscape to wind turbines. The Study reveals that all landscapes within the area are constrained to a degree. There are specific sensitivities and values that would be adversely affected by such forms of development. There are four landscape types that are considered to be highly constrained to turbine development, namely the:

- Open Downland;
- High Chalk Plain;
- Downs Plain and Scarp; and
- River Valleys.

These are the landscapes where sensitivities to this form of development are high and any wind turbine is likely to have adverse impacts.

There are four landscapes which are considered to be moderately to highly constrained to wind turbine development, namely the:

- Downland with Woodland;
- Wooded Plateau;
- Vales; and
- Lowland Mosaic.

The particular landscape characteristics and configuration of these four landscape types means that it may be possible to find locations that are less constrained to some types of turbine development, although these locations are likely to be limited<sup>53</sup>.

## **Other Renewable Energy Projects**

As a response to climate change, there is a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The security of energy supplies is also a concern. These factors are likely to lead to an increase in renewable energy generation. There are already many well established and sensitively located forms of renewable energy projects across the area. These include:

- micro-generation on individual residential and commercial properties;
- photovoltaic installations (some up to 1 ha in area);
- on farm bio-digesters;
- wood-fuel boilers; and
- hydro-electric generation projects within water courses.

Further information is contained with the North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Renewable Energy as to the likely acceptability of differing forms of renewable energy projects.

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<sup>53</sup> North Wessex Downs AONB (2006), A Study of Landscape Sensitivities and Constraints to Wind Turbine Development Approved by the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners March 2006

## **‘Green infrastructure’**

‘Green infrastructure’ (GI) is the physical environment within and between the towns and villages. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks and gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. There is an opportunity for new development to secure and enhance the area’s GI, including through the Community Infrastructure Levy. This will support the sustainable management of natural resources. Biodiversity gains by ensuring the connectivity of habitats. The recreational use of greenways and the drainage of flood water enhance public health and well-being<sup>54</sup>. Schemes that improve links for walkers and riders, as well as securing bio-diversity and landscape enhancements will win support.

Mono-culture urban parkland open spaces should be avoided when in or near the North Wessex Downs. They have a negative landscape impact and require more maintenance. There is less bio-diversity gain.

## **Urban fringe and Setting**

A number of sizable and expanding towns lie just outside the North Wessex Downs. In the west, the most notable is Swindon for which there is a specific strategy. This is the Swindon Urban Fringe Action Plan, which includes a part of the North Wessex Downs. It notes that the agricultural economy close to Swindon is under pressure. This is due to uncertainty over the future, marginal viability and urban pressures (including vandalism and litter dumping). It concludes that it could become an area of immense opportunity and multiple uses. However, targeted action is required to deliver this potential<sup>55</sup>.

There are other proposals for growth outside but on the edge of the North Wessex Downs. These include at Wantage, Didcot, Andover and Devizes. The potential for harm on the setting of the area from large-scale urban extensions is substantial. Any new uses or development proposed outside but within the setting of the area should consider the North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Setting. Proposals should include detailed measures to mitigate against harm on and into the area. Forms of mitigation may include strategic landscape buffers, restrictions on building heights, care over massing and scale, care over roofscape design, or avoidance of development in the most exposed locations.

## **Built environment and New Housing**

The North Wessex Downs Partnership’s approach to the provision of new housing is contained within its Housing Position Statement. This sets out that in general, strategic levels of new housing within the area should be avoided except in exceptional circumstances, in line with the recommendations of the NPPF<sup>56</sup>. Land of lesser environmental value outside the designated area should be the first choice. Only where necessary to meet appropriate local needs will new housing be supported. This should be within existing settlements, preferably on suitable previously developed sites. Good design and siting of all new developments in the North Wessex Downs is

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<sup>54</sup> From EU Green infrastructure Planning Guide - <http://www.greeninfrastructure.eu>

<sup>55</sup> An Action Plan for the Southern Urban Fringe of Swindon prepared by Land Use Consultants for North Wessex Downs, March 2006

<sup>56</sup> From National Planning and Policy Framework – 11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

essential. They should reflect the local landscape character and architecture and make use of local materials.

The Position Statement also states that there will only be support for new open market housing development on greenfield land on the edges of Marlborough, Hungerford, Lambourn, Pewsey, and Pangbourne. In other areas there will be strict tests to minimise the impact on the landscape. In a far more limited role, small scale housing sites within or on the edges of the secondary larger villages may be supported where all landscape and other planning issues have been resolved. The provision of affordable homes through exception site policies could also be possible in these locations. Need has to be demonstrated and landscape and environmental harm minimised.

Housing may also be delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan process. Such provision should still be in general conformity with any Core Strategy and be appropriate in terms of landscape and environmental impact

### **Highways Infrastructure**

The M4 (London to Wales) and the A34 (Southampton to Oxford) form the main arteries in a wider network of A-roads crossing the North Wessex Downs. Yet the overall impression is of a relatively sparse road network underlining the historical and current lack of settlement on the open downlands. The only part to have a dense network of winding rural lanes is the well wooded Hampshire Downs and the lowlands to the north east of Newbury – both areas with a Medieval settlement pattern.

More could be done to find imaginative and sensitive solutions to the maintenance of the existing highway network and the design of new roads. These should be sympathetic to the character and qualities of the North Wessex Downs. Many rural lanes have a rich character of their own. The challenge is to retain that character whilst meeting modern highway safety needs. Particular problems occur when urban solutions are imposed on the rural setting. This results in a loss of local character and the addition of lighting and clutter. The North Wessex Downs team will collaborate with the Highways Authorities to improve the existing highway environment and seek improvements to proposed new schemes. The development of new private driveways should retain rural character and to reflect the historic qualities of settlements.

The North Wessex Downs unit has contributed to work that is helping to reduce the impact of highways infrastructure, such as through the Avebury World Heritage Site Transport Strategy (currently in development). A Position Statement on Highways Design and Management will be produced to help provide guidance on this issue.

### **Minerals and Waste**

It is national policy to exclude landbanks of non-energy minerals in AONBs (NPPF paragraph 144). Mineral schemes within the area will require exceptional circumstances and demonstrate public interest before they can be considered (NPPF paragraph 116).

Waste proposals should substantially be meeting local needs. They should be of a scale relevant to the proposal and avoid greenfield sites. Any new facilities should conform with the relevant Local Planning Authority Waste Local Plans in determining their need.

## 8.5 Special Qualities; Development

- The sense of **remoteness and tranquility** that comes from an undeveloped and rural quality with only limited human intervention, containing typically modest villages with distinctive and ancient settlement patterns.
  - The Open Downlands, Downland with woodland and High Chalk Plateau areas are generally very sparsely populated, containing scattered isolated farms, equestrian establishments or small hamlets sheltering in the dry valleys and folds of the chalk upland.
  - Wooded Plateau contains a distinct pattern of settlement comprising a remote 'uninhabited' western plateau, smaller settlements such as Froxfield and a concentration of villages in the east of the area, in the valley of the River Dun.
  - In the Downs Plain and Scarp character area, attractive springline villages cluster along the base of the Northern ridge or along the valley of Avebury Plain. 20th century military installations, including Wroughton Airfield and a First World War camp near Draycot Foliat, are dominant and defining features of the area
  - The Vales are settled landscapes with a concentration of compact small towns, clustered villages, hamlets and many dispersed residential and farm buildings, while the River Valleys display a concentration of nucleated and linear settlement including tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and market towns
  - The Lowland Mosaic remains one of the most densely settled landscape types, with a diverse range of settlements ranging from large manor houses, villages, numerous hamlets and lines of houses along the roads and lanes.
- **Distinctive architectural styles** that vary throughout the AONB but within specific areas create a sense of place and vernacular local character due to the availability of local building materials and traditional building styles. This includes traditional knapped flint and brick, timber framed farm buildings, thatch and tiled roofs, use of Sarsen Stone, blue flint and tile and clunch and cobb walls.
- A **sparse road network**, but there is good access from a number of economically significant towns such as Swindon, Andover, Whitchurch, Basingstoke, Reading, Devizes, Newbury and Didcot resulting in an economy that is largely 'outward looking' towards these 'boundary towns' and beyond.
- Within the North Wessex Downs, the **traditional land based and rural economy** contrasts with a growing high tech and creative sector.

## 9. Communities



*“Don't be led away to think this part of the world important and that unimportant. Every corner of the world is important. No man knows whether this part or that is most so, but every man may do some honest work in his own corner.”* Thomas Hughes 1822-1896 <sup>57</sup>

The North Wessex Downs are not a wilderness. They are a distinct and recognisable area arising from a long history of human occupation and the sustainable use of their natural resources. There is a clear relationship between land stewardship, community, the economy and natural beauty. They combine to give the area its special character.

There are 173 parish councils and with two market towns (Marlborough and Hungerford). The total population of the North Wessex Downs is 125,000, with approximately 90,000 (72%) being economically active. Around 30% work within the AONB and 60% commute to the surrounding urban areas and London (assisted by good rail connections)<sup>58</sup>. Many villages are now largely occupied by those commuting out of the area to work. This has stimulated rapidly rising house prices with very significant pressure placed on the affordable housing stock. In addition, villages are now left with a significantly reduced population during the day. This undermines the viability of village services such as post offices, pubs and doctors' surgeries. There is a need for a broad mix of housing to maintain sustainable communities and support village services.

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<sup>57</sup> Hughes, T (1857). Tom Brown's School Days.

<sup>58</sup> Key Populations and Vital Statistics 2000 and 2007, Office for National Statistics.

To have sustainable communities in the North Wessex Downs they must be places where people want to live and work, now and in the future<sup>59</sup>. Sustainable communities should be:

- Vibrant and inclusive, with many community networks in place that bring people together for leisure and peer support purposes.
- In charge of their own destiny, able to identify their own issues and access the skills and support needed to address them
- Places that provide straightforward access to the services and facilities needed by people of all ages
- Able to appreciate the unique nature of their environment and contribute towards it's sustainability

A number of parishes in the North Wessex Downs have undertaken a community led planning approach. Although this is not consistent between local authority areas, such plans include actions relevant to the social, economic and environmental objectives of the North Wessex Downs. We support this approach and provide advice and support to parishes where requested.

The majority of the population within North Wessex Downs have poor access to services when compared to regional averages. The percentage of households without a car is less in the area (10.7%) when compared with the south east (19.4%) and south west (20.2%)<sup>60</sup>.

### **9.1 Employment and Training**

The majority of the local economy is part of a larger 'urban economy'. Many businesses benefit from the area's high landscape quality to either attract staff or customers<sup>61</sup>. Only 5% of the economically active population of the North Wessex Downs is directly involved in agriculture. Where buildings have been re-used as part of economic activities, many of the new uses relate to high-tech industries. Small village industrial estates, such as that at Inkpen, are dominated by businesses whose employees commute in from surrounding areas. This is also true of employees in the horse racing industry.

The current fundamental changes in the area's land-based economy are requiring new skills and the re-learning of old skills. There is a need to understand, define and then meet training and education needs. Support comes from:

- National Training Organisations (such as LANTRA representing the land-based sector);
- further education and training colleges; and
- representatives of community groups.

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<sup>59</sup> PSA 21 Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities

<sup>60</sup> Tantram, D., Craven A. (2007) Evidence for North Wessex Down Leader Bid prepared on behalf of the Local Action Group

<sup>61</sup> Land Use Consultants (2003) Planning for Sustainable Rural Economic Development: A strategy for planning for sustainable rural economic development for the South East SEERA, GOSE, SEEDA and the Countryside Agency.

## 9.2 Travel and transport

Local communities and visitors need access to services – a key issue for social inclusion. That access should be sustainable. The North Wessex Downs is within easy reach of three mainline railways:

- The Waterloo to Exeter line with stations at Basingstoke, Overton, Whitchurch and Andover;
- The Paddington to Penzance line with stations at Kintbury, and Hungerford, Bedwyn and Pewsey (with a rail-bus link from Marlborough to Bedwyn);
- The Paddington to Bristol and South Wales line with stations at Pangbourne, Goring, Cholsey, and Didcot.

Outside the main towns that ring the North Wessex Downs, bus services are limited. Although the distribution of bus routes suggests that rural areas are well served, many of these services run only infrequently. However, a number of innovative and flexible community transport schemes are operating within the North Wessex Downs. These often rely on the support of charitable funding and volunteers.

Click on the following links for further information about [community projects supported](#) through our Sustainable Development Fund, [examples of parish or community plans](#) and [guidance available](#) from the North Wessex Downs AONB team.

### 9.3 Special Qualities: Communities

- Containing a **dispersed and small population** spread over a large area, the majority live in the small villages and the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford with the high downs including large expanses, without any significant habitation. The number of young people within villages is declining as they leave to relocate to areas with better service provision and cheaper housing, resulting in a higher proportion of middle aged and elderly people
- Unemployment is low and **economic activity** rates are high, with many jobs in high value-added industries within a short journey from villages in the AONB. Swindon, Newbury and Basingstoke in particular have developed international reputations within the ICT industry with some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. The economic influence London, the Thames Valley and north Hampshire is most keenly felt to the south east and east of the AONB and in particular those villages with good access to mainline stations.
- The **Armed Forces** still play a significant role in the local economy, especially in places such as Tidworth and Ludgershall to the south of the AONB on the Wiltshire Hampshire border.
- **Good access to the wider area** and road network means that much of the AONB is highly accessible to commuters working in the adjacent towns. The east of the AONB has a greater pressure on housing stock and recruitment in West Berkshire, Basingstoke and Deane and South Oxfordshire.
- A well-structured and resourced **farming industry**, with substantial assets of land, machinery, knowledge and entrepreneurial ability. Many examples of diversification into food processing, tourism and provision of space for economic activity can be seen across the North Wessex Downs.
- Villages and small towns with a **strong sense of identity**, active and resourceful community groups
- There is a strong local resonance and **affinity with the landscape** of the North Wessex Downs, particularly the individual downs and the river valleys and other outstanding features.

## 10. Leisure and tourism



*“Out on that almost trackless expanse of billowy Downs such a track is in some sort humanly companionable; it really seems to lead you by the hand.”* Kenneth Grahame 1859-1932<sup>62</sup>

### 10.1 Tourism

The North Wessex Downs is a landscape rich in historic sites and natural features. This magical landscape has attracted naturalists, antiquarians and travellers throughout history. Tourist attractions of international renown within the North Wessex Downs include the 25 square kilometre (9.6 sq mile) Avebury World Heritage Site (taking in Avebury Village, the Avebury Henge complex, as well as Silbury Hill, Windmill Hill and the West Kennet long barrow); the White Horse at Uffington; the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails; and the Kennet and Avon Canal providing a strategic waterways link between the Thames and Bristol Channel. But it is the spectacular scenery, highly attractive villages, and sense of isolation that are the primary recreational and tourism attractions of the area.

Although not large in number, there is a range of paying visitor attractions within the North Wessex Downs. These include Basildon Park, Lower Basildon (run by the National Trust) and Highclere Castle, near Newbury (owned by the Earl of Carnarvon), the Crofton Beam Engines and Pumping Station on the Kennet and Avon Canal at Great Bedwyn and the Living Rainforest environmental centre at Hampstead Norreys. There are many more attractions that could benefit from greater collective promotion and support.

Despite its close proximity to major areas of population, the North Wessex Downs is not well used as a place for quiet enjoyment. Green tourism offers enormous opportunities for the North Wessex Downs and a good business reason for conserving and enhancing the landscape. There may be opportunities for the tourism sector to support investment in rights of way improvements and the provision of accommodation, facilities and information.

At present, visitors directly support around 2,200 full time jobs. Of all visitors, only 18% are from overseas, most of whom are business related, staying on a single night, Monday to Thursday. Nearly half of all visitors to the area stay with family or friends. Well over 90% of all foreign visitors

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<sup>62</sup> Grahame, K (1894). Pagan Papers.

are either business or family related. The average length of stay by UK visitors is 2 days and it is estimated that a visitor spends an additional £27 in the North Wessex Downs<sup>63</sup>. More than half of all serviced accommodation providers are un-graded for quality. There is potential to improve the performance of the area as a short break destination. This is especially with the development of bespoke activity packages, such as self-guided off road cycle routes. The area can appeal particularly to affluent young and older couples from London and the Home Counties. That would bring real benefits to the rural economy.

The North Wessex Downs can be an area for green tourism, with easily accessible information about its wildlife, culture and history, and with many opportunities to explore, on foot, by bike and on horseback. In response the Partnership has implemented two projects, the South East Protected Landscapes 'Our Land' and RDPE LEADER funded Love Your Land initiative. Through a growing network of tourism businesses it is hoped that the value of the landscape will be reflected more widely in the tourism 'offer'.

## **10.2 Rights of Way and Access**

Access to the countryside is an important part of the lives of people who live in the area and also for visitors as a tourism asset. The importance of using and enjoying woodlands and green spaces as part of an everyday healthy lifestyle has been demonstrated by Forestry Commission research<sup>64</sup>. Exercise in the North Wessex Downs can have positive effects on many aspects of health. The North Wessex Downs will look to build on initiatives, such as the circular walks developed in partnership with the Ridgeway National Trail. The lack of convenient public transport imposes limits on the benefits and use of the resource.

Access and the needs of recreational users must be balanced with land managing interests, as well as other issues such as conservation. Greater and improved access should be encouraged where this can be achieved without undue cost to conservation or the landowner's use of the land. There may be opportunities from the growth of settlements on the fringes of the North Wessex Downs to offset some of the impact through improving and extending access.

The CRoW Act established access land which the public has the right to enjoy under certain conditions. There are 1189 hectares of open access land and 694 hectares of registered commons in the North Wessex Downs. There are also permissive arrangements which grant access as part of agri-environment or inheritance tax agreements. At present some of this access can be difficult to determine due to the patchwork nature of its provision. In addition, there are 100 hectares of National Trust land to which there is access. An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East<sup>65</sup> in February 2007 found that the North Wessex Downs has the smallest percentage of accessible natural greenspace (4%) of all of the SE Protected Landscapes.

Of that accessible natural greenspace, 59% was woodland. In general woodlands with open or partial access are owned by the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust or the National Trust. A surprising 69% of the woodland area has a public right of way either running through the woodland

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<sup>63</sup> LAG (2008) Local Development Strategy North Wessex Downs Leader, January 2008

<sup>64</sup> Forestry Commission (2005), Trees and woodlands: Nature's health service Liz O'Brien, Social Research Group, Forest Research.

<sup>65</sup> McKernan P & Grose M (2007) An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East

or along one edge of the woodland. The figures fall dramatically for open access to woodland, the total area of open access woodland is only 14% of the total woodland area.

One of the most important resources of the North Wessex Downs is its extensive rights of way network, providing access to some of the most spectacular views and secluded valleys in southern England. Not only does it underpin the recreational and tourism sectors but also affords some opportunities for sustainable and safe journeys to school and work. Important national and regional walking routes within the North Wessex Downs include (the length within the AONB): the Ridgeway National Trail (88km/55mi); the Thames Path National Trail (14km/9mi); the Test Way (22km/14mi); the Wayfarers Walk (27km/17mi); the Lambourn Valley Way (29km/18mi); and the towpath of the Kennet and Avon Canal (48km/30mi) which is a National waterways Link and one of the busiest paths in the British Waterways Network. In addition, a very large number of other paths are promoted as recreational walking routes by the National Trust, the constituent local authorities, and the Ramblers Association.

There are a large number of advertised cycle routes (on and off road) that pass through the area, taking advantage of lanes and bridleways. The entire network of legally accessible off road cycle routes across the North Wessex Downs have been mapped and graded according to International Mountain Biking Association guidelines as part of the 1SW project. In addition, Route 4 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network also runs for 47 km (29mi) through the North Wessex Downs, part following the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath.

The Three Downs Link horse riding route offers huge potential for recreational riders linking the Ridgeway with both the Hampshire and the South Downs. There are a number of advertised shorter riding routes that utilise the Ridgeway and link with the much wider multi-use network. Responsible recreational cycling and horse riding are two of the key activities to encourage in the North Wessex Downs. Supporting the provision of facilities such as accommodation with access to stables or drying rooms and the construction of bike wash facilities and cycle hubs are examples of how this could be achieved.

The CRoW Act requires every county/unitary authority to set out their plans for improvement of the Rights of Way network. This is through the production of a Rights of Way or Countryside Management Plan (previously known as RoWIPs). These plans set out how an authority will maintain countryside access resources and take opportunities for improving and promoting access to the countryside. The North Wessex Downs Partnership supports the work of the Wiltshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forums (LAF's).

Running a tourism business or visitor attraction? Why not sign up to be part of the [Our Land project](#), or download the [North Wessex Downs tourism toolkit](#).

### 10.3 Special Qualities: Leisure Tourism

- Offering some of the finest **cultural landscape** in England including chalk downland, river valleys, ancient woodland, historic sites. There is a recognition for the landscape in literature and the arts, with locations such as Watership Down, Uffington White Horse and the Whittenham Clumps inspiring well known works
- **Historic attractions** reflecting the industrial and socio economic history of the area including the Kennet and Avon Canal, Didcot and Swindon Railway Museums, Crofton beam engines and the Wilton Windmill.
- **Picturesque market towns** and small villages with independent shops, superb pubs, restaurants and plenty of B&Bs and hotels. A growing reputation for local food and produce.
- **Rich archaeological history** and evidence of our ancestors that can be found in greater concentrations than much of the country.
- **The great country houses** at Highclere, Basildon Park, Littlecote and Ashdown and the medieval, norman and Saxon churches.
- The **extensive Rights of Way** network offering many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside away from crowds, including the Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails, access land, commons and accessible woodland.
- A **centre for antiques** between the towns of Hungerford, Marlborough and the village of Pewsey.

## 11. Key Issues, Objectives and Policies



This section sets out:

- the Key Issues relating to the different themes of the Management Plan;
- the overall strategic Objectives of the Management Plan; and
- the Policies of the North Wessex Downs Partnership that are aimed at addressing the Key Issues in line with the Objectives. The Policies are designed to guide and inform the policies and actions of all North Wessex Downs partners where they affect the area.

Actions identified as priorities for the work of the North Wessex Downs team and other partners (as identified) are set out in the North Wessex Downs AONB Business Plan, reviewed annually. This sets out who is doing what, the role of the North Wessex Downs team in each action, and the desired outcome/s. Generally, in relation to actions the role of the North Wessex Downs team will be one of the following:

- Things we take whole or lead responsibility for (or co-ordinate): **Leader**.
- Things we take forward in partnership but do not lead: **Partner**.
- Things we help make happen by raising awareness or helping others to do: **Facilitator**.
- Things we support (e.g. with our name or endorsement) but neither fund directly nor actively participate in: **Supporter**.

## 11.1 Landscape

### Key Issues

- The potential for development beyond the AONB boundary to visually damage or undermine the scale and critical qualities of landscape character areas.
- Management of the Ridgeway National Trail and other rights of way to maximise enjoyment by responsible users and minimise conflicts
- Maintenance and, where possible, extension of chalk grassland habitat.
- Conserving and enhancing the remoteness and expansive open scale of the downland landscape.
- The need for viable agriculture to continue to contribute to AONB purposes.
- Availability of sufficient resources for management and understanding of archaeological sites.
- Conserving and enhancing the remote, secluded and relatively undeveloped character of more enclosed and intimate landscapes, including the character of the lanes.
- The need for appropriate woodland management, including the viable use of timber products, particularly for fuel;
- Encouraging restoration of wood pasture landscapes, husbandry and ecology and ensuring future veteran tree succession
- The dominance of roads, in particular the impact of traffic noise, external lighting, road signs, insensitive materials and clutter on landscape character and people's experience of the landscape as they travel through it.
- Maintaining the pattern of discrete villages set within a quiet rural landscape and ensuring that the views to the surrounding dramatic scarps are undamaged.
- Ensuring the maintenance of water quality and quantity in the rivers, supporting river managers in river course improvement for fisheries and wildlife;
- Maintaining and enhancing adjacent seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, damp woodlands and historic parkland.
- Conserving and enhancing the small-scale, secluded and rural character of the lowland mosaic, including the fragile lowland heaths.
- Intense pressure for development throughout the AONB and its setting that threatens the character and quality of its landscape and risks merging of small settlements or encroachment by larger settlements.
- The need to protect and enhance historic sites, buildings and landscapes and their setting.

Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs.</i></li> <li>• <i>To raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs AONB.</i></li> </ul>
North Wessex Downs AONB Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage all partners and other stakeholders to have regard for AONB purposes across all relevant policies, programmes and activities.</li> <li>• Wherever possible seek to identify and address the main factors that threaten the special qualities of the AONB landscape: e.g. water abstraction, agricultural practices; woodland neglect; damage to historic sites, built development.</li> <li>• Use the North Wessex Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to inform policy and decision making across the AONB and its setting.</li> <li>• Support, encourage and promote good practice across all sectors that conserves and enhances the character and qualities of the North Wessex Downs landscape.</li> <li>• Support and encourage efforts to conserve and explain the rich heritage of the North Wessex Downs, including archaeological sites.</li> <li>• Ensure that all development in or affecting the setting of the AONB conserves and enhances the character, qualities and heritage of the North Wessex Downs landscape.</li> <li>• Raise the policy profile of the North Wessex Downs locally, regionally and nationally to secure the co-ordination and resourcing of policies and programmes for the benefit of the AONB.</li> <li>• Encourage responsible recreational enjoyment of woodland.</li> <li>• Support the maintenance and responsible use of the Kennet and Avon Canal.</li> </ul>

## 11.2 Land Management

### Key Issues

- The need to manage resources to achieve sustainable consumption and production.
- Potential for major investment in diversification and micro-enterprise in the land management sector from the next rural development programme.

#### Agriculture:

- Market volatility resulting in uncertainty regarding land management in the AONB. This influences the mix of farming types and farm sizes.
- Market forces and major policy reform influencing future land management, together with changing technology, climate risks and energy prices. Food security and biofuels will also have effects.
- Shortage of livestock needed to graze downland pasture.
- How best to harness demand for locally produced food and drink in line with AONB objectives, with increasing interest in producing and marketing local food in the North Wessex Downs.
- Climate change - increasingly identified by farmers in the North Wessex Downs AONB as a key threat and opportunity for the future. Opportunities for land managers to undertake activities both to adapt to climate change and to help mitigate its effects.
- Potential for improved co-ordination and consistency of provision of land management advice across the AONB.

#### Racing Industry:

- Small-scale changes to the smooth, rolling landform around new buildings, which cumulatively have an adverse effect on the character of the AONB.
- Opportunities to support the racing industry, ancillary businesses and local communities through diversification, e.g. in responsible tourism.
- Loss of biodiversity from the creation of new fields and paddocks on open chalk downland.
- Change in landscape character by the replacement of hedgerows with fencing, leading to the 'suburbanisation' of landscape.
- Pressure to widen and straighten minor roads to improve vehicle access leading to 'suburbanisation' and loss of sense of place.
- Loss of integrity of historic settlements/hamlets/farmsteads.

Key Issues (Cont'd)
<p>Forestry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope for more and better management of woodland in the AONB, especially smaller woods, to improve habitat for wildlife and provide an economic return.</li> <li>• Risk of harmful impacts on wildlife, archaeology and recreation from increasing exploitation of woodland to meet demand for timber, if not done in an environmentally sensitive way..</li> <li>• Opportunities for better co-ordination of forestry with agricultural land management under new environmental management schemes.</li> <li>• Widespread threats from pests and disease (e.g. Phytophthora and Chalara).</li> </ul> <p>Rising deer numbers inhibiting the natural regeneration of some woodland. Deer Management Groups are helpful but are insufficient on their own to control deer numbers.</p>
Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To encourage initiatives that facilitate sustainable land management.</i></li> <li>• <i>To encourage diverse and viable agriculture, forestry, horseracing and other land based enterprises that support the delivery of a wide range of public benefits, including; the conservation and enhancement of the area's special qualities and features; the provision of opportunities for responsible access; and support for local markets.</i></li> <li>• <i>To create a diverse rural skills base to support traditional and emerging land based enterprises that enhance the special qualities and features of the North Wessex Downs.</i></li> </ul>
North Wessex Downs AONB Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage national, regional and local land management policies to be consistent with the purpose of AONB designation</li> <li>• Encourage and support joint working and expansion/replication of existing landscape-scale conservation and land management projects, both within and beyond the AONB, to assist in the delivery of AONB objectives.</li> <li>• Support sustainable farm diversification and multi-purpose woodland management where it achieves AONB objectives and accords with planning policy.</li> <li>• Support efforts to identify future land use options that are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the AONB.</li> <li>• Support local markets for local produce and the development of local supply networks.</li> <li>• Encourage management of sites in public and tenanted ownership within the North Wessex Downs to be examples of best practice in the delivery of AONB objectives.</li> </ul>

#### North Wessex Downs AONB Policies (Cont'd)

- Support and where appropriate co-ordinate efforts across the North Wessex Downs to reduce invasive or unsustainable populations of species where these threaten the sustainable management of woodland and other habitats.
- Encourage the active and environmentally sensitive use of woodland resources for viable products, helping to enhance biodiversity.
- Support and help guide publicly funded investment in rural development.
- Support investment in new agricultural infrastructure and redevelopment of farm buildings where it increases the economic, social and environmental sustainability of local businesses and does not conflict with AONB purposes.
- Encourage awareness of the special qualities of the AONB among local businesses to help them understand and embrace their responsibilities alongside running a profitable enterprise.
- Support improved co-ordination and consistency in provision of land management advice across the AONB.
- Support efforts to identify and develop the skills required to care for the landscape and its special qualities, with opportunities for all to acquire such skills.
- Encourage and support the local provision of practical training in traditional land management and the skills necessary for adding value and land-based diversification activities landscape.

### 11.3 Biodiversity

#### Key Issues

- General lack of knowledge about the full biological resource of the North Wessex Downs and how to manage it most effectively for biodiversity, including the management of sites that may support priority target species.
- Habitat fragmentation preventing proper functioning of ecosystems: wildlife populations unable to disperse or colonise new habitats, leading to loss of genetic diversity and local extinctions.
- Impacts of climate change on habitats and species with both losses and gains. In addition to direct impacts on habitats (e.g. drying out of wetlands) there are likely to be indirect effects such as those caused through colonisation by non-natives responding to climatic change. The ability of species to respond to climate change, and the associated shift in their distribution, will be strongly influenced by habitat availability and fragmentation.
- The uncertainty of CAP reform and the emerging Environmental Land Management Schemes. Budgetary constraints are likely to have serious implications for the ability to deliver significant biodiversity improvements across the farmed landscape, retain improvements secured through past land management schemes, and prevent further loss of wildlife habitat.
- Direct and indirect effects of agricultural intensification and land management changes having continued negative impacts on farmland wildlife.
- Continued decline of species, in particular those with very specific habitat requirements that have responded negatively to changes in land management practices.
- Nesting success and productivity is often insufficient to reverse declines or even to sustain current populations of many ground nesting birds
- Loss of once-common species of chalk streams and rivers such as the water vole and the white-clawed crayfish (both priority target species).
- Negative impacts of invasive non native species on native wildlife.
- Economic fragility of low input/extensive farming systems and cost of replacement infrastructure (fencing, water supplies etc) leading to loss or deterioration of semi-natural habitats through both undergrazing and overgrazing.
- Bovine Tuberculosis testing and movement regulations having a negative impact on availability of cattle for conservation grazing.
- Lack of grazing livestock to manage remaining areas of semi-natural chalk grassland.

Key Issues (Cont'd)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems, where grazing is still practised, from recreational pressures including dog worrying and trespass.</li> <li>• Increasing erosion of remnant areas of chalk grassland as a result of recreational activities.</li> <li>• Degradation and loss of river and wetland habitats through inappropriate management, development, increasing water demand, pollution, eutrophication and climate change.</li> <li>• Lack of or poor management of much ancient woodland, causing a decline in biodiversity.</li> <li>• Lack of resources for maintaining biodiversity and securing enhancements on the existing green infrastructure network, including road verges.</li> <li>• Erosion of lane and byway verges by increased traffic use and larger vehicles.</li> <li>• Change from the use of grass gallops (some of which retain remnant areas of chalk grassland) to artificial surfaces in the racing industry.</li> <li>• The impact of access restrictions to areas important for vulnerable ground-nesting species, such as stone curlew.</li> </ul>
Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ensure that the characteristic habitats and species of the North Wessex Downs are conserved and enhanced.</i></li> </ul>

## North Wessex Downs AONB Policies

- Support the delivery of Biodiversity 2020 outcomes, other landscape strategies, catchment management and forestry plans to ensure effective management of all priority habitats and species in the AONB landscape.
- Encourage a co-ordinated and consistent approach to biodiversity conservation across the AONB and beyond (e.g. Big Chalk).
- Support and encourage work to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the North Wessex Downs through support for landscape-scale projects for habitat management, restoration and creation, particularly where they deliver identified priorities within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, including through management of existing wildlife sites and valuable habitat to the highest standards.
- Support land managers in maintaining the land as habitat for key species, including threatened arable plants, invertebrates and farmland birds.
- Support the development of a green economy locally that realises the opportunities afforded by greener goods and services, consistent with AONB purposes.
- Support partnerships with key stakeholders to promote and deliver projects that contribute to the achievement of Water Framework Directive objectives in the AONB.
- Encourage the restoration of lost connections with the natural environment and enable fairer access to its goods and services.
- Support efforts to communicate the benefits of the local natural environment and its value to society.
- Encourage innovative use of initiatives such as Environmental Land Management schemes to deliver biodiversity benefits and the provision and protection of ecosystem goods and services.
- Support research into causes of declines in ground nesting birds and support appropriate projects that aim to rebuild populations.
- Encourage and support efforts to identify the extent of spread and damage caused by invasive non-native species (INNS), to eradicate and/or control them, and to restore habitats and wildlife populations damaged by them.
- Seek to secure readily accessible baseline biodiversity data across the North Wessex Downs.
- Support the County Biological Record Centres and Sites and Monuments Records serving the North Wessex Downs as the main repositories for information on the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the AONB and support initiatives to engage the public in biological recording/monitoring.
- Support and encourage mechanisms to enable grazing on all the main grassland areas of the AONB.

## 11.4 Historic Environment

### Key Issues

- Lack of knowledge about the broader historic landscape of the North Wessex Downs – the landscape speaks eloquently of its cultural history, but this needs to be better understood and more closely applied to management objectives.
- Many undiscovered archaeological sites, especially in wooded areas.
- Insufficient understanding of the historical evolution of individual settlements and how this should influence their future development.
- Need for more consistent approach to the designation and management of Conservation Areas, in particular the systematic use of Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.
- Development pressure threatens to the historic fabric and visual character of traditional market towns.
- Poorly sited and designed new development that fails to reflect the historic form of settlements and building groups, their character and setting.
- Infilling and over-expansion on small plots, which may erode the traditional mixed character of individual settlements.
- Loss of local vernacular architecture and traditional farmstead layouts, especially through the insensitive conversion of traditional agricultural buildings.
- Loss of grazing animals, which is threatening the important archaeological sites with damage from uncontrolled scrub encroachment.
- Poorly managed recreational access to sensitive archaeological/cultural sites, including damage caused by irresponsible or illegal use of off-road motorised vehicles.
- Continued deep ploughing over archaeological sites and remains, and damage from burrowing animals.
- Impact of planting trees or biomass crops either directly on archaeological features, or on the character of the historic landscape through poor design and siting.
- Impact of modern farming practices on the character of the historic landscape.

### Objectives

- *To enhance the protection, management and setting of the archaeological and historic features, sites and landscapes that characterise the North Wessex Downs.*
- *To promote an increased level of awareness, use and enjoyment of the historic and cultural fabric of the North Wessex Downs.*
- *To realise the potential value of the Historic Environment data.*

## North Wessex Downs AONB Policies

- Support efforts to ensure that sites, features and landscapes of historical importance are appropriately identified, recorded and managed
- Encourage all stakeholders to use the English Heritage at Risk Register to focus on archaeological sites, historic buildings and conservation areas in special need of action.
- Support a review of designated sites across the North Wessex Downs AONB to ensure that the lists are current and appropriate.
- Work closely with the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Partnership and other groups to develop shared objectives and deliver joint actions for the World Heritage Site Management Plan.
- Encourage voluntary-sector research and collaboration on poorly understood aspects of the local historic environment.
- Promote the production and publication of 'local lists' of heritage assets.
- Support initiatives that seek to provide long-term sustainable management of important heritage assets for social and economic benefits.
- Identify and promote opportunities to include the historic environment in community-generated Village Design Statements, Parish and Neighbourhood Plans etc., linked where appropriate to Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Promote and encourage the use of Historic Landscape and Historic Settlement Characterisation to inform land management, policy making and planning decisions.
- Support more and better explanation, interpretation and promotion of the historic environment for residents and visitors.
- Support collaborative historic environment activity involving professional and voluntary sectors, such as research and advice from historic environment experts.

## 11.5 Natural Resources

### Key Issues

- Lack of agreement on the levels of acceptable environmental limits within the AONB.
- The need to raise awareness of water quality issues.
- Soil erosion, especially on steeper slopes and under 'open' arable crops, such as maize.
- Opportunities to encourage minimum tillage and careful application of inputs,
- Air quality is currently good but activities outside the AONB can have a significant effect across the area.
- Over abstraction of groundwater and chalk aquifer.
- Increasing water demand, especially during the summer months, as a result of climate change and changing lifestyles.
- Increasing water demand for crop irrigation as a result of climate change and more erratic weather patterns resulting in prolonged dry periods and intense summer rainfall.
- The influence of climate change on groundwater recharge patterns and overall water availability.
- Increasing water demand as a result of major development in the urban areas in and around the North Wessex Downs, also sometimes leading to export of water out of the catchments of the North Wessex Downs.
- Loss of river habitats as a result of historical land drainage and channel modifications associated with past flood alleviation works and past industry (although some man-made features, e.g. mill leats, are of considerable historical importance).
- Decline in fish stocks and quality of fisheries.
- Excessive removal of bankside vegetation (on occasion associated with fisheries management).
- Weed cutting and river clearance to reduce downstream flooding (although this is carefully regulated by the Environment Agency).
- Loss of winterbourne channels through agricultural cultivation.
- Increasing lock movements on the Kennet and Avon Canal taking water from the River Kennet and its tributaries.
- Pollution of rivers from point sources, including public and private domestic sewerage systems (with phosphorus discharges a particular problem), agriculture, commercial watercress beds, and fish farms.

Key Issues (Cont'd)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts on ecology of rivers from diffuse sources of pollution - often individually minor but collectively significant - including run-off from roads, houses and commercial areas, run-off from farmland, and seepage into groundwater from developed landscapes of all kinds, resulting in raised nutrient levels and toxic algal blooms.</li> <li>• Pollution pressure on the River Kennet generated by poor water quality and boat traffic on the Kennet and Avon Canal.</li> </ul>
Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To conserve the depth and appropriate quality of soils in the North Wessex Downs.</i></li> <li>• <i>To ensure that the water environment, including fisheries is sustainably managed.</i></li> </ul>
North Wessex Downs AONB Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and encourage management of soils that restricts their loss, impoverishment and pollution, particularly in the case of the thin chalk downland soils.</li> <li>• Support co-ordinated action and guidance on soil conservation measures.</li> <li>• Support initiatives to encourage sustainable management of soil by land managers to minimise pollution and loss through erosion.</li> <li>• Support and provide landscape input to AONB catchment partnerships. Contribute to research, projects and co-operation of partners with an influence on watercourses and catchments. .</li> <li>• Encourage all partners to take water demand and its consequences for landscape, ecology and fisheries fully into account in all relevant decisions regarding planning, changes to land use or cropping patterns within the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>• Support the introduction of demand management measures for water use in those settlements that draw on the aquifers of the North Wessex Downs, and measures to monitor and reduce water wastage.</li> <li>• Support efforts to ensure that no water is abstracted from catchments that are classified as 'no water available', 'over licensed' or 'over abstracted' under the Environment Agency's Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy.</li> <li>• Support work to identify and address the sources of diffuse and point pollution within the North Wessex Downs through agencies, local groups and volunteer initiatives.</li> <li>• Promote and help co-ordinate remedial action through the Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative and other partnership schemes to restore and enhance degraded river sections within the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>• Work to ensure that no new abstraction licences are granted within the North Wessex Downs which export water out of the catchments of the AONB. Support measures to reduce abstraction, such as Thames Water pipeline linking North and South Swindon.</li> </ul>

## North Wessex Downs AONB Policies (Cont'd)

- Promote Sustainable Drainage Systems and flood alleviation works which maximise all-round benefits, e.g. through restoration of traditional water meadow systems or shallow winter flooding in the floodplain of benefit to wildlife.
- Promote restoration of rivers and river corridors to further biodiversity / amenity objectives – re-creating natural river channels and re-linking rivers with their floodplains where this would not damage artificial channels of historic / cultural importance.
- Seek to develop a better understanding of the likely implications of climate change on the environment and economy of the North Wessex Downs
- Support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane, from all possible sources. Support mitigation measures including better on-farm management of fertiliser and animal waste,, biomass heating from local fuel stocks and small-scale renewable energy generation appropriate within the protected landscape.
- Support and encourage greater domestic and commercial energy efficiency.
- Engage with opportunities to improve the availability, accessibility of sustainable modes of transport (e.g. bus and rail services, cycling) and promote use their use.
- Encourage greater use of timber in construction from sustainable woodland.
- Promote carbon sequestration as an objective and benefit of habitat creation and management of woodland and permanent grassland.
- Encourage simple greenhouse gas and carbon accounting to monitor the effectiveness of changes.
- Support efforts to influence behaviour in response to the impacts of climate change, including dissemination of advice on bio-security and disease control in domestic and wild animals and plants.
- Encourage modelling of groundwater response to climate change as a part of planning policy development.
- Support measures to manage the risk of flooding.
- Support measures to secure future water resources, e.g. by appropriate-scale water storage and transfer schemes that reduce abstraction.
- Encourage water efficiency in homes and businesses and encouraging reuse.
- Support collaborative initiatives with partners to link, extend and buffer fragmented habitats to improve opportunities for species migration and population stabilisation.

## 11.6 Development

### Key Issues

*In responding to planning applications or planning policy consultations within the North Wessex Downs AONB and its setting, the following key issues highlight examples of development which, if harmful, would be opposed by the AONB Unit subject to detailed consideration. As well as the following, the AONB Unit's Position Statements also contain further detailed advice on specific forms of development and should therefore also be considered. Each local planning authority may also have specific supplementary planning guidance, for example on replacement dwellings.*

- The threat of expansion of the main urban areas just beyond the boundary of the North Wessex Downs, including the main centres of Swindon, Wantage, Didcot, Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke, Andover, and Devizes for example creating urban fringe pressures and impact on the setting of the AONB.
- New large free-standing dwellings as replacement dwellings in the open countryside.
- The change of use of land to domestic garden use.
- The loss of rural character through suburbanising influences from new development (new fencing, lighting, signage, parking areas, paved footpaths, loss of native hedgerows and creation of new garden areas).
- New housing developments on greenfield sites.
- The threat of incremental housing development outside settlements from unwarranted conversions and redevelopments; or unjustified rural workers accommodation.
- Impact on dark skies and tranquillity of high-powered external lighting, especially where poorly directed or in an exposed location (not usually subject to planning control).
- Potential for certain forms of development to intrude on the wider landscape, including masts, pylons, wind turbine developments, photovoltaic schemes, and minerals and waste schemes, threatening the senses of remoteness and tranquillity, and landscape quality and heritage assets.
- Potential for harm from smaller wind turbine developments if poorly located in exposed locations in landscapes recognised for their sensitivity to this form of development.
- Unsuitable development of redundant previously developed and part-developed sites within the North Wessex Downs, especially redundant airfields and military sites (e.g. as at Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape quality and heritage assets.
- New developments at the junction of the M4 and A34 or along their corridors which spread the impact from development yet further into the undeveloped parts of the AONB.
- Impact from the racing industry from new gallops and facilities where inappropriately located and or designed

Key Issues (Cont'd)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact from equestrian uses and structures generally where new development is expansive in area, in greenfield locations, poorly designed and/or located on exposed sites.</li> <li>• Substantial new farm buildings where unjustified, poorly designed and or located in exposed locations.</li> <li>• Development that results in a material loss of tranquillity and / or impact on the dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs or its setting.</li> <li>• Development, where relevant, that does not provide for or support existing Green Infrastructure.</li> <li>• Development where appropriate, that does not provide for appropriate mitigation (including through the Community Infrastructure Levy).</li> <li>• New noise-creating activities for example from quad or bike courses, microlights, shooting schools, kennels, new industrial, minerals or waste operations.</li> <li>• The illegal dumping of rubbish.</li> <li>• Large-scale new commercial uses or inappropriate farm diversification projects.</li> <li>• New road building.</li> <li>• Impact of road signage, street lighting and other highway clutter on landscape character, including within settlements. Measures which have an urbanising effect on AONB character and are thus generally inappropriate include: oversized, multiple and yellow-backed road signs; new street lighting in previously unlit locations; lighting that allows spillage or glare; road markings; concrete kerbing; illuminated bollards; fencing; and elaborate traffic-calming schemes.</li> <li>• Opportunities to reduce costs and maintain or restore the character of rural roads through adoption of a low-key rural design approach to roads across AONB.</li> </ul>
Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To encourage appropriate sustainable development to jointly achieve economic, social and environmental benefits through the planning system in the context of a nationally protected landscape.</i></li> <li>• <i>To ensure that the formulation and implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs takes full account of the purposes of designation and the character and quality of the AONB and its setting.</i></li> <li>• <i>To promote a sustainable rural economy.</i></li> </ul>

## North Wessex Downs AONB Policies

- Encourage all proposals for new development, redevelopment and re-use to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. Oppose forms of development that fail to conserve and enhance the character and quality of the AONB and its setting and to make reference to the AONB's published guidance.
- Encourage high standards of design, comprehensive landscaping where required, traditional building styles, energy conservation and innovation that respect historic settlement patterns and the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs.
- Encourage Local Plans, Supplementary Planning Documents and other policies to take account of the statutory protection of the AONB, in terms of location of development affecting the AONB and its setting, and specific AONB policy.
- Support the need for Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents and other policies to address issues such as landscape impact, local character, materials and historic structure and scale of settlements.
- Encourage the consideration of landscape impacts at the earliest opportunity in the planning process and the provision of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments where required.
- Resist noise-generating developments and activities both within the AONB and its setting.
- Avoid and reduce light pollution, including control of lighting schemes or other developments that threaten the integrity of dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs.
- Encourage, support and promote good practice in the design and management of roads in the AONB and its setting that conserves and enhances the character of the landscape and settlements.
- Support appropriate and sustainable farm diversification activities where planning applications are supported by a whole farm plan and linked to design guidance.
- Encourage the use of planning briefs or master plans which guide developments within and on the edge of the North Wessex Downs and take account of AONB purposes.
- Encourage the retention of existing and provision of new 'Green Infrastructure'. Ensure that 'Green Infrastructure' (including new or enhanced biodiversity assets) is incorporated within the area of all "major developments", both within and near the AONB.
- Support the development of strategies and integrated projects to manage the pressures and opportunities presented by the AONB's close proximity to its surrounding urban centres.
- Work with local communities to increase capacity and involvement in development processes.

#### North Wessex Downs AONB Policies (Cont'd)

- Support local communities to engage with local and national planning policy consultations.
- Encourage local communities to identify local needs and assist in the conservation and enhancement of local distinctiveness through the preparation and development of Neighbourhood Plans/Parish Plans, Village Design Statements, Neighbourhood Development Orders and other initiatives.
- Encourage economic growth, new responsible tourism opportunities and diversification of the local economy generally within the overall aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.
- Support broadband rollout where the installation of new equipment is in accordance with the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice (DCMS June 2013) and where due consideration is given to AONB purposes.
- Support training courses to encourage businesses within the North Wessex Downs to adopt sustainable approaches consistent with AONB objectives
- Resist developments that would substantially increase traffic volume in sensitive areas.
- Encourage local planning authorities to use powers available to them under Section 106 of Town & Country Planning Act, Community Infrastructure Levy and similar legislation to achieve the North Wessex Downs Management Plan objectives and activities.
- Support economic activities that embrace sustainable development principles at a scale and nature compatible with the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.
- Support initiatives that seek to add value to land-based products sympathetic to the natural beauty of the AONB.

## 11.7 Communities

### Key Issues

- Widespread lack of awareness of the North Wessex Downs AONB among local residents and businesses.
- The towns which surround the AONB are all expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development in the next 20 years.
- Increased volumes of traffic or an increasing demand for quicker journey times may lead to pressure for road widening and other 'improvement' schemes on roads in the AONB.
- Greater prosperity enjoyed by some people leads to other environmental impacts such as more over-flights by aircraft of all kinds, more use of roads and rights of way for motorised leisure pursuits, and increased demand for second homes.
- Loss of affordable housing, reducing the social mix within settlements and leading to a loss of essential rural skills and services.
- Potential changes in demographic profile, social exclusion, access to services and loss of public transport routes and other key facilities.
- The trend of commuting to higher paid jobs outside the AONB whilst living in the area is resulting in rising house prices.
- High demand for traditional buildings to convert to residential use, so reducing the opportunities for business conversions.
- Strong and active community spirit in many AONB communities, including a rich artistic and cultural life.
- Perceived limitations on opportunities for businesses in inaccessible locations.
- Opportunities and risks for the AONB associated with new instruments such as Neighbourhood Plans, which may form an increasingly important element of local decision-making
- Financial pressures reducing the ability of town and parish councils to participate in partnerships and community activities.
- Lack of understanding of the impacts of daily life style decisions on the environment of the North Wessex Downs – from individual travel decisions to the use of water as if it were an unlimited natural resource.
- Increasing volume of HGVs, delivery vans and commuter traffic on rural lanes. Rat running on minor lanes to escape congestion on the main arterial roads.
- Government requirements that businesses running apprenticeship schemes must have business premises (many traditional land-based contractors do not have formal business premises).

Key Issues (Cont'd)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for better understanding and awareness of the links between high environmental quality and ecosystem services and local business.</li> <li>• Opportunities to increase involvement in local community activities to improve social cohesion and sense of belonging.</li> <li>• The need for local sources of employment and opportunities for local people to develop skills that could support them into self-employment or enterprise,</li> <li>• The need for a wide range of skills training for land managers and other rural enterprises within the North Wessex Downs.</li> </ul>
Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To enable vibrant communities to develop sustainably in the North Wessex Downs by stimulating economic prosperity and local culture.</i></li> <li>• <i>To encourage an enhanced sense of ownership and respect for the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs amongst local people.</i></li> <li>• <i>To provide transport that is more sustainable and meets the needs of residents and visitors of the North Wessex Downs.</i></li> </ul>
North Wessex Downs AONB Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support efforts to raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs AONB among communities within and surrounding the area.</li> <li>• Seek to provide parishes and all other relevant community groups and individuals with information and training as necessary to raise awareness of the special qualities of the AONB and the need to conserve and enhance it.</li> <li>• Encourage, support and celebrate local communities' engagement in the planning, conservation and enhancement of their local environment, enhancing the sense of local pride and ownership.</li> <li>• Support projects to promote community use of renewable energy sources consistent with AONB objectives.</li> <li>• Seek to publicise relevant community activities and events across the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>• Support community initiatives aimed at retaining rural services, including the combining of services where this will improve their viability.</li> <li>• Encourage and support initiatives to foster awareness, understanding and appreciation of the AONB landscape in local schools.</li> <li>• Support and encourage initiatives to address the specific needs of different groups within the AONB, such as access to training and social activities for young people.</li> </ul>

#### North Wessex Downs AONB Policies (Cont'd)

- Support provision of reliable and affordable broadband and mobile telephone connections throughout the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect the special qualities of the area.
- Seek to ensure the development and implementation of transport plans and programmes addresses the needs of North Wessex Downs communities, reduces transport impacts on the environment, and conserves and enhances the special qualities of the landscape.
- Support and promote measures to provide integrated passenger transport, including easily accessible information, across the North Wessex Downs that serves the needs of local people and visitors.
- Secure Travel Plans for new developments with significant traffic generation within the North Wessex Downs to encourage sustainable travel.
- Support good practice examples of community approaches that respond to locally identified needs and promote them as an inspiration to others (e.g. the establishment of local housing trusts, support for new village shops, community transport schemes, or community energy schemes).

## 11.8 Leisure and Tourism

### Key Issues

- The opportunity to raise the profile of North Wessex Downs as a short break destination and the opportunities for quiet recreation and green tourism that it can offer.
- Co-ordinated marketing of the North Wessex Downs as a whole remains weak, despite significant progress under the last AONB Management Plan.
- Tourism provision in the AONB is fragmented and poorly co-ordinated, supporting few jobs and limited income.
- Multiple destination management organisations across the AONB increase fragmentation.
- Generally poor (but increasing) recognition amongst AONB communities of the opportunities that association with a landscape of national importance offers for quiet recreation and green tourism and their associated economic benefits, e.g. for local food.
- Potential for insensitive, inappropriate or excessive tourism development to harm the special qualities of the AONB landscape.
- Popularity of a few 'honeypot' locations with resulting sprawl of car parking, wear and tear on verges and paths, litter and lower enjoyment, and potentially intrusive traffic management measures.
- Opportunities arising from changes to the management and promotion of the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.
- Infrequent public transport links to and between points of access, key attractions and accommodation. Very limited service at some railway stations e.g. Pewsey prevents their positive use for leisure and tourism.
- Increasing pressure on funding for management and maintenance of rights of way and poor connectivity of the rights of way network in some areas for circular walks and rides.
- Irresponsible use of the rights of way network by motorised vehicles, of particular concern along the route of the Ridgeway.
- Noise associated with some recreation pursuits, including that from trail bike courses and powered aircraft, affecting tranquillity and others' enjoyment.
- General lack of facilities for the non-horse owner to gain access to the recreational riding opportunities of the North Wessex Downs.
- Lack of indication such as road signs that visitors are entering or in the AONB.
- Lack of information and provision for the less able and other disadvantaged groups to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs.

Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and enjoy the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs while minimising the negative impacts of visitors</i></li> <li>• <i>To promote a recreation and tourism sector that is well managed, sustainable and adding value to the local economy whilst respecting the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.</i></li> </ul>
North Wessex Downs AONB Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a strategic, partnership approach to planning and marketing green tourism and improved countryside access in the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>• Work with destination management organisations, protected landscapes and other partners to promote responsible tourism in the North Wessex Downs, including through the Our Land and the Visit North Wessex Downs initiatives.</li> <li>• Support the development of markets for short break opportunities that emphasise the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>• Nurture tourism businesses and help to develop a tourism network across the North Wessex Downs. Support constructive and community-led projects that benefit the tourism economy.</li> <li>• Promote greater accessibility to the North Wessex Downs for users of all abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well being.</li> <li>• Encourage the provision of easily accessible information regarding access to and around the North Wessex Downs by public transport.</li> <li>• Identify and promote with relevant partners signs or other ways of indicating to visitors that they are in the North Wessex Downs that do not conflict with AONB purposes.</li> <li>• Encourage and support greater recognition among commercial transport providers such as train operating companies of the recreational / leisure potential of stations in and around the North Wessex Downs.</li> <li>• Support more and better monitoring of the distribution and demography of visitors and promote management approaches that reduce pressure on sensitive habitats.</li> <li>• Support events that celebrate the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs and contribute to a viable visitor economy</li> <li>• Work with local authorities, Local Access Forums and others to manage and improve the network of public rights of way, ensuring that relevant plans for development and delivery of access to the area take full account of the local distinctiveness, character and quality of the North Wessex Downs and its setting..</li> <li>• Encourage the creation of new permissive and definitive routes that link existing routes and enable recreational walkers, cyclists and riders to avoid busy roads.</li> </ul>

#### North Wessex Downs AONB Policies (Cont'd)

- Identify spinal and circular routes to be promoted in AONB publicity that are supported by the recreation and tourism infrastructure e.g. bicycle hire, farmhouse B&B / bunk barns and recreational bus links.
- Support increased provision and management of accessible greenspace and the promotion of new and existing recreation opportunities in line with AONB purposes.
- Support research, tools and projects which support the development of a thriving recreation and tourism sector.
- Support initiatives to help communities and businesses reduce the outflow of revenue, retaining and recycling wealth in the area for longer.
- Encourage and support research as appropriate into the demand and current provision of transport, accommodation and attractions for residents and visitors to the AONB.

## 12. Stakeholder responsibilities

**Figure 9 Stakeholders and Opportunities to Contribute**

The following table outlines some of the main stakeholder groups and the principle opportunities for them to contribute to the important work of the North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership. This is by no means an exhaustive list and we welcome suggestions for further partners or examples of how these groups can help to deliver the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-19.

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Principal Opportunities</b>	<b>Delivery (examples)</b>
<b>Chambers of commerce</b>	North Wessex Downs profile / marketing; tourism; local products.	Member information and events; North Wessex Downs tourism network; <i>Our Land</i> tourism initiative; local supplier networks; visitor payback.
<b>Consultants and Agents</b>	Awareness, understanding and recognition of the landscape and North Wessex Downs in particular.	Sensitivity to the heritage, natural environment, local economy and communities in bringing forward proposals and raising awareness among client base.
<b>Educational institutions</b>	Awareness, understanding and pride in the landscape.	Engagement with landscape through the curriculum; collaborative projects; field trips; farm visits; outdoor classrooms/Forest Schools.
<b>Energy companies</b>	Landscape conservation / enhancement; energy conservation; climate change.	Customer energy conservation advice; undergrounding powerlines; appropriate renewable energy generation; infrastructure planning and design.
<b>Farmers and land managers</b>	Wildlife habitat; landscape character; local food; public awareness and understanding; natural resources; tourism; responsible access; climate change.	Environmental Land Management Schemes; partnership conservation projects (e.g. Nature Improvement Areas); catchment-sensitive farming; control of outdoor lighting; diversification projects (e.g. LEADER); farm visits; carbon sequestration; rights of way maintenance; permissive access; appropriate farm-scale renewable energy generation.

<p><b>National bodies</b> <i>including</i></p> <p><b>English Heritage</b> <b>Environment Agency</b> <b>Forestry Commission</b> <b>Highways Agency</b> <b>Natural England</b></p>	<p>Historic environment; landscape and nature conservation; rivers and water quality; tranquillity; ecosystem goods and services.</p>	<p>Land use planning; environmental land management schemes; land management advice; Local Nature Partnerships; partnership conservation projects (e.g. Nature Improvement Areas; North Wessex Downs Woodland Forum; River Basin Management Plans; Conservation Area Appraisals; Catchment Partnerships and Catchment Management Plans; Route Management Strategies; Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan.</p>
<p><b>Highway authorities</b></p>	<p>Road decluttering; landscape character; dark skies, access; tranquillity; climate change; tourism; layout and design of new and redevelopment.</p>	<p>Local Transport Plans; road maintenance and safety programmes; signs audits; land use planning; National Trail partnerships; Local Access Forums; Rights of Way Improvement Plans.</p>
<p><b>Individuals</b></p>	<p>Natural resources; heritage and nature conservation; water abstraction; dark skies; tranquillity; local products; settlement character; climate change.</p>	<p>Participation in local projects; water and energy conservation; buying local; control of external lighting; conservation gardening; responsible access; green travel; pollution avoidance; planning and design.</p>
<p><b>Local businesses</b></p>	<p>Local products; tourism; North Wessex Downs profile; dark skies; natural resources; climate change.</p>	<p>Local sourcing; marketing; North Wessex Downs tourism network; <i>Our Land</i> tourism initiative; control of external lighting; energy/water conservation; waste minimisation.</p>

<p><b>Local Enterprise Partnerships</b> <i>Including</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Enterprise M3</b></li> <li><b>Oxfordshire</b></li> <li><b>Solent</b></li> <li><b>Swindon and Wiltshire</b></li> <li><b>Thames Valley</b></li> <li><b>Berkshire</b></li> </ul>	<p>Diversification; sustainable prosperity; local products; ecosystem goods and services; climate change; tourism.</p>	<p>Strategic Investment Frameworks; LEADER programme/s; green travel; Local Nature Partnerships, Nature Improvement Areas; environmental land management schemes.</p>
<p><b>Local Nature Partnerships</b></p>	<p>Landscape and nature conservation and restoration; ecosystem goods and services; community engagement; climate change</p>	<p>Identifying local environmental networks; engaging the public, private and voluntary sector in collaborative protection and enhancement of the North Wessex Downs; educating young people and communities regarding the benefits of the natural environment.</p>
<p><b>Local authorities (including planning authorities)</b></p>	<p>Landscape and nature conservation; historic environment; settlement character; water abstraction; tranquillity; dark skies; affordable housing; diversification; ecosystem goods and services.</p>	<p>Development plans; planning advice, decisions, conditions and enforcement; green travel plans; supplementary planning guidance. Reporting on efforts to conserve and enhance the North Wessex Downs; duties specified by NERC act (2006)</p>
<p><b>Non-governmental organisations</b> <i>including</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Action for the River Kennet</b></li> <li><b>Canal and River Trust</b></li> <li><b>CPRE</b></li> <li><b>Earth Trust</b></li> <li><b>Friends of the Ridgeway</b></li> <li><b>Kennet and Avon Canal Trust</b></li> <li><b>National Trust</b></li> <li><b>RSPB</b></li> <li><b>Trust for Sustainable Living</b></li> <li><b>Wildlife Trusts</b></li> </ul>	<p>Landscape, heritage and nature conservation and restoration; North Wessex Downs profile; settlement character; water abstraction; tranquillity; dark skies; affordable housing; responsible access; tourism; farm diversification; ecosystem goods and services</p>	<p>Member /supporter communications; public information and interpretation; estate management; collaborative projects; planning and design; recreation marketing and management; green travel; North Wessex Downs tourism network; <i>Our Land</i> tourism initiative.</p>

<b>Parish and town councils</b>	North Wessex Downs profile and marketing; community identity and pride; community engagement; tourism; landscape and nature conservation; decluttering; historic environment; settlement character; tranquillity; dark skies.	Public communications and events; parish / town / neighbourhood planning; community projects; Village Design Statements; property and grounds management; publications (e.g, walks leaflets); control of external lighting; community transport; local sourcing.
<b>Rights of way and countryside access forums</b>	Access to the North Wessex Downs; raising the profile and marketing; tourism; links to landscape and nature conservation.	Improving responsible access; contributing to collaborative marketing and tourism initiatives; recognition of the North Wessex Downs in Countryside Access Improvement Plans.
<b>Tourism marketing bodies</b>	North Wessex Downs profile / marketing; tourism; local products.	Destination marketing strategies; collaborative projects (e.g. Our Land); North Wessex Downs tourism network; local supplier networks; National Trail partnerships; visitor payback.
<b>Transport operators</b>	Green travel; access; North Wessex Downs profile / marketing; sustainable tourism; tranquillity.	Business and marketing strategies; collaborative initiatives with local businesses and communities; National Trail partnerships.
<b>Water companies</b>	Water abstraction and consumption; water quality; habitat conservation and enhancement;	Public information and advice; Water Resources Management Plans; Five-Year Plans; collaborative projects with local partners; demand management measures; use of abstraction licences; estate management; control of external lighting.

### 13. Glossary of Terms

Figure 10 Glossary of Terms used in Document

Term used	Definition / Explanation
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Low cost housing for sale or rent, often from a housing association, provided to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation through the open market.
<b>Aggregates</b>	Sand and gravel, crushed rock and other bulk materials used in the construction industry for purposes such as making concrete, mortar, asphalt or roadstone, drainage or bulk filling.
<b>Agri-environment Schemes (AES)</b>	A range of schemes operated by DEFRA designed to encourage environmentally friendly farming and public enjoyment of the countryside, includes Countryside Stewardship in England and Tir Gofal in Wales.
<b>Alien species.</b>	Plant or animal species that has either been transported accidentally through human activity, or purposefully introduced, from their historically known native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. Also known as non-indigenous, exotic, invasive or introduced species.
<b>Amenity</b>	The pleasant or normally satisfactory aspects of a location, which contribute to its overall character and the enjoyment of residents or visitors.
<b>Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)</b>	An ancient woodland site, believed to have had continuous woodland cover since 1600 AD, composed principally of native tree species that have not obviously been planted.
<b>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</b>	Area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, with the primary purpose of designation being to conserve natural beauty.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The common term for "biological diversity", the variety of life and the natural processes of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur.
<b>Bio-fuels</b>	currently methane, alcohols and biodiesel, all of which may be made from sustainable agricultural crops, producing valuable by-products
<b>Bridleway</b>	A public right of way for walkers and those on horseback, or leading a horse, together with permission by parliament for use by pedal bicyclists, provided they give way to walkers and horse riders. A bridleway may also have higher rights (see Public Rights of Way)

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Broadleaved Trees</b>	Trees belonging to the botanical group Angiospermae, carrying broad leaves, which usually shed all their foliage at the end of the growing season. Also known as deciduous or hardwood trees.
<b>Brownfield Land</b>	Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed and as AONBs are of high environmental value, any development must also conserve and enhance the character and special qualities of the AONB) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.
<b>Browsing</b>	A method of feeding by herbivores in which the leaves and peripheral shoots are removed from trees and shrubs.
<b>Buffer Zone</b>	The region near the border of a protected area providing a zone of transition between areas managed for different objectives.
<b>Byway</b>	A Byway open to all traffic (BOAT) is a Public Right of Way open to all users.
<b>Carrying Capacity</b>	<p>Attempts made to measure the maximum amount of use that a resource can accommodate.</p> <p>Ecological capacity is the maximum level of use consistent with no reduction in the valued ecological attributes of an area;</p> <p>Physical capacity is the maximum level of use that can be accommodated in space or time;</p> <p>Perceptual capacity refers to the point at which enjoyment falls due to feelings of overcrowding. Burton (1974).</p>
<b>Catchment Abstraction Management Plans (CAMs)</b>	Implemented by Environment Agency since 2001 for every catchment in England and Wales to provide both a consistent approach to local water resource management and greater public involvement in water management.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Climate change</b>	The anticipated impact of modern human activity on the global environment leading to an estimated 3 –8 degree centigrade rise in temperatures in the UK over the next 100 years, with additional environmental consequences.
<b>Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)</b>	European Union wide policy that supports agriculture through price support, market management and measures to improve the agriculture industry. Undergoing a Mid term review, introducing decoupling and more modulation and cross compliance.
<b>Common Land</b>	Defined in section 22 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 as land subject to rights of common (as defined in this Act) whether those rights are exercisable at all times or only during limited periods
<b>Community Strategy</b>	Defined in the Local Government Act 2000 as provision of a new duty and responsibility for local authorities to work closely with others to improve the local quality of life and promote well being. A Community Strategy links the work of key stakeholders in a local Authority area across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.
<b>Condition monitoring</b>	Monitoring condition of the AONB to assess changes over time. Differs from performance monitoring that monitors completion of actions etc within the plan
<b>Coniferous Woodland</b>	Wooded land on which more than 75% of the tree crown cover consists of coniferous species.
<b>Conservation</b>	The management of the human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to current generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations: Thus conservation is positive; embracing preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilisation, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment.
<b>Conservation Area</b>	Defined by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.
<b>Coppice</b>	Woodland which has normally been regenerated from shoots formed at the cut stumps of the previous crop trees, root suckers, or both i.e. by vegetative means. Coppice is normally grown on a short rotation i.e. 5 – 25 years to yield small diameter material.
<b>County Road</b>	General purpose highways on 'List of Streets' maintained by local highways authority, includes minor roads and some not sealed or actively maintained.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Countryside</b>	The term used for all land outside the built-up area boundaries defined in local plans.  The rural environment and its associated communities.
<b>Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000)</b>	Contains measures to improve public access to the open countryside and registered common land while recognising the legitimate interests of those who own and manage the land concerned; it amends the law relating to rights of way; it amends the law relating to nature conservation by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest including tougher penalties and by providing extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife crime; it provides a basis for the conservation of biological diversity; and it provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the requirement for local authorities to produce AONB management plans every five years and places a duty on public bodies to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation.
<b>Countryside Stewardship (CS)</b>	The current Common Agricultural Policy land management scheme introduced by DEFRA in 2014.
<b>Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)</b>	An historic agri-environment scheme administered by DEFRA, which enabled farmers and land managers to enter ten year management agreements to maintain or enhance certain landscapes and features. Replaced by Environmental Stewardship in 2005 and Countryside Stewardship in 2014.
<b>Cross Compliance</b>	The linking of a farmer's eligibility for agricultural subsidies to environmental conditions and good farming practice.
<b>Decoupling</b>	Breaking the link between farm subsidies and production to reconnect farmers to their markets, reduce damaging environmental impacts and cut red tape.
<b>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)</b>	Central government body with the aim of sustainable development, which means a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, including: a better environment at home and internationally, and sustainable use of natural resources; economic prosperity through sustainable farming, fishing, food, water and other industries that meet consumers' requirements; thriving economies and communities in rural areas and a countryside for all to enjoy.
<b>Entry Level Scheme (ELS)</b>	Agri-environment scheme introduced in 2005 with the aim to encourage a large number of farmers across a wide area of farmland to deliver simple yet effective environmental management.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>	Defined under the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, where developers are required to provide in addition to a planning application, an environmental statement, evaluating the likely environmental impact of the development, together with an assessment on how impacts may be mitigated.
<b>Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)</b>	Operated from 1987 to 2005 offering incentives to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural practices, which would safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. There were 22 ESAs in England, covering some 10% of agricultural land. The Wye Valley was not an ESA. Replaced by Environmental Stewardship.
<b>Erosion</b>	It is the act or operation in which soil or rock at the earth's surface is worn away (weathered) by the chemical or mechanical action of water, wind or man. It can also refer to a gradual process of removing something which can be accelerated by human activity.
<b>Food Miles</b>	The distance food travels from farm to plate.
<b>Footpath</b>	A public right of way for walkers, which may also have higher rights (see Public Rights of Way)
<b>Forest</b>	An extensive track of land covered mainly with trees and undergrowth, sometimes intermingled with pasture.
<b>Fragmentation</b>	The breaking-up of continuous tracts of ecosystems, reducing the size of homogenous areas and creating barriers to the migration or dispersal of organisms.
<b>General Permitted Development Order (GPDO)</b>	The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 grants rights to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application for planning permission (the thresholds for GDP are generally smaller in AONBs).
<b>Geographical Information System. (GIS)</b>	Computer based systems for managing, analysis and presenting geographically referenced data.
<b>Geomorphology</b>	The branch of physical geography which deals with the form of the earth, the general configuration of its surface and the distribution of land and water etc. together with the natural processes that contribute to the evolution of landscapes.
<b>Grassland</b>	Any plant community in which grasses and/or legumes comprise the dominant vegetation.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Grazing</b>	A method of feeding by herbivores characterised by the repeated removal of only a part (usually the leaf) of the plant (most commonly herbage such as grass and clovers).
<b>Green</b>	Often used instead of 'sustainable' but implies something different in terms of 'green' tourism, which is concerned with the environment as an attraction rather than 'sustainable' tourism that considers the environmental, economic and social impact of tourism on an area.
<b>Green Lane</b>	A term with no legal definition which is often used to describe routes, normally bounded by walls or hedges, which appear to have no 'sealed' surface i.e. macadam or concrete, irrespective of whether they are rights of way or entirely private.
<b>Habitat</b>	A place in which a particular plant or animal lives, or the wider interaction of plants and animals that are found together.
<b>Heath</b>	A tract of uncultivated, generally nutrient poor land, with an open character, whose vegetation is dominated by dwarf shrubs, most typically belonging to the family Ericaceae – Heathers. Depending on levels of moisture heaths are further subdivided as dry heath, heather moor and moss-moor. Heath under 300 metres above sea level is referred to as Lowland Heath.
<b>Hedgerow</b>	Lines of trees and/or shrubs which delineate the boundaries of fields.
<b>Heritage</b>	Historic or cultural associations.
<b>Higher Level Scheme (HLS)</b>	Agri-environment scheme introduced in 2005 to concentrate on the more complex types of management needed to achieve the objectives of the ELS where land managers need advice and support, where agreements need to be tailored to local circumstances and where management needs to be carefully targeted.
<b>Highway</b>	Any way over which the public have a right to pass and repass, including footpath, bridleway, restricted byway and carriageway.
<b>Highway Authority</b>	The Highways Act 1980 defines a Highway Authority as the body responsible for maintaining all highways maintainable at public expense and keeping them free of obstruction, including responsibility for public rights of way. The Highway Authorities in the Wye Valley are Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire County Councils.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)</b>	A method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. It forms part of a National Programme developed by English Heritage in the early nineties and is continually evolving with ongoing development and changes in methodology, technology and application.
<b>Historic Parks and Gardens</b>	Parks and Gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Cadw or English Heritage in three grades as with historic buildings.
<b>Honeypot Site</b>	Features or facilities which attract significant numbers of visitors through their reputation or position.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Anything, whether buildings, apparatus or services, essential to the development and use of land. Planning permission can be withheld if infrastructure required by a development is not provided, including infrastructure needs arising outside the proposed site.
<b>Interpretation</b>	Interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first hand experience and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information. It is the art of explaining the place of man in his environment, to increase visitor or public awareness of this relationship and to awaken a desire to contribute to environmental conservation.
<b>Landscape</b>	An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.
<b>Landscape Assessment</b>	Non statutory document setting out the special qualities of the landscape, tracing its evolution and forces for change
<b>Landscape Character</b>	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from one another, rather than better or worse.
<b>Landscape Character Area (LCA)</b>	Are unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur, which share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but have their own particular identity.
<b>Landscape Character Assessment</b>	Is a method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and features i.e. woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts which give a place a distinctive character.
<b>Landscape Feature</b>	A prominent eye-catching element, e.g. wooded hill top or church spire.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>LEADER</b>	European Union initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of their area.
<b>Listed Building</b>	A building of architectural or historical importance, graded according to its merit (I, II*, II) and subject to special controls.
<b>Local Access Forum (LAF)</b>	Set up under CRoW Act to represent a balance of local interests and views, providing independent guidance to the relevant local authorities and the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. Each county has one covering their respective areas of the North Wessex Downs.
<b>Local Authority</b>	An administrative unit of local government, specifically any body listed in section 270 of the Local Government Act 1972 or section 21(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
<b>Local Distinctiveness</b>	Essentially the sum of points of connection between the place and the person. Local distinctiveness is fundamentally about giving professionals a mandate to care for landscape detail, by linking meaning and identity. It is an expression of how landscapes are valued as places which have a distinctiveness and significance that communities cherish as their own and seek to find alternatives to the spread of uniformity in the countryside.
<b>Localism</b>	To empower communities to do things their way—by creating rights for people to get involved with, and direct the development of, their communities. To lift the burden of bureaucracy and strengthen accountability to local people.
<b>Local Nature Partnership (LNP)</b>	Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) are partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment. Established following the Natural Environment White Paper 2011.
<b>Local Nature Reserve (LNR)</b>	Site acquired, declared and managed by local authorities in co-operation with EN in order to protect its wildlife value for the benefit of the local community.
<b>Local Planning Authority (LPA)</b>	The local authority, normally the local borough or district council, which is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.
<b>Local Produce</b>	Local production and local producers from within a radius up to 30 miles of a market, or 50 miles in the case of large cities or remote areas, but never more than 100 miles.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Local Transport Plan (LTP)</b>	A plan produced by the Highway Authority setting out future proposals for transport infrastructure over the following 5 years and attracting possible Government funding.
<b>Meadow</b>	Land, usually level and low lying, devoted to grasses and short herbs, which is mown annually for hay.
<b>Methodology</b>	The specific approach and techniques used for a given study or project.
<b>Minerals Planning Authority (MPA)</b>	Mineral planning authorities (MPAs) process planning applications relating to minerals extraction. MPAs must take Government policies contained in Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs) and their replacements, Minerals Policy Statements (MPSs) into account in preparing their development plans.
<b>Modulation</b>	Modulation involves the transfer of money paid to farmers from direct CAP agricultural support payments to a wider range of rural development measures.
<b>National Nature Reserve (NNR)</b>	Designated by Government under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to protect and conserve nationally important areas of wildlife habitat and geological formations and to promote scientific research.
<b>National Parks</b>	There are currently ten National Parks in England and Wales plus the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads that has equivalent status. National Parks are extensive areas each with their own managing authority to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities.
<b>National Trail</b>	Routes based on Public Rights of Way through the nation's finest and most characteristic countryside, allowing an extensive journey on foot, horseback or by bicycle and capable of attracting tourist use from home and abroad.
<b>Natural Beauty</b>	Legislation and associated guidance defines natural beauty as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology and physiographic or geomorphological, the cultural and heritage elements, together with less tangible values such as intactness, rarity, wildness, remoteness, tranquillity and the appeal to the physical senses.
<b>Natural Environment and Rural Communities</b>	Legislation that extends the CROW biodiversity duty to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. It contains provisions to clarify the use of mechanically propelled vehicles on public rights of way. It made small change to the

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>(NERC) Act (2006)</b>	Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to define the meaning of “statutory undertaker”, currently undefined in this Act and refined the definition of “natural beauty”.
<b>Organic Agriculture</b>	A method of production, which puts the highest emphasis on environmental protection and, with regard to livestock production, animal welfare considerations. It avoids or largely reduces the use of synthetic chemical inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, additives and medical products. The word ‘organic’ may only be applied to products that have been obtained in accordance with EC Regulation 2092/01
<b>Parkland</b>	A large piece of ground usually comprising woodland, pasture and formal gardens, currently or once attached to a country house or mansion.
<b>Pasture</b>	An area of land dominated by grass, which is used only for grazing, as distinct from a meadow that is mown. Pasture may be enclosed fields or unenclosed common land.
<b>Permanent Pasture</b>	Any pasture composed of perennial or self-seeding annual plants kept indefinitely for grazing.
<b>Permissive Path</b>	A route where the landowner has granted permission for public use, usually for foot access but occasionally for horse riders, but which is not dedicated as a public right of way.
<b>Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)</b>	Ancient Woodland Sites in which the former tree cover has been replaced, often with non-native trees. PAWS often retain important ancient woodland features including characteristic flora, fauna and archaeology.
<b>Pollard</b>	A tree having its top cut off at some height above the ground to promote new and multiple growth, either to avoid the reach of browsing animals or to create aesthetically pleasing forms, extend the life of the tree and/or maintain wildlife habitat.
<b>Precautionary Principle</b>	Principle applied, to err on the side of caution where significant environmental damage may occur, but where knowledge on the matter is incomplete, or when the prediction of environmental effects is uncertain.
<b>Protected Area</b>	A geographically defined area which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Public Right of Way</b>	A route where the public has a right to walk, and in some cases ride horses, bicycles, motorcycles, wheeled carriages or drive motor vehicles which is designated either a footpath, a bridleway, Restricted Byway, Carriage or Cart Road used mainly as a Footpath (CR/F) or Bridleway (CR/B) or a byway open to all traffic (BOAT). These are shown on the 'Definitive Map' held by the county Highway Authority. A route may also have higher rights eg. be a County Road or other Highway; or simply be incorrectly signed or waymarked and/or have private rights of access.
<b>Public Forest Estate</b>	Woodland owned or leased by the government and primarily managed by the Forestry Commission.
<b>Public Transport</b>	Methods of transporting passengers including buses, trains and taxis but not car passengers.
<b>Quiet Lane</b>	Section 208 of the Transport Act 2000 makes provision for local traffic authorities to designate roads for which they are responsible as Quiet Lanes, enjoying voluntary speed restrictions and promotion for non-motorised traffic.
<b>Recreation</b>	Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc.
<b>Regional Route</b>	Longer named paths, promoted on the initiative of local authorities, signed and fully waymarked, and based on public rights of way, offering more than a days travelling, perhaps following a theme or feature that offer tourism potential, such as the Wye Valley Walk
<b>Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)</b>	Non-statutory sites of regional geological or geomorphological importance recognised by English Nature, Natural Resources Wales and local authorities.
<b>Renewable energy</b>	Energy generated from resources that are non-fossil fuels, and are unlimited, rapidly replenished or naturally renewable such as wind, water, sun, wave and refuse. Thus the technology includes wind turbines, wave generators, biofuels, solar power, wood fuel burners and boilers etc.
<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)</b>	Sections 60 to 62 of the CRow Act 2000 require local highway authorities to prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans for improving rights of way in their areas, taking into account the needs of the public including people with disabilities.
<b>Riparian</b>	Of or relating to, or located on, the banks of a stream or river.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Roadside Clutter</b>	A perceived over provision of road signs, road surfaces, authorised and unauthorised advertising and other road furniture that impacts on the natural beauty of an area and potentially increases risks for motorists.
<b>Run-off</b>	Portion of rainfall, melted snow or irrigation water that flows across the ground's surface and is eventually returned to streams.
<b>Rural Development Regulation</b>	The programme for England under European Regulation EC 1257/1999 is aimed at diversifying farming and forestry businesses and increasing competitiveness, developing new food and non-food products, ensuring the sustainable management of Less Favoured Areas and significantly increasing the areas covered by environmental schemes.
<b>Rural Regeneration</b>	The process of undertaking initiatives for public benefit in areas of social and economic deprivation, through the maintenance or improvement of the physical, social and economic infrastructure and by assisting people who are at a disadvantage because of their social and economic circumstances.
<b>Scheduled Monument (SAM)</b>	A structure identified by Cadw and English Heritage for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
<b>Second Home</b>	A fixed property which is the occasional residence of a household that usually lives elsewhere.
<b>Section 106 agreement</b>	A binding agreement between a local planning authority and a developer associated with a grant of planning permission and regarding matters linked to the proposed development.
<b>Sense of Place (Genius Loci)</b>	Concept used to describe the memories and feelings of connectedness evoked by places where people live and work. The essential character of an area: 'Genius Loci' literally means 'spirit of the place'.
<b>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</b>	Area identified by Natural Resources Wales and English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest.
<b>Sites and Monument Record (SMR)</b>	A database of sites of archaeological interest and potential within a particular area, usually a county. Commonly known as the Historic Environment Record.
<b>Social Exclusion</b>	A summary term describing the collective difficulties experienced by people and/or areas which suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, inadequate housing, poor skills, low income etc.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</b>	Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. All candidate SACs in UK are SSSIs.
<b>Special Wildlife Sites</b>	Categorisation developed by County Wildlife Trusts to identify the best places for wildlife outside legally protected areas.
<b>Species</b>	Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed.
<b>Statutory</b>	Denotes something that is defined in legislation.
<b>Statutory Undertaker</b>	Statutory undertakers are organisations authorised by statute or licensed by central government to perform various public undertakings. Section 98 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 defines a statutory undertaker as any person authorised by any enactment to carry out any railway, light railway, tramway, road transport, canal, inland navigation, dock, harbour or pier undertaking or any relevant airport operator.  The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 defines as Statutory Undertakes all utilities namely electricity, gas, water, telephone, cable telephone, television and other telecommunications companies.
<b>Sudden Oak Death</b>	Popular name given to the fungus <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> , which infects foliar (leaf) hosts such as <i>Rhododendron</i> and <i>Viburnum</i> and fatally infects bark canker hosts, principally Oaks.
<b>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</b>	Documents prepared to support and amplify policies in the Local Development Plan or Framework. Such guidance must be consistent with national and local planning policy
<b>Sustainable</b>	When equal consideration is made of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a development or project.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	The widely used definition is "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
<b>Sustainable Drainage</b>	Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note 25 - Development and flood risk seeks to ensure that flood risk is considered on a catchment scale. It

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Schemes (SUDS)</b>	directly identifies the potential for SUDS to reduce flooding downstream of developments and promotes the development of teamwork to encourage the incorporation of sustainable drainage in developments. It suggests that local authorities should work closely with the Environment Agency, sewerage undertakers, navigation authorities and prospective developers to enable surface water run-off to be controlled as near to the source as possible through SUDS.
<b>Sustainable Tourism</b>	The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves. To make as low an impact on the environment and local culture as possible, while helping to generate future employment for local people.
<b>Sustrans</b>	A sustainable transport charity, working on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects.
<b>Tourism</b>	Describes the activity of people taking trips away from home and the industry which has developed in response to this activity.
<b>Town and Country Planning System</b>	System by which all forms of development is planned and controlled. Currently based on the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF) in England and Wales Spatial Strategy and Local Development Plans (LDP) in Wales
<b>Traffic Management</b>	Measures designed to improve the local environment through the reduction of accidents, injuries, congestion and pollution.
<b>Tranquillity</b>	Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting.
<b>Unimproved Grassland</b>	Grassland consisting of native grasses and herbs which have not been significantly affected by treatment with mineral fertilizers, pesticides, intensive grazing or drainage.
<b>Utilities</b>	Organisations performing a public service i.e. Water, gas, electricity etc.
<b>Veteran Tree</b>	Tree which by virtue of its great age, size or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife. 'Great age' is further defined as an individual tree older than half the natural lifespan for that species.
<b>Viewpoint</b>	Publicly accessible positions from which particularly impressive scenic views can be enjoyed. Viewpoints are often associated with interpretive material.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
<b>Viewshed</b>	<p>A North American concept for a discrete area which may be mapped or viewed from one or more viewpoints which has inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic values as determined by those who view it. The immediate foreground of a viewshed often enjoys more consideration than the far distance or background.</p> <p>Building on the concept of the 'Viewshed' recent work in England has developed the concept of a Strategic View which either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contains clear views of readily recognisable natural and/or built elements</li> <li>• has a role in defining the visual attractiveness, context or sense of place of an area</li> <li>• contain good examples of landscape unique to the area</li> </ul>
<b>Wetland</b>	<p>Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins. The term can include marshes, swamps, bogs, some shallow waters and the intertidal zones. When applied to surface waters, it is generally restricted to areas shallow enough to allow the growth of rooted plants.</p>
<b>Whole Farm Conservation Plans</b>	<p>Plans that consider individual farms as a whole, producing tailor-made conservation plans considering farm type, location and any particular wildlife value, identifying adjustments to management practices that can significantly benefit wildlife.</p>
<b>Wildlife Corridor</b>	<p>A continuous feature, normally broadly linear, which facilitates the movement of wildlife through rural or urban environments.</p>
<b>Woodland Grant Scheme</b>	<p>A scheme administered by the Forestry Commission to provide grants to help create new woodlands and to encourage the good management and regeneration of existing woodlands.</p>
<b>World Heritage Site (WHS)</b>	<p>A UNESCO Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage which encourages the designation of cultural and natural heritage sites.</p>

# THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

working in partnership with;



**Basingstoke  
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Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



ENGLISH HERITAGE



**Hampshire  
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Listening Learning Leading



**SWINDON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

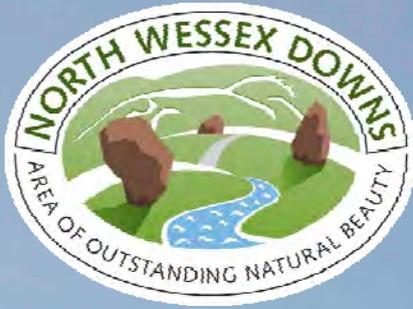


**Vale  
of White Horse**  
District Council



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