

A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

TR010025

6.3 Environmental Statement Appendices

Appendix 7.4 Published Landscape Character Assessments

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

October 2018



7.4 Published Landscape Character Assessments

7.4.1 The study area is covered by published landscape character assessments at national, county, district and local levels.

7.4.2 The key aspects of these published studies are summarised below, as well as their sensitivity.

National

7.4.3 Natural England has mapped 159 separate, distinctive National Character Areas (NCAs) across England. These are intended to inform and contribute towards policy formulation and local planning, action and development.

National Character Area (NCA) 132: Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs

7.4.4 The study area lies wholly within National Character Area (NCA) 132: Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs¹², which is characterised as:

“sparsely settled, predominantly agricultural area with a strong sense of remoteness and openness. The dominant element in the landscape – apart from the expansive sky – is the gently rolling chalk downland.”

7.4.5 The published key characteristics of NCA 132: Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs include:

“Woodland generally confined to valley slopes, with scattered copses and shelterbelts (usually of beech or conifer) found on the high downs, and occasional ancient oak woods on the ridgetops;

Large arable fields predominate, with generally very few hedgerows or obvious boundary features; there are often wide grass buffer strips;

Outstanding prehistoric ritual landscape, with many Scheduled Ancient Monuments and earthworks prominent in the open landscape, notably Stonehenge; and

Military tracks, airfields and structures reflecting a major land use. Visually prominent modern military housing and supporting development are found in the eastern side of the NCA.”

7.4.6 Statements of environmental opportunity (SEO) for NCA 132 include:

“SEO 1: Protect, manage and enhance the landscape of large areas of calcareous chalk grassland, and develop network connectivity, supporting internationally important and designated

¹² Natural England, (2013). *National Character Area 132, Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs*. [online]. Available at: <<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5001829523914752>> [Last accessed 2nd May 2018].

semi-natural habitats and species assemblages – from birds to bumblebees – and thus support biodiversity;

SEO 3: Protect, conserve and sustainably manage the NCA's rich historic and archaeological resource, notably the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and its surrounding landscape, and its natural and cultural heritage, for its value in sense of place and history and tranquillity, for open air recreation, and for the benefits it brings to the local and regional economy;

SEO 4: Protect and enhance the NCA's agriculture interest, working with the local farming community to prepare for the impact of and adapt to both evolving funding mechanisms and climate change, to secure future food provision, while working in harmony with the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, its natural beauty and scenic quality and, so far as possible, extending the scope for access to nature and other recreation, for public benefit, understanding and enjoyment."

7.4.7 Additional observations within the NCA are that:

- a) a positive development has been the restoration of the landscape setting to Stonehenge following the closure of the A344 (page 11, 4th paragraph, last sentence);
- b) Stonehenge and the surrounding open pasture land supply a strong sense of place to the NCA (page 12, 5th paragraph);
- c) the area remains tranquil, with dark night skies away from the major transport links of the A36 and A303 (page 13, 2nd paragraph, section 8.2);
- d) Amesbury is one of the largest settlements in the NCA (page 24);
- e) with regards to public access, there are no national trails within the NCA, with 3% of the NCA being publically accessible (page 25, Section 10);
- f) landscape drivers for change include Increasing concern about the impact of car travel may put pressure on tourism, which is a key economic driver for the NCA and is not yet equipped with ready substitutes (page 31, last bullet point in Climate Change);
- g) settlements and transport routes are associated with the more settled river valleys (page 35, 9th bullet point);
- h) the A303 is a busy traffic corridor and a continued problem which may adversely impact on the NCA (page 51, Sense of History analysis); and
- i) the A303 intrudes upon tranquillity (page 52, Tranquillity analysis).

Sensitivity

- 7.4.8 The NCA consists of nationally valued and rare attributes, including chalk grassland, the plains and heritage features. The value of the NCA is therefore assessed as **high**.
- 7.4.9 As the NCA consists of open rolling landform and extensive areas of chalk grassland and WHS the ability to accommodate change is localised to the existing settlement patterns and road networks. The susceptibility is therefore assessed as **high**.
- 7.4.10 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the proposed development.

County

Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment, 2005

- 7.4.11 At the county scale, the study area is covered by the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment¹³ which characterises Wiltshire's landscape as:
- “Wiltshire is dominated by the vast sweeps of the chalk downs, its landscape is highly varied with intimate river valleys contrasting with open uplands and broad vales.”*
- 7.4.12 The main purpose of this assessment is to document the current status of the Wiltshire landscape, furthering the understanding of the landscape resource available in the area and giving an indication of areas in need of enhancement and of conservation.
- 7.4.13 In relation to the High Chalk Plain, which covers the majority of the study area, the study notes that access across the landscape is restricted by MoD uses (Chapter 9: Recreational Influences, page 2), and that for the Chalk River Valley, covering parts of the study area, there is little open access land (Chapter 9: Recreational Influences, page 3).
- 7.4.14 The following Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and sub-divided Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are within the study area, as shown on Figure 7.6:

LCT 3: High Chalk Plain

- 7.4.15 The High Chalk Plain LCT covers a large area of central Wiltshire and its key characteristics include:
- *“Very large scale and open, exposed landscape;*
 - *Rolling plateau land form with panoramic views over the surrounding lowlands creating a sense of elevation;*
 - *Large regular arable fields are bounded mainly by ditches or fences with occasional hedgerows;*

¹³ Wiltshire Council, (2005). *Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment*. [online]. Available at: <<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/landscapeconservation/wiltshirelcafinalreport.htm>> [Last accessed 2nd May 2018].

- *Steep and incised slopes down to the surrounding river valleys; and*
- *Copses and woodland belts, at various stages of growth occur throughout the area with sinuous older plantations contrasting with more recent tree planting in geometrical blocks.”*

7.4.16 In relation to settlement and built character, settlement is noted as being sparse and limited to nucleated villages, military camps and isolated farmsteads, and that most settlement is confined to the river valleys. The A303 is also noted as one of the busy transport routes within the area.

7.4.17 The positive landscape features within the High Chalk Plain LCT include the:

- *“Large scale open and exposed landscape;*
- *Strong sense of remoteness and isolation accentuated by absence of settlement;*
- *Wide views across the plain and out over the surrounding lowlands;*
- *Extensive areas of uninterrupted calcareous grassland with juniper scrub and of high ecological value;*
- *Scattered woodlands and plantations; and*
- *Outstanding sites of archaeological interest; numerous sites, many of international importance including Stonehenge.”*

7.4.18 The forces for change within the LCT include:

- *“In the past intensive arable agriculture has resulted in loss of biodiversity (chalk grassland) and ploughing up of important historic monuments;*
- *Further amalgamation and enlargement of fields and the breakdown of traditional field boundaries associated with intensive farming practices;*
- *Managing high visitor numbers to key archaeological sites – potential effects on the historic landscape and need for supporting infrastructure; and*
- *Potential impact of tall structures - communications masts and transmitters plus future renewable energy developments (wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness.”*

- 7.4.19 The published study assesses the condition of the High Chalk Plain LCT as good due to the large areas of chalk grassland, however this is reduced as a result of the loss of biodiversity arising from the intensification of arable farming and removal of hedgerows.
- 7.4.20 The published study assesses the strength of character of High Chalk Plain LCT as strong due to vast scale and openness of the landscape.
- 7.4.21 The inherent landscape sensitivities include:
- *“The open, exposed and isolated nature of the plain;*
 - *Internationally important ecological resources in the vast areas of uninterrupted chalk grassland;*
 - *Ecologically significant areas of arable biodiversity, Juniper scrub and ancient woodland;*
 - *Numerous sites of archaeological interest;*
 - *The long views and openness of the level plateau have a high visual sensitivity to change; and*
 - *Skylines and tops of the scarp slopes are also particularly visually sensitive.”*
- 7.4.22 The management strategy for the LCT is therefore to conserve the open and isolated character of the plain along with the vast areas of calcareous grassland and sites of historic interest.
- 7.4.23 The broad management objectives include to:
- *“Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development;*
 - *Conserve the areas of chalk grassland, arable biodiversity, Juniper scrub and ancient woodland of high ecological value;*
 - *Explore opportunities to reinstate buffer areas of chalk grassland around the arable fields but ensuring retention of arable interest; and*
 - *Protect the sites of historic interest and archaeological features. Consider opportunities for extending areas of pasture around archaeological monuments in the arable areas.”*

Sensitivity of LCT 3: High Chalk Plain

- 7.4.24 As an area with rare landscape features and representative of key characteristics of rolling landform and open landscapes, as well as a stated ‘good’ condition, the value is assessed as **high**.

7.4.25 As the LCT consists of a simple but distinctive pattern of rolling and open landform overall, the susceptibility is **high**.

7.4.26 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility result in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA 3A Salisbury Plain West

7.4.27 LCA 3A Salisbury Plain is the largest character area within the High Chalk Plain LCT, extending from the River Avon across the WHS, and therefore the majority of the Scheme is located within this LCA.

7.4.28 The characteristic of LCA 3A Salisbury Plain West are its continuity and intensively farmed land use. Whilst this results in an open character, it also results in a 'manicured' feel. Additional attributes of LCA 3A Salisbury Plain West are expansive and panoramic views; military installations and signage and a landscape of restricted public access.

Sensitivity of LCA 3A: Salisbury Plain West

7.4.29 As an area with rare landscape features and representative of key characteristics of rolling landform and open landscapes, the value is assessed as **high**.

7.4.30 As the LCA consists of a simple but distinctive pattern of rolling and open landform overall, the susceptibility is **high**.

7.4.31 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility result in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA 3B: Salisbury Plain East

7.4.32 LCA 3B Salisbury Plain East covers the area to the east of the River Avon. The LCA is noted for its vast scale and sense of isolation and exposure, as well as extensive areas of calcareous grassland recolonization within MoD ownership.

Sensitivity of LCA 3B: Salisbury Plain East

7.4.33 As an area with rare landscape features and representative of key characteristics of rolling landform and open landscapes, as well as a stated 'good' condition, the value is assessed as **high**.

7.4.34 As the LCA consists of a simple but distinctive pattern of rolling and open balanced with settlements and therefore the susceptibility is **medium**.

7.4.35 The combination of the high value and medium susceptibility result in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCT 5: Chalk River Valley

7.4.36 The key characteristics of the Chalk River Valley LCT include:

- *“Strongly enclosed valleys with an intimate scale contrasting with the surrounding open upland landscape;*
- *Level, often narrow valley floors with relatively steep sides;*

- *Pastoral land use along the valley floor with small scale fields contrasts with arable farmland on the valley sides with medium to large geometric fields;*
- *Hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the lush and enclosed feel of the valleys;*
- *Diverse mosaic of land cover and habitats includes meadows, fen and wet woodland on valley floor;*
- *Clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams a key habitat;*
- *Valleys contain a concentration of settlement in contrast to the adjacent unsettled downs;*
- *Valley used as transport corridors with major roads and railway lines along valley sides; and*
- *Rural landscape sometimes interrupted by the large volume of traffic.”*

7.4.37 In relation to the settlement and built character analysis, the river valleys contain a concentration of settlement, following a very distinctive pattern, with both nucleated and linear villages occurring at regular intervals along the valley sides, including Amesbury.

7.4.38 The positive landscape features within the Chalk River Valley LCT include the:

- *“Intimate, small scale rural landscape;*
- *Chalk rivers and streams with their characteristically clear, fast-flowing waters;*
- *Seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, marsh and damp woodlands of high ecological value.”*

7.4.39 Forces for change include:

- *“Nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run off affecting the high water quality of the streams and rivers;*
- *Wet woodland is now mostly restricted to a narrow line of willow and alder along the immediate river banks;*
- *The presence of major transport corridors particularly the trunk roads has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage;*
- *Modern residential developments in more open locations, some close to the floodplain, have weakened the pattern of tight knit villages in the past;*

- *Loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;*
- *Increased traffic on the road network, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character;*
- *Development pressure may also affect the rivers through increased extraction causing lower flows; and*
- *Increasing road use which will further diminish the rural tranquillity of the valley landscape."*

7.4.40 The overall condition of the Chalk River Valley LCT is assessed as good, due to the high water quality and biodiversity.

7.4.41 The strength of character is assessed as strong, due to the generally narrow, steep sided landform and outstanding ecological interest in its water courses and meadows. However, the busy trunk roads and some suburban edge of larger settlements are noted as detracting from the rural and peaceful small scale landscape.

7.4.42 The inherent landscape sensitivities include:

- *"Small scale enclosed landscape;*
- *High water quality and outstanding ecological richness of the chalk rivers;*
- *Remnants of water meadows including a few in active management plus other historic floodplain feature such as mills and leats and watercress beds;*
- *Rich floodplain landscape of small scale grazed pastures, riparian vegetation and damp woodlands;*
- *Small distinctive villages and manors built of rich variety of local materials;*
- *Peaceful rural landscape away from the major roadways;*
- *Valley crests are visually sensitive."*

7.4.43 The strategy for the Chalk River Valley LCT is therefore based upon conserving the tranquil, intimate and rural character of the landscape, including for opportunities for restoration of waterside pastures, replanting and management of hedgerows and limited native tree planting/regeneration.

7.4.44 The broad management objectives include to:

- *“Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost. In particular, the comparatively dense structure of willows, poplars and other moisture loving trees should be retained along field boundaries and the course of the river;*
- *Identify, conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature - and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques;*
- *Identify, conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen, marsh and swamp;*
- *Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the trunk roads and maintain a sense of landscape scale when planning new road junctions - junctions that are too large will disrupt visual unity along the valleys;*
- *Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of the lanes;*
- *Conserve the pattern of tight knit villages, maintaining the physical and visual gap between them; and*
- *Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements.”*

Sensitivity of LCT 5: Chalk River Valley

- 7.4.45 As the overall condition is assessed as good and the strength of character is strong, in combination with the recreational opportunities and high scenic quality, the value is **high**.
- 7.4.46 As the LCT contains existing road networks and settlements, there is some ability to accommodate change and therefore the susceptibility is **medium**.
- 7.4.47 The combination of the high value and medium susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA 5D: Upper Avon

- 7.4.48 LCA 5D Upper Avon is noted as a narrow strongly contained valley with an intricate pattern of small pastoral fields, woodland and scattered villages, which is wider and more level at Amesbury. The LCA is assessed by the published study as a highly rural landscape, despite the busy A303 and A345.

Sensitivity of LCA 5D: Upper Avon

- 7.4.49 As the overall condition is assessed as good, across this rural landscape, the value is **high**.

7.4.50 As the LCT contains existing road networks and settlements, there is some ability to accommodate change and therefore the susceptibility is **medium**.

7.4.51 The combination of the high value and medium susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA 5E: Wylve Valley

7.4.52 LCA 5E Wylve Valley is noted as an intimate landscape with a semi-enclosed character, which whilst crossed by busy transport corridors, (the A303 crosses via a viaduct) the floodplain retains a peaceful quality.

Sensitivity of LCA 5E: Wylve Valley

7.4.53 As the overall condition is assessed as good and this is an intimate landscape, the value is **high**.

7.4.54 As the LCT contains existing road networks on the valley floor, there is some ability to accommodate change and therefore the susceptibility is **medium**.

7.4.55 The combination of the high value and medium susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

District Level

Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment

7.4.56 The study area is covered by the Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment¹⁴, which is stated as a “useful reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes”.

7.4.57 The following LCTs and sub-divided LCAs are within the study area, as shown on Figure 7.7:

LCT A: Narrow Chalk River Valley

7.4.58 The stated key characteristics of LCT A: Narrow Chalk River Valley are:

- *“Relatively narrow river corridors, which punctuate surrounding vast tracts of Chalk Downland;*
- *Intimate scale of the river corridor and immediate valley sides, contrasts within the surrounding open landscape;*
- *Narrow, valley floors, which support a variety of watermeadows, cress beds and damp pastures and also encompass relatively fast-flowing chalk rivers;*

¹⁴ Salisbury District Council/CBA, (2008). *South Wiltshire/Salisbury District Landscape Character Assessment*. [online]. Available at: <<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planningpolicyevidencebase/southwiltshirecorestrategyevidencebase.htm#SalisburyLandscapeCharacterAssessment>> [Last accessed: 2nd May 2018].

- *Predominantly pastoral land along the valley floors, with small-scale fields, which often contrast with the medium to large-scale fields on adjacent Chalk Downland;*
- *Thick hedgerows and clumps of mature riparian woodland often line the river corridors, contributing to relatively strong sense of enclosure;*
- *Diverse mosaic of land cover and habitats includes meadows, fen and wet woodland on valley floor;*
- *Small settlements are often situated in conjunction with the valley floors – along the spring line, in contrast to the unsettled downs;*
- *Many long established villages, built of a rich variety of vernacular materials;*
- *Valley corridors are often used as communication and transport corridors, with major roads and railway lines along the valley sides; and*
- *Predominantly rural landscapes, with pockets of tranquillity at distance from main road corridors.”*

7.4.59 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes that river corridors within this LCT are aligned north-south across the landscape and that thick hedgerows and clumps of mature riparian woodland often line the river corridors, highlighting the rivers and creating a sense of enclosure along the valley floor. Additionally, river valleys have a historical association with human activity.

Sensitivity of LCT A: Narrow Chalk River Valley

7.4.60 As an area of good condition and scenic quality the value is assessed as **high**.

7.4.61 The LCT is considered to have a low ability to accommodate change and therefore the susceptibility is **high**.

7.4.62 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA A1: Till Narrow Chalk River Valley

7.4.63 The relevant key characteristics of LCA A1: Till Narrow Chalk River Valley include:

- *“Relatively narrow river corridor, encompassing the clear, fast-flowing chalk river Till, which is a key habitat running along the floodplain;*
- *River valley forms a tributary of the wider Wylve river corridor to the south;*

- *Sinuuous belts of predominantly deciduous woodland lining the river corridor;*
- *Mature, single deciduous trees dotted within a patchwork of small pasture fields in close proximity to the river corridor;*
- *Sinuuous, meandering river corridor, relatively narrow and enclosed;*
- *Linear villages of Shrewton and Maddington at the northern end of the valley;*
- *Historic village of Winterbourne Stoke towards the centre of the area, where the busy A303 main road corridor crosses the valley and introduces a source of noise and movement;*
- *B3083 road corridor follows the gently meandering line of the valley; and*
- *Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the valley.”*

7.4.64 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes the enclosed character of the LCA, and that Winterbourne Stoke exhibits a combination of vernacular and more modern buildings. Whilst there is a generally strong sense of tranquillity, this is disturbed in proximity to settlements and the main A303 and B3083 road corridors.

7.4.65 The published evaluation of LCA A1: Till Narrow Chalk River Valley is that its condition is good as a result of riverside habitats rich in biodiversity. It is assessed by the published study as having a moderate to high inherent sensitivity as a result of its enclosed character, sinuous woodlands, small scale fields and water meadows within the floodplains.

7.4.66 Relevant key landscape changes are noted as:

- *“Nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run-off, potentially affecting the water quality of the river;*
- *Increased traffic on the A303 and B3083 threatens overall sense of tranquillity and rural nature of villages and surrounding landscape; and*
- *Loss of mature single deciduous trees and hedgerow boundaries, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows.”*

7.4.67 The overall management strategy for LCA A1: Till Narrow Chalk River Valley is based upon conserving the predominantly rural character and relatively strong sense of tranquillity. Relevant specific management objectives include to:

- *“Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the trunk road corridors, and maintain a sense of landscape scale when planning new road junctions that are too large will disrupt visual unity along the valley;*
- *Conserve views across and along the valley corridor;*
- *Conserve intact mature single deciduous trees and landscape features; and*
- *Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost, using species appropriate to local landscape character.”*

Sensitivity of LCA A1: Till Narrow Chalk River Valley

- 7.4.68 The LCA is noted as being in good condition with good scenic quality and tranquillity away from the A303 and B3083. It is considered to be of overall **high** landscape value.
- 7.4.69 The LCA is noted as having a moderate to high inherent sensitivity as a result of its enclosed character, sinuous woodlands, small scale fields and water meadows within the floodplains. The key landscape changes and management objectives for the LCA identify aspects that are susceptible to a development of the type proposed. It is considered to be of **high** susceptibility, with low capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.
- 7.4.70 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA A2: Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley

- 7.4.71 The relevant key characteristics of LCA A2: Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley include:
- *“Narrow, strongly contained valley which cuts through adjacent Chalk Downland landscape and encompasses the upper section of the River Avon;*
 - *Strong sense of enclosure and shelter within the valley, which contrasts with the predominantly open nature of surrounding Chalk Downland;*
 - *Generally small-scale settlement pattern in southern half of the valley, with larger nucleated settlements of Durrington and Amesbury occupying the northern valley sides; and*
 - *Belts of linear woodland along the valley sides further contribute to sense of enclosure.”*

- 7.4.72 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ recognises the strong sense of enclosure created by patches of linear woodland and the surrounding chalk downland, and the predominantly rural character, although it notes this is disrupted by noise

and visual intrusion at the A303 and A345 corridors, and large settlement edges.

7.4.73 The published evaluation of LCA A2: Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley is that its condition is good because of its intact hedgerow network and rich biodiversity near the river. It is assessed by the published study as having a moderate to high landscape sensitivity as a result of its water meadows and wet woodland, and its predominantly rural character and strong sense of tranquillity through much of the area

7.4.74 Relevant key landscape changes are noted as:

- *“Nutrient pollution from riverside farmland plus road and urban run off affecting the high water quality within the Upper Avon River;*
- *Loss of hedgerow field boundaries in places, and poor management in other locations; and*
- *Increased traffic pressure on the rural road network, leading to improvements including widening, kerbing and signage, leading to a more ‘urban’ character in places.”*

7.4.75 The overall management strategy for LCA A2: Upper Avon Chalk River Valley is based upon conserving the predominantly rural character and relatively strong sense of tranquillity. Relevant specific management objectives include to:

- *“Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of the network of lanes;*
- *Conserve views across and along the valley corridor;*
- *Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques;*
- *Conserve the strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout.”*

Sensitivity of LCA A2: Upper Avon Narrow Chalk River Valley

7.4.76 The LCA was noted as being in good condition with rich biodiversity and strong tranquillity across much of the area; although this is reduced in proximity to the A303 corridor. It is considered to be of overall **high** landscape value.

7.4.77 The LCA is noted as having a moderate to high inherent sensitivity as a result of its water meadows and wet woodland, and its predominantly rural character and sense of tranquillity. The key landscape changes and management objectives for the LCA identify aspects that are susceptible to a development of the type proposed. It is considered to be of **high** susceptibility, with low capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.

7.4.78 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCT B: Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes

7.4.79 The stated key characteristics of LCT B: Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes are:

- *“Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry tributary valleys;*
- *Wide, extensive valley slopes;*
- *Where hedges exist, they are generally widely spaced; tight plantations are also a feature;*
- *The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in 'hanging' woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation;*
- *Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took the livestock to and from the downs in the Medieval period;*
- *A series of linear springline villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes;*
- *Underlain by chalk geology;*
- *Relatively large-scale landscape pattern of geometric fields, overlain with a pattern of small woodland clumps and isolated vernacular and modern buildings and settlements; and*
- *General sense of openness on the Valley Slopes, in contrast to the more enclosed nature of the Valley Floor.”*

7.4.80 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes that the LCT encompasses the valley sides to broad valleys, which are often eroded to form dry tributary valleys, and provide a strong sense of enclosure to the valley floor.

Sensitivity of LCT B: Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes

7.4.81 The condition of LCT is assessed as good, with recreational opportunities and a notable pattern of landform. The value is assessed as **high**.

7.4.82 The noted strong sense of enclosure and steep valley sides result in a low capacity to accommodate change, such that the susceptibility is **high**.

7.4.83 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA B1: Wylfe Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes

7.4.84 The relevant key characteristics of LCA B1: Wylfe Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes include:

- *“Steepest slopes have retained their semi-natural grassland or are clothed in ‘hanging’ woodland;*
- *Strongly enclosing chalk valley sides have been eroded by a series of tributaries to form dry tributary valleys;*
- *A series of springline villages, including Corton, Boyton, Stockton, Bapton and Little Langford; and manors lie at the foot of the valley slopes on the gravel river terraces where they are protected from flooding;*
- *The shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation, while the steeper valley sides have remained wooded or grazed by sheep; and*
- *The extensive slopes rise from a relatively broad valley floor to meet adjacent Chalk Downland landscapes at the top of the slopes.”*

7.4.85 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes that the Wylfe Valley has carved a deep valley through the chalk, with shallower slopes to the north containing dry tributary valleys, and steeper slopes to the south. It has a semi-enclosed character resulting from blocks of woodland, and a strong sense of tranquillity through much of the area.

7.4.86 The published evaluation of LCA B1 Wylfe Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes is that its condition is moderate as a result of the loss of semi-natural habitats such as chalk grassland and scrub mosaics on the valley sides. It is assessed by the published study as having moderate landscape sensitivity as a result of its combination of smooth and unenclosed grassland typical of chalk scarps and slopes that has been lost in places to arable fields.

7.4.87 Relevant key landscape changes are noted as:

- *“Conversion from chalk grassland to an arable land use has been one of the most significant changes affecting the landscape of the chalk river valleys – the arable fields and their geometric boundaries on the valley sides detracting from the smooth, unenclosed grasslands that are typical of the chalk scarps and slopes;*
- *The presence of major transport corridor, particularly the A36 trunk road, has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage; and*
- *The A303 trunk road that crosses the valley on a viaduct... (Outside the study area) ...and its junction with the A36 disrupts visual unity along the valley.”*

7.4.88 Relevant specific management objectives include to:

- *“Consider opportunities for reversion from arable cropping back to chalk grassland on the valley sides (a possible area for agri-environment targeting);*
- *Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the A36; and*
- *Encourage use of native planting in any new landscape scheme associated with new development and consider removal of unsympathetic species, such as Leylandii screening hedges that stand out in the landscape.”*

Sensitivity of LCA B1: Wylve Broad Chalk River Valley Slopes

7.4.89 The condition of LCT is assessed as good, with recreational opportunities and a notable pattern of landform. The value is assessed as **high**.

7.4.90 The noted strong sense of enclosure and steep valley sides result in a low capacity to accommodate change, such that the susceptibility is **high**.

7.4.91 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCT D: Chalk Downland

7.4.92 The stated key characteristics of LCT D: Chalk Downland are:

- *“Large-scale landform of broad rolling hills dissected by a series of coombe river valleys and rounded upstanding ridges;*
- *Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground;*
- *A predominantly arable landscape divided into large, regular field units with straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure;*
- *Remnant chalk grassland, ancient broadleaved woodland and Yew woodland are important habitats;*
- *Main roads cut across the undulating landscape linking settlements;*
- *Large open skies and distant panoramic views;*
- *Low density scattered settlement of farmsteads, the occasional downland village, or Medieval hunting lodge and military camps;*

- *Large woods, shelterbelts, copses and clumps of woodland create a series of enclosed 'rooms' surrounded by trees in places;*
- *Military signage and posts along the numerous tracks that cross the area;*
- *Numerous Neolithic burial and ritual monuments and Bronze Age Barrows and prehistoric to Romano-British earthworks and field systems; and*
- *Strong sense of elevation."*

7.4.93 The 'Summary of Visual Character' notes that the LCT has a gently rolling landform of spurs and dry valleys with a real sense of openness and a sparse settlement pattern. Military camps are often highly visible in the landscape due to their large scale and utilitarian construction.

Sensitivity of LCT D: Chalk Grassland

7.4.94 The LCT is in good to moderate condition, consisting of nationally rare chalk grassland and a strong sense of openness. The value is therefore assessed as **high**.

7.4.95 The LCA has a moderate to high inherent sensitivity and its susceptibility to the Scheme is assessed as **high**.

7.4.96 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA D2: Tilshead Chalk Downland

7.4.97 The relevant key characteristics of LCA D2: Tilshead Chalk Downland include:

- *"Very large-scale landscape, which generally has a strong sense of openness and exposure;*
- *Strong sense of elevation, with frequent panoramic views over surrounding Landscape Character Areas;*
- *Strong sense of continuity throughout this gently rolling landscape;*
- *A network of rural roads crosses the landscape, which is predominantly rural in character;*
- *Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout much of the area, disturbed at times by military activities and traffic noise on the A303 road corridor to the south;*
- *Large-scale landscape pattern delineated by low hedgerows, which are often denuded or gappy; and*

- *Woodland clumps, some ancient, juniper scrub and small plantations at various stages of growth are also scattered across the Chalk Downland within this area.*

7.4.98 The 'Summary of Visual Character' notes that the gently rolling landscape has a strong sense of openness and exposure resulting from its elevated nature and lack of extensive woodland. The busy nature of the A303 corridor is noted as introducing a strong visual and noise intrusion, however generally tranquillity is strong across much of the area.

7.4.99 The published evaluation of LCA D2 Tilshead Chalk Downland is that its condition is generally good as a result of the well-maintained chalk grassland and clumps of woodland, however outside of MoD areas this is reduced to moderate due to arable farmland and the loss of hedgerows and field boundaries. It is assessed by the published study as being of high landscape sensitivity across most of the area as a result of its large-scale, smooth rolling landform and exposed character. The study notes that sensitivity is reduced in closer proximity to the A303 road corridor.

7.4.100 Relevant key landscape changes are noted as:

- *"Past intensification of arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of biodiversity value amongst the chalk grassland, ploughing up of archaeological sites and loss of hedgerow field boundaries;*
- *Agricultural intensification has also resulted in amalgamation and enlargement of fields and the breakdown of traditional field boundaries; and*
- *Noise and visual intrusion associated with military vehicles and non-military traffic on the busy A303 road corridor to the south."*

7.4.101 The overall management strategy for LCA D2 Tilshead Chalk Downland is to conserve the strong sense of openness and intact landscape features. Relevant specific management objectives include to:

- *"Maintain open and dramatic views across the Chalk Downland;*
- *Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development;*
- *Consider opportunities for replanting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost;*
- *Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout."*

Sensitivity of LCA D2: Tilshead Chalk Downland

- 7.4.102 The LCA was noted as being in good condition within MoD areas as a result of well-maintained woodland and chalk grassland, but moderate condition outside MoD areas where arable farmland and loss of hedgerows is more prevalent. It is noted as having a strong sense of openness and exposure, and being a generally tranquil area away from the A303 corridor. It is considered to be of overall **high** landscape value.
- 7.4.103 The LCA is noted as having a high inherent sensitivity as a result of its large-scale, smooth rolling landform and exposed character (although reduced in proximity to the A303 corridor). The key landscape changes and management objectives for the LCA identify aspects that are susceptible to a development of the type proposed. It is considered to be of **high** susceptibility, with low capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.
- 7.4.104 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility therefore results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA D3: Larkhill Chalk Downland

- 7.4.105 The relevant key characteristics of LCA D3: Larkhill Chalk Downland include:

- *“Strong sense of continuity throughout this gently rolling landscape;*
- *A largely uninhabited landscape of unenclosed rough grassland, criss-crossed by army tracks;*
- *Numerous archaeological features visible within the landscape, including instantly recognisable landmarks, such as Stonehenge;*
- *Strong recognisable sense of place as a result of views across this landscape towards archaeological features;*
- *Very large-scale landscape, which generally has a strong sense of openness and exposure;*
- *Strong sense of elevation, with frequent panoramic views over surrounding Landscape Character Areas;*
- *The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland;*
- *The utilitarian form, materials and layout of military camps (such as Larkhill towards the north of the area), have a strong influence on the character of this landscape;*
- *A network of rural roads crosses the landscape, in addition to main road corridors of A303 and A345, which introduce noise and visual intrusion;*

- *Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout much of the area, however, this is disrupted by military activities and traffic noise on the A303 and A345 road corridors; and*
- *Large-scale landscape pattern delineated by low hedgerows, which are often sometimes gappy, and regular shaped mixed woodland copses and shelter belts.”*

7.4.106 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes the area comprises gently undulating extensive areas of unenclosed and uninhabited chalk grassland and scrub, with a series of dry valleys through the landscape, particularly in proximity to Winterbourne Stoke. The ridgelines often allow dramatic views across the open landscape. Sense of place is strong as a result of views towards landmarks such as Stonehenge, however the urban edge of Amesbury and the A303 corridor are visual intrusions.

7.4.107 The published evaluation of LCA D3 Larkhill Chalk Downland is that its condition is good in MoD areas where chalk grassland is prevalent and clumps of woodland are generally well maintained. The condition is reduced to moderate outside MoD areas where arable farmland is generally more prevalent, with hedgerow and field boundaries lost. It is assessed by the published study as being of moderate to high landscape sensitivity as a result of the patchwork of arable farmland and chalk grassland, but with tranquillity reduced in proximity to the A303 and A345 corridors.

7.4.108 Relevant key landscape changes are noted as:

- *“Past intensification of arable agriculture has resulted in a loss of biodiversity value amongst the chalk grassland, ploughing up of archaeological sites and loss of hedgerow field boundaries; and*
- *Noise and visual intrusion associated with military vehicles and non-military traffic on the busy A303 road corridor to the south, and Salisbury.”*

7.4.109 The overall management strategy for LCA D3 Larkhill Chalk Downland is to conserve the strong sense of openness and exposure. Relevant specific management objectives include to:

- *“Maintain open and dramatic views across the Chalk Downland towards landscape features and archaeological monuments, such as Stonehenge;*
- *Consider opportunities for replanting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost; and*
- *Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout.”*

Sensitivity of LCA D3: Larkhill Chalk Downland

- 7.4.110 The LCA was noted as being in good condition within MoD areas as a result of well-maintained woodland and chalk grassland, but moderate condition outside MoD areas where arable farmland and loss of hedgerows is more prevalent. It is noted as having a strong sense of place as a result of cultural associations, but that Amesbury and the A303 corridor detract from the area visually. It is considered to be of overall **high** landscape value.
- 7.4.111 The LCA is noted as having a moderate to high inherent sensitivity as a result of its patchwork of arable farmland and chalk grassland, with the A303 and A345 road corridors reducing tranquillity at a local level. The key landscape changes and management objectives for the LCA identify aspects that are susceptible to a development of the type proposed. It is considered to be of **high** susceptibility, with low capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.
- 7.4.112 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

LCA D4: Boscombe Down Chalk Downland

- 7.4.113 The relevant key characteristics of LCA D4: Boscombe Down Chalk Downland include:

- *“Gently rolling and fairly elevated landscape;*
- *The landscape is covered by a patchwork of arable farmland and calcareous grassland;*
- *In places, field boundaries are delineated by hedgerows which tend to be low and gappy;*
- *Relatively large-scale landscape pattern which is interspersed by the nucleated settlement of Amesbury and regular layout of Bulford Camp, introducing human elements to the landscape;*
- *Network of predominantly rural lanes criss-cross the landscape, in addition to the major A303 road corridor, which introduces a source of noise and visual intrusion;*
- *Open views in places into the valley corridors of the Upper Avon and Bourne; and*
- *Sense of tranquillity quite strong throughout much of the area, but disturbed in place by noise and visual intrusion associated with the A303 road corridor, the settlement edges of Salisbury and Amesbury, and military activities.”*

- 7.4.114 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes that the patchwork of arable farmland and chalk grassland is dominated in parts by Amesbury and Bulford Camp which impart a human character on the rural landscape. Bulford Camp and Boscombe Down are dominant in several views across the landscape.

7.4.115 The published evaluation of LCA D4 Boscombe Down Chalk Downland is that its condition is moderate as a result of intensive farming methods. It is assessed by the published study as being of moderate to high landscape sensitivity as a result of its large-scale smooth rolling landform and exposed character.

7.4.116 Relevant key landscape changes are noted as:

- *“There is pressure for development and facilities along the A303 transport corridor (such as the new services at Countess East); the loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with varied approaches to field boundary management, affects the visual integrity of the landscape; and*
- *The loss of features such as hedgerows, combined with varied approaches to field boundary management, affects the visual integrity of the landscape.”*

7.4.117 The overall strategy for LCA D4 Boscombe Down Chalk Downland is to conserve the patchwork of arable farmland and chalk grassland, and restore field boundaries where appropriate. Relevant specific management objectives include:

- *“Conserve the network of remaining hedgerows and restore where possible, using locally appropriate species;*
- *Conserve open views into the Upper Avon and Bourne valleys;*
- *Conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity and predominantly rural character throughout; and*
- *Seek to screen visually harsh urban edges.”*

Sensitivity of LCA D4: Boscombe Down Chalk Downland

7.4.118 The LCA was noted as being in a moderate condition as a result of intensive farming methods. It is noted that nearby settlement is dominant in places and detracts from the area’s character. It is considered to be of overall **high** landscape value.

7.4.119 The LCA is noted as having a moderate to high inherent sensitivity as a result of large-scale, smooth rolling landform and exposed character. The key landscape changes and management objectives for the LCA identify aspects that are susceptible to a development of the type proposed. It is considered to be of **high** susceptibility, with low capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.

7.4.120 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan (2014-2019) & Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2003)

- 7.4.121 The Management Plan¹⁵ presents objectives and policies to help conserve and enhance the AONB.
- 7.4.122 'Section 1: Introduction' of the AONB Management Plan provides a summary of the landscape character of the AONB by LCT, taken from the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment.
- 7.4.123 The part of the study area within the AONB is within the following LCT and sub-divided LCA.

LCT 5: Chalk River Valleys

- 7.4.124 The key characteristics of the Chalk River Valleys LCT are:
- *“Strongly enclosing valley sides, frequently eroded to form dry valleys;*
 - *The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in ‘hanging’ woodland while the shallow valley sides have been exploited for cultivation;*
 - *The clear, fast-flowing chalk rivers are a key habitat;*
 - *The floodplains support water meadows, cress beds and damp pasture;*
 - *The valleys typically provide convenient transport corridors, containing major roads and railways;*
 - *Straight-sided fields represent late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss;*
 - *Field boundaries and footpaths often reflect the tracks, droves and hollow ways that took livestock from and to the downs in the Medieval period;*
 - *A series of linear spring line villages typically lie at the foot of the valley slopes;*
 - *Isolated Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to visible archaeology; and*
 - *The rural landscapes are sometimes interrupted by the large volumes of traffic that use the valleys as transport corridors.”*

¹⁵ Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership. (2014). *Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan 2014-2019*. [online]. Available at: <<http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/publications/aonb-management-plan/>> [Last accessed 2nd May 2018].

7.4.125 The following relevant issues and challenges are identified for the LCT within the Cranborne Chase AONB Management Plan:

- a) Highway ‘improvements’; and
- b) Infrastructure clutter (e.g. telephone and electricity poles, signs).

LCA 5A: Wylde River Valley

7.4.126 The relevant key characteristics of LCA 5A Wylde Chalk River Valley are:

- *“Strongly enclosing chalk valley sides have been eroded by a series of tributaries to form dry tributary valleys;*
- *The River Wylde meanders across a flat valley floor forming a corridor which maintains a constant width of about 1 kilometre;*
- *The steepest valley slopes have retained their semi-natural chalk grassland or are clothed in ‘hanging’ woodland;*
- *A series of spring line villages and manors lie at the foot of the valley slopes on the gravel river terraces where they are protected from flooding;*
- *Major transport routes use the valley as an east-west corridor between Warminster and Salisbury and the rural landscape is interrupted by large volumes of traffic; and*
- *The shallow valley sides have been exploited for arable cultivation while the steeper valley sides have remained wooded or grazed by sheep.”*

7.4.127 The ‘Summary of Visual Character’ notes that Wylde Valley is enclosed by steep chalk slopes, with chalk grassland and hanging woodland on steeper slopes, and arable cultivation on less steep slopes. The valley is noted as providing a corridor for movement, and despite being characterised by this, retains a peaceful quality.

7.4.128 The published evaluation of the LCA is that its condition is moderate as a result of its strong intact natural form but declining semi-natural habitats.

7.4.129 Relevant forces for change are include:

- *“The condition of many of the hedges and other boundaries, such as iron railings and estate fences, on the valley floor is now declining; and*
- *The presence of major transport corridors, particularly the A36 trunk road, has brought pressures for development and associated amenity planting and signage.”*

7.4.130 The overall management objective for LCA 5A Wylde Chalk River Valley is to conserve the strong visual unity of the valley and the diversity of semi-natural habitats. Relevant specific management objectives include:

“Encourage use of native planting in any new landscape scheme associated with new development and consider removal of unsympathetic species, such as the Leylandii screening hedges that stand out in the landscape.”

Sensitivity of LCA 5A: Wylde River Valley

7.4.131 As a nationally designated landscape the value is **high**.

7.4.132 As a river valley and valley sides, the susceptibility is **high**.

7.4.133 The combination of the high value and high susceptibility results in a **high sensitivity** to the Scheme.

Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan

7.4.134 The WHS Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan, 2015¹⁶ identifies the following local landscape areas:

- a) Agricultural downland;
- b) Avon valley, river valley slopes;
- c) Avon valley, water meadows and floodplain;
- d) Downland ridgelines;
- e) Dry river valleys;
- f) Unimproved downland/ military training;
- g) Upper Stonehenge dry valley; and
- h) Urban areas.

7.4.135 The WHS Management Plan notes that typically, much of the WHS is an open landscape. The rolling landform, with large fields bounded by fences and long-distance views of plantations, clumps of trees, roads and upstanding archaeological features are noted as the most distinctive characteristics of the downland plateau landscape of the WHS. In contrast to the expansive downland plateau areas, the enclosed and small-scale character of the Avon valley is a notable variation in the character of the WHS. The general absence of hedgerows and buildings is also a notable characteristic.

¹⁶ Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, (2015). *Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site Management Plan 2015*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.stonehengeandaveburywhs.org/management-ofwhs/stonehenge-and-avebury-whs-management-plan-2015/>> [Last accessed 2nd May 2018].

7.4.136 The WHS Management Plan notes that the setting of the WHS is characterised by a rolling open landscape, which is particularly sensitive to development, stating that:

“At Stonehenge, with the exception of the grassland areas in and around key monuments, the landscape of the WHS is more or less wholly farmed with extensive areas of very large arable fields. There are also limited (but visually prominent) areas of woodland. Principal features of the landscape include the distinctive ridgelines with their concentrations of visible archaeological remains, including the Stones themselves, and dry valleys which cut deeply into the surrounding downland.” (WHS Management Plan paragraph 8.3.2)

7.4.137 The WHS Management Plan identifies the key characteristics of the WHS landscape as:

- *“An open landscape in which the sky dominates;*
- *The undulating landform, with large fields bounded by fences and long distant views of plantations, clumps of trees, roads and upstanding archaeological features being the most distinctive characteristics of the downland plateau landscapes within the WHS;*
- *The general absence of hedgerows and buildings is also a notable feature; and*
- *Enclosed small scale character of the Avon Valley.”*

7.4.138 The landform within the WHS (rolling with a series of ridges and valleys) is also noted as a distinctive feature, with visually prominent ridges and panoramic views from Windmill Hill and valley floors which mark the transitions between the WHS and surrounding landscape types. The modern features of the WHS landscape include intensive military use.

7.4.139 The WHS Management Plan notes that the intrusive elements within the WHS are:

- *“roads and traffic which dominate a number of areas and are visibly and aurally intrusive;*
- *the A344, A303 and A360 at Stonehenge;*
- *the traffic;*
- *the severance between Stonehenge Avenue and Durrington Walls as a result of the A303 and A345; and*
- *buildings at Larkhill and Boscombe Down, the latter of which is noted as being visually prominent.”*

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