

Local Development Framework

Landscape Character Area Assessment



Evidence Base
Addendum - July 2008



4 Previous Landscape Character Assessments (*amended*)

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Areas
Limestone Hills	North Dorset Limestone Ridges
Chalk Valley and Downland	Upper North Winterborne Valley, Lower Winterborne Valley, Upper Milborne Valley, Lower Milborne Valley, Tarrant Valley, Bloxworth/Charborough Downs, Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs, East Blandford/Pimperne Downs
Open Chalk Downland	South Blandford Downs, Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs
Chalk Escarpment/Ridge	North Dorset Chalk Escarpment
Wooded Chalk Downland	Cranborne Chase Wooded Chalk Downland
Rolling Vales	North Blackmore Rolling Vales, South Blackmore Rolling Vales, Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges
Clay Vale	Blackmore Vale
Valley Pasture	Upper Stour Valley, Mid Stour Valley

Table 4.2 Table showing Landscape Character Areas in each Landscape Character Type

5 Landscape Character Areas for North Dorset (*amended*)

5.1 Each landscape character area falls within a specific landscape character type. Landscape character types are landscapes with broadly similar patterns of geology, soils, vegetation, landuse, settlement and field patterns. Within North Dorset 8 landscape character types have been defined. The 18 landscape character areas have been examined and categorised into a specific landscape type, for example, the Chalk Valley and Downland is a landscape character type within which there are several landscape character areas including the Upper North Winterborne Valley, the Lower Winterborne Valley and the Upper Milborne Valley. Table 5.1 identifies the North Dorset character types and character areas.

5.2 There are 18 Landscape Character Areas within North Dorset as shown in Figure 5.1. Some of these areas fall within the Dorset AONB and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Dorset AONB has recently consulted on a document entitled "Conserving Character, Landscape Character Assessment for the Dorset AONB". This document has been considered in the preparation of this Landscape Character Area Assessment for North Dorset and any changes have been incorporated into this report where applicable.

5.3 If the key characteristics and/or features which are identified for each area were to change or are lost there would be significant consequences for the current character of the landscape. This would usually be negative but sometimes positive where some characteristics/features currently have a negative influence.

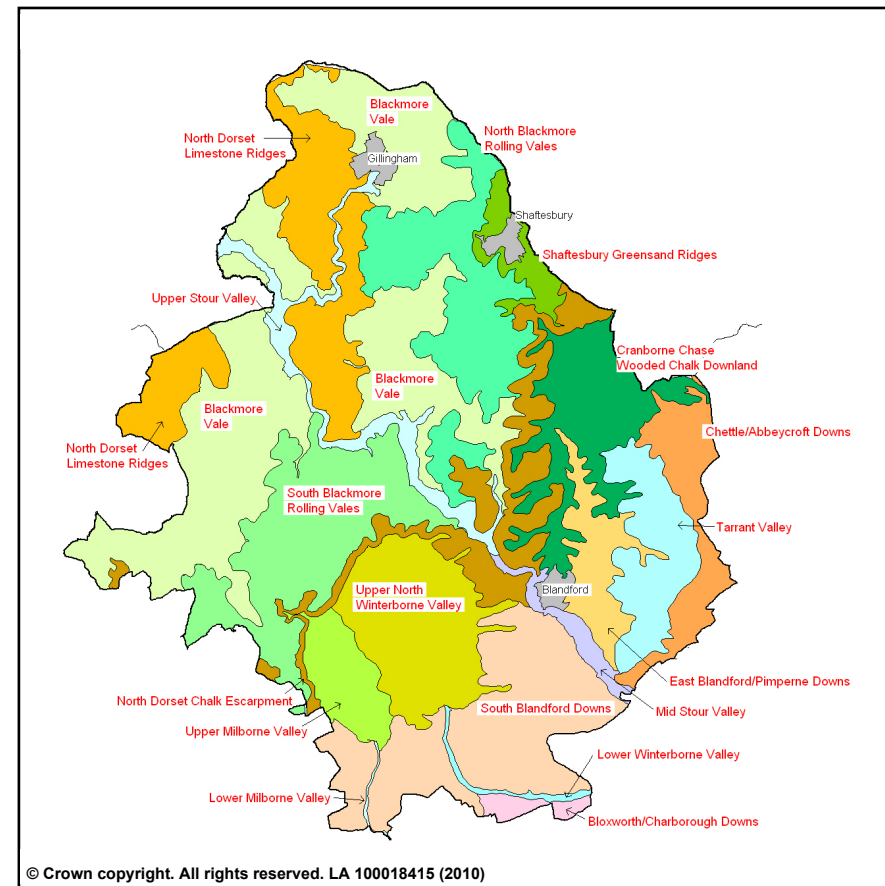


Figure 5.1 Landscape Character Areas for North Dorset

7 North Blackmore Rolling Vales *(amended)*

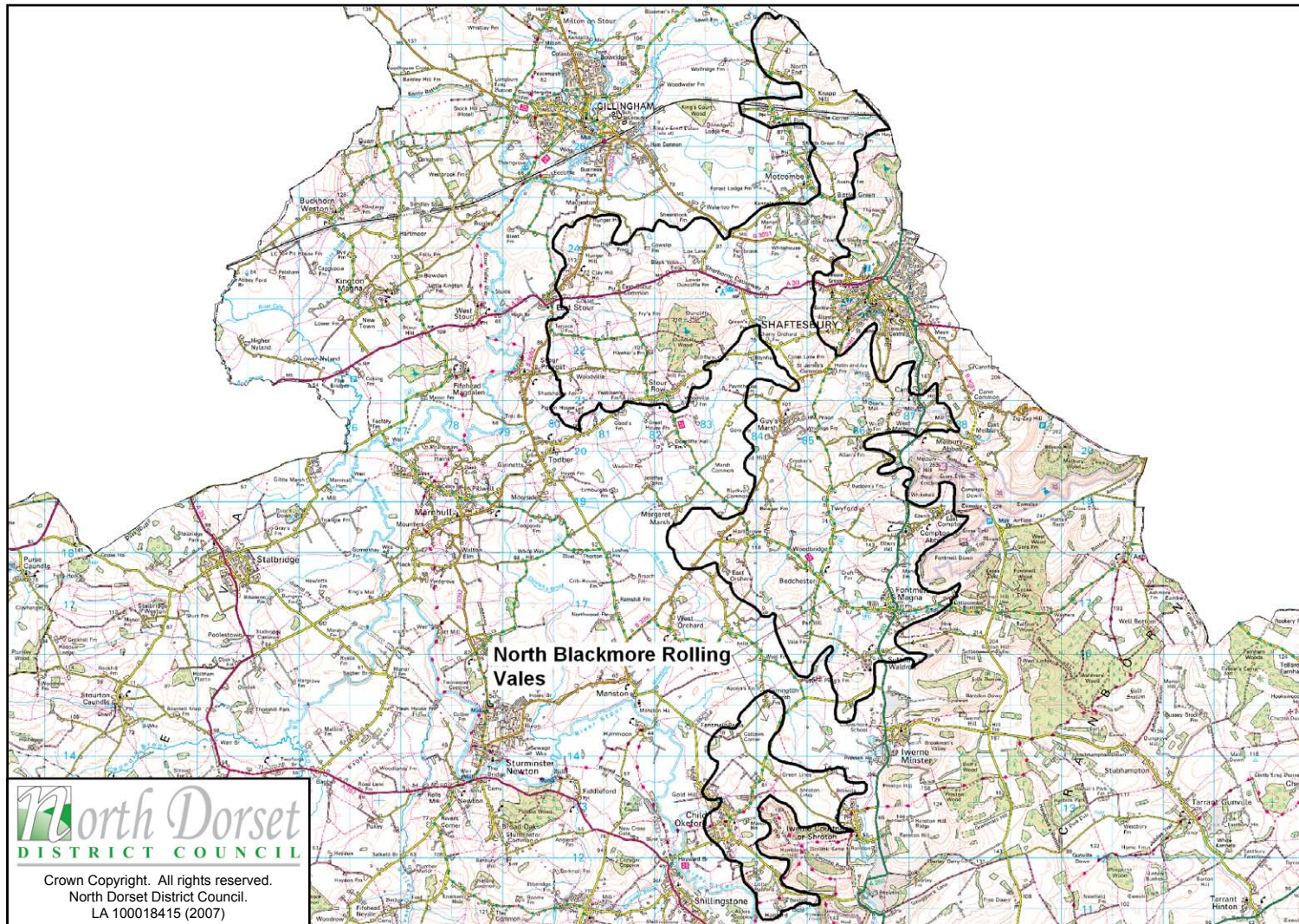


Figure 7.1
The North Blackmore
Rolling Vales



Figure 7.2 Looking towards Fontmell Down and Melbury Beacon from Hambledon Hill

Key Characteristics

- Undulating, rolling farmland hills forming a transition zone between the Blackmore Vale and the chalk escarpment foothills.
- Divides the Blackmore Vale north and south of the area
- Irregular pattern of farmland, fields, copses, streams, dense hedgerows and copses.
- Many dispersed and isolated hamlets and farmsteads.
- Settlements are found towards the foothills at the base of the chalk escarpment.
- A tranquil, peaceful landscape.
- Duncliffe Wood is a key feature and outlier of Upper Greensand with a distinctive wave-shaped profile.
- The escarpment to the east forms an important feature and backdrop to the area.
- There are some important views over the Vale from high places.
- Many small streams and brooks.
- The area provides a rural, important setting for Shaftesbury which overlooks the area
- Kingswood, Handford Park Estate and the manor house and grounds at Child Okeford are all key features.
- The A350 and the C13 are busy north-south routes through the area.

Landscape Description

Land shape and structure

- 7.1 A varied undulating series of clay and greensand farmland hills which forms a transition zone between the Blackmore Vale proper the Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges and the main chalk escarpment to the east. The escarpment forms an important backdrop to the area. In the east part of the area there are rolling, twisting and folded foothills adjacent to the main chalk escarpment which form a distinctive landform, with a well treed and wooded feel. In these foothills the small, irregular-shaped fields with thick hedgerows and small copses, together with the narrow, twisting, hedge-banked lanes which in places are very steep, create an interesting and varied landscape. It is more treed, wooded and more hilly than the rolling farmland to the west and there is an abrupt level change between this area and the steep sides of the chalk escarpment.

Settlement and landcover

- 7.2 It is a mainly pastoral landscape with the occasional arable field interspersed amongst permanent pasture and meadow. The lanes in the foothills follow the tight folds and bends in the landform and the picturesque settlements, such as Melbury Abbas, Compton Abbas, Sutton Waldron, Cann and Child Okeford, are typically found at the very foot of the escarpment along the spring line. The A350 is a busy north-south road through the area but, because of the landform, has a reduced impact on the overall character of the area. The C13 also runs north-south through the area via Melbury. Kingswood in the north and Handford Park Estate in the south are both key features, as is the manor house and grounds at Child Okeford at the foot of Hod and Hambledon Hills. There are several important grassland and woodland SNCIs and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) throughout the area.
- 7.3 The area gradually flattens out to the west nearer the Vale where in places there are some steep and distinctive folds and high points such as Pen Hill and Duncliffe Wood where open views across the Vale are possible. The field pattern across the whole area is more irregular than the Vale and the fields are bounded by reasonably thick, tall hedgerows and some mature hedgerow trees. These, together with the isolated trees, hedgerow copses and woodlands, create a patchwork landscape pattern. The hedgerow oaks are not as distinctive as in the Vale proper, partly due to the rolling landform. The western parts of the area are similar to the Vale but are more undulating and rolling and the hedge-lined lanes are generally wider than the foothills, with wider grass verges. There are many small streams and brooks present in the area flowing between the slopes in the landscape. Duncliffe Hill and its wood are distinctive landmarks and are designated as SNCIs. The settlement edges of Motcombe create a hard urban edge in this part of the area and the Guys Marsh Young Offenders' Institute and its chimney creates a detracting feature in the landscape.

References for this character area

- Countryside Commission/English Nature Joint Character Map 1996: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour.
- English Nature, Natural Areas 1997: Wessex Vales.
- Small parts are with within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
- Landscape Description Unit Nos. 19, 303, 88, 261.

23 Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges

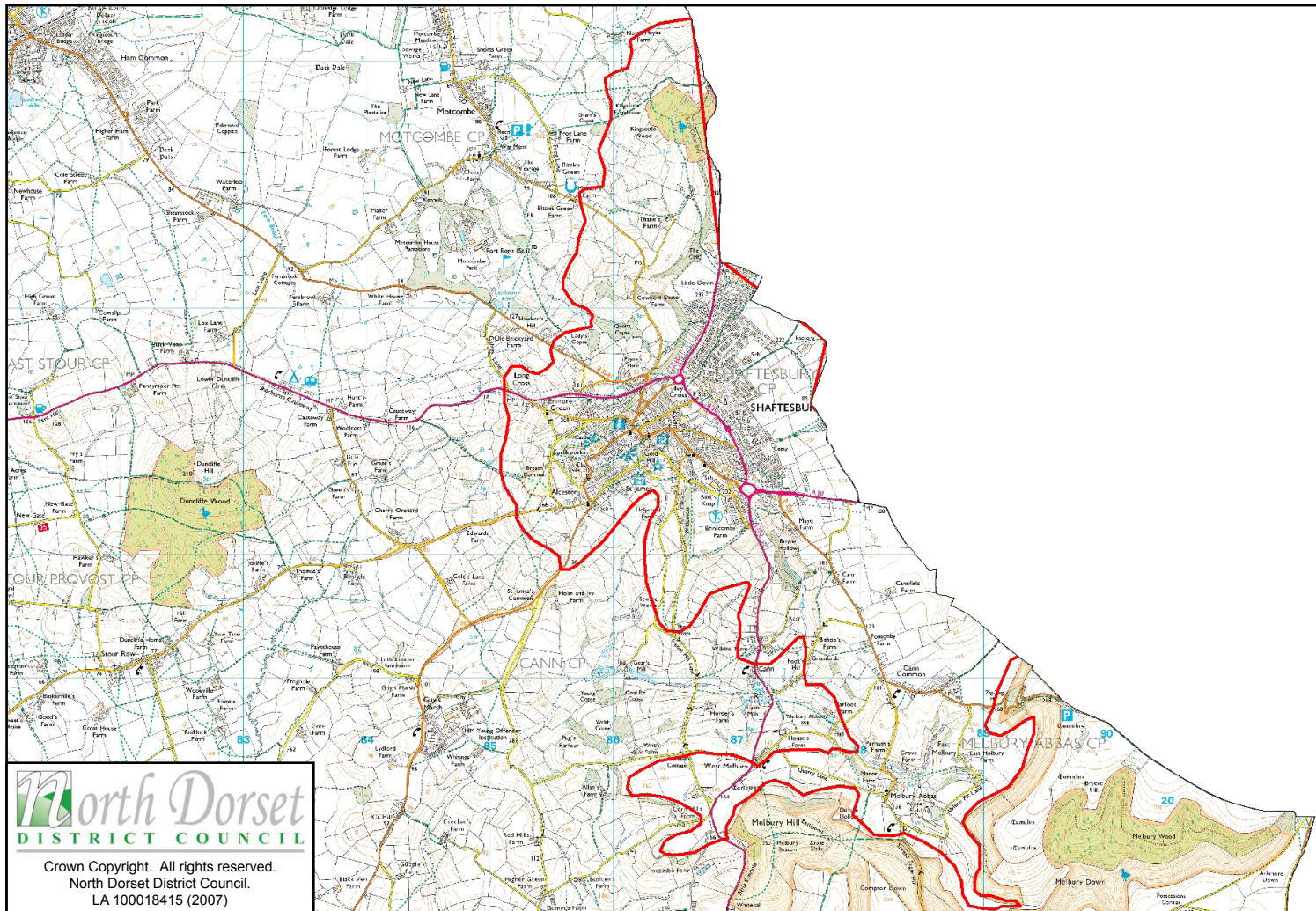


Figure 23.1
Shaftesbury
Greensand Ridges



Figure 23.2 Looking north towards Shaftesbury



Figure 23.3 Looking towards Shaftesbury

Key Characteristics

- Dominated by the historic hilltop setting of Shaftesbury.
- A tight folded landform with tight small valleys
- Distinctive upstanding greensand hills and ridges with open and wide views.
- The hills support woodlands and meadows are found on the valley floors both providing important habitats.
- Dense network of ancient sunken hedge lined lanes.
- A tranquil and intimate perception despite the presence of the A350.
- A well settled landscape with concealed hamlets and cottages.
- Small scale pattern created by irregularly shaped hedgeline fields.
- Use of locally distinctive building materials especially stone

Landscape Description

Land shape and structure

23.1 The area forms the western end and spur of the Upper Greensand hills which extends over the county boundary from Wiltshire being exposed as a band between the clays and chalk. It provides an elevated ridge and therefore prominent setting for Shaftesbury which overlooks the vales to the south west and west. It has a distinctive undulating landform with tight small valleys and sunken lanes which combine with the small copses and dense hedgerows to create an intimate landscape with a strong character. The landscape opens up and becomes less intimate to the east as the land rises up to the plateau of the Greensand terrace. The western edges of the area form a transition with the rolling vales landscape character area.

Land cover is typically permanent pasture with mixed woodland and meadows on the valley floors. There is an increase in arable farming on the flatter plateau landscape to the east. The small woodlands and copses follow the tight folds in the landscape. The small scale pattern of fields with irregular boundaries subdivided by hedgebanks indicate early, pre inclosure, of open fields.

Settlement and land cover

23.2 Shaftesbury dominates the area without creating significant visual intrusion particularly when viewed from the south. In fact its distinctive hilltop location is a positive feature in the wider landscape from the south and west. It is a well settled landscape with hamlets hidden in the shelter of deep valleys and cottages and farms scattered along the dense network of sunken lanes. Both are therefore well concealed and integrated into the pattern of the landscape. Many of the buildings are made from the locally distinctive stone which contributes to local character. The A350 is a dominant feature running through the area and detracts from overall intimacy. There are many footpaths and bridleways across the area making it relatively accessible. Key features include the picturesque setting of Melbury Abbas at the foot of the escarpment and the ancient woodland of Kingsettle Wood SNCI to the north of Shaftesbury.

References for this character area

- Countryside Commission/English Nature Joint Character Map 1996: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour.
- English Nature, Natural Areas 1997: Wessex Vales.
- Small parts are with within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
- Landscape Description Unit Nos. 260, 262 and 517.