

East Dorset Landscape Character Assessment



East Dorset District Policy Planning 2008



Foreword

This landscape character assessment for East Dorset has been prepared as part of a County-wide initiative aimed at improving our understanding and appreciation of the varied Dorset landscape. The assessment identifies the unique character areas and associated characteristic features within East Dorset.

This document has been prepared by East Dorset District Council using a standard assessment approach in order to achieve consistency across the County and across England as a whole.

After a period of public consultation the landscape character assessment was approved by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 29th October 2008.

The assessment will help to inform the Planning Authority when considering proposals for development. It will also provide an evidence base for emerging landscape policies in the Local Development Framework and, in due course, as a basis for more specific Supplementary Planning Documents

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1. Introduction

Dorset is predominantly a rural county of great beauty. Its highly distinctive and varied landscapes of rolling downland with prominent hilltops and ridges, lush river valleys, magnificent coast-line, heathlands and attractive villages, merge into a singular, strongly unified image.

East Dorset forms part of this image. Whilst the southern extremities of the District are influenced by the Bournemouth-Poole conurbation, most of the District remains as largely unspoilt countryside. This countryside has certain characteristics which are distinctive to East Dorset. Its landscape is a reflection of the underlying geology and the results of uninterrupted human activity that has impacted on the area since prehistoric times.



The ancient monuments of Knowlton Church and earthworks

Evidence of East Dorset's rich historical background can be seen all over the district, in the form of historic buildings, ancient landscapes and monuments. This heritage, along with the outstanding character of the natural environment is irreplaceable.

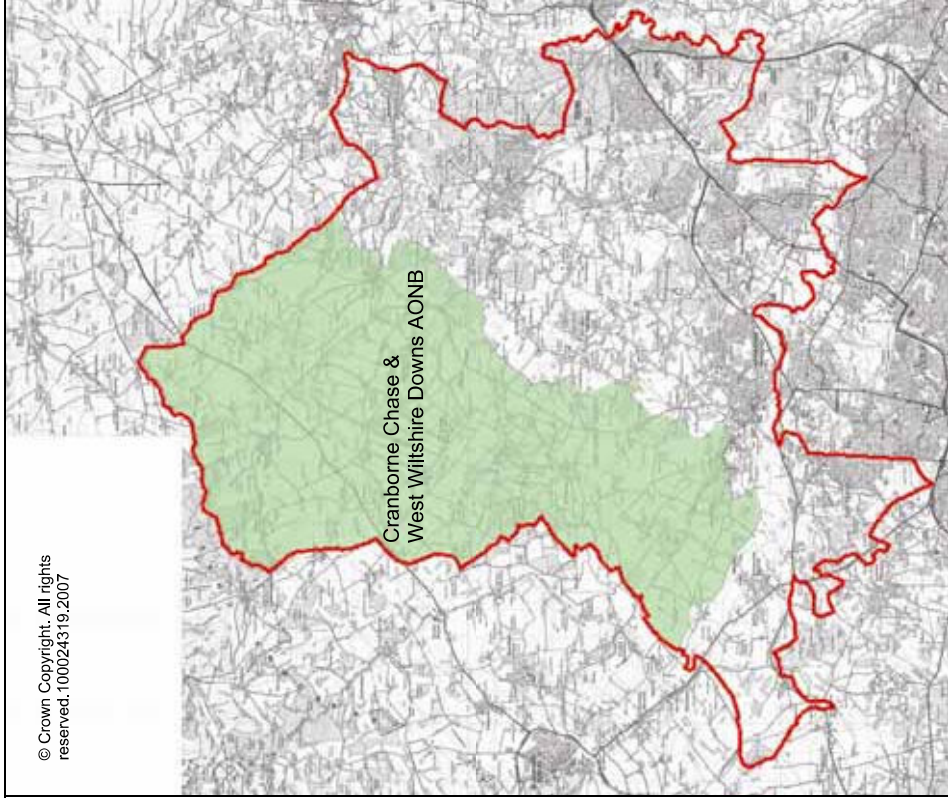


Iron Age & Romano-British settlement at Woodcutts

The district is covered by a number of environmental designations such as AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty); Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and tree preservation orders all intended to protect this unique character. The district also possesses a wealth of ecological interest, as recognised by the numerous international, national, regional and local designations.

A Nationally Important Landscape

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally important protected landscape and cover approximately 45% of the district. The area's special qualities include dramatic landform and views, rich habitats, diverse mixed farmland, rich historic and built heritage, tranquillity and remoteness.



Boundary of Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB in East Dorset

2. Landscape Character Assessment

"Landscape Character Assessment is the tool that is used to help us to understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps us identify the features that give a locality it's 'sense of place' and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas."

(Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002)

Landscape Character Assessment provides a structured framework for describing an area in a systematic way. Through understanding and mapping what is present and what is distinct in the landscape, future management and development can be guided to conserve or enhance local character.

Landscape Character Assessment can be used in many other situations, for example, in devising indicators to gauge countryside change, in helping local people prepare Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Market Town Health checks and in devising environmental improvement strategies for places undergoing regeneration.

Purpose of the Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to provide practical, readily accessible information and guidance which can contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the special characteristics of the district. It identifies the unique character areas and associated characteristic features.

It provides the evidence base for emerging landscape policies in the Local Development Framework and for the review of AONB Management Plans. It can be used to help determine planning applications and in the future, as the basis for more specific Supplementary Planning Documents.

Users

It is intended to be used by the following audiences and associated purposes:

- Residents and community groups in developing community plans;
- Local businesses, farmers and landowners in performing land and landscape management;
- Developers, architects, planners and designers in taking into account planning, management and design considerations;
- Local planning authorities in developing Planning Policy and determination of planning applications;
- Highway engineers in developing highway schemes;
- Elected members and officers of local and parish councils in formulating responses to development proposals;
- Public utilities in performing works;
- Countryside management organisations in delivering landscape scale projects.

Landscape Character Assessment has been successfully applied in many areas nationally, e.g. West Sussex CC, Huntingdonshire DC and High Peak BC. In preparing this assessment we have been keen to learn from the experience of others.

3. Planning Policy Framework for Landscape Character Assessment

National Government guidance

The following national Government guidance provides a background to the assessment:

PPS1: Sustainable Development, February 2005

Planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole.

Policies and decisions should be based on up to date information on the environmental characteristics of the area.

Refers to 'By Design' on design/local distinctiveness matters.

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, August 2004

Objectives include: Good quality sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside and continued protection of the open countryside for all with the highest level of protection for our most valued landscapes. Advises that local planning authorities should prepare policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout their rural areas utilising tools such as Landscape Character Assessments'.

PPS12: Local Development Frameworks, September 2004

Emphasis is placed on frontloading key strategic decisions and stakeholder involvement to develop consensus.

This approach requires the preparation of an evidence base to inform decisions early on and should help to slim down the length of policies.

PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment

Refers to the wider historic landscape, in particular in defining policies for the countryside.

Regional guidance

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy published June 2006 states that “The distinctive qualities and features of the South West’s landscape character areas will be sustained and enhanced by Local Planning Authorities undertaking assessments of landscape character at a strategic level and in partnership with adjoining authorities (where landscape character areas cross administrative boundaries) in order to identify priority areas for the maintenance, enhancement and/or restoration of that character and provide an appropriate policy framework in Local Development Documents for each area.” This document should be referred to alongside the policies set out in the emerging RSS and other Local Plans for the area.

Local Development Framework

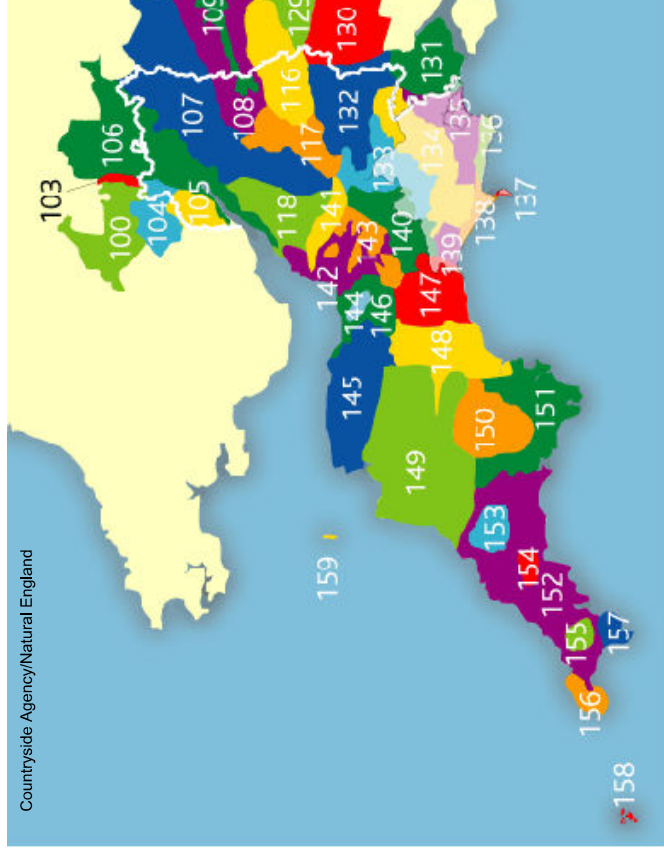
The district is in the process of preparing its core strategy, which will establish a vision and headline policies. The draft policy framework states that landscape character and local distinctiveness shall be taken into account in development decisions, landscape character shall not constrain development and design policy is a key way to achieve landscape character goals. Landscape policy may therefore appear in Core Strategy Policies, Development Control Policies, Area Action Plans and/or Supplementary Planning Documents.

4. Previous Landscape Character Assessments

The following national, regional and local studies relating to landscape character have been undertaken since the early 1990s and have been used to inform the current study.

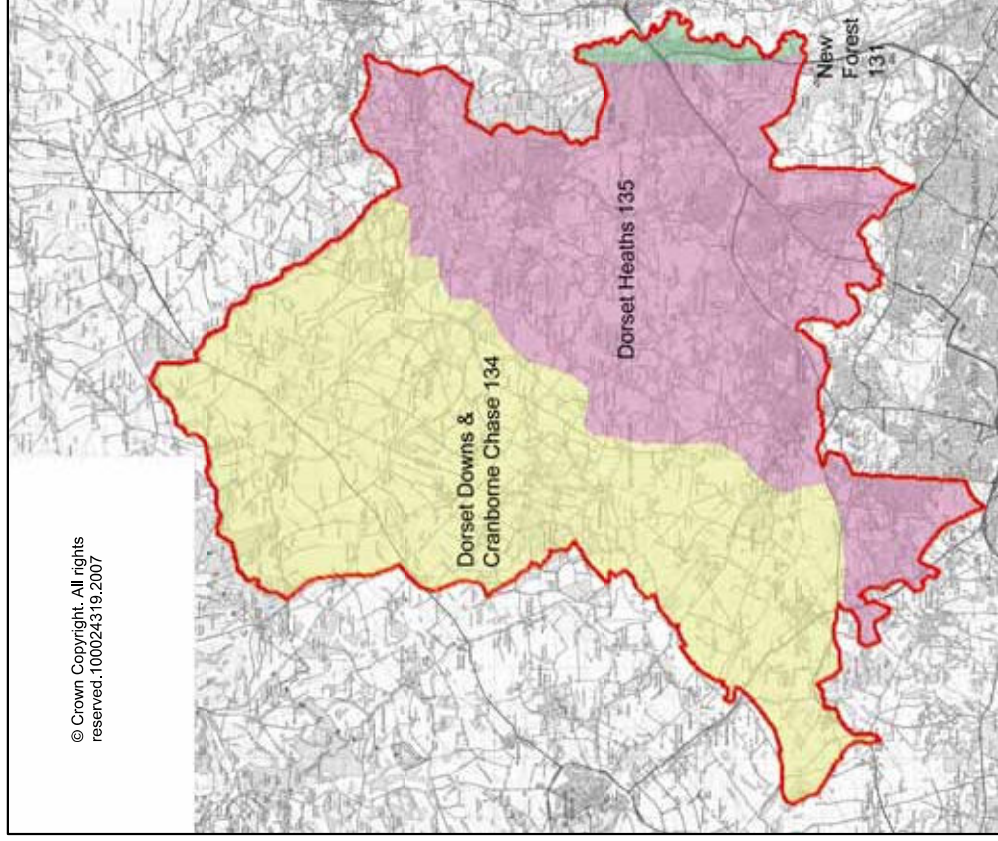
The Character of England

At a national level, the character of the English countryside has been described and mapped into 159 character areas. These are commonly referred to as ‘Joint Character Areas’ through a joint project between the Countryside Agency and English Nature (now Natural England).



The Character Map of England – South West (Dorset highlighted)

The following three character areas are wholly or partly within the District and provide a context in which to examine landscape character at a more local level:



Dorset Landscape Assessment 1993 (DCC and Countryside Commission) Identified six landscape zones and twenty two character areas within the County.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wilshire Downs Landscape 1995 (Countryside Commission). A landscape assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty prepared by Land Use Consultants.

A Handbook of Landscape Management Guidance for Dorset 1997, produced by Dorset County Council as a guide to the management of the landscape characteristics identified by the 1993 assessment.

Cranborne Chase Landscape Assessment, undertaken by East Dorset District Council for that part of east Dorset lying within the AONB designation and describing seven landscape character zones with their component areas. This document was adopted as SPG to the East Dorset Local Plan in 1997.

Areas of Great Landscape Value undertaken by East Dorset District Council to describe four areas of distinct landscape quality beyond the areas designated as AONB. This document was adopted as SPG to the East Dorset Local Plan in 1997.

Countryside Design Summary. Prepared by East Dorset District Council, the Countryside Design Summary comprises a descriptive analysis of the landscape and the setting of buildings and villages within it; the form of settlements and their relationship with the surrounding landscape; the form, design and materials of traditional buildings and divided the District into four 'landscape zones' relating to the area's main geophysical formations. The document was approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan in August 1999.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wilshire Downs AONB - Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (Countryside Commission). A further, more detailed landscape assessment of the

Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) prepared by Land Use Consultants to reflect current methodology and guidance to facilitate the preparation of the AONB Management Plan.

5. Methodology of Landscape Character Assessment

The process of mapping and describing landscape character has followed the 'Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland' (Countryside Agency, 2002). Consultants Diacono Associates carried out a study to identify and map Landscape Description Units (LDUs), the 'building blocks' of the landscape. The key steps of this process leading to the definition of the Landscape Character Areas are laid out in Appendix 1.

The study has identified 9 landscape character types and 25 landscape character areas within East Dorset. The relationship between the Joint Character Areas, character types and character areas is set out in the following table. Each landscape character area is fully described in Chapter 6.

In the characterisation study '**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES**' are landscapes with broadly similar patterns of geology, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field patterns. Landscapes belonging to a particular type - for example "Open Rolling Heath" - may be found in many different places.

'**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**' are unique areas, geographically discrete examples of a particular landscape type. For example 'Holt Heath' is a character area belonging to the 'Open Rolling Heath' type.

Joint Character Area	Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Area
Dorset Downs & Cranborne Chase	Wooded Chalk Plateau	Chase Woods
	Chalk Downland	East Dorset Downs/South Blandford/Bloxworth Downs
	Chalk River Valley	Monkton Up Wimborne Valley Gussage Valley Crichel Valley Allen Valley Lower Winterborne Valley
	Lowland river valley	Lower Stour Valley (part)
	River terrace	Sturminster Marshall
	Rolling Farmland/woodland	Woodlands-Colehill & Hillbutts farmland/woodland Henbury - Corfe, Morden-Lytchett farmland/woodland
	Lowland river valley	Lower Stour Valley (part) Moors River Valley
	River Terrace	Merley Ridge -Canford River Terrace Hampreston River Terrace Parley River Terrace Dewlands-Rushmoor River Terrace
	Heath/farmland mosaic	Horton Common-Three Legged Cross Dudsbury Ridge
	Forest Heath mosaic	Ringwood-Hurn Forest/Heath Mosaic West Moors
New Forest	Open Rolling Heath	Ferndown Forest-Staplehill Holt Heath Upton Heath West Parley Heath
	Lowland river valley	Lower Avon Valley

1) Chase Woods

Context

Landscape Type: Wooded chalk plateau

Landscape Description Units Nos: 44 & 46



View across the downland to Chase Woods on the horizon

Description

A belt of woods extends across the higher chalk downs from Vernditch Lodge (near Woodyates) in the east, to West Lodge (Iwerne Minster) in the west. The influence of these woods when seen together is felt

throughout the downland area within East Dorset, although only their southern extremities actually lie within the District boundary.

Large areas such as Pribdean Wood, Hoe Coppice and Garston Wood, east of Deanland, and the various woods collectively referred to as Chase Woods to the west comprise Ancient semi-natural woodlands. Brookes Coppice and Pollards Wood, to the west of Woodcutts Common is also Ancient Woodland.



Handley Common with the Coppices of Chase Woods forming a backdrop

Whilst some of the woods coincide with deposits of clay-with-flints overlying the chalk, the landscape type is generally similar to the open downland; however its distinguishing feature is the woodland cover, now more extensive in the west. Visually, the woods complement the open

downland, both in appearance and function. This long association epitomises the Chase and accounts for its unique identity.

Historically, this area comprised the heartland of the medieval hunting ground of Cranborne Chase and was known as the "Inner Bounds". The area retains much of its remote and quiet character.



Valley north of Deanland leading into Chase Woods

Key Characteristics

- Rolling landform, rising and steepening to the north
- Woodland blocks on the rising ground enclosing open areas of common, small scattered settlements and farmsteads
- Valuable wildlife habitats provided by older woodland

- Remote and quiet in character
- Important historic environment

Key Features

- Chase Woods
- Garston Wood Nature Reserve
- Distinctive Estate-managed landscapes of Rushmore Park to the north-west of Minchington Down
- Nationally protected landscape (AONB designation)



View south from Garston Wood to tower of St Mary's Church

2) East Dorset Downs/South Blandford Downs/Bloxworth Downs

Context

Landscape Type: Chalk downland

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 458, 450, 452, 482, 51, 49, 404, 396, 397, 403, 402, 406, 340, 438.



Characteristic rolling landform of the downland character area

Description

The chalk downland comprises nearly half of the District and extends well beyond East Dorset to the north-east (Hampshire), to the west (North Dorset) and south-west (Purbeck). It is an open, low-profile, undulating, and smooth landscape, with panoramic views. A largely uncluttered landscape of simple shapes, where line tends to be as important as colour.

Most of the natural downland has been converted to arable. The large field sizes, low trimmed thorn hedges and few individual trees create an open, large-scale appearance.

This area includes some of the most dramatic parts of the Chase within East Dorset District. Penbury Knoll is the highest point at 185m and is marked by a picturesque group of pines. Although visually the hill forms an integral part of the chalk landscape, its geology is somewhat different, being capped with clay and flints.

The area comprises a plateau that dips gently from north to south. Within the north eastern section of the downland landscape are chalk-stream valleys that divide the landform into a series of parallel north-westerly, south-easterly ridges marked by Bottlebush Down, Harley Down and Gussage Hill, Sovell Down and Cricchel Down and Rushton Hill, thus giving this part of the downland landscape a characteristic 'grain'. (See geology and relief maps in Appendix 2 and 3).

The whole area contains many significant archaeological sites, including Bokerley Dyke (a Romano-British defensive ditch); Ackling Dyke (a Roman Road); the Dorset Cursus (a neolithic monument) and to the south west, Badbury Rings, an Iron Age fortification, which forms the most important landmark in the area.

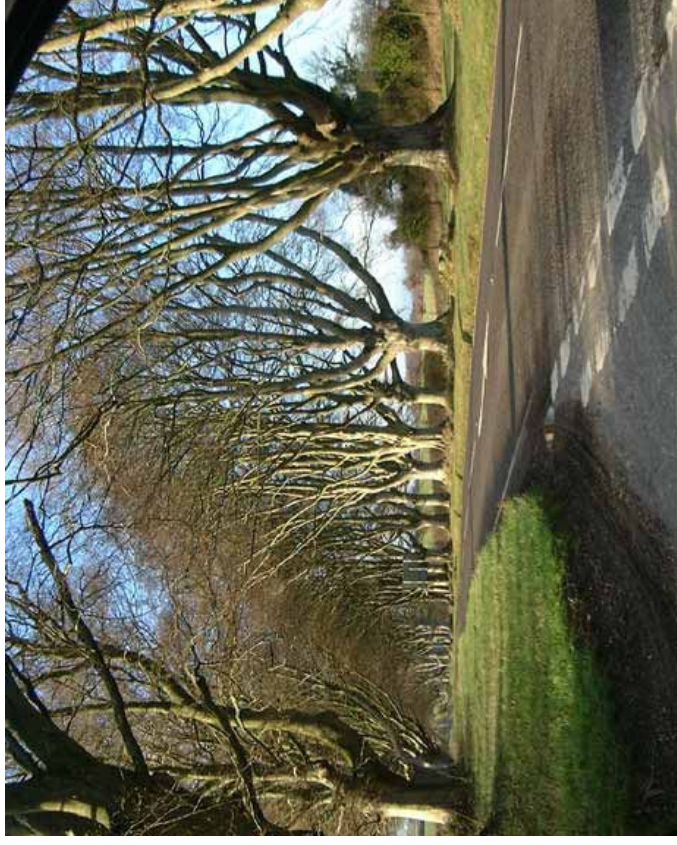
In terms of geology, gently undulating topography, large fields and open, empty character this large countryside tract extends to the River Stour and then beyond to the south west to encompass the South Blandford and Bloxworth Downs. These two areas of chalkland are separated by the narrow valley of the Lower Winterborne.



View to Penbury Knoll

Tree-cover within the area is sparse, except for a number of fairly small and self-contained woods, the most significant of which are Blackbush Plantation and Salisbury Plantation in the north east, Chetterwood in the west and Jubilee Wood and Great Col Wood in the south west. To the south west deciduous tree species tend to be more prevalent, particularly beech and oak. The celebrated Beech Avenue along the Wimborne-Blandford road forms an impressive landscape feature.

Several telecommunication masts have recently been installed in the downland character area, however their location within or adjacent to the areas of established woodland has helped to mitigate their visual impact in this elevated, open landscape.



Beech Avenue

Hedgerows also give the landscape shape and form accentuating the contours of the land and accounting for the 'soft' appearance of the landscape. Hedges tend to be kept low and enable long distance views from the road.

The land to the south of the Beech Avenue falls towards the Stour, near Shapwick the fall is gradual and constant, permitting long-distance views towards Badbury Rings and the Avenue, whilst further to the east the land has a more rolling character with relatively shorter, steeper slopes.

There is a group of woods in the vicinity of Badbury Rings - Target Wood, Jubilee Woods, The Oaks, High Wood and on the Rings itself, some of which are classified as Ancient Woodlands. These, including the

distinctive profile of Badbury Rings, are of considerable importance. From many parts of the area they form a well defined edge to the landscape. Elsewhere tree-cover is sparse. In this open landscape farm-buildings tend to be obtrusive.



Photo: Peter Mounce

View across downland south of B3082, Badbury Rings can be seen at the left hand edge of the photo

The landscape south of the Avenue is characterised by a rectangular field pattern extending towards the Stour. This 'grain' is not evident further north where fields are more irregular. Here, field sizes tend to be larger to the west and smaller towards the River Allen. This landscape has changed very little since mediaeval times. There is still evidence of the pre-enclosure field system and the preponderance of thatched buildings reinforces the historical landscape.

Most roads and tracks in the area tend to be straight. This is a feature of the A354 Blandford to Salisbury road which passes through the north of the District in a south-west/ north-east direction. Although a major road, its impact on the landscape is not unduly significant, because of its traditional single-carriageway design and presence of hedgerows except at the roundabout at Handley Hill which is marked by a prominent group of street lights. The road follows the natural contours of the landscape, and because of its long, straight alignments, tends to emphasise the rolling topography. As the road rises to Handley Cross it reveals uninterrupted panoramic views across the landscape.



View from Handley Hill northwards across the A 354

The chalk landscape extends to the east of the River Allen and runs parallel to the Allen valley northwards to Wimborne St. Giles. This elongated zone is flanked to the east by a line of hills that tend to contain

the views across the valley, but emphasise the long-distance views along it; as far as the Rushmore woods in the north and beyond Badbury Rings to the tower in Charborough Park to the south beyond the District Boundary. Views from the Cranborne Road are improved by its gently meandering alignment, and by the often falling land on its western side.



View southwards along the Cranborne Road from Wimborne Lodge

This part of the chalkland area is extensively farmed, with large regular fields and closely-cropped hedges. Tree cover within the fields is sparse. However, this is compensated by the woods and plantations that exist on both sides of the valley and along the valley bottom. The field pattern gives the landscape a regular 'grain', accentuated at different times of the year by plough furrow-lines within the fields themselves. The colours seen within the chalkland landscape form an important aspect of its character; they reflect the manner in which the landscape is managed as much as the seasonal differences.

As noted, the Cranborne Road meanders through this downland area, merging with the landscape. There are very few roadside trees but those that do feature along the road are related to buildings, such as High Lea, Didlington Lodge and the lodge to Witchampton Paper Mill. These form pinchpoints along the road that, by temporarily blocking the long-distance views, increase interest, emphasising the contrast between enclosure and open views.

This area has a less empty character than the downland areas to the north and south west due to the various buildings that are scattered along the road and the farmhouses on the hills to the east and the village at Hinton Martell. The most prominent building in this area was the Horton Inn which is now partly screened by a recently planted copse to the south.

The historic village of Witchampton lies on the boundary of the chalk and the Allen Valley. The village setting is characterised by extensive tree-cover that conceals parts of the settlement, but the Church tower and the gables of Abbey House stand out amongst the treescape and provide a clear focal point.

The beech and conifer plantations on the ridge behind the village are important in the wider landscape. They extend northwards and merge with the woods of the Crichel Estate

In contrast, immediately to the west and south of the ridge, the landscape is open, relatively treeless, arable downland.

Newtown is a hamlet to the north-east of the village, centred on Witchampton Mill. The approach is marked by the castellated gateway to Crichel House, which forms a feature and focal point to the road.

In the north east of the chalk downland area lies a relatively shallow dry valley that extends from Cranborne to Handley Down. Its landform is not as strong as those of the valleys serving the River Allen to the south east, as noted below, but is more closely linked to the surrounding downland by the large fields that encroach from the west onto the valley floor.

To the north east of this valley the downland rises towards the boundary with Hampshire. In parts the character may be perceived as one of greater contrast than the more open downland to the south west, however, within East Dorset the chalk downs influence remains strong as the downland field pattern also encroaches beyond Toby's Bottom into this area.



View from Pound Hill above Witchampton to the north east, Newtown in the middle ground

Close to the north eastern boundary of the chalk and the adjacent ridge of London Clay and Reading Beds lies the important Chase village of Cranborne. The village is nestled amongst surrounding tree-clad downland, so that its influence upon the wider landscape is limited. A small chalk stream flows eastwards through the centre of the village as a winterbourne from the chalk downland to the west and marks the headwaters of the River Crane. Lanes, tracks and bridleways that radiate from the village and permeate the surrounding countryside. All are

narrow, winding and flanked by hedges; the roads to the north are particularly narrow and are characterised by high hedgebanks. To the south, lying on a north western extension of the clay ridge and dominating the village setting, is Castle Hill. On the hillside immediately to the north of the village set on a remnant of the London Clay is an important wood, named Burwood. These chalk hills continue northwards, culminating in a ridge that coincides with the District boundary.



Burwood north of Cranborne

Blagdon Hill Wood, in the north-west set on a ridge of isolated Reading Beds that coincides with the District boundary, to Bratch Copse in the south east form a continuous belt of woods that provides an important backdrop to this corner of the chalk downs. Many of the woods in this area comprise semi-natural Ancient Woodlands. Between this woodland belt and Burwood lies Boveridge House, a substantial listed mansion dating from 1825. It overlooks gardens that were laid out by Thomas Mawson, and beyond to an undulating patchwork of woods, copses and open fields.

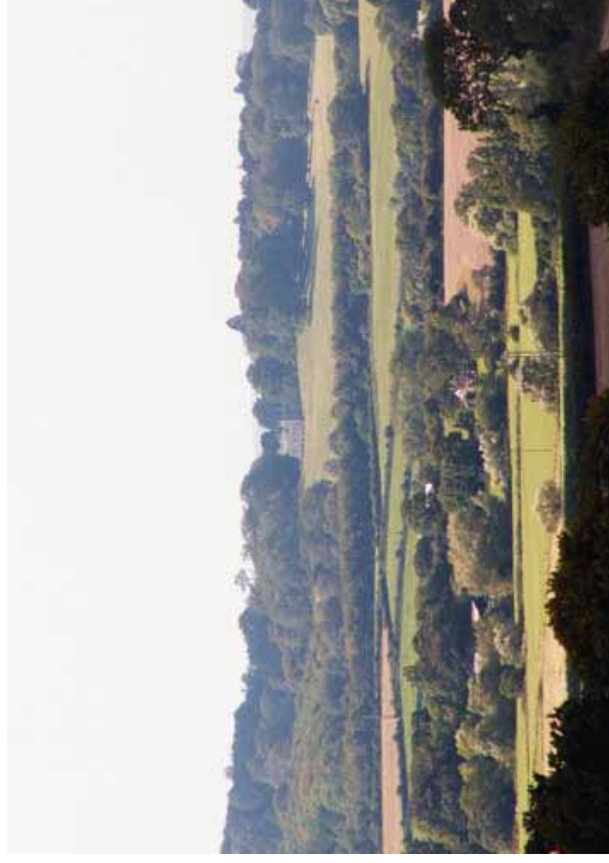
There are three areas of historic Parkland within the downland associated with important historic houses; Kingston Lacey in the south, Crichel adjacent to the Gussage chalk river valley and Wimborne St Giles. All make important contributions to the landscape, particularly in terms of their associated tree planting.

Crichel House stands in a classical eighteenth-century landscape setting. The park features a landscaped lake, with a backdrop of mature woodland. However, the size of the park has successively shrunk since the 1940's and much of the land has been returned to agriculture. The house and park make such a strong influence on the landscape to warrant the delineation of a separate character zone. Crichel Lake was formed by damming Crichel Stream near to its confluence with the Allen. The Parkland is visually separated from the river valley by thick woodland



Photo: Peter Mounce

View of Kingston Lacy House and part of the park looking towards Poole Harbour



Kingston Lacy House viewed from Badbury Rings

Kingston Lacy Park has similar parkland setting to Crichel or St. Giles, but without a landscaped lake, there is only a small pond. Alongside the boundaries are belts of thick woodland that separate the park from the surrounding countryside and give it an introspective character. The House was built by Sir Roger Pratt in 1665 and remodelled in the nineteenth century by Sir Charles Barry. The Grade I Listed Building is centrally placed within the park, and the various contrived views of it give the Park its unique character.



Driveway to Kingston Lacy House

At Wimborne St Giles the parkland is centred on St. Giles House, a nationally important building dating from 1651 and belonging to the ancestors of the Earl of Shaftesbury since the early fifteenth century. The Park, which was established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contains a number of notable natural features, architectural and other historic artifacts.

Surrounding the Park is a belt of woodland that forms an impenetrable visual screen. The south-eastern edge to the Park, which is skirted by the Wimborne - Cranborne Road, forms part of The Drive Plantation. It was probably established concurrently with other parkland features by the 4th Earl during the eighteenth century on the lines of the 3rd Earl's landscape ideas. The north-eastern belt forms a particularly well-defined edge to the landscape that is fully appreciated from the B. 3081 Sixpenny

Handley Road. The strong contrast between the woodland edge and the open downland is pronounced. The treescape to the west of the Park makes an important contribution to the setting of the village of Wimborne St. Giles.



Outside edge of Eastern Drive Plantation enclosing St. Giles Park

The nature conservation value of the area as a whole is limited as the larger-scale arable fields offer little cover. Wildlife interest is largely confined to the last remains of the natural downland, the ancient woodlands, and drove roads where hedgerows have been retained as mature features.



The remains of Knowlton Church set within Knowlton Rings - Scheduled Ancient Monuments, the Church is also Listed.

Key Characteristics

- Escarpment rising to the north
- Long distance views across and beyond the District boundary from downland hills and ridges
- Low profile valleys that gradually merge with downland
- Parallel ridges

- Large field sizes
- Isolated woodland blocks
- Linear settlements in valley bottoms
- Sparsely settled, especially further north

Key features

- Kingston Lacy House and estate
- Beech Avenue
- Historical land use pattern representing enclosures
- Wealth of archaeological features e.g. Roman Roads, Cursus, Badbury Rings and Knowlton Church
- Woodland plantations of Chetterwood, Blackbush, Great Col Wood
- Historic parkland including the Drive Plantation

3) Allen Valley

Context

Landscape Character type: Chalk River Valley

Landscape Description Unit No. 398



View south along the Allen from Fitches Bridge, note the impact of the o/h line

Description

The Allen system extends from the chalk downs to the north and west to its confluence with the River Stour to the south. This narrow zone is associated with a sinuous belt of valley gravel alongside the river that extends from beyond Wimborne St. Giles in the north to Witchampton in the south-east. Lower down the Allen valley below Witchampton the river has laid down deposits of alluvium.

Flat water meadows lie either side of the river as it meanders throughout its length, contrasting with the adjacent arable fields. Copses and riverside trees trace the course of the river. North of Witchampton there is a continuous belt of woods and plantations extending as far as Crichel (Loverley) Mill. Throughout its length the valley habitat is of significant nature conservation interest.

Unlike its tributaries, the Allen has very little development along its banks. The ancient settlements of Didlington, Knowlton and Brockington are now only place names. The only buildings of note are the water mills at Stanbridge, Crichel, Didlington and Hinton Mill further to the south. Witchampton Mill has been associated with paper-making since the eighteenth century, but the majority of buildings associated with the mill have now been removed and the site redeveloped for housing.



View across the Allen Valley from the B3078, the course of the river is marked by the tree line in the centre of the photo

The landscape along the river is much more intimate than that of the surrounding countryside. The best public views of the river can be found

where minor roads to the west of the B.3078 cross over the river, undoubtedly these views are enhanced by the historic character of the bridges themselves many of which are listed.

The influence of the central line of the river valley on landscape character extends beyond the route of the Allen itself into its tributaries that have cut into the downland landscape to the north-west. This influence is particularly notable in areas 4); 5) & 6) (see below).



The Allen looking south from Stanbridge

Key Characteristics

- Shallow sided valley
- Important chalk stream habitat

- Water meadows
- Riverside trees
- Sparsely developed with secluded and intimate character
- Distinctive, traditional building materials, flint, red brick and thatch
- Simple Bridges

Key Features:

- Historic bridges at Lumber Lane and at Stanbridge
- Historic Mills and mill sites at Stanbridge, Walford, Didlington, Crichel, Witchampton.



Roadbridge at Witchampton

4) Monkton Up Wimborne Valley

Context

Landscape Character Type: Chalk river valley

Extension to Landscape Description Unit No. 398



The northern end of the valley flattening out into the chalk downland

Description

The valley landscape extending from Wimborne St. Giles northwards to Monkton Up Wimborne is of contrasting character from the surrounding chalk downland. Nevertheless, the total landscape 'reads' as one and there are no clear cut-off points between the respective

landscape types. Each forms a complementary feature of the Chase landscape.

The most important features that distinguish the valley are the watercourses, their related ecology, and the settlement pattern and other land use changes. The entity of this valley is best appreciated from the valley bottom, viewing the area 'longitudinally' both up-stream and down-stream.



The Allen as it runs towards Wimborne St Giles

The profile of the valley is very shallow, quite different in character from other settlements near the head of the chalk valley river system. The gentle valley sides allow the open downland landscape to permeate the northern end of the village.

Farmland extends down as far as good drainage allows. Field sizes vary, but follow the pattern of the chalk landscape. Water meadows characterise the valley bottom. The area is of considerable nature conservation importance.

The river flows through water meadows before entering the lower part of Wimborne St Giles. Bridging points at Bull Bridge and near French's Farm provide a focus for the landscape influence of the river. Unspoilt views of the water meadows can be obtained from the listed bridge near French's Farm.

Set apart from the village of Wimborne St. Giles, there are a number of modest manor houses and traditional farmhouses fairly evenly dispersed throughout the valley, which gives the area a lived-in character in contrast to the surrounding downland. The eighteenth-century tower of the Parish Church is just visible amongst the surrounding treescape.



The tower of the Church of St Giles viewed from the B3081 to the north

A narrow winding lane continues up the valley linking Wimborne St Giles with Monkton Up Wimborne. Beyond this hamlet at the head of the valley the lane straightens out and the downland influence is reasserted.

Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley
- Farmland with relatively few trees, apart from St. Giles Park
- Water meadows
- Important chalk stream habitat
- Dispersed dwellings and farmsteads

Key Features:

- Church of St Giles
- Old bridges over the Allen

5) Gussage Valley

Context

Landscape Character Type: Chalk river valley

Extension to Landscape Description Unit No. 398



The steep sides of the Gussage valley, the village is 'hidden' in the views from ridge to ridge

Description

Beyond Bowerswain Farm in the Allen Valley lies a valley containing the Gussage stream and the villages of Gussage All Saints and Gussage St.

Michael. The valley sides are steeply pronounced particularly on the south side which rise to Sovell and Thickthorn Downs. These lie on the high ridge dividing the Gussages from the Crichel valley further to the south. Sovell Down lying midway between Gussage All Saints and St. Michael, adjacent to the course of a Roman Road, is a former chalk pit which is now a local nature reserve.

Beyond Gussage St. Michael, to the north, the valley flattens out and its general character merges with the downland. There are, however, a handful of important traditional farmhouses that continue along the 'valley' beyond the A.354 as far as Gussage St. Andrew.

The historic churches within each village represent important local features, but their influence is restricted by the surrounding landform and treescape. The trees tend to be concentrated within the generous curtilages that characterise the villages.

Many of the buildings in Gussage All Saints are set well inside their plots, away from the road. The older, thatched buildings however tend to be positioned close to the road and this feature in particular reinforces the rural character of the village and strengthens local identity. Small humped bridges over Gussage Stream at each end of Gussage All Saints and the eighteenth century Packhorse Bridge at Gussage St. Michael emphasises the valley's historic significance.



18th C packhorse bridge

Key Characteristics

- Steep sided valley gradually spreading out into downland to the north
- Riverine vegetation
- Important chalk stream habitat
- Linear settlements along valley floor
- Farm buildings grouped along valley floor
- Road pattern follows valley floor



View along valley towards Gussage All Saints, the church tower can be seen among the trees on the left

Key Features:

- Historic churches of All Saints and St Michael
- Bridges at Bull Bridge and south of Ryalls Farmhouse

6) Crichel Valley

Context

Landscape Character Type: Chalk river valley

Extension to Landscape Description Unit No. 398



View across the middle section of the Long Crichel valley

Description

This elongated sub-area of the Allen, centred on Long Crichel, follows the pattern of its neighbouring valleys in terms of geology and topography, but its character is quite different. This change in character

is largely due to landuse factors: the area is much less developed, and in consequence, more rural and totally unspoilt. Farms and cottages are set along the road frontage. Being of traditional materials, mostly brick and flint under peg tile roofs, they relate well with one another and with the surrounding landscape.

Long Crichel church, at the southern end of the village, forms a local landmark, seen at its best when entering the village from the north. Around the church and Long Crichel House are fine specimen trees giving a park-like appearance to the adjacent watermeadows.



View south-eastwards along the valley stream, the pasture and trees in the foreground contrast with the open downland on the horizon

The field pattern is square to the road, with hedges that run up the slopes on either side generating a strong rhythm. Except for Norwood Park and

adjacent coppices, the farming regime of the nearby downs extends across the valley largely uninterrupted.



View across north-westwards over the Long Crichel valley

The landscape is extensively farmed, with a number of large farms sited along the valley. Each farm complex comprises a compact grouping of traditional and modern buildings that stands out against the open, sometimes tree-less landscape.

North of the village, beyond Higher Farm, the landscape merges with the sweeping open downland landscape. From the elevated Thickthorn Down, the view further north is quite different: suddenly becoming lush with the woods and copses associated with Chettle.

Immediately to the east of Chetterwood is Crichel Park. The house and park have a strong influence on the landscape character of the immediate area.

Key Characteristics

- Steep sided valley gradually spreading out into downland to the north
- Important chalk stream habitat
- Farmland linking downland and valley bottom
- Linear village
- Road pattern follows valley floor
- Undeveloped and unspoilt rural character

Key Features

- Crichel Park
- Long Crichel village

7) Lower Winterborne Valley

Context

Landscape Character Type: Chalk river valley

Landscape Description Unit No. 399

Description

A continuation of a character area identified in the adjacent local authority area draining from the wider North Winterborne Valley to the north west.

The valley bottom of the Winterborne, west of Newton Peverill, consists of Valley Gravel, and separates two areas of chalk downland to the north and south. Copses and hedgerows along the length of the valley contribute to a sense of containment and the dry valley extending northwards from East Almer creates a more irregular landform.

The valley of the Winterborne has a long history of associated habitation, focused in three early settlements at Mapperton, West Almer and East Almer, all set at the edge or just to the north of the boundary of the valley gravel and the chalk. These settlements are recorded in Domesday Book. Moorcourt Farm also has very early origins. This area was surrounded by open fields until being subject to the Enclosures in 1845.



View from the valley floor north-eastwards towards Westley Wood

There is an attractive view of Almer Manor and the adjacent church from the A.31 to the south east.

Mapperton lies at the bottom of a shallow dry valley to the north west of the River Winterborne, enclosed by low downland hills to the north and south.



View eastwards along the A31

The A31 trunk road, which at this point is a traditional single-carriageway road flanked with hedgerows and hedgerow trees, follows the valley of the River Winterborne, passing Almer to the north. The brick walls marking the boundary of the Charborough Park Estate forms a striking feature in the views along part of the valley floor. From Stag Gate the minor road to Newton Peverill marks the line of the valley as it continues north eastwards to Sturminster Marshall.



The road to Newton Peverill which at this point runs parallel to the Winterborne that lies to the east of the road

Key characteristics

- Shallow valley in a narrowly defined corridor marked by roads and abutting woodland
- Small nucleated settlements

Key Features

- Walls, lodges and gateways to Charborough Park
- Almer Manor and Almer Church

- A31 Trunk road - has an adverse impact on the rural character.



Footbridge over the River Winterborne near its confluence with the River Stour at Sturminster Marshall

8) Woodlands-Colehill & Hillbutts farmland/woodland mosaic

Context

Landscape Character Type; Rolling farmland/woodland mosaic

Landscape description Unit Nos. 459; 462; 477; 443; 437



View northwards from Horton Tower

Description

To the east of the Allen valley the landform rises as an undulating ridge to form a clear physical edge to the chalk downland. High points include Clay Hill near Hinton Martell, and Chalbury Hill. From Chalbury in

particular, near the distinctive historic 13th C church, there is a panorama of the surrounding landscape extending as far as the coast. This forms a transitional area between the Chalk of the Cranborne Chase and the acidic lowland sands of the forests and heaths to the east, having soils derived from the underlying clays of the bands of Reading Beds and London Clay that bisect the District from Ashford Water in the north east to Henbury in the south west (see character area below). The Rivers Stour and Allen have cut through the gravel and clay to leave an isolated area around Hillbutts.

The north western part of the Woodlands-Colehill area shares similar landscape characteristics to Cranborne Chase: long views, especially to the east and west, with wooded horizons. However one of the most distinctive qualities is the variety of scenic landscapes that occur within such a relatively narrow band. The area is one of contrast, between the enclosure afforded by the undulating landscape and substantial areas of woodland cover and the often long-distance views from its hilltops. The land use is characterised by a mosaic of regular, medium-sized fields for stock grazing and arable. Fields are bounded by continuous, thick hawthorn hedgerows and hedgerow oaks. There are often substantial individual oaks in the larger fields. Throughout the area oak is predominant and forms woods, copses, hedgerow and roadside trees and individual specimens in abundance.



View to Boys Wood at Woodlands

The centre of this landscape area is strongly influenced by Woodlands Park that flanks the area to the east. An Ancient Replanted Woodland, this area was also Medieval Deer Park. The woods have been the subject of considerable recent replanting and comprise several large conifer plantations. Around the perimeter, a belt of deciduous trees contrast in colour and form to the plantations and provide a soft edge to the woods. In amenity terms these are of crucial importance to the wider landscape character.



Woodlands Park

Set on the hill to the south of the historic village of Horton lies Horton Tower. This massive 18th C brick structure is prominent in the views from the surrounding countryside.

To the south-west of the Woodlands-Colehill area, modern developments in villages and hamlets such as Gaunts Common, Holt and Holt Wood, and individual properties beyond the village envelopes, have made an impact on the character of landscape.



Horton Tower, a Grade II listed building and a prominent landmark*

The remnant of the clay ridge around Hillbutts and Pamphill is capped by plateau gravel. Pamphill has a long history of human settlement and also bears more recent evidence of the influence of the nearby Kingston Lacy Estate, particularly in the tree planting around Pamphill Green. Generally however, the landscape here reflects that of the larger area to the north east, especially the extensive tree cover and hedgerows. The elevated land provides views across the both the Allen and Stour Valleys, the latter being particularly striking.

Less sympathetic in terms of impact on landscape character are the presence of the large complex of QE School and the 400kv overhead powerline and pylons, the latter are especially prominent at Little Pamphill.



Photo: Peter Mounce

Hillbutts looking eastwards towards Wimborne, Q.E School to the right of the photo

Key Characteristics

- Narrow, winding lanes throughout the area, with high, dense hedgerows
- Extensive network of public footpaths and woodland and other tracks
- Farmhouses and other modest rural dwellings, few major historic buildings or churches
- General absence of archaeological remains, except for tumuli on hilltops
- Heavy concentration of Ancient Woodlands
- Quiet, peaceful countryside largely unaffected by modern development

- Undulating landform, punctuated by hilltops
- Heavily influenced by woods, copses and hedgerow trees creating an irregular patchwork
- Absence of major roads
- Irregular road pattern, having an east-west emphasis with short north-south links



Woodlands/Colehill farmland/woods mosaic: a hilly landscape area with a high density of tree cover - mostly old oaks- and small fields enclosed by thick hawthorn hedges used predominantly for grazing.

Key Features

- Woodlands Park
- Chalbury Hill
- Chalbury Church
- Pamphill Green and Little Pamphill
- Q.E School (adverse impact)

- O/h powerline at Pamphill (adverse impact)
- Horton Tower



Pamphill Green viewed from the St Stephens church gateway

9) Henbury- Corfe (Morden-Lytchett) farmland/woodland mosaic

Context

Landscape Character Type: rolling farmland/woodland mosaic

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 405; 407; 408; 439; 467, Part of

Landscape Description Unit No. 411



View from Pardys Hill to Stoney Down to the southwest

Description

As noted above the London Clay and Reading Beds continue beyond the River Stour diagonally across the District, overlain with Plateau Gravel in the area of Henbury Plantation and Notting Hill and at Corfe Mullen. Its elevated position commands extensive views across the area to the distant countryside beyond. When viewed from the north, the area's wooded hills provide an important backdrop to the Stour valley.

The area is divided into a patchwork of small, enclosed fields and paddocks connected by a network of winding lanes. Close to the urban fringe, to the west, lies the extensive wooded landscape of Stoney Down and Henbury. To the west and north beyond Henbury the agricultural landscape becomes more open as the land falls towards Coombe Almer and the Stour Valley.

An extensive part of the area around Henbury is subject to gravel extraction. The extraction site is however relatively well screened by the surrounding woodland.

The western side of the character area is crossed from north to south by an overhead powerline which becomes more prominent in the open landscapes to the north and south.

Hilltops afford some panoramic views. Allen Hill, in Stoney Down Plantation, is a particularly good viewpoint, here the middle-distance view to the north is of green pastures, with dense woodland clothing the hillside behind; in the distance lies the Stour valley, with the perimeter woods of Kingston Lacy beyond and beyond this extends even more distant countryside to the horizon.



View of Henbury Plantation from Blandford Road

A corridor of farmland extends north-eastwards through Crumpets Valley, linking the Stour valley with the open farmland around Lytchett Matravers (Part of the 'Morden-Lytchett' Character Area identified in Purbeck District to the south-east). The valley is predominantly pasture land and separates and articulates the more extensive areas of dense woodland, some of which appear as 'hanging woods' on the adjacent hillside

A small section on the eastern side of the residential development at Lockyers Drive is part of a larger remnant of heath extending to the east into Poole and lies on a gravel plateau overlooking the Stour Valley to the north. It is bounded to the south and west by large areas of urban development and to the east by a golf course.



View to Badbury Rings from Corfe Mullen Recreation Ground

To the north and west the land slopes to the north and is marked by a mosaic of groups of dwellings, blocks of woodland and fields bounded by hedges and trees. At Sleight a large part is given over to playing fields. This more open area affords views across the Stour Valley.

The area is also bisected by the line of the former Somerset and Dorset railway line; groups of trees alongside this route remain to mark its passage through this part of Corfe Mullen.

Key characteristics

- Undulating landform, punctuated by hilltops
- Heavily influenced by woods, copses and hedgerow trees

10) Lower Stour Valley

Context

Landscape Character Type: Lowland river valley

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 400; 412

- Irregular mosaic of pasture, woodland and hedgerows
- Hamlets and narrow lanes

Key Features

- Allen Hill/Stoney Down
- Gravel extraction at Henbury Plantation
- Disused railway line
- O/h power lines (adverse impact)



Farmland to the east of Corfe Mullen around Home Farm



The view eastwards along the Stour valley from White Mill Bridge

Description

A wide and flat, meandering flood plain. The area comprises the river and the alluvium beds lying immediately on either side. As the river progresses from Shapwick in the west to Parley in the east through the District it is normally bounded on each side by terraces of valley gravel

that mark the former floodplain. However, in places the valley edge is also demarcated by chalk downland in the west and, further to the east, by ridges of clay and gravel, notably at Pamphill, Merley and Dudsbury. (see character areas described below)



View westwards along the Stour at Ensbury Bridge, the woods at Dudsbury Camp in the background

The character of the river valley is particularly influenced by these ridges. The associated woodland on this higher ground provides a backdrop to views along and across the valley as well as a sense of enclosure. Buildings and parkland on the ridges also provide significant points of interest along the course of the Stour as, for example at Little Pamphill where a group of cottages look southwards over the valley.



Cottages at Little Pamphill overlooking the Stour Valley, note the o/h line.

The associated open, pastoral landscape character found in the western half of the valley is also significantly influenced by the roads, road crossings and the developments that encroach along its length.

The historic settlements of Shapwick, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne are marked by their church towers in the views along the river valley.

The course of the river is also marked by a number of historic watermill sites, the most prominent surviving site being at White Mill to the north of Sturminster Marshall.

At Wimborne the river is pinched between the ridge at Merley on the southern bank and more recent developments in Wimborne to the north and, further to the east at Parley, Dudsbury Rings also forms a

pinchpoint. The Ensbury Bridge crossing to the south east marks the limit of urban encroachment from the Bournemouth conurbation to the south and the ribbon development along the A.347 from West Parley to the north.

At Shapwick, Cowgrove, Hampreston and Parley the valley is crossed by prominent overhead powerlines.

Gravel extraction and water abstraction to serve the urban areas have led to the creation of extensive reservoirs at Longham.



The Wimborne By pass is screened from view for much of its length along the valley by maturing vegetation. Also note the vegetative backdrop provided by the trees within the urban development on the ridge at Colehill.

However, despite these urban influences and impacts the river valley still provides a significant landscape feature with associated river terraces and important trees and small linear copses along its length.



Long distance view westwards along valley from Canford Bridge towards Pamphill

Key Characteristics

- Flat wide flood plain
- Meandering river
- Riverside trees and copses
- Long distance views along the valley



The Stour looking north eastwards from Longham Bridge towards West Parley, ribbons of commercial and residential development lie either side of the A.348 as it routes northwards beyond the bridge

Key Features

- Isolated nucleated farmsteads
- Road crossings and historic multi-arched bridges e.g. White Mill, Julian's, Canford and Longham Bridges



Longham Bridge, a Grade 2 listed structure, a busy crossing point over the Stour

- Views of the church towers at Shapwick, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne
- Views of Canford School
- Views of A31 Wimborne By Pass
- Longham Lakes water treatment complex
- Historic water mill sites e.g. White Mill
- O/h power lines (adverse impact)

11) Merley Ridge-Canford River Terrace

Context

Landscape Character Type: River terrace and ridge

Landscape Description Unit No. 481



The steep wooded slopes of Colehill form a distinctive backdrop to views along the valley on the north bank of the river opposite Canford Park. They enclose both the Lower Stour Valley and the associated river terrace to the north and strongly influence the character of both



Trees on the horizon on the ridge in Merley Park forming a backdrop to views across the terrace from Julian's Road

Description

A character area shared with Poole, although only a small part lies within East Dorset. The lower part consists of a fragment of valley gravel at Lake Gates forming a flat step alongside the river marking the level of former flood plain. The remaining, higher south-eastern part of the area

that lies within Poole is set on a gravel plateau lying over the Bagshot Sands and comprises undulating farmland, dispersed settlement and woodland blocks. The woodland provides a backdrop to the views across the Stour Valley from the north. The character of the eastern part of the area within Poole is heavily influenced by the presence of Merley House, its associated parkland and by the view and noise from the busy A.31 trunk road that runs along the northern edge of the character area.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating farmland
 - Woodland blocks
- ### **Key Features**
- Merley House and park
 - A.31 Wimborne by pass

12) Sturminster Marshall River Terrace

Context

Landscape Character Type: River terrace

Landscape Description Unit No. 410



View across the river terrace from Henbury House

Description

An area of clay enriched soils lying largely on valley gravel to the south of the Stour Valley. Part of this character area is overlain by the development at Sturminster Marshall and bisected by the A350. The

historic village has been considerably extended from the its riverside core southwards to the A350.

A golf course and a series of large fish farm lakes lie to the east of the settlement. The undeveloped part of this character area is also adversely affected by the presence of the busy A.350 and the A31 trunk road and the 400kv overhead pylon line. Fields are large but of irregular shape, tree cover is sparse, confined largely to field boundaries.

The historic Henbury House lies at the southern edge of this character area, in a slightly elevated location overlooking the river terrace. Glimpses of the house can be obtained from the A.31 trunk road to the north.



Large flat fields and boundary planting on the river terrace viewed from the A31

Key Characteristics

- Large flat, open fields
- Field boundary trees and hedges

Key Features

- A.350 and the A.31 trunk road
- Sturminster Marshall village and historic church
- O/h power lines (adverse impact)
- Henbury House



Henbury House, a Grade 2 listed building, overlooking the river terrace and the A.31*

13) Hampreston River Terrace

Context

Landscape Character Type: River terrace

Landscape Description Unit Nos: 479



View across the western edge of the character area, Leigh Road to the right and the by-pass to the left of the picture

Description

An area of valley gravel lying to the north of the river, the western part of the area is influenced by the industrial and residential developments at

Leigh and Brook Road and by the A.31 Wimborne by pass that crosses the river to the south west and the roundabout at Canford Bottom. To the east the landscape is more agricultural, with large regular fields used predominantly for arable or grazing, a large group of glasshouses lie south of Ham Lane close to the river but are screened to view by intervening woodland. The urban influence on the landscape character returns at the village of Hampreston and, at the easternmost point, the developments, both commercial and residential at Longham that lie either side of the busy A.348.



Hampreston village and its landscape setting

South of Ham Lane important landscape trees lie on field boundaries and along the river banks. North of Ham Lane there are important plantations that provide a backdrop to the view from the road.

Key Characteristics

- Flat landform
- Mosaic of large fields used for arable and pasture
- Few trees in fields, most trees near river and village

Key Features

- A31 by pass to the west
- A.348 at Longham
- Hampreston village and church



Flat grazing land of the terrace to the west of the A348

14) Dudsbury Ridge

Context

Landscape Character Type: Heath/farmland mosaic
Landscape Description Unit No. 454



The woodland at Dudsbury Camp viewed from the Golf Course

Description

The Bagshot Sands that cover the area between Ferndown and Alderholt extend southwards and, overlaid with a cap of Bracklesham Beds, appear as a ridge of high ground close to the river. The similarity of geology, the Podzol soils and land use prior to the development of the

golf course suggest this character area is a remnant of the heath/farm character type identified further to the north. Christchurch Road forms the northern boundary of this character area.



View southwards from the Golf Club towards the conurbation.

The character area forms a narrow band between the recent urban developments at Ferndown and West Parley to the north and the River Stour. The land slopes steeply to the river and there are extensive views from Christchurch Road and from the Golf Course southwards to the Bournemouth conurbation. These views are curtailed to the east by significant woodland planting around Dudsbury Camp which forms a prominent, historic feature alongside the river. The earthworks of Dudsbury Camp are a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Key Characteristics

- Steep slope to river
- Important woodland
- Extensive views from ridge
- Urban influences

Key Features

- Dudsbury Camp
- Golf Course
- Christchurch Road

15) Parley River Terrace

Context

Landscape Character Type: River terrace

Landscape Description Unit No. 456



View westwards across the character area showing the large, flat fields, note the garden centre buildings alongside Christchurch Road on the right hand side of the photograph.

Description

An area of valley gravel set alongside the northern edge of the Lower Stour Valley extending eastwards from the West Parley traffic lights to beyond the boundary of the District and include the hamlet of West Parley that lies near to an historic crossing point of the Stour. This character area is broad and largely flat and is mainly used for agriculture. Large irregularly shaped fields occupy this terrace. Tree cover is sparse.

There are ribbons of housing and other developments such as nurseries and garden centres along the Christchurch Road and housing along Church Lane that impinge upon the more rural character of the character area. The rural character is also impacted by the movements of aircraft in and out of the nearby Bournemouth Airport to the east.



Flat, agricultural land to the east of New Road

Key Characteristics

- Gentle slope to river
- Sparse tree cover
- Large flat fields

16) Moors River Valley

Key Features

- Urban influences
- O/h power lines (adverse impact)
- Ribbon development alongside Christchurch Road and Church Lane
- West Parley hamlet
- Airport flightpath (aircraft noise)

Context

Landscape Character Type: Lowland river valley

Landscape Description Unit No. 476 & part 452



View across the Moors River Valley character area where it is crossed by the A31 at West Moors and at Tricketts Cross

Description

Starting beyond the District Boundary at Hurn, this area extends north and westwards from Tricketts Cross to include, to the west, the valley of the Uddens Water and Mannington Brook and, to the north, the Moors River and the River Crane as far as Verwood.

Mannington Brook drains from Mannington Heath in the north to Pennington Copse where it joins Uddens Water which drains from Uddens Plantation and Broom Hill to the west to Tricketts Cross where it joins the Moors River.



Uddens Water at Ameysford

The Moors River rises as a winterbourne on the chalk downs to the north and is known for the first part of its course as the River Crane.

Near Verwood the river drains across clays, sand and gravels, is joined by several tributaries which drain acidic heaths and forest and transitions to a more sluggish flowing low-alkalinity watercourse.

This geological diversity gives rise to a large and varied range of associated plants and wildlife. The diversity of flora and fauna supported by the river has led to its designation as a SSSI.

The landscape of the alluvial valley tends to merge with that of the terrace, forest heath and heath/farmland mosaic areas on either side, the greatest landscape contrast being provided where the woodland blocks of the forest heaths encroach from the west along the course of the Valley and the urban areas and associated urban fringe uses to the south and north of Uddens Water and Mannington Brook.

The valley of Uddens Water is bisected by the northern section of the A31 Ferndown by pass that now has a significant influence on the landscape of this part of the character area. The by pass has separated an area of wet heath at Slop Bog from Uddens Water. Slop Bog is part of the Slop Bog and Uddens Heath SSSI which is designated as an internationally protected site.



To the north of Ferndown Uddens Water is bounded on its southern edge by the A31 Ferndown By-pass

Key Characteristics

- Flat
- Valley pasture
- Woodland blocks
- Ecological interest along river corridor
- Urban influences



Pasture and woodland north of Ameysford, note the overhead pylon line

Key Features

- A.31 dual carriageway
- Hamwoods Copse
- O/h powerlines (adverse impact)
- Moors Valley Country Park, lake and golf course



The River Crane at Potterne, the river terrace to the right

17) Dewlands-Rushmoor River Terrace

Context

Landscape Character Type: River terrace

Landscape Description Unit No. 460



The river terrace set between Ringwood Road, Three Legged Cross and Venwood to the north (top)

Recreation Ground occupies a middle section of this character area. Further south field sizes diminish and periodic urban fringe uses such as sites used for car boot sales can be found. Tree cover is largely confined to field boundaries, although larger woodland blocks can be found to the north adjacent to the urban area. Remnant heathland can be found at Lower Common forming part of the Holt and West Moors Heaths SSSI, SAC and SPA.

Key Characteristics

- Flat open fields
- Sparse tree cover
- Ecological interest in heathland
- Urban fringe activities

Key Features

- Golf Course (part)
- Woolsbridge Industrial Estate (part)
- Potterne Recreation Ground
- O/h lines (adverse impact)

Description

A transition area of fluvial soil on the Valley Gravels between the Heath/Farmland Mosaic and the River Crane, extending from the western side of Verwood, southwards to Woolsbridge. The area is predominantly pasture and grazing linked with smallholdings. The northern section contains part of the Crane Valley Golf Course. Potterne



The river terrace at Potterne, Potterne Wood and the river to the left, note the impact of the o/h line in this landscape

18) Ringwood-Hurn Forest/Heath Mosaic

Context

Landscape Character Type: Forest heath mosaic

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 446; 464; 465

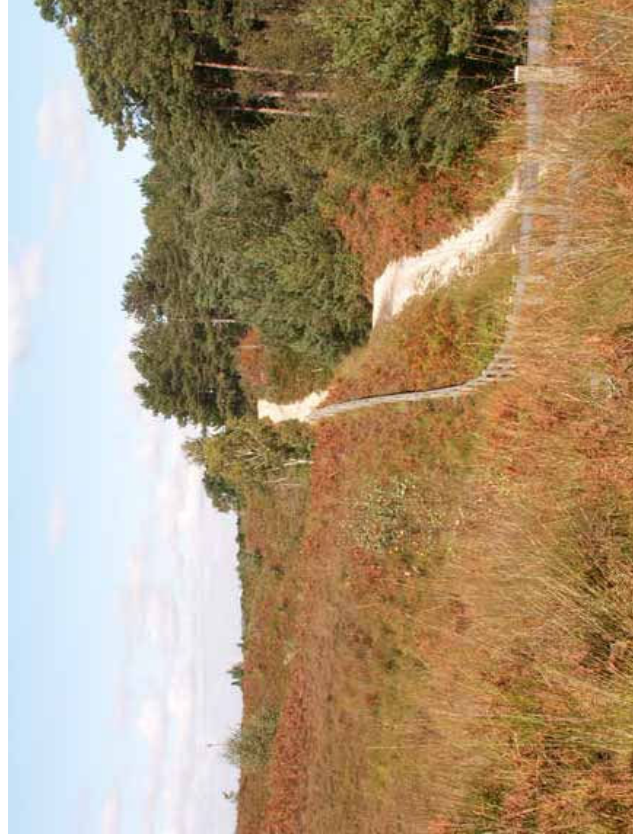


View across Matchams Stadium to the forest and heathland beyond

Description

The acid soils derived from the underlying Plateau Gravel, Bagshot and Bracklesham Beds extend from Alderholt in the north to Hurn Forest in the south and from Clump Hill and Colehill in the west to the Avon Valley

in the east. Topography and human activity have created three distinct landscape character areas on these soils and one of these, the Forest-Heath mosaic, marks the eastern edge of the District. Extensive planting of conifers on much of this land, particularly non-native species, has had a significant impact on the character of these former areas of open heath distinguishing them from the elevated open heaths and the areas of farmed heath to the west.



The interface between forest and heath at Stephens Castle north of Verwood

The heathland areas, although now fragmented, still represent one of the largest groups of heathland in the County. They are less open and exposed than most East Dorset heaths, partly because of the substantial areas of regenerating birch and pine. The only significant open areas tend to be isolated parcels of acidic grassland, which articulate the heath and conifer woodland. Despite the impact of afforestation and scrub

regeneration, much of the remaining heath is of significant international ecological importance and is designated as such.

The A338 Bournemouth Spur Road lies close to the boundary of the Forest Heath with the Avon Valley to the east. To the west of the road, the land rises steeply; the highest point is near North Lodge, close to the Boundary Lane/Hurn Lane junction



The impact of the A338 on the landscape

To the north of Boundary Lane, the landform descends gently before rising again near the A31. The highest point is David's Hill, at the entrance to the North Park of Avon Heath Country Park. From this vantage point there are good views southwards to the ridge south of Boundary Lane. Beyond the A31 and the development of St Leonard's and St Ives lies a further forested tract beginning on Ashley Heath and extending northwards beyond the District boundary as part of Ringwood

Forest which reaches back into the District at Boveridge Heath, to the north of Verwood, and Cranborne Common, south of Alderholt.

The large swathes of woodland help to unify the land and although much of the woodland is comparatively recent, as a result of afforestation of open heathland, the area has an empty, wild character.



The view northwards from Stephens Castle at the southern edge of Boveridge Heath, across the forest heath and heath farm mosaics to the downland beyond

The areas of woodland also make a significant contribution to the area's character and identity. Ridgetop trees are also important landscape features, for example, the ridgetop belts of conifers to the south of Boundary Lane and on Foxbury Hill respectively.



View to Bansfield Heath from Matchams Viewpoint, flats in Bournemouth can be seen in the background

These dense plantings have also served to screen and contain much of the extensive post-war urban developments that have taken place along many of the principal routes that cross the heaths.

Key characteristics

- Varied landform, with steep slopes especially to the east
- Patchwork of heath, woodland and farmland
- Sandy soils
- Extensive areas of pine forest and birch woodland

- Remnant heathland areas with groups of naturalised pine and birch
- Absence of fields and hedgerows
- Ecological value of heathland
- Urban influences
- Influence of major roads

Key Features

- David's Hill
- Moors Valley Country Park
- Avon Heath Country Park
- A.31 and A.338

19) West Moors Forest/Heath Mosaic

Context

Landscape Character Type: Forest heath mosaic

Landscape Description Unit No. part of 452



View of West Moors, West Moors Forest to the north

Description

This plantation on a former heath lies on the area of Valley Gravel associated with the Moors River. However, in terms of its character and

appearance, it has more in common with the area of forest-heath to the east beyond the river than with the areas of farmed heath or river terrace to the north. It is separated from the latter by the extensive West Moors Petroleum Depot complex. An overhead powerline runs west to east through the plantation.

The character area is crossed by part of the Castleman Trailway that follows the disused railway line, the area to the north of the trailway forms part of the Holt and West Moors Heaths SSSI which is also a component site in the Natura 2000 network of internationally important and protected sites.

Key Characteristics

- Flat land
- Extensive areas of pine and birch woodland
- Remnant heathland areas
- Absence of fields and hedgerows
- Ecological value

Key Features

- Former railway line now trailway
- O/h power line

20) Ferndown Forest – Stapehill Forest /Heath Mosaic

Context

Landscape Character Type: Forest heath mosaic

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 444; 473



Ferndown Forest, bisected by the Ferndown By pass

Description

This area lies on the Bagshot Beds where caps of Plateau Gravel mark higher ground particularly at Colehill, With the presence of Colehill and Uddens Plantations in Ferndown Forest much of this character area reflects that of the larger areas of forested heaths noted to the north and east. The elevated position of Colehill Plantation provides a significant backdrop to the built up area of Colehill in the views from the Stour

Valley to the south and east. The area to the east is however more open and its character influenced by the Wimborne Road, the residential developments at Stapehill and the industrial estates at Ferndown to the north and east. Within this more open area lies Ferndown Common a Site of Special Scientific Interest which is also internationally designated.

Key Characteristics

- Extensive areas of pine and birch woodland
- Important backdrop to Stour Valley
- Remnant heathland areas
- Absence of fields and hedgerows
- Ecological value

Key Features

- Colehill Plantation
- Uddens and Ferndown Industrial Estates
- Long distance views from ridge



View towards Colehill from Ham Lane showing the forested backdrop provided by Colehill Plantation

21) Horton Common-Three Legged Cross Heath/Farmland Mosaic

Context

Landscape Character Type: Heath/farm mosaic

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 452; 463



West Moors Depot in the foreground, Lower Common and Three Legged Cross beyond

Description

This character area lies on the Bagshot Sands between the open heathland of Holt Heath and the urban development at Verwood. It extends from Romford in the north to West Moors in the south.

The area contains both remnant open as well as farmed heath and two significant developments; one being the housing area centred upon Three Legged Cross the other the MoD Petroleum Depot at West Moors.

Agriculture is a mixture of marginal farming, horticulture and pasture. Farms are set within an irregular mosaic of heath and scrub, with woodland clumps and roadside trees contributing to the area's character. Despite the proximity of development, the remnant heaths still retain much of their ecological value and are designated accordingly as SSSI.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating land rising towards the north
- Irregular mosaic of heathland and scrub
- Belts of trees and scrub
- Ribbon development
- Small scale industrial uses at the urban fringe

Key Features

- Three Legged Cross developments
- Woolsbridge Industrial Estate
- Redman's Hill
- West Moors MoD Petroleum site

22) Holt Heath

Context

Landscape Character Type: Open rolling heath

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 474; 475



Holt Heath

Description

In common with the other heathland areas, Holt Heath lies on the sandy acidic soils of the Bagshot Beds. The north and western sides are capped with deposits of Plateau Gravel, which coincide with the highest parts of the heath.

Most of the heath is elevated above the surrounding landscape. Its open, largely tree-less character affords panoramic, long-distance views: those to the Isle of Wight and the coast being of particular note.

The landform slopes down fairly gently towards the east and south, but on the north and west sides the slopes are significantly steeper.

The southern edge is defined by White Sheet Plantation. These are comparatively recent coniferous plantations which today form a contrast against the open heathland.



Views across Holt Heath towards the Bourne mouth conurbation

Holt Heath has a wild character that belies its artificial management. Originally a wooded area, the heath was cleared during the Neolithic period and Bronze Age for stock grazing. The heathland once formed a vast tract extending almost continuously eastwards to the River Avon. As

a National Nature Reserve the heathland habitat is still maintained by the regular removal of regenerating pine. Occasional trees have been allowed to remain, which add considerably to the heath's visual qualities. The area comprises mostly dry heath, but there are also substantial areas of wet heath, especially in the east where willow and birch are characteristic.

The Holt -Three Legged Cross road passes through the heath, offering good views of the heathland to the south, as well as long-distance views to the Needles, near Higher Row, the prospect shifts to the north, with Horton Tower forming a prominent landmark.

Prominent overhead powerlines pass across the northern part of the heath and along its south-eastern boundary.

Holt Heath is also managed for passive recreation, with a well established network of informal paths and tracks. A small informal car-park, concealed by coniferous woodland, has been established at Whitesheet Hill.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating elevated terrain
- Exposed open landscape
- Sparsely populated
- High ecological value
- Viewpoints

Key Features

- Views towards Bournemouth and Isle of Wight
- O/h electricity lines (adverse impact)

23) Upton Heath

Context

Landscape Character Type: Open rolling heath

Landscape Description Unit Nos. 415; 417



Upton Heath

Description

An area of largely open heath set on the sands and clays of the Bagshot Beds overlooking Poole Harbour. From the viewpoint on a cap of Plateau Gravel at Beacon Hill the land falls to the south and west in a

series of gentle folds. This character area extends to Poor Common in the north west and is bounded to the north and east by the urban development of Corfe Mullen and Broadstone and encroached to the north west by small scale agricultural uses.

The heath area is fragmented by blocks of trees and scrub and by informal tracks. Large areas to the south and north west have, in the past, been the subject to sand and clay working and used for waste disposal. It is planned to restore the former clay and refuse pit at Beacon Hill to heath. The area is also crossed by a high voltage overhead electricity line that serves a major sub-station sited at the western edge of the heath.

Despite the impacts on the landscape noted above this character area has high ecological value and is designated accordingly as SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating elevated terrain
- Exposed open landscape
- Mosaic of heath, scrub and woodland
- High ecological value
- Viewpoints

Key Features

- Beacon Hill
- Reclamation works
- Major electricity sub station and overhead powerlines (adverse impact)

24) West Parley Heath Context

Landscape Character Type: Open rolling heath

Part of Landscape Description Unit No. 457

Description



Parley Common view from the north

Set on Valley Gravel, this heathland area, which includes Parley Common, rises from Christchurch Road in the south to the residential development at Tricketts Cross in the north. It is a remnant of a much more extensive tract of heath that once extended from the edge of the

Stour Valley northwards to Alderholt. The area has been subject to urban encroachment and afforestation both by commercial plantations and natural regeneration. The character of the area is influenced by the adjacent urban developments and particularly, in terms of noise, by the nearby airport.



Urban development immediately abutting the heath

Despite the impacts noted above the area has retained its high ecological value and is designated accordingly. The heath has also, in the recent past been subject to management to restore the heathland vegetation. Part of the heath is a nature reserve managed by the Herpetological Conservation Trust.

Key Characteristics

- Undulating terrain rising to the north
- Sections of heath are open and exposed

- High ecological value
 - Urban influences
- Key Features**
- Golf course to the west
 - Residential developments to north of heath
 - Views from the north
 - O/h powerlines (adverse impact)



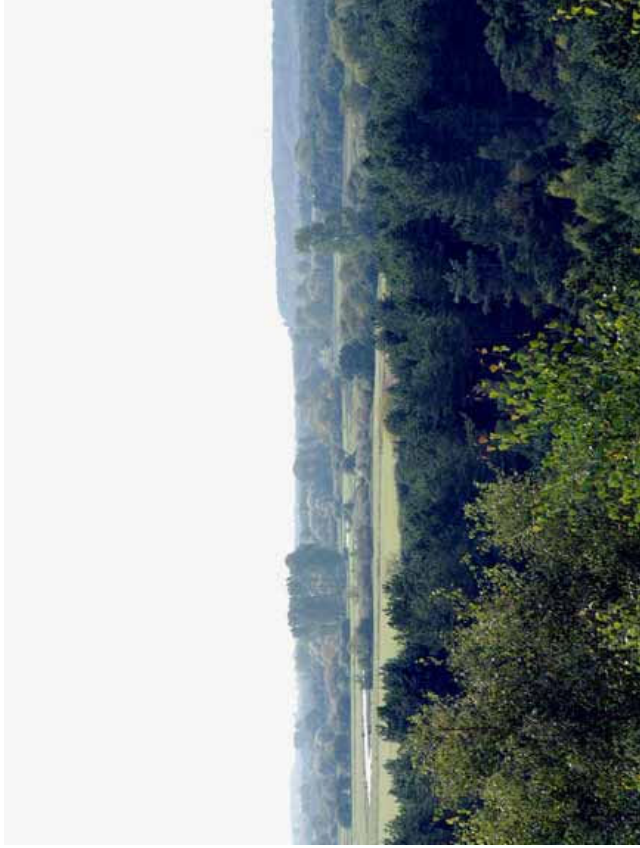
View across southern part of Parley Common with the prominent overhead lines in the background

25) Lower Avon Valley

Context

Landscape Character Type: Lowland river valley

Landscape Description Unit No.450



Avon Valley from Matchams Viewpoint

Description

The River Avon, which coincides with the District Boundary, defines the easternmost edge of the District. This character area includes the river and the adjacent alluvium beds.

The woods on the hills formed by the Bracklesham Beds and Plateau Gravels to the west overlook the flat, open meadowland either side of the River Avon and provide a significant backdrop to views within and across the valley. Woods and copses within the character area also make a crucial contribution to its special character and identity.



Development at Avon Castle overlooking the Avon Valley

To the north of the area on the west bank, the valley abuts the urban development at Avon Castle. Within East Dorset's boundary there are just two major areas of pastureland, at Watton's Ford and further to the south at Week Farm. Pasture forms the predominant land-use on the east bank of the river.

The river valley and the river itself are of significant ecological value and are protected by both national and international designations.

Historically the River was an important means of transport from Christchurch harbour to Salisbury. But the need to maintain a constant depth of water for boats conflicted with the demands of mill-owners and farmers who needed to draw off the water to irrigate their meadows which resulted in its gradual decline during the eighteenth-century.

Key Characteristics

- Flat, open meadows
- Enclosure by wooded, higher land to west
- Waterside trees and copses

Key Features

- Avon Castle developments to the west overlooking the valley
- Extensive views along valley
- Bridges

Appendix 1

Landscape Character Assessment Process

The assessment work is based on the current national guidance on landscape character assessment in the 2002 Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage "Landscape Character Assessment-Guidance for England and Scotland". It is subdivided into the following stages:

DESK STUDY - Defining and mapping Landscape Description Units (LDU) based on national datasets including: Natural dimension- relief, geology, soils; Cultural dimension: tree cover and farm type.

FIELD SURVEY – Visual dimensions, aesthetic qualities, distinctive features, landscape condition – visual unity, functional integrity.

(Note: regarding seasonal variation: As well as time and resources, the seasonal variation in the landscape is another factor in determining how and when the landscape is best assessed. Ideally photos should be taken at different times of the year to indicate the seasonal variations in each character area. The work in East Dorset was carried out mainly in the summer months)

CLASSIFICATION & DESCRIPTION – Amalgamation of LDUs into Landscape Character Areas based on visual attributes and cultural associations and Landscape Character Types.

EVALUATION & DECISION MAKING – Development of a strategic vision to inform Landscape Character based policy making and land management guidelines

CONSULTATION

Consultation can occur at any stage, most commonly in relation to draft Landscape Character Areas/Types. A Dorset wide stakeholder event on landscape character assessment was held in Wimborne on 16 June 2006 to provide an opportunity to introduce the principles of Landscape

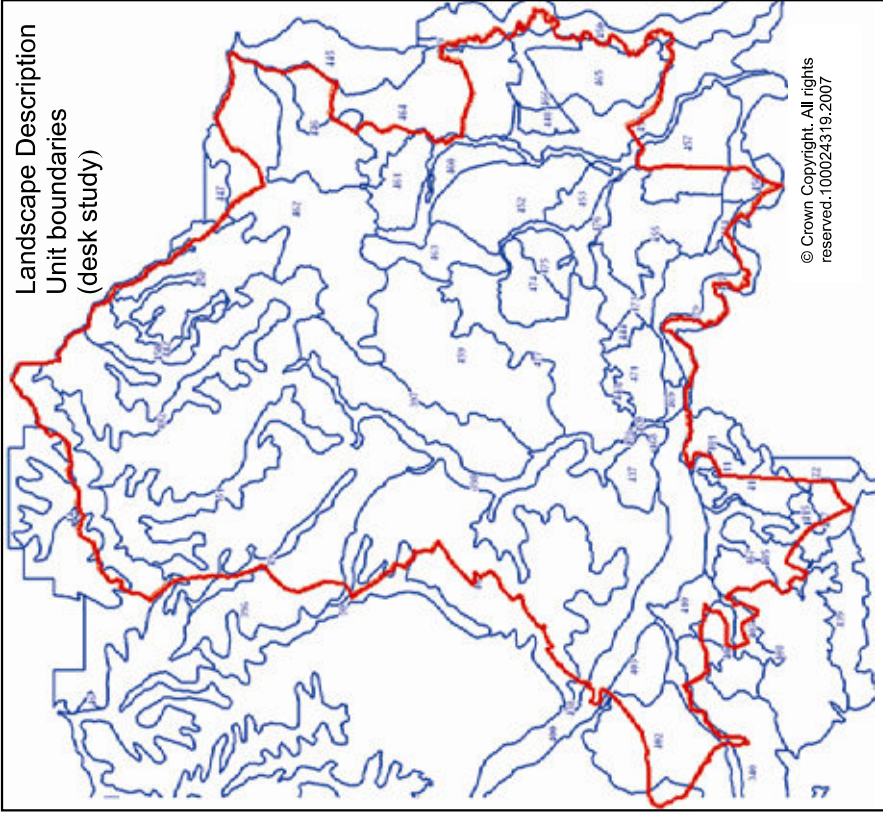
Character Assessment and focus on the needs of organisations involved in planning and land management in Dorset.

MONITORING - Increasingly formalised with the emergence of evidence-based approaches - aids targeting of resources and indicating success of initiatives.

Desk Study

This was primarily carried out by Diacono Associates and it was at this stage that the 'building blocks' of the landscape, the Level 2 Landscape Description Units (LDUs) were identified and mapped. Each of the 69 Landscape Description Units has its own associated database on geology, soils, ecology, physiography, settlement pattern and land use and cover. These datasets are used to define and separate the individual LDUs.

The mapped Landscape Description Unit boundaries and databases will be viewable on a 'MapInfo' GIS (Geographical Information Systems). The boundaries are also shown on the map below and detailed in Tables 1 and 2. Some of the information used to inform the characterisation process is included in Appendices 2 and 3.



assessment work carried out in East Dorset. This stage also involved field verification to check the initial boundaries for each area.

Each area was described in a relatively value-free and objective way and its key characteristics identified. Landscape character areas' 'key characteristics' are those aspects of character which give an area its distinct sense of place. Key features of importance are those elements of the landscape of particular prominence or those which catch the eye. The loss or change of key characteristics or features identified in the assessment would have a significant impact on the established landscape character. This would usually be negative, however impacts may also be positive where features or characteristics that are considered detrimental to landscape character are removed or altered.

At all stages work has been cross checked to ensure consistency of approach.

Making judgements

Landscape character assessment is a relatively value-free and objective process and can be used as a consistent evidence base for policy development and other planning and land management decisions. Making judgements is the next stage normally undertaken and is based upon the results of the characterisation process and can be used to inform future decision making for each area.

Classification and Description and Field Study

This involved the identification, classification, mapping and description of distinctive areas of recognisable and consistent character. These distinctive areas are known as Landscape Character Areas and are based on the mapped boundaries of the LDUs. The process also included the analysis of previous assessments such as the Dorset County Council Landscape Assessment dated 1993 and previous

Table 1

Level 2 Landscape Description Units Typology (4.2.1)

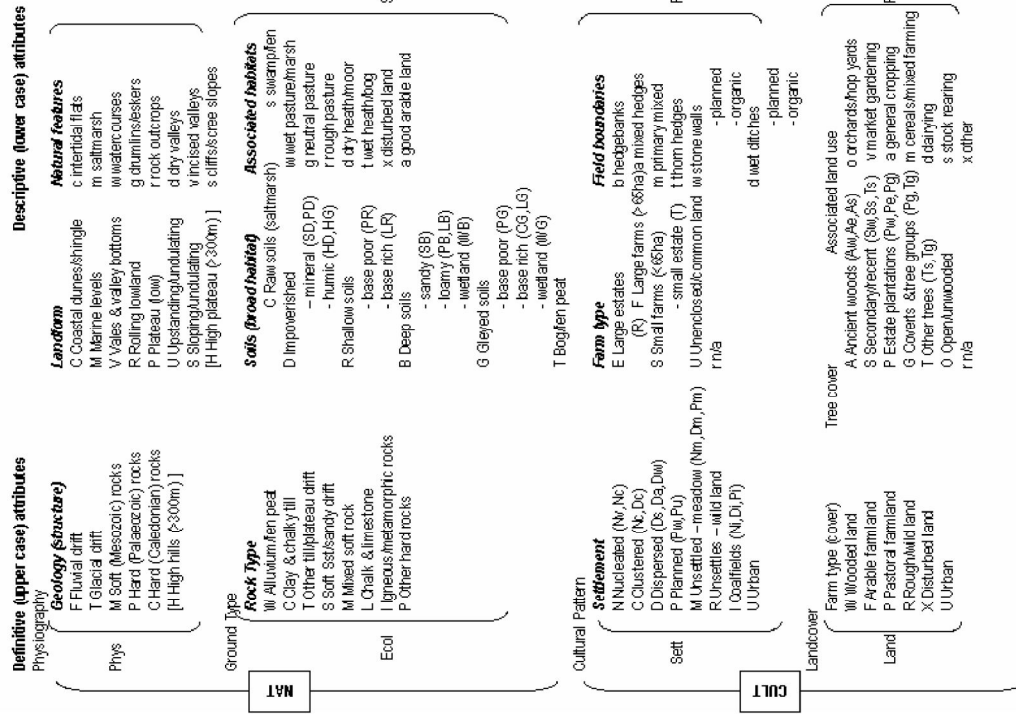


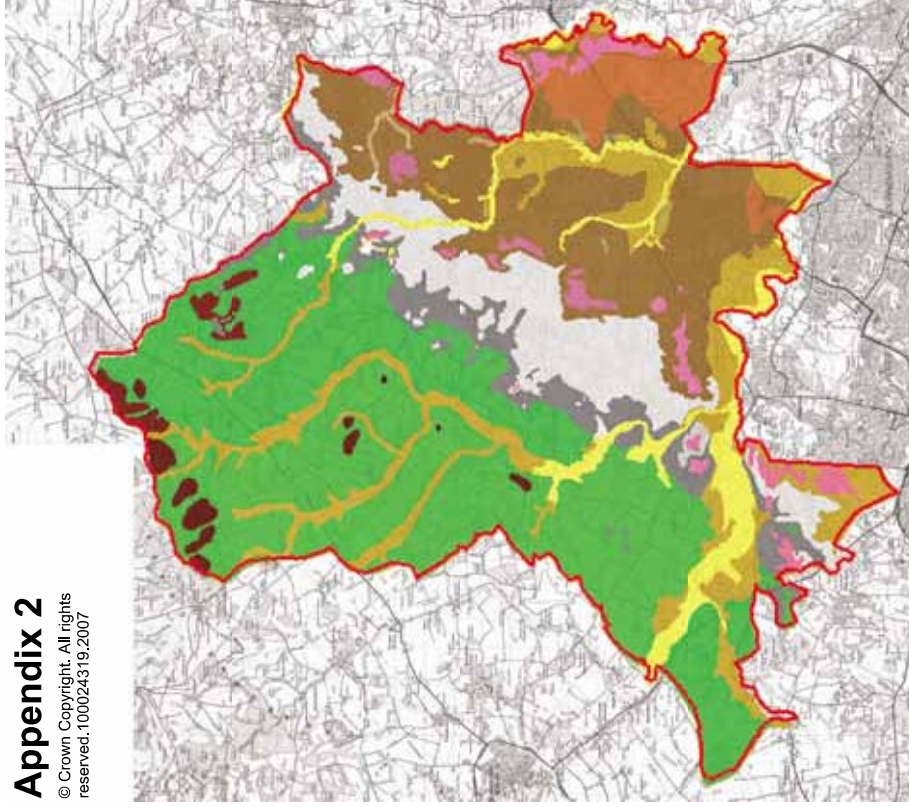
Table 2 Landscape Description Units in East Dorset

LDUNO	NAT	PHYS	ECOL	CULT	SETT	LAND	ECOL_SENS	CULT_SENS	VIS_SENS	ID
49		MP	LR	NEG	NE	FG				
50		MP	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
340		MR	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
402		MR	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
403		MR	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
405		MU	SB4	DS00	DS	00A				
407		MR	LR	DS4	DS	PA				
442		TP	TB4	NEG	ME	PT				
398		FV	UBT	MET	ME	PT				
443		MR	SD	CSA	CS	PA				
444		MR	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
445		MV	SB4	CS00	CS	00A				
446		MU	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
404		MU	LR	NE00	NE	FA				
447		MR	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
448		MV	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
449		FV	SBW	CSG	CS	FG				
450		FV	UBT	MSS	MS	FG				
451		MV	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
452		MV	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
453		MV	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
454		FV	SBW	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
455		MV	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
456		FV	SBW	CEG	CS	FG				
457		MV	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
458		MS	LR	NEG	NE	FA				
397		MR	LR	NE00	NE	FA				
459		MR	LR	NEG	NE	FA				
460		MR	MG4	CE00	CE	00A				
461		FV	SBW	PSS	PS	00A				
462		MU	MG4	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
463		MR	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
464		MR	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
465		MR	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
466		MR	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
422		MR	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
439		MR	M8g	DS4	DS	PA				
411		MU	SD	DSG	DS	FG				
415		MU	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
413		MU	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
417		MR	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
399		FV	UBT	MET	ME	PT				
407		MR	SB4	DSG	DS	FG				
410		FV	SBW	NEG	NE	FA				
487		MR	MB4	CEA	CE	FA				
469		FV	SBW	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
470		FV	SBW	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
471		MR	SD	Uhan	Ur	Ur				
472		FV	SBW	CSG	CS	FG				
473		MV	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
474		MR	SD	PSS	PS	00A				
475		FV	IND	MES	ME	PT				
476		MV	M0W	CS00	CS	00A				
465		FV	SBW	PSS	PS	00A				
409		FV	SBW	CSG	CS	FG				
406		MU	MB4	CEA	CE	FA				
483		MR	DS4	DS	PA	00A				
412		FV	UBG	MET	ME	PT				
400		FV	UBG	MET	ME	PT				
438		MV	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
482		MP	LR	NEG	NE	FA				
44		TP	TB4	NE00	NE	FA				
51		MU	LR	NEA	NE	FA				
395		MU	LR	NEG	NE	FA				
173		TP	TB4	NE00	NE	FA				
46		MS	LR	NE00	NE	FA				

Information to be validated

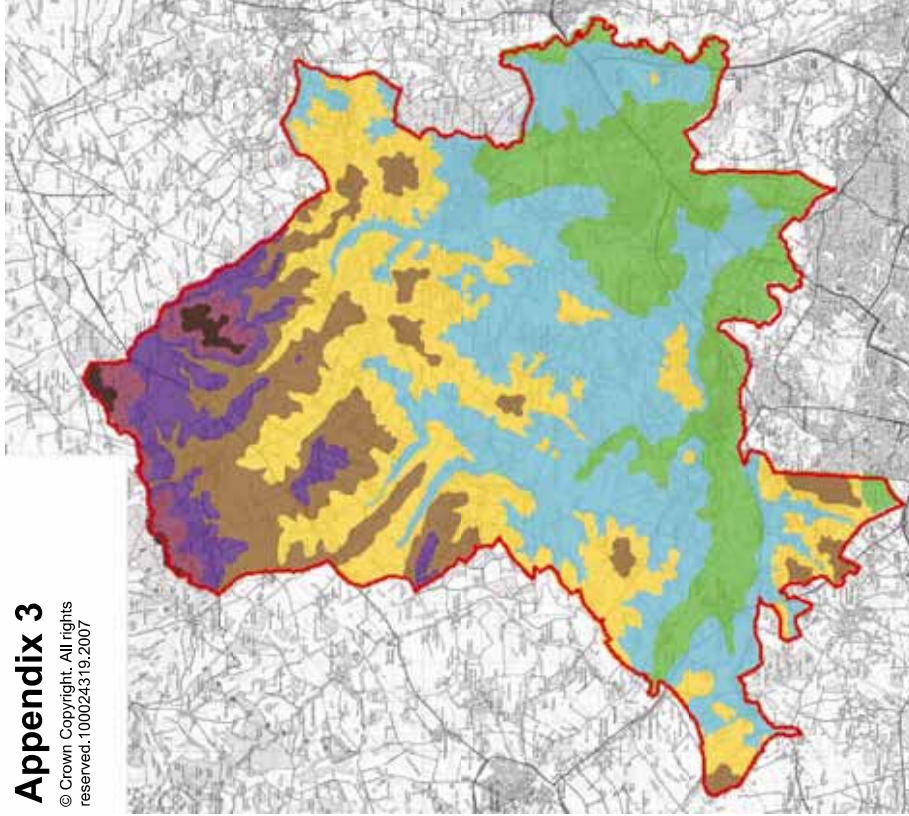
Appendix 2

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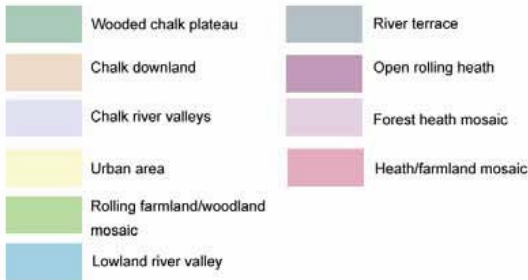


Appendix 3

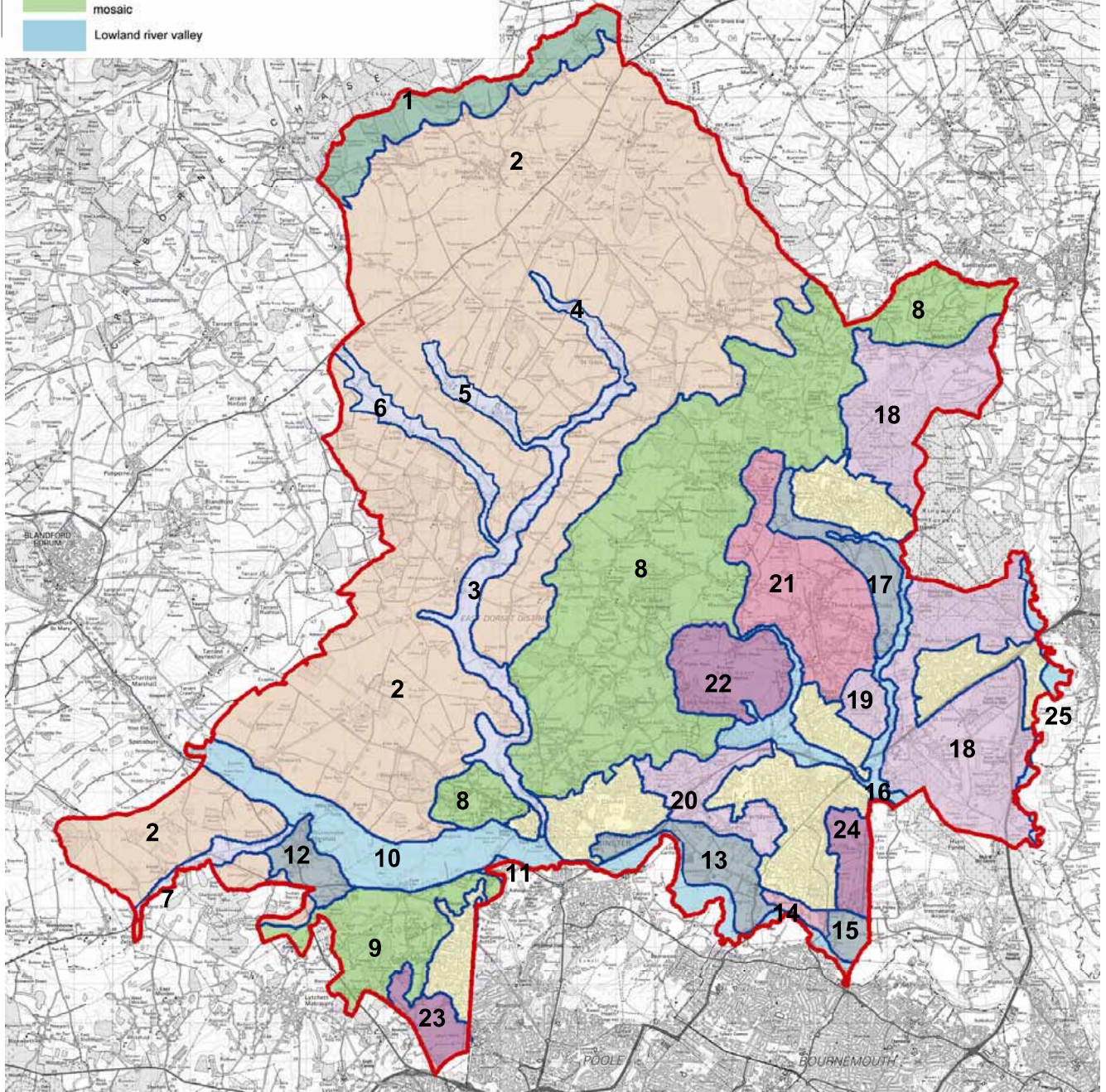
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Landscape Character Types



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East Dorset Landscape Character Areas 2008

(The areas shown are derived from the landscape character types identified in the key panel above) Map not to scale.

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Chase Woods | 10) Lower Stour Valley | 19) West Moors Forest/Heath Mosaic |
| 2) East Dorset Downs/South Blandford Downs/Bloxworth Downs | 11) Merley Ridge -Canford River Terrace | 20) Ferndown Forest-Staplehill |
| 3) Allen Valley | 12) Sturminster Marshall River Terrace | 21) Horton Common-Three Legged Cross |
| 4) Monkton Up Wimborne Valley | 13) Hampreston River Terrace | 22) Holt Heath |
| 5) Gussage Valley | 14) Dudsbury Ridge | 23) Upton Heath |
| 6) Criche Valley | 15) Parley River Terrace | 24) West Parley Heath |
| 7) Lower Winterborne Valley | 16) Moors River Valley | 25) Lower Avon Valley |
| 8) Woodlands-Colehill & Hillbutts farmland/woodland mosaic | 17) Dewlands-Rushmoor River Terrace | |
| 9) Henbury - Corfe, Morden-Lytchett farmland/woodland mosaic | 18) Ringwood-Hurn Forest/Heath Mosaic | |