



NORTH WESSEX DOWNS

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Historic Landscape Character Areas and their special qualities and features of significance



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Wyvern Heritage and Landscape Consultancy





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Summary

The North Wessex Downs AONB is one of the most attractive and fascinating landscapes of England and Wales. Its beauty is the result of many centuries of human influence on the countryside and the daily interaction of people with nature. The history of these outstanding landscapes is fundamental to its present-day appearance and to the importance which society accords it. If these essential qualities are to be retained in the future, as the countryside continues to evolve, it is vital that the heritage of the AONB is understood and valued by those charged with its care and management, and is enjoyed and celebrated by local communities.

The North Wessex Downs is an ancient landscape. The archaeology is immensely rich, with many of its monuments ranking among the most impressive in Europe. However, the past is etched in every facet of the landscape – in the fields and woods, tracks and lanes, villages and hamlets – and plays a major part in defining its present-day character. Despite the importance of individual archaeological and historic sites, the complex story of the North Wessex Downs cannot be fully appreciated without a complementary awareness of the character of the wider historic landscape, its time depth and settlement evolution.

This wider character can be broken down into its constituent parts. This process called ‘Characterisation’ is the process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

The North Wessex Downs AONB has an existing landscape character assessment (Land Use Consultants 2002) which identifies unique single areas of particular landscape types within the AONB such as chalk river valleys such as the Kennet. It also has a complementary Historic Landscape Characterisation (Wyvern Heritage and Landscape Consultancy, 2012; Conway 2007) which characterises the distinctive historic dimension of today’s landscape. This is a complex and multifaceted database concerned with time depth in the landscape as well as present day character comprised of recurrent but not necessarily geographically discrete Historic Landscape Types.

*This database has therefore been used as a basis for the identification of more strategic **Historic Landscape Character Areas**, which are akin to Landscape Character Areas in that they identify geographically discrete areas, with distinctive historic environment characteristics. These highlight surviving time-depth and the legibility and the enjoyment of the past in the present landscape. They identify the North Wessex Downs landscape’s cultural, historic and archaeological attributes and the importance of change through time as a primary characteristic. They provide a systematic overview of the characteristics of the historic landscape in the AONB and in this revised edition includes **their special qualities and features of significance** which can be used as a basis for the identification of management priorities and issues and actions.*

Section 1: Introducing the North Wessex Downs AONB Historic Landscape Character Areas

Twenty Eight distinct Historic Landscape Character Areas have been identified in the North Wessex AONB. The attributes used to identify the Historic Landscape Character Areas were based on information in the AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation. The HLC provided two key pieces of information:-

1. The present day historic landscape character present in the AONB.
2. The surviving evidence of the historical development of the area.

The following descriptions aim to provide an overview of each area which encapsulate the main features of the Historic Environment present and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent.

The process by which the Historic Landscape Character Areas were identified, and mapped, and the sources of information used to create these descriptions is documented in Section 3: Methodology.

Introducing Historic Landscape Character Areas

The creation of Historic Character Areas provides a method of consolidating historic characterisation data, and other sources such as Historic Environment Records into a more generalised dataset based on geographically specific areas.

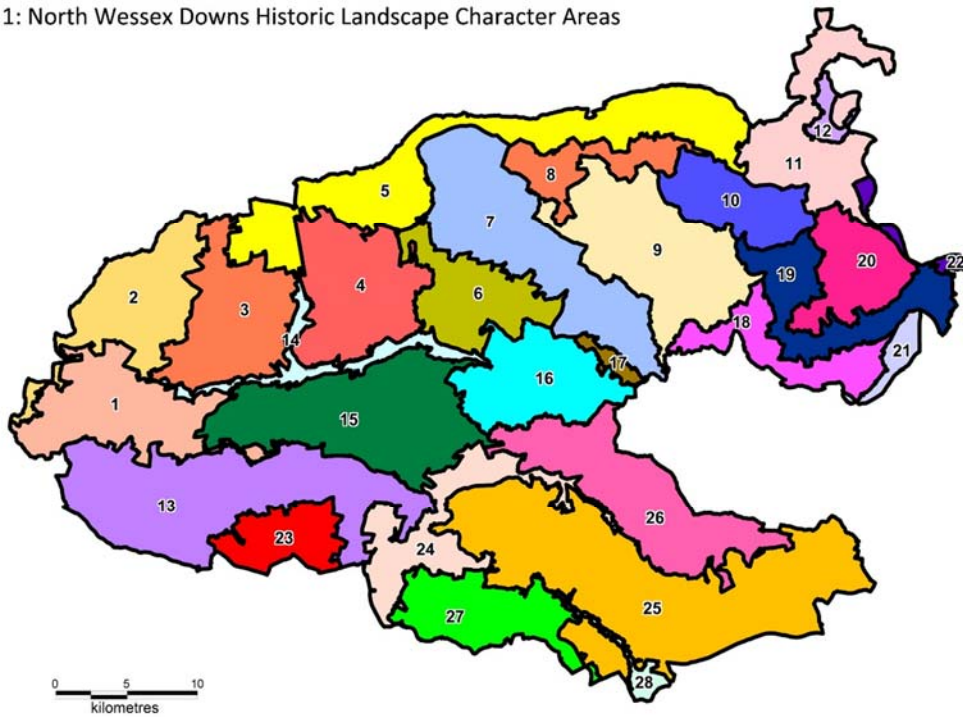
All historic characterisations (landscape, urban or seascape) form detailed, often complex, datasets which record the historic dimension of the present day. This complexity derives from the interrelation of several factors:

1. The characterisation dataset is often formed of many thousands of individual parcels of land each associated with a large amount of data.
2. The primary unit of these characterisations often called the Historic Character Type is usually not geographically specific. They often occur across the full geographical range of any given landscape. This forms a complex spatial pattern of interrelated types.
3. More recent characterisations record information on previous as well as present character

It is sometimes desirable to rework the datasets to provide a synthesis of the complex characterisation based on discrete geographical areas. This can be undertaken for three main reasons:

1. To allow the broad assessment of the historic and archaeological dimensions of the landscape.
2. To create areas that can be more easily engaged with and recognised by local people.
3. To aid in the creation of Historic Environment Action Plans and other management tools.

Figure 1: North Wessex Downs Historic Landscape Character Areas



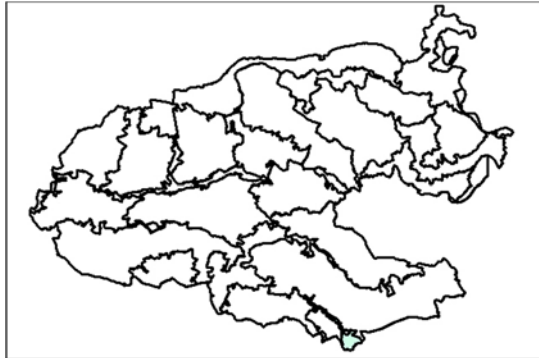
Map Produced by Wyvern Heritage and Landscape Consultancy 2012. © Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved (100049050) 2012.

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|-----|---------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Pewsey Downs | 16. | Middle Kennet Valley |
| 2. | Avebury Plain | 17. | Stockcross-Wickham Heath |
| 3. | Barbury Downs | 18. | Snelmore and Bucklebury Commons |
| 4. | Aldbourn Downs | 19. | Pang Valley and Sulham Gap |
| 5. | Northern Chalk Escarpment | 20. | Pang-Thames Plateaux |
| 6. | Lambourn Wooded Plateau | 21. | Kennet Valley East |
| 7. | Lambourn Valley | 22. | Thames Valley South |
| 8. | West Ilsley and Downland | 23. | Milton Hill and Down |
| 9. | Winterbourne Valley and Downs | 24. | Shalbourne Vale and Wick Down |
| 10. | Upper Pang Valley | 25. | Linkenholt, Litchfield and Hannington |
| 11. | Greenhill and Thurle Downlands | 26. | Highclere and Inkpen Common |
| 12. | Thames Valley North | 27. | Chute Forest - Faccombe |
| 13. | Pewsey Vale | 28. | Bourne Valley and Hurstbourne Park |
| 14. | Upper Kennet Valley | | |
| 15. | Savernake Forest and West Woods | | |

See Volume 2 Figure 1 for an A3 version of this map and for A3 Maps showing the individual location of these areas in relationship to Ordnance Survey 1:25000 mapping.

Area 28 Bourne Valley and Hurstbourne Park

Iron Age and Roman settlement and burials are known in the Bourne Valley particularly at the southern end. Medieval archaeology includes the remains of the Medieval deer park related to Hurstbourne Park, which in turn became a designed 18th century park.



Geology and Topography – The river cuts through the Upper Chalk exposing Middle Chalk on the valley sides. Valley gravel deposits overlay the valley floor. The valley has a distinct form with a flat, narrow floor enclosed by relatively steep sides

Landscape Character – Narrow valley floor and abruptly rising valley sides. This is an enclosed and intimate landscape. *Source: North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment Landscape Area 7C: Bourne Valley*

Archaeological Character – This valley is a tributary of the Test. The utilisation of the valley through time reflects the nature of the exploitation of the adjacent landscapes as well as the resources of the valley. The valley floor was a focus of occupation and route ways, farming and exploiting the chalk land either side. This might be the case from the Neolithic, but certainly Bronze Age burial mounds are known and Iron Age and Roman settlement and burials are known in the Bourne valley particularly at the southern end.

Medieval archaeology includes the remains of the Medieval deer park related to Hurstbourne Park.

Later Post Medieval archaeology includes watermeadows, and the Landscape Park and pleasure grounds of Hurstbourne Park.

The valley has been a route and a settled area from earliest times and the potential for the archaeology of past settlement is high.

Historic Landscape Trajectory – Formerly the valley bottom was dominated by pre 1700 enclosed meadows along each side of the river punctuated by small nucleated settlements. The meadows are formed of sinuous fields. These were probably originally for hay cultivation but are now mainly grazing and are likely to be Medieval or early Post Medieval in origin. In some instances they may have enclosed earlier open Medieval meadows which were used in combination with open fields which were outside of this area on the valley sides. In some areas these were interspersed with pre 1700 regular enclosure. These were probably created following an agreement between local land holders and farmers to rationalise and enclose holdings in the common fields.

The South of the area is associated with the former Medieval deer park at Hurstbourne. This was near a former area of ancient woodland adjacent to which were open areas of common land. These represent areas of common grazing in the valley bottom. The park was transformed into a designed landscape in the 18th century.

Between 1700 and 1900 century many of the enclosed meadows were replaced with water meadows with bedworks, channels and sluices created as part of the sheep-corn system of agriculture. These went out of use in the beginning of the 20th century.



The River Bourne, Hurstbourne Priors -

Formerly the valley bottom was dominated by pre 1700 enclosed meadows along each side of the river punctuated by small nucleated settlements.

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St Mary Bourne – The valley was historically densely settled with clusters of nucleated settlements at the top end of the valley with nucleated regular row settlements arranged along the course of the valley bottom. Buildings are largely of the local vernacular brick and tile.

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Hurstbourne Tarrant – The Pre 1700 enclosed meadows are still the dominant historic landscape type in the river valley where settlement infilling hasn't occurred. The water meadows were enclosed in the 20th century but many of the channels and bedworks remain as relicts in the landscape.

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Present Day Historic Landscape Character – The Pre 1700 enclosed meadows are still the dominant historic landscape type in the river valley where settlement infilling hasn't occurred. The water meadows were enclosed in the 20th century but many of the channels and bedworks remain as relicts in the landscape. Hurstbourne Park remains as a dominant feature associated with an area of replanted ancient woodland.

Historic Settlement Character – The valley was historically densely settled with clusters of nucleated settlements at the top end of the valley with nucleated regular row settlements arranged along the course of the valley bottom. Buildings are largely of the local vernacular brick and tile.

There has been significant infilling of settlement in the 20th century which has eroded the original nucleated settlement pattern and replacing it with long linear settlements either side of the river course.

Historic Farmstead Character – Isolated individual historic farmsteads are rare with most being situated on the edge of the historic settlements. Large courtyard farms, geared to large-scale arable production, are the dominant farmstead type. These include some of the earliest of this type (dating from the 18th century and earlier) in the country. Complete examples with one or more threshing barns, stabling, cart shed and a granary are very rare.

Courtyard plans present blank exteriors to surrounding settlements and landscapes, openings being concentrated on the elevations facing into the yards. The aisled barn is an iconic feature of the downland landscape, its integrity depending on the degree of structural completeness and the dominance of the expanse of the roof. Long straw style thatched roofing, which is rare in a regional context. Boundary walls are dominant and critical to the setting, particularly of village-based farmsteads.

Special Qualities and features of Significance

Archaeological Interest

- Bronze Age burial mounds
- Iron Age and Roman settlement and burials are known in the Bourne valley particularly at the Southern end.
- Medieval archaeology including the remains of the Medieval deer park related to Hurstbourne Park
- Later Post Medieval archaeology includes water meadows.

Historic Interest

Many prehistoric sites surviving as earthworks and have a very strong illustrative value as they are such dominant feature. Early Medieval and later earthworks in the valley bottom also survive

Surviving areas of pre 1700 enclosed meadows, and water meadows can be used to illustrate early pre modern land use. Earlier Medieval activity can also be illustrated through surviving buildings and earthworks.

Hurstbourne Park has a strong associative value with the designer Thomas Archer.

Architectural Interest

Historic buildings associated with Medieval valley floor settlements and the Medieval planned town of Marlborough. Vernacular chalk cob buildings.

Buildings associated with historic park at Hurstbourne

Aesthetic and artistic interest

Historic parks and garden at Hurstbourne have an important aesthetic interest.

Coherence, Rarity and Time depth

The Pre 1700 enclosed meadows are still the dominant historic landscape type in the river valley where settlement infilling hasn't occurred. The water meadows were enclosed in the 20th century but many of the channels and bedworks remain as relicts in the landscape.

Hurstbourne Park remains as a coherent feature associated with an area of replanted ancient woodland.

There is strong time depth relating to the prehistoric period with Bronze Age and Iron Age evidence being present, Roman archaeology is also present but the majority of the valley is dominated by early and late Medieval archaeology.

Designated Heritage – The one Scheduled Monuments (1) is a Bronze Age round barrow. The Listed Buildings (162) are related to the valley bottom settlement. There is 1 parkland on the register of parks and gardens at Hurstbourne. The park was emparked in 1332 and documented in 1558 as comprising orchards and gardens. In about 1712 Thomas Archer re-landscaped the park for John Farley. Further alterations were made during the late 18th century and early 19th century.