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# Landscape Sensitivity to Wind and Solar Energy Development in North Dorset District

Prepared by LUC  
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# 7 Assessment of Sensitivity to Wind and Solar PV Energy Development in North Dorset

## Using the assessment for a specific location or area

- 7.1 The assessment is presented by **Landscape Character Type (LCT)** so the map of all LCTs within the District in **Figure 6** should be referenced to identify the relevant LCT(s).
- 7.2 The heading page for each LCT (**Figure 9**) gives the names of the **Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)** that fall (wholly or partly) within the LCT and a **map** is provided to illustrate the relevant LCT and LCA boundaries within the District. A smaller inset map shows occurrences of the LCT across the whole County. It should be noted that there is not always a consistent relationship between LCTs and LCAs: typically an LCT will subdivide into one or more LCAs but sometimes one LCA will cover more than one LCT (as noted in **Table 3** in section 4).

### Landscape character type: Wooded Chalk Downland

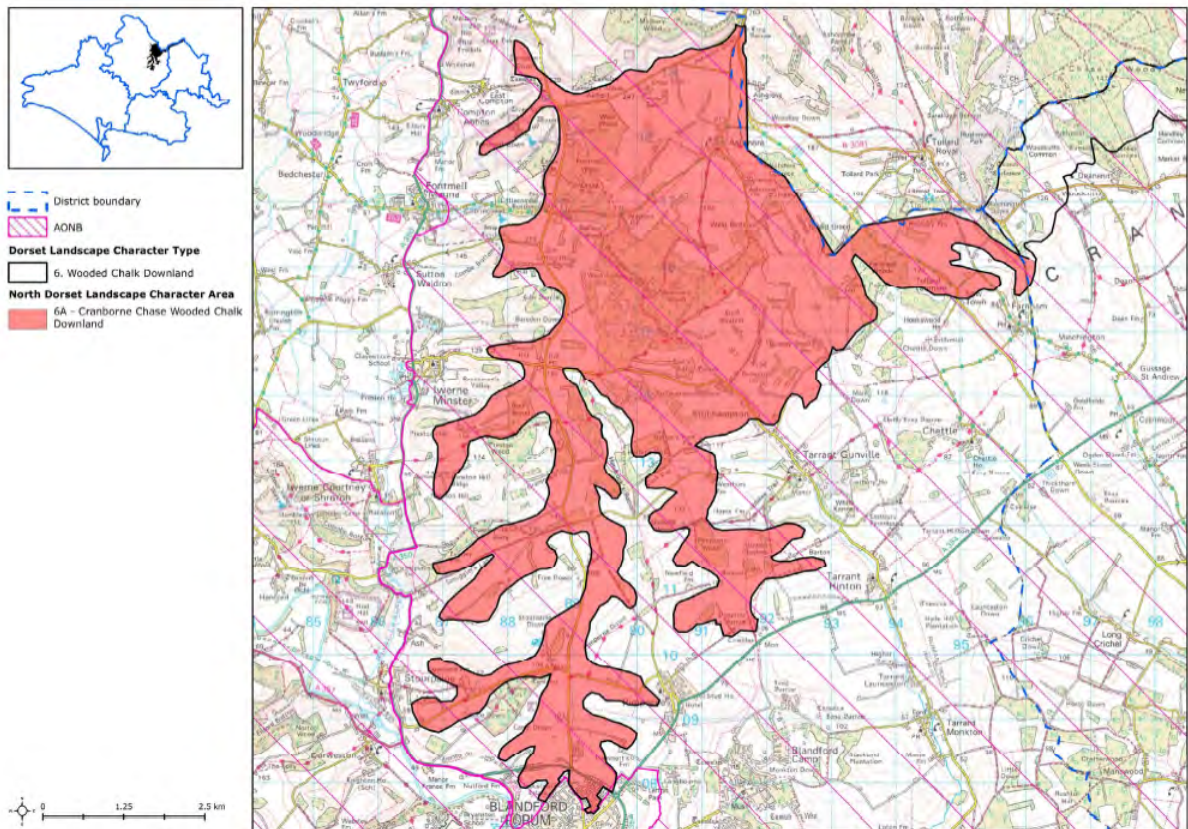


Figure 9: example of heading page for LCT

- 7.3 Where a substantial part of an LCA is defined at County-level as being in a different LCT to the rest the LCA assessment is likewise split, but where boundary differences between LCT and LCA definitions are less significant, affecting only small areas, the LCA is assessed as a whole. In the case of an area of interest in an LCA falling outside of the boundary for the LCT, as will be clear from the assessment mapping, the reader should also make separate reference to the assessment for the nearest LCA in the LCT in question, in case this identifies any potential differences in sensitivity.

- 7.4 An assessment table for the LCT (**figure 10**) follows the map page. This starts with a brief **overview** of the LCT location and relationship with LCAs and surrounding LCTs. The following lines list relevant information from the County-level 'key characteristics' and 'landscape management guidance' for the LCT, arranged under headings of **susceptibility criteria** (as identified in section 6 above). Direct quotes from published assessments are shown in italics, whilst other text represents the assessment judgements formed by LUC on the basis of the published assessments and supported by fieldwork carried out by LUC between October and December 2013.
- 7.5 The LCT descriptions are also drawn upon to identify any factors which add **value** either to the LCT or to particular elements within it. These might be 'special qualities' associated with a designated landscape (e.g. an AONB) or other aspects of value (see **Figure 7**) which could influence the sensitivity of the landscape to wind or solar PV development.

Wooded Chalk Downland LCT overview	
<p>The Wooded Chalk Downland LCT lies adjacent to the Chalk Ridge Escarpment but only occurs to the north of the Stour, within Cranborne Chase. Most of the LCT area is in North Dorset, principally to the north of Stubbhampton but also extending in narrower ridge top arms south towards Blandford. In East Dorset the LCT forms a narrow belt along the county boundary, continuing northwards up to the chalk escarpment in Wiltshire.</p>	
Wooded Chalk Downland LCT characteristics by susceptibility criteria	
<p><b>Scale and complexity of landform:</b></p> <p><i>"...characteristic deeply eroded topography of steep chalk valleys, dry coombs, upstanding ridges and plateaus with open views."</i></p> <p>The landform is complex and the extent of variation gives it a generally small scale.</p>	<p><b>Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:</b></p> <p><i>"distinctive land cover mosaic of improved grassland, shelter belts, ancient woodland and open downland ... with the landcover creating 'enclosed spaces' surrounded by trees"</i></p> <p><i>"Clipped hedgerows provide field boundaries to mostly medium to large irregularly shaped fields and to the generally straight roads and lanes which run across the area."</i></p>
<p><b>Visual exposure:</b></p> <p><i>"Panoramic views over adjacent escarpments and foothills."</i></p>	<p><b>Development and activity:</b></p> <p><i>"The area has been settled continuously from the Iron Age, with evidence of many prehistoric earthworks, but now there are few settlements with Ashmore being the only hilltop village in the area. The rest of the buildings, hamlets, farms and old lodges are disbursed throughout the area and are often linked via a dense network of bridleways and footpaths."</i></p>
Wooded Chalk Downland LCT value characteristics	
<p>All of the Wooded Chalk Downland Landscape lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, which is valued for special qualities which include a distinctive landform, overlying woodland mosaic, a sense of history and remoteness and a tranquil, rural character. The remote, rural character is strong on this high, wooded chalk terrain.</p> <p>The principal Management Objective for the Wooded Chalk Downland LCT is "to conserve the distinctive classical English landscape created by the dramatic chalk valleys, ridges and plateau, diverse woodland, copses, shelterbelts, avenues and parkland trees". The Management Guidance Notes include the following:</p> <p><i>"Identify, protect and conserve the long ranging views especially from roads, Rights of Way and key viewpoints e.g. via Parish Action Plans, Village Design Statements and other Settlement Appraisals.</i></p> <p><i>Conserve the distinctive character of the landscape and the long ranging views especially from roads, Rights of Way and key viewpoints e.g. by keeping built development off the ridge tops and exposed downland summits."</i></p> <p><i>"Many important archaeological sites..."</i></p>	

**Figure 10: example of LCT description page**

- 7.6 General comments are made regarding the sensitivity of the LCT to wind and solar energy, with reference to the susceptibility criteria and landscape value (**Figure 11**).

Wooded Chalk Downland LCT sensitivity to wind energy	Wooded Chalk Downland LCT sensitivity to solar PV energy
<p>The dramatic landform, distinctive land cover and historical character of this LCT make it a highly valued landscape, which along with the chalk escarpment can be considered the heartland of the AONB, exhibiting many of the 'special qualities' on which the designation is based. Any development within this area can be considered sensitive, even where woodlands might provide screening from many viewpoints.</p> <p>Some distinction can be made between the higher downs to the south of Stubbhampton, where the definition of the LCT is narrow and in places has a plateau-like character, and the steeper, more complex topography of the 'core' of Cranborne Chase to the north; however the visual exposure of these ridge tops means that sensitivity is still high.</p>	<p>The dramatic landform, distinctive land cover and historical character of this LCT make it a highly valued landscape, which along with the chalk escarpment can be considered the heartland of the AONB, exhibiting many of the 'special qualities' on which the designation is based. Any development within this area can be considered sensitive, even where woodlands might provide screening from many viewpoints.</p> <p>Some distinction can be made between the higher downs to the south of Stubbhampton, where the definition of the LCT is narrow and in places has a plateau-like character, and the steeper, more complex topography of the 'core' of Cranborne Chase to the north; however the visual exposure of these ridge tops means that sensitivity is still high.</p>

**Figure 11: example of LCT assessment text**

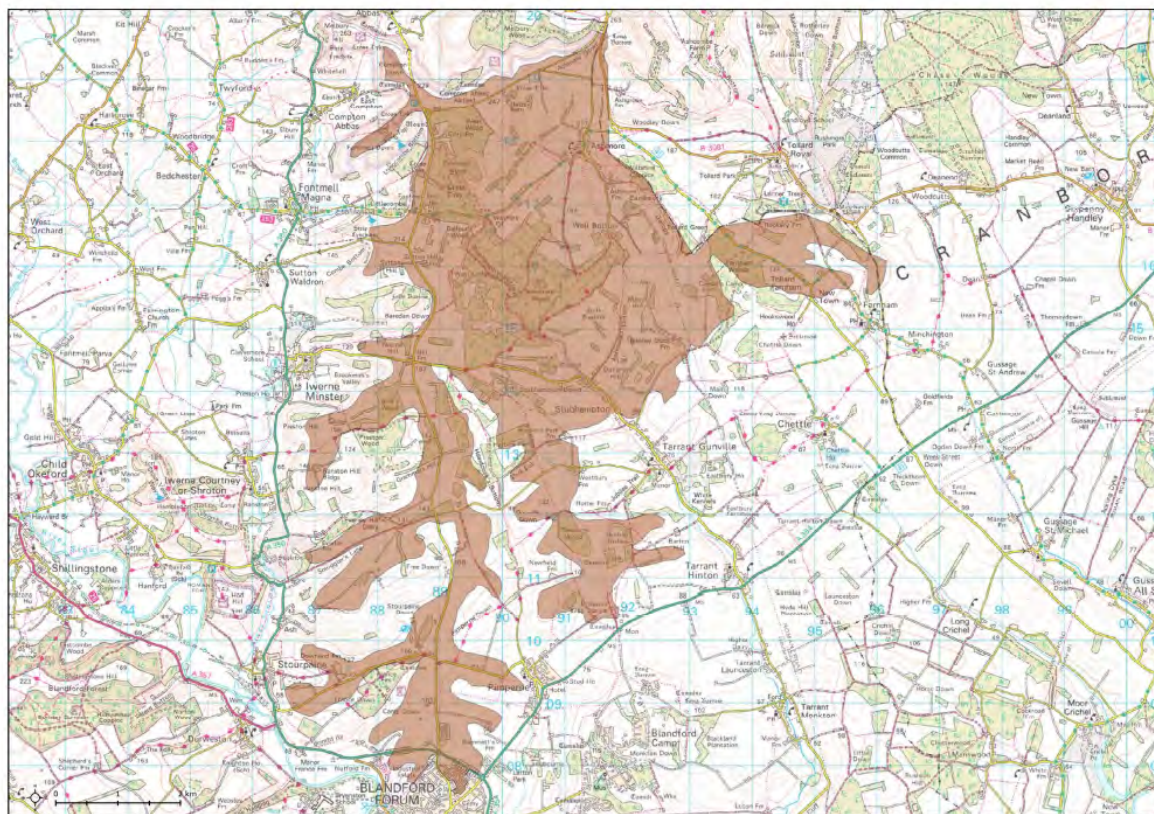
- 7.7 For each LCA represented within the LCT a map is presented to show the LCA, together with its area in hectares<sup>14</sup> (**Figure 12**). This is followed by quotes and comments relating to susceptibility and value in the same format as for the LCT but with reference to the District Landscape Character Assessment (**Figure 13**).

<sup>14</sup> Calculation based on LCA boundary data provided by North Dorset District Council



**Landscape character area: Cranborne Chase**

Area: 3815 hectares



**Figure 12: example of LCA map page**

Cranborne Chase LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria	
<p><b>Scale and complexity of landform:</b></p> <p><i>"... dramatic folds and dry coombes, ridges, smaller valleys and plateaus."</i></p> <p>The landform is complex and the extent of variation gives it a generally small scale.</p>	<p><b>Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:</b></p> <p><i>"A mixed arable and pastoral landscape with arable dominating further south ... has a greater percentage covering of woodland than the adjacent chalk downland areas ... A mosaic of chalk grassland, broadleaf and conifer woodlands and arable farmland."</i></p> <p><i>"The fields are medium to large, often getting larger to the south in the chalk upland areas and, due to the landform, often have irregular shapes, for example caused by the dry coomb curved valleys. Clipped hedgerows provide the field boundaries to most fields and to the generally straight roads and lanes which run across the area."</i></p>
<p><b>Visual exposure:</b></p> <p><i>"An exposed and elevated wooded chalk downland landscape"</i></p> <p><i>"Panoramic views over the adjacent escarpment and foothills"</i></p>	<p><b>Development and activity:</b></p> <p><i>"Few settlements and dispersed scattering of farmsteads"</i></p> <p>Lack of settlement gives the landscape a remote character.</p>
Cranborne Chase LCA value characteristics	
<p>The LCA is designated as part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.</p> <p><i>"...special, unique character and sense of place with the land cover creating enclosed spaces surrounded by trees."</i></p> <p><i>"...bridleways and footpaths together with the unique landscape of the Chase help to make the area an important recreational resource."</i></p> <p><i>"Medieval royal hunting grounds with surviving features such as park pales ... Numerous barrows, tumuli and other prehistoric earthworks ... Several Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as cross dykes and earthworks which form key features across the area"</i></p> <p><i>"The Rushmore Estate provides a typical 'estate managed' landscape with exceptional trees and distinctive managed copses, shelter belts, plantations, parkland trees and hedgerows in a well-managed built environment."</i></p> <p>The lack of settlement and combination of enclosure and long, panoramic views give the LCA a sense of remoteness.</p>	

**Figure 13: example of LCA description page**

7.8 Matrices are provided for each LCA to give, for each development typology, **ratings** of overall **sensitivity**, weighing up the importance of characteristics and associated susceptibility criteria for the LCT in general and the specific LCA in question and taking into consideration any aspects of landscape value which would affect the judgement. Summaries are provided to explain the judgements and to note any **local characteristics** which might serve to increase or decrease the sensitivity from the rating provided for the LCA as a whole (**Figure 14**).

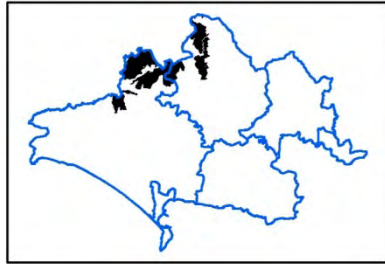
Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to wind energy		Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																				
<p style="text-align: center;">Turbine height</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>≤35</td> <td>≤65</td> <td>≤99</td> <td>&gt;99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cluster size</td> <td>1</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2-4</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>&gt;4</td> <td></td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> <td>H</td> </tr> </table>			≤35	≤65	≤99	>99	Cluster size	1	H	H	H	H		2-4	H	H	H	H		>4		H	H	H	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Development size</td> <td>≤1</td> <td>MH</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>≤10</td> <td>H</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>≤30</td> <td>H</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>&gt;30</td> <td>H</td> </tr> </table>		Development size	≤1	MH		≤10	H		≤30	H		>30	H
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Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to wind energy		Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																				
<p>Sensitivity to all scales of wind energy development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The value attached to this LCA derives from a combination of landform, land use, visual exposure, historic character and lack of modern development. All of these characteristics would be sensitive to wind energy development.</p>		<p>Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of less than 1 hectare is <b>moderate-high</b> and sensitivity to larger schemes is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The value attached to this LCA derives from a combination of landform, land use, visual exposure, historic character and lack of modern development. All of these characteristics would be sensitive to solar PV development. There may be locations with more even terrain where a small development would be well screened by woodland blocks, but any scale of development would be out of character with the historic landscape.</p> <p>Sensitivity is notably high where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location is prominent in views from public rights of way;</li> <li>Location has an adverse effect on the setting of a historic landscape feature or parkland (e.g. Rushmore).</li> </ul>																																				





Figure 14: example of LCA assessment page

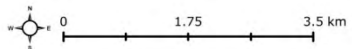
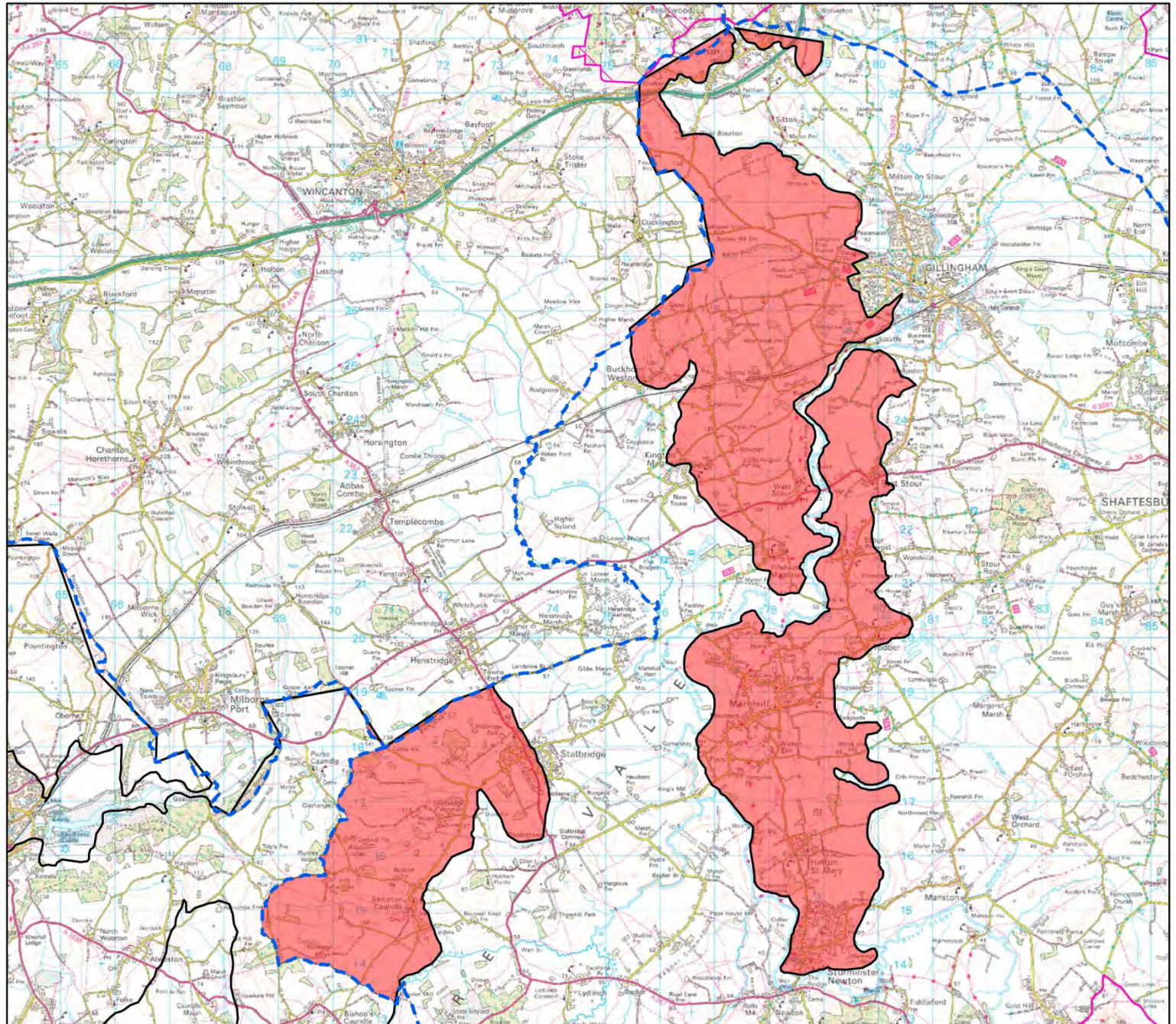
- 7.9 Reference should be made to the published landscape character assessments to gain a fuller picture of characteristics and features of an area.
- 7.10 Sections 8 and 9 have maps to show sensitivity ratings across all the LCAs in the District. For wind power there is one map for each combination of cluster size and turbine height and for solar PV energy there is one map per size category.



# Landscape character type: Limestone Hills



-  District boundary
-  AONB
- Dorset Landscape Character Type**
-  14. Limestone Hills
- North Dorset Landscape Character Area**
-  14A - North Dorset Limestone Ridges





## Limestone Hills LCT overview

There are three main areas of Limestone Hills in Dorset, all located in the northern part of the county and subdividing the flatter vale landscapes. The principal area within North Dorset District runs north-south from Bourton down to Sturminster Newton and the smaller part of an area centred on Sherborne in West Dorset also crosses into North Dorset. A third area is located further west. The ridge between Bourton and Sturminster is split in two in a north-south direction between Gillingham and Marnhull by the Stour Valley.

All the Limestone Hills within North Dorset are treated as one LCA: the North Dorset Limestone Ridges.

## Limestone Hills LCT characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### Scale and complexity of landform:

The landscape is described as having a *“broken and varied relief due to the complex geological structure across the area”*. The Bourton–Sturminster ridge is shallow, with some larger scale landforms, but there are also incised valleys with a smaller scale.

### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*“...varied with dense hedges, some steep open grassed slopes as well as wooded and scrub covered slopes and enclosed valleys. There are fewer trees on elevated areas and the mixed farmed fields are larger with more arable than those in the vales”*

### Visual exposure:

*“There are open expansive views from these elevated areas.”*

### Development and activity:

*“The development pattern of villages either follows the ridgetops, as at Hinton St Mary, Marnhull and Bishops Caundle ... or on the sloping hillsides as at Stalbridge, Buckthorn Weston, Kington Magna and Stourton Caundle.”*

## Limestone Hills LCT value characteristics

The Limestone Hills LCT does not fall within a nationally designated landscape, but the northern end of the Bourton-Sturminster ridge adjoins the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

*“The overall management objective for the Limestone Hills Landscape Type should be to conserve the intimate character of the incised valleys and wooded hillsides. Replanting new hedgerow trees, enhancing the management of existing woodland and the conservation of the parkland landscapes are also key objectives.”*

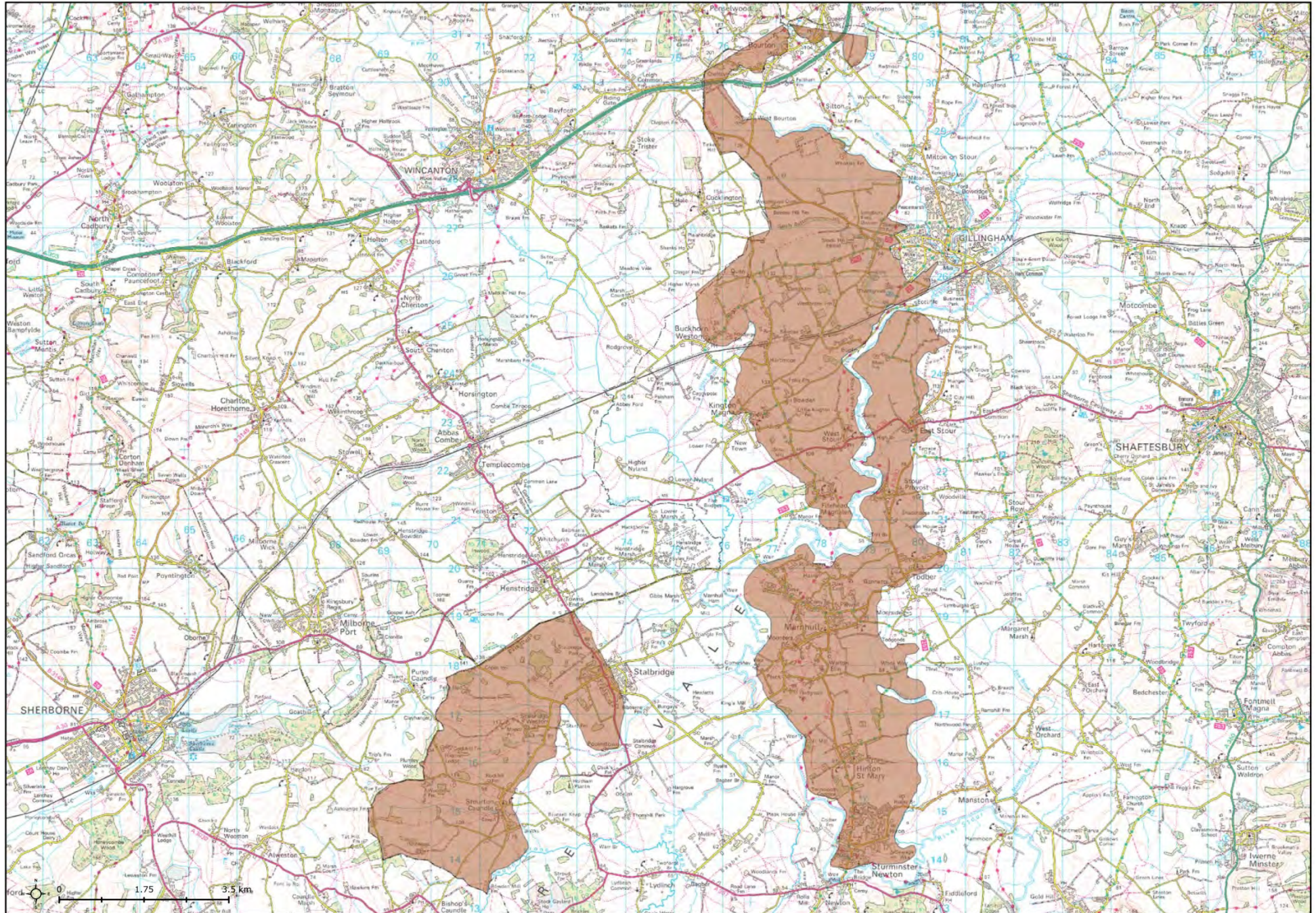
*“These picturesque limestone villages and their church towers; the manor houses, stately homes and scattered farmsteads are all characteristic in this limestone scenery. Stonewalls, using local limestone, are key features associated with the parkland landscapes.”*

Limestone Hills LCT sensitivity to wind energy	Limestone Hills LCT sensitivity to solar PV energy
<p>The varied terrain of the Limestone Hills LCT offers some larger areas of plateau that in terms of landform scale alone would be of lower sensitivity to wind energy development, but also some areas of complex, locally varied terrain which would be of higher sensitivity. Land use and field pattern tend to suggest a typically higher level of sensitivity associated with the smaller scale, more vegetated lower slopes and valleys, and a lower level of sensitivity on the more open, elevated areas.</p> <p>Visually the higher ground is naturally more exposed to views both from within and beyond the LCT, but some parts of the LCA are far enough from the AONB that they are unlikely to have an impact on its setting.</p>	<p>Areas of undulating terrain will be sensitive to solar PV developments but there are some more even slopes or plateau-like areas which will have lower sensitivity in terms of topography. The mixed pastoral and arable land use in the LCT is typically less sensitive than the surrounding vales, where pastures dominate. Field sizes, shapes and strength of hedgerows and tree cover vary so sensitivity varies accordingly. This is a rural landscape, so there will be a certain level of sensitivity to a more industrial land use such as solar PV, but it is not a remote area, being more populated than the surrounding vales. The scale of the landscape in any given area will be an important factor in determining sensitivity, with more intimate areas being of higher sensitivity to larger developments.</p>



# Landscape character area: North Dorset Limestone Ridges

Area: 5818 hectares





## North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### Scale and complexity of landform:

*“Overall the area has the same character but it is divided into two separate parts. One is the low north-south rounded ridge extending from Sturminster Newton to Bourton which divides the Blackmore Vale into two and the second area is a rolling, elevated, plateau landscape between Stalbridge and Stourton Caundle. The latter area forms part of a large area of limestone hills and ridges extending west to Sherborne and beyond. ... has a more undulating and elevated plateau feel to it”*

*“The area between Sturminster Newton and Bourton ... is gently divided by the River Stour Valley which runs north to south through this ridge line and forms its western boundary to the south. The eastern slopes of the area are more gradual to the Vale pastures but there is a more distinct change in slope on the western side between Fifehead Magdalen and Buckhorn Weston.”*

### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*“Both areas are diverse being a mainly pastoral farmed landscape with some arable and characterised by relatively thick hedgerows, often trimmed alongside the roads and tall and straggly in other places. The medium sized fields are irregularly shaped and there are frequent copses and plantations often on the high points. There are fewer hedgerows here than in the adjacent Blackmore Vale and willows and alders are often found in the small brook valleys between the undulating landform.”*

*“The area [between Stalbridge and Stourton Caundle] is more wooded than the area to the east with many of them being designated SNCI and Ancient Woodland. There are several distinctive copses situated on high points.”*

### Visual exposure:

*“The area between Sturminster Newton and Bourton forms a distinctive long rounded profile when seen from the west”*

*“[between Stalbridge and Stourton Caundle] there are open views from high points across the Blackmore Vale towards the chalk escarpment”*

### Development and activity:

*“There are many scattered farmsteads and agricultural buildings throughout the area. The settlement pattern is distinctive with some on the plateau tops such as Marnhull and Hinton St Mary and other villages ‘hanging’ onto the side slopes such as at Kingston Magna, Fifehead Magdalen and Buckhorn Weston”*

*“Both Sturminster Newton and Marnhull have some poorly integrated urban edges.”*

Although the LCA has many settlements it lacks large scale, modern development, and so can be considered to contribute to giving the area a peaceful, rural character.

## North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA value characteristics

*“Twinwood Coppice at Hinton St Mary forms a key feature in this upland landscape.”*

*“The parkland landscape at Stalbridge Park and in particular the Estate roadside walls are key features in this area.”*

There is a general sense of rural tranquillity in the LCA, although there are too many settlements for there to be any sense of remoteness.

North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA sensitivity to wind energy

		Turbine height (m)			
		≤35	≤65	≤99	>99
Cluster size	1	LM	M	MH	H
	2-4	M	MH	MH	H
	>4		H	H	H

North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy

		Development size (ha)
	≤1	LM
	≤10	M
	≤30	MH
	>30	H

North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA sensitivity to wind energy

Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is **low-moderate**. Sensitivity to 2-4 turbines less than 35m high or to single turbines less than 65m high is **moderate**. Sensitivity to 2-4 turbines up to 65m in height, or up to 4 turbines between 66-99m, is **moderate-high**. Sensitivity to all other scales of wind energy development is **high**.

The westernmost area of Limestone Ridges, centred on Stourton Caundle, is a relatively complex landscape in terms of landform and land cover, giving it a human scale and making it sensitive to large scale wind development. However, its scale is not as small as the surrounding clay vale, and in the context of the District as a whole the distance from much of the LCA to the AONB-designated high chalk downs means that visual sensitivity is not as high as is typically the case in more easterly or southerly parts of North Dorset, where turbines would have potential to impact on the character and special qualities of the AONB. As a quiet, rural area with little modern development there will be a certain degree of sensitivity to any large scale development but sensitivity to smaller turbines associated with farms would be lower.

The terrain in the easternmost area of Limestone Ridges, between Bourton in the north and Sturminster Newton in the south, includes some more open, larger scale, plateau-like areas in which sensitivity would tend to be lower but also some areas where the land cover pattern is smaller in scale.

Sensitivity might be higher where:

Location is on a steeper slope (e.g. along the western edge of the LCA between

North Dorset Limestone Ridges LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy

Sensitivity to solar PV developments of less than 1 hectare is **low-moderate**, sensitivity to developments of 1-10 hectares is **moderate**, sensitivity to 10-30 hectares schemes is **moderate-high** and sensitivity to larger developments is **high**.

As a rural landscape with little modern intrusion there is a certain level of sensitivity to any solar PV development, and there are some undulating and exposed slopes, irregularly shaped fields and more 'intimate' areas that would be of higher sensitivity. However there are also some more even and screened slopes that are also fairly geometric in form where sensitivity to moderately-sized developments would be lower, particularly where there is a mixture of pastoral and arable land use.

Sensitivity might be higher where:

There is an adverse effect on the historic landscape setting of Stalbridge Park;

Landscape within site area is undulating or steeper in form (e.g. along the western edge of the LCA between Bourton and Sturminster);

Fields are irregular in form;

Location is prominent in views from AONB locations.

Bourton and Sturminster) or on the floor of one of the valleys feeding into the Stour;

Multiple turbine scheme is proposed in undulating terrain;

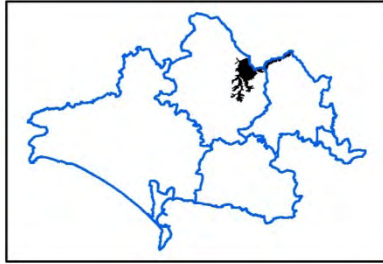
Landscape is smaller in scale, due to larger number/size of settlements and/or tree cover (e.g. in the vicinity of Stalbridge Weston and Stourton Caundle);





There is an adverse effect on the historic landscape setting of Stalbridge Park;

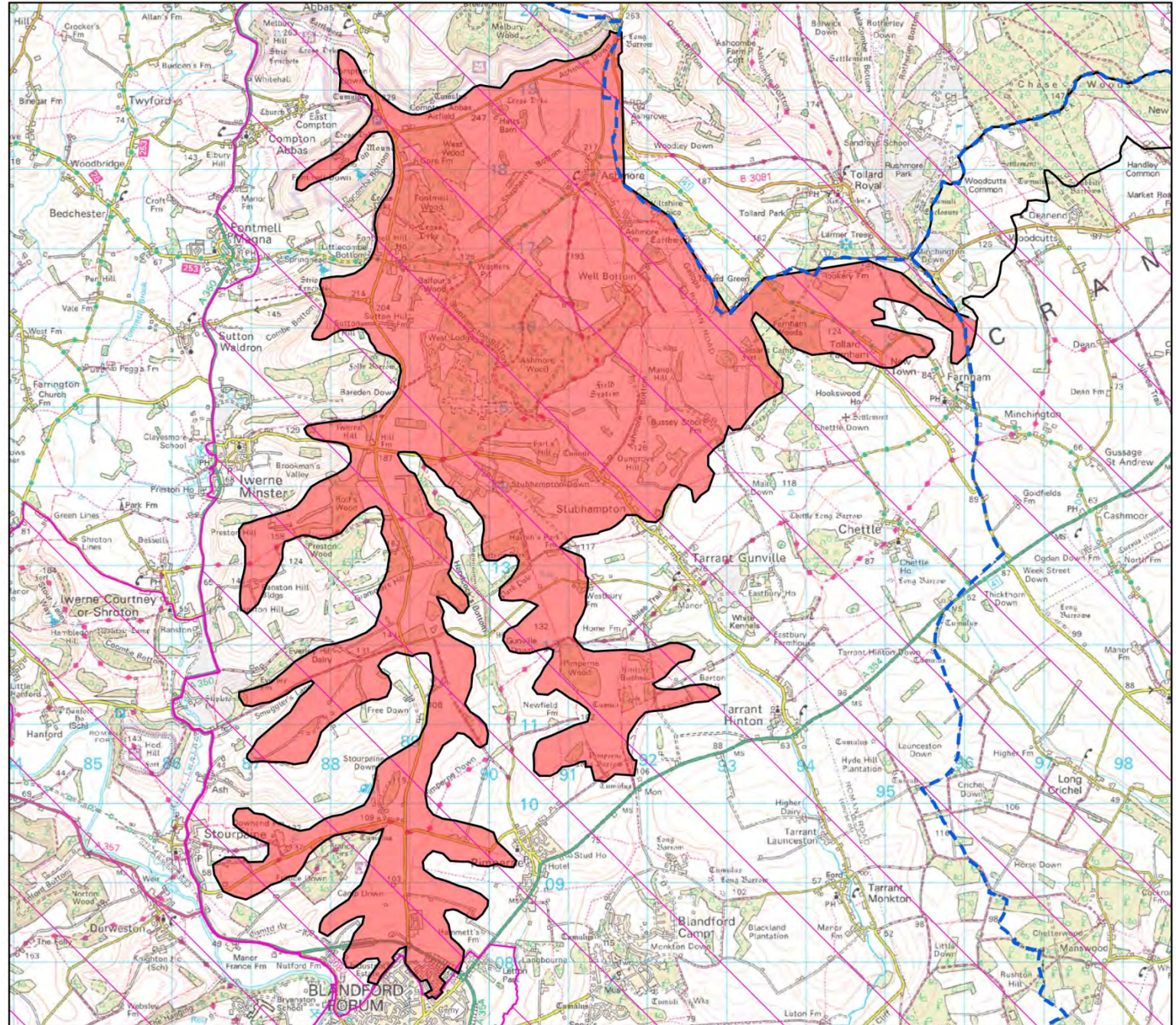
Location is prominent in views from AONB locations.



# Landscape character type: Wooded Chalk Downland



-  District boundary
-  AONB
- Dorset Landscape Character Type**
-  6. Wooded Chalk Downland
- North Dorset Landscape Character Area**
-  6A - Cranborne Chase Wooded Chalk Downland





## Wooded Chalk Downland LCT overview

The Wooded Chalk Downland LCT lies adjacent to the Chalk Ridge Escarpment but only occurs to the north of the Stour, within Cranborne Chase. Most of the LCT area is in North Dorset, principally to the north of Stubhampton but also extending in narrower ridge top arms south towards Blandford. In East Dorset the LCT forms a narrow belt along the county boundary, continuing northwards up to the chalk escarpment in Wiltshire.

## Wooded Chalk Downland LCT characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"...characteristic deeply eroded topography of steep chalk valleys, dry coombs, upstanding ridges and plateaus with open views."*

The landform is complex and the extent of variation gives it a generally small scale.

### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"distinctive land cover mosaic of improved grassland, shelter belts, ancient woodland and open downland ... with the landcover creating 'enclosed spaces' surrounded by trees"*

*"Clipped hedgerows provide field boundaries to mostly medium to large irregularly shaped fields and to the generally straight roads and lanes which run across the area."*

### Visual exposure:

*"Panoramic views over adjacent escarpments and foothills."*

### Development and activity:

*"The area has been settled continuously from the Iron Age, with evidence of many prehistoric earthworks, but now there are few settlements with Ashmore being the only hilltop village in the area. The rest of the buildings, hamlets, farms and old lodges are disbursed throughout the area and are often linked via a dense network of bridleways and footpaths."*

## Wooded Chalk Downland LCT value characteristics

All of the Wooded Chalk Downland Landscape lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, which is valued for special qualities which include a distinctive landform, overlying woodland mosaic, a sense of history and remoteness and a tranquil, rural character. The remote, rural character is strong on this high, wooded chalk terrain.

The principal Management Objective for the Wooded Chalk Downland LCT is *"to conserve the distinctive classical English landscape created by the dramatic chalk valleys, ridges and plateau, diverse woodland, copses, shelterbelts, avenues and parkland trees"*. The Management Guidance Notes include the following:

*"Identify, protect and conserve the long ranging views especially from roads, Rights of Way and key viewpoints e.g. via Parish Action Plans, Village Design Statements and other Settlement Appraisals.*

*Conserve the distinctive character of the landscape and the long ranging views especially from roads, Rights of Way and key viewpoints e.g. by keeping built development off the ridge tops and exposed downland summits."*

*"Many important archaeological sites such as burial mounds, cross dykes and earthworks..."*

*"...a dramatic, distinctive and historic landscape ... unique sense of place..."*

*"The extensive ancient woodlands of Ashmore and Chase Woods and the managed estate landscape of Rushmore Park are all key features in the area."*

(Rushmore Park is just across the border in Wiltshire, but is a distinctive element in the landscape affecting the Wooded Chalk Downland in nearby North and East Dorset).

**Wooded Chalk Downland LCT sensitivity to wind energy**

The dramatic landform, distinctive land cover and historical character of this LCT make it a highly valued landscape, which along with the chalk escarpment can be considered the heartland of the AONB, exhibiting many of the 'special qualities' on which the designation is based. Any development within this area can be considered sensitive, even where woodlands might provide screening from many viewpoints.

Some distinction can be made between the higher downs to the south of Stubhampton, where the definition of the LCT is narrow and in places has a plateau-like character, and the steeper, more complex topography of the 'core' of Cranborne Chase to the north; however the visual exposure of these ridge tops means that sensitivity is still high.

**Wooded Chalk Downland LCT sensitivity to solar PV energy**

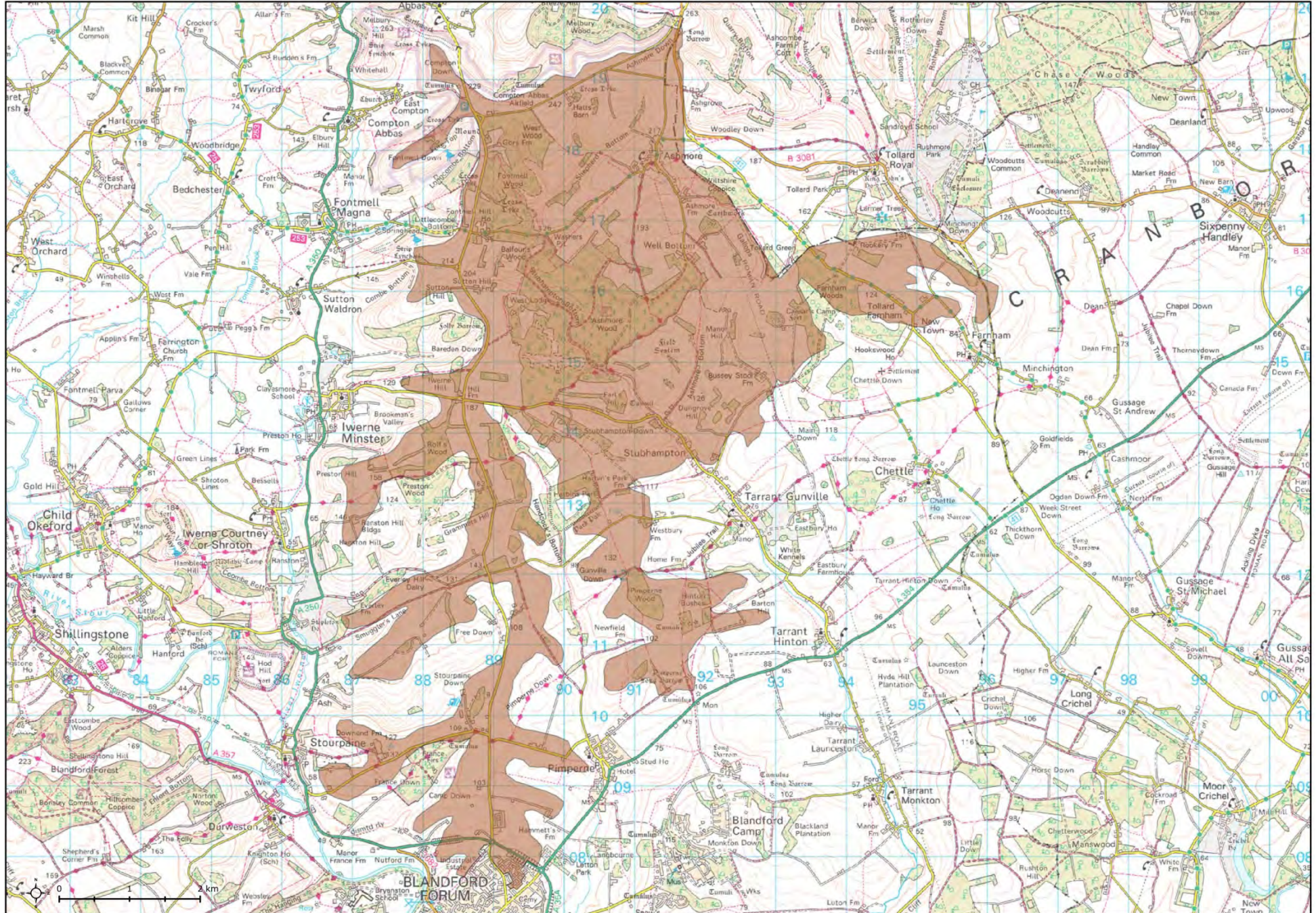
The dramatic landform, distinctive land cover and historical character of this LCT make it a highly valued landscape, which along with the chalk escarpment can be considered the heartland of the AONB, exhibiting many of the 'special qualities' on which the designation is based. Any development within this area can be considered sensitive, even where woodlands might provide screening from many viewpoints.

Some distinction can be made between the higher downs to the south of Stubhampton, where the definition of the LCT is narrow and in places has a plateau-like character, and the steeper, more complex topography of the 'core' of Cranborne Chase to the north; however the visual exposure of these ridge tops means that sensitivity is still high.



# Landscape character area: Cranborne Chase

Area: 3815 hectares





### Cranborne Chase LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"... dramatic folds and dry coombes, ridges, smaller valleys and plateaus."*

The landform is complex and the extent of variation gives it a generally small scale.

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"A mixed arable and pastoral landscape with arable dominating further south ... has a greater percentage covering of woodland than the adjacent chalk downland areas ... A mosaic of chalk grassland, broadleaf and conifer woodlands and arable farmland."*

*"The fields are medium to large, often getting larger to the south in the chalk upland areas and, due to the landform, often have irregular shapes, for example caused by the dry coomb curved valleys. Clipped hedgerows provide the field boundaries to most fields and to the generally straight roads and lanes which run across the area."*

#### Visual exposure:

*"An exposed and elevated wooded chalk downland landscape"*

*"Panoramic views over the adjacent escarpment and foothills"*

#### Development and activity:

*"Few settlements and dispersed scattering of farmsteads"*

Lack of settlement gives the landscape a remote character.

### Cranborne Chase LCA value characteristics

The LCA is designated as part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

*"...special, unique character and sense of place with the land cover creating enclosed spaces surrounded by trees."*

*"...bridleways and footpaths together with the unique landscape of the Chase help to make the area an important recreational resource."*

*"Medieval royal hunting grounds with surviving features such as park pales ... Numerous barrows, tumuli and other prehistoric earthworks ... Several Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as cross dykes and earthworks which form key features across the area"*

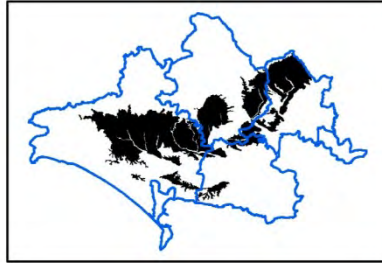
*"The Rushmore Estate provides a typical 'estate managed' landscape with exceptional trees and distinctive managed copses, shelter belts, plantations, parkland trees and hedgerows in a well-managed built environment."*











The lack of settlement and combination of enclosure and long, panoramic views give the LCA a sense of remoteness.

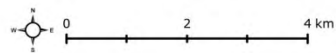
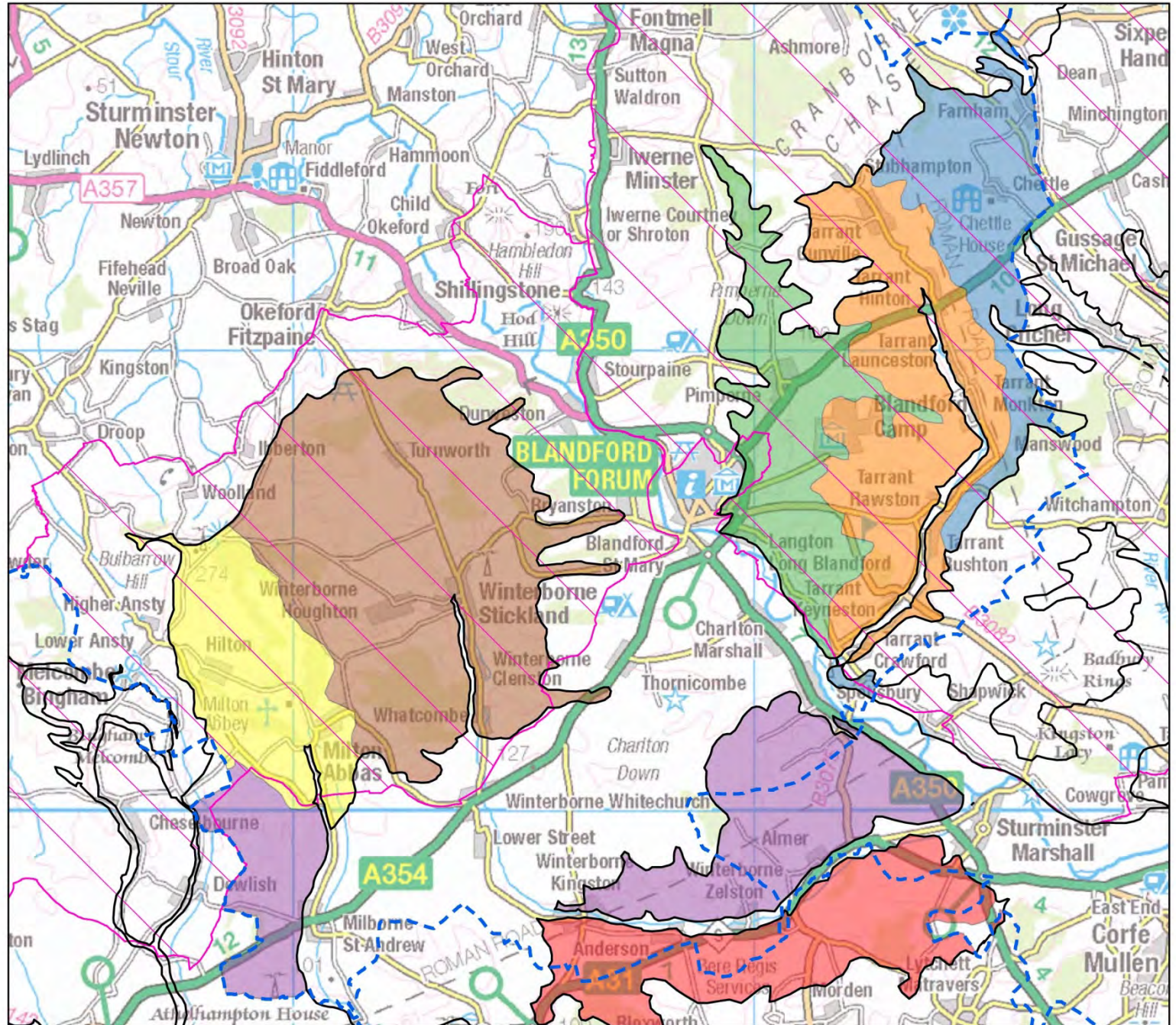


Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to wind energy	Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																			
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Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to wind energy	Cranborne Chase LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																			
<p>Sensitivity to all scales of wind energy development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The value attached to this LCA derives from a combination of landform, land use, visual exposure, historic character and lack of modern development. All of these characteristics would be sensitive to wind energy development.</p>	<p>Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of less than 1 hectare is <b>moderate-high</b> and sensitivity to larger schemes is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The value attached to this LCA derives from a combination of landform, land use, visual exposure, historic character and lack of modern development. All of these characteristics would be sensitive to solar PV development. There may be locations with more even terrain where a small development would be well screened by woodland blocks, but any scale of development would be out of character with the historic landscape.</p> <p>Sensitivity is notably high where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location is prominent in views from public rights of way;</li> <li>Location has an adverse effect on the setting of a historic landscape feature or parkland (e.g. Rushmore).</li> </ul>																																			

# Landscape character type: Chalk Valley & Downland



-  District boundary
-  AONB
- Dorset Landscape Character Type**
-  11. Chalk Valley & Downland
- North Dorset Landscape Character Area**
-  11A - Bloxworth/Charborough Downs
-  11B - Chettle/Abbecroft Downs
-  11C - East Blandford/Pimperne Downs
-  11D - South Blandford Downs
-  11E - Tarrant Valley
-  11F - Upper Milborne Valley
-  11G - Upper North Winterborne Valley





## Chalk Valley & Downland LCT overview

The Chalk Valley and Downland LCT, and associated chalk landscape types, occur extensively across Dorset, forming a wide belt that runs north east to south west through the centre of the county. In North Dorset the chalk belt cuts through the eastern and southern parts of the District, interrupted by the Stour Valley, and is subdivided into a number of LCAs associated with different chalk valleys. The lower reaches of several of the larger watercourses that penetrate into the downs are defined as very narrow LCAs and within this study are classified as a different LCT: Chalk River Valley Floor. To the north and west the Chalk Ridge/Escarpment marks the edge of the chalk belt, with an area of Wooded Chalk Downland in between this and the East Blandford/Pimperne Chalk Valley and Downland area to the north of the Stour.

The Chalk Valley and Downland LCT description includes references to the upper reaches of the valleys which cut northwards into the downs. Whilst these are intimately associated with the surrounding downlands their character is distinctly different so this assessment follows the lead of the District landscape character assessment and treats them as a separate LCT (Chalk Valley River Floor). To the south and east the LCT incorporates areas of Open Chalk Downland, with the South Blandford Downs and Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCAs being split between Chalk Valley & Downland and Open Chalk Downland LCTs.

## Chalk Valley & Downland LCT characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### **Scale and complexity of landform:**

*"Extensive and uniform area of chalk covering a large part of the county"..." The whole area is undulating with an inverted saucer shaped profile and a gentle dip slope towards the Frome valley and Poole Basin linking into the escarpment landscape along its remaining edges."*

Within the broader chalk landscape there are distinctive valley forms, ranging from shallower coombes to more incised chalk river valleys (the valley floors are assessed as a separate LCT), but landform scale is typically large.

### **Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:**

"Large arable fields subdivided by low, thin and straight hedges"

### **Visual exposure:**

"...has a dominant visual influence being more extensive and generally more elevated than other landscape types in the county with open views from elevated positions."

### **Development and activity:**

The area is sparsely settled, with most villages being located in the chalk river valleys and larger settlements (e.g. Blandford and Wimborne) located in the wider river valleys beyond the margins of the LCA. The area retains a strong agricultural character and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

## Chalk Valley & Downland LCT value characteristics

Most of the Chalk Valley & Downland areas within the District to the north of the Stour lie within either the Dorset AONB or the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the higher downs south of the Stour are also in the Dorset AONB. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is valued for 'special qualities' which include a distinctive landform, simplicity and openness, a sense of history and remoteness and a tranquil, rural character. The Dorset AONB includes a wider range of landscapes, the contrast and diversity of which is one of the 'special qualities' of the designated area, but the chalk downs are particularly associated with a distinctive sense of place, panoramic views, individual landmarks and the same sense of remoteness, tranquillity and history that characterise the Cranborne Chase AONB.

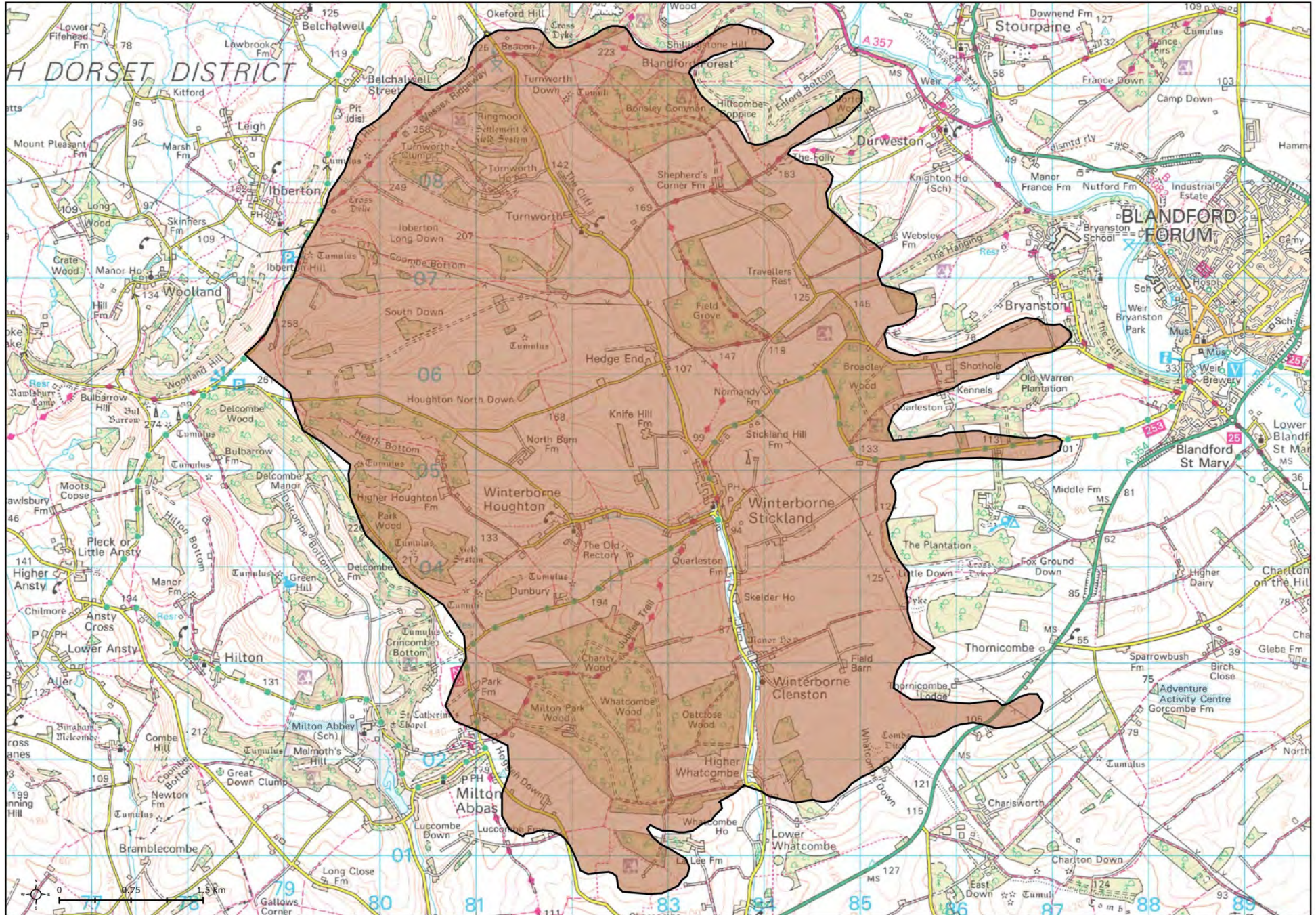
The principal management objective for Chalk Valley & Downland LCT is to conserve the distinct landscapes.

Chalk Valley & Downland LCT sensitivity to wind energy	Chalk Valley & Downland LCT sensitivity to solar PV energy
<p>The chalk downlands are an undulating landscape which in topographical terms alone can typically be considered moderately sensitive to wind energy development, and the large scale and openness of the landscape suggest a lower susceptibility to wind energy development.</p> <p>Visibility within the LCT is limited in valley locations but higher downs offer extensive views so development would typically be visible over a wide area. Adjoining LCTs, most notably the Chalk Ridge/Escarpment but also other chalkland LCTs and Valley Pasture, have high inter-visibility with many downland areas and there is a high potential for distinctive horizon lines to be interrupted, distorting the sense of balance in what is currently a very open landscape with few features to break distant skylines.</p> <p>In terms of development and human influence this is a rural landscape with a strong sense of remoteness and little modern intrusion, so sensitivity is high.</p> <p>The combination of landform, openness and arable cultivation create a distinctive landscape which is valued for its scenic and perceptual qualities. A large scale landscape can be considered more able to accommodate strong features such as wind turbines than a more human-scale environment, but in all other respects the distinctive character of the Chalk Valley and Downland LCT, the value of which is recognised by the extent of AONB and AGLV coverage, can be considered highly sensitive to wind turbines. Its distinctive visual lines and uniformity deriving from an absence of visual clutter could be compromised by the introduction of high vertical structures with movement. The positioning of turbines in locations on valley sides would raise the prospect of 'disembodied' turbine blades appearing in what are currently very open views from higher ground, in which valleys beyond the immediate vicinity are only barely perceptible (contributing to the sense of remoteness and large scale that are 'special qualities' of the AONB). Their scale would also be overbearing in the context of the smaller scale chalk valley landscapes.</p>	<p>The chalk downlands are an undulating landscape which in topographical terms can typically be considered moderately sensitive to solar energy development, but the large scale and openness of the landscape suggest a higher susceptibility to solar PV energy development.</p> <p>Visibility within the LCT is limited in valley locations but higher downs with large, open areas and only low hedging mean that development would typically be visible over a wide area. Adjoining LCTs, most notably the Chalk Ridge/Escarpment but also other chalkland LCTs and Valley Pasture, have high inter-visibility with many downland areas.</p> <p>In terms of development and human influence this is a remote rural landscape with little modern intrusion, so sensitivity is relatively high.</p> <p>The combination of landform, openness and arable cultivation create a distinctive and uniform landscape which is valued, and designated as an AONB, for its scenic and perceptual qualities. The general absence of modern development and frequency of ancient monuments add a sense of 'time depth'. Sensitivity to solar energy developments in this LCT would typically be high, adding uncharacteristic shapes and textures to an uncluttered landscape.</p>



# Landscape character area: Upper North Winterborne Valley

Area: 4281 hectares





### Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

*The Chalk Valley & Downland LCT incorporates the "steep branching valleys and open chalk uplands" that feed down into the Winterborne river. The main valley floor south of Winterborne Stickland is part of the Chalk River Valley Floor LCT. "Towards the upper slopes the valley becomes broader in scale". There are some shallower, broader downs on the eastern side of the valley, above Winterborne Stickland and Winterborne Clenston.*

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"Large arable field patterns and significant blocks of dark conifer plantation on the higher slopes and occasional scattered farms provide a gradual transition to the surrounding open chalk uplands."..." Straight sided arable fields (late 18th Century early 19th Century enclosures on the open chalk upland)"*

#### Visual exposure:

The chalk escarpment frames views to both the north and west of the LCA, creating a sense of remoteness and openness on the higher downs and a sense of intimacy in the higher valleys. There are views from minor roads and public rights of way on high ground into most of the LCA, but the undulating nature of the terrain limits the extent of visibility particularly on lower ground. Towards the southern boundary on Whatcombe Down there are some less overlooked areas above the break of slope from the main valley, where woodland blocks contribute to screening from longer views.

#### Development and activity:

*The main village settlements are located along the valley floor but there are scattered farms on the higher downs and the hamlet of Winterborne Houghton falls within this LCT.*

*"Towards the northern upper reaches of the valley where the landform rises towards the chalk escarpment the landscape becomes more intimate and tranquil"*

*A 35m transmitter mast is located on Stickland Hill, above the village of Winterborne Stickland.*

### Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA value characteristics

Almost all of the LCA is designated as part of the Dorset AONB. The landform, woodland blocks and historic villages combined to create a scenic landscape.

*"Secluded, intimate, unified and tranquil character"*

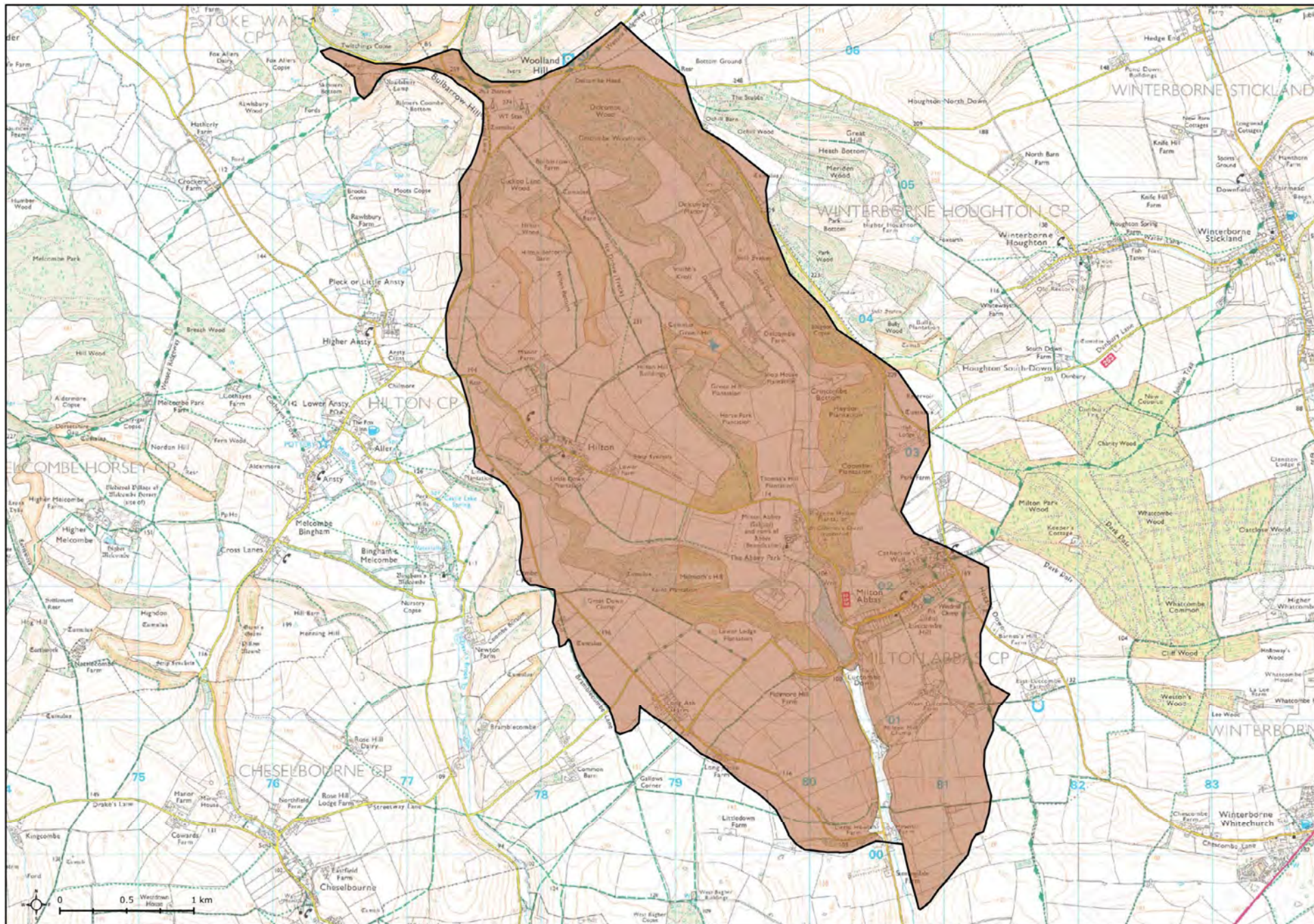
*"The design parkland landscapes, for example at Turnworth Park and associated veteran trees, railings and country houses on the valley floor form distinctive, locally important features"*

Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA sensitivity to wind energy		Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																	
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Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA sensitivity to wind energy		Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																	
<p>The Upper North Winterborne Valley is judged to have <b>moderate-high</b> sensitivity to single turbines of less than 35m height and <b>high</b> sensitivity to larger or multiple turbines. The distinctive undulating terrain and scenic, tranquil and remote character, which are recognised in the AONB designation, make this a highly sensitive area but there are some locations towards the lower end of the valley where topography and woodland cover would be likely to reduce the impact of smaller turbines.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is on higher ground towards the northern end of the LCA;</li> <li>• Location is evident from the main valley floor road (Turnworth to Winterborne Whitechurch).</li> </ul>		<p>Sensitivity to solar PV developments of less than 10 hectares is <b>moderate-high</b> and sensitivity to larger developments is <b>high</b>. The distinctive undulating terrain and scenic, tranquil and remote character, which are recognised in the AONB designation, make this area sensitive to solar PV developments but there some less undulating locations, principally towards the lower end of the valley, where woodland cover would be likely to reduce the impact of smaller solar farms.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is on steeper or more undulating slopes, or on higher ground towards the northern end of the LCA;</li> <li>• Location is evident from the main valley floor road (Turnworth to Winterborne Whitechurch).</li> </ul>																																	



# Landscape character area: Upper Milborne Valley

Area: 1545 hectares





### Upper Milborne Valley LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

*Gently rolling valley floor landscape "...defined by the surrounding deep complex twisting valley sides and in particular the chalk escarpments to the west and north"*

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"Dense Beech, Ash and Sycamore woodland along the slopes further enhance the sense of enclosure emphasising the dramatic topography as the woods follow a series of small deep coombes around the valley bottoms"*

*"Straight-sided arable fields (late 18th Century early 19th Century enclosures on the valley floor) with species rich hedgerows and small broadleaf woodlands"*

*"...dominated by a dramatic designed 18th Century parkland setting and the associated historic Milton Abbey and St Catherine's Chapel"*

#### Visual exposure:

*"...long sweeping views and vistas with a wooded background".*

Panoramic views from high points are mostly oriented out north and west across the escarpment rather than into the LCA, where woodlands have a strong screening effect.

#### Development and activity:

*"Small dark woodlands along winding lanes with parkland railings and dense hedgerows and hedge banks seclude villages and clustered farm buildings. Frequent use of locally distinctive brick, flint, cob and thatch further emphasise the traditional rural character of the area with the picturesque villages of Hilton and Milton Abbas adding further interest to this tranquil and historic landscape"*

### Upper Milborne Valley LCA value characteristics

The LCA sits within the Dorset AONB. It is described as a *"tranquil and historic landscape"* with a *"great sense of seclusion"*. Milton Abbas is very picturesque village in which Milton Abbey, the church and almost all of the houses on the main street (built at the same time when the village was relocated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century) are listed.

### Upper Milborne Valley LCA sensitivity to wind energy

		Turbine height (m)			
		≤35	≤65	≤99	>99
Cluster size	1	MH	H	H	H
	2-4	H	H	H	H
	>4		H	H	H

### Upper Milborne Valley LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy

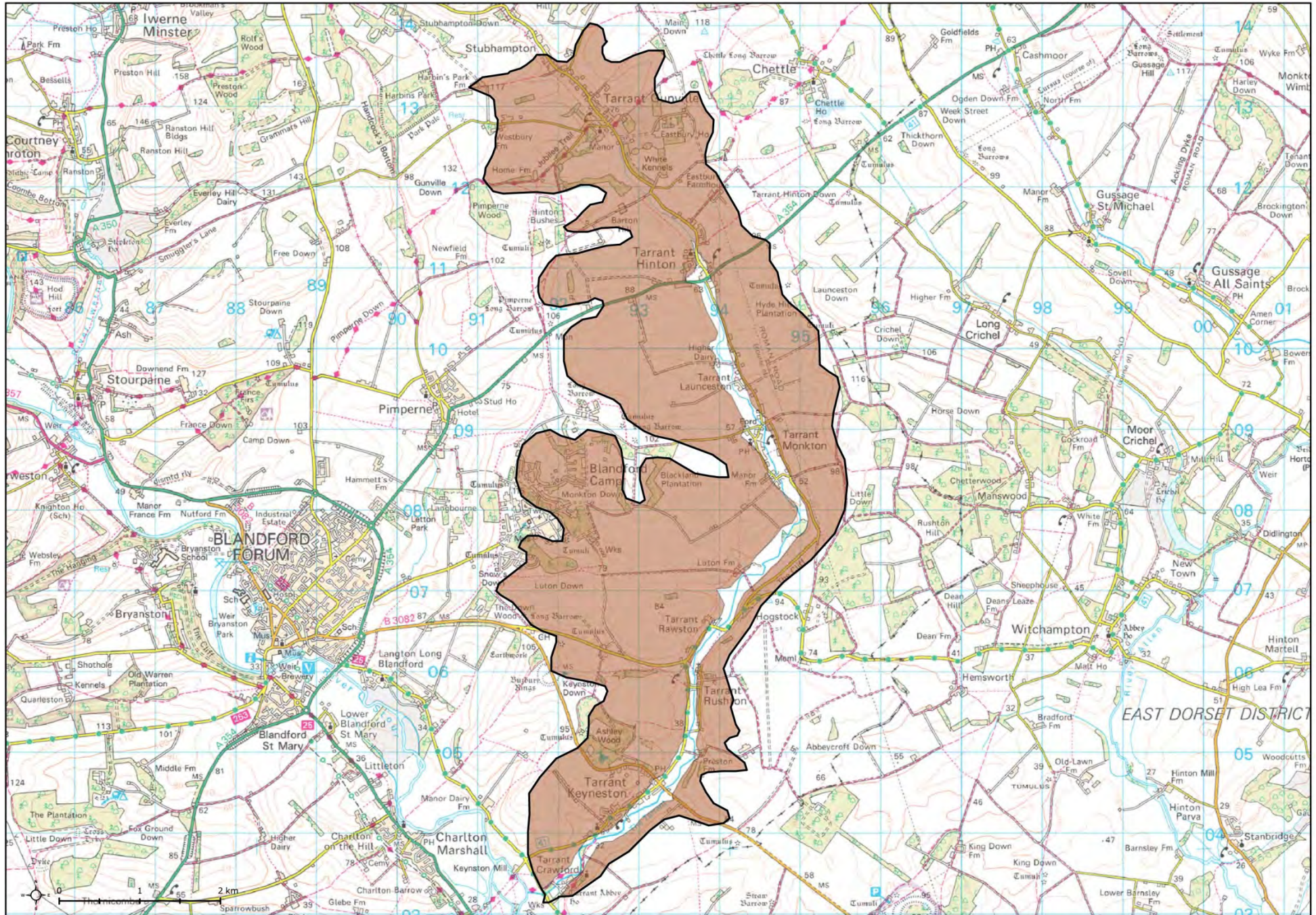
Development size (ha)	≤1	MH
	≤10	MH
	≤30	H
	>30	H

Upper Milborne Valley LCA sensitivity to wind energy	Upper Milborne Valley LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy
<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The Upper Milborne Valley is dominated by steep, dramatic topography and associated woodlands. Those high areas which are not wooded are very distinctive and dramatic landforms, such as the ridge than runs south from Bulbarrow Hill, on the chalk escarpment, to Green Hill. Scenic values are high in this area, and are reflected in the area's AONB designation. The extent of screening offers the possibility that there will be locations in which sensitivity to a small turbine would be slightly lower, and the southern facing slopes at the lower, southern end of the LCA could also be considered slightly less sensitive to development, particularly if it was associated with a large farm complex.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development contrasts with the historic character of valley floor villages</li> <li>• Development affects the setting of Milton Abbey and its parkland</li> <li>• Development is very evident in panoramic views from high points close to the escarpment.</li> </ul>	<p>Sensitivity to solar PV developments of less than 10 hectares is <b>moderate-high</b> and sensitivity to larger developments is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The Upper Milborne Valley is dominated by steep, dramatic topography and associated woodlands. Those high areas which are not wooded are very distinctive and dramatic landforms, such as the ridge than runs south from Bulbarrow Hill, on the chalk escarpment, to Green Hill. Scenic values are high in this area, and the intimate, historic character of the core valley area, reflected in the area's AONB designation, would be sensitive to modern development. The extent of screening offers the possibility that there will be some more enclosed locations in which sensitivity to a solar farm would be slightly lower, but such a site would need to have much shallower slopes than are the norm for the area.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development contrasts with the historic character of valley floor villages</li> <li>• Development affects the setting of Milton Abbey and its parkland</li> <li>• Development is very evident in panoramic views from high points close to the escarpment.</li> </ul>



# Landscape character area: Tarrant Valley (part)

Area: 2442 hectares





## Tarrant Valley LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"The sloping sides to the valley are typical chalk downland with an undulating and indented landform with dry coombes and elevated open downland around the watershed. It is generally steeper with some distinctive steep scarp slopes along the eastern side, for example at Tarrant Rushton and more gentle and rolling shape to the west"*

There is a distinctive turn in the valley beneath Monkton Down.

The valley sides create an increasingly contained and small scale landscape towards the valley floor, but the upper slopes have a more open, larger scale.

### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"...an intensively farmed area and often right up to the edge of the stream side with very few marginal areas. Generally the fields are geometric and large scale and bounded by thin weak hedges or replacement wire fencing.*

### Visual exposure:

There are long, open views across the north-central part of the Tarrant Valley to the Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs and distant wooded Chase Downs from the A354 and panoramic views from high ground to the east of the river, from the Wichampton Road above Tarrant Rawston. The ridge top to the east of the valley, on the Chettle and Abbeycroft Downs, is well served by public rights of way which offer some strong vistas down into and across the Tarrant Valley, although high hedges do have a limiting effect on the continuity of views. There are also strong views into the southern end of the LCA from the B3082 and golf course on Keynston Down.

### Development and activity:

*"Blandford Camp is a locally prominent landmark and creates an urban impact at the western edge of the area."*

Other than Blandford Camp there are only isolated farms above the main valley floor villages, although the A354 and B3082 pass through the northern and southern ends of the LCA respectively. Away from these influences there is a stronger sense of remoteness and isolation.

## Tarrant Valley LCA value characteristics

The Tarrant Valley is situated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. It forms the contained setting for the Tarrant family of villages and hamlets, one of the distinctive chains of valley floor settlements which are characteristic of the AONB and valued for their historic character and sense of intimacy and traditional rurality.

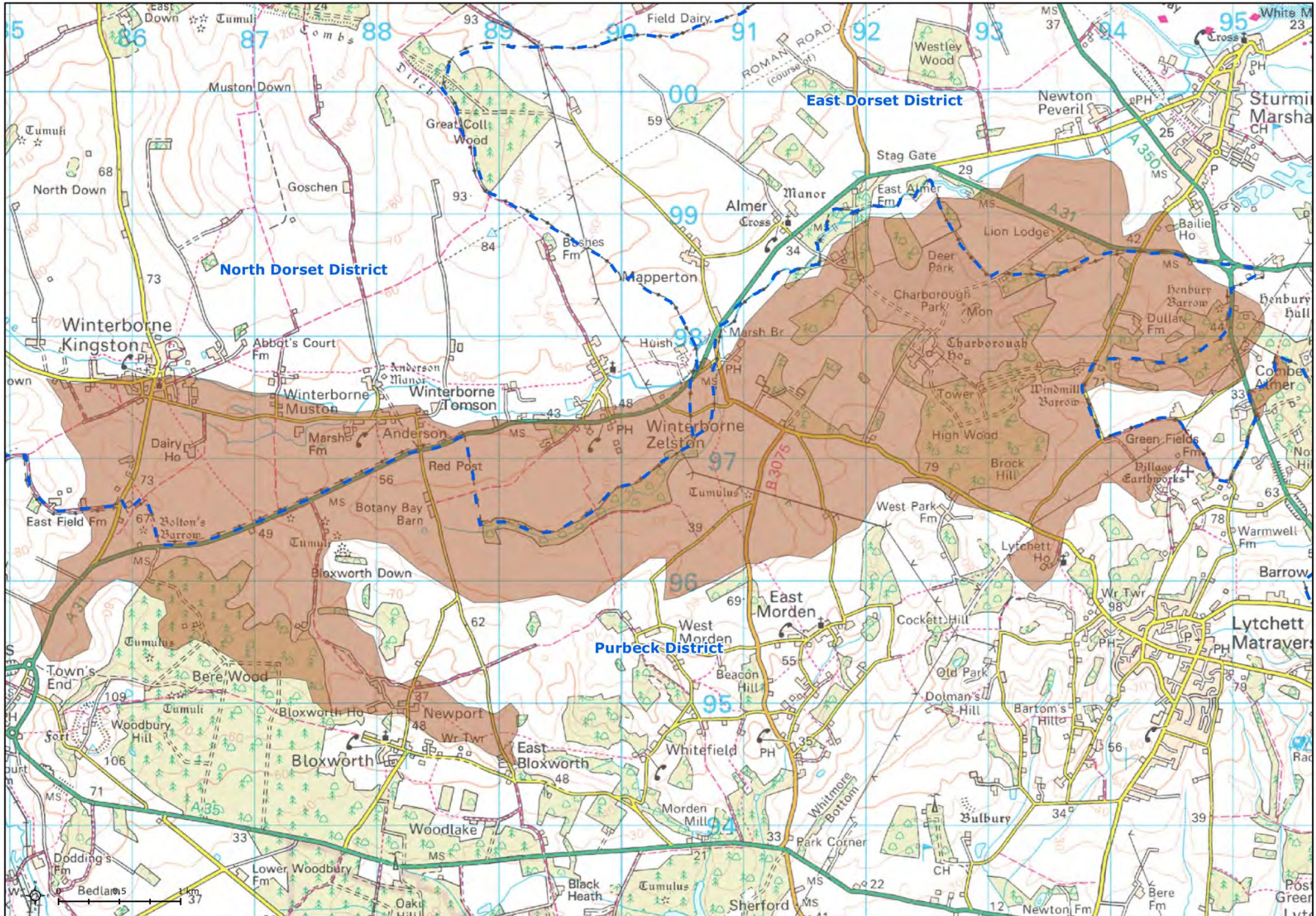
*"...a unique sense of identity"... "Tarrant Abbey is a scheduled ancient monument and a key feature in the lower part of the Valley"... "The estate wooded landscape around Tarrant Gunville is a key feature of interest"... "The steep scarp slope and beech hanger at Tarrant Rawston is a key feature."*

Tarrant Valley LCA sensitivity to wind energy	Tarrant Valley LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																			
<p style="text-align: center;">Turbine height (m)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>≤35</th> <th>≤65</th> <th>≤99</th> <th>&gt;99</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <th>Cluster size</th> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <th>1</th> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>MH</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> </tr> <tr> <th>2-4</th> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> </tr> <tr> <th>&gt;4</th> <td></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		≤35	≤65	≤99	>99	Cluster size					1	<b>MH</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	2-4	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	>4		<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>H</b>	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Development size (ha)</th> <td></td> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <th>≤1</th> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>MH</b></td> </tr> <tr> <th>≤10</th> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> </tr> <tr> <th>≤30</th> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> </tr> <tr> <th>&gt;30</th> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"><b>H</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Development size (ha)		≤1	<b>MH</b>	≤10	<b>H</b>	≤30	<b>H</b>	>30	<b>H</b>
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<p>The Tarrant Valley downlands are more focused on the one principal valley than is the case with other Chalk Valley &amp; Downland LCAs in the District, and this distinctive topography increases sensitivity to wind turbine developments. Sensitivity would be lower on the broad, open downs to the west of the river in the vicinity of Blandford Camp, where this modern development is already a landmark and topography and woodland blocks would be likely to limit visibility from further east, but the ‘human scale’ of the valley floor villages, farms and tree-lined river would still serve to make any development relatively sensitive. The strength of character that is valued as a ‘special quality’ of the AONB could be diluted by wind energy development.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slopes are steeper, particularly to the east of the river between Tarrant Crawford and Tarrant Monkton;</li> <li>• Location is strongly exposed to views from the valley floor, high ground to the east, Eastbury Park (Tarrant Gunville) or Tarrant Abbey.</li> </ul>	<p>The Tarrant Valley downlands are more focused on the one principal valley than is the case with other Chalk Valley &amp; Downland LCAs in the District, and this distinctive topography, in particular in the central section where steeper slopes contrast with broader, shallower, undulating hillsides with large, low-hedged fields, has a high scenic value, reflecting its AONB designation, and suggests a high level of sensitivity to solar PV arrays. There are unlikely to be many locations where a development would not be exposed to recreational views from rights of way on the valley crests, sides or floor.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slopes are steeper, particularly to the east of the river between Tarrant Crawford and Tarrant Monkton;</li> <li>• Location is strongly exposed to views from the valley floor, high ground to the east, Eastbury Park (Tarrant Gunville) or Tarrant Abbey.</li> </ul>																																			



# Landscape character area: Bloxworth/Charborough Downs

Area (within North Dorset): 407 hectares





**Bloxworth/Charborough Downs LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria**

<p><b>Scale and complexity of landform:</b></p> <p><i>"A varied character area but largely dominated by large scale open chalk upland which gradually slopes down to the Lower Winterborne Valley along its northern fringes"</i></p>	<p><b>Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:</b></p> <p><i>"...intensively farmed regular sized large fields are subdivided by thin and weak hedgerows with the occasional hedgerow tree characteristic of a 'planned enclosure' landscape"</i></p> <p><i>"Individual mature parkland trees"... "Old estate lodges, gateposts and walls abutting lanes are key features in parts of this area"</i></p> <p><i>"Interconnected and enclosing woodland blocks along high ground"</i></p>
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<p><b>Visual exposure:</b></p> <p><i>"There are open views across the Winterborne valley from elevated positions."</i></p> <p>There are views from lower-hedged stretches of the A31 into much of the area, with middle-distance views to the chalk downs to the north of the Winterborne Valley (although not to the more dramatic higher ridges further north). There is a shorter horizon to the south, with wooded high ground in the western part of the LCA.</p>	<p><b>Development and activity:</b></p> <p><i>"The area has few settlements with Winterborne Kingston, Tomson, Anderson, Zelston and Muston (all part of the linear Winterborne 'family' of villages/hamlets) being found along the edges of the area abutting the Winterborne valley and following the straight valley floor road network. There are a few isolated farmsteads in the area and the A31 cuts through its north edges creating in particular an audible impact on the character area."</i></p>
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**Bloxworth/Charborough Downs LCA value characteristics**

There are no landscape designations relating to this LCA in North Dorset or Purbeck, although within East Dorset the LCA is part of the Stour Valley AGLV. The estate parkland landscape of Charborough Park is a key feature influencing the Purbeck and East Dorset parts of the LCA. The LCA includes the northern part of Bere Woods, which is a prominent skyline feature to the south west.

**Bloxworth/Charborough Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy**      **Bloxworth/Charborough Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy**

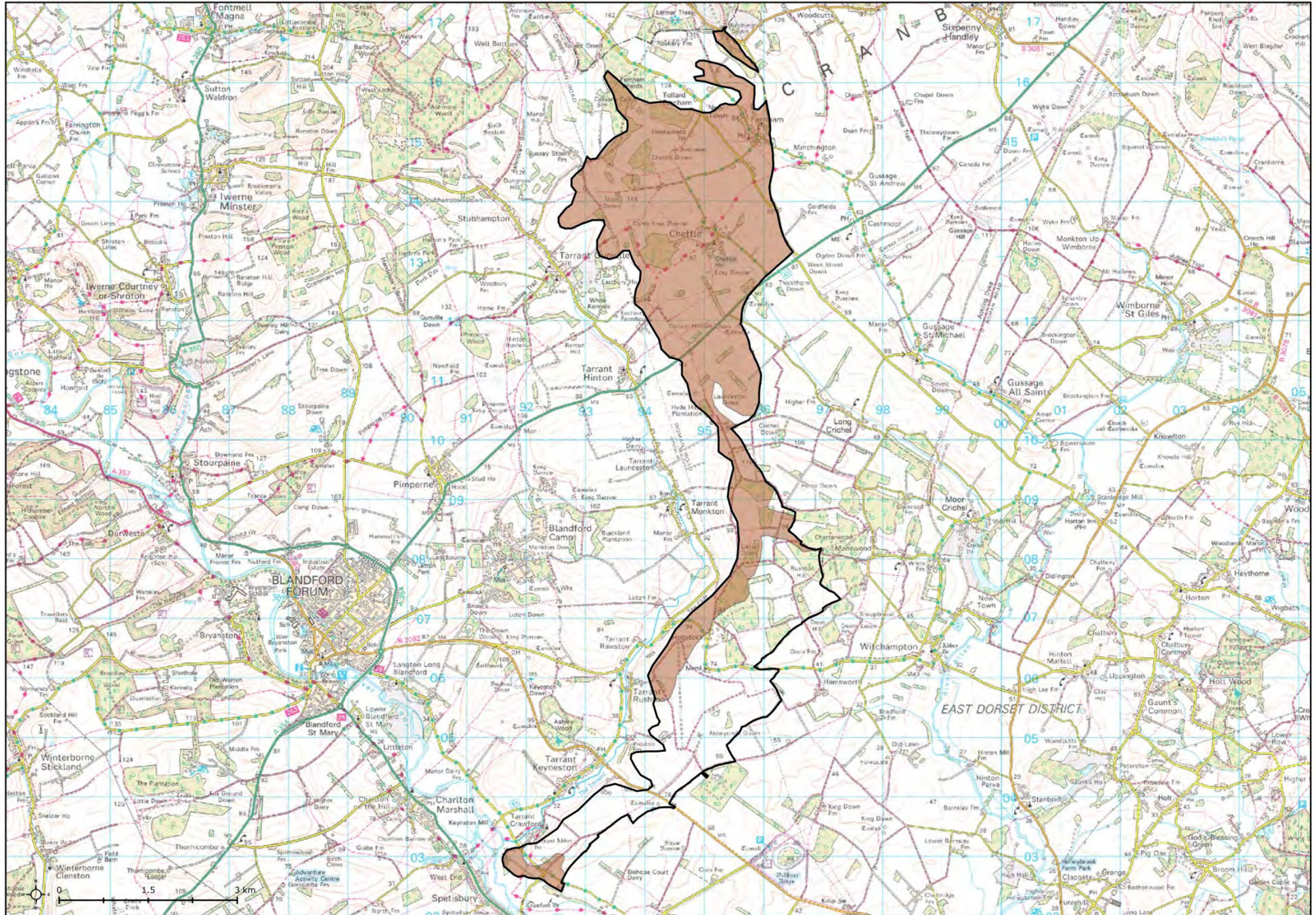
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Bloxworth/Charborough Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy	Bloxworth/Charborough Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy
<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to 2-4 turbines less than 35m high, or single turbines 36-65m high, is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The busy A31 makes the lower, northern part of area less tranquil than most Chalk Valley &amp; Downland LCAs, and the landform is less distinctive than that which is associated with the narrower north-south stretches of chalk river valley further north, but proximity to the lower Winterborne villages, with their smaller-scale valley floor landscape, raises sensitivity to wind turbines.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site is prominent from the floor of the Winterborne Valley, in particular from settlements;</li> <li>• Location detracts from prominence of the tower at Charborough Park in views, or the historic character of the park's setting.</li> </ul>	<p>Sensitivity to solar farms of less than 1 hectare is <b>low-moderate</b>, sensitivity to solar farms of less than 30 hectares is <b>moderate</b> and sensitivity to larger development is <b>moderate-high</b>.</p> <p>This LCA forms only the lower slopes of the downs in the broad lower part of the Winterborne Valley, so topographically (disregarding technical issues relating to availability of sunlight on north-facing slopes) it is more suitable for solar PV installations than many downland LCAs, and the geometric, arable fields are also of relatively low sensitivity. The busy A31 makes the lower, northern part of area less tranquil than most Chalk Valley &amp; Downland LCAs.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site is prominent from the floor of the Winterborne Valley, in particular from settlements;</li> <li>• Location affects the historic character of Charborough Park;</li> <li>• Fields shapes are irregular.</li> </ul>



## Landscape character area: Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs (part)

Area: 1536 hectares





### Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

This LCA lacks the steeper slopes associated with the adjacent Tarrant and Crichel valleys, and consists of higher ground: *"...an open, expansive and rolling landscape with distinctive elevated plateaus and windswept, exposed highpoints... The elevated plateaus are typically found on the eastern side of the area above the Tarrant valley. They are less undulating than the rest of the area which has gently curving and convex profiles."*

*"The northern end of the Crichel valley creates a small bowl at the valley head where Chettle is located. The far north east part of the area forms the upper end of the Allen valley where Farnham sits on the valley floor."*

This is generally a large scale landform, but is more contained in the vicinity of Chettle.

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"The area is intensively farmed with large geometrically shaped fields bounded by thin, straight and weak hedges typical of the late 18th Century and early 19th Century parliamentary enclosure. In places all the hedges have been removed to create very large featureless open fields."*

*"There are the several distinctive geometric woodlands and narrow coniferous shelter belt plantations which are characteristic in the northern part of the area. The central part of the area is well wooded..."*

#### Visual exposure:

*"...exposed highpoints which offer open and wide views..."*

There are strong views down over the Tarrant Valley from high ground to the east of the river, from the Wichampton Road above Tarrant Rawston. The ridge top to the east of the valley is well served by public rights of way which offer some strong vistas, although high hedges do have a limiting effect on the continuity of views. The A354 has views across a very open downland landscape up to the geometric plantations on Launceston Down and Hyde Hill, and these also form the skyline in views from the upper part of the Crichel Valley.

#### Development and activity:

*"There are a few isolated large agricultural buildings and several dispersed farmsteads in the area... The area is sparsely populated with Chettle and Farnham being the only two settlements."*

The sparseness of settlement gives the LCA a remote, rural character.

### Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA value characteristics

The LCA is designated as part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

*"The parkland landscape setting around Chettle House provides a key feature"*

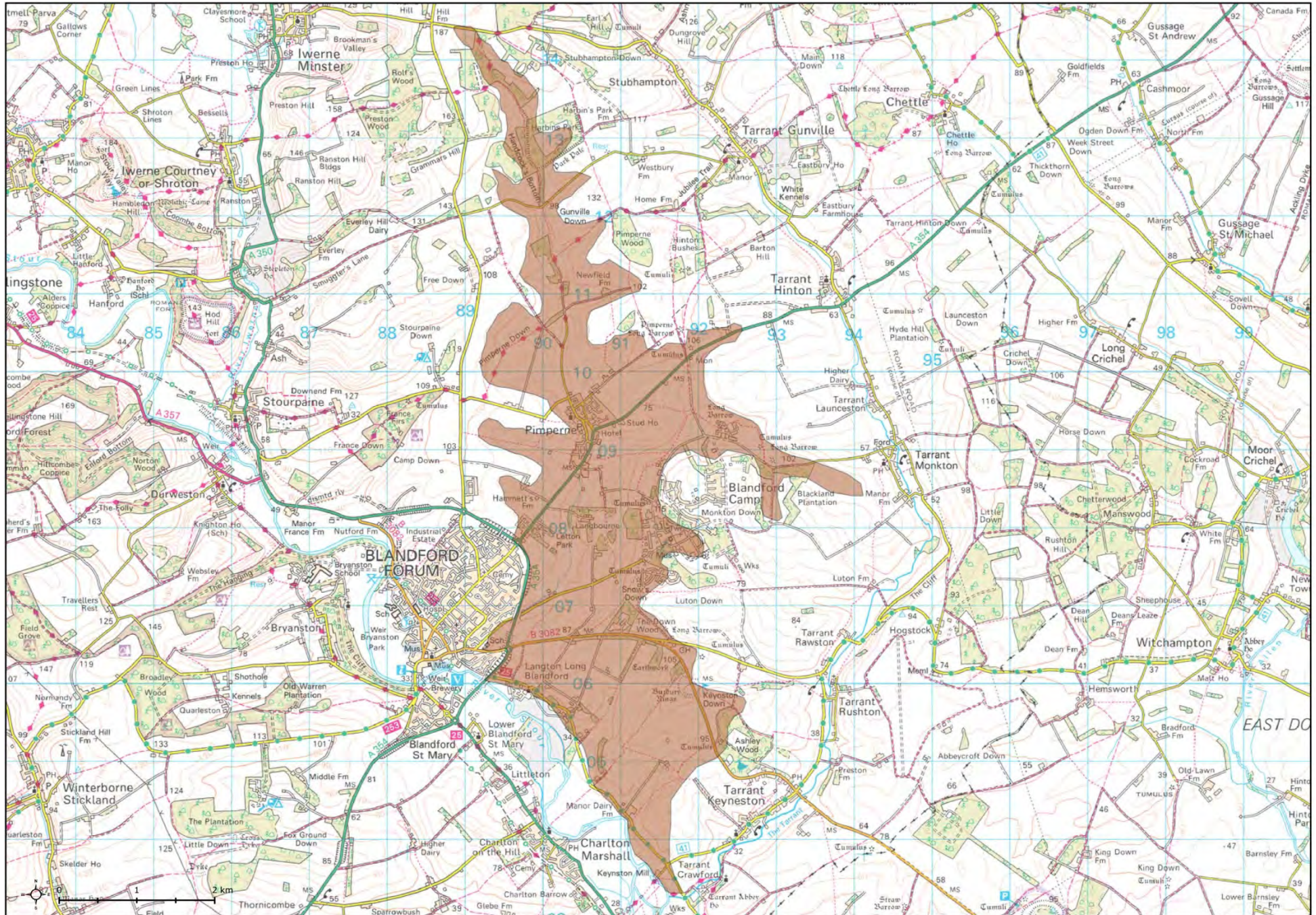
*"There are several Neolithic tumuli, barrows and historic field systems characteristic of chalk downland"*

Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy					Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																				
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<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>Although this is typically a large scale landscape, the undulating high downs, with an expansive open character and distinctive, geometric shelter belts, are sensitive to wind energy development which would be widely visible from the adjacent valleys and the chalk escarpment to the north, affecting the undeveloped and simple character of the landscape which are 'special qualities' of the AONB. There are few hillside farm buildings in association with which smaller turbines could be located.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It intrudes on the contained historic landscape around Chettle;</li> <li>• Development affects exposed slopes, with visibility from adjacent valleys or the high ground beyond them.</li> </ul>					<p>Sensitivity to solar farms of less than 10 hectares is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to larger development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>This is distinctive, open and often exposed downland that is characteristic of the AONB and as such is typically very sensitive to solar PV development. On the higher ground that is broad enough to have a plateau-like character, with some screening from plantation blocks, there is some reduction in visual sensitivity, but any development close enough to the downland slopes to have skyline impact on views from the Tarrant or Crichel Valleys would have a greater impact.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It intrudes on the contained historic landscape around Chettle;</li> <li>• Development affects exposed slopes, with visibility from adjacent valleys or the high ground beyond them.</li> </ul>																																				



# Landscape character area: East Blandford/Pimperne Downs

Area: 1702 hectares





### East Blandford/Pimperne Downs LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"This is a largely uniform area of rolling and undulating chalk downland and valley to the east of Blandford. The southern section forming the side slopes running down to the Stour Valley and the northern section is a complete small chalk valley based on the stream which runs through Pimperne and drains into the Stour just south of Blandford. There are distinctive folded and indented edges to the side slopes which create small dry coombes and rounded ridges."*

The scale of the landscape decreases towards the head of the valley.

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"...intensively farmed with large geometrically shaped fields bounded by thin, straight and weak hedges typical of the late 18th Century and early 19th Century parliamentary enclosure. In places all the hedges have been removed to create very large featureless fields"*

*"... The landscape is more intimate along the valley floors. The far northern end of the area is more enclosed with a tight, confined but still folded landform as well as being more wooded as it merges with the Cranborne Chase landscapes."*

#### Visual exposure:

*"...an open and expansive landscape with long views from the prominent edges elevated plateaus and windswept, exposed highpoints to the area."*

*"The A354 forms a major visual corridor across the area detracting from character"*

*"The visually prominent edges to Blandford, Blandford Camp and Pimperne create hard and visually distracting edges to the area"*

There are views down into the LCA from the Cranborne Chase Wooded Down Downland LCA which forms the high ground surrounding the valley, and although views from roads are limited the area is well served by public rights of way, with both the Wessex Ridgeway and Jubilee Way Long Distance Paths crossing the LCA.

#### Development and activity:

*"Pimperne on the A354 is the only significant settlement in the area and has some poorly integrated urban edges."..." Several straight hedge lined roads and lanes run across the grain of the landscape as well as along the valley edges and floors. There are a few isolated large agricultural buildings and several dispersed farmsteads"*

### East Blandford/Pimperne Downs LCA value characteristics

The LCA is designated as part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, other than a small area adjacent to the north east edge of Blandford.

*"A few steep-sided and wooded or scrub-covered slopes provide important key features of local interest at the far northern end of the area."*

*"Pimperne Valley and its associated narrow stream and/or lane along the valley floor is a feature of interest."*

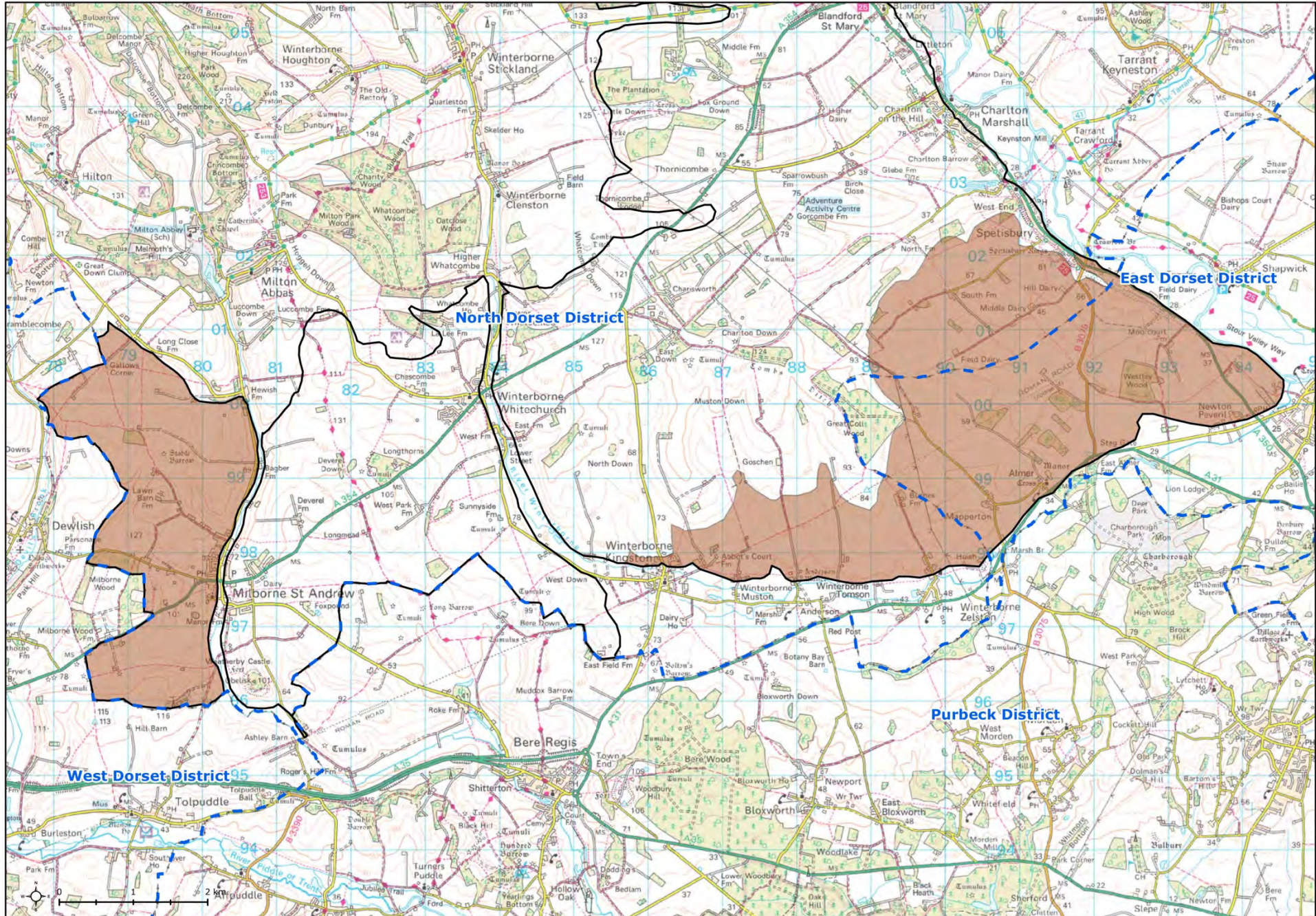
The Jubilee Trail and Wessex Ridgeway long distance routes cross the LCA.

East Blandford/Pimperne Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy	East Blandford/Pimperne Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																
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<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The undulating, valley terrain of this LCA is very characteristic of the AONB and of high sensitivity to wind energy developments, and the sloping southern area is exposed to long views. There is slightly lower sensitivity to smaller turbines, particularly if associated with farm complexes.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are prolonged views from public rights of way, in particular the Jubilee Way and the Wessex Ridgeway;</li> <li>• Sites are on more exposed or undulating ground.</li> </ul>	<p>Sensitivity to solar farms of less than 10 hectares is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to larger development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The large, uniform, undulating, exposed fields on the sides of the valley between Blandford and Gunville Down, and on the slopes down to the Stour and Tarrant valleys, are of high sensitivity to solar PV development. North of Pimperne the lack of a significant watercourse, and the absence of the distinctive valley settlements that are valued as characteristic of the AONB, reduce sensitivity in locations where slopes are not too undulating, and woodlands towards the northern end of the LCA may provide some more screened locations for appropriately scaled development.</p> <p>Sensitivity could also be lower close to Blandford and the A354, outside of the AONB, if a site is relatively well screened from the town by trees/topography but appears in close proximity to the town and ring road when viewed from the surrounding downs.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are prolonged views from public rights of way, in particular the Jubilee Way and the Wessex Ridgeway;</li> <li>• Sites are on more exposed or undulating ground.</li> </ul>																																



# Landscape character area: South Blandford Downs (part)

Area (within North Dorset): 1653 hectares





### South Blandford Downs LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

The Chalk Valley & Downland LCT occurs in the southern part of the South Blandford Downs and consists of gently undulating downlands sloping down towards the Stour and Winterborne. The ridge top and steeper dry valleys are defined as the Open Chalk Downland LCT.

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"...intensively farmed with large to medium sized geometrical shaped fields bounded by low, straight clipped hedges"*

*"...several small, geometric-shaped plantation woodland blocks which dot the landscape and define the horizon in many places"*

*"There are widely spaced out, straight roads lined by low clipped hedgerows..."*

Great Coll Wood, in the adjacent Open Chalk Downland LCT, is a distinctive broad, flat hill top feature.

#### Visual exposure:

*"...an expansive landscape with some open views to the horizon"*

Great Coll Wood and Muston Down form a relatively even skyline in views from the south of the Winterborne Valley, and views from the Winterborne and Stour valleys are foreshortened by the rising terrain. The principal views are from public rights of way on higher ground to the north and from the Spetisbury Rings Iron Age hill fort, and from further afield there are views from the downland to the north of the Stour, most notably from Badbury Rings, but the skyline is not particularly distinctive.

#### Development and activity:

*"...open, empty character..."*

The hamlets of Mapperton, Almer and Newton Peveril lie close to the Winterborne Valley near the southern edge of the LCA but otherwise the only habitation is several isolated farms. There are a number of villages in the valleys just beyond the LCA boundary, with Charlton Marshall and Spetisbury to the east and Winterborne villages to the south.

### South Blandford Downs LCA value characteristics

The South Blandford Downs are designated within East Dorset as part of the Stour Valley AGLV.

The area lies beyond the boundaries of the AONBs, although it forms part of the setting of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire AONB just across the Stour Valley to the north east.

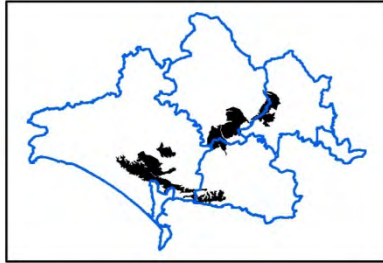
Spetisbury Rings is a noted ancient monument with extensive views westwards across the South Blandford Downs.








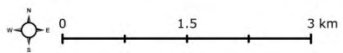
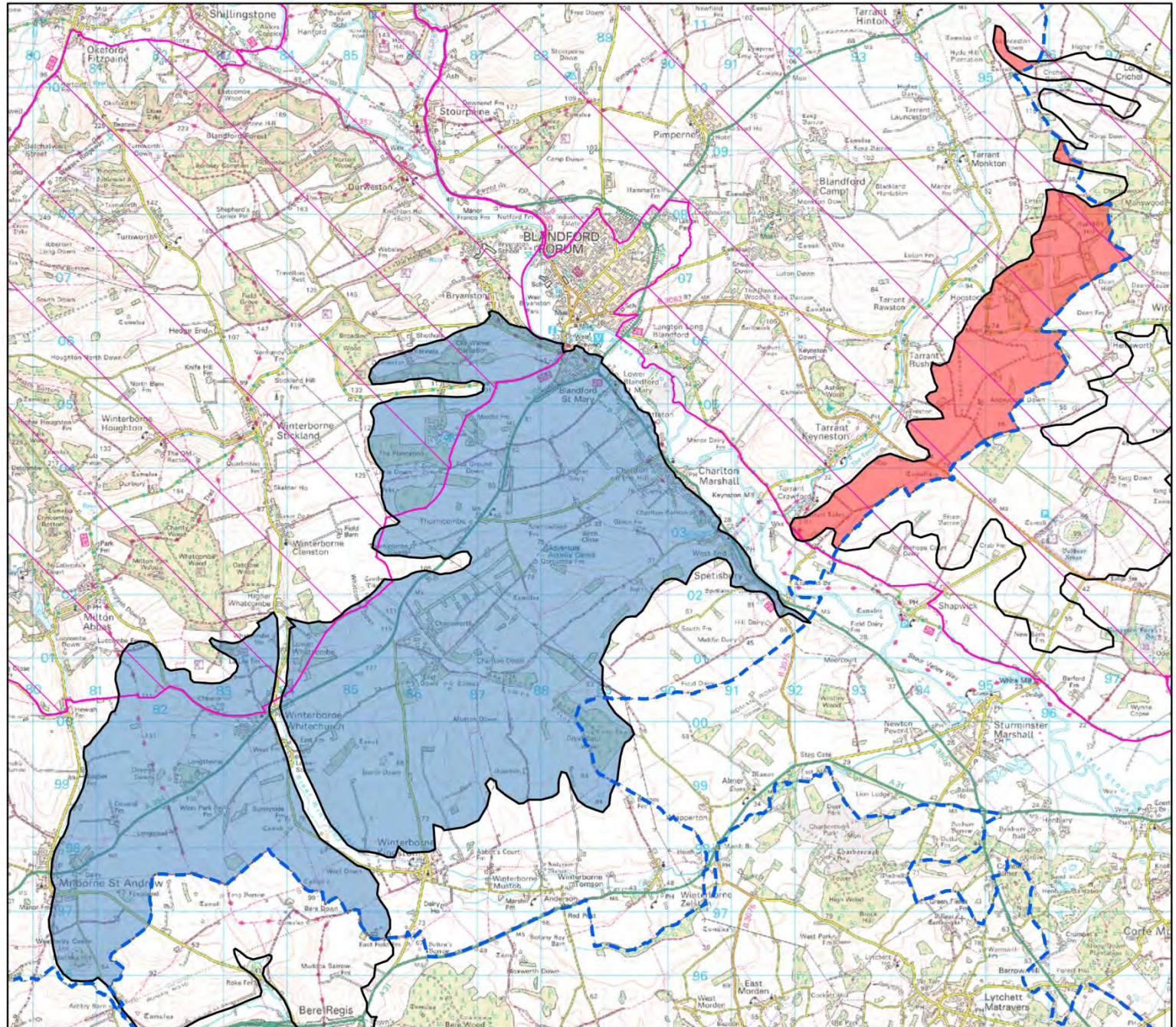
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<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to 2-4 turbines less than 35m high or single turbines 36-65m high is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>Whilst the typical characteristics of chalk downland are largely present in this part of the South Blandford Downs, the landform is less undulating than is usually the case for the LCT. Small turbines located in association with the isolated farms and numerous woodland blocks would be less intrusive than in more open locations, but larger turbines would be likely to appear out of scale with adjacent buildings and would potentially be visible from locations to the north of the Muston Down/Great Coll ridge.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is prominent in views from Spetisbury Rings or Badbury Rings;</li> <li>• Site is prominent from the floor of the Winterborne Valley, in particular from settlements;</li> <li>• Turbine is visible above the ridge in views from the north;</li> <li>• Location detracts from prominence of the tower at Charborough Park in views.</li> <li>• The area is in the setting of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB</li> </ul>					<p>Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of less than 10 hectares is <b>low-moderate</b>. Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of 10-30 hectares is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to larger schemes is <b>moderate-high</b>.</p> <p>Whilst the typical characteristics of chalk downland are largely present in this part of the South Blandford Downs, the LCA is generally less visually sensitive than is the case in Chalk Valley &amp; Downland LCAs which are closer to the escarpment, or associated with narrow chalk river valleys. The lie of the land is less undulating than many downland areas and woodland blocks create a number of locations which would not be highly prominent in views.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is prominent in views from Spetisbury Rings or Badbury Rings;</li> <li>• Scale of development is not consistent with either field size of proposed site or surrounding field sizes;</li> <li>• Location is on exposed higher ground close to Great Coll Wood.</li> </ul>																																			



# Landscape character type: Open Chalk Downland



-  District boundary
-  AONB
- Dorset Landscape Character Type**
-  12. Open Chalk Downland
- North Dorset Landscape Character Area**
-  12A - Chettle/Abbecroft Downs
-  12B - South Blandford Downs





## Open Chalk Downland LCT overview

The Open Chalk Downland LCT forms part of the belt of chalk (also incorporating the Chalk Valley and Downland, Chalk Ridge/Escarpment, Wooded Chalk Downland and Chalk Valley River Floor LCTs) that runs north east to south west through the centre of the county. In North Dorset areas of Open Chalk Downland sit within broader areas of the Chalk Valley and Downland LCT, in the southern and eastern parts of the District. There is no physical distinction between the Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs and the East Dorset Downs, where the boundary between the two follows the District boundary.

The South Blandford Downs also cross into East Dorset. The sensitivity assessment for this LCA covers both districts.

## Open Chalk Downland LCT characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"Elevated areas of open chalk upland with a broad rolling landform... Gentle curving convex profiles to the landform"*

This is a large scale landform.

### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"Uniform and homogenous landscape character"*

*"Patchwork of large-scale arable fields subdivided by low, straight and weak hedges"*

*"Isolated small blocks of geometrically shaped woods"*

### Visual exposure:

*"An expansive open scale with panoramic views to distant landmarks"*

### Development and activity:

*"Sparsely populated with few settlements and scattered isolated farmsteads"*

There is consequently a strong sense of remoteness.

## Open Chalk Downland LCT value characteristics

All of the Open Chalk Downland north of the Stour lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB but only the northern fringes of the LCT to the south of the Stour are designated, as part of the Dorset AONB. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is valued for 'special qualities' which include a distinctive landform, simplicity and openness, a sense of history and remoteness and a tranquil, rural character. The Dorset AONB includes a wider range of landscapes, the contrast and diversity of which is one of the 'special qualities' of the designated area, but the chalk downs are particularly associated with a distinctive sense of place, panoramic views, individual landmarks and the same sense of remoteness, tranquillity and history that characterise the Cranborne Chase AONB.

The principal Management Objective for the Open Chalk Downland LCT is to conserve the distinct landscapes, and the Management Objectives also make reference to restoring the condition of characteristic features so as to *"increase visual unity"* and *"make the combination of patterns and elements more distinct"*.

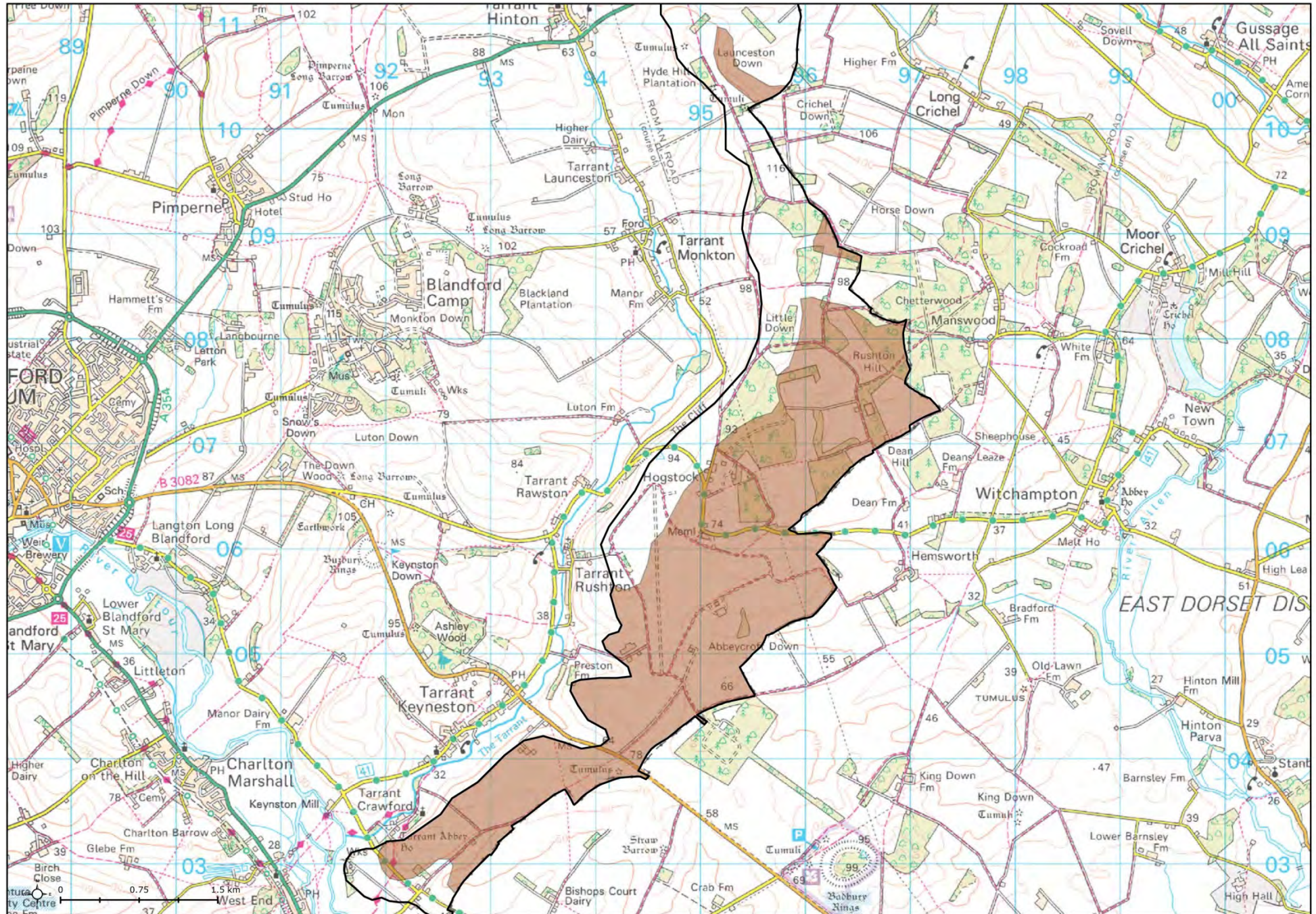
The distinctive character of the Open Chalk Downland has literary associations with Thomas Hardy, and throughout the area there are ancient monuments in exposed locations which add an important historic dimension to the landscape.

Open Chalk Downland LCT sensitivity to wind energy	<i>Open Chalk Downland LCT sensitivity to solar PV energy</i>
<p>This is an open, large scale landscape, and these characteristics are typically considered less sensitive to strong features such as wind turbines than more human-scale environments, but in all other respects the distinctive character of the Open Chalk Downland can be considered highly sensitive to wind turbines. Its distinctive landform, uniformity deriving from an absence of visual clutter and visual openness could all be compromised by the introduction of high vertical structures with movement.</p> <p>In terms of development and human influence this is a rural landscape with little modern intrusion and a strong sense of remoteness, so sensitivity is relatively high.</p>	<p>The undulating, rounded forms of the downland landscape are moderately sensitive to the introduction en masse of rigid forms such as solar panels, and the openness and large scale of the landscape, with low hedges, increases sensitivity. Geometric fields on more even slopes are of lower sensitivity if they are either reasonably well screened by woodland blocks or are located some distance from strong viewpoints, but the value attached to this AONB landscape, in which prominent modern development is rare, makes any location relatively sensitive to solar PV development.</p>



# Landscape character area: Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs (part)

Area: 736 hectares





### Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"...an open, expansive and rolling landscape"*

The southern part of the LCA, Abbeycroft Down, is defined as Open Chalk Downland, sloping away east and south from the top of the Tarrant Valley. The Open Chalk Downland areas here and in neighbouring East Dorset are shallower than the Chalk Valley & Downland LCT landscape, which slopes steeply in places down to the Tarrant Valley and is also more undulating in the northern part of the LCA around Chettle. There is a plateau area above Tarrant Rushton which was formerly used as an airfield.

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

There are a number of plantation blocks, including the large Hogstock Coppice, but the landscape is generally open, with only low, narrow hedges. Fields vary somewhat in size and shape but are typically larger and less regular than those to the east, particularly where they are bordered by the woodlands centred on Hogstock Coppice.

#### Visual exposure:

The southern end of the LCA slopes down towards the Stour Valley at Spetisbury and is exposed to views from the village, Spetisbury Rings and the downs to the south. Badbury Rings is an important viewpoint and there are also views from the ridge crest above the western side of the Tarrant Valley. Hogstock Coppice and the smaller coppices around it limit views into and within this part of the LCA.

#### Development and activity:

There are only a few farms and the hamlet of Hogstock within the Open Chalk Downland part of this LCA, and few roads, although the B3082 passes through the southern slopes.

### Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA value characteristics

The LCA is designated as part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The openness and large scale of this landscape is a valued 'special quality' of the AONB designation.

### Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy

		Turbine height (m)			
		A	B	C	D
Cluster size	A	M	H	H	H
	B	MH	H	H	H
	C		H	H	H
	D				

### Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy

		Development size (ha)	
		A	B
Development size (ha)	A	M	
	B	M	
	C	MH	
	D	H	

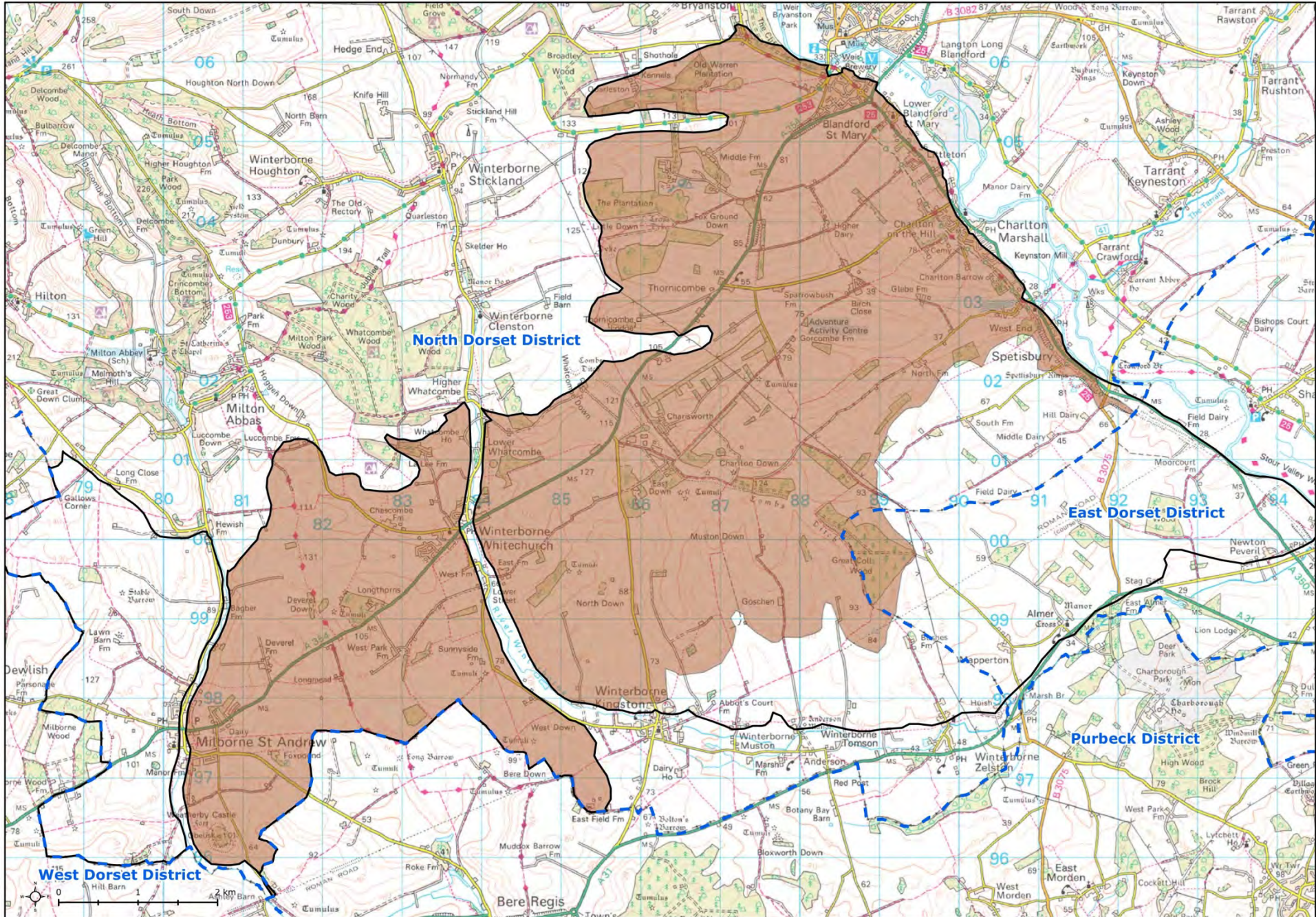


Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy	Chettle/Abbeycroft Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy
<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to 2-4 turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The value attached to the openness, uniformity, simplicity and undeveloped rural character of this downland landscape, recognised as key aspects of its AONB designation, makes it sensitive to wind energy development, despite its large scale. Sensitivity to smaller turbines would be lower in less exposed locations, particularly where associated with existing farm complexes or woodland blocks.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locations along the floor of the Tarrant Valley are exposed to views of a development;</li> <li>• Location is open to views from the downs to the west and south and from Badbury Rings.</li> </ul>	<p>Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of less than 10 hectares is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of 10-30 hectares is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to larger schemes is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>Topographically there are areas with only gentle undulations, including a flatter plateau, which would be less sensitive to development than the surrounding Chalk Valley &amp; Downland landscapes. The openness and rural character of the landscape, both 'special qualities' of the AONB, are more sensitive to solar development but vegetation and lack of roads and settlement mean that localised views of a development would potentially be very limited.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is open to views from the downs to the west and south and from Badbury Rings.</li> </ul>



## Landscape character area: South Blandford Downs (part)

Area (within North Dorset District): 4915 hectares





### South Blandford Downs LCA characteristics by susceptibility criteria

#### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"An undulating area of chalk downland distinctively subdivided by the predominantly south flowing chalk valleys... merges with the downland areas to the south"*

*"In the far south of the area around Weatherby Castle, a more intimate valley landscape is created as it becomes tighter and constricted by topography..."*

The Open Chalk Downland topography in the South Blandford LCA is more varied and undulating than the Chalk Valley & Downland slopes in the south eastern part of the LCA. In the north eastern part of the LCA it forms spurs and combes which slope down from high points in the Upper North Winterborne Valley LCA towards the Stour Valley. West of the Winterborne it includes all of the downland feeding into the three north-south river valleys (the Devil's Brook, Milborne and Winterborne) and the River Piddle to the south, although the western and southern parts of the LCA are in West Dorset and Purbeck districts respectively.

#### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"...intensively farmed with large to medium sized geometrical shaped fields bounded by low, straight clipped hedges"*

Field sizes and shapes do vary, and are noted as being smaller in the south of the area.

*"...several small, geometric-shaped plantation woodland blocks which dot the landscape and define the horizon in many places"*

*"There are widely spaced out, straight roads lined by low clipped hedgerows and the A354 dominates the central part of the area, as it crosses the upland"*

#### Visual exposure:

*"...an expansive landscape with some open views to the horizon"*

*"Parts of the urban edges of Winterborne Whitechurch and Milborne St Andrew become visible, and create an impact, as they have developed up the side slopes of the downland over time"*

The eastern part of the LCA is overlooked by the hill tops above the Winterborne and there are long views from the downs to the east of the Stour. The western part is overlooked in panoramic views from high ground above Milton Abbas.

There are passing views into much of the area from the A354, and into the southern edge of the area from the A35 and A31.

#### Development and activity:

*"Settlements are few and found mainly along the edges of the Stour Valley with a few isolated farmsteads scattered across the area"*

The principle villages within the area, such as Bere Regis, Milborne St Andrew and Winterborne Whitechurch, are on the lower slopes close to valley floors.

### South Blandford Downs LCA value characteristics

The northern fringes of the LCA fall within the Dorset AONB and the whole area forms part of the setting for higher chalk downland within the Dorset AONB to the north and the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire AONB to the east. The area exhibits many of the AONB qualities.

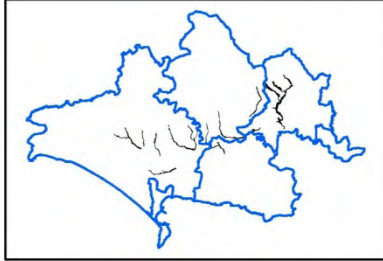
The following are noted as key features: Weatherby Castle, the Jubilee Trail (which runs along the top of the downs between the Milborne and Winterborne valleys), Longthorns Wood and its surrounding tumuli, Milborne Wood and the parkland landscape around Whatcombe House.









The "hard urban edge" of Blandford St Mary is noted as a detracting feature.

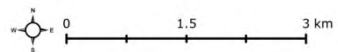
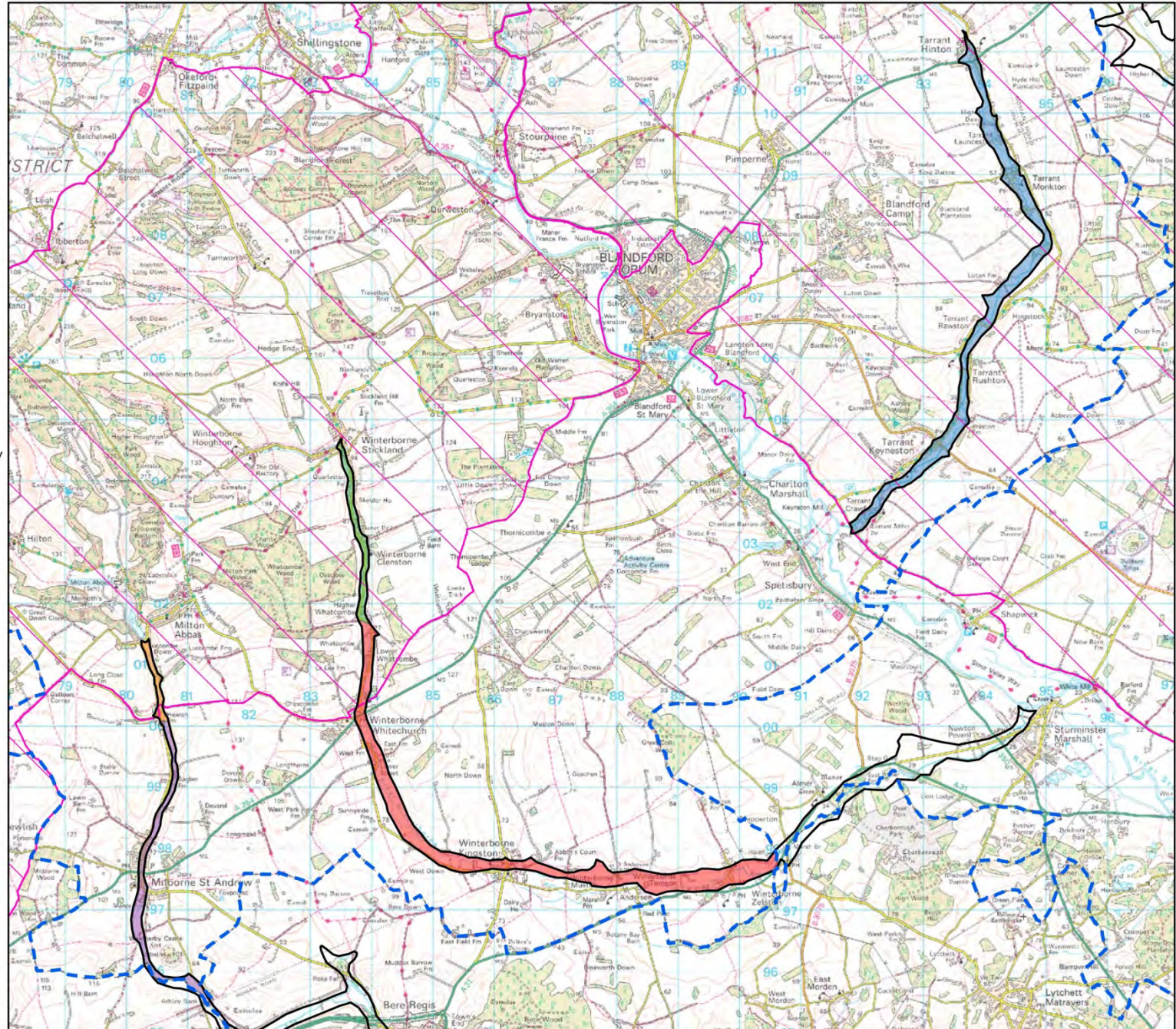
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South Blandford Downs LCA sensitivity to wind energy	South Blandford Downs LCA sensitivity to solar PV energy																																
<p>Sensitivity to single turbines less than 35m high is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to 2-4 turbines less than 35m high or to single turbines 36-65m high is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to all other scales of development is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The undulating slopes within this LCA are moderately sensitive to wind energy development , with lower slopes being more sensitive than crests, but the distinctive, homogeneous character of the downland landscape, with arable fields, low hedges and a sense of openness, is a key element of its value which therefore elevates sensitivity. Smaller turbines could be located in association with woodland blocks or farm buildings, so as not to create entirely new focal points in the landscape.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location appears in middle distance of longer, panoramic views from high ground on or near the chalk escarpment;</li> <li>• Turbine appears prominent in context of smaller scale valley landscape;</li> <li>• Location affects the prominence or character of landmarks such as Weatherby Castle, Longthorns Wood, Whatcombe Park, Milborne Wood or Great Coll Wood;</li> <li>• There is prolonged visibility in views from the Jubilee Trail.</li> </ul>	<p>Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of less than 10 hectares is <b>moderate</b>. Sensitivity to solar PV schemes of 10-30 hectares is <b>moderate-high</b>. Sensitivity to larger schemes is <b>high</b>.</p> <p>The simplicity and ruralness of the open downs are typically sensitive to modern development, but areas of flatter ground, or locations in which woodlands provide some screening, would be less sensitive than more exposed or undulating positions.</p> <p>Sensitivity could be higher where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location appears in middle distance of longer, panoramic views from high ground on or near the chalk escarpment;</li> <li>• Development appears prominent in context of a valley landscape;</li> <li>• Location is on exposed slope;</li> <li>• Field shape is irregular;</li> <li>• Location affects the prominence or character of landmarks such as Weatherby Castle, Longthorns Wood, Whatcombe Park, Milborne Wood or Great Coll Wood;</li> <li>• There is prolonged visibility in views from the Jubilee Trail.</li> </ul>																																



# Landscape character type: Chalk River Valley Floor



-  District boundary
-  AONB
- Dorset Landscape Character Type**
-  22. Chalk River Valley Floor
- North Dorset Landscape Character Area**
-  22A - Lower Winterborne Valley
-  22B - Tarrant Valley
-  22C - Upper North Winterborne Valley
-  22D - Lower Milborne Valley
-  22E - Upper Milborne Valley





## Chalk River Valley Floor LCT overview

Chalk River Valley Floor areas are identified on County LCT mapping but described as part of the typology for the Chalk Valley and Downland LCT, with which they are associated. The river valleys run in a generally north west to south east direction, draining off the chalk into larger valleys. Within North Dorset there are three principal chalk valleys: the Tarrant (draining into the Stour from the north), the Winterborne (which drains from the west into the Stour in East Dorset) and the Milborne (which flows into the Piddle, in Purbeck District).

The District Landscape Character Assessment identifies the valley floors of the lower reaches of the Milborne and Winterborne valleys as separate LCAs distinct from the surrounding downs but the definitions of the Upper Winterborne, Upper Milborne and Tarrant Valleys include the surrounding valley sides and combes. This sensitivity study treats the valley floor areas within these LCAs as a distinct Chalk River Valley Floor LCT, in line with the County-level LCT mapping.

## Chalk River Valley Floor LCT characteristics by susceptibility criteria

### Scale and complexity of landform:

*"The distinctive north south aligned, secluded chalk valleys of this landscape drain and subdivide the surrounding chalk downlands"*

The Chalk River Valley Floor LCT character areas are narrowly defined to include only the valley bottoms and lowest slopes, the surrounding hillsides and ridges typically being categorised as the Chalk Valley & Downland LCT but in some cases as Open Chalk Downland. The scale of the valley floor landscapes depends to an extent on the degree of slope on the containing valley sides. This varies in different locations, with the typically steeper slopes and narrower floors of the more upstream areas giving a smaller scale, but in all cases the surrounding higher downlands have a much larger scale.

### Scale and complexity of land use and field pattern:

*"Smaller scale pattern of fields and winding ribbons of trees along the valley floors creates a more sheltered and secluded character" (in comparison to the more open, exposed chalk downs)*

*"Historic now disused water meadows are key features"*

### Visual exposure:

Lateral views from the chalk valley floors are constrained to the immediate ridgelines. Longer linear views are available in places but vegetation bends in the valley form also limit these. Outside of the LCT there is very limited perception of the valleys beyond the immediate hillsides and crests.

### Development and activity:

*"Distinctive settlements of stone, brick and flint in linear form along the valley floors"*



### Chalk River Valley Floor LCT value characteristics

The upper reaches of the Winterborne and Milborne valleys are designated as part of the Dorset AONB and all of the Tarrant Valley is in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The distinctive valley floor settlement pattern, the historic character of these villages, the remoteness and tranquillity associated with their location and the contrast between open downs and intimate valleys are 'special qualities' of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The Dorset AONB includes a wider range of landscapes, but chalk downland with its associated valleys and distinctive 'sense of place' is a key aspect of the designation.

The management guidance notes for the Chalk Valley and Downland LCT include aspects specifically relating to the valley floors. These include *"Conserve and enhance the pattern and character of valley floor 'ribbon development' villages"* and *"Conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature..."*

### Chalk River Valley Floor LCT sensitivity to wind energy

The rivers that meander along the chalk valley floors are the key physical features within this LCT and the introduction of significant vertical landscape elements would detract from these and also jar with the sheltered, secluded, small-scale of the landscape and with its distinct, historic character. The upper sections of turbines could potentially appear above the ridge tops in views, which would have a significant impact on the very limited perception of these valleys that presently exists in views across the open downlands from locations away from the immediate valley tops.

### Chalk River Valley Floor LCT sensitivity to solar PV energy

The predominant land use types are pastoral, including water meadows with historic value, and these would be sensitive to the introduction of solar energy. There may be some scope for smaller solar schemes to be located where they would not be widely perceived in the local landscape and would not appear out of scale, but the sharp, geometric forms of solar development are likely to clash with the historic, pastoral character of the valleys wherever they are sited, and any location immediately adjacent to a river would be likely to detract from its sinuous form.