

# Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan (MA&CNP38)

## **Environment, Landscape Character and Vistas Topic Paper**

Prepared by Development in Transition (DinT)



View towards Pitts Lane, Cann and Shaftesbury from Melbury Beacon

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## List of Abbreviations

Acronym	Full name
AECOM	Architecture, Engineering, Consulting, Operations and Maintenance Technology Corporation
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CCWWD AONB	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DinT	Development in Transition
LLCA	Local Landscape Character Area
MA&CNP31	Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan 2031
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SSSI	Site of Specific Scientific Interest

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## Document Purpose

This document sets out the landscape typography of the area, complementing the AECOM<sup>1</sup> 2019 Design Guide, to document key local landscapes that should be protected from development in the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2038 (MA&CNP38), wherever possible. It is particularly important to ensure that any adverse landscape impacts on the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CCWD AONB) are avoided and that the area retains its rural character in the event of any new development facilitated through the Neighbourhood Plan.<sup>2</sup>

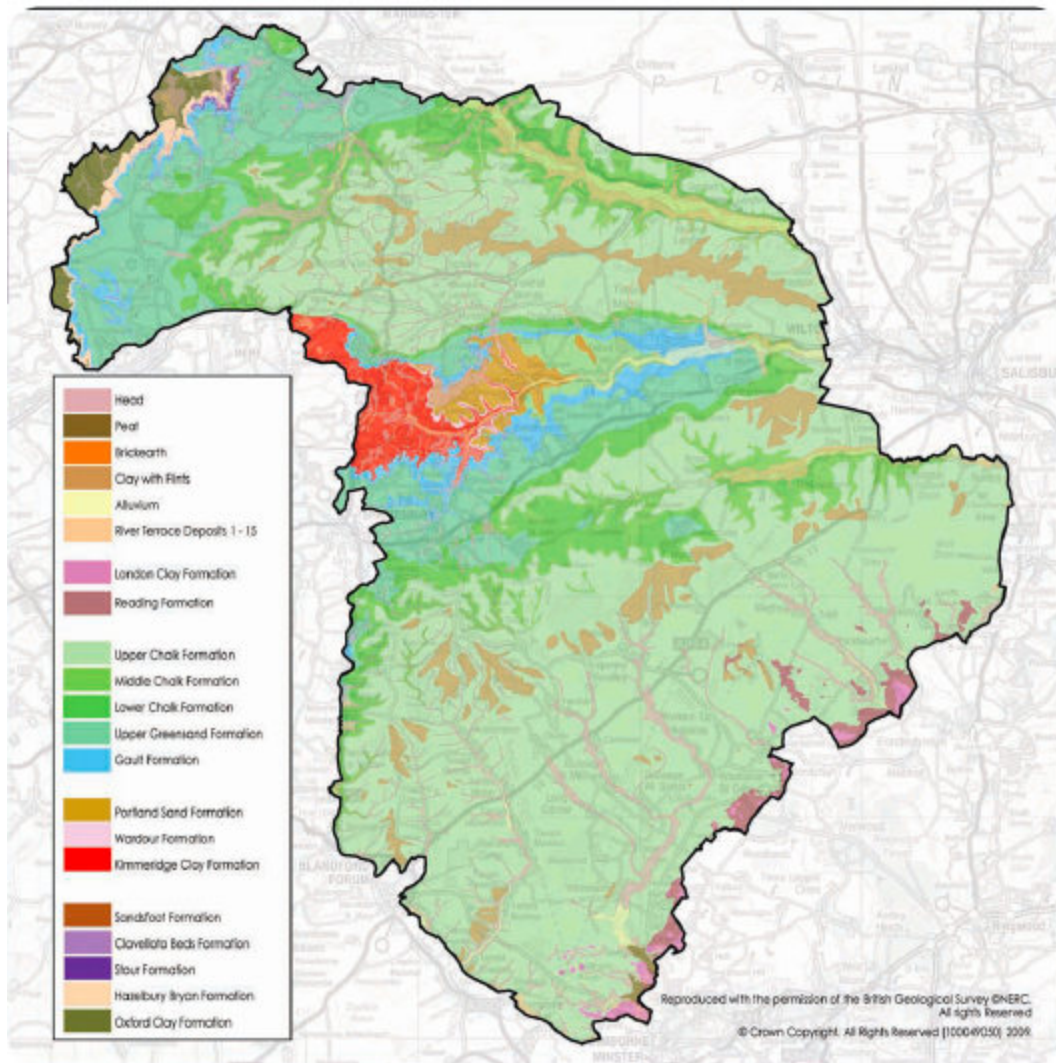
## Landscape character areas within the MA&CNP38 Neighbourhood Area

The physical, cultural, social and economic influences have combined to create the unique and distinctive character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The area is characterised by a diversity of landscapes and these variations and differences are represented by eight landscape types.

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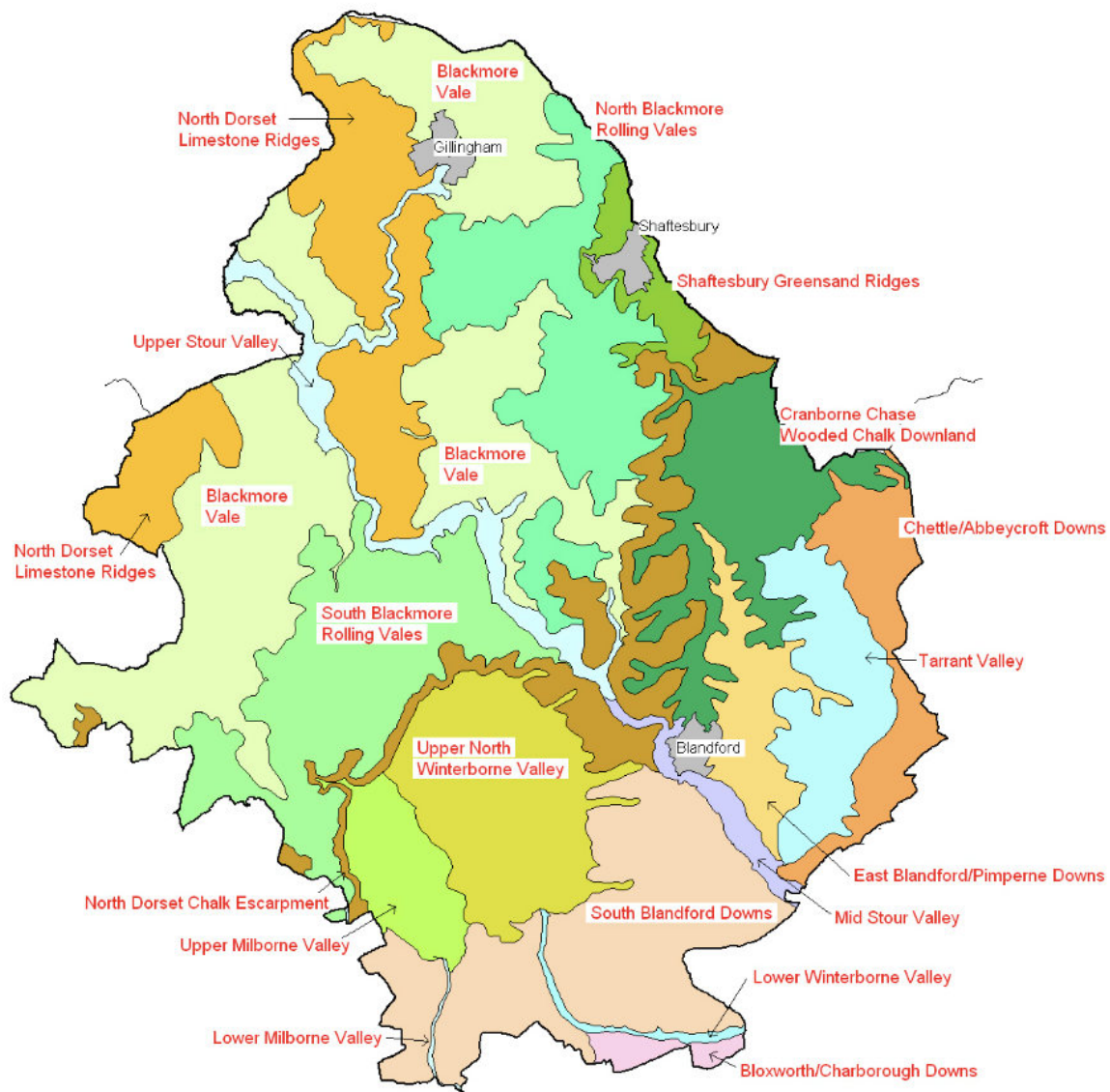
<sup>1</sup> [AECOM](#) are an independent company contracted to carry out technical support under the Locality Neighbourhood Plan grant programme.

<sup>2</sup> NB: a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was not deemed necessary by Dorset Council at the time.



Geology in the AONB (CCWWD AONB, 2008)





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Landscape Character Areas for North Dorset (NDDC, 2008b, p.3)

- 1: Chalk Escarpments (burgundy) - 1A Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
- 2: Open Chalk Downland
- 3: Wooded Chalk Downland

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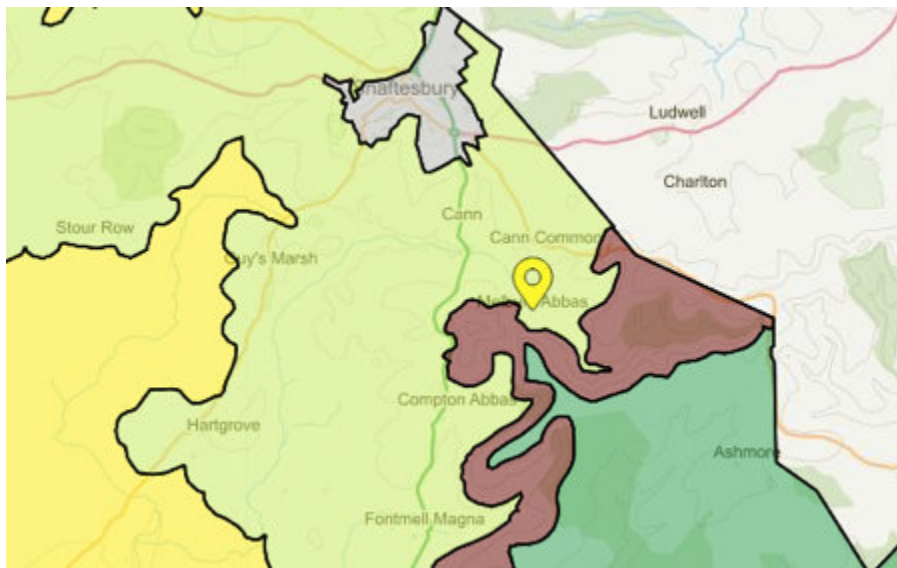
4: Downland Hills

5: Chalk River Valleys

6: Greensand Terrace

7: Greensand Hills

8: Rolling Clay Vales (lime)<sup>3</sup>



Landscape assessment character type - see landscape character assessment map<sup>4</sup>:

The whole of the Neighbourhood Area is set within the Blackmore Vale and the Vale of Wardour joint character area. Melbury Abbas and Cann also straddle both the Natural England National Character Area (NAC) 133 'Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour'<sup>5</sup> and NAC

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<sup>3</sup> [https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Planning\\_and\\_the\\_AONB-2.pdf](https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Planning_and_the_AONB-2.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/the-dorset-landscape/landscape-character-assessment-map.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> [NCA Profile:133 Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour - NE539 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/nca-profile/133-blackmore-vale-and-vale-of-wardour-ne539)

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134 'Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase'<sup>6</sup>. Though, the North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment<sup>7</sup>, including the addendum, and the Cranborne Chase AONB Landscape Character Assessment are both much more detailed and, therefore, more relevant to potential local landscape impacts.

Relevant character areas to Melbury Abbas and Cann

North Blackmore Rolling Vales
Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour
Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
Character Area 1A: Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment
Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges

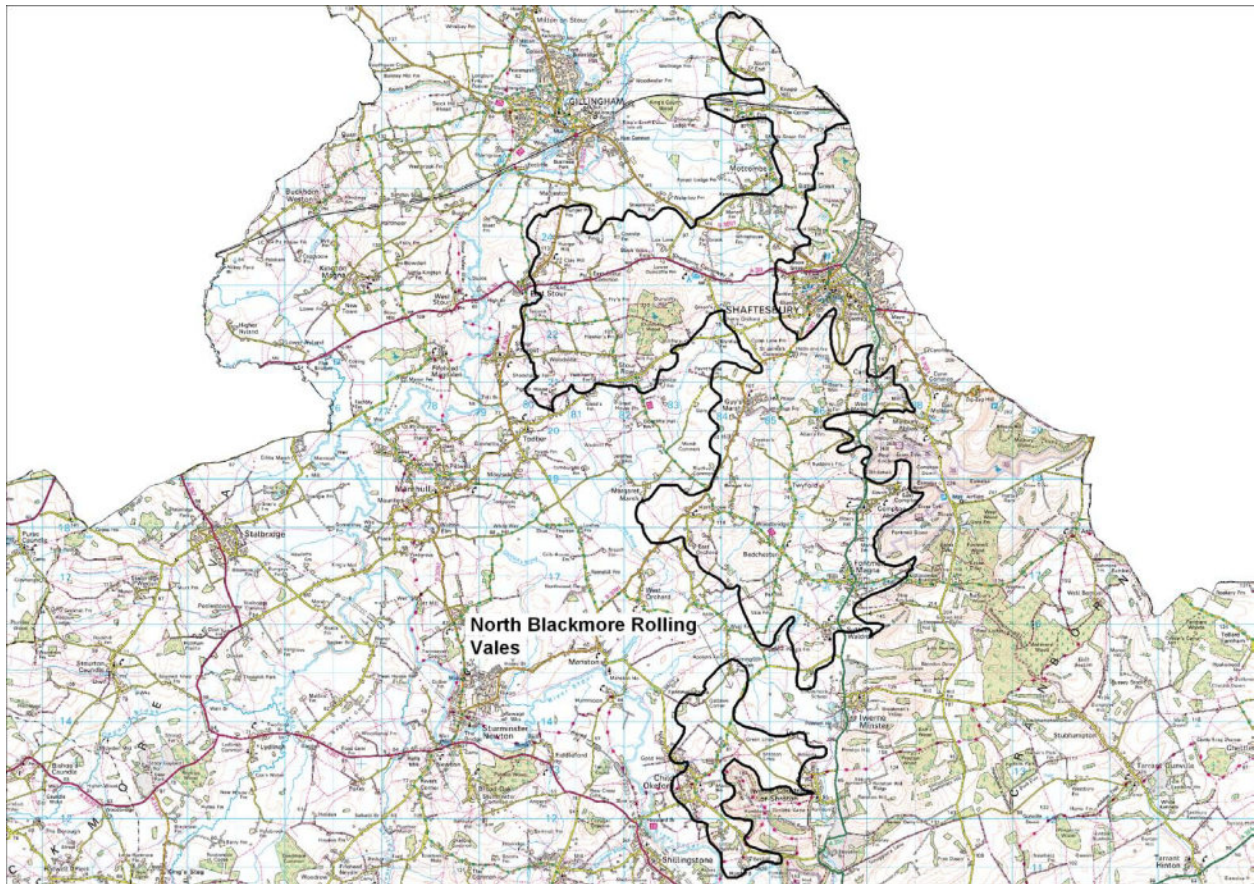
A detailed landscape and heritage report was commissioned by Dorset Council (LUC, 2019) for the six larger villages in North Dorset, but not for smaller ones such as Melbury Abbas or Cann, hence the rationale for this document to capture important landscapes in the Neighbourhood Area.

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5846213517639680?category=587130>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/395759/north-dorset-landscape-character-assessment.pdf/552b9f84-187d-1075-209d-8bd5-1c65-56a4-f9d454e73300> An addendum to the 2008 Landscape Character Area was an additional landscape area within the plan area, Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges. See <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/281417/North+Dorset+Landscape+Character+Assessment+Addendum.pdf/5b6dc92b-2455-1c65-56a4-f9d454e73300>





Character Area North Blackmore Rolling Vales NDDC (2008b)

The North Dorset Local Development Framework Landscape Character Area Assessment Evidence Base Addendum - July 2008 sets out the following key characteristics of this landscape area: Undulating, rolling farmland hills forming a transition zone between the Blackmore Vale and the chalk escarpment foothills; divides the Blackmore Vale north and south of the area; Irregular pattern of farmland, fields, copses, streams, dense hedgerows and copses; Many dispersed and isolated hamlets and farmsteads; Settlements are found towards the foothills at the base of the chalk escarpment; A tranquil, peaceful landscape. Duncliffe Wood is a key feature and outlier of Upper Greensand with a distinctive wave-shaped profile. The escarpment to the east forms an important feature and backdrop to the area. There are some important views over the Vale from high places. Many small streams and brooks. The area provides a rural, important setting for Shaftesbury which

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overlooks the area. Kingswood, Handford Park Estate and the manor house and grounds at Child Okeford are all key features. The A350 and the C13 are busy north-south routes through the area.

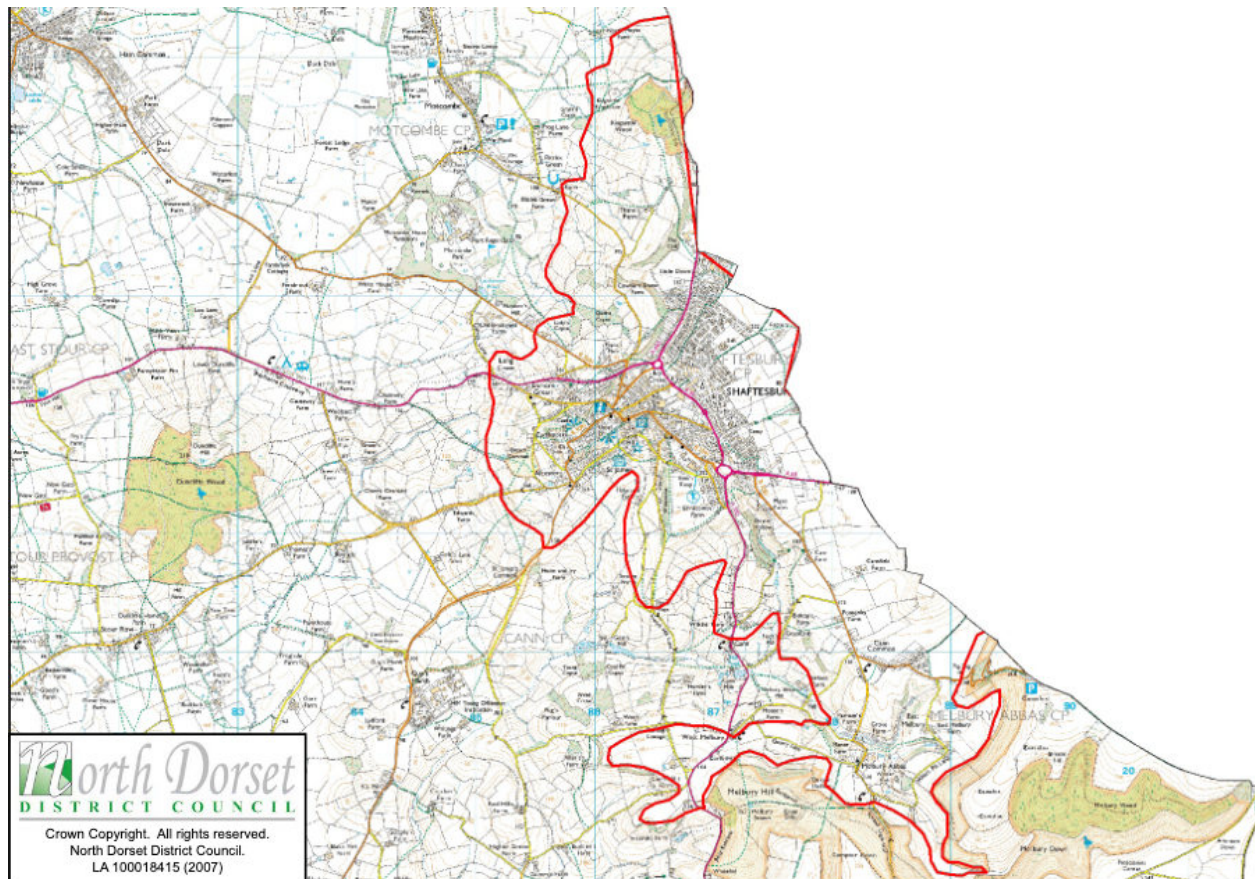
## **Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges**

An addendum to the 2008 Landscape Character Area was an additional landscape area within the plan area, Shaftesbury Greensand Ridges.<sup>8</sup> The North Dorset Local Development Framework Landscape Character Area Assessment Evidence Base Addendum - July 2008 sets out the following key characteristics of this landscape area: Dominated by the historic hilltop setting of Shaftesbury; a tightly folded landform with tight small valleys; distinctive upstanding greensand hills and ridges with open and wide views. The hills support woodlands and meadows are found on the valley floors both providing important habitats with a dense network of ancient sunken hedge-lined lanes and there is a tranquil and intimate perception despite the presence of the A350. A well-settled landscape with concealed hamlets and cottages. Small scale pattern created by irregularly shaped hedge-lined fields. Use of locally distinctive building materials especially stone

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<sup>8</sup> See

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/281417/North+Dorset+Landscape+Character+Assessment+Addendum.pdf/5b6dc92b-2455-1c65-56a4-f9d454e73300>



## Chalk ridge / escarpment<sup>9</sup>

### Management Objectives

The overall management objective for the Chalk Escarpment Landscape Type should be to conserve the uninterrupted landform, strong open skyline and the distinct mosaic patterning of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland and to seek opportunities to restore and enhance habitats and historic features. NB: particularly relevant points to MA&CNP38 highlighted in bold.

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<sup>9</sup> See

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/the-dorset-landscape/landscape-character-type.aspx?id=107a00b5-bd6b-4f71-b4fd-1bbc656937c9>

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## Key land management guidance notes

- promote the use of visually permeable boundaries such as post and wire fencing on higher ground and enhance the sense of continuity and openness across the escarpment/ridge tops and associated monuments.
- monitor continued encroachment of scrub on the steepest slopes. Manage scrub as a valued habitat component, and encourage grazing where appropriate and avoid cutting vegetation in straight lines to minimise visual impact. Retain occasional small patches of scrub for aesthetic and wildlife benefits.
- seek opportunities to recreate, link and restore important grassland sites and buffer from intensive management
- further woodland planting is not a key objective for this area, with the aim being to maintain the balance of open land and woodland cover with enhanced woodland management.
- ensure conservation and restoration of low-impact grassland management around prehistoric features, particularly barrows and hill forts.
- promote sustainable management and recreational access to Open Access areas and important viewpoints.
- consider the location of game cover crops in visible locations to minimise visual impact.
- maintain the undeveloped character of the scarp and the sharp contrast with the scarp foot settlements e.g. by the careful control of settlement edges and boundaries.
- any new development should be small-scale and should respect the distinctive nucleated 'scarp foot' settlement pattern and should not extend onto the lower slopes.



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- conserve the rural character of the narrow sunken lanes and protect sensitive hedgebanks from further erosion e.g. by identification of key sites through Parish Action Plans or similar and/or via Conservation Verge 'designation'.
  - identify, protect and enhance important views to and from the ridge/escarpment e.g. via Parish Action Plans, Village Design Statements and other Settlement Appraisals.

### **Character Area 1A: Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment**

The Landscape Sensitivity Study (2007), commissioned in February 2006 by Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Partnership, defines the Character Area 1A: Melbury to Blandford Chalk Escarpment to have a high landscape value and sensitivity<sup>10</sup>. It states:

*The combination of the landscape's distinctive landform and land cover pattern of woodland, scrub and chalk grassland imparts a strong sense of place and character to the area, in particular to the north in the vicinity of Melbury Hill, Melbury Down and Fontmell Down where strength of landform is particularly significant. This is reflected in the assessment of the area's strength of character as being strong. The physical attributes of the area's landscape character are judged as being in good condition, principally because the area's archaeological attributes are still intact, and the ecological condition of the scarp's internationally and nationally designated habitats is considered good. While the escarpment is almost totally devoid of settlement, the series of nucleated villages at the foot of the scarp exhibit the local vernacular and have a very strong sense of place. **The character area is judged to have high sensitivity as it is unlikely to accommodate change without extensive degradation of character and value.***

*Visual Sensitivity*

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 2, (LUC, 2007) for a classification of risk impacts.

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2.1.2 The west-facing slopes of the chalk escarpment are prominent in views across the Blackmore Vale and ensure that the escarpment is a dramatic landmark for miles around. Although the convoluted appearance of the scarp gives rise to enclosing deep combs and associative hanging woodland, these areas are still elevated and prominent in views. The area's network of footpaths and bridleways, including the Wessex Ridgeway, affords good access between lowland and upland areas, and is much frequented by tourists and ramblers alike. A large proportion of the escarpment has been mapped as Access Land under the Countryside Right of Way Act 2000. Any built development or change in land use is likely to be visually intrusive and have a particularly widespread influence. **This landscape is therefore highly sensitive to change.**

#### *Sensitivity to Change*

2.1.3 The element of the escarpment landscape which is most vulnerable to change is the open and predominantly undeveloped skyline of the escarpment ridge. It is important that skylines are uninterrupted by vertical and enclosing elements such as buildings, telecommunication masts and power lines, as being viewed against an open horizon their perceived scale would be very much exaggerated. The predominantly open prospect and sense of exposure experienced on the ridge is a dramatic characteristic of this landscape and must be retained. It is thus assessed that **most forms of development or land use change in this location would be prominent and would readily impact on many sensitive landscape and visual receptors** as recorded in the LCA and Management Plan.

2.1.4 On the lower scarp slopes and at the foot of the scarp, modern farm buildings, badly sited fence lines and the creation of enclosures can all detract from the harmonious and open qualities of this landscape...For these reasons this character area is evaluated as being **highly sensitive to change.**

These sensitivities to change would need to be carefully managed in the design of buildings within the MA&CNP38 in appropriate locations, as set out in the Design Guide (see AECOM, 2019).



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## Rolling vales<sup>11</sup>

### Management Objectives

The overall management objective for the Rolling Vales Landscape Type should be to conserve and enhance the diverse pattern of trees, woodland, hedgerow and small-scale fields, watercourses and narrow lanes. The conservation of the rural and tranquil nature of the area is also a key objective.

### Key land management guidance notes

Conserve and enhance any streams, ponds and marsh areas in the escarpment foothills; any new planting should reflect the existing varied visual structure of woods, copses, hedges and trees; soften the impact of hard urban edges such as at Motcombe and Hazelbury Bryan e.g. using small-scale broad-leaved native woodlands and/or natural regeneration.

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<sup>11</sup> See:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/the-dorset-landscape/landscape-character-type.aspx?id=61b46d59-1175-4028-9bd8-fda846ecc87b>. NB: this doesn't seem to AONB's landscape map - 6A Fovant Greensand Terrace see [https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Planning\\_and\\_the\\_AONB-2.pdf](https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Planning_and_the_AONB-2.pdf).

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## Important views and vistas in Melbury Abbas and Cann

To identify and address potential landscape sensitivities the MA&CNP38 steering group have created a list of potential views and their extent, depicted below.

Table 1 - Information on each identified vista in Melbury Abbas and Cann

<b>Iconic vista/important view reference</b>	<b>Name of the proposed view</b>	<b>Landscape Impact Zone no.</b>
Cann	View towards Cann from the Community Field adjacent to the Village Hall	LIZ1: West Melbury to Cann from Community Field
Multiple: West Melbury and Cann	View from Melbury Beacon towards Shaftesbury on the ridgeline with Pitts Lane on the left and the settlement of West Melbury along West Lane, with Cann settlement along the A350 to the North East	LIZ2a: Melbury Beacon to Shaftesbury
Various: West Melbury and Cann	Expansive view of the parishes towards West Melbury and Cann from Park Walk in Shaftesbury	LIZ2b: Shaftesbury to Melbury Beacon and Cann
Cann Common	Melbury Beacon looking East towards Cann Common	LIZ3a: Melbury Beacon towards Cann Common
West Melbury	View from Cann Common towards Melbury Beacon	LIZ3b: Cann Common towards Melbury Beacon

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Melbury Abbas	Melbury Abbas from the Beacon looking East towards Melbury Abbas in the middle and Cann Common to the left	LIZ4: Melbury Beacon towards Melbury Abbas and Cann Common
Guys Marsh, Cann	View from Park Walk, Shaftesbury towards Guys Marsh, overlooking Cann	LIZ5: Park Walk, Shaftesbury to Guys Marsh
Cann Common	View of Cann Common looking East from Spreadeagle Hill	LIZ6: Spreadeagle Hill to Cann Common
Guys Marsh, Cann	Melbury Beacon to Dunccliffe Wood	LIZ7a: Melbury Beacon to Dunccliffe Wood
Cann	Entrance to Cann towards Melbury Beacon	LIZ8: Entrance to Cann (proposed LGS3) towards Melbury Beacon
Cann Common	Foots Hill to Melbury Beacon	LIZ9: Foots Hill to Melbury Beacon

The wider landscape impact areas and their intersection are detailed in the map below (draft).



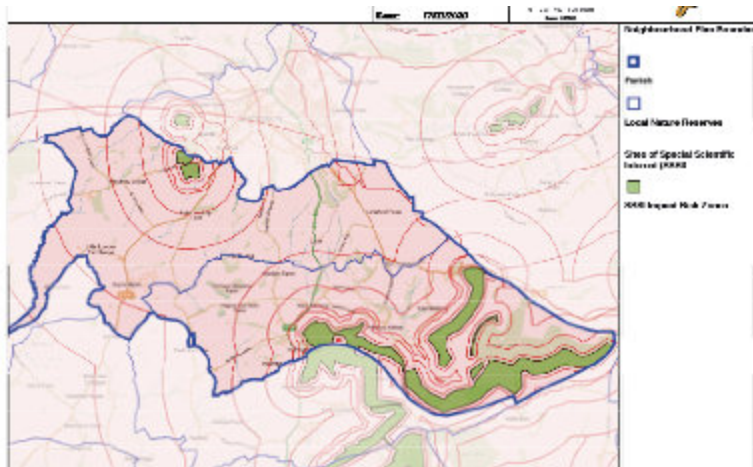
The Plan details images and figures and notes where assessed sites may impact the landscape.

## SSSI status in the Neighbourhood Area

Pink - (+ other coloured areas) - Neighbourhood Area of Melbury Abbas and Cann

Site	% of site in favourable condition	% of site in unfavourable recovering condition
Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI/SAC	67.56%	31.96%
Breach Fields SSSI	55.80%	44.20%

Cann is within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone for larger scale residential development due to its proximity to Breach Fields impact zone and the southern edge of Melbury Abbas is within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the Fontmell and Melbury Downs SSSI.



SSSI Impact Area Breach Fields and Fontmell and Melbury Downs

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# References

AECOM (2019) Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide.

CCCVLP (2018) *Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Character Assessment*. Cranborne Chase & Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership/Chris Blandford Associates.

CCWWD AONB (2003) *Integrated landscape Character Assessment*. Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB/The Countryside Agency prepared by Land Use Consultants. Available from:  
[https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LandscapeCharacterAssessment\\_FULL.pdf](https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LandscapeCharacterAssessment_FULL.pdf)

CCWWD AONB (2008) *Historic Landscape Characterisation Project*. Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB/Emma Rouse.

CCWWD AONB (2008) Historic Environment Action Plans:

CCWWD AONB/ The Landscape Partnership (2007) *Landscape sensitivity study*. Available from:

<https://cranbornechase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LandscapeSensitivityMay2007.pdf>

LUC (2019) Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset Area. Final report. Prepared by LUC for Dorset Council. August 2019. Assessment of land surrounding the larger villages

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (2007) Landscape Sensitivity Study (Final Report) May 2007. Sherborne: The Landscape Practice.

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North Dorset (2008b) Local Development Framework Landscape Character Area Assessment Evidence Base March 2008. Addendum.

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/281417/North+Dorset+Landscape+Character+Assessment+Addendum.pdf/5b6dc92b-2455-1c65-56a4-f9d454e73300> (p.3)