



National  
Trust

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22 January 2018

Planning Policy (North Dorset)  
South Walks House  
South Walks Road  
Dorchester  
DT1 1UZ

By email: [planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam

**NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN REVIEW**  
**Issues and options consultation**

We would like to make comments in response to the above consultation, specifically in relation to potential new development at Shaftesbury.

The National Trust owns Fontmell and Melbury Downs in the Cranborne Chases Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This land was bought in memory of Thomas Hardy, to protect the landscape in which his novels are set. There are excellent outward views from the Downs, including towards Shaftesbury from high points such as Melbury Hill and Win Green. The Downs are also of considerable importance for their ecology and archaeology, and they are enjoyed by increasing numbers of walkers and visitors.

In response to the consultation, we accept the need for new housing in North Dorset, yet we have significant concerns about the potential visual and environmental impacts of further housing development on the southern side of Shaftesbury. Our comments appended to this letter therefore relate to the Shaftesbury chapter of the Issues and Options paper.

We trust that our comments and concerns can be taken into account before any decisions are taken as to the quanta and locations for new housing.

Yours sincerely

Mark Funnell BSc MSc DipTP MRTPI  
Planning Adviser – South West Region

National Trust  
South West Region  
[REDACTED]

President: HRH The Prince of Wales  
Regional Chair: Doug Hulyer  
Regional Director: Rebecca Burton  
[REDACTED]

## **Appendix: National Trust comments on North Dorset Local Plan Review Issues and Options (November 2017)**

### **Chapter 8: Shaftesbury**

***Q 12 – Do you agree with the conclusions regarding the areas of search identified at Shaftesbury?***

***Q13. Are there any further issues relating to the areas of search that you think should have been considered as part of the assessment process?***

Our answer to question 12 is 'no', in that we don't agree that certain 'areas of search' have development potential for further strategic housing allocations. Our further comments in relation to both of the above questions are set out below:

#### NT introduction/background

The National Trust owns Fontmell and Melbury Downs in the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Downs offer stunning views that stretch for miles across the Blackmore Vale. Melbury Hill offers excellent views towards Shaftesbury, which is relatively close by to the north, whilst there are longer distance views to the town from Win Green, just over the border into Wiltshire.

In addition to their landscape and scenic beauty, Fontmell and Melbury Downs comprise the largest area of continuous unimproved calcareous (chalk) grassland in National Trust ownership, and are designated as being of national (SSSI) and European (SAC) importance. They includes many very rare and important species such as Adonis blue, chequered skipper, chalkhill blue, early gentian, juniper, brown hare, skylark, and many species of orchid. In addition, from an archaeological perspective, they include scheduled monuments such as Melbury Beacon and the cross-dykes at Fontmell Down.

Fontmell and Melbury Downs are well-used by walkers, some of whom drive out form Shaftesbury, and many of which use the National Trust car park beside the C13 road from Melbury Abbas down to Blandford Forum. There is open access land and dedicated public rights of way for them to enjoy.

In relation to existing housing development that has taken place at the edge of Shaftesbury in recent years, we would like to note that the growth of the town, particularly new residential development along the A30 Salisbury Road, has already impacted on the landscape and visual amenities as experienced from places such as Melbury Hill. This is particularly because some of the new dwellings are three storeys in height, and because there does not appear to be tree planting to screen or soften the wider visual impacts. In addition, the car park at Fontmell Down is becoming increasingly popular, with additional footfall potentially impacting on ecological and archaeological interests.

## Response to areas of search

Firstly, we acknowledge that there is a need for new housing across Dorset including in North Dorset. We do however have some specific concerns about the 'areas of search' on the south side of Shaftesbury, and the implications of new development in these areas.

We note and support the conclusions that areas E, F and G (to the south-west of Shaftesbury) do not have development potential. Our comments focus on areas A, B and D (to the east and south), which the Issues and Options paper considers to have development potential, albeit 'limited' potential.

From a landscape and visual impact perspective, development in areas A, B and D is likely to harm the views and setting of the AONB landscape. Views from the AONB to these parts of Shaftesbury are widely available, and two key viewpoints are featured below:

- (a) View from Melbury Hill – The attached viewshed map for Melbury Hill shows that a person standing on the north side of the hilltop could clearly see any new buildings of 5 metres or more in height across most of areas A to F, with some small exceptions (the pockets of red shaded areas).
- (b) View from Win Green – The attached viewshed map for Win Green, slightly further afield, indicates that new development in virtually all of area B would be visible (and that it would be closest to the viewpoint); development in area A would also be visible, as it would be in part of area D.

From an ecological perspective, Fontmell and Melbury Downs are already heavily visited and this is having an impact from trampling and compaction, soil enrichment from dog faeces and disturbance to grazing which is critical in maintaining the habitats. Increased housing, particularly in the southern part of Shaftesbury, will inevitably increase the pressure, damage and disturbance to this very sensitive site. From an archaeological perspective, it could also affect the integrity of the scheduled earthworks.

In conclusion, from the perspective National Trust viewpoints in the AONB and potential landscape and visual impacts, we would question whether areas B, D and A are suitable for new residential development. Without prejudice to these concerns, should any additional new housing be sanctioned on the southern side of Shaftesbury, we would want it to be no greater than two storeys in height, and with considerable new tree screening – both in amongst the new housing and on its southern side. Appropriate mitigation for any ecological and archaeological impacts should be included – see also our comment below.

### ***14. What are the additional infrastructure requirements that are likely to result from potential future development at Shaftesbury?***

Any new housing provided at Shaftesbury should have ample new green infrastructure provided alongside it, such as public open space and areas for dog walking. Whilst this would not replace the 'draw' of the AONB for walkers, and may not prevent increases in footfall with consequential environmental impacts, it would offer an alternative that could partially offset the effects of additional housing.



### Fixed point viewed from Melbury Hill

National Trust

Date: 18/01/2018

Scale: 1:25,000 (A4)

Grid Ref: 387,047 122,529

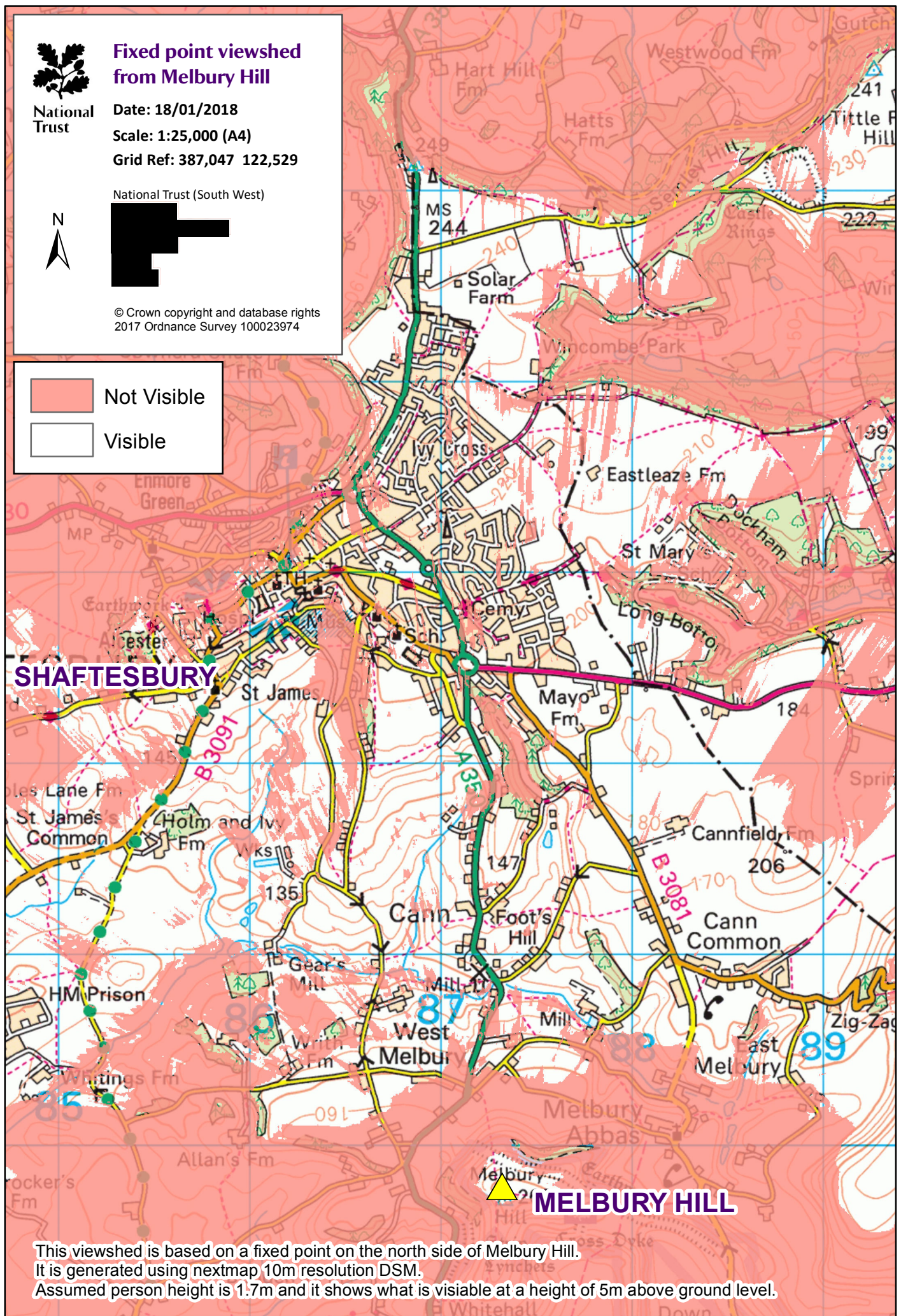
National Trust (South West)



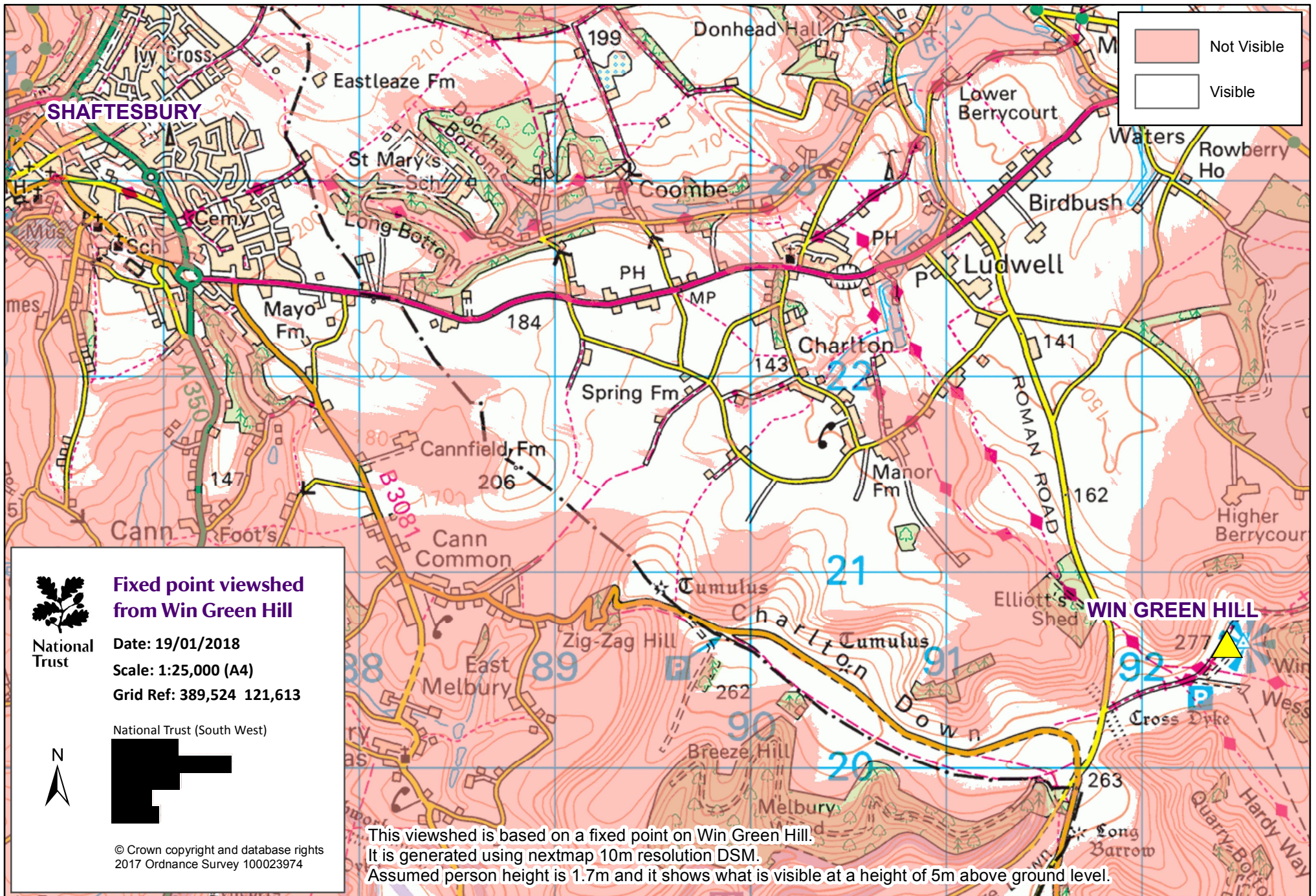
© Crown copyright and database rights  
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Not Visible


Visible



This viewshed is based on a fixed point on the north side of Melbury Hill. It is generated using nextmap 10m resolution DSM. Assumed person height is 1.7m and it shows what is visible at a height of 5m above ground level.



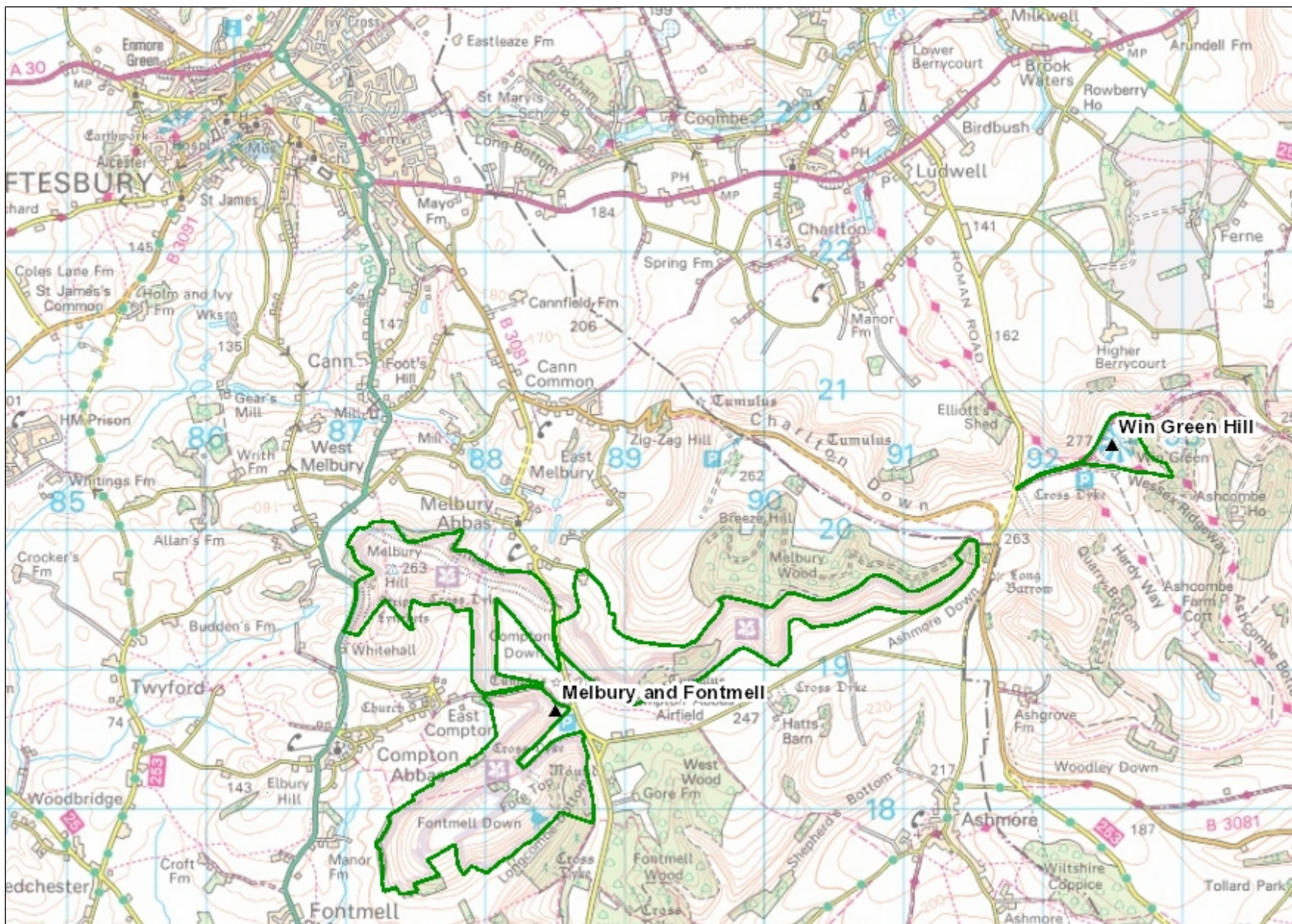
	Not Visible
	Visible

  
**Fixed point viewed from Win Green Hill**  
 Date: 19/01/2018  
 Scale: 1:25,000 (A4)  
 Grid Ref: 389,524 121,613  
 National Trust (South West)

This viewshed is based on a fixed point on Win Green Hill.  
 It is generated using nextmap 10m resolution DSM.  
 Assumed person height is 1.7m and it shows what is visible at a height of 5m above ground level.



# Fontmell and Melbury Downs



## Legend

- ▲ Definitive Properties (GB)
- NT Ownership (GB)
- NT Leasehold (GB)

1: 40,000



1.6 0 0.80 1.6 Kilometers

British\_National\_Grid

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This map is a user generated static output from an Intranet mapping site and is for reference only. Data layers that appear on this map may or may not be accurate, current, or otherwise reliable.

THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

## Notes

This map was automatically generated using the National Trust GIS Browser