

# **METHODOLOGY FOR LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT**

**LAVERSTOCK AND FORD PARISH**

**AUGUST 2020**

**L138/R02A**

## 1. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

### Guidance and terminology

- 1.1. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) is a tool used to provide a measure of the ability of a landscape to withstand change which may then be used to inform strategic special planning and land management. It provides a strategic assessment of sensitivity with regard to the principle of a particular type of change scenario such as housing development.
- 1.2. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value – such as changes to valued attributes of baseline landscape character and the visual resource. Landscape sensitivity assessment is a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes. It can help decision makers to understand likely changes and the nature of change should particular courses of action - the development / land management scenarios – be taken forward.
- 1.3. The main guidance for LSA is ‘An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’ by Christine Tudor for Natural England 2019. This document expands on the guidance given by GLVIA 3 for the assessment of landscape and visual susceptibility and value for specific development on specific parcels of land.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.4. The ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013’. (GLVIA 3). This remains the main source for legal basis and good practice for LVIA in the UK and EU. For full definition of terms and methods used please refer to the GLVIA 3. GLVIA 3 is used to inform landscape sensitivity methodology and still forms a relevant resource.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.5. In order to avoid confusion, the following terminology is used throughout this and related documents:<sup>3</sup> For a full glossary please refer to the relevant documents.
  - 1.5.1. **Landscape Sensitivity** Within the context of spatial planning and land management, landscape sensitivity is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resource, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type / development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resource. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development

<sup>1</sup> An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’ by Christine Tudor for Natural England 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013. (GLVIA 3).

<sup>3</sup> P. 7: An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management ‘ by Christine Tudor for Natural England 2019.

types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value.

- 1.5.2. **Landscape Susceptibility** Within the context of spatial planning and land management, landscape susceptibility is the degree to which a defined landscape and its associated visual qualities and attributes might respond to the specific development type / development scenario or other change without undue negative effects on landscape character and the visual resource.
- 1.5.3. **Landscape Capacity** refers to the amount of specified development or change which a particular landscape and the associated visual resource is able to accommodate without undue negative effects on its character and qualities
- 1.5.4. **Landscape value** The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reason
- 1.5.5. **Overall sensitivity** A term applied when landscape sensitivity reporting is generalised across the assessment unit (even though it must be accepted that such sensitivity to particular developments is likely to vary within the assessment unit).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. The Natural England identifies the following approach to LSA. (Fig.2) and requires that the following key principles should be adhered to for the process.
  - 2.1.1. A Landscape sensitivity assessment should be as straightforward as possible
  - 2.1.2. Landscape character, the visual resource [including views and the general visual amenity experienced] and value inform landscape sensitivity although differing circumstances will dictate the exact nature of the evidence gathered to inform the assessment.
- 2.2. This document identifies the process and methodology including the specific Sensitivity and Susceptibility Criteria to be used in the assessment of the various parcels of land (sensitivity parcels) identified to be considered in the parish of Laverstock and Ford.

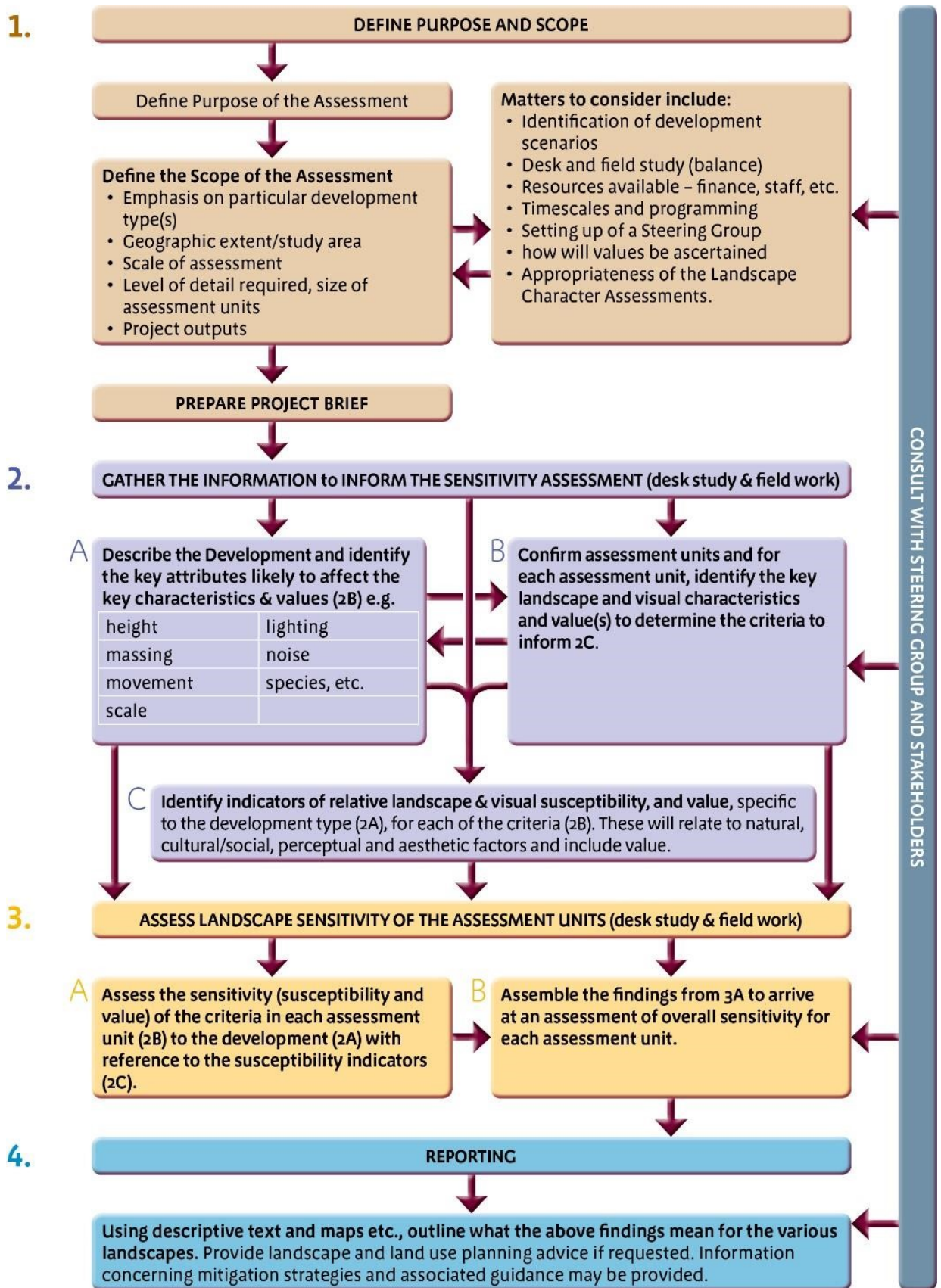


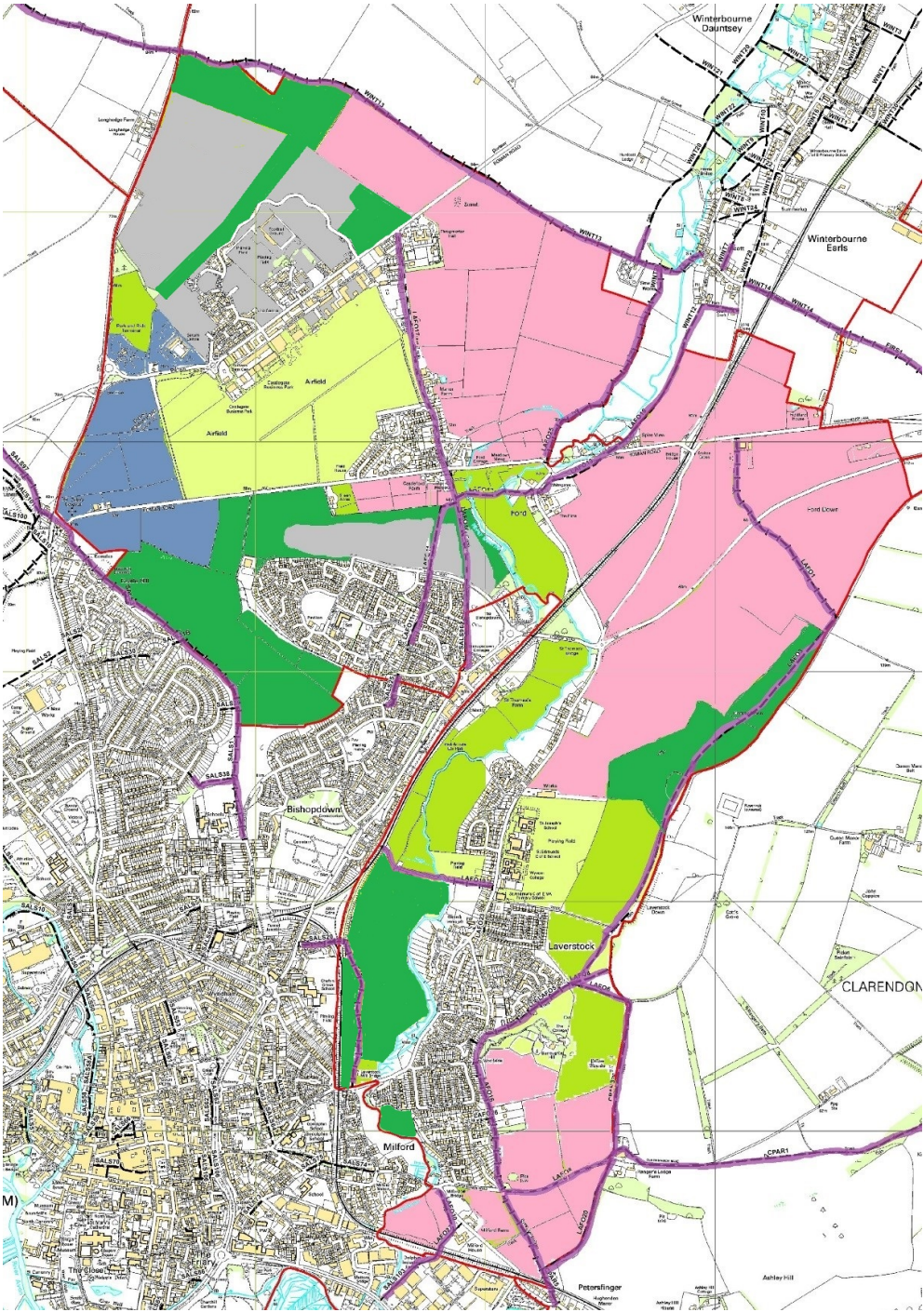
Fig. 1 The process of Landscape Sensitivity Assessment <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Page 12: An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’ by Christine Tudor for Natural England 2019.

### 3. SCOPE AND OUTPUT OF THE STUDY

- 3.1. The scope of this study is to identify and analyse the potential impact of further development on the landscape of the parish, especially when viewed from the main footpaths and viewpoints used by residents and visitors within the parish and also from adjacent locations, such as Old Sarum and Figsbury Ring Ancient Monuments, and the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area and the main roads into the parish. In particular, the following elements are to be considered:
  - 3.1.1. Which areas of the parish cannot be developed without significant detrimental impact on the visual landscape, and in particular on its semi-rural character?
  - 3.1.2. If further housing development is required in the parish at some point in the future as part of the Salisbury Area Housing Allocation, where might this best be located to minimise the visual landscape impact, and preserve the semi-rural character? What would be the nature and extent of any adverse impact of such development on the visual landscape? As part of this assessment, the maximum possible extent of such development should be identified. The Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (NPSG) are not currently looking to make allocations within the neighbourhood plan since there are no strategic housing allocations by Wiltshire Council to be met.
- 3.2. The output should include a baseline mapping of low/medium/high visual impact of low rise (2 storey) housing development across the areas of the parish coloured pink in the second map below (Fig.1). Recommendations with regards to alternative levels of suitable development can also be made. Detailed assessment of other factors for development other than related to landscape character are not to be included in this study. Currently it is believed that there is an adequate supply of commercial land within the recent development areas and further commercial developments are not to be specifically identified.
- 3.3. The NSPG have identified various land use areas within the parish, including areas unlikely to be developed. This land-use mapping has been determined the main areas of the parish to be included or excluded from the landscape sensitivity study. These are shown in Fig. 2.





■ Wiltshire Council Owned Land

■ Requested Area of Study

Fig.1. Area Covered by the Study



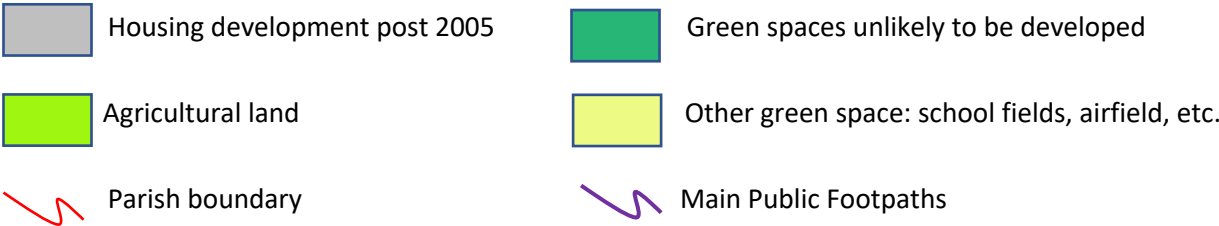
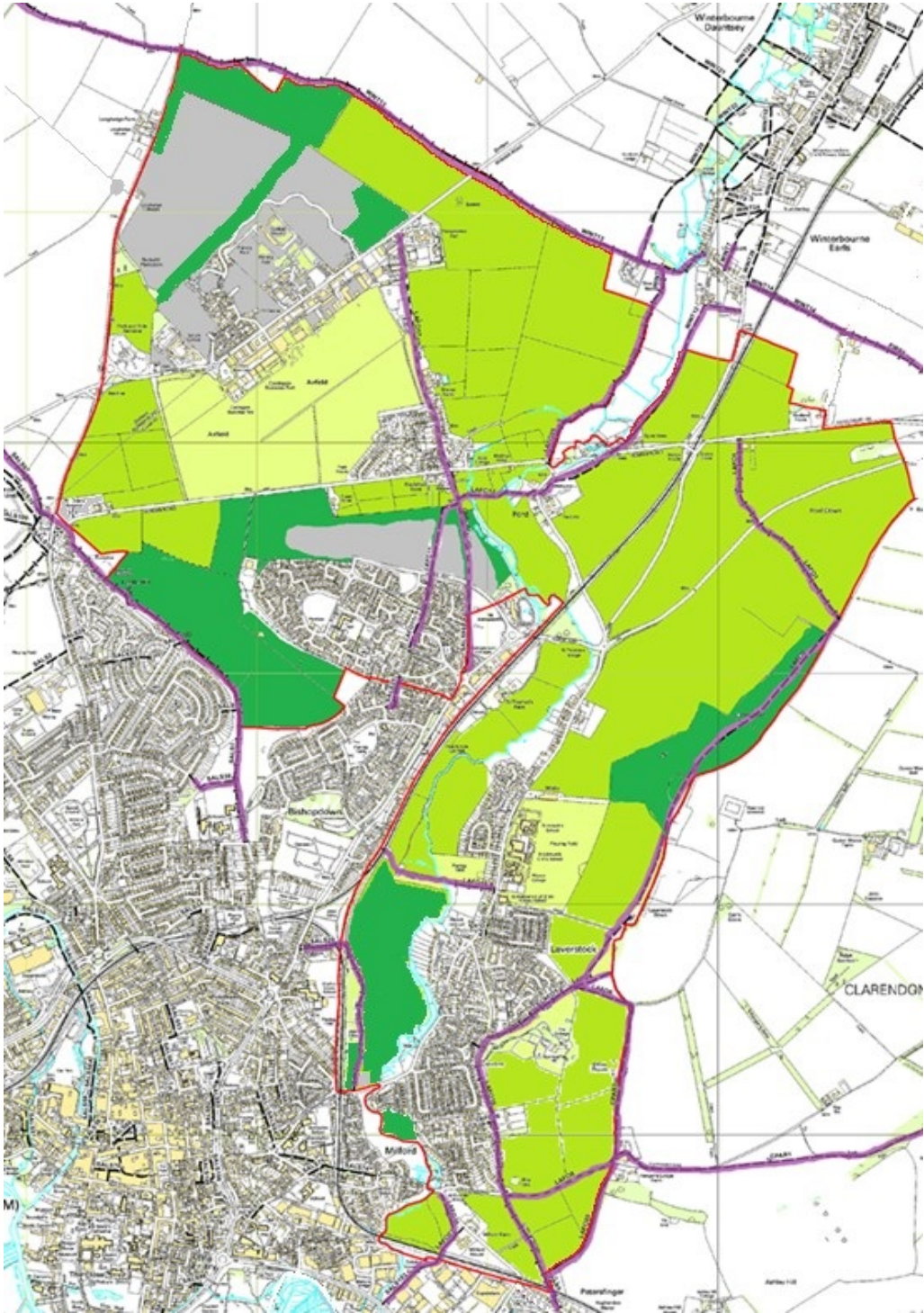


Fig. 2. Greenspace and Land Use of Laverstock and Ford Parish

## 4. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

- 4.1. The following steps were carried out to gather the baseline information for the LSA, both using desk top study and field study.

### Development Type

- 4.2. The type of development for this study was identified by the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (NPSG) as Residential Development – two to two-and-a-half storey high.

### Assessment Units

- 4.3. The assessment units are identified in Figure 1 above which shows the areas under consideration highlighted in pink. These have been grouped together in the following areas and are shown in Fig. 3 below:

- 4.3.1. Area 1 – Land to the east of Duck Lane and to the south of Queen Manor Drive  
 4.3.2. Area 2 - Land to the east of Church Road (Laverstock)  
 4.3.3. Area 3 - Land to the East of Ford

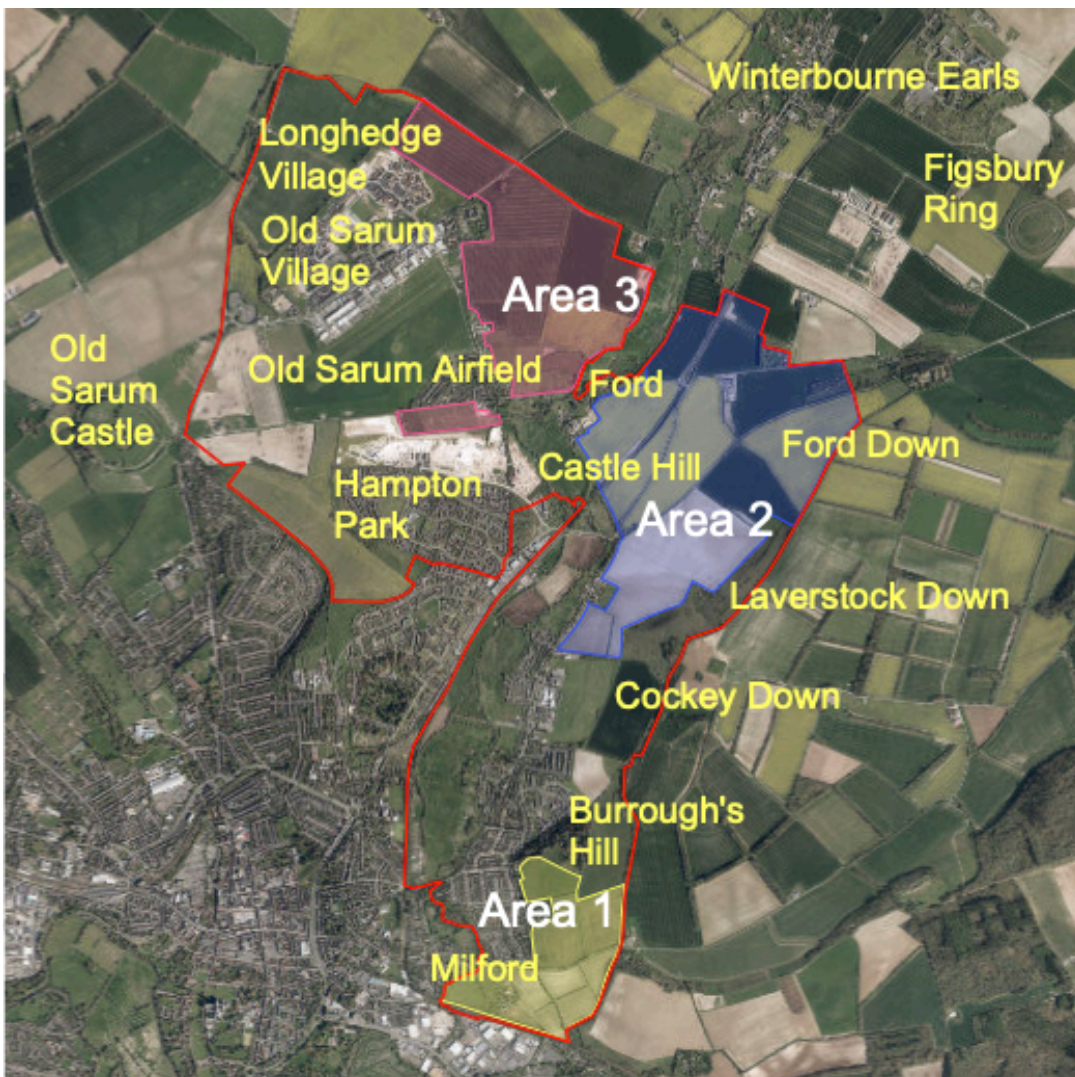


Fig. 3 Assessment Areas



## Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.4. A baseline desktop landscape character assessment was carried out to identify the various elements and characteristics comprising the landscape character of the area and its environ with reference to the following documents:
- Ordnance Survey Maps 1:25,000 and 1:50,000;
  - Aerial photographs of the site and environ
  - National Landscape Character Assessments – Natural England NCA 132
  - Regional Landscape Character Assessments – South Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment
  - Planning Policies – Wiltshire County Council, Salisbury District Council including:
    - Conservation Areas
    - Local nature reserves
    - Key wildlife sites
    - CROW/access land
    - Public rights of way
    - Flood Zone 3
  - Landscape Designations – MAGIC website including:
    - Scheduled monuments
    - Listed buildings
    - SSSIs and SACs
    - Local nature reserves
    - Ancient woodlands
    - Registered parks and gardens
    - National trails
- 4.5. The landscape assessment methodology developed by Natural England in 2014 - 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' is an accepted procedure for assessment of landscape character and visual character of a landscape. As part of this, a baseline survey is produced and then judgements are made with regard to categorisation of the sensitivity of the landscape. These judgements are made of several factors listed below, which must be combined in order to give a final statement as to the sensitivity of the resource.

## Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

- 4.6. The landscape characteristics and visual characteristics were assessed in accordance with the guidance given in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' by Natural England 2014. The list of criteria to be assessed includes:
- 4.6.1. **Natural Criteria**
- Landform
  - Land cover, vegetation, scale, landscape pattern, biodiversity
  - Hydrology
- 4.6.2. **Cultural and Social Criteria**
- Land use (agriculture, recreation, industry, settlement etc.)
  - Cultural heritage
  - Enclosure
  - Built Form and Settlement Pattern

- Public Access

#### 4.6.3. **Aesthetic and Perceptual**

- Scale and openness
- Tranquillity (movement, lighting, darkness, noise etc.)
- Naturalness
- Remoteness
- Scenic quality and character

#### 4.6.4. **Landscape Condition**

- Intactness
- State of repair

#### 4.6.5. **Visual Criteria**

- Visual amenity
- Skylines
- Important or characteristic Views
- Landmarks and other focal points
- Intervisibility
- Typical receptors

### **Indicators of Susceptibility**

- 4.7. Overall, sensitivity is taken to mean the ability of a given landscape to respond to and accommodate change. It reflects character, the nature of change and the way both are perceived and experienced by people. In the case of this study it is the sensitivity to residential or employment development. The judgement is arrived at by combining susceptibility to change with value.
- 4.8. Indicators of susceptibility are a series of check points against which to assess the criteria listed above. These indicators identify how that criteria, specifically assessed for Laverstock and Ford parish, sits on a scale from high to low susceptibility. These sliding scales have been created for this project and approved as appropriate by the NPSG. The indicators are listed in table 1 below.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Indicators of susceptibility: higher</b>	<b>Indicators of susceptibility: lower</b>
<b>LANDSCAPE - NATURAL CRITERIA</b>		
Landform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Open</li> <li>– Irregular or complex landform</li> <li>– Narrow valleys and ridges</li> <li>– Distinctive landform features</li> <li>– Sharp changes in level</li> <li>– Relationship between features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Simple featureless landform</li> <li>– Flatter</li> <li>– Uniform</li> </ul>
Landcover Vegetation Scale Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Small scale or intricate landscape pattern from a combination of settlement, field pattern or vegetation cover where development may affect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Medium or large scale landscape pattern</li> <li>– Developed land, derelict or waste ground</li> </ul>

Pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pattern</li> <li>- Open landscapes without potential for enclosure</li> <li>- Highly valued areas of biodiversity e.g. SSSI</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commercial forestry</li> <li>- Enclosed landscapes which can 'hide' development</li> </ul>
Hydrology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Areas liable to flooding</li> <li>- Adjacent to water courses</li> <li>- Water meadows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No flood risk</li> </ul>
<b>LANDSCAPE - CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CRITERIA</b>		
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agriculture – arable</li> <li>- Infrequent/no residential built form</li> <li>- Hedges providing screening and biodiversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flood meadows</li> <li>- Open Downs</li> <li>- Open common land</li> <li>- Agriculture – grazing</li> <li>- Settlement/development</li> </ul>
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listed buildings</li> <li>- Scheduled Monuments</li> <li>- Locally valued parks and structures</li> <li>- Registered parks and gardens</li> </ul>	
Built form and settlement pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absence of settlement</li> <li>- Dispersed settlement</li> <li>- Historic settlements e.g. villages along River Bourne</li> <li>- Proximity to urban settlement/fringe</li> <li>- Listed buildings</li> <li>- Scheduled monuments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Modern development unsympathetically designed</li> <li>- Modern industrial development</li> <li>- Commercial forestry</li> <li>- Utility infrastructure</li> <li>- Transport infrastructure</li> <li>- Urban settlements</li> </ul>
Public Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National or long distance trails</li> <li>- Permissive access</li> <li>- Widely used by local residents</li> <li>- Recreational open land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No access</li> </ul>
Enclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open landscapes with no hedges or boundaries (development more visible)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good quality hedges and tree belts (provide screening)</li> </ul>
<b>AESTHETIC AND PERCEPTUAL CRITERIA</b>		
Remoteness and tranquillity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long distance views</li> <li>- Lack of traffic noise and visibility</li> <li>- Lack of people</li> <li>- Few obvious man made features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unattractive</li> <li>- Intrusive noise</li> <li>- Intrusive visual impact</li> <li>- Notable presence of large scale development and infrastructure</li> </ul>
Scenic Quality and Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High scenic quality (AONB)</li> <li>- Strong sense of place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low scenic quality (industrial areas, transport links)</li> </ul>



		– Weak sense of place
<b>VISUAL CRITERIA</b>		
Visual Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Open exposed landscape</li> <li>– Extensive intervisibility and little screening of views</li> <li>– Landscapes visible from designated viewpoints in protected landscapes</li> <li>– Prominent visual landmarks</li> <li>– Views from scenic routes or viewpoints</li> <li>– Landscapes creating significant backdrops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Landscape with strong sense of enclosure</li> <li>– Contained/enclosed and strongly visually filtered</li> <li>– Very little or no intervisibility from designated viewpoints in protected landscapes</li> <li>– No prominent landmarks or topographic features</li> </ul>
Skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prominent skylines</li> <li>– Uninterrupted/undeveloped skylines</li> <li>– Distinctive landscape features e.g landmarks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Less prominent skylines</li> <li>– Existing modern vertical features</li> <li>– Existing built development</li> </ul>
Views to and from Important Landscape and Cultural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Views of Salisbury Cathedral spire</li> <li>– Views of Salisbury Plain</li> <li>– Views to and from Figsbury Ring</li> <li>– Views to and from Old Sarum</li> <li>– Views along River Bourne</li> <li>– Intervisibility between sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Views of modern development</li> <li>– Little intervisibility between sites</li> </ul>
Views to and from locally important viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Views to and from Cockey, Laverstock and Ford Downs</li> <li>– Views of Burrough's Hill</li> <li>– Views where the Downs create a visual backdrop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Little intervisibility</li> </ul>
Visual Receptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Recreational pedestrian users</li> <li>– Visitors to landscape specifically for the purpose of enjoying that landscape or view</li> <li>– Users of scenic roads/paths</li> <li>– High number of visual receptors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Users of transport (road, rail)</li> <li>– Few visual receptors</li> </ul>
<b>LANDSCAPE VALUE CRITERIA</b>		
Strength of character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strong landscape structure, character, patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Weak or degraded landscape which has lost most of its natural or built heritage features</li> </ul>
Rarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unique or rare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Commonplace</li> </ul>
Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Good condition with appropriate management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Disturbed or derelict land requiring treatment</li> </ul>
Sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strong sense of place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Little sense of place</li> </ul>

Landscape value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Beautiful, distinctive, unique or outstanding natural landscape or townscape character</li> <li>– AONB, National Park, World Heritage Site</li> <li>– Limited potential for substitution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Monotonous, uniform landscape or townscape which has lost most of its natural or built heritage features</li> <li>– Potential for substitution</li> <li>– Area identified for restoration or recovery</li> </ul>
Natural value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– High quality biodiversity</li> <li>– Nature reserves, SAC, ancient woodland</li> <li>– SINC</li> <li>– Definitive patterns of landform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No designations,</li> <li>– lack of local biodiversity resources</li> </ul>
Recreational value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Highly accessible and attractive to visitors e.g. nature reserves, country parks, outdoor sports facilities, public rights of way, scenic routes, green infrastructure corridors, promoted viewpoints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Poor accessibility, non linking rights of way,</li> </ul>
Visual Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Iconic views, promoted views</li> <li>– Views related to designated landscapes</li> <li>– Regionally recognised views – identified in local plan</li> <li>– Locally important views – valued by community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Restricted long views</li> <li>– Views dominated by unsympathetic buildings and structures</li> </ul>

Table 1 - Indicative landscape and visual criteria with indicators of landscape and visual susceptibility and indicative landscape and visual value criteria.

## 5. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

5.1. Field visits were carried out between January and April 2020 in order to assess the sensitivity of the landscape areas. The criteria indicated in table 4.3 area was assessed against the prospect of 2-2.5 storey residential development. The results are allocated giving a five point scale from Low to High. The results of these assessments are shown on the tables for the individual areas in the main report.

### Combined Landscape Sensitivity

5.2. Each landscape receptor is evaluated in relation to its sensitivity in accordance with the criteria contained in the tables above which are summarised in Table 1 below. The determination of sensitivity is based upon an evaluation of each key element or characteristic of the landscape likely to be affected. It reflects factors such as quality, value, contribution to landscape character and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted. The criteria for each area will not have equal

weight, for example, the influence of scarp slopes will only be important in those areas which are visually influenced by them.

- 5.3. In order to calibrate the sensitivity assessment, the general guidance given in the table below should correspond generally to the final overall assessment given of landscape sensitivity. The results are shown in the tables and diagrams for the individual areas.

Sensitivity Level	Definition
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Elements of landscape are of relatively low importance and rarity or degraded, typically of local scale. Values may be low.</li> <li>– Identified as having some redeeming features and possibly identified for improvement.</li> <li>– A landscape tolerant of substantial change.</li> <li>– Potential for replacement or substitution.</li> <li>– Thresholds for significant change are very high.</li> </ul>
Medium/Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Valued elements or landscape/townscape of moderate importance and rarity typically of local scale. Values may be medium/low to high/medium</li> <li>– Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the land parcel are resilient to change</li> <li>– Can accommodate the relevant type of development in many situations without significant character change or adverse effects.</li> <li>– Thresholds for significant change are high.</li> </ul>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Valued elements or landscape/townscape of moderate importance and rarity typically of regional or local scale. Values may be medium/low to high/medium</li> <li>– A landscape capable of accepting change.</li> <li>– Moderate potential for replacement or substitution.</li> <li>– Thresholds for significant change are intermediate.</li> </ul>
Medium-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the land parcel are vulnerable to change. Values may be medium through to high.</li> <li>– It may be able accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations</li> <li>– Thresholds for significant change are low.</li> </ul>
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Important elements or landscape/townscape of a particularly distinctive and highly valued character and/or rarity, typically of national or regional scale (e.g. National Park, AONB). Values are high or high/medium</li> <li>– Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the land parcel are very vulnerable to change</li> <li>– Unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects</li> <li>– Limited potential for replacement or substitution.</li> <li>– Thresholds for significant change are very low.</li> </ul>