

# **Cranborne Chase**

## **Landscape assessment**

Part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**East Dorset District Council Planning Department Supplementary Planning Guidance No.18 (June 1997)**

## **1. Introduction**

1. From the Norman Conquest until its disfranchisement in 1841 Cranborne Chase existed almost entirely in order to provide sport for kings and noblemen. The stringent imposition of Chase Law preserved 'vert and venison' and effectively obstructed any form of change within the landscape for centuries. As recently as the turn of the century the area was characterised by unimproved grassland 'downs' on the chalk, and coppiced woodland.

2. The northern boundary of the Chase followed the River Nadder between Salisbury and Tisbury and then continued southwards to Shaftesbury and thence to Sturminster Newton. The southern boundary followed the River Stour to Wimborne and then followed the Allen northwards to Stanbridge. The Boundary Continued in a north easterly direction before turning sharply in what is now Ringwood Forest. It joined with the River Avon at Ringwood and followed the river northwards.

3. From Saxon times, the area centred on Holt Heath was Royal Forest and therefore excluded from Chase Law.

4. The total Area of outstanding Natural Beauty, designated in 1983, extends further north into West Wiltshire as far as Warminster. This Landscape Appraisal, however, covers just 18% of the 370 square miles of the total AONB area and about one-third of the historical bounds of the Chase.

## **PURPOSE**

5. Over the last hundred years the Chase landscape has experienced the effects of technological changes and Government fiscal policies. In particular, downland has been cultivated for grain production and coppicing has been largely replaced with commercial forestry.

6. Despite these underlying changes the area retains much of its historic scenic character and local identity. This reports attempts to interpret and analyse the essential landscape characteristics of the AONB within East Dorset which make this area "special". By identifying these valuable features we will be in a better position to conserve them and, where appropriate, recommend positive steps to recreate landscapes that have suffered decline.

7. In conjunction with the Conservation Area Appraisals, the Landscape Assessment will supplement the District-wide Local Plan, providing an information-base from which rural policies and proposals can be formulated, and taking on board some of the issues identified in this survey. The report can also assist in environmental impact analysis in respect to planning applications. Thirdly, as a generalised description of the landscape, the appraisal should form a useful record and reference point for monitoring change.

8. The Landscape Assessment is intended to complement a County-wide exercise being undertaken jointly by the Countryside Commission and Dorset County Council.

## **HOW THE APPRAISAL WAS CARRIED OUT.**

9. The assessment was based on field surveys and desk studies conducted between July and October 1992.

i) Firstly, maps showing the main components of the landscape were produced to assess whether any pattern emerged in the form of 'distinctive' landscapes. Soils and geological information proved the most value in dividing the landscape into character-zones.

ii) Using 1:25,000 scale OS sheets overlaid with acetate, the area was surveyed to assess how these zones correlated with the perceived landscape and modified where appropriate. Characteristic features of each landscape type were identified and illustrated by quick, simple line drawings that help to bring out the grain and pattern of the landscape.

iii) Information on the OS maps was checked against aerial colour photographs taken in 1992 to identify, in particular, changes in land-use and vegetation cover.

10. The study has been as objective as possible, with no attempt to make any qualitative assessment. It was, however, necessary to make some value judgements on the relative importance of particular features in influencing the character of each landscape type.

11. It is important to appreciate that the various character zones often merge one to the other without clear demarcation. In these instances the lines drawn are by no means precise, but intended to signal where change seems apparent. Sometimes the changes are more obvious.

12. In some instances there are significant landscape edges within the same character zone; for example, an important shelter belt or avenue of trees. Where the character of the landscape is essentially similar on each side of the feature the whole area is regarded as one, even though visually they may 'read' as two separate tracts.

## **2. Surveys**

### **Topography**

1. The area comprises the dip slope of a chalk plateau, from 46m asl in the Stour valley in the south, rising to over 138m in the north. Tributaries of the River Allen, and the

Crane further north, have cut into the chalk to create a series of parallel valleys, with ridges in between. This accounts for the apparent flatness of the area when taking long-distance scans. The longitudinal section illustrates this point. It also highlights the significance of Pentridge Hill to the north and Badbury Rings in the south.

## Geology

2. Chalk underlies the majority of the AONB in East Dorset . The highest parts in the north are capped with clays with flints. Gravels extend along the valley bottoms, with deposits of alluvium occurring downstream of Witchampton. The eastern extremity of the area comprises a band of clays which overlie the chalk. This also occurs at Blagdon Hill, north of Cranborne. The clays form a narrow transition zone that separates the chalk from the sands and gravels of the Hampshire Basin.

## Tree Cover

3. The extensive primaeval woodlands of southern England were the first to be cleared by early settlers.

By the Middle Ages the pattern of woods and pasture was established, and largely preserved that way under Chase Law until as late as 1829. Hazel coppice woodland was common, with holly planted around the edges to provide food for deer.

4. Today, despite the agricultural improvements of the twentieth century, the overall landscape structure has changed surprisingly little.

5. The influence of the landed estates is still considerable. A feature of the Chase is the variety of tree species. Whilst beech and oak are prevalent, there is also a widespread distribution of ash, sycamore, sweet chestnut and hazel. The most common conifer species are Douglas fir, Norway spruce, Scots pine, Western Hemlock and Western Red Cedar, in direct response to Forestry Commission advice and incentives.

6. Ancient and semi-ancient woodlands remain, but are supplemented with much more extensive conifer and mixed woods and plantations. Significantly, none of these woods are managed by the Forestry Commission, which instead, targeted large areas of heathland to the east, including Ringwood Forest. This forms a distinctive change in character beyond the eastern edge of the AONB.

7. The enclosed effect, brought about by forests and coalescing woods, is manifest on each horizon. Collectively, they embrace the open landscape of the Chase.

8. The Rushmore woods in the north are particularly important owing to their elevated position. Ringwood Forest, on the other hand, is much lower, and its visual influence is experienced from relatively few locations.

9. Within the AONB, treed hillsides and hilltops are common features. Regular-shaped blocks of plantations occur in most parts of the area, surrounded by open downland.

10. More unusual landscape features are attributable to the whims of the aristocracy, not least the ten-mile circular 'ride' that extends out from St. Giles Park. Comprising a narrow ring of beech and conifer woods, the Drive was established in the eighteenth century and is now managed for amenity and timber. In common with the other estates, particularly Rushmore, game forms an increasingly important factor in woodland management.

11. To the south of the area the Beech Avenue, planted by William Bankes in 1835 forms one of the most distinctive features of the District.

12. The bold blocks of woods not only enclose and articulate the landscape but also accentuate the 'openness' of the downland. It is the contrast between cover and exposure which represents one of the principle characteristics of the Chase.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY

13. The history of the Cranborne Chase, and its effects in shaping the countryside, distinguishes the area from all other Chalkland landscapes. From prehistoric times man has been attracted to the area. The Bronze Age site at Handley Down is the earliest settlement. There are Iron Age hill-forts and settlements, the most important of which is Badbury Rings. Lesser forts existed at Pembury Knoll and Mistlebury Wood, near Sixpenny Handley.

14. Elevated downlands were popular sites for occupation during the Iron Age and Roman periods. At Woodcutts, near Sixpenny Handley, on Gussage Hill, Oakley Down (Wimborne St. Giles) and King Down (Pamphill) there is evidence of important settlements.

15. There are Roman remains at East Hemsworth, near Witchampton, and the remains of a villa at Holwell near Cranborne. The most significant landscape effect of Roman occupation in the area is Ackling Dyke, which connects Badbury Rings with Old Sarum.

16. There are two important defensive dykes still evident which lie in the AONB: Grim's Ditch near Pentridge, and Bokerly Dyke nearby, but lesser dykes within the area have been destroyed by agriculture.

17. There are over three hundred barrows and burial mounds dating from the Neolithic period concentrated around the Gussages, Pentridge and Knowlton Circle, but many have been destroyed by the plough. There are prominent barrows at Thickthorn Down, Gussage Hill and Bokerley Down.

18. Closely associated with the distribution of Long Barrows is The Dorset Cursus, a Neolithic ceremonial monument that extends for over six miles between Thickthorn and

Martin Downs, parallel with the A.354 Another important ceremonial centre was Knowlton Circle, also related to numerous barrows.

19. Most early Medieval settlements were confined to valley bottoms, a pattern that is evident today. The settlements of Brockington, Hemsworth and Knowlton are now only place names. Further north, away from the river valleys, the settlements comprised dispersed farms and hamlets- Sixpenny Handley being the only significant village.

#### Building Materials of the Chase

20. Generally buildings tend to form incidental features in the wider landscape. Even churches, the most important landmarks, have limited visual influence. This is mainly because settlements and their churches are confined to valleys and the few major houses in the area are screened by perimeter woodland planting.

21. Within the valleys, the form and character of the villages can be appreciated. They are related to one another by their linear settlement pattern, by their simple form and by their use of local materials.

22. Cob is an important building material, chalk cob in the north and mud cob to the south, and is associated with some of the most attractive cottages throughout the area.

23. There are many boundary walls constructed of cob, with tile capping, particularly around villages. Those in Cranborne are of particular importance and are listed. However, many other cob walls do not share the same protection.

24. Thatch, too, has a long tradition in the Chase and forms a vital ingredient of the character of the area, from Pentridge in the north to Shapwick in the south. Long straw was superseded by combed wheat in the early 1900's and is still regarded as the traditional roof material.

25. Cranborne, Wimborne St. Giles, Witchampton and Moor Crichel in particular were influenced by the belt of London clay to the east of the area. At Witchampton, the sixteenth-century Abbey House is one of the first buildings in the County to be constructed of brick.

26. Sixpenny Handley is built mostly of brick on account of the fire which destroyed most of the village in 1892.

27. In Long Crichel, Pentridge, and Woodcutts, flint is locally important, used in conjunction with brickwork or cob, or both.

28. Flint is associated with almost all of the historic churches in the area and with many of the larger houses of the Chase, most notably Cranborne Manor and West Woodyates Manor.

29. Stone rubble is also quite common, used in association with stone dressings and flint, and often rendered.

30. Timber-frame buildings occur in small numbers in the Gussages and Pentridge and one in Sixpenny Handley. The largest group occurs in Witchampton.

## Views

20. This map indicates some of the main vantage points used for the survey and reflects the variety of contained views and those extending to the horizon that can be experienced. The overall impression is of a working man-made landscape: well-managed fields and woods, neat hedges and efficient farms. It is a managed landscape largely unaffected by urban development.

### 3. Landscape Character Zones.

1. The whole area comprises 'a chalkland landscape'. The homogeneity of the Chase is one of its most important characteristics, but within this landscape there are variations influenced by topography, vegetation, and land-use that give the area its sense of identity.

2. **Zones 1(a) - 1(j)** are most characteristic of chalkland landscapes, each area having its own sense of place; zone 2 comprises the high woodland belt to the north; zone 3 is chalk downland heavily influenced by woodland management.

3. **Zones 4(a), 4(b) and 4(c)** are parkland landscapes associated with great houses. Zone 5 relates to the village of Witchampton and its hillside setting, while Zone 6 is confined to the distinctive ecology of the valley bottom of the Allen.

4. Finally, **Zones 7(a), 7(b) and 7(c)**, though forming an important visual edge to the south-eastern border of the Chase, tend to relate in character more closely to other landscape tracts to the east.

5. In general, the sense of remoteness and landscape drama increases towards the north. It is in the area around Sixpenny Handley which retains most of its historic landscape.

### Zone 1. Chalk Downlands

#### 1(a) Downland

i) The chalk downland comprises the great majority of the area and extends beyond the administrative boundaries of the District to the north-east (Hampshire) and to the west (North Dorset). It is an open, low-profile, smooth landscape, with panoramic

views. An uncluttered landscape of simple shapes- where line tends to be more important than colour.

ii) Almost all the natural downland has been converted to arable. The large field sizes, low trimmed thorn hedges and few individual trees maintains an open, large-scale appearance. The old downland place names remain.

iii) The area comprises a plateau that dips gently from north to south. Chalk-stream valleys divide the landform into a series of parallel north-westerly, south-easterly ridges thus giving the landscape its characteristic 'grain' and identity. The prospects from the ridges extend without interruption over the valleys to give long, expansive views.

iv) This area includes some of the most dramatic parts of the Chase within East Dorset District. Penbury Knoll is the highest point at 185m. The gradients are steepest on the western slopes towards Pentridge, where natural downland is still evident. The Knoll itself is pinpointed by a picturesque group of pines. Although visually the hill forms an integral part of the chalk landscape, its geology is somewhat different, being capped with clay and flints.

v) Tree-cover within the area is sparse, except for a number of fairly small and self-contained woods, the most significant of which are Blackbush Plantation and Salisbury Plantation. The straight edges of these and similar shelterbelts cut across the gentle contours of the land. This unfortunate effect is accentuated when regular shaped blocks of woodland are sliced off and converted to agriculture.

vi) The Drive Plantation, some ten miles long, forms an almost continuous ring of woodland around Wimborne St. Giles. The ring, which is clearly identified on Ordnance Survey Maps, is roughly egg-shaped, pivoted on a north-west/south-east direction. (See 4 (b) below ) From the surrounding ridge tops, however, the feature seems less marked.

Because of the scale and open prospect of the landscape the area within tends not to be visually enclosed. The character within the ring is very similar to that outside. Both areas are therefore included in the same zone. The extent of the drive is indicated for identification purposes.

vii) One of the delights of the winter landscape on the downs is the tracery effect of clumps of mature beech on hilltops. Unfortunately, the AONB area within the District is not particularly well-blessed with such distinctive features, so those that do exist should be safeguarded.

viii) More common are the conifer plantations, which, although uncharacteristic of chalk landscape, now represents a distinctive feature of this area. Of much older origin, and creating a distinctive feature, are yew trees that can be found here and there throughout the area. These ancient and picturesque trees are characteristically located



close to the road, once providing a marker for travellers in snowy weather. Those on the Cranborne road, at its junction with the Edmondsham/Wimborne St. Giles road, are reputed to be 1000 years old. Near Blackbush Plantation stands an important wood of evergreen oak.

ix) The sparse tree-cover is emphasised by the open nature of the landscape. Individual trees tend to make little impact. Rather, it is the hedgerows that give the landscape shape and form. They accentuate the contours of the land and account for the 'soft' appearance of the landscape.

x) The hedges tend to be kept low and cause little disruption to the open views. Those growing alongside some of the ancient footpaths, however, are allowed to develop more fully and often form distinctive linear landscape features.

The very large field sizes are in scale with the character of the landscape and reflect the historical land use pattern. Today, arable has replaced sheep: mostly wheat and barley, but latterly increasing acreages of oil seed rape and flax. The colours of the fields vary significantly from season to season and, in summer, contrast strongly with the dark green conifer plantations. The predominance of grain crops reinforces the visual unity of the landscape.

xi) The nature conservation value of the area is diminished on account of the large-scale arable fields with little cover, except for the conifer plantations. Wildlife interest is largely confined to the last remains of the natural downland, the ancient woodlands, and drove roads where hedgerows have been retained as mature features. It is important that these should be preserved and new sympathetic plantings established to renew wildlife corridors throughout the landscape. The Shaftesbury Estate manages some 30 miles of hedgerow on conservation principles.

xii) Typical of chalk downland, most roads and tracks in the area tend to be straight. This is a feature of the A354 Blandford to Salisbury road which passes through the District in a south-west/ north-east direction. Although the A354 is the major road in the area, its impact on the landscape is not unduly significant, because of its traditional single-carriageway design and presence of hedgerows.

xiii) The road follows the natural contours of the landscape, and because of its long, straight alignments, tends to emphasise the rolling topography. The road rises to Handley Cross to reveal uninterrupted panoramic views of well-farmed landscape. Nearby, the remains of neolithic tumuli remind us of man's long occupation of this area and the strategic importance of these elevated sites.

xiv) At Bockerly Junction, coinciding with the County boundary, the road meets the Roman Road, that connects Old Sarum with Badbury Rings. The road passes through an ancient defensive earthwork, known as Bockerly Dyke, which extends along the boundary for almost four miles to Martin Wood. North-west of the road, the Dyke has

been almost levelled by ploughing, but to the south-east, much of its length is well preserved, and forms an impressive linear feature across the landscape.

xv) Two less important roads lead off the Salisbury Road: the B3081 (Handley Cross-Cranborne) and C.2 (Thickthorn Cross-Horton Inn) roads run almost entirely along the ridge tops, affording good views of the Chase. These, too, are straight. From these roads the open, unpopulated character of the downland scenery is most apparent. Very few buildings make any impact. Grimsdyke Granaries, however, almost three miles outside the District boundary on the A 354 to the north-east, can be clearly seen from Handley Cross. More serene is the tower of Sixpenny Handley Church.

### **1(b) Downland valleys: Gussage St. Andrew**

i) Two small, shallow valleys fork out from Gussage St. Andrew towards Farnham and Woodcutts respectively. Topographically, the sub-area forms the northern extremity of the Gussage valley, but is separated from it by a tract of chalk downland.

ii) The underlying geology comprises narrow bands of valley gravel. Half-way along both valleys, as the ground gradually rises, there is evidence of springs. These give rise to little brooks in the vicinity of Minchington but, in contrast, the Woodcutts valley is dry. At Minchington itself there is a ford at an elbow corner of the road, from which point the stream flows adjacent to the road for 100m or more. During times of flood the whole road can turn into a river.

iii) In the Minchington valley the small rise in level between the valley bottom and the surrounding low chalk hills is enough to create a sense of enclosure and intimacy, reinforced by the narrow hedgerow lanes, small thatched cottages and farm buildings.

iv) The character of the dry valley is more open, with farmland extending right across interspersed by the occasional cottage and farmbuilding. This valley has far fewer trees, but near Woodcutts, the continuous line of woods of the Rushmore Estate to the north encloses the landscape.

### **1(c) Downland valleys: Sixpenny Handley**

i) This is an irregular-shaped sub-area relating to three shallow valleys centred on Sixpenny Handley. This recently-expanded village now forms the largest settlement within the Study Area. Topographically it lies at the northern extremity of the Allen river system, but appears separated from the valley below by Wyke Down and the more extensive farming associated with downland soils. The village lies in a hollow between high ground to the south-east (Handley Cross) and to the north and north-west (Rushmore/Chase Woods). The landform, and the treescape within the village itself, tends to conceal the much of the settlement from the surrounding landscape.

ii) The village harmonises with the surrounding landscape, but there are few vernacular buildings within the settlement that actually strengthens local character and

identity. A major fire in 1892 destroyed most of the village and much of its charm, which modern housing estates have not been able to replace. The village tends to lack cohesion partly due to the effects of the fire and also on account of the variety of building materials used at different periods in its development. The Church, standing on high ground to the north-west of the village, however, is a prominent land-mark and is visible at a distance from several directions. It forms a particularly good focal point when seen from the Tollard Royal road.

iii) The hamlets of Deanland and Newtown lie close to- and are strongly influenced by- an entirely different landscape zone, the Rushmore Woods. Each linear settlement is strung out along the valley bottom and flanked by quite steep hillsides. Like Sixpenny Handley, they are well concealed by the surrounding landform.

#### **1(d) Downland Valleys: Pentridge**

(i) A small sub-area centred on the deep valley settlement of Pentridge. Located on a narrow band of valley gravel, the linear village is surrounded by chalk hills, the most notable of which is the highest part of the AONB in East Dorset.

(ii) Pentridge, which lies at the end of a long narrow lane, has retained its historic settlement pattern and vernacular character and remains unspoilt.

iii) The valley bottom is well-treed which affords an attractive leafy setting for the village in stark contrast to the open, grassy hillsides beyond. There are some notable conifers, particularly a line of firs along its northern edge.

iv) The small Parish Church stands on the northern slopes of the village, its short angular spire conspicuous against the flowing lines of the downland landscape behind.

#### **1(e) Downland Valleys: Wimborne St. Giles**

i) The valley landscape extending from Wimborne St. Giles north-westwards to Monkton Up Wimborne is clearly of contrasting character from the surrounding chalkland. Nevertheless, the total landscape 'reads' as one; there are no clear cut-off points between the respective landscape types. Each forms a complementary feature of the Chase landscape. The most important features that distinguish the valley sub-area are the watercourses and related ecology, and the settlement pattern and other land use changes.

ii) The entity of the sub-area is best appreciated from the valley bottom, viewing the area 'longitudinally' both up-stream and down-stream. The profile of the valley is very shallow, quite different in character from Pentridge or other settlements near the head of the topographical river system. Farmland extends down as far as good drainage allows. Field sizes vary, but follow the pattern of the chalk landscape. Water meadows characterise the valley bottom, with ducks and geese. In response to positive

conservation management by the Estate the area is of considerable nature conservation importance.

iii) Set apart from the attractive village of Wimborne St. Giles, there are a number of modest manor houses and traditional farmhouses fairly evenly dispersed throughout the valley, which gives the area a lived-in character in contrast to the surrounding downland. The eighteenth-century tower of the Parish Church is just visible amongst verdant treescape.

iv) A narrow winding lane continues up the valley connecting the village with Monkton Up Wimborne. Beyond the hamlet, as the head of the valley is passed and downland takes over, the lane straightens out.

### **1 (f) Downland Valleys: Gussages**

i) Beyond Brockington, Tenantry and Harley Downs runs a parallel valley containing the linear villages of Gussage All Saints and Gussage St. Michael. The area is of similar character to 1 (e) but rather more built-up. The valley sides are more pronounced too, particularly on the south side which rise steeply to Sovell and Thickthorn Downs. These lie on the high ridge dividing the Gussages from the Crichel valley further to the south.

ii) Beyond Gussage St. Michael, to the north, the valley flattens out and its general character merges with the downland to such an extent as to erase any clear difference. There is, however, a handful of important traditional farmhouses that continue along the 'valley' as far as Gussage St. Andrew (sub-area 1(b)). To the south, the Gussage stream joins with the Allen at Bowerswain Farm.

iii) The historic churches within each village represent important local features, but their influence is restricted by the surrounding landform and treescape. The trees tend to be concentrated within the generous curtilages that characterise the village. Many of the buildings in Gussage All Saints are set well inside their plots, away from the road. The older, thatched buildings however tend to be positioned close to the road and this feature in particular reinforces the rural character of the village and strengthens local identity. Small humped bridges over Gussage Stream at each end of Gussage All Saints and the eighteenth century Packhorse Bridge at Gussage St. Michael emphasises the valley's historic significance.

iv) Midway between Gussage All Saints and St. Michael, adjacent to the Roman Road, is a former chalk pit which now forms a local nature reserve.

### **1(g) Downland Valleys: Long Crichel**

i) This elongated sub-area, centred on Long Crichel, follows the pattern of its neighbouring valleys in terms of geology and topography, but its character is quite

different. This change in character is largely due to landuse factors: the area is much less developed, and in consequence, more rural -and totally unspoilt. Farms and cottages are strung out near the road frontage. Being of traditional materials, mostly brick and flint under peg tile roofs, they relate well with one another and with the surrounding landscape.

ii) Long Crichel church, at the southern end of the village, forms a local landmark, seen at its best when entering the village from the north. Around the church and Long Crichel house are fine specimen trees giving a park-like appearance to the adjacent watermeadows.

iii) Further into the village the large gardens are mostly utilitarian, with few trees and they tend to merge with the open countryside. Alongside the road are groups and individual specimens of ash, but these are gradually declining in number.

iv) The field pattern is square to the road, with hedges that run up the slopes on either side generating a strong rhythm. Except for Norwood Park and adjacent coppices, the farming regime of the nearby downs extend across the valley largely uninterrupted.

v) The landscape is extensively farmed, with a number of large farms sited along the valley. Each farm complex comprises a compact grouping of traditional and modern buildings that stands out against the open, sometimes tree-less landscape. Patchy remnants of hedgerows, sometimes covered in ivy, tend to mar the landscape.

vi) North of the village, beyond Higher Farm, the landscape merges with the sweeping open downland landscape (1(a)). From the elevated Thickthorn Down, the view further north is quite different: suddenly becoming lush with woods and copses associated with Chettle.

### **1(h) Woodyates**

i) Contained by farming land, this tiny zone embraces the hamlet of Woodyates. Unlike most Chase villages, the settlement lies on elevated land close to the main A354

ii) This is on account of the celebrated Woodyates Inn, a regular meeting place of Chase landowners, located as it was on the eighteenth-century Great Western Turnpike. It was here that George III liked to break his journey between London and Weymouth. Later called the Shaftesbury Arms Inn, the building was demolished in 1967 and the site is now a cul de sac of bungalows.

iii) The historic core of the village, centred on Manor Farm, is set amongst trees which reinforce the strong sense of enclosure as well as providing valuable shelter.

iv) To the north of Woodyates the lane rises gradually and continuously towards the Ox Drove, passing Cobley Manor that overlooks an otherwise remote and almost primeval landscape of woods and enclosures. The area is littered with ancient earthworks, though their impact on the landscape is limited.

### **1(i) Lowland Chalk**

i) This large countryside tract extends from the Crichel plantations in the north (Zone 3) to the southern edge of the AONB near the River Stour. In many ways the landscape forms a continuation of the chalk landscape within 1(a), in terms of its geology, gently undulating topography, large fields and open, empty character. Its archaeological sites are equally important, most significant of which being Badbury Rings. This Iron Age fortification is sited upon the highest land in the zone and forms the most important landmark in the area. Although considerably lower than the 'high' ground east of Pentridge, the views from here are no less extensive.

ii) The area is much lower than the chalkland to the north, down to 30m. at its southern edge. There are no watercourses, except for the River Allen, and no regular pattern of valleys and ridges as described above. Instead there are irregular dry valleys that penetrate the higher ground to the west. The landscape to the south of the Beech Avenue falls towards the Stour which lies just beyond the AONB boundary. Near Shapwick the fall is gradual and constant, permitting long-distance views towards Badbury Rings and the Avenue, whilst further to the east the land has a more rolling character with relatively shorter, steeper slopes.

iii) The area is sparsely populated, with only a handful of small hamlets and farms. The main settlements lie to the south in the Stour Valley and to the west in the Tarrant Valley. Moreover, there are very few metalled roads, although tracks and footpaths criss-cross the area.

iv) The tree-cover varies from Zone 1(a) too. Deciduous species tend to be more prevalent, particularly beech and oak. The celebrated Beech Avenue along the Wimborne-Blandford road forms an impressive landscape feature. From the south, the Avenue creates a continuous edge to the landscape tract. Because the general character of the landscape south of the Avenue is similar to that to the north both tracts are included within the same character zone. The Avenue forms an important, but single and disparate feature, across a generally homogeneous landscape.

v) The Beech Avenue (see 1(i) above) extends continuously in a more or less straight line for 4 km. to the District boundary. Planted by W.J. Bankes in 1835, the trees were pollarded in 1888, and are now beginning to suffer the effects. New trees have been planted a short distance outside to form a wider avenue in future years.

vi) There is a group of woods in the vicinity of Badbury Rings -Target Wood, Jubilee Woods, The Oaks, High Wood and on the Rings itself, some of which are classified as Ancient Woodlands. These, including the distinctive profile of Badbury Rings, are of considerable importance. From many parts of the area they form a well defined edge to the landscape.

vii) Elsewhere tree-cover is sparse. This is particularly noticeable in the Chilbridge Farm /King Down area where the land is quite flat. In consequence, the farm-buildings tend to be obtrusive.

viii) The landscape south of the Avenue is characterised by a rectangular field pattern extending towards the Stour. This 'grain' is not evident further north where fields are more irregular. Here, field sizes tend to be larger to the west and smaller towards the River Allen. From Badbury Rings northwards, Ackling Dyke, the Roman Road, cuts straight across the area.

ix) This landscape has changed very little since mediaeval times. There is still evidence of the pre-enclosure field system and the preponderance of thatched buildings reinforces the historical landscape.

#### **1(j) Allen Corridor**

i) The Cranborne Road forms the main access onto the Chase from the south. Upon entering the AONB near Stanbridge, the road gradually rises from 29m. above sea level to 52m. at High Lea. This is by no means a dramatic increase in height, but a significant one because of the change in landscape that is experienced from the low lying, mostly enclosed landscape outside the AONB area, to the higher chalkland landscape with its open character and panoramic views.

ii) This landscape tract follows the Allen valley to Wimborne St. Giles, a distance of 4 or 5 miles. It has an essentially chalk downland character, similar to sub-areas 1(a) and 1(i) and is contiguous with these areas. The elongated zone is flanked to the east by a line of hills (see 8(c) below) which forms a physical edge to the AONB. To the west, the most significant feature is the ridge in the vicinity of Witchampton which represents part of the southern end of the incised downland tracts, described above (1(a)).

iii) The hills tend to contain the views across the valley, but emphasise the long-distance views along it; as far as the Rushmore woods in the north and beyond Badbury Rings to the Drax Estate to the south (well beyond the boundaries of the AONB). These views from the road are improved by its gently meandering alignment, and by the often falling land on its western side.

iv) Within the same landscape tract, but comprising a different landscape type, is the long, narrow, sinuous zone alongside the river, described in 7 (a).

v) The chalkland area is extensively farmed, with large regular fields and closely-cropped hedges. Tree cover within the fields is almost non-existent. However, this is compensated by the woods and plantations that exist on both sides of the valley and along the valley bottom. The field pattern gives the landscape a regular 'grain' extending down the hillside, accentuated at different times of the year by plough furrow-lines within the fields themselves.

vi) The colours of the chalkland landscape form an important aspect of its character. They reflect the manner in which the landscape is managed as much as the seasonal differences. Strong colours occur during high summer when the cornfields are ripening, producing a huge patchwork of golden yellow and green. Strong colour contrasts occur between the cornfields and adjacent woods, particularly where these frame views or form a backdrop.

vii) Unlike the Salisbury-Blandford Road which passes straight across the landscape and hence becomes a feature in itself, the road to Cranborne meanders through this sub-area. It tends to merge with the landscape on account of the low hedges that follow the line of the road -these being identical in character to the other field boundaries. There are very few roadside trees.

viii) Those trees that do feature along the road are related to buildings, such as High Lea, Didlington Lodge and the lodge to Witchampton Paper Mill. These form pinchpoints. By temporarily blocking the long-distance views they increase interest and add an element of drama by emphasising the contrast between enclosure and open views.

ix) This area has a less empty character than the other two downland sub-areas. This is due to the various buildings that are scattered along the road, and views of other nearby buildings, such as Witchampton Paper Mills. Its tall industrial chimney stands out like a finger pointing skywards amongst the surrounding dense treescape. Farmhouses on the hills to the east and the village at Hinton Martell also influence its character.

x) Significantly, the valley bottom (zone 7(a)) adjacent to the Allen, is noticeably devoid of settlements, unlike the other chalk valleys where human habitation is concentrated.

x) Perhaps the most notable building in this area is the Horton Inn which stands as a beacon to travellers at the crossroads with the Ringwood to Shaftesbury road - 'a solitary wayside tavern called Lornton Inn', in Thomas Hardy's 'Barbara of the House of Grebe'. 'The rendezvous of many a daring poacher for operations in the adjoining forest.'



xi) The Victorian gothic lodge at Didlington forms a valuable feature and focal point. Its tall chimney stacks and fishscale tiled roof are set against a backdrop of trees that extend right up to the road. Further north at Knowlton, surrounded by flat, treeless fields, stands the ruinous Norman church encircled by a small neolithic henge.

## **Zone 2. Northern Woodland Belt**

i) Before reaching the higher, more dramatic scenery of Win Green and Whitesheet, lies a belt of woods extending from Vernditch Lodge (near Woodyates) in the east, to West Lodge (Iwerne Minster) in the west. The influence of these woods when seen together is felt throughout the AONB within East Dorset, though only the southern extremities actually lie within the District boundary.

ii) Some of these woods coincide with deposits of clay-with-flints overlying the chalk.

iii) Large areas comprise Ancient semi-natural woodlands such as Pribdean Wood, Hoe Coppice and Garston Wood, east of Dean land, and various woods collectively referred to as Chase Woods to the west. Brookes Coppice and Pollards Wood, to the west of Woodcutts Common is also Ancient Woodland

iv) Historically, this area comprised the heartland of the Chase and was known as the "Inner Bounds". The area retains much of its remote and quiet character.

v) Visually, the woods complement the open downland, both in appearance and function. This long association epitomises the Cranborne Chase and accounts for its unique identity.

## **Zone 3. Western Woodland Belt**

i) This area of woodlands, bounded by the Tarrant valley to the west, the Allen valley to the east and the Crichel stream to the north forms one of the original 'walks' of the Chase. Its geology and landform are similar to the downland landscapes on its northern and southern boundaries, but the extensive treecover has given the area its distinctive identity.

ii) The area is characterised by coniferous and mixed woodland plantations and small enclosures. The edges between cover and open country are clearly defined and create smaller landscape units within. The woods are systematically cropped, leaving certain areas devoid of cover ready for the next planting.

iii) The majority of the area is Ancient semi-natural woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland. The woods have a rich and diverse ecology, and in spring there

are masses of bluebells carpeting the woodland floor. Coppicing is still practised on a small scale.

iv) Within Oakhills Coppice are specimens of fir and sequoia, which protrude above the line of the wood and give it the appearance of an arboretum.

v) Permeating the woods is a network of tracks and footpaths, which connect with public rights of way that in turn join up with the surrounding narrow hedge-lined lanes.

vi) Manswood lies in a hollow between Chetterwood and Oakhills Coppice. Manswood is an intimate, totally unspoilt linear hamlet. Both physically and economically Manswood maintains a close relationship with the surrounding countryside. Its thatched cottages reflect the soft, gentle character of the downland landscape.

## **Zone 4 Parkland**

### **4(a) Crichel**

i) Immediately to the east of Chetterwood is Crichel Park. The house and park make such a strong influence on the landscape to warrant the delineation of a separate character zone. Crichel Lake was formed by damming Crichel Stream near to its confluence with the Allen. The Parkland is visually separated from the Allen valley by thick woodland.

ii) Crichel House stands in a classical eighteenth-century landscape setting. The park features a landscaped lake, with a backdrop of mature woodland. However, the size of the park has successively shrunk since the 1940's and much of the land has been returned to agriculture. Cedars of Lebanon have been removed. However, a few remain, some appearing a little incongruous amongst the farmland.

iii) The House makes a valuable contribution to the surrounding landscape. The view from the public footpath near the south end of the lake is particularly noteworthy. The Stables form another attractive view from Longman's Road.

iv) On the north side of the house are the elegant utility buildings: stables, coach-house, and grooms' quarters grouped around a central square courtyard. And just beyond these buildings is the hamlet of Moor Crichel (historically referred to as More Crichel), characterised by estate lodges and high brick walling. A boundary wall of cob and brick forms a striking interface between the settlement and the adjacent open landscape.

v) The influence of the house extends further north, in the form of a beech avenue alongside the road, terminating at the lodge and gatepost opposite on Mill Hill. This road forms the 'edge' with the adjacent downland landscape. Here, the prospect is

open, in contrast to the Park which tends to be introspective and private, and in contrast to Chetterwood immediately to the west.

#### **4(b) Parkland: St. Giles**

- i) A secret parkland, centred on St. Giles House, a nationally important building dating from 1651 and belonging to the ancestors of the Earl of Shaftesbury since the early fifteenth century. The Park, which was established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contains a number of notable natural features, architectural and other historic artifacts.
- ii) Within the Park only fragments of the parterres, fountains, sculptures and topiary remain. The principal avenue from the east front of the House to the boundary was devastated during the storms of 1987 and 1990 . Since this date the Estate has embarked upon a major programme of tree planting. The 3 ha. lake remains however, together with a castellated gateway and grotto. There are various lodges around the park boundary. The Round House, otherwise known as the 3rd.Earl's Tower, is a gazebo located outside the park, on the east side of the Cranborne Road. It forms an attractive focal point for travellers driving south and acts as a reminder of the historical link between St. Giles House and its former deer park to the east.
- iii) Surrounding the Park is a belt of woodland that forms an impenetrable visual screen. The south-eastern edge to the Park, which is skirted by the Wimborne - Cranborne Road, forms part of The Drive Plantation. This curious feature extends well beyond the confines of the Park to form a ring some 10 miles in circumference. It was probably established concurrently with other parkland features by the 4th Earl during the eighteenth century on the lines of the 3rd Earl's landscape ideas.
- iv) The north-eastern belt forms a particularly well-defined edge to the landscape, that is fully appreciated from the B. 3081 Sixpenny Handley Road. The strong contrast between the woodland edge and the open treeless downland is pronounced.
- v) A similar dramatic effect is experienced when travelling north along Bottlebush Lane through Bottlebush Clump. From the shade and enclosure of this wood is revealed a panoramic view across Blackbush Down to Pentridge Hill.
- vi) The treescape to the west of the Park makes an important contribution to the setting of the village of Wimborne St. Giles. Despite being visually separate, the character of the St. Giles Park pervades the village.
- vii) The north-west belt follows the line of Ackling Dyke. Although forestry operations involve sections of the plantation being temporarily removed, the structure of the Drive is still clearly evident. Harley Wood is an area of Ancient semi-natural woodland. The entire Drive, including Creech Hill Wood, is included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

#### **4(c) Parkland: Kingston Lacy**

- i) Kingston Lacy Park, at the extreme southern edge of the AONB, has a similar parkland setting to Crichel or St. Giles, but without a landscaped lake -there exists only a small pond . Alongside the boundaries are belts of thick woodland that separate the park from the surrounding countryside and give it an introspective character. The park itself, which is generally level, contains groups and individual specimen trees. The area suffered from a long period of neglect before being taken over by the National Trust, and major devastation was caused during the storms of 1987 (part of Coneygar Copse being almost completely flattened).
- ii) From the Blandford Road near the Tadden Entrance, the woodland planting gives way to open parkland, allowing views into the park. Here is a fine group of Cedars of Lebanon which extend as an avenue along the driveway into the park, although storm damage has reduced this feature considerably.
- iii) The House was built by Sir Roger Pratt in 1665 and remodelled in the nineteenth century by Sir Charles Barry. The Grade I Listed Building is centrally placed within the park, and the various contrived views of it give the Park its unique character. An Egyptian obelisk placed centrally some distance from the south front gives a more formal character to this side but the essential parkland character of grass and trees, enhanced by the Estate's herd of Red Devon Cattle, is maintained.
- iv) There are various other garden monuments within the park which act as important focal points. To the west of the House are stables and a coach-house grouped formally around a courtyard. Around the park boundaries are a number of attractive lodges that signal the ornamental landscape within.

#### **Zone 5. Witchampton**

- i) The historic village of Witchampton lies on the east-facing slope of a chalk ridge, the top of which is capped in a narrow band of clay with flints. The hillside is characterised by extensive tree-cover that conceals parts of the village, but the Church tower and the gables of Abbey House stand out amongst the treescape and provide a clear focal point.
- ii) The beech and conifer plantations on the top of the ridge are important in the wider landscape. They extend northwards and merge with the woods of the Crichel Estate (see 3 and 4 (a)).
- iii) In contrast, immediately to the west and south of the ridge, the landscape is open, relatively treeless, arable downland.

iv) Newtown is a hamlet to the north-east of the village, centred on Witchampton Mill. The approach is marked by the castellated gateway to Crichel House, which forms a feature and focal point to the road.

## **Zone 6. River valley of the Allen**

i) This narrow zone relates closely with the sinuous belt of valley gravel alongside the river. It extends from Wimborne St. Giles (sub-area 4(b)) in the north to where the river leaves the AONB in the extreme south-east. throughout its length the valley habitat is of significant nature conservation interest.

ii) Flat water meadows occur on either side of the river as it meanders throughout its length, contrasting with the arable fields adjacent. Copses and riverside trees, including willow, are frequent. North of Witchampton Paper Mill there is a more continuous belt of woods and plantations extending as far as Crichel (Loverley) Mill.

iii) Unlike its tributaries, the Allen has very little development along its banks. The ancient settlements of Didlington, Knowlton and Brockington are only place names. The only buildings of note are water mills -Stanbridge, Crichel, Didlington and Hinton Mill further to the south. Witchampton Mill has been associated with paper-making since the eighteenth century, but the majority of buildings on the site are recent and ugly in the extreme. Fortunately, they are concealed by trees but the tall factory chimney forms an interesting and unusual feature in the landscape.

iv) The landscape of the river is much more intimate than that of the surrounding countryside and needs to be viewed at close quarters to be fully appreciated. It is where minor roads to the west of the B.3078 cross over the river where the best public views can be found: at Fitches Bridge, near High Hall in the south, Witchampton Lane, Stanbridge and Brockington. Undoubtedly, these views are enhanced by the character of the bridges themselves.

### Historic bridges of the Allen:

Stanbridge, near Horton Inn ,1666, in ashlar and stone rubble with four pointed arches

Bridge near Brockington Farm, Gussage All Saints, 19th C, 4 segmental arches

Witchampton Mill Stream, 18th C, brick with stone dressings, 3 semi-circular arches, large central arch

Wimborne St Giles, near French's Farm, early 19th C, brick with stone coping, 5 segmental headed arches

Wimborne St Giles, near All Hallows Farm, 19th C, brick with semi-circular arch and smaller side arches

Fitches Bridge, near High Hall, 19th C, brick with single arch

- v) Near the south-east boundary of the AONB stands High Hall, an elegant Georgian House surrounded by paddocks, woods and parkland. It is located on elevated land on an island of Reading Beds surrounded by lowland alluvium. From the river to the south are good views of the original front of the house, standing behind its lawns and high eighteenth-century wall. On the other side of this rise, to the west of the House, the pastures are gridironed with a network of drainage ditches.
- vi) The small park is not of sufficient impact in the overall landscape to warrant a separate classification. The trees, many of which are overmature oak, wrap around the House and adjacent stables, barn and coach-house and limit views of the group to certain vistas. The decorative water-tower, standing high amongst the treescape, is an interesting feature.

### **Zone 7. Eastern fringe areas**

- i) Three fringe areas along the eastern edge of the AONB have a rather different character to the chalkland landscapes described above. They form the western extremities of other landscape types that coincide with an entirely different geological formation. The chalk and valley gravels give way to Reading Beds, London Clay and sands strata of the western side of the Hampshire Basin.
- ii) The Reading Beds (sandy clays) extend as a narrow, deeply incised narrow band from Rockbourne to Pamphill, separating the chalk from a wider London Clay band behind.
- iii) The area is characterised by narrow lanes and hedgebanks. The lanes cut deeply into the hillside and the steep banks are often densely wooded.
- iv) Oak woodland is prevalent in the area, reflecting the heavier clay soils.

### **7(a) Southern area**

- i) Along the Allen valley the landform rises eastwards to form a series of ridges that form a clear physical edge to the AONB. High points include Clay Hill near Hinton Martell, and Chalbury Hill. From Chalbury, in particular, there is a panorama of the surrounding landscape extending as far as the coast. Here, a comparison can be made between the downland landscape and the forest landscape to the east.
- ii) The hillsides contain a number of woods, perhaps the most significant of which is Wiltshire Wood, near Black Barn Farm on account of its distinctive shape and profile

and its mixed species. Wiltshire Wood comprises Ancient semi-natural Woodland, mostly of oak. Other woods and lines of well-developed hedgerow link together to form a unified landscape, with small/medium fields of pasture or arable lying between. Grazing is common on the higher ground.

iii) The village of Hinton Martell, which is located on level ground at the foot of the hillside, has an impressive wooded backdrop when seen from the west. Its church, set amongst the trees, is particularly picturesque when viewed from Clay Hill. The western end of the village, however, tends to be obtrusive on account of the lack of tree-cover between the post-war houses and open farm-land.

v) Near the hamlet of Stanbridge, Ashton Wood and Brach Copse enclose the Cranborne Road and create a pinchpoint at this southern 'entrance' to the AONB. They also emphasise the contrast in landscape character with the more open, gently-profiled downland.

#### **7(b) Middle Area**

i) A heavily-wooded area of mixed species extending beyond the AONB into Woodlands Park to the east. Much of this area comprises semi-natural Ancient Woodlands that has been managed as oak coppice. There are pine plantations too, as well as specimen oaks along the road and field boundaries. Their origin perhaps relate to the ancient Deer Park, which once formed the grounds of the original St Giles Manor.

ii) Between the woods are enclosures of grassland. Towards the Cranborne Road, however, the fields become larger and arable farming is more common.

#### **7(c) Northern Area**

i) A continuation of this woodland landscape, but separated from 7(b) on account of its impact on the important Chase village of Cranborne. Within this zone can be identified a minor landscape type that coincides with the valley bottom of the River Crane. The river flows as a winterbourne from the chalk downland to the west through the centre of the village and into watercress beds on the eastern side.

ii) The village nestles amongst the surrounding tree-clad hills, so that its influence upon the wider landscape is restricted. The steep, once fortified Castle Hill dominates the village to the south. On the hillside immediately to the north is an equally important wood, named Burwood. The hills, having short, relatively steep slopes, continue northwards, culminating in a ridge that coincides with the District boundary.

iii) A continuous belt of woods (from Blagdon Hill Wood in the north-west to Bratch Copse) forms an important backdrop to the village and to this corner of the Chase itself. Many of the woods in this area comprise semi-natural Ancient Woodlands.

- iv) Between this woodland belt and Burwood stands Boveridge House, a substantial Listed mansion dating from 1825. It overlooks gardens that were laid out by Gertrude Jekyll, and beyond to an undulating patchwork of woods, copses and open fields.
- v) Cranborne Manor, begun as a hunting lodge in 1208 for King John, was for centuries, until Lord Salisbury sold the Chase to his neighbour Lord Shaftesbury at Wimborne St. Giles, the Chase Court. The present house, substantially rebuilt and enlarged in 1612 for the 1st Earl of Salisbury, is of outstanding architectural and historic interest.
- vi) The early seventeenth century gardens have been extensively restored. Of particular note are the hedges of yew that surround the building and the mount created by the Renaissance garden designer and plant collector, John Tradescant in 1610.
- vii) Linking Cranborne with the outside world are a dozen or so lanes, tracks and bridleways that radiate from the village and permeate the surrounding countryside. All are narrow, winding and flanked by hedges; the roads to the north are particularly narrow and are characterised by high hedgebanks.

#### **4. Policy Guidelines**

1. One of the most important characteristics of the Chase is its apparent remoteness, despite being surrounded by settlements and its proximity to the Bournemouth-Poole Conurbation.
2. Large tracts of the Chase appear completely unaffected by development. This is an important ingredient of Chase character and should be protected.
3. Any proposal for any new development within the AONB should be rigorously scrutinised and its visual impact assessed
4. The sense of history that makes the Chase unique should be protected, particularly its ancient monuments, ancient tracks, monuments and buildings. Interpretation of these features will enable more people to appreciate how this landscape has evolved.
5. The relationship between open land and cover has been of paramount importance since the early middle ages and is equally relevant today, in terms of the visual identity of the Chase. Forestry is vital to the character of the area, but the special management needs of Ancient Woods should be taken into account too. Encouragement should be given to the ancient craft of coppicing as an appropriate method of management such woods.



6. Changing farming practices pose a potential threat to the character of the AONB. A reduction in corn production would have a significant impact on the landscape particularly in summer when the crop is about to be harvested. The trend towards using even larger agricultural buildings could also be visually damaging particularly in areas of open landscape. If fiscal policies limit agricultural production, positive steps should be taken to guide the management of land to ensure that Chase character is not diminished.

Sheep grazing is still practised in localised areas in the area and could be regarded -on account of its long historical precedent and benefits in terms of the establishment of permanent chalkland pasture- as the most appropriate form of landscape management.

7. Highway improvement schemes, in terms of road realignments, removal of hedgerows, larger junctions, larger road signs and street lighting require particular care if the historical character of the area is not to be eroded. It is important that hedgerows, soft verges and hedgebanks, as well as traditional finger-posts and other interesting roadside features are safeguarded.

8. The Chase is blessed with an extensive network of public footpaths and bridleways. Most of Ackling Dyke is a public right of way too, and it is from these paths, away from the noise of traffic, that the countryside can best be appreciated. The Roman Road, which bisects the area within the District could be considered as a primary long-distance footpath with links to Blandford, Poole and Salisbury. Leading off would be circular routes eventually leading back onto the Roman Road. Good waymarking, clear maps and maintenance of footpaths enhance ramblers' enjoyment of the countryside. Car-parks should be confined to existing sites, village pubs, and church car-parks to minimise the impact of visitors in the countryside.

9. Pony trekking is another recreational pursuit that is compatible with the Chase landscape provided bridleway surfaces can be properly maintained. Planning policies should encourage the conversion of barns as shelters for hikers and trekkers.

10. Quiet, low key sporting activities can take place with minimal effect on the peace and solitude of the Chase. Game is an accepted part of rural life, and helps support the management of the woodlands. Golf courses however are considered inappropriate on visual, traffic and other planning grounds. The conversion of such large areas of countryside to quasi-urban use is incompatible with the AONB.

11. The role of the landed estates in managing the vast majority of the Chase landscape should not be underestimated. The process of change in the landscape will continue. Woodland will continue to be cropped for timber. New planting should take

cognizance of the lie of the land to achieve a more harmonious landscape. The edges of woods should generally be softer, achieved by planting with traditional understorey species, such as holly and hazel. Monoculture should, wherever possible, be replaced with mixed planting of coniferous and broadleaved species.

12. The landscape survey has identified certain areas and situations where there is a demonstrable need for additional planting:

a) Areas generally deficient in cover:

1. King Down area, between Witchampton and Badbury Rings: small-scale plantings of oak and coppice
2. Thickthorn/Sovell Downs: large-scale planting of beech, ash, sycamore and douglas fir

b) Settlement planting, within and around settlements to provide shelter and blend village into landscape:

1. Sixpenny Handley and Deanland.
2. Hinton Martell (west side)
3. Cashmore
4. Long Crichel
5. Woodyates
6. Gussage St. Michael
7. Witchampton (west side)
8. Cranborne ( east side )

c) Farmstead planting:

All farms, especially those on rising ground. Those on the eastern side of the Allen valley would benefit from small-scale 'clump' plantings.

d) Ridge-top planting:

Establishment of beech clumps on selected areas of high ground to provide features.

e) Hedgerow planting:

Reinforcement of drove roads and historic boundary features throughout the AONB.

f) Ornamental planting:

1. Rejuvenation of historic parkland and amenity features throughout the area.

2. Re-assessment of the recently-planted beech avenue on the approach to Handley Cross.

13. It is vital that the form and character of Chase settlements are safeguarded. Consideration should be given to the designation of Gussage All Saints, Long Crichel, Manswood and Moor Crichel as Conservation Areas.

14. Throughout the area it is important to respect local building traditions:

a) Cob buildings should be preserved; any repairs necessary should be carried out using traditional methods. Render coating is particularly important to ensure the material remains in good condition. Too often, owners apply cementitious render in a misguided attempt to waterproof the walls. This can have disastrous consequences to the stability of the wall.

b) Boundary walls constructed of cob are particularly vulnerable to neglect or unsympathetic maintenance. These should be identified and help given to their owners to ensure they are properly looked after.

c) Thatch is another vitally important feature of the Chase landscape. Conversion from thatch to other roofing materials should be resisted, and where appropriate, new buildings in thatch should be considered. Generally, combed wheat reed should be encouraged.

d) Brick is now the most common material throughout the area. Care is needed to ensure that new bricks are compatible in colour and texture with the old, and that bonding and mortar mixes correspond as close as possible too.

e) In areas where there is flint-work, consideration should also be given to new buildings having similar features, provided that traditional methods of laying can be assured.

15. Wherever possible, every encouragement should be given to sustain local building traditions and craftsmanship.

16. The condition of the various historic bridges within the AONB should be monitored, and kept in good repair using traditional materials.

17. Historic parks and gardens are valuable assets to the Chase landscape and an important part of its history. Some are well looked after, but others are neglected. Those containing seventeenth century features are most at risk. In particular, St. Giles park has suffered neglect over a period of years. Encouragement should be given to the task of restoring historic parks, both in terms of replanting programmes and the repair of buildings and features.

18. A landscape assessment exercise should form an essential part of all applications for new agricultural buildings to ensure their siting and materials (including colour) do not create a discordant feature. A number of existing farm-buildings that have an adverse effect on the surrounding landscape should be targeted for screen-planting.

19. The co-operation of the utility companies should be sought to ensure that the landscape is not spoilt by new services.

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