Introduction

This report is a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the Borough of Taunton Deane in Somerset. This Landscape Character Assessment covers the entire rural landscape of the Borough. It is not a townscape assessment and as such excludes the urban areas of Taunton and Wellington.

Background and Context

1.2 Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) has an adopted Landscape Assessment called the 'Deane Tree Plan Report'. This was written in 1992 for one key purpose – to produce a co-ordinated ‘tree management strategy’ for the Borough. Broad contextual information for the tree management strategy was provided through the classification and mapping of character areas across the Borough. Key physical characteristics of each character area were identified and provided for each LCA e.g. geology, soils, rainfall, topography but there was no coordinated description of character to really draw out what is special about each of the landscapes, to evoke the essence or sense of place for each mapped area.

1.3 The Deane Tree Plan has proven to be a valuable resource and continues to be used today by Landscape and Planning Officers at TDBC but it does not follow the current, accepted best practice methodology for undertaking Landscape Character Assessment, namely ‘Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland’ (Swanick and Land Use Consultants, 2002). This new Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared according to these guidelines and has re-classified the landscape – providing a more detailed character map, accompanied by descriptions of landscape character that bring out the key characteristics and qualities of each of Taunton Deane’s landscapes.

1.4 This Landscape Character Assessment was prepared to Draft status in 2008 and finalised in 2011. The study was steered by the Head of Landscape and the Head of Planning Policy at Taunton Deane Borough Council.

Taunton Deane – a landscape overview (and geological character)

1.5 Taunton Deane, within the county of Somerset, covers 460 square kilometres and is home to a population of 108,000. An in-land Borough, Taunton Deane sits between the districts of West Somerset (to the northwest), Sedgemoor (to the northeast), South Somerset (to the east and southeast) East Devon (to the south) and Mid Devon (to the southwest). The County Town of Taunton (population around 63,000) is at the heart of the Borough – both geographically (occupying an almost central location within the Vale of Taunton Deane) and economically – containing 80% of jobs. The location and geographic context of Taunton Deane is illustrated in Figure 1.
1.6 Taunton Deane exhibits considerable landscape variety. Over one fifth of the Borough’s landscape is of National importance – both the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Blackdown Hills AONB cover significant swathes of land within the Borough – in the north and south respectively (refer to Appendix 3). The centrally positioned area known as the ‘Vale of Taunton Deane’ (National Character Area 144) defines much of the Borough’s landscape. An area characterised by high and low vale landscapes and interspersed by floodplains. The high Vale in the west is formed of Permian red sandstones and pebble beds. The low vale to the east is formed of Triassic sandstones and mudstones which provide the expanse of lowland farmland that surrounds the meandering west-east course of the River Tone and its numerous tributaries. The most recent Quaternary deposits are the river valley alluvium and the peat of the low lying Somerset levels and moors in the east. The Triassic light red sandstone is relatively soft and easily dressed and is extensively used as a building stone throughout the vale.

1.7 The oldest rocks are Devonian slates, dark red sandstones and shales which form the Brendon Hills and Quantock Hills enclosing the vale of Taunton Deane to the west and north. The dramatic steep southern face of the Quantock Hills is a fault scarp. In the west the strongly undulating farmland of the Brendon Hills extends beyond the Borough boundary and merges into the area of Exmoor National Park. The Devonian dark red sandstone is hard and highly characteristic and used consistently as a building material throughout these areas.

1.8 To the south of the vale the ground again rises steeply and is defined by the distinctive wooded Cretaceous greensand escarpments of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the dip slope forms an open farmed plateaux which has a thin surface layer of clay with chert – the chert being to this area of the Blackdowns as the red sandstone is to the Quantock Hills. These dramatic landscapes surrounding the central vale provide dramatic backdrops to, and offer fine views across, the lower-lying farmland.

1.9 The south east of the Borough is characterised by the scarp and dip slopes of the Jurassic blue lias limestones and clays. These rocks are strongly bedded and the white lias is extensively used as a building stone, with the blue lias widely used for paving slabs. The Lias Vale occurring within Taunton Deane is part of a wider vale landscape that extends into South Somerset.

1.10 In the east of the Borough, the wooded lias scarps form a dramatic backdrop to West Sedgemoor, the flat peat landscape that forms a part of the much larger Somerset Levels and Moors – a landscape that extends way beyond the Taunton Deane Boundary and which is given international protection through it’s Ramsar, ESA and SPA status.

Rivers

1.11 The main river within Taunton Deane is the River Tone – its catchment area covering the vast majority of the Borough. The source of the River Tone is in the Brendon Hills and cuts a relatively straight north-south course, creating striking valleys through farmed hills – on the fringes of the Brendons. West of Wellington, the Tone takes an eastward course - the river and its floodplain forming a key part of the broad area of low lying land known as the Vale of Taunton Deane. The Tone joins the River Parrett near to the prominent landscape feature of Burrow Mump. In the south,
the waters of the Rivers Culm, Otter and Yarty cut deep valleys through the plateau landscape of the Blackdown Hills AONB.

**Modern Day Landscape Change**

1.12 There are a number of pressures affecting the landscape of Taunton Deane Borough today. Many of these are generic issues that are having an influence on the landscapes of the United Kingdom as a whole. These include:

- development pressures (expanding urban areas for commerce and housing),
- renewable energy e.g. wind energy, biomass cropping; solar PV arrays;
- new highways and road improvement schemes;
- changing agricultural and land management practices,
- disease threatening tree cover e.g. Phytophthera Ramorum; and
- trends for a move away from agriculture to more recreational uses of land such as for keeping of horses or hobby farming.

1.13 Despite the pressures of such change, Taunton Deane boasts outstanding rural landscapes and not just those that have been afforded designated status. It is important to ensure that given the demands placed on the Borough, the special qualities that make up the many landscapes of Taunton Deane are identified and described so that policies can be developed and strategies employed to ensure these qualities can be protected for future generations.
Landscape Character Assessment

2.1 Landscape Character Assessment is a well-established tool for systematically identifying, classifying, mapping and describing the landscape. It recognises the landscape as a continuous system that does not adhere to administrative boundaries. It is a method that records features and elements of the landscape (their form combination and expression) to draw out the essence or special character of a particular landscape in a particular place. The process of Landscape Character Assessment allows the landscape to be broken down and understood; making clear what it is that distinguishes one landscape from another.

2.2 Landscape Character Assessment can be split into two main stages:

- **Characterisation** – an objective and relatively value-free process of landscape identification, mapping, classification and description and

- **Making Judgements** – developing and employing a robust methodology in order that professional judgements about the landscape can be made and which will assist in decision-making.

This Assessment

Scale and Fit

2.3 This report provides an up to date Landscape Character Assessment of Taunton Deane. In 1992, the Borough Council prepared The Deane Tree Plan and the Borough was mapped at a scale of 1:50,000. This report updates the 1992 assessment – providing an assessment (accurate to 1:25,000) that follows current, accepted guidance for Landscape Character Assessment and which fits within the broader national framework of the Joint Character Areas of the Character of England Map (Figure 2).

2.4 Even at the broad scale of the Character of England Map, the variety of landscapes within Taunton Deane is clearly illustrated, with 7 Landscape Types identified. Natural England are currently undertaking a review of the descriptions that accompany the Character of England map, with an anticipated completion date set for 2012. Importantly, the mapped boundaries of the new Joint Character Areas (to be re-named National Character Areas) will not change and will therefore remain the same as those illustrated in Figure 2.

2.5 A finer grain of landscape detail can also be seen in the National Landscape Typology map – Figure 3 - which has also been a source of baseline information to inform the ‘fit’ of the local scale assessment within the broader National context.

2.6 The whole of the rural landscape of Taunton Deane Borough has been assessed and characterised. The urban areas of Taunton and Wellington have been excluded. Characterisation of the Borough has identified **15 landscape types** that have been sub-divided into **22 character areas**.
**Landscape Types** share broadly similar patterns and combinations of physical and human elements (such as geology, soils, landform, vegetation, field pattern and settlement) in every area that they occur. An example of a landscape type within Taunton Deane is the Wooded Escarpment landscape type.

**Landscape Character Areas** are unique geographical areas that exhibit the common characteristics of a landscape type e.g. ‘Quantock’ Wooded Escarpment or ‘Fivehead’ Wooded Escarpment.

2.7 Taunton Deane has considerable variety of landscape character. As such there a large number of Landscape Types identified within the Borough, the majority of which are represented by just one Character Area.

**Landscape and Planning**

2.8 Landscape Character Assessment is deeply embedded within the planning system. From the international to the local scale there are a whole host of policies, statements and guidance documents that aim to conserve, protect, enhance and positively manage the character of the landscape.

**European Landscape Convention**

2.9 The ELC was signed by the UK government in February 2006 and became binding in March 2007. The convention was created by the Council of Europe and promotes landscape protection, management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues.

The convention highlights the need to recognise landscape in law, to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. It also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.

Specific measures include:

- raising awareness of the value of landscapes among all sectors of society, and of society’s role in shaping them;
- promoting landscape training and education among landscape specialists, other related professions, and in school and university courses;
- the identification and assessment of landscapes, and analysis of landscape change, with the active participation of stakeholders;
- setting objectives for landscape quality, with the involvement of the public;
- the implementation of landscape policies, through the establishment of plans and practical programmes.

Text taken from Landscape Character Network website (June 2010).
Taunton Deane Borough

Fig. 2
National Context:
Joint Character Areas

Key

- 143. Somerset Hills
- 142. Somerset Levels
- 147. Bradninch
- 146. Vale of Taunton and Quantock Pegwys
- 144. Quantock Hills
- 145. Exmoor
- Taunton Deane Borough Extends

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of H.M.S.O., © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Taunton Deane Borough Council LA07627
Taunton Deane Borough

Fig: 3
National Context:
National Landscape Typology

Physiology (1st letter)
H - High Hills
L - Lowlands
R - Intermediate
U - Low Hills

Land Cover (2nd letter)
B - Other light land
C - Clayland
D - Heath and Moorland
W - Wetland

Cultural Pattern (3rd letter)
A - wooded - Ancient Wood
D - Dispersed unwooded
N - Nucleated unwooded
O - Unsettled/ openland
W - Wetland/ waste unwooded

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Taunton Deane Borough Council LA07/977
National Planning Policy

2.10 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) – ‘Sustainable Development in Rural Areas’ contains the National policies related to rural areas including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas. PPS7 outlines a number of objectives for rural areas, including:

- Good quality sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside.
- Continued protection of the countryside for the benefit of all, with the highest level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources.

2.11 In the context of new development PPS7 states that, “the Government’s overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all”.

Local Plan Policy

2.12 Chapter 7 (Environment) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan (adopted November 2004) states that “The unspoilt landscape (of Taunton Deane) is of great beauty and variety, ranging from the Quantock and Blackdown Hills, both designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), through the undulating fertile Vale, to the flat Levels and Moors.” Within this chapter, there are a number of policies related to the landscape and landscape character. These are outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>Development which would harm trees, woodlands, orchards, historic parklands and hedgerows of value to the area’s landscape, character or wildlife will not be permitted unless adequate provision is made for tree cover to compensate for this loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>Development that would harm the character, landscape, historic and wildlife value of ancient woodlands will not be permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>Priority will be given to preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty AONBs. Development which would adversely affect the landscape, character and appearance of AONBs will not be permitted … The protection of views to and from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be an important consideration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>Development which would harm the appearance, character and contribution to landscape quality of Special Landscape Features (as shown on the Proposals Map) will not be permitted unless planning conditions would prevent such harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN12</td>
<td>Development proposals must be sensitively sited and designed to respect the distinct character and appearance of Landscape Character Areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.13 Policy EN11 of the Local Plan is dedicated to the local landscape designation of Special Landscape Features. There are thirteen of these identified within Taunton Deane, for their contribution to the character and quality of the local landscape within which they occur. It is important to note that Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) ‘Sustainable Development in Rural Areas’ makes it clear that, “Local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. LDDs should state what it is that requires extra protection, and why. When reviewing their local area-wide development plans and LDDs, planning authorities should rigorously consider the justification for retaining existing local landscape designations. They should ensure that such designations are based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned.”

2.14 Taunton Deane Core Strategy has provided for the retention of policy EN11: Special Landscape Features due to the designation of Creechbarrow Hill within Taunton. The policy will be reviewed as part of the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD. As such, where Special Landscape Features occur within the landscape character areas, they are identified in the report.

Methodology

2.15 The Landscape Character Assessment was prepared through a process of desk and field study and was undertaken in line with the best practice guidance of the Countryside Agency’s 2002 publication ‘Landscape Character Assessment - Best Practice for England and Scotland’.

Characterisation

2.16 During the desk study a range of baseline data was reviewed e.g. geology, soils, landform, watercourses and drainage, field and settlement patterns, and the Somerset Historic Landscape Characterisation. A series of overlays were produced using GIS mapping techniques. A number of these overlays are illustrated in Appendix 3. These overlays were used to draw out patterns in the landscape, leading to the development of a draft classification of Landscape Type and Character Area boundaries, mapped at a scale of 1:25,000. These boundaries were then taken forward for field-testing; leading to their amendment and refinement based on observations and photographic evidence gathered in the field.

2.17 Following field survey work, the final 15 landscape types and 22 Character Areas were mapped at a scale of 1:25,000. The complete Landscape Character map for Taunton Deane is shown in Figure 4.

2.18 It is important to note that this is a strategic-scale landscape study and although some changes in landscape character are visually very clear, some boundaries will represent more subtle or gradual transitions in character as opposed to relating directly to definitive physical features visible on the ground. For this reason, landscape character assessments should only be used at the same scale that they were developed and not relied upon for making judgements where a much finer grain of study is required. This
The landscape character assessment has been prepared at a scale of 1:25,000, making it suitable for use and interpretation at this scale.

2.19 The descriptions of the Landscape Type and Character Areas are provided in the following chapters of this report.

Making Judgements

2.20 The majority of this report is dedicated to the Characterisation stage of Landscape Character Assessment – presenting the maps and descriptions of the landscapes identified. In addition however, a relatively short landscape evaluation has been undertaken with the intention that it act as a starting point for more detailed landscape evaluation in the future – with Taunton Deane Borough Council taking the landscape strategies forward for the development of landscape management guidelines.

2.21 The evaluation has involved the use of a matrix to guide judgments of Landscape Quality (determined by assessing strength of landscape character and landscape condition). A broad Landscape Strategy - that may be taken forward to guide landscape planning and management in the future - accompanies the Landscape Quality judgement. The evaluation provides a judgement of the current state of the landscape and the strength of landscape character and gives an indication as to the most appropriate strategies to ensure protection of Taunton Deane’s landscape for the future.

2.22 The matrix used is shown overleaf (Table 1) and is accompanied by a brief description of the terms used for the Landscape Strategies.

Table 1. Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Quality</th>
<th>Associated Landscape Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate – Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Conservative and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor-Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor-Create</td>
<td>Moderate – Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strength of Landscape Character
The following tables provide an outline explanation of the contents of the matrix.

**Landscape Quality, Strength of Character and Condition**

**Landscape Quality:** This is a judgement about the overall physical state of the landscape and is based upon the combination of the strength of landscape character and overall landscape condition (see below).

**Strength of Character:** determined by an assessment of landscape features, elements and characteristics and how these combine to form a sense of place. The process conditions how distinctive and recognisable the pattern of elements is that make up a particular type of landscape; taking into account attractors and detractors in the landscape e.g. the former may be the consistent use of local building material and strong vernacular and the latter may be an intrusive communication mast or pylon lines. When making an assessment of strength of character it is also important to be mindful of landscape that may be empty of distinctive features such that it is lacking local distinctiveness and lacking strong character. The judgement also considers expression of articulation of features and degree of fragmentation eg historic field boundaries may have fallen into decline such that the landscape pattern is diluted and the strength of character weakened. A three point scale have been used for the purpose of making judgements – weak, moderate and strong.

**Landscape Condition:** judgements made by consideration of the state or intactness of landscape features, elements and characteristics and how these combine to inform an impression of overall landscape condition. Again, a three point scale has been used for the purpose of making judgements: poor, moderate and good.

**Landscape Strategies**

**Conserve:** where landscape quality is good (combination of good condition and strong character) and as such there should be a focus to protect and safeguard key characteristics of the landscape as they are today.

**Enhance:** where features or key characteristics of the landscape have fallen into decline and the emphasis should be on improving their state and the state of the landscape overall. This may involve improvements to landscape management practices to improve condition or the introduction and or removal of features in order to strengthen character.

**Restore:** where there needs to be a focus on re-establishing features that have been lost or are in a state of obvious or sever decline.

**Create:** where the landscape quality is poor (due to poor condition and weak character) and there is a need to form a new and different landscape for the benefit of people and the environment.
Structure of the Report

As noted above, characterisation of the Borough has identified 15 landscape types that have been sub-divided into 22 character areas. These are illustrated in Figure 4. The majority of the following chapters of the report are dedicated to describing these landscapes and are laid out as follows.

- Summary of (generic) character of the Landscape Type.
- Identification of the Character Areas pertaining to the Landscape Type and their location.
- Key characteristics and description of the Character Areas.
- Evaluation (Landscape Quality and associated Landscape Strategy).

For the vast majority of landscape types within Taunton Deane, there is just one character area and the bulk of descriptive text is provided at the ‘character area’ level. For those landscape types where there is more than one character area, a description of the landscape type is provided along with a description for each of the character areas.
Landscape Type 1: Farmed and Settled Low Vale
Landscape Type 1: Farmed and Settled Low Vale

Character Areas:
1A Vale of Taunton Deane

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Type 1: Farmed and Settled Low Vale

Hedgerow and hedgerow oaks make a significant contribution to the landscape pattern of the Vale.

Views across the Low Clay Vale from the slopes of the High Clay Vale.

Dairying is common on the rich pastures of the Low Clay Vale landscape.

Permanent pasture grazed by sheep.

Fruit (predominantly apple) orchards can still be found in the Vale but were once a much more common landscape feature.

Tributary streams of the River Tone cut through the landscape.
Landscape Type 1: Farmed and Settled Low Vale

Landscape Type Summary

A wide, flat to gently undulating vale landscape defined by an underlying Keuper Marl geology - giving rise to loamy soils. The fertile soils allow for a very productive agricultural landscape – arable, pasture, orchards and market gardening are all characteristic. There is a strong connection to the river, its many tributary streams and brooks that offer adjoining landscape interest and lend character in the form of well-wooded corridors and water-loving tree species. The vale landscape type is very clearly shaped by the hand of humans with urban areas and major transport corridors (road and rail) creating a marked contrast to the agricultural landscape and resulting in areas with a strong urban-fringe character. Villages, hamlets, scattered farms and individual dwellings are typical across this landscape type.

Character Areas

There is one large character area belonging to the landscape type of the ‘Farmed and Settled Low Vale’. This area – the Taunton Deane Farmed and Settled Low Vale - defines a significant proportion of the central part of the Borough. The Low Vale is surrounded to the north, south and west by the higher ground of the Farmed and Settled High Vale but to the east the land very gradually descends – flattening out and merging with the lower lying landscape of the Clay and Peat Moors. The Vale is interspersed by the main watercourse and numerous tributaries making up the landscape of the River Tone Floodplain.

Character Area 1A: Vale of Taunton Deane

Key Characteristics

- A low-lying vale landscape centred around the River Tone and the County town of Taunton extending to up to the northern boundary of Wellington.
- A flat to gently undulating terrain with an elevation ranging from (15m-50m AOD) - the landscape generally being lower and flatter to the east, rising and becoming more undulating in the west.
- Principally underlain by a solid surface geology of Keuper Marls (of the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group), giving rise to well-drained coarse and loamy soils (Grades 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land).
- Strong sense of being with a vale or wide, shallow bowl-like landform – with the surrounding Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB offering visual and physical containment.
- Mixed agricultural land use system – dairying, stock rearing, cereals and fruit cropping (orchards).
- Strong hedgerow network (with striking hedgerow trees – mainly oak) defining a field system that is both of ancient and recent enclosure.
- Limited woodland cover – woodland generally restricted to occasional small copses on areas of higher ground.
- A number of villages, hamlets and dispersed farms connected by a network of roads and winding rural lanes.
- Notable rural-urban fringe character around the main towns of Taunton and Wellington.
Varied building age and vernacular – in the north red sandstone is prevalent but in the south, blue lias is more common. Painted stone and clay tiles are common throughout.

A number of hills that have been designated as Special Landscape Features make an important contribution to the wider landscape eg Knowle Hill, Norton Camp Hill, Rag Hill, the ridge between Stonegallows Hill and Lipe Hill and the river cliff at Bradford-on-Tone.

The A38 and M5 motorway have a visual and aural influence on many parts of the vale.

Character Area Description

3.1 Occurring between 15m and 50m AOD, the Taunton Deane Farmed and Settled Low Vale defines much of the central area of the Borough. It stretches from the edges of Wellington in the southwest to the outskirts of the Clay and Peat Moors in the northeast. The low vale is frequently interspersed by the waters of River Tone and its tributaries and merges seamlessly with the higher landscape of the Farmed and Settled High Vale that surrounds it to the north, south and west.

3.2 The Low Vale contains the county town of Taunton and, with the smaller town of Wellington located approximately 7 miles to the southwest, the influence of the urban areas is felt in the immediate hinterland. This is particularly evident where an unsympathetic or blunt urban edge treatment in places results in an awkward interface between developed and undeveloped/agricultural land e.g. along the A38 corridor (connecting Taunton and Wellington) where the commercial edges of the two towns spread out and industrial units, garden centres and farm shops are dotted along the roadside.

3.3 Taunton’s numerous church towers and steeples are familiar, impressive landmarks on the skyline as are the distinctive chimneys of Tonedale at Wellington. In marked visual contrast, but nonetheless prominent features, are pylon lines which run from NE to SW through the Vale.

3.4 Beyond the rural-urban fringe landscapes of Taunton and Wellington, the vale has a strong rural character – its land use defined by a mixed agriculture of dairying, stock rearing, arable and fruit cropping and, increasingly bio-fuel cropping (fields of miscanthus) that at full height towers over the tops of the strong hedgerow network. The vale is principally underlain by a solid surface geology of Keuper Marls (of the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group), giving rise to well-drained coarse and loamy soils.
that offer high quality agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3). Parts of the field system within the vale are defined by ancient enclosure (fields that are irregular and smaller in scale but modified between the 17th and 19th centuries) as can be seen for example to the west of Norton Fitzwarren. Areas of more recent enclosure (larger fields and of a more regular, geometric shape) characterise the land enclosed between the 18th and 20th centuries - such as in the northwest around Cheddon Fitzpaine.

Good quality agricultural land – lush pastures grazed by dairy herds

3.5 Woodland cover is limited but hedgerow trees (typically oak), punctuating the relatively dense and lush hedgerows, make a valuable contribution to tree cover and character overall. There are some small copses on areas of higher ground. Once very common within the vale, apple orchards now occur far less frequently but are still a feature - with local cider and apple juice being advertised and sold from numerous farm shops.

3.6 The hedgerows make a significant contribution to the vale by defining the field pattern. Usually occurring on low hedgebanks the hedges are dominated by elm but contain a range of woody species including hazel, field maple, holly and blackthorn. The mixed hedges give way to hawthorn hedges in areas of more recent field enclosure.

3.7 Within the vale itself there is a definite sense of separation from the towns. This is largely due to the strong hedgerow network that limits views across the low-lying land. From the surrounding landscapes, on higher ground, the towns are clearly seen - in views from the Farmed and Settled High Vale, from the plateau edge of the Blackdown Hills AONB and the summits and foothills of the Quantock Hills AONB. These striking and contrasting elevated landscapes, forming part of the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, not only form a striking backdrop but also provide a sense of containment and enclosure to the vale.
3.8 Settlement within the landscape is a mixture of villages, dispersed hamlets and farms. Some villages extend to little more than a church and a small, loose cluster of dwellings but others are larger such as Creech St Michael and the new village of Cotford St Luke. There is a mixed vernacular of modern and traditional. Building materials vary across the vale. In the north and west red sandstone is seen in a number of villages – relating to the underlying sandstone geology of the surrounding Quantock Hills and High Vale. In the south and east, stone built properties are often of Blue or White Lias, reflecting the changing underlying geology moving east towards the Farmed and Wooded (Lias) Vale. Brick buildings occur throughout reflecting the underlying clay and alluvium of the Low Vale. Slate roofs and clay tile roofs are common throughout the vale.

3.9 Rendering and whitewashing or painting of stone is also common. There are a large number of villages with Conservation Area status, including Cheddon Fitzpaine, Bradford-on-Tone and the edge of Hillfarrance, Bishop’s Hull, and part of the West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Conservation Areas spilling over from the High Vale. Village churches form strong landmarks – Bishops’ Lydeard and Cheddon Fitzpaine for example.

There has been a loss of many traditional apple orchards although fruit growing is still a feature of the vale.

Hedgerow oaks make an important contribution in a landscape lacking woodland cover.
3.10 Although low-lying and relatively flat in places, the Vale contains a number of small natural ridges and hills that have a significant influence on the character of the landscape at the local level. These are currently designated as Special Landscape Features within the existing local plan and are recognised for their contribution to landscape character – being pronounced and relatively prominent features that are visually distinctive in the context of the wider (flatter) landscape of the Vale. Surrounding Taunton these hills are Knowle Hill (a distinctive and unusually wooded hill within the vale – surrounding Norton Manor Camp), Norton Hill Fort at Norton Fitzwarren, Creechbarrow Hill, Cotlake Hill, Rag Hill (a natural ridge to the north of the town around Staplegrove) and the ridge between Stonegallows Hill, Castleman’s Hill, Lipe Hill and the Blackdown Hills. These ridges and hills provide visual containment to much of the urban area of Taunton, which lies in a shallow saucer, the rim of which is formed by the ridges. As a result of the relative containment of the town there is an element of surprise when crossing the ridges from the surrounding rural area as the town becomes visible. Although not distinctive at the scale of Landscape Character Assessment, forming a transition between the floodplain and the Low Vale is the river cliff at Bradford on Tone – a steep, wooded river bank that is also listed as a Special Landscape Feature.

3.11 Although much of the vale has a very rural character the visual and aural influence of the busy transport corridors (A38 and M5) can still be felt in places.
Landscape Evaluation

3.12 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

### Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and</td>
<td>Conserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor-Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance and</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restore</td>
<td>Conserve and</td>
<td>Conserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restore/</td>
<td>Enhance and</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Restore</td>
<td>Conserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strength of Landscape Character**

### Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

3.13 **Condition** across the vale is variable but overall is judged to be **moderate**. Although much of the landscape is working farmland and under good management, there are a number of issues affecting the overall state of intactness of features and characteristics of the landscape. The areas of poorest condition are typically within the rural-urban fringe (around Taunton and Wellington) where marginal farmland appears degraded. Hedgerow condition is poor - often gappy, thin and short flailed with the effect of weakening the landscape pattern. There are issues of fly tipping along the transport corridors (primary and secondary routes). Many fields within the vale have been subdivided into paddocks for horse keeping and exercising – boundaries made up of post and wire and electric fencing and tape can appear unsightly and in places detract from the historic landscape pattern of the hedgerows which are such a defining feature of the vale landscape.
3.14  The **strength of landscape character** varies across the vale but is judged to be **moderate to strong** overall. **Moderate** strength of character reflects a combination of how visual detractors and a moderate to poor landscape condition have, in places, diluted the pattern of elements defining the Vale. These include factors such as poor and varied hedgerow management leading to a weakened landscape pattern, major transport corridors (and associated linear development and intrusive signage along their length, such as between Taunton and Wellington), pylon tracts and large industrial style agricultural buildings that do not respect the local vernacular nor add...
to the sense of place. Incremental changes to the landscape (such as subdivision of fields, the erection of post and wire fencing for horse paddocks and planting of miscanthus crops) are having a cumulative negative impact on the landscape. In those parts of the character area where condition is good and there are few landscape detractors, the distinctive vale landform, the rich agricultural scene, the strong hedgerow network and the close visual relationship with the River Tone create very distinctive, strong landscape character.

### Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above there is, overall, a requirement to enhance the landscape of the Farmed and Settled Low Clay Vale. Although the Vale contains distinctive characteristics, there are a number of human elements that detract from the character of the landscape – transport corridors, pylons, and intrusive developments eg large agricultural sheds and town edge development. Implementing landscape management strategies to improve the condition of the vale would significantly improve the landscape pattern and strengthen landscape character overall. In areas of the vale where landscape character is stronger, the landscape strategy should be to conserve as well as enhance and this is reflected in the matrix above.
Landscape Type 2: River Floodplain
Landscape Type 2: River Floodplain

Character Areas:

2A The Tone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Type 2: River Floodplain

Characteristic stone bridges define road crossing points over the river.

River Tone meanders across the floodplain flanked by meadows and pasture.

Willows are a common feature that distinguish the floodplain from the surrounding Low Vale.

Wide, flat floodplain with much of the land use characterised by pasture and arable cropping.

Dairy herds graze the rich pasture aligning watercourses.

Modern industrial units are common features of the urban floodplain.
Landscape Type 2: River Floodplain

Landscape Type Summary

This is a low-lying, flat floodplain landscape centred on the river and its tributary watercourses. This landscape type is underlain by drift Alluvium and river terrace deposits and has traditionally been defined by a land use of pasture but in more recent times, arable cropping has extended onto the floodplain. The floodplain watercourses can be picked out by water-loving tree species and well-wooded banks that define the edges of the water.

Character Areas

There is one landscape character area classified as River Floodplain landscape type. This character area corresponds to the low-lying landscape surrounding the River Tone and is distinguished by its flat, lowland alluvial/river terrace floodplain that supports pasture and some arable farming. The character area covers a significant amount of the Borough – incorporating the floodplains of smaller tributary streams that feed into the main watercourse of the River Tone. There is a strong physical and visual relationship with the surrounding Farmed and Settled Low Vale.

Character Area 2A: The Tone

Key Characteristics

- A low-lying, typically flat floodplain landform generally occurring between 5 and 50m AOD.
- Defined by the tributaries and main watercourse of the River Tone.
- Surface geology predominantly defined by Alluvium and River Terrace Deposits.
- Land use characterised by permanent pasture (with some cropping in places).
- Field enclosure pattern varying from ancient (modified 17th to 19th century) to modern (18th to 21st century). Hedgerows typically divide the fields.
- Very limited settlement within the rural areas (mainly individual farmsteads) but where the River Tone meets Wellington and Taunton, there is a very clear urban influence.
- Man-made infrastructure associated with transport and services – Great Western and West Somerset Railways, as well as prominent pylons carrying overhead cables.
- Riverbank and stream banks flanked by well-wooded margins containing species typical of a wet landscape – willow, poplar and alder.

Character Area Description

4.1 The River Tone Floodplain covers a considerable part of the Borough. Because of the intrinsic connection to the course of the water, the Floodplain landscape has a fairly complex pattern (being a series of interconnected linear tracts that relate to tributary streams as well as the main river) and has a relatively wide coverage within the Borough of Taunton Deane.
4.2 The landscape comprises the watercourses and floodplains of three smaller tributary brooks (Hillfarrance Brook, Halse Water and Norton Brook) and the main watercourse and floodplain of the River Tone - into which the smaller three watercourses run. The floodplain of Hillfarrance Brook really becomes apparent within the landscape just north of Milverton, Halse Water’s floodplain north of Halse and Norton Brook to the southeast of Bishops Lydeard. Further upstream, the watercourses and the land around them form key characteristics of other landscape types as opposed to being landscapes of distinctive character in their own right. It is as the waters become more significant in size and the land around them becomes flatter and wider, that the River Tone Floodplain landscape within the vale becomes distinguishable.

4.3 Within the vale of Taunton Deane there is a subtle transition from the floodplain to the more undulating and elevated landform of the surrounding Farmed and Settled Low Clay Vale but the Floodplain is nonetheless apparent - being lower-lying, largely flat, and noticeably more open in character. In places, more prominent local landforms meet with the floodplain – Rag Hill and Stonegallows for example – both designated as Special Landscape Features in the current Local Plan. The landform change corresponds to a change in surface geology - the Floodplain being defined by a surface geology of Alluvium and River Terrace Deposits. The Alluvium gives rise to alluvial gley (reddish, clayey) soils.

4.4 Having followed a relatively straight north-south course through, and forming part of, the Farmed Hills with River Valleys landscape type, The River Tone emerges as part of the Floodplain landscape at Greenham. From Greenham it flows northwards and then eastwards passing the northern edge of Wellington, and continuing through farmland before taking a west to east route though Taunton, beyond the M5 motorway before meeting with and forming part of the Clay and Peat Moors landscape.

4.5 Between Wellington and Taunton, the Floodplain is at its widest with the numerous tributary brooks merging with the Tone. Around both of the towns the Floodplain takes on an urban-edge character – the historic and modern industrial buildings, commercial property, sewage works and houses all forming part of the flat landscape flanking the river. At Taunton, the influence of the urban area is strongly felt where relatively recent and ongoing development on the Floodplain adjacent to Silk Mills Road has occurred – highway widening and improvement, development of a road bridge over the railway, a park and ride scheme and on-going residential development. Combined with highway schemes, signage and lighting, the influence of the town on the floodplain has significantly increased in very recent years and the landscape has become noticeably more urban in character - by day and by night.

4.6 Bridges and crossing points are a particular feature of the River Tone Floodplain landscape – the multi-arched stone bridge at Bradford-on-Tone being a notable example (refer to photo sheet). Settlement on the floodplain is for the most part limited to scattered farms although the settlements of Bathpool and Creech St Michael extend onto this lower flatter ground. Farms and settlements (such as Bradford-on-Tone, Bishops Lydeard and Cotford St Luke) typically sit adjacent to, as opposed to within, the area characterised as the Floodplain). Building materials within the floodplain are typically red and buff brick and render with slate and clay tile roofs.
4.7 The River Tone (much of its course tightly meandering) is flanked by areas of wet meadow and by well-wooded margins containing typical riverside trees (willow, alder and poplar for example). The occurrence of willow – both individual trees and outcrops in hedges – is a key feature that distinguishes the Floodplain from the surrounding Vale. The floodplain can appear both open and enclosed. In areas of dense hedgerow, there is a sense of semi-enclosure but where hedges are low, short-flailed and gappy or fields are divided by post and wire fencing, the landscape has a larger scale and a sense of openness. Fields are of irregular shape and of medium to large size – typically of both ancient enclosure (but modified between the 17th and 19th centuries) and recent enclosure (18th to 21st century).

4.8 The flat nature of the floodplain has meant a tradition of using the landscape for transport and services. The Great Western Railway tracks a course across the length of the landscape and the West Somerset Railway branches from it through the narrower floodplain area of the Hillfarrance Brook. The A38, A3065 and the M5 motorway cross the floodplain. Pylon lines are prominent features – marching across the flat land, they are the dominate element in some views.

Landscape Evaluation

4.9 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Quality</th>
<th>Associated Landscape Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor-Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor Restore/ Create</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

4.10 The condition of this landscape is judged to be moderate overall with some areas in poorer condition. The landscape is suffering in places due to the decline and lack of management of field boundaries (particularly where areas of the floodplain have been given over to arable cropping and there is no longer an incentive for stock-proofing). Where the urban areas abut the floodplain, the condition of the landscape noticeably declines and there is often an awkward interface between rural and urban land uses.

4.11 The strength of landscape character is judged to be moderate. The simplicity of the naturally flat, open floodplain landscape has been notably lost in places due to the dominance of a number of human influences – the railway, pylons and urban edge developments that detract from the natural physical character of the landscape.

Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above there is, overall, a requirement to enhance (and, in places, restore) the landscape pattern of the floodplain – improving the condition of existing hedgerows and restoring hedgerows in areas where they have almost disappeared from the landscape could considerably improve the sense of intactness and strengthen landscape character overall. A number of opportunities exist to implement local landscape schemes that would enhance the rural-urban fringe areas in order to visually improve the often-awkward interface between rural and urban land uses.
Landscape Type 3: Farmed and Settled High Vale
Landscape Type 3: Farmed and Settled High Vale

Character Areas:

3A Quantock Fringes and West Vale
3B Blackdown Fringes

KEY

Urban Areas
Landscape Type
Landscape Type 3: Farmed and Settled High Vale

Transition from Low Vale to High Vale and up to the Wooded Escarpment.

High hedges along rural lanes often restrict views.

Striking backdrop of the adjacent Wooded Escarpment.

Significant areas of large arable fields occur where field units have been enlarged (mature trees indicate old hedgerow lines as shown here).

The M5 Motorway cuts through the high vale landscape - having a strong visual and aural influence.

Sandstone walls are a distinctive feature in the village of Fitzhead.
Landscape Type 3: Farmed and Settled High Vale

Landscape Type

Key Characteristics

- A transitional landscape defining the landscape between the Low Vale and the areas of distinctive higher ground e.g. Quantock Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB.
- Undulating terrain formed where tributary streams have carved shallow depressions.
- Varied underlying geology, reflected in the building stones of the different character areas.
- Elevation generally occurring between 50m AOD and 150m AOD.
- Rich agricultural landscape of arable cropping and pasture (dairying and stock rearing).
- Varied field size and shape.
- Overtly rural landscape in places with other areas having an urban fringe character (along major transport corridors and close to main settlements).

Landscape Type Description

5.1 The landscape of the Farmed and Settled High Vale is one of the component landscape defining the wider area known as the Vale of Taunton Deane (comprising the Farmed and Settled Low Vale, Farmed and Settled High Vale and the River Floodplain landscape of the Tone). The High Vale is linked both physically and visually to the Low Vale - the boundaries between the two landscapes being very transitional and in places, are hard to determine as they merge together. The High Vale is nonetheless a landscape that expresses its own character – being more detached from the floodplain than the low vale and having a much stronger connection to surrounding areas of higher ground such as the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills AONBs.

5.2 This is a landscape with an undulating, rolling topography compared with the flatter and less varied landform of the low vale. The undulations have been formed by tributary streams cutting through the vale; creating a series of shallow depressions. A number of the streams issue from springs within the High Vale itself whilst others run into the vale from surrounding areas of high ground.

5.3 The soils of the High Vale are very fertile creating a rich farmed landscape of both arable cropping and pasture (for dairying and stock rearing). Field sizes and shapes vary throughout the vale, reflecting different periods and mirroring the different land uses - arable cropping typically focussed in much larger field units and pastures are associated with smaller fields.

5.4 The farmland is interspersed with settlements – from larger villages to hamlets and individual farms. The character of the villages is determined by underlying geology which, as with the low vale, varies across the landscape type.

5.5 It is a landscape of variety – from overtly rural to urban fringe in character, from tranquil to fast pace near major transport corridors.
Character Areas

There are two distinct character areas pertaining to the landscape of the **Farmed and Settled High Vale**, both demonstrate key characteristics of the landscape type but are geographically separate and exhibit local distinctiveness. One area forms the northern and western extents of the Vale of Taunton Deane and the other defines the most southerly stretch of the vale landscape.

5.6 The two character areas belonging to the Farmed and Settled High Vale are:

- 3A: Quantock Fringes and West Vale
- 3B: Blackdown Fringes

5.7 A description of these geographically separate areas is provided below.

Character Area Descriptions

**Character Area 3A: Quantock Fringes and West Vale**

5.8 The Quantock Fringes and West Farmed and Settled High Vale extends from the north of Taunton, around Upper Cheddon, skirting along the edge of the southern extents of the Quantock Hills AONB and extending up to the north western boundary of the Borough at Triscombe. The character area stretches out to the west, widening around the village of Bishop’s Lydeard and Cotford St Luke, continuing past the settlements of Halse and Fitzhead. The area is broken by Hillfarrance Brook, surrounding Floodplain and Low Vale, but then stretches to the south to encompass a significant area of farmland that reaches west to edge of Langford Budville and south to the fringes of Wellington, where it meets with the River Tone.

Striking backdrop of the Quantock Hills AONB – here looking at the Agricultural Fringe and Escarpment landscapes.

5.9 At the foothill of the Quantocks, this character area is defined by sloping, undulating ground and the hills beyond form a strong backdrop. The fields are medium to large in size and loosely geometric in shape. They are principally given over to arable cropping and, in places, biomass cropping such as in fields at Fennington. The lack of a need for stock proofing is evident as the hedgerow structure has been severely weakened – being very gappy and non-existent in places. These large field units are generally typical of the character area as a whole, although smaller fields are evident between Halse and Fitzhead and also in the area around Upper Cheddon. The area...
of the vale that extends south from Milverton towards Wellington has a very open, almost plateau-like character in places and is known as Great Downs. This area was once covered with pear and apple orchards but is now principally characterised by cereal crops.

5.10 Red sandstone buildings with slate roofs are evident throughout the character area – consistently characterising the village of Bishop’s Lydeard, Halse and Fitzhead for example and used more recently throughout the new village of Cotford St Luke.

![Gappy hedges bordering sunken lanes.](image)

5.11 Roads within the character area are generally minor and are often sunken but the busy A358 cuts a route through the landscape, stretching north of Bishop’s Lydeard. The West Somerset Railway is key feature of this part of the character area – its course can often be picked out by Scots pine aligning the route.

![Woodland blocks break up the large arable fields.](image)

**Character Area 3B: Blackdown Fringes**

5.12 This character area mirrors the position of character area 3A so, instead of forming the northern vale limits (at the foot of the Quantock Hills AONB), it defines the southern extent of the Vale of Taunton Deane – abutting the Wooded Escarpments of the Blackdown Hills AONB. The landscape extends to the west (beyond Wellington) where its boundary is defined by the River Tone Floodplain and it stretches as far as Corfe in the east with two spurs of land extending up to the south and southwest edges of Taunton. These spurs include the prominent rounded spur of Cotlake Hill (special landscape feature) – a distinctive landform that offers
expansive views across Taunton and beyond. The second spur is a clearly defined sinuous ridge through Lipe Hill and Castleman’s Hill to where it meets the urban edge. A prominent landform feature with a well wooded skyline, this ridge acts as a visual container – restricting views to Taunton from the west. It is designated within the Local Plan as a Special Landscape Feature.

Wooded Escarpments of the Blackdown Hills AONB are a prominent backdrop.

5.13 Throughout the character area, small tributary streams cut a predominantly north-south course. Both running off the steep scarp of the Blackdowns as well as issuing from springs within the character area, these streams have cut their courses through the landscape, creating an undulating terrain. Streams crossing points are picked out by stone bridges.

5.14 Compared with the larger, more geometric pattern of character area 3A, the Blackdown Fringes is characterised by small to medium sized fields – irregular in shape and primarily given over to stock rearing and dairying, interspersed by some areas of arable cropping. The fields are of ancient enclosure (pre 17th century) with some modifications between the 17th and 19th centuries. Closer to the Wooded Escarpment, hedges consistently include beech – reflecting proximity to the Plateau landscape where beech is a key characteristic. There is a semi-natural ancient woodland at Piley Copse (west of Thorne St Margaret).

Beech is more common in hedgerows where the vale meets with the Wooded Escarpment.

5.15 Settlement is dispersed throughout the landscape, comprising hamlets, villages and a large number of scattered farms. Chert and Blue Lias are building materials found in the east, with brick being more common in the west, closer to Wellington. Unlike
the landscape of Character Area 3A, the Blackdown Fringe abuts Taunton Deane’s two largest towns – Taunton and Wellington – and here the influence of the urban environment is clearly felt. A line of pylons crosses the landscape within the south (stretching from Holywell Lake to the boundary just south of Gamlins Farm). The pylons are prominent and dominate the skyline locally.

5.16 The M5 and the A38 cut through the landscape – interrupting the landscape pattern. The undulating terrain and motorway cutting means that the M5 is not always visible but built development along its length such as at Taunton Deane Services, heightens awareness of this transport corridor due to building clusters and lighting. The aural influence of both roads is evident across much of the landscape.

Landscape Evaluation

5.17 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

**Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Good Conserve</th>
<th>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor-Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor Restore/Create</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

5.18 Condition is varied within both character areas but overall the landscape type is judged to be in a moderate condition. Strength of character is also judged to be moderate (to strong in places) and this judgement is significantly influenced by the condition of landscape elements eg hedgerows and the introduction of new landscape elements eg field of biomass crops that have weakened or interrupted the landscape pattern.

Landscape Strategy

The overall strategy for the Farmed and Settled High Vale is to enhance the quality of the landscape e.g. through improvement of the rural-urban interface and, in areas where landscape character is stronger, to conserve those features, elements and characteristics that combine to form a strong and recognisable landscape pattern.
Landscape Type 4: Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale
Landscape Type 4: Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale

Character Areas:
4A Fivehead Vale

KEY

- Urban Areas
- Landscape Type
Landscape Type 4: Farmed and Wooded Liass Vale

Agricultural land and woodland occur over an undulating landform.

Hedgerow trees make a significant contribution to the overall character of the vale.

Landscape patterning defined by the strong hedgerow network.

Lower-lying flatter areas of the vale occur in the east such as here at Hatch Beauchamp.

The use of the underlying Blue Liass geology creates a strong local vernacular.

The wooded escarpment at the edge of the Blackdown Hills AONB forms a striking backdrop.
Landscape Type 4: Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale

Landscape Type Summary

A vale landscape defined by a distinctive landscape pattern of agricultural land (predominantly pasture) interspersed with significant areas of woodland and plantation, occurring over an undulating terrain. The landscape is underlain by Blue Lias geology reflected in its use as the primary building stone.

Character Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>There is just one landscape character area belonging to the landscape type of the 'Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale'. This area – Fivehead - occurs within the southeast of the Borough, forming the dip slope to the Northwest and Northeast Blackdown Hills Wooded Escarpments. The eastern boundary of the Vale forms part of the wider vale landscape that extends into South Somerset.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Character Area 4A: Fivehead Vale

Key Characteristics

- Vale landscape centred on a number of tributary streams that flow towards the Fivehead River, in the adjacent district of South Somerset.
- Occurring across a varied elevation (35-200m AOD) with a rolling terrain - the landscape being lower and flatter to the east, rising and becoming more undulating in the west.
- Defined by a geology of Blue Lias – blue-grey and honey coloured white lias stone consistently used as a building material and forming a strong local vernacular.
- Strong land use and land cover pattern – agricultural land (mainly dairying and stock rearing) interspersed with sizeable woodland areas (mixed broadleaf and coniferous woods with some coniferous plantations).
- Fields defined by a hedgerow pattern of ancient enclosure (pre 17th century) and recent enclosure (17th – 21st century) with prominent hedgerow trees.
- Areas of higher ground offer some extensive views – beyond Taunton to the Quantock Hills AONB and well into the rolling landscape of South Somerset.
- Bordered by the landscapes of wooded escarpments – those of the Blackdown Hills AONB forming a dramatic well-treed backdrop.
- Villages (with Conservation Areas) at Staple Fitzpaine and Hatch Beauchamp.
- Formal, designed landscape character, influenced by the presence of the Grade 1 listed Hatch Court and its Grade 11 listed Parks and Gardens.

Character Area Description

6.1 Occurring within the southeast of the Borough, the landscape of the Fivehead Farmed and Wooded Vale has a varied elevation – occurring as low as 35m AOD in the east and ascending up to 200m AOD in the west. The lower lying area of the vale extends beyond the Taunton Deane borough boundary – merging with the wider Fivehead Vale landscape, primarily occurring within South Somerset and through
which the Fivehead River runs. The higher area of the vale in the west has a marked sense of elevation and a well-treed character as it gradually merges with the convoluted band of adjacent densely wooded escarpments.

6.2 The Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale has a strong land cover pattern of agriculture, interspersed with woodland (on higher ground) and occurs over an interesting landform of undulating terrain with some localised, flatter areas on lower ground, such as around the village of Hatch Beauchamp. The Lias Vale is separated from the Vale of Taunton Deane by the dramatic wooded escarpments that descend from the northeast boundary. Wooded scarps that ascend up to the Blackdown Hills AONB, and which form a strong woodland backdrop, border the southern boundary of the area.

6.3 The higher western half of the Vale contains a number of woodlands - a mix of broadleaf and coniferous trees. The largest woodland areas are Thurlbear Wood, Pridley Plantation, and Young Wood (all of which spill over into the adjacent escarpment) and Birkenhall Wood/Ben's Copse. A number of the woodlands are Ancient Woodland sites – some semi-natural and some replanted. Hedgerow trees and trees within fields also contribute to a strong impression of a well-treed landscape although in some lower lying areas there are fewer hedgerow trees, creating a more open character. In addition a wooded character is borrowed from the escarpments to the south that incorporates Staple Park Wood, Staple Hills Plantations and Castle Plantation and form a strong backdrop and striking view.
6.4 The entire landscape is underlain by Blue Lias geology comprising limestones and clays. This landscape forms the westernmost part of the Blue Lias dip slope that extends way beyond Taunton Deane – to Street, via Langport and Somerton. Blue Lias is widely used as a building material to the east of Taunton and the blue-grey and sometimes honey-coloured (White Lias) stone is prevalent throughout this landscape. There are individual dwellings and farms dispersed across the Vale with settlement clusters at the villages of Staple Fitzpaine and Hatch Beauchamp (both Conservation Areas) as well as a number of hamlets such as West Hatch and Curland.

6.5 There are a number of springs within the landscape and a host of streams cutting through the vale – tributary streams running towards the Fivehead River within South Somerset. Their courses carve very subtle valleys, which in combination create the vale’s rolling terrain. Some of these streams can be identified from a distance due to the flanking, streamside vegetation but the streams have a subtle presence and are typically only apparent at close proximity.

6.6 The vale is an agricultural landscape underlain by slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils and seasonally waterlogged clayey soils. These soils typically support an agricultural land use predominantly defined by pasture (dairying and stock rearing) with some winter cereals on areas of higher (sometimes flatter) and drier ground.
6.7 The hedgerow pattern is strong but the hedgerow structure is variable – stock proof and of good height in some areas but shorter-flailed and gappy in others. The pattern of enclosure relates to different periods in history - most fields are defined by a pattern of ‘recent’ (17th to 21st century) enclosure, but some areas are of ancient (pre-17th century) enclosure. With many hedges embanked, views are often channelled, creating a sense of enclosure when passing through the vale along the rural lanes. The recent enclosure has created a number of long straight roads such as New Road between Bickenhall and Staple Fitzpaine.

In places high hedges create channelled views and an enclosed character.

6.8 There are a number of secondary roads and rural lanes throughout the area. Staple Hill, which offers a link between Taunton and the Blackdown Hills, is a much-used route and interrupts to some degree the generally tranquil nature of the landscape. The A358 also cuts though a short section of the hills, to the west of Hatch Court, and although the impact is limited its influence is felt – both visually and aurally.

6.9 Hatch Court - a Grade 1 Palladian mansion (built in 1755 of Bath stone) with Grade II listed Parks and Gardens – has a local ‘designed’ influence within the northeast corner of the vale. The grounds consist of 30 hectares of gardens and pleasure grounds and 30 hectares of parkland. This designed landscape sits on a high area of the vale, adjacent to Line Wood – part of the wooded escarpment that drops away dramatically to the north.

6.10 Although views are often intermittent or broken due to the landform, woodland cover and strong hedgerow structure, there are areas of higher ground that do offer fine internal landscape views (Staple Fitzpaine church forming a strong landmark). There are also more extensive views, into the Vale of Taunton Deane for example and beyond to the Quantock Hills AONB and also east into the gently rolling landscape of South Somerset.
Landscape Evaluation

6.11 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of **Landscape Quality** and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

### Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate – Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate</strong></td>
<td>Poor-Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor</strong></td>
<td>Poor Restore/Create</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Strength of Landscape Character

6.12 The **strength of landscape character** is judged to be **strong** due to the consistent pattern of farmland and woodland, interspersed with small villages and hamlets. Aside from the busy A358 (and to some extent the busy road at Staple Hill), there are few visual or aural detractors in the landscape (or overt human influences that disrupt the organic pattern of the vale). The underlying Blue Lias geology of the
landscape is evident in individual buildings and is also consistently used within settlements and this creates a strong sense of place.

6.13  The condition of the landscape is judged to be moderate. As with the Farmed and Settled Low Clay Vale there are opportunities for improved landscape management that would enhance the overall state of intactness and strengthen the landscape pattern - hedgerow boundary management for example.

Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, a landscape strategy for this area is to conserve the distinct pattern of woodland and farmland (with a pattern of small scale settlement) and conserve the uninterrupted and fine views (both within the landscape and beyond). There are opportunities to enhance landscape character overall by focussing on improved and consistent approaches to landscape management.
Landscape Type 5: Sandstone Ridge
Landscape Type 5: Sandstone Ridge

Character Areas:
SA North Curry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taunton Deane – Landscape Character Assessment
Landscape Type 5: Sandstone Ridge

Looking across the Clay and Peat Moors towards the Sandstone Ridge.

North Curry has a nucleated centre; focussed around a village square.

Thorn Clump is a prominent group of trees on a dome-shaped hillock at the edge of the ridge.

Irregular field pattern (of ancient enclosure) defined by mixed species hedgerows with dotted hedgerow trees.

Trees, where they occur, make an important contribution in a landscape absent of woodland cover.

Landmark Church at Stoke St. Gregory.
Landscape Type 5: Sandstone Ridge

Landscape Type Summary

The Sandstone Ridge landscape type is a small-scale agricultural landscape occurring over a distinctive ridge landform and offering views across surrounding low-lying landscapes. Settlement comprises intimate villages, hamlets and scattered farms and individual dwellings. A landscape of limited tree cover but a strong hedgerow network clearly demarcates the landscape’s ancient field pattern. High hedge banks aligning narrow sunken lanes enclose the landscape; reinforcing its small, intimate character.

Character Areas

There is just one landscape character area (North Curry) of the Sandstone Ridge landscape type. This area occurs within the east of Taunton Deane Borough and is surrounded by the low-lying, wetland landscape of the Clay and Peat Moors. The contrast in landform with its surrounding lowland wetland makes the ridge a clearly defined, and easily distinguishable, landscape.

Character Area 5A: North Curry

Key Characteristics

- Narrow, undulating ridge defined by Keuper Marl geology capped with North Curry Sandstone.
- Pronounced landform, forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding Clay and Peat Moors landscape type.
- Extensive views from the ridgeline and sides across the low-lying surrounding wetland and beyond eg to the Vale of Taunton Deane and Quantock Hills AONB.
- Agricultural landscape (pasture and arable cropping) defined by an ancient field enclosure pattern of native mixed species hedgerows.
- A settled landscape of villages (North Curry and Stoke St Gregory), hamlets and scattered farms and dwellings typically built of distinctive green grey stone of the underlying North Curry Sandstone.
- Landmark churches at North Curry and Stoke St Gregory.
- Distinctive wooded knoll of Thorn Hill – occupying a prominent position.
- Numerous sunken lanes and tall hedge banks, restricting views out and reinforcing the small-scale character of the landscape.

Landscape Description

7.1 The North Curry Sandstone Ridge is a relatively prominent landscape – an undulating, clearly defined ridge that raises out of the surrounding Clay and Peat Moors. It is the ridge landform and its juxtaposition with the contrasting, flat Moors that defines the character of this landscape. The ridge is so distinctive locally that it is designated as a Special Landscape Feature with the existing Local Plan.
7.2 There is a strong symbiotic relationship between the ridge and the surrounding moors. The ridge lends character to the moors by providing an ascending and clearly articulated backdrop. In turn, the ridge enjoys a striking landscape setting due to the extensive views across the low-lying wetland. The ‘Willow and Wetland Centre’ on the ridge (at Meare Green) reinforces the sense of connection between the two landscapes.

7.3 This is a small-scale landscape – the relatively narrow ridge extending from the edge of the hamlet of Ash, in the southwest, to the edge of Stathe in the northeast. Although relatively low-lying (the highest point being 57m AOD at Borough Post) there is a notable sense of elevation from the ridge top and from the sloping sides – both of which offer views to the much lower, and dramatically flat Clay and Peat Moors and beyond to the Vale of Taunton Deane, to the Quantock Hills AONB and to the Polden Hills. In many places however, views are highly restricted by high hedge banks and sunken rural lanes.

7.4 The ridge is underlain by geology of Keuper Marls (connecting with the Vale of Taunton Deane) and is in turn capped by a relatively narrow strip of North Curry Sandstone (stretching from Knapp to North Curry and from Stoke St Gregory to Stathe). The geology gives rise to slowly permeable reddish clayey soils that support permanent and short-term grassland as well as some arable cropping - offering a mixed agricultural land use and landscape scene. Although there are some areas of recent enclosure, the majority of the ridge is defined by an ancient pattern of field enclosure (pre 17th century, with some later modifications). The mixed native species hedgerows form clearly defined irregular-shaped field boundaries. Hedgerow trees, where they occur, make an important contribution to a landscape absent of woodland cover.
7.5 The ridge is a settled landscape, comprising two main villages – North Curry and Stoke St Gregory – as well as the hamlets (Meare Green and Knapp for example) and a large number of individual farms dotted throughout. The North Curry Sandstone (a green-grey stone) is a consistent building material found across the ridge, as is red brick, render and clay pan tiles. North Curry has a nucleated centre; focussed around a village green, a range of 18th century terraced brick (and rendered) cottages creates a strong local village vernacular. There are six roads that converge at North Curry and the settlement pattern has extended along these radial routes giving it a relatively loose-knit character beyond its immediate centre. Both North Curry and Stoke St Gregory have prominent churches that can be picked out from a number of surrounding areas. The church of St Peter and St Paul at North Curry, for example, is a landmark building - occupying a commanding position on the edge of the ridge overlooking Curry Moor, designated as a Special Landscape Feature in the Local Plan. The church’s octagonal bell tower is particularly prominent.

7.6 In addition to landmark buildings, the ridge boasts a prominent landscape feature – Thorn Hill. Thorn Hill is a dome-shaped hillock, at the southwest end of the ridge, topped by a number of mature broadleaved trees that are bounded by a stone wall. A simple setting of undeveloped agricultural land offers clear and uninterrupted views of this distinctive feature, which is clearly pronounced on the skyline and
identifiable over a very wide area of the wider Taunton Deane landscape. Due to it being a striking landscape and landmark feature, Thorn Hill is currently designated as a Special Landscape Feature within the existing Local Plan.

The distinctive landscape feature of Thorn Clump at Thorn Hill.

7.7 One road runs the full length of the ridge top. This is relatively busy route that links to a number of secondary roads, feeding onto the ridge from the Moors. The A358 and the A378 do cross this landscape but their influence is limited to the southwest corner of the ridge, between Mattock’s Tree Hill and Stonyhead Hill.

7.8 There is one SSSI designated site within this landscape – North Curry Meadow. Located to the east of North Curry village, this site is a traditionally managed hay meadow – a habitat that has typically been subject to agricultural improvement over the past 50 years.

**Landscape Evaluation**

7.9 The matrix overleaf has been used to guide judgements of **Landscape Quality** and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Good Conserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy**

**Taunton Deane – Landscape Character Assessment**
Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

7.10 The strength of landscape character of the North Curry Sandstone Ridge is judged to be strong. The Ridge has a number of characteristic features that combine to create a very distinctive landscape – the uninterrupted and pronounced landform rising above the Moors, the scattering of farms, the distinctive sandstone and red brick villages, the prominent churches and the landmark feature of Thorn Hill.

7.11 The Ridge is judged to be in moderate condition overall. There are some opportunities for improved landscape management that would enhance the overall state of intactness and strengthen landscape character. Condition and strength of character combine to form a landscape of moderate to good quality overall.

Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, a landscape strategy for this area is to conserve and enhance the simple, small-scale nature, and largely uninterrupted, character of the ridge. The dramatic juxtaposition between the ridge and adjacent Moors should be protected.
Landscape Type 6: Clay and Peat Moors
Landscape Type 6: Clay and Peat Moors

Character Areas:
6A Curry and West Sedge Moors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clay and Peat Moors

The strikingly flat, geometrically patterned landscape of the Moors is frequently covered with large areas of standing water.

Linear settlement at Burrowbridge is strewn along the A361 which cuts through the Moors.

Embanked rivers and flood relief channels are major water carriers running through the landscape.

Rhynes and drainage ditches are an essential part of the highly engineered, water management system.

The prominent landform and ruined chapel at Burrow Mump forms a landmark feature and offers panoramic views across the Moors.

Pollarded willows are synonymous with the Moors and are typically seen aligning drainage ditches, droves and secondary roads.
Landscape Type 6: Clay and Peat Moors

Landscape Type Summary

The Clay and Peat Moors landscape type is a low-lying, flat landscape of drained inland marsh – reclaimed from the sea through a system of water management and drainage. Distinctive pollarded willows flank embanked rivers, drains, rhynes and droves that form strong linear patterns across the Moors. Fields of withies reflect the tradition of willow-weaving.

Character Areas

There is just one landscape character area belonging to the Clay and Peat Moors Landscape Type. This area (Curry and West Sedge Moors) defines the character of the protruding northeast finger of the district – wrapping around the North Curry Sandstone Ridge - and forms one small part of the vast Levels and Moors landscape that stretches from South to North Somerset.

Character Area 6A: Curry and West Sedge Moors

Key Characteristics

- Low-lying landscape of drained inland marshland (Moors) predominantly defined by an agricultural land use of dairying and stock rearing.
- Strong sense of human intervention in the landscape due to hierarchy of water channels – draining the land and controlling flooding.
- Strikingly flat landform with a regular, geometric pattern of enclosure (boundaries often defined by drainage channels or ‘rhynes’).
- Large areas of standing water in the winter, providing important habitat for wild fowl and wading birds.
- Internationally important landscape – a designated Ramsar site, Special Protection Area and Environmentally Sensitive Area. There are a number of SSSI sites and an area designated as a National Nature Reserve.
- Fields of withies, associated with a long tradition of willow weaving.
- Lines of pollarded willows - aligning rhymes, droves and roads – create strong landscape pattern and sense of place.
- Burrow Mump – a natural (although modified) landform feature with its ruined chapel is a prominent landmark, offering extensive views across the Moors.
- Limited, linear settlement at Burrowbridge, Stathe and Curload - Athelney – following the course of main water channels.

Character Area Description

8.1 Wrapping around the North Curry Sandstone Ridge, this is a strikingly flat landscape forming part of the much more expansive Levels and Moors landscape type, which stretches from South to North Somerset and forms the largest area of lowland wetland in Britain. The landscape has been systematically reclaimed from natural marsh (or fenland) that would have once been frequently flooded by the sea. The 'Levels' are the coastal area of the landscape (occurring between 5 and 10M AOD), underlain by estuarine clays that run along the estuaries and coast. The
lower-lying areas of ‘Moors’ (occurring between 2 and 7m AOD) are the drained inland wetland landscapes underlain by geology of peat and clay.

The inland, open landscape of the Moors - defined by a strong geometric pattern of field enclosure.

8.2 Being an inland Borough, there are no ‘Levels’ within Taunton Deane, but a series of Moors – West Moor, Hay Moor, Curry Moor, Stan Moor, Southlake Moor, Lower Salt Moor and Earlake Moor (to the north of the Sandstone Ridge) and West Sedge Moor (to the south). These extend beyond the Borough into Sedgemoor and South Somerset where they connect to a vast network of Moors.

8.3 Through an extensive engineering programme of water management and drainage, the present day landscape is one that has been manufactured and tamed by humans. The ‘Levels’ were drained earlier than the ‘Moors’ and this is reflected in their landscape pattern – typically having a more irregular and organic pattern of drainage compared with the noticeably more organised, geometric drainage system occurring on the Moors and clearly illustrated within the Moors landscape of Taunton Deane. Here, the water-management system includes the embanked rivers of the Tone and Parrett (high water carriers - elevated above the surrounding ground levels), a wide drain (West Sedgemoor Main Drain), a number of rhynes¹ (including North Drove Rhyne and Centre Rhyne) and a large number of small drainage ditches. The majority of the rhynes and ditches date to the period of enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries. There are a number of pumping stations including one at Curry Moor and at West Sedge Moor.

Rhynes extending east from Burrowbridge

¹ Pronounced ‘reens’.
8.4 Although managed, the water within this landscape is not as controlled as other landscapes reclaimed from marshland such as the Fens of East Anglia. Areas of the Levels and Moors do flood during winter and large areas are often covered with standing water – supporting large flocks of water fowl and being an important breeding area for a range of wading birds that require wet grassland. Part of West Sedgemoor is a RSPB nature reserve and is managed to provide a higher water table, encouraging rushes in the landscape.

8.5 The presence of standing water and water channels throughout the landscape means that there is an inherently wet character all around. The moisture loving plant and tree species, associated with this wetland landscape, add enormously to the strong sense of place. Pollarded willows are synonymous with this landscape type - often occurring in rows along rhynes, ditches and droves; their various shapes and sizes make eye-catching features.

A row of pollarded willow.

8.6 Fields of withies are also common – Salix triandra and Salix viminalis are grown and harvested for the local willow weaving industry – basket making for example can be traced back to the late Iron Age in Somerset. Withy fields can be seen here at Curry Moor, West Sedge Moor, Stan Moor, and Salt Moor.

Withies grown for the traditional art of weaving – baskets, chairs, hurdles and more recently sculpture.
8.7 Given its propensity to flood, this landscape, unsurprisingly, contains limited settlement with most occurring on the adjacent higher ground of the North Curry Sandstone Ridge and on ‘islands’ of naturally occurring land. These islands occur within the Levels and Moors landscape but beyond the Taunton Deane administrative boundary e.g. Middlezoy, Westonzoyland, and Chedzoy (‘zoy’ meaning island). There are however three settlements within this area – Burrowbridge, Stathe and Curlow -Athelney. All are linear in form and are strewn along the raised banks of the rivers. The village of Stathe aligns the Sowy River (flood relief channel for the River Parrett), Burrowbridge occurs along the A361 where the River Tone and River Parrett converge and Curlow - Athelney aligns the canalised (flood relief) channel of the River Tone.

8.8 Burrowbridge is the larger and more distinctive of the settlements, due to the striking landform feature of Burrow Mump (a Scheduled Ancient Monument and designated as a Special Landscape Feature within the current Local Plan). Burrow Mump (both words mean ‘hill’) is a natural outcrop of Triassic sandstone capped with Keuper Marl. A ruined chapel stands at the summit of the hill and forms a striking silhouette set against the open sky. The chapel, dedicated to St Michael and belonging to Athelney Abbey, stood on the summit of the mump before the mid 13th century. The chapel was rebuilt a number of times – the last attempt being in 1793. Burrow Mump, with its ruin, is a landmark that can be picked out from considerable distance and although much smaller in scale, is similar in character to Glastonbury Tor. Burrow Mump offers extensive panoramic views across the landscape and beyond – to the Polden Hills for example in the district of Sedgemoor.

8.9 As noted, this area of Clay and Peat Moors forms part of the extensive Levels and Moors landscape and it is internationally important. It is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and a Ramsar Site. In addition there are a range of SSSI designated sites that cover the majority of the land area – Curry and Hay Moors, North Moor, Southlake Moor and West Sedge Moor. Southlake Moor is also designated as a National Nature Reserve.

8.10 Although, typically, straight roads cut across the Levels and Moors landscape, much of the landscape within Taunton Deane is inaccessible by car - only a short section of the A361 runs though the area at Burrowbridge. Extending out from the settlement of Burrowbridge, however, are a number of old droves or tracks that reach out and give access to the middle of the Moors. The Moors contain a number
of prehistoric causeways, trackways and earthworks - archaeological features of county significance.

8.11 River alluvium (clay) defines the geology of the area to the north of the Sandstone Ridge, giving rise to alluvial gley soils. To the south of the ridge, much of the landscape is defined by underlying peat geology giving rise to earthy peat soils. Given the often-waterlogged nature of the land, agriculture within this landscape is given over to extensive areas of pasture for dairying and stock rearing. Much of the landscape is unsuited to arable or horticultural cropping as the risk of flooding is too great.

8.12 The landscape has an open character – with many areas almost devoid of trees. The elm was once the dominant tree species on field boundaries across the Moors, creating a more enclosed landscape scene, but the ravages of Dutch Elm disease in the 1970s has all but obliterated the native elm. Some sense of enclosure is however offered by adjacent landscapes. The wooded escarpment abutting West Sedge Moor, for example, gives a clear and definitive edge to the Moors and marks the dramatic contrast in landscape character. Similarly, although not as dramatic, the North Curry Sandstone Ridge is distinctive and clearly illustrates a sudden change in landscape character.

8.13 There are a number of small orchards within the landscape – many contain old trees that appear to be lacking active management and are struggling to stand. There are however some areas where orchards have been planted relatively recently. During the period of leaf fall, the large number of mistletoe clumps, attached to apple trees, is clearly visible.
8.14 Although this landscape has been created by humans, a sense of remoteness or wildness can be experienced in places.

Landscape Evaluation

8.15 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

### Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Good Moderate Enhance</th>
<th>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Good Conserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strength of Landscape Character
Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

8.16 The strength of landscape character is judged to be strong. The dramatically flat landform, the engineered drainage system of ditches, rhynes and embanked rivers, the fields of withies, the pollarded willows and areas of standing water combine to make a very recognisable, distinct landscape. Landscape condition is judged to be moderate overall (poor in places).

**Landscape Strategy**

Strength of character and condition combine to create a landscape of moderate quality and as such the landscape strategy should focus on conserving the distinctive wetland landscape but enhancing (and restoring) individual elements that contribute to landscape character eg encouraging traditional pollarding of willows and planting new stock along roads, droves and drainage channels would strengthen the landscape pattern.
Landscape Type 7: Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes
Landscape Type 7: Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes

Character Areas:
7A Southeast Quantock
7B Kenley

KEY
- Urban Areas
- Landscape Type
Landscape Type 7: Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes

South facing sloping landform defined by a predominantly arable land use.

Narrow, wooded combes cut through the sloping agricultural land.

High walls (of sandstone and morte slates) define property boundaries.

Short-flailed hedgerows.

Distinctive local vernacular.

Higher ground marks the transition to hills and ridges lying further north.
Landscape Type 7: Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes

Key Characteristics

- A landscape of strongly articulated rounded hills and fringes cut by steeply incised combes.
- Underlying geology of slates, siltstones and sandstones of the Devonian period.
- Blocks of woodland – broadleaved and coniferous occur on the hills, spilling over to clothe the sides of the combes.
- Agricultural landscape given over to a mix of pasture and arable cropping.
- Small to medium field units (the combes retaining an older, smaller field pattern and the hills having a more geometric field pattern with larger field units)
- Red sandstone villages and hamlets occur within the shelter of the combes.
- Sense of grand design in the landscape due to the presence of country house estates.
- Extensive views.

Landscape Type Description

9.1 The **Rolling Hills and Fringes with Wooded Coombes** landscape type, is characterised by a complex and varied landform created by a number of combes that carve through the landscape. These combes are surrounded by rolling hills that extend up to form rounded hilltops, which in turn meet with the Heathland and Open Summits of the AONB. There is a strong sense of connection between the hills and combes and the adjacent summits. In reality the landscape character transcends these artificial boundaries to form one much large landscape that occurs at its northernmost point at Over Stowey (in adjacent Sedgemoor District) and extends southeast to Kingston St Mary and Yarford within Taunton Deane – in total defining approximately one third of the land area of the Quantock Hills AONB.

9.2 The combes cutting through the hills form tightly enclosed, steep valleys that are typically the focus for small scale settlement; sheltered in the valley sides. The traditional land use of pasture remains on the steeper valley sides although advancements in mechanisation have meant that in some areas previously difficult-to-work fields have been converted to arable cropping. Free range chicken farming is also a feature of the landscape – fields peppered in places with movable coupes. In some areas Christmas tree plantations are also part of the land use mix.

9.3 Many of the combes are characterised by woodland and or coniferous plantation that cloak the valley sides. The coniferous plantations also characterise a number of the hilltops. Advancements in forest design has meant that previously straight-edged plantations have been softened by broadleaved woodland on plantation edges but nonetheless the formality of the block plantations and the triangular tops of the coniferous trees themselves means that they continue to stand out against the organic forms of the landscape.

9.4 Much of the ancient field pattern of the combes has remained intact but on the more open, rolling hills there has been significant hedgerow loss in past years, creating large sweeping fields that have been converted in places from pasture to intensive arable cropping. Some remaining mature trees, occurring in broken lines within
fields, are a visual clue to the now lost hedgerows that would have once created a more intimate and varied landscape pattern. On areas of higher ground, where the hills meet with the open summits, stone faced-banks planted with Beech are a common sight. Once managed as hedgerows, these historic boundaries and enclosure features are now characterised by mature beech trees that create a strong sense of place. As with the beech avenues found within the Blackdown Hills AONB, the beech trees are fragile – their shallow root system breaking out through the stone faced banks on which the trees sit.

9.5 The underlying geology is defined by Morte Slates and Ilfracombe Beds (Slates, Siltstone and Sandstones) of the Middle and Upper Devonian period. These building materials, known locally as ‘shillet’, are found in walls buildings throughout the landscape.

![Underlying geology represented in boundary walls and buildings.]

9.6 Much of this landscape type is characterised by large country houses and their associated parkland and extensive grounds of the estates – the manor houses themselves, the estate cottages and lodges and the designed landscapes combine to create a sense of grand design.

**Character Areas**

There are two character area belonging to the ‘Rolling Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes’ landscape type – ‘Southeast Quantock’ and ‘Kenley’. Although both part of a much bigger landscape than extends beyond the Taunton Deane boundary into Sedgemoor District, within Taunton Deane these are two geographically separate areas that have their own local nuances and therefore warrant separate ‘area’ descriptions. Both character areas fall within the Quantock Hills AONB.

9.7 The two Character Areas belonging to the Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves landscape type are:

- **7A**: Southeast Quantock; and
- **7B**: Kenley;
A description of these geographically separate areas is provided below.

**Character Area 7A: Southeast Quantock**

The area extends from Toulton in the west to Coombe / Adsborough in the east and occurs between 70m and 190m AOD. It is characterised by an even south-facing band of sloping land that skirts the edge of the Vale of Taunton Deane. This sloping ground merges with more open, rounded hillsides (around Volis and Quantock Farms) that extend northwards onto the hilltop plateaux beyond the Taunton Deane boundary. The lower, steeply sloping area of land is interspersed by the characteristic well-treed combe valleys that define this landscape – Buncombe for example (to the north of Kingston St Mary) and West Combe and Hestercombe (to the east of Volis Hill).

The agricultural land use is one of arable cropping and pasture – pasture more consistent with the enclosed combes and southern slope and cropping occurring in the more open hills around Volis and Quantock Farms, where the fields have been enlarged through past removal of hedgerows. Fields are mostly bounded by mixed native species hedgerows (some embanked along narrow, sunken lanes). Where land is under pasture for livestock and horses, a number of fields have been subdivided using wire, post and rail, and electric fencing. Arable cropping means that there is no requirement for stock proof boundaries and as such hedgerow sections are typically short flailed and have become very gappy and thin in places with few hedgerow trees. A number of field gates have also been removed, leaving permanent openings at field entrances.

A number of pylon lines extend up from the vale, on to the hills – three lines extending from west of Upper Cheddon Farm to the Borough boundary east of Yalway. These are very prominent features, cutting diagonally across the fields, dominating the skyline in places.

The south-facing slope of the landscape allows for open views across the lower-lying vale landscape, to the urban landscape of Taunton and beyond. Volis Hill for example provides extensive views across the Vale to the prominent landscape of the Blackdown Hills AONB.
9.13 The band of sloping agricultural land is interspersed by a number of tightly enclosed, small, narrow valleys that are wooded and contain a number of settlements in the form of small villages and hamlets. The majority of the combes are only accessible on foot and there is limited public right of way access. Woodland within the combes consists of broadleaved and coniferous species – the trees cloaking the steeply incised valley sides, creating a strong sense of enclosure. Broadleaved woodland to the north of Cushuish is designated Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland and there are designated Ancient Replanted Woodlands surrounding Hestercombe as well as to the northeast of Tetton Park.

9.14 Settlement is typically located where the combes open out and merge with the high and low vale landscapes of the Vale of Taunton Deane. Here, properties are in a sheltered location - nestled towards the base of the slope - but are able to take advantage of extensive views over the surrounding areas of lower ground. These settlements include the hamlets of Coombe, Yarford, Overton, Gotton and Cushuish and the villages of Kingston St Mary and West Monkton. A number of the settlements contain small village greens at crossroads. Settlement on higher ground is limited – a couple of farms with associated cottages eg Quantock Farm and Volis Farm.

9.15 The settlements are characterised by the consistent use of local red sandstone (quarried historically at nearby Triscombe). Morte Slates, the geology underlying this character area, comprises silvery-grey slates (with thin beds of sandstone and siltstone especially at West Monkton and Hestercombe). It is much used and seen locally in the many walls that demarcate property boundaries and define the clear gateways/entrances to the villages – at Kingston St Mary and West Monkton. Morte Slates were historically quarried locally - at Kings Cliff, further north on the Quantocks (within the district of Sedgemoor). Slate and clay tiled roofs and rendered stone are also common. There are a number of modern properties within this character area but there is nonetheless a strong local vernacular.

9.16 This character area boasts the designed, parkland landscape of Hestercombe House – a Grade II* listed house with a Grade I listed park and garden, that has been the subject of extensive restoration and is now open to the public. The 80-hectare site consists formal gardens and pleasure grounds around the house, walled gardens, parkland and ornamental woodland. The grounds consist of mid to late 18th century landscaped gardens, created by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde, and early 20th
century formal gardens designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens with planting by Gertrude Jekyll. The house itself is a prominent building – Italian Villa style with French renaissance and Greek details – and its southern terrace offers extensive views across the vale of Taunton Deane to the Blackdown Hills AONB. Due to its prominent location – maximising views out – the house can also be picked out from surrounding areas. In addition to Hestercombe, the Grade II* Listed Tetton House with its parkland setting (west of Kingston St Mary) occupies a more secluded location and is not visible from public roads.

9.17 There are a number of secondary roads and lanes running through the landscape. Most of these run in a north-south direction, offering the most direct link between the vale and the Quantock Hills - Kingston Road being the busiest. The lanes are often sunken and enclosed by hedgerows. Secondary roads also cross east to west at the break of the slope (where the foothills meet the vale) e.g. Parsonage Lane. These lanes contain a number of lay-bys and pull-ins frequently used to enjoy views across the vale.

Character Area 7B: Kenley

9.18 The Kenley Character Area is notably at greater elevation than Southeast Quantock (7A). It is defined by a strongly rolling terrain with a pronounced hillock at approximately 300m AOD. On the higher ground there is a strong sense of elevation and clear views can be gained – internally of the wider Quantock Hills AONB landscape and beyond to the northern Quantock foothills and across the Bridgwater Bay. A road that runs between Park End and Lydeard Hill defines the southern boundary. This is the route of the Macmillan Way West recreational route and is a popular stopping point for motorists wishing to take advantage of the views. This southern boundary is defined by a beech hedgebank. The elevated areas drop relatively sharply into tight combes such as at Kenley Bottom where the spring fed tributary streams issue from within this landscape.

9.19 The highest ground is typically defined by permanent pasture – sheep pepper the slopes. Some of the lower fields are defined by arable cropping such as to the east of Bishpool Farm. Native mixed species hedgerows, often lined with post and wire fencing, define field boundaries.

9.20 There is a strong wooded character throughout. Wooded areas occur around Kenley Farm and Kenley Bottom and Ralph’s Copse and with a significant mixed woodland block at Muchcare. The sense of being within a well-treed landscape is also heightened by the presence of woodland immediately abutting the landscape boundary – notably the mixed woodland of Twenty Acre Plantation. The landscape contains three County Wildlife Sites - Bishpool Covert (part ancient plantation, now conifer plantation with some broadleaved plantation stands), Kenley Copse (ancient semi-natural coppiced woodland, with some broadleaved plantation) and Merridge Hill Common (the northernmost extension of Cothelstone Hill). There are also a number of County archaeological sites (a cairn, an enclosure and two deserted farms).
9.21 Settlement is limited to the occasional farm. There is one rural lane cutting through the area; linking Park End to Lower Aisholt. There are also a number of public rights of way forming a link between Lydeard Hill and Aisholt. Although not remote, this character area is very tranquil landscape, slow in pace and overtly rural in character.

**Landscape Evaluation**

9.22 There is considerable variety in terms of landscape condition and strength of character between the two character areas and as such a separate evaluation of each character area is provided for this landscape type. The matrices below have been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

**Character Area 7A: Southeast Quantock**

**Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Quality</th>
<th>Landscape Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate – Good</td>
<td>Conserve and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Restore/Create</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strength of Landscape Character**

9.23 The **condition** of this landscape character area is variable - from moderate to poor in parts and good in others. The settled combs are visually more intact than the hills and fringes. Deterioration of hedgerows and the loss of hedgerow trees on the both the open hills and southern sloping fringe has led to a marked dilution of the landscape pattern, particularly in the central part of the area – to the east of Kingston St Mary. An overall judgement of **moderate** condition is applicable whilst recognising more localised condition of good (such as the combs) and poorer in other parts.

9.24 Linked directly with the variable landscape condition, the **strength of landscape character** is also mixed, in line with the different degrees of intactness of landscape features. An overall judgement of **moderate** strength of character is appropriate. The better condition of landscape features within the combs makes for a stronger
landscape pattern and a stronger expression of character overall. The character of the sloping agricultural land has however been diluted as a direct result of poor or inconsistent landscape management - leading to the resultant deterioration of the landscape pattern. Pylons are prominent visual detractors – slicing across the fields and forming intrusive structures on the skyline.

**Landscape Strategy**

Based on the judgements above there is, overall, a requirement to focus on enhancing much of the landscape of the Southeast Quantock Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes. Implementing landscape management strategies to improve the condition of the landscape would significantly strengthen landscape character and this particularly relates to hedgerow management, field entrances and scruffy roadside pull-ins. In those areas where condition of features is more favourable, such as the combes, there should be a focus on conserving the character of the landscape. In areas where condition is poorer, opportunities should be explored for repairing or re-establishing features that have been lost or are in a declining state (landscape restoration).

**Character Area 7B: Kenley**

**Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Moderate Enhance</th>
<th>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor-Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Restore/Create</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

9.25 The condition of the Kenley character area is judged to be good overall. Some landscape enhancement could be achieved through traditional hedgerow management where hedges are gappy in places. A strategy for managing the beech hedgerow on the southern boundary of the area needs to be employed – replanting where trees have been lost or are over mature.

9.26 The strength of landscape character is deemed to be strong. The strongly articulated landform, hedgerow network, woodland and extensive views combine to create strong landscape character with no adverse visual intrusions to interrupt or fragment the striking pattern of the landscape.

Landscape Strategy

Overall there is a requirement to conserve the tranquil, overtly rural and generally uninterrupted character of the landscape and to keep it free from visual intrusions. As the landscape offers relatively wide views, it is important to ensure the quality of these views is not compromised by the introduction of inappropriate development or structures within adjacent landscapes. There are some opportunities to implement landscape management techniques (principally hedgerow and boundary management) to enhance the condition of the landscape and strengthen the landscape pattern.
Landscape Type 8: Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves
Landscape Type 8: Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves

Character Areas:

8A Culm
8B Otterford
8C Yarty

KEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taunton Deane – Landscape Character Assessment
Landscape Type 8: Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves

Farms are located mid-slope - sheltered by the steeper wooded slopes that extend up to the plateau.

Winding rural lanes drop away suddenly from the adjacent plateau into the well-wooded combes.

The rural lanes are flanked by grass verges and drainage ditches.

Valley mires - rush pasture and wet woodland align the watercourses.

Chert and slate typify the local vernacular.

A large number of hedgerow trees add to the well-treed character of the landscape.
Landscape Type 8: Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves

Landscape Type

Key Characteristics

- Occurring between 170m AOD and 250m AOD this is a valley landscape of steep slopes and wooded cleaves.
- Defined by an underlying geology of Greensand (on the upper slopes) and Keuper Marls (on the lower slopes) and drift rain-wash deposits of large chert stones and flint.
- Rivers and their tributary streams cut a series of tight cleaves extending down to the narrow valley floor.
- Wetland landscape – valley mires, rush pastures and wet woodland as well as ponds and lakes created along the course of dammed rivers.
- Landscape pattern of farmland – sheep, dairying and beef herds – interspersed with woodland, particularly clinging to the steep, upper slopes.
- Pre 17th century pattern of enclosure - field boundaries defined by mixed hedgerows with beech occurring on steeper slopes.
- Narrow, rural lanes wind down the steep slopes to meet the valley floor (in contrast to the straight roads on the adjacent plateau).
- Settlement is typically characterised by farms and agricultural buildings with some small settlement clusters. Chert is frequently used as a building material.
- A small-scale, tranquil landscape of unhurried change.

Landscape Type Description

10.1 The landscape of the ‘Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves’ is in marked contrast to the surrounding area of open plateau (defining the edges of the valleys) and forming prominent wooded skylines.

Winding lanes through wooded combes.

10.2 Entering into the valleys from the plateau, there is an immediate and marked change in landscape character – the open, exposed plateau top quickly transforming to a well-wooded landscape of steep slopes and enclosing combes (cleaves). The straight roads that cross the plateau are replaced in the valleys by narrow rural lanes that wind their way down to the valley floor; crossing the rivers and tributary streams.
10.3 This valley landscape is one of slow pace and there is a feeling of being within an ancient landscape of very limited and unhurried change. Farming is the dominant land use – typically sheep flocks, beef herds and dairying. There are some areas given over to horse grazing and exercising and here, post and rail fencing frequently subdivides the fields.

10.4 Fields are typically small to medium in size and largely defined by an irregular pattern of ancient enclosure - pre 17th century. Again, this is in marked contrast to the regular, planned, geometric 19th century parliamentary enclosure patterning the plateau landscape. Field boundaries are a mixture of hedgerows and banks as well as rural (post and wire and post and rail) fencing. Mixed species hedges include ash, oak, hazel, field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly. Beech hedges do occur on the upper, steeper slopes – marking the transition from the plateau.

10.5 Woodland and tree cover makes a significant contribution to the landscape. In some areas woodland cloaks the lower slopes although it is more commonly found clinging to the steeper, upper valley sides. Beech trees are present in the valley but are not the principal species. Oaks form prominent hedgerow trees and there are a number of ancient woodlands, semi-natural broadleaved woodlands as well as conifer plantation stands.

10.6 This is a green, lush landscape where flowing water is often heard even where it can not be seen (the main watercourses are often not visible other than at close
proximity). The valleys comprise a number of tributary streams, carving out a series of tight cleaves that extend down to the main valley floor. Several rivers and streams have been dammed to create a number of ponds and small lakes that have a naturalistic character. Valley mires - waterlogged, marshy strips including unimproved rush pastures and areas of wet woodland - flank the watercourses.

10.7 Drainage ditches align the rural lanes and can be seen often full to bursting with water. A number of the drainage channel banks are littered with ferns and other shade-loving plants.

10.8 This is a landscape of varied viewing experiences due to a changing sense of enclosure. Limited corridor views along the upper slopes of well-wooded combes open out to provide wider views across an undulating broad valley system – a landscape scene of farmland, woodland and limited, dispersed settlement.

10.9 The landscape is defined by an underlying geology of Greensand (on the upper slopes) and Keuper Marls (on the lower slopes). There are some areas of drift rainwash deposits where large chert stones and flint can be seen peppering the soils.

10.10 Settlement is typically characterised by farms and agricultural buildings. These are sometimes located on the landscape boundary, adjacent to the plateau, but are often located at mid slope. Here, they are sheltered by the challenging terrain (and woodland cover) of the steep upper slopes and away from the risk of flooding on the valley floor. There are some settlement clusters (hamlets and small villages). Many
buildings contain chert as a key building material. Painted render is also common, as is the use of slate as a roofing material, and in some cases thatch and clay tiles.

Farms occur at mid slope – sheltered by the densely wooded, upper slopes that extend to meet the plateau.

10.11 This is a tranquil landscape – having a peaceful and quiet character.

Character Areas

There are three Character Areas of the Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves landscape type. These areas all occur in the south of the Borough, within the Blackdown Hills AONB. The valleys form the upper reaches of much larger valley systems that extend beyond the administrative boundary into Mid Devon, East Devon and South Somerset.

10.12 The three Character Areas belonging to the Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves landscape type are:

- 8A: Culm;
- 8B: Otterford; and
- 8C: Yarty

10.13 A brief description of these geographically separate areas is provided below.

Character Area 8A: Culm

10.14 The River Culm character area occurs immediately west of the Churchinford Clay-with-Chert Plateau. It comprises the valley head of the River Culm, and two tributary valleys of the Culm. One of the tributary valleys is just half of the upper reaches of the Bolham River valley – the Bolham River defining part of the administrative boundary with East Devon district, into which this character area extends.

10.15 This character area is very well wooded with large woodland blocks – broadleaf and mixed woodland – defining a significant proportion of the land cover eg at Widcombe Moor, extending across the River Culm valley from Churchstanton to Burnworthy and covering much of the north facing slope between Paye Plantation, Beer Hill and Biscombe. The steep slopes of Brimley Hill and Biscombe Hill offer fairly extensive views across the wider Culm Valley – where landmark features such as the church at Clayhidon, can be identified.
From Biscombe Hill, views open out to the wider Culm Valley.

10.16 The valley head of the Culm (the most northern of the three valleys making up this area) has significant nature conservation value; large tracts are designated as County Wildlife Sites such as Burnworthy Moor – a complex site comprising wet and dry broadleaved woodland, conifer plantation, marshy grassland, scrub and bracken. This character area also contains the nationally-important, SSSI designated Ringdown – a mire community with a patchy bryophyte cover – occurring on the valley side where a seepage line at the base of the Upper Greensand ensures the area is always very wet and the Greensand aquifer results in the groundwater being highly acidic. Within the valley of the Bolham River, a large area (Southey Moor) forms part of the SSSI designated Southey and Gotleigh Moors – a mosaic of valley mire, acid-marsh grassland and alder-birch carr.

10.17 Within the valleys there are two main, but very small settlement areas – Stapley and Willand – and a church at Churchstanton. Stapley and Willand are located adjacent to woodland, on the steep valley sides, close to the adjacent plateau. There are numerous farms scattered throughout.

The church at Churchstanton.
Character Area 8B: Otterford

10.18 This is the smallest of the three character areas and forms the head of the River Otter Valley. This is a narrow valley with an intimate scale and strong sense of enclosure. It is very well wooded, principally due to the coniferous plantations that surround the area of Otterford Lakes. Otterhead Lakes (a chain of lakes created through a number of weirs and waterfalls) are the surviving features of what was once a landscaped estate – centred on Otterhead House (now demolished). The landscape surrounding the house previously had a more open, parkland character, interspersed with mixed native and ornamental trees. There were islands of rhododendrons and shrubs and numerous purple beeches. The estate included pleasure grounds – terraced walks, lawns, flower gardens etc, orchards, a walled fruit and vegetable garden and a range of supporting buildings (stables, boat house etc) of which only the lodge house remains today.

![River and weir viewed from Royston Bridge.](image)

10.19 Today, the landscape of Otterhead Lakes has been allowed to ‘naturalise’ and 20 acres are now a nature reserve managed by The Somerset Wildlife Trust. This is also a farmed landscape but the former parkland area and the coniferous plantations cover the greatest land area and have the greatest influence on landscape character.

![Formerly managed beech and rhododendron (forming part of the designed landscape) have been allowed to 'naturalise'.](image)
10.20 There is a small cluster of houses at Royston Water, where the main road running through the valley crosses the River Otter at Royston Bridge. This road directly links the valley to the village of Churchinford – on the plateau to the west – and the village of Bishopswood, within the Yarty Farmed Valley with Wooded Cleaves, to the east.

**Character Area 8C: Yarty**

10.21 This character area forms part of a much bigger valley system that extends beyond the Taunton Deane Borough boundary – the River Yarty itself marking the administrative change to South Somerset district. Less wooded than the other areas, this valley nonetheless has a well-treed character due to woodland swathes and blocks that intersperse the farmland (pasture) and the number of hedgerow trees. Much of the valley is covered by areas designated as County Wildlife Sites and within the north, the SSSI-designated Deadman site is one of the best surviving mixed valley mires in Somerset (a rich mosaic of wet heath, bog pools and birch/willow carr grading into acid marshy grassland).

![View across the Yarty valley to South Somerset.](image)

10.22 Farms are scattered throughout the area and there is one main settlement, at Bishopswood – a linear village containing a range of property ages and styles that are usually married by the use of chert/flint and slate or clay tiles. Thatched properties are also found within this valley, such as those at Whatley.

10.23 A series of lanes drop into the valley from the adjacent plateau and these offer views across to the well articulated, rolling farmland of South Somerset.
Landscape Evaluation

10.24 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

### Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Good – Good Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Poor – Moderate Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Moderate – Poor Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Poor – Poor Create</th>
<th>Moderate – Weak</th>
<th>Strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Good Conserve</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate Enhance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Restore/</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strength of Landscape Character**

10.25 Overall the characteristics, features and elements of this landscape appear to be in a good state of repair and combine to form a landscape in **good** condition overall (**moderate** in places).

10.26 There is little variation across the different character areas in terms of strength of landscape character, which, for the landscape type overall, is judged to be **strong**). This is a landscape whose physical characteristics – steep slopes and narrow valley floors – combine with a consistent land cover and land use of woodland and farmland to create a recognisable landscape that is so distinctive from the surroundings of the Churchinford Clay-with-chert Plateau. The landscape pattern is to some extent being threatened by the cumulative impact of field sub-division (typically for horse exercising and grazing) – fragmenting the historic (ancient) hedgerow field pattern.
Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, a landscape strategy for this area is to **conserve** its tranquil rural character and the intimate mix of woodland and farmland, wetland and small-scale settlement. There are some opportunities for improved landscape management that would **enhance** the overall state of intactness and strengthen the landscape pattern - hedgerow boundary management for example.
Landscape Type 9: Clay-with-Chert Plateau
Landscape Type 9: Clay-with-Chert Plateau

Character Areas:
9A Churchinford

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape Type</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Type 9: Clay-with-Chert Plateau

Typical plateau scene

Beech hedgebanks form impressive avenues across the plateau

Chert cottages at Churchinford

Evergreen hedges stand out against the consistently occurring beech hedgebanks

Trickey Warren occupies a large area of land on the plateau

Evergreen hedges stand out against the consistently occurring beech hedgebanks
Landscape Type 9: Clay-with-Chert Plateau

Landscape Type Summary

An elevated, plateau landscape with a dramatically simple, flat landform. The Plateau landscape type has a strong geometric landscape pattern – consistent field pattern (Parliamentary enclosure), long straight roads, drainage ditches and aircraft landing strips. The latter form part of the large second World War fighter airfields that are a repeating feature of this landscape type. Beech hedgebanks – both managed and overgrown to form impressive avenues – are so characteristic of a landscape now shaped by agriculture but which once had a strong upland heath character.

Character Areas

There is just one Character Area of the Clay-with-Chert Plateau landscape type. This area – the Churchinford Clay-with-Chert Plateau - occurs within the far south of the Borough – within the Blackdown Hills AONB. It forms part of the much wider plateau landscape that stretches south beyond the Taunton Deane administrative boundary into South Somerset and East Devon. The plateau is intersected by the character areas of the Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves landscape type and is bordered, to the north, by the visually prominent, Wooded Escarpments.

Character Area 9A: Churchinford

Key Characteristics

- Occurring between 230m and 300m AOD – an elevated landscape with a flat terrain forming an open plateau.
- Falling wholly within the Blackdown Hills AONB.
- Farmed landscape with a geometric (19th century parliamentary enclosure) field pattern.
- Landscape pattern strongly influenced by humans – long straight roads, geometric fields, drainage ditches and landing strips (attached to airfields).
- Beech hedgebanks – both managed and overgrown – are a consistent feature, giving structure and definition across the flat terrain.
- Farmland generally defined by improved pasture reflecting the poorer, acidic soils compared with many other parts of Taunton Deane. Pastures are grazed by sheep, with some free-range pig rearing and poultry farming as well as areas given over to keeping horses.
- Some outcropping areas of gorse reflecting the underlying heathy character (acidic soils) that existed before agricultural improvement.
- Underlying geology of Upper Greensand, capped by drift geology of Clay-with-Chert.
- Chert (whole and knapped) used consistently as a building material.
- Limited settlement – occasional small village/hamlet but otherwise scattered farms and individual dwellings.
The landscape of the **Churchinford Clay-with-Chert Plateau** characterises a significant part of the Blackdown Hills AONB where this nationally important landscape extends into Taunton Deane.

Generally occurring between 230m and 300m AOD, this is a distinctive, elevated landscape defined by a strikingly flat plateau (e.g. from Churchinford to Trickey Warren) that extends out to a series of gentle sloping hills and narrow ridges towards its edges, such as at Leigh Hill, Staple Hill and Luddery Hill.

The area forms part of a much wider plateau landscape that reaches beyond the borough boundary into South Somerset and East Devon.

The plateau has a relatively simple and consistent landscape pattern – the central area of flat terrain overlain by a regular, geometric, pattern of 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure. Continuous tracts of beech hedge banks, in turn, demarcate the field boundaries. There are some areas of remnant common land such as at North Down. Here, the absence of beech as a boundary feature is evident and the post and wire fencing creates a noticeably more open landscape character.

The beech hedge banks take various forms – some are intensively managed for stock proofing and are punctuated by both mature and young tree standards, and others have developed into eye-catching avenues of mature trees such as those aligning both sides of the road immediately south of Culmhead House.

Probably allowed to grow up when the traditional practice of hedge laying began to wane, the mature beech avenues have a notable presence; making a significant visual impact and unifying the landscape scene. These imposing trees are however tinged with a sense of fragility – many are over mature – their shallow root systems protruding and eroding the earth banks on which they sit. There is a strong sense that many of the trees are wrestling to stay standing on this wind-blown, exposed plateau-top.

Beech is by far the dominant species but there are other tree species found in some small deciduous/mixed woodland blocks eg at Widcombe. Oaks can also be found as standards within hedgerows but this is more common towards the edge of the plateau where there is a transition to the Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves.

A number of evergreen trees and shrubs can be found interspersing hedgerows and hedge banks or bordering properties. Rhododendron, laurel and Leyland Cypress are not uncommon – the latter acting as windbreaks or visual screens or plugging gaps in hedges. Due to their colour, texture and shape, these evergreens stand out, in winter, when viewed against the muted hues of the beech hedges and broadleaved trees. A number of Scot's Pine can also be seen in this landscape. These eye-catching trees were originally planted to flank the roads and turnpikes, constructed during the period of 19th century field enclosure.
11.9 There are a number of outcropping areas of gorse indicating the underlying heathy character that is supported by the acidic soils. The main semi-natural vegetation of the landscape would, for many centuries, have been upland heathland but today, with agricultural improvement, the landscape is principally defined by farmland. Areas of heathland are now only seen in a few isolated, fragmented areas.

11.10 The agricultural landscape scene is one of improved pasture with sheep grazing the fields. Some areas are given over to free-range/outdoor pig rearing, poultry farming and horse grazing and there are number of in-field animal shelters, pens and other (often temporary) structures associated with these land uses.

11.11 The plateau landscape has a definite sense of being shaped by humans. The collection of barrows at Robin Hood’s Butts is evidence of human settlement as far back as the megalithic times. It is however the geometric and linear patterning of the landscape that exerts a strong sense of human presence on the plateau - the field patterning and the number of long straight roads flanked by grass verges and drainage ditches. These routes criss-cross the plateau and form strong straight vistas. The main roads through the landscape are relatively busy as they provide north-south routes across the hills between the M5, to the north, and the A303(T) to the south. Although not prominent visual features, there are a number of wells on the plateau due to the free-draining nature of the acidic soils and the general absence of watercourses or areas of open water.

11.12 Upper Greensand, capped by a drift surface geology of Clay-with-Chert, underlies the landscape. The Chert is a hard orange-light brownish stone similar geologically to flint and, both whole and knapped, is a much-used building material across the Blackdown Hills. It is particularly prevalent on the plateau (and in buildings within the adjacent Greensand Valleys) where it is easily sourced. Examples of Chert cottages are found aligning the numerous lanes that converge at the centre of the village of Churchinford.
11.13 Chert is also the principle building material used for the construction of a number of walls – enclosing domestic gardens for example. Slate tiles and clay pan tiles are the most common roofing materials.

11.14 Aside from the village of Churchinford, settlement on the plateau is very limited. There are a number of dispersed farmhouses, clustered with their associated agricultural buildings. The large agricultural sheds and units are visually prominent, particularly when viewed against an open skyline. There are also a number of individual houses that are set back from the busiest roads. These houses vary in age and style (Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and post-war) – a number having almost suburban architectural style, which does not reflect the local, rural vernacular.

11.15 In addition to houses, farms and agricultural buildings there are a number of other structures on the plateau including water towers and telecommunication/radio masts. The plateau was the ideal location for a number of Second World War fighter airfields such as at Culmhead (and Smeatharpe and Dunkeswell in Devon). Trickey Warren - the Culmhead airfield and then an MOD radio station, occupies a large area of land on the plateau. The radio station buildings have been converted to employment use, forming the Culmhead Business Park. Here, the low-rise buildings and car parking areas sit at the centre of the old airstrips characterised by wide tracts of hard standing that radiate across this part of the plateau.

11.16 The flattest, most open areas provide open views across the plateau. Views into the adjacent landscapes of South Somerset and East Devon are, in places, quite extensive but to the north views into the Vale of Taunton Deane and beyond are largely restricted to the plateau edge where the coniferous (and some mixed and broadleaf) woodland on the scarp slope has breached the ridgeline.

11.17 The plateau is an elevated, open landscape with a windswept character and a strong sense of exposure to the elements. There is a sense of tranquillity but due to the presence of roads, houses, farm buildings, the strong pattern of field enclosure and a general perception of human presence and influence, it is not perceived to be a remote landscape.

**Landscape Evaluation**

11.18 The matrix overleaf has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.
# Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

| Landscape Condition | Moderate | Good
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

11.19 Landscape condition is variable - judged to be moderate (to poor in places) with a number of elements having a direct influence on strength of character and quality. Examples include in-field accumulation/storage of agricultural machinery and other large structures such as caravans – evoking a scruffy state and a lack of management, Fly-tipping in lay-bys, degraded field boundaries e.g. sections of beech hedges plugged with post and wire fencing as opposed to replanting of young beech stock.

11.20 The strength of landscape character is judged to be moderate to strong. This is a very distinctive landscape – the strong sense of elevation, the strikingly flat terrain, the consistency and repetition of beech hedgebank boundaries, for example, combine to create a strong sense of place. In parts however this character has been weakened or diluted through insensitive landscape change and as a result of a decline in landscape condition (where improved management would have a direct influence on strength of character, condition and overall quality). There are a number of issues affecting strength of character such as encroachment of a number of domestic evergreen species into the beech hedgebanks – laurel, leylandii and rhododendron for example, ‘suburbanisation’ of the countryside through property boundary detailing that does not reflect local vernacular e.g. urban driveways, large wrought iron gates and splayed entrances, large agricultural sheds (of varied colour and size) in visually prominent locations against and open skyline, ‘having an’ industrial unit’ character.
Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, the overall landscape strategy for this area should be to enhance the quality of the landscape. This means an emphasis on improving features that have fallen into decline which may include changes to landscape management techniques and introducing or removing elements to strengthen character and/or perceived condition. There are also some opportunities for restoration in areas of poorer quality where there is a need to repair or re-establish features that have been lost or are in a state of severe decline (restoration of beech hedge banks for example). The overriding sense of openness and simplicity of the landscape pattern should be conserved.
Landscape Type 10: Wooded Escarpments
Landscape Type 10: Wooded Escarpments

Character Areas:
10A Quantock Hills
10B Blackdown Hills Greensand
10C Blackdown Hills Limestone
10D Wantage

KEY
- Urban Areas
- Landscape Type
Landscape Type 10: Wooded Escarpments

The dense woodland and dramatic landform create a striking backdrop to the lower-lying landscapes at the foot of the scarps.

Extensive views across the Vale of Taunton Deane to the Quantock Hills AONB.

Looking across the vale towards the Wooded Escarpments.

Areas of pasture intersperse the dense woodland in some areas.

Generally unsettled although occasional properties are located on the steep slopes, taking advantage of the commanding views.

A landscape of considerable biodiversity value.
Landscape Type 10: Wooded Escarpment

Landscape Type

Key Characteristics

- Steep scarp slopes that dramatically ascend from the adjacent, lower lying landscapes and, conversely, drop sharply away from areas of higher ground.
- Significant variation in elevation – from 100m reaching as high as 350m AOD in places.
- Scarp slopes cloaked in dense woodland – mixed, broadleaf and coniferous plantations – forming striking wooded backdrops.
- Long history of a wooded landscape with a number of areas designated as Ancient Woodland – both semi-natural and replanted.
- Areas of pasture intersperse the wooded areas, creating clearings within the dense woodland cover. Fields are small in size and typically defined by ancient enclosure (pre 17th century as well as modified between 17th and 19th centuries.
- Varied geology between character areas – Upper Greensand, Rhaetic beds and Little Hangman Sandstone.
- Lanes and secondary roads cut winding courses up the scarp slope – enclosed by surrounding tree cover.
- Significant biodiversity interests – numerous SSSI designated sites.
- Limited settlement within the landscape.
- Some clear areas provide glimpsed extensive views across the low-lying vale but generally opportunities for views out from the landscape are greatly restricted by the woodland cover.

Landscape Type Description

12.1 With its dramatic, escarpment landform and the continuity and extent of woodland cover, the ‘Wooded Scarp’ landscape type is striking and instantly recognisable. It is a prominent landscape of consistent character that is easily distinguishable from considerable distance.

12.2 With elevation ranging from 100m to 350m AOD, the transition from the lower to upper slopes of the scarp occurs across a short distance. This creates a strong landform mass with an impressive, steep gradient that wraps around and affords enclosure to the adjoining landscapes on lower ground. It is the striking juxtaposition of the scarp set against the enclosed farmland of gently undulating lower-lying landscapes (e.g. the Farmed and Settled High Vale landscape that makes for such a strong sense of identity.

12.3 The land cover of the scarp landscape is dominated by woodland – broadleaved woodland, mixed woodland and coniferous plantations, forming continuous swathes that in places extend from the base to the top of the scarp face. Much of the woodland has significant biodiversity value reflected in a number of sites being designated SSSI.
12.4 Some areas of pasture occur across the scarp slopes – forming clearings and breaking up the unity of the woodland cover. This agricultural land is defined by pasture and characterised by a pattern of small fields, of irregular shape due to their ancient (pre 17th century) pattern of enclosure.

12.5 This is a sparsely populated and generally unsettled landscape although some farms (and small villages) are nestled at the base of the slope; sheltered by the backdrop of the scarp. Lanes and secondary roads cut winding courses up the steep slopes – contained by tree cover.

12.6 Although elevated above the adjacent vale landscape, the overtly wooded character of the scarp significantly limits views out. In some areas, extensive views can be gained from very top of the escarpment.

**Landscape Character Areas**

There are four Character Areas of the Wooded Escarpment landscape type. These areas are split between the north and the south of the Borough – occurring on opposite sides of the Vale of Taunton Deane. One character area falls wholly within the Quantock Hills AONB forming part of the AONB’s southern slopes. The other two areas are interconnected and form part of the northern edge of the Blackdown Hills AONB.

12.7 The four character areas belonging to the Wooded Scarp Landscape Type are:

- 10A: Quantock Hills Wooded Escarpment;
- 10B: Blackdown Hills Greensand Wooded Escarpment;
- 10C: Blackdown Hills Limestone Wooded Escarpment; and
- 10D: Wrantage Wooded Escarpment.

12.8 The brief description of these geographically separate areas is provided overleaf.

**Character Area Descriptions**

**Character Area 10A: Quantock Hills**

12.9 The Quantock Hills Wooded Escarpment occurs within the north of the Borough – extending northwest to southeast from the edge of Triscombe to the edge of Cushuish. This character area is bordered to the south by the landscape of the Triscombe – Cothelstone Agricultural Fringe and to the north by the Lydeard – Triscombe Heathland Summits and Combes and Cothelstone Hill Open Summit.
12.10 This character area is the highest of all three scarps within Taunton Deane – reaching 350m AOD where it borders the prominent ridgeline of Will’s Neck – separated from the summit by an overgrown beech hedgebank. The scarp has a more varied land cover and land use pattern than the other scarps.

12.11 There are a number of small woodland blocks but the largest extent of woodland is located on the slopes immediately abutting the Open Summit landscape of Cothelstone Hill. This is an interconnected series of woodlands - Old Plantation, Twenty Acre Plantation, Grub Bottom and Paradise. A steep road cuts through the woodland here – connecting the scarp with the ridge road between Lydeard Hill and Merridge Hill.

12.12 At Bagborough Hill, old beech hedgebanks indicate where Parliamentary Enclosures took in sections of the scarp. Today there are some areas of pasture surviving but much of the land has reverted back to rough heath and scrub (seemingly spilling over from the adjacent Heathland Summits and Combes) and woodland (Bagborough Plantation – mixed woodland). This area of mixed woodland, scrub and heathland forms the southeastern extent of the The Quantocks SSSI – one of the most extensive areas of semi-natural habitat in South West England and containing a wide variety of habitats including dry dwarf-shrub heath, acidic flushes, ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland and dense scrub.
12.13 The scarp is cut by a series of short, narrow and steep combes, such as at Grub Bottom and Paradise. Although it contains a significant amount of woodland, the south-facing Quantock Hills Scarp contains more extensive tracts of enclosed farmland than is found on the two north-facing Blackdown Hills scarps. The farmland, given over to pasture (predominantly sheep grazing) is defined by both ancient enclosure (pre 17th century) and recent enclosure (17th – 19th and 18th – 21st century) and is characterised by generally small field units of irregular shape. These farmed areas occur on the less steep areas of the scarp – around Tilbury Farm for example. Due to the absence of woodland within the farmland, these open slopes offer commanding views across the vale below.

12.14 The geology of this character area is defined by Hangman Sandstone formation. The sandstone in this area - Millstone Grit – is particularly hard and, as such, was much used historically for millstones and more recently surface dressing for roads. The extraction of the sandstone at Triscombe Quarry (now disused) has created a large convex scar in the scarp – the red of the outcropping stone making it visually distinct from considerable distance.

12.15 The Quantock Hills Wooded Scarp is a striking landscape – flanked at its foot by the apron of land defined as the Agricultural Fringe. The fault-scarp provides a dramatic backdrop and offers a strong sense of containment to the Vale of Taunton Deane.

Character Area 10B: Blackdown Hills Greensand

12.16 The Northwest Blackdown Hills Escarpment is a relatively broad scarp that can be described or broken down into two parts – an upper, narrow and sinuous steep section of the escarpment (defining the upper southern slopes) that is densely wooded and falls wholly within the boundary of the AONB. Beneath this dramatic, narrow belt of steep woodland the scarp drops away into a more subtle escarpment landscape (although still distinguishable from the High Vale landscape below) that has been farmed and is for the most part defined by pasture (stock rearing, dairy, and horse grazing) and enclosed by an irregular field pattern (of anciently enclosed and some recently enclosed land). The Northwest Blackdown Hills Greensand Scarp extend from the edge of Sampford Common in the west, and incorporating Wellington Hill/Wellington Monument as it stretches across to Whitford Hill in the east. Here it links with the Northeast Blackdown Hills Limestone Scarp.
12.17 This north-facing escarpment contains significant woodland cover on the upper slopes (interspersed in places by areas of pasture defined by small-enclosed fields) with woodland diminishing and agricultural fields dominating the landscape on the lower slopes. The scarp provides a strong backdrop to the southern boundary of the Vale of Taunton Deane. The dense woodland is dominated by beech on the upper slopes – with beech hedgebanks marking the boundary with the adjacent plateau. Oak is dominant on the lower down but much of the woodland is characterised by significant areas of coniferous plantation. Large sweeps of woodland are designated as Ancient Woodland – some semi-natural (such as at Prior’s Park Wood) and other areas replanted (such as the mixed woodland at Staple Park Wood). The underlying heathy character of the landscape is evident in places with outcropping areas of The underlying geology of the area is defined by Upper Greensand giving rise free draining, coarse and loamy soils.

12.18 The highest point on the scarp (at 272m AOD) is the location of the Wellington Monument – where the scarp meets the adjacent landscape of the Clay-with-Chert Plateau. As well as the highest point on the scarp, this is also the highest point on the Blackdown Hills. The Wellington Monument, erected in celebration of the Duke of Wellington’s victory at the battle of Waterloo, sits within 4.8 has of National Trust land. The monument is accessible to the public and its location offers extensive views across the vale below and across to the prominent landscapes of Exmoor National Park and The Quantock Hills AONB.

12.19 Part of The Quants SSSI falls across the scarp. The Quants is an area designated for its wide range of habitats – unimproved neutral grassland, ancient woodland, secondary woodland and small areas of heathland and fen.

**Character Area 10C: Blackdown Hills Limestone**

12.20 The Northeast Blackdown Hills Escarpment is linked to the Northwest Blackdown Hills Scarp and stretches from Blagdon Hill/Prior’s Park Wood in the west to Stoke Wood in the east. Although contiguous with the northwest scarp, this scarp is recognised as a separate area principally due to its underlying geology – Rhaetic Beds (shales and limestones)- differentiating it physically from the adjacent northwest ‘greensand’ scarp. Unlike the northwest scarp, this escarpment abuts the landscape of the Fivehead Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale; forming the dip slope behind.

12.21 This scarp is also differentiated from the northwest scarp as it does not share the same extensive area of agricultural land – being much more narrow in its form and dominated by a series of interconnected woodlands – Adcombe Wood, Lime Ridge Wood, Young Wood for example. Thurlbear Wood forms part of the SSSI designated area of ‘Thurlbear Wood and Quarrylands’ - the woodland being species-rich (oak dominated with ash scattered throughout) and having a rich ground flora. Lime Ridge Wood is classified as Ancient Woodland and is a County Wildlife Site.

12.22 To the north of Lime Ridge Wood, which forms part of the main scarp, is an separate and distinctive outlying knoll – blanketed in woodland (Orchard Wood) and having a strong visual relationship with the vale landscape surrounding Orchard Portman.
12.23 Between Young Wood and Stoke Wood, where the steepness of the scarp slope reduces, the woodland cover diminishes and enclosed agricultural fields define much of the sloping landform here. It is along this same stretch that the landscape takes on a more settled character – with Church Farm at Thurlbear and properties of Stoke St Mary (on the adjacent vale) extend up to and onto the lower scarp slopes.

**Character Area 10D: Wrantage**

12.24 The Wrantage Escarpment is the smallest and most visually subtle of the all the escarpment landscapes within Taunton Deane. It occurs on the eastern boundary of the Borough between the Farmed and Settle Low Clay Vale (at Wrantage) and the Fivehead Wooded and Farmed Lias Vale. This scarp forms part of a landscape that extends beyond the Taunton Deane Borough Boundary into South Somerset (wrapping around the north of the village of Curry Rivel for example).

12.25 This escarpment is densely wooded with both broadleaved and mixed woodland areas – stretching from Line Wood to Crimson Hill and on to Lord’s Wood. Line Wood was once the landscaped garden belonging to Hatch Court (built in 1755 – refer to Lias Vale). Line Wood was opened to the public, in 2003, to walk the designated trail through the woodland. Evidence of its designed, romantic gardens once located on the site can be identified such as the remains of a grotto, icehouse and bowling green but much of the features described in surviving descriptions of the garden are unrecognisable within the woodland today.

12.26 This scarp enjoys extensive views across the Vale of Taunton Deane and also across the landscape of the Clay and Peat Moors.

**Landscape Evaluation**

12.27 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.
12.29 Overall the characteristics, features and elements of this woodland (and farmed) landscape appear to be in a moderate to good state of repair and combine to form a series of character areas in moderate to good condition. Condition and strength of character make for a landscape of good quality overall across the four areas.

12.30 The strength of landscape character is judged to be strong – the striking landform and blanket woodland creating instantly recognisable landscapes that frame the surrounding lower lying areas and offer a strong sense of containment. Much of the escarpment woodland is under active management (much by the Forestry Commission) and the areas of pasture are being grazed and maintained. The areas of pasture are deemed to be in moderate condition with field boundaries in a variable state of repair.

Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, the principle landscape strategy for the character area is to conserve the balance and simplicity of the land cover and land use – the blanket woodland interspersed by areas of pasture - and to maintain the character of limited settlement within the landscape. There are some opportunities for improved landscape management that would enhance the overall state of intactness.

Importantly it is essential to conserve the drama of the scarps (by preventing, for example, features and elements associated with lower-lying landscapes (such as the adjacent vales) from spilling up onto the slopes and diluting the sense of arrival onto the scarps and the striking contrast in character.
Landscape Type 11: Open Summit
Landscape Type 11: Open Summit

Character Areas:
11A Cothealstone Hill

KEY
- Urban Areas
- Landscape Type
Landscape Type 11: Open Summit

The distinctive feature of the Seven Sisters beech trees.

Scrubbing up on the lower slopes.

Expansive views define much of the character of the hill.

Footpath erosion on the hill.

Managed, country park character – (photo of car park in Sedgemoor district).

Provision of informal seating to enjoy expansive views.
Landscape Type 11: Open Summit

Landscape Type Summary

Separate and distinct from the Heathland Summits with Combes landscape type, the Open Summit is an elevated, rounded hill top landscape defined by a ground cover of grassland and bracken and surrounded by areas of scrub and developing broadleaved woodland. Views are extensive and varied across surrounding lower-lying landscapes. This is a landscape with a strong sense of exposure to the elements but it is not remote, having a strong human influence.

Key Characteristics

- Elevated, rounded hill, occurring between 270m and 320m AOD within the Quantock Hills AONB.
- Expansive views to the north and south – encompassing varied inland and coastal scenery, stretching as far as Wales.
- Underlain by Devonian geology of Leighland Slates – comprising slates, siltstones and sandstones.
- Land cover of grass with bracken and ground covering scrub, grazed by a herd of Exmoor ponies.
- Prominent group of beech trees – The Seven Sisters – forming a strong landmark feature that can clearly be identified from the vale of Taunton Deane.
- Open access land, much used by the general public for recreation.
- Ringed by scrub and broadleaved woodland that encloses the hill in places and restricts views and a sense of connection with the Heathland Summits.
- The Macmillan Way West crosses the hill as well as a number of way marked public footpaths.
- Scheduled monuments on site – prehistoric burial mounds (bowl barrows) and folly ruins (the Beacon Tower).

Character Areas

There is one landscape character area – Cothelstone Hill - belonging to the Open Summit landscape type. Although nearby Broomfield Hill also pertains to the characteristics of this landscape type, it lies beyond the Taunton Deane Borough Boundary, within the district of Sedgemoor.

Character Area Description

Character Area 11A: Cothelstone Hill

13.1 Cothelstone Hill is a small character area – a hilltop summit occurring between 270m and 332m AOD. Cothelstone Hill along with Broomfield Hill (in adjacent Sedgemoor District) is isolated from the expansive Heathland Summits landscape and although shares many similar characteristics, does not have the same perceptual qualities – being smaller and more contained and notably less remote. This area of open access land, occurring above the Wooded Scarp, is owned and managed by the
Quantock Hills AONB Service on behalf of Somerset County Council. Cothelstone Hill is a much used and valued public resource. The Macmillan Way West crosses over the summit and there are a number of way marked public footpaths and bridleways, making this a popular area for walkers, dog walkers and horse riders.

13.2 The hill has an open, rounded character with a simple land cover – unimproved grassland with areas of bracken cover and ground-covering scrub. In spring, large areas of Cothelstone Hill are carpeted with bluebells. Developing scrub and broadleaved woodland have established on the lower slopes and this reduces the sense of openness of the hills and limits views to the other summit landscapes.

13.3 The landscape is defined by Devonian geology of Leighland Beds – comprising slates, siltstones and sandstones. This, in turn, is overlain by well-drained fine soils that are shallow in places, revealing with areas of exposed rock.

13.4 Due to its elevated and exposed character, one of the main characteristics of this landscape is the extensive and varied panoramic views. To the south and west there are views across the Vale of Taunton Deane to the Blackdown Hills AONB, to the Brendon Hills and wider landscape of southeast Exmoor as well as to the coast at Minehead. Looking north, there are long vistas including the rolling farmland and fringes of the wider Quantock Hills AONB landscape, onto Bridgwater and out to the Bristol Channel (with the islands of Sleep Holm and Flat Holm clearly in view) and across the Wales. The simple, block structures of the reactors at Hinkley Point nuclear power station are prominent features within views.

13.5 Cothelstone Hill has considerable archaeological value. There are a number of Scheduled Monuments at Cothelstone Hill – a number of Bronze Age bowl barrows (tumuli) that form part of a barrow cemetery, and stone footings which mark the site of an old folly (the Beacon Tower). This was a circular stone tower that was erected on the hill between 1768 and 1780 by Lady Hillsborough (the then owner of the estate) for the purpose of viewing the surrounding countryside.

13.6 The popularity of Cothelstone Hill has led to the provision of facilities for the public. Although most of these occur within Sedgemoor District, they mark the entrance onto the hill and include a car park, interpretation board, picnic tables, tree-trunk benches, a dog bin and information/signage and fencing – evoking a sense of management and a ‘country park’ character.

13.7 At the highest point of the hill, stands a clump of beech trees, contained within a partially banked circular platform (possibly the remains of a prehistoric cairn). The trees are affectionately referred to as The Seven Sisters. The beech trees are seemingly part of an old ornamental planting scheme. There were originally seven planted but many have been lost over the years. Only three older trees remain (with younger trees now making up the group). The Seven Sisters create a strong landmark and can be picked out from considerable distance – distinguishing Cothelstone Hill over a wide area. There are a number of tree stumps where older trees have fallen. In the shade of the Seven Sisters, the herd of 11 Exmoor ponies can often be seen. These ponies graze the hill all year round – helping to manage the levels of scrub encroachment.
Landscape Evaluation

13.8 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

### Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Quality</th>
<th>Associated Landscape Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor-Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

13.9 The condition of this landscape is judged to be **good** (moderate in places). Issues affecting landscape condition include scrubbing up of grassland with bracken and other ground covering scrub, erosion due to heavy use of the footpaths, litter dropping and dog fouling. Illegal access by motorised vehicles also occurs periodically resulting in damage to access gates and churning up of the ground – particularly destructive during wet periods. There are few visual detractors in the landscape although recently erected post and rail fencing, to protect a round barrow at the western end of the hill, is visually jarring in this open, smooth landscape.

13.10 The strength of landscape character is judged to be **high**. The hill has a striking simplicity in terms of landform and land cover but it is its elevated position and the character borrowed from the vast and varied viewing experiences – to Exmoor, the Blackdown Hills, the Bristol Channel and the south coast of Wales – that heighten the strength of character overall. The presence of the Seven Sisters makes this landscape distinctive and distinguishable from considerable distance. Developing woodland and scrub at the edge of the hill (and on the hill in places) is threatening the simple, open character of the landscape and is limiting the opportunity of impressive views to the other hilltop landscapes within the Quantock Hills AONB.
### Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above the landscape strategy should focus on **conserving** (and **enhancing**) the simple, open character of the summit and monitoring closely the introduction of small elements that, cumulatively, can have a strong influence on the character of the landscape eg dog bins and furniture.
Landscape Type 12: Heathland Summits and Combes
Landscape Type 12: Heathland Summits and Combes

Character Areas:
12A Lydeard to Triscombe

**KEY**

- **Urban Areas**
- **Landscape Type**
Landscape Type 12: Heathland Summits and Combes

Looking across to Great Hill and beyond from Will's Neck - the beech-line Drove road forming a strong landscape feature.

Prominent beech hedgebanks have a strong influence on some parts of the heath.

Footpaths cut clear lines across the heathland.

The OS triangulation point on top of a barrow at Will's Neck.

The plunging combe of Aisholt Common (within Sedgemoor District).

Extensive views across the Vale of Taunton Deane (here from Lydeard Hill car park).
Landscape Type 12: Heathland Summits and Combes

Landscape Type Summary

An elevated ridge landscape, intersected by plunging combes. This landscape type is hugely influenced by its landcover – predominantly heathland – which, in spring and summer, offers dramatic sea of purple colour interspersed with yellow gorse. The landscape offers a strong sense of elevation and exposure to the elements and dramatic inland and coastal views. Surviving beech hedgebanks and archaeological features are visual indicators of historic land use.

Character Areas

Within Taunton Deane, there is one landscape character area (Lydeard to Triscombe) belonging to the Heathland Summits and Combes landscape type. This character area forms a relatively small part of a much larger, and almost continuous heathland landscape that extends north and west across the Quantock Hills AONB, into the districts of Sedgemoor and West Somerset.

Key Characteristics

- Series of connected rounded hills (forming an elevated ridge) dropping away into sweeping coombe valleys.
- Landscape occurs entirely within the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Elevation ranges from 160m AOD to 384m AOD (at Will’s Neck) – the highest point on the Quantock Hills.
- Forming part of wider plateau formed of Devonian sandstones.
- Expansive panoramic views – encompassing varied inland and coastal scenery, stretching as far as Wales.
- Entirely falling within the Quantock Hills SSSI – one of the most expansive semi-natural habitats in south-west England.
- Land cover and habitat defined by a Dwarf shrub – bell heather, western gorse, and bilberry (whortleberry) with areas of bracken and rhododendron encroachment.
- Some beech hedgebanks – mature beech standards clinging on to earth banks by their exposed root systems.
- Open access land with numerous waymarked rights of way including the recreational route of the Macmillan Way West.
- Visible scheduled monuments – cairns and barrows.

Character Area Description

Character Area 12A: Lydeard to Triscombe

The Lydeard to Triscombe Heathland Summits and Combes landscape occurs within and is one of the most distinctive landscapes within the Quantock Hills AONB. The landscape is defined by a series of interconnected hills – Lydeard Hill, Middle Hill, Will’s Neck and Marrow Hill – forming a prominent wide ridge or plateau that plunges away into steep sided combes to the north (around Aisholt Common). Elevation of
the landscape ranges from 160m AOD to an altitude of 386m AOD at Will’s Neck – the highest point on The Quantock Hills.

The Ordnance Survey triangulation point at Will’s Neck.

14.2 The entire character area forms a part of the much larger area designated as The Quantocks SSSI. This is one of the most extensive areas of semi-natural habitat in South West England – containing a range of habitats including dry dwarf-scrub heath, wet dwarf-scrub heath, acidic flushes, ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland and dense scrub. This character area is principally defined by dry dwarf-scrub heath (including Bell Heather, Western Gorse, and Bilberry – known locally as Wortleberry). The continuous heathland cover creates a visually consistent landscape scene that allows the dramatic rounded summits and sweeping combes of the underlying landform to be revealed – offering striking scenery from a distance.

14.3 During the summer months, the mass of flowers on the bell heather creates swathes of striking purple covered hills, interspersed by the bright yellow of the gorse. Encroachment of the heath by invasive species such as bracken and rhododendron is an issue here, as it is as across the much of the heathland areas on the Quantock Hills that extend beyond the borough boundary. A small area of woodland occurs at Middle Hill and further east at the Aley Land Plantation – the latter designated ancient semi-natural and ancient replanted woodland.

14.4 The landscape is underlain and shaped by Devonian sandstones – principally Hangman Grits which comprises sandstones with subordinate shales, siltstones and conglomerates. The geology defines the soils – acidic permeable loamy upland soils that overlay the sandstone.

14.5 The elevated, upland character of this landscape offers extensive and varied views – including the wider heathland system of the Quantock Hills; across to Great Hill, Aisholt Common, Fire Beacon and Black Hill for example. Other views are of varied inland scenery across the wide vale of Taunton Deane and beyond to Exmoor National Park and the Blackdown Hills AONB. There are also coastal views – across the Bristol Channel to Wales. Hinkley Point nuclear power station on the coastline forms an instantly recognisable and prominent landmark.
14.6 The character area of the Quantock Hills Wooded Escarpment borders the landscape to the south and west. Where dense woodland cover abuts the heath it has a notable influence – limiting views out across the vale to the south e.g. on the low, southern slopes of Middle Hill. On the low, southern slopes of Lydeard Hill, the adjacent scarp is defined by an area of farmland and here, overgrown beech hedgebanks are characteristic. These date back to the period of Parliamentary Enclosures in the 19th century when peripheral encroachment of the moorland took place. The earth banked hedges would previously have provided stock proof boundaries but as they have been allowed to grow out (over the last century) they now stand as impressive mature beech trees with gnarled and twisted root systems that protrude through, but seemingly bind, the earth banks on which they sit.

14.7 Although largely occurring beyond the Taunton Deane Borough boundary, the Drove (running along the central hilltop spine between Triscombe Stone and Crowcombe Combe Gate) is perhaps the most distinctive of the beech hedgebanks on the Quantocks. The Macmillan Way West follows the line of The Drove and enters the Taunton Deane just south of the car park at Triscombe Stone. There are a number of way marked public rights of way across the hills including the Samaritans Way South West but the whole area is designated as open access land.
14.8 This is a popular area for walking and mountain biking – the provision of a car parking area at Lydeard Hill easing accessibility to the landscape and being popular with those who just want to enjoy the view from the car park. Although not having a formal layout, the surface of the car park is covered by an impermeable asphalt cover unlike other car parks on the Quantock Hills such as at Cothelstone Hill and Triscombe Stone. There are a number of interpretation boards and signs at the car park but beyond this area, with the exception of subtle way markings on paths and the obvious triangulation point at Will’s Neck, there is little obvious human intervention in the landscape.

14.9 There is a long history of human use of this landscape. It was a Bronze Age ritual landscape and there are a number of visible archaeological features – the remains of barrow cemeteries can be found on the high summits. An ordnance survey triangulation point now tops one of the barrows at Will’s Neck. At the western edge of Will’s Neck there is a well preserved ring cairn2 from which there are views across to cairns on Great Hill, Fire Beacon Hill, and Hurley Beacon and to an embanked platform cairn on a spur above Triscombe (all beyond the Taunton Deane Borough boundary). On the boundary of this character area – just beyond the Taunton Deane Borough boundary – lies one of the three surviving megalithic standing stones – Triscombe Stone.

14.10 This landscape offers extensive views to settlements and landscapes that are strongly influenced by humans. With this in mind it would be wrong to describe it as truly remote. However, the upland character, wide-open skies, and sense of exposure that characterise this landscape do evoke some degree of remoteness, wildness and solitude.

Landscape Evaluation

14.11 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

---

2 A ring cairn is a low, circular bank of stone defining a central space.
Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

14.12 The condition of this landscape is judged to be moderate to good. Issues affecting landscape condition include scrubbing up of the heathland with bracken, gorse and rhododendron and erosion of heathland cover and soil due to user pressure. Litter dropping and dog fouling is apparent within and close to the car park at Lydeard Hill and has a negative impact on the landscape.

14.13 The strength of landscape character is judged to be high. The upland heath (moorland) landscape is instantly distinguishable from its wooded, farmed and enclosed fringing landscapes. The dramatic landform of rounded hills and sweeping combes covered by purple heather is a striking landscape scene – both in internal and distant views. As with the Open Summits, significant character is borrowed from the many and varied views out to the coast as well as inland.

Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above there is, overall, a requirement to conserve and enhance the simple, open character of the Lydeard – Triscombe Heathland Summits and Combes – importantly the relative sense of wildness, the strong heathland character and the quality and extent of the views from and to the landscape.
Landscape Type 13: Agricultural Fringe
Landscape Type 13: Agricultural Fringe

Character Areas:
13A Triscombe to Cothelstone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apron of enclosed agricultural land at the foot of the Wooded Escarpment.

Triscombe House – at the base of Bagborough Hill.

Field defined by sinuous organic field pattern – and given over to pasture.

Occasional farms are dotted across the fringe and overlook the adjacent vale.
Landscape Type 13: Agricultural Fringe

Landscape Type Summary

An apron of enclosed agricultural land, predominantly pasture, sitting beneath and fringing a pronounced wooded scarp behind. The evenly sloping ground is undulating as it is cut by a number of small streams that issue from steep combes above, and run through this landscape, forming shallow depressions across the farmland. Small villages sit at the foot of the scarp.

Character Areas

There is one landscape character area (Triscombe to Cothelstone) belonging to the Agricultural Fringe landscape type. This small area occurs almost entirely within the Quantock Hills AONB – at the foot of the Quantock Wooded Scarp. This is a transitional landscape, separating the low-lying vale to the south from the dramatic steep slopes of the Quantocks to the north.

Character Area 13A: Triscombe to Cothelstone

Key Characteristics

- Narrow apron of enclosed agricultural land occurring within the Quantock Hills AONB, at the foot of the Quantock Wooded Scarp.
- Gently undulating, even slope cut by a number of subtle streams running from the combes above.
- Elevation ranges from 90m (at Cothelstone) to 225m AOD (abutting the edge of the wooded scarp).
- Defined by an agricultural land use – laid primarily to pasture – with fields defined by native hedgerow boundaries.
- Varied field pattern – sinuous fields to the west (17th – 18th century enclosure) and geometric fields to the east (anciently enclosed land modified between 17th and 19th centuries).
- Dominated by the adjacent wooded scarp that forms a dramatic backdrop.
- Settled landscape comprising the village of West Bagborough (Conservation Area) and a series of farms and individual properties scattered across the slope – enjoying views over the vale.
- A number of prominent country houses with surrounding parkland, evoking a strong sense of formal design in the landscape.

Character Area Description

15.1 The Triscombe to Cothelstone Agricultural Fringe is a small landscape within the borough of Taunton Deane but one that extends a significant distance beyond the borough boundary – into West Somerset, stretching as far as West Quantoxhead. This description relates to the area falling solely within the Taunton Deane Borough Boundary.
15.2 The landscape falls almost entirely within the nationally important landscape of the Quantock Hills AONB. The character area is defined by relatively narrow band of land with an even but gently undulating slope. The undulating ground is formed where streams issuing from the higher ground on the Quantocks run through this landscape, forming shallow depressions. This band of agricultural land skirts the edge of the steep Quantock Hills Wooded Escarpment, forming a subtle ledge that separates the lower-lying vale to the south from the more dramatic, pronounced landform of the wider Quantock Hills to the north.

15.3 At the base of the adjacent wooded scarp, the Agricultural fringe reaches a height of 225m AOD but descends as low as 90m AOD as it comfortably merges with the landscape of the vale. The wooded scarp forms a striking backdrop and dominates views when looking towards the Agricultural Fringe from the vale.

15.4 The geology of the landscape is defined by Keuper Marls to the west, changing to a surface geology of Upper Sandstone in the east (between West Bagborough and Cothelstone). The geology of the area gives rise to well drained coarse loamy soils. These soils are typically associated with a land use of stock rearing and dairying, as is reflected within this character area.

15.5 The land use of the area is principally defined by pasture within fields that are medium to small in size. Within the western half of the landscape, the fields have a sinuous, organic form and represent an enclosure pattern dating between the 17th and 18th centuries. To the east, between West Bagborough and Cothelstone, the fields are more geometric in shape - characterised by an ancient enclosure pattern that was modified between the 17th and 19th centuries. The fields within this agricultural fringe landscape are noticeably smaller in size than those of the adjacent vale.

15.6 This is a settled landscape – containing the villages and Conservation Areas of West Bagborough and Cothelstone, as well as a number of farms and individual properties, dotted over the open slope and taking advantage of the southerly views across the vale. Red sandstone with a mix of slate and clay tiled roofs characterises the majority of traditional buildings. There are a few, more modern properties within the landscape that are atypical of the local vernacular, but are not intrusive or dominant.

15.7 Large country houses/manor houses have a significant influence on the character of this agricultural fringe. The listed building and large country house of Bagborough House (with its surrounding parkland landscape) forms part of the West Bagborough Conservation Area. To the far east of the landscape is the listed building of Cothelstone Manor with its surrounding gardens, pleasure grounds and park. Cothelstone Park contains a listed lodge house, a lake and number of mature specimen trees. At the far west of the character is Triscombe House, just south of the hamlet of Triscombe. These three large properties and their surrounding grounds exert a sense of grand design on the landscape.

15.8 This landscape is crossed by a number of secondary roads that generally run north to south linking the area with the wider Quantock Hills AONB to the north and the vale to the south. The recreational route of the West Deane Way crosses east to west though the area. Although not remote, this is a landscape with a strong rural
character and a notable sense of tranquillity in places, although this is reduced in the west due to the close proximity of the A358.

Landscape Evaluation

15.9 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Landscape Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Good Conserve and Enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor – Moderate – Poor</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Poor</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Poor – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate – Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate – Moderate Conserve and Restore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Type 14: Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes
Landscape Type 14: Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes

Character Areas:
14A West Deane

KEY
- Urban Areas
- Landscape Type
Landscape Type 14: Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes

Undulating landform covered by a mix of woodland and agricultural land.

Strong local vernacular at Milverton.

Properties and agricultural buildings nestle within the folds of the landform.

Rural lanes flanked by mixed species hedgerows and dotted with hedgerow trees.

Looking towards the higher landscape of the Brendon Fringe Farmed Hills with River Valleys.

Quantock Hills and the lower-lying vale landscape are both visible from the Vale Fringes.
Landscape Type 14: Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes

Landscape Type Summary

A farmed landscape with an undulating landform of valleys, slopes and hillocks. Springs issuing in the landscape are the source of a number of tributary streams that cut narrow, intimate valleys that are often well-wooded (and relatively dark) and occur throughout the landscape. The farmland is interspersed by significant areas of woodland, often on hilltops, and this is one of the features that distinguish the fringe landscape from the adjacent Farmed and Settled High Vale. The landscape is settled, comprising small villages and dispersed farms.

Character Areas

There is just one large landscape character area – West Deane - belonging to the Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes. This area occurs within the far west of Taunton Deane Borough - abutting West Somerset District and forming part of a transitional landscape that occurs between, and separates, the low-lying Vale of Taunton Deane and the elevated, dramatic scenery of Exmoor’s Brendon Hills. The large character area extends from Runnington in the south (the boundary meeting with the River Tone Floodplain) to Tolland Down in the north.

Character Area 14A: West Deane

Key Characteristics

- A varied landscape with an undulating terrain of narrow valleys, slopes and hillocks.
- Elevation ranging from approximately 75m and 170m AOD.
- Underlying geology defined by Permo-Triassic and Lower Sandstone, Lower Marl, sands and gravels (Pebble Beds (bunter) and Breccio-Conglomerate).
- Farmland interspersed with significant areas of woodland, including a number of ancient woodland sites.
- Forming part of the River Tone catchment – numerous springs issue within, and streams run through, the landscape.
- Some areas of marshy/wetland flush habitats in areas of high water table – Langford Heathfield, Holme Moor and Clean Moor SSSI.
- A settled landscape containing the ancient market town of Wiveliscombe and the predominantly Georgian-influenced village of Milverton.
- Red sandstone geology reflected in the buildings throughout the area with slate, thatch, painted stone and render also common.
- Agricultural land use predominantly defined by both pasture and arable.
- Small to medium sized fields of irregular shape - predominantly ancient (pre 17th century) enclosure with some later modifications.
- Strong native hedgerow network punctuated with hedgerow trees.
Character Area Description

16.1 The landscape Character Area of West Deane Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes covers a large area – within the west of the Borough. This is continuous but varied tract of land is bounded in the south by the Floodplain landscape of the River Tone. This landscape is best described as the transitional – separating the High Vale to the east and the Farmed Hills with River Valleys to the west. Although exhibiting elements of both of the surrounding landscapes, the Vale Fringe has its own unique landscape pattern and character.

16.2 Elevation within the fringe landscape generally occurs over 100m AOD – reaching 170m AOD in the north (between Lydeard St Lawrence and Tolland) and dropping down to 75m AOD in localised areas such as by the banks of the River Tone in the south. The name - Vale Fringes – reflects a definite sense of having moved out of the lower-lying landscape of the vale into a landscape of greater landform variation. It is markedly more elevated and undulating with subtle hills and summits that surround and enclose discrete valleys and combes.

16.3 Springs issuing in the landscape are the source of a number of tributary streams that form part of the River Tone catchment. These streams cut narrow, intimate valleys that are often well-wooded (and relatively dark) and are a repeating theme in the landscape. Here, a number of hamlets and small villages can be found, nestled in the shelter of the valley sides, close to the source of water - such as at West Leigh, Tolland and Bathealton. Ascending out these valleys and combes, the dark and enclosed character gives way to a much more open, rounded terrain of subtle hills and summits that offer fairly wide views. In the north, these views include the Brendon Hills of Exmoor National Park and the distinct ridge landform of the Quantock Hills AONB. From much of the character area, there are views across the High and Low Vale landscapes.

16.4 One of the defining features of this landscape, that distinguishes it from the adjacent vale, is the amount of woodland and tree cover. Although not blanketed by woodland, wooded areas (notably crests of hills) are a repeating feature of the landscape. With the exception of the Wooded Escarpments, the Farmed and Wooded Vale Fringe contains the largest number of ancient woodland sites in Taunton Deane. These sites consist of the woodland surrounding Langford Heathfield SSSI, Milverton Wood and Stone Hill Copse, Combe Wood and Combe Down Lodge. The woodland often covers steep ground and the crests of hills; forming vistas of wooded slopes and skylines. Within the north of the area there is a strong visual relationship with the wooded landscape of the Brendon Hills of Exmoor National Park.

16.5 Farms are dispersed throughout the landscape and farming is defined by a mix of arable production and pasture. Fields are typically small to medium sized and of irregular shape - characterising the ancient enclosure patterns (pre 17th century) and areas of modified ancient enclosure that cover much of the landscape. Mixed hedgerows, with hedgerow trees, define the field boundaries. The landscape is underlain by a geology of Permian and Triassic rocks - pebble beds (bunter), Lower Marl, Breccio-Conglomerate and Lower Sandstone, giving rise to well drained fine loamy reddish soils (gritty and stony in places) associated with dairying, stock rearing, cereals and some horticulture cropping.
This is a settled landscape – containing the two larger settlements of Wiveliscombe and Milverton, smaller villages such as Lydeard St Lawrence, Combe Florey and Langford Budville and numerous hamlets, such as Runninston in the south and Tolland in the north. The ancient town of Wiveliscombe is often seen as one of the gateways to Exmoor and, with a population of 2500 and a centre with many small businesses, serves the farming population and small communities scattered throughout the surrounding hills and valleys. Milverton is a large village that was founded on the woollen industry and is characterised by Georgian streets – many of its houses built of local red sandstone. Red sandstone is enormously characteristic of many of the buildings in the landscape with rendered stone, slate and thatch also occurring throughout. Both Wiveliscombe and Milverton have designated Conservation Areas as do a number of other settlements in the landscape – Ford, Bathealton, Combe Florey and Lydeard St Lawrence.

There are a number of large country houses/manors within and immediately abutting the Fringe – Gauldon Manor, Bindon House, Cothay Manor and Wellisford Manor House – evoking a sense of grand design in the landscape.

In terms of nature conservation, the landscape contains three nationally designated sites: Langford Heathfield SSSI and Holme Moor and Clean Moor SAC. Holme Moor and Clean Moor occur on the north-facing slope of the upper reaches of the Hillfarrance Brook and are the sources of springs fed by base-rich and nutrient poor ground water. The moors support swamp and flush plant communities and there is further diversity in areas of marshy grassland and broadleaved semi-natural woodland. Langford Heathfield SSSI contains a variety of semi-natural habitats including marshy grassland and ancient woodland – the neutral to acid soils supporting the habitats are derived from the underlying Permian Lower Marls.

This character area covers a large area of the district and there is considerable variety within its bounds. It is a rural landscape with limited influence of urban areas. The B3227 (running through Milverton and Wiveliscombe) is a busy route but away from this road, the landscape is overtly rural and of a generally tranquil character.

Landscape Evaluation

The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.
## Landscape Quality and Associated Landscape Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Condition</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate – Good</th>
<th>Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Moderate – Good</th>
<th>Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Moderate – Good</th>
<th>Conserve and Enhance</th>
<th>Poor – Moderate</th>
<th>Enhance and Restore</th>
<th>Strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor-Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Poor – Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Restore/ Create</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Enhance and Restore</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

16.11 Overall the characteristics, features and elements of this landscape appear to be in a **moderate to good** state of repair. There are some opportunities for improved landscape management that would enhance the overall state of intactness and strengthen the landscape pattern - hedgerow boundary management for example.

16.12 The strength of landscape character is judged to be **strong** – the landscape having a generally uninterrupted and distinctive pattern of farmland and woodland cover over an articulated terrain.

### Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, a landscape strategy for this area is to conserve the mix of woodland and farmland, the tranquil, rural character and, to explore opportunities for landscape enhancement through appropriate landscape management strategies.
Landscape Type 15: Farmed Hills with River Valleys
Landscape Type 15: Farmed Hills with River Valleys

Character Areas:

15A Brendon Fringe

KEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape Type 15: Farmed Hills with River Valleys

Dropping down to the narrow valley floors – stone bridges marking crossing points over the River Tone and its tributaries.

View open out on the hills and ridges offering some striking panoramas.

High hedges along sunken lanes create a strong sense of enclosure.

Surviving stone viaduct piers on the dismantled Barnstaple to Taunton railway.

Beech avenue on high ground at Heydon Hill.

Prominent lines of pylons marching across the landscape.
Landscape Type 15: Farmed Hills with River Valleys

Landscape Type Summary

A farmed landscape defined by a striking landform of steep-sided valleys and prominent hills and ridges. It is strongly influenced by the presence of the river and its tributary streams, creating a lush landscape with linear villages and hamlets relating strongly to the issuing springs and streams. The land use is principally characterised by pasture with arable farming having a significantly smaller influence. Narrow, often sunken lanes, an ancient pattern of field enclosure and a notable absence of any large settlements has creates a small-scale and intimate landscape character. Enclosed valleys extend up to open hills to create varied views – channelled and narrow to dramatically open. This is an overtly rural and tranquil landscape.

Character Area

There is just one landscape character area – the ‘Brendon Fringe’ – belonging to the Farmed Hills with River Valleys landscape type. This area occurs within the far west of Taunton Deane Borough - abutting West Somerset District and forming part of a transitional landscape that occurs between, and separates, the low-lying Vale of Taunton Deane and the elevated, dramatic scenery of Exmoor’s Brendon Hills. The area extends from Sampford Arundel in the south to Tolland Down in the north.

Character Area 15A: Brendon Fringe

Key Characteristics

- Striking and varied landform comprising steep valley sides, narrow valleys floors, prominent hills and ridges.
- Elevation ranges from 100m to 310m AOD.
- Geology defined by Devonian slates, siltstones and sandstones.
- Areas of natural wetland character due to the River Tone cutting a fairly straight north- south course through the area with a number of associated tributary streams feeding the river from east and west (issuing from numerous springs within the landscape).
- A settled landscape comprising hamlets and small villages (typically linear and located close to springs and streams) with farms regularly dispersed throughout.
- A well–treed landscape that includes deciduous woodland swathes (along the course of the River Tone) and coniferous plantations (at Maundown and Kington Copse). Beech predominates in some areas of high ground such as Heydon Hill.
- Agricultural land use predominantly defined by pasture, with limited arable influence. Sheep and cattle graze the fields.
- Field pattern predominantly characterised by ancient enclosure – pre 17th century – of small to medium sized irregular shaped field units, defined by a strong native hedgerow network.
- Network of narrow, rural lanes, often sunken and bordered by high hedges and hedgerow trees – creating a strong sense of enclosure.
A landscape of surprise (often extensive) views that open out from the hills and ridges.

Character Area Description

17.1 The Brendon Fringe character area of the Farmed Hills with River Valleys landscape type occurs within the far west of Taunton Deane borough. This is a transitional landscape that separates the low-lying and relatively consistent landscape of the Vale of Taunton Deane from the elevated landscape of the Exmoor’s Brendon Hills. It is a dramatic landscape – principally due to its complex and visually interesting landform.

17.2 Cut by the River Tone and a large number of its tributary streams, the strongly articulated topographic form consists of narrow, enclosed valley floors with steep valley sides that sharply ascend and open up to rounded hills and ridges, offering surprise, expansive views – into Mid Devon, across the Vale of Taunton Deane and beyond to the Blackdown Hills for example.

17.3 The presence of the river Tone and its tributaries is strongly felt within the landscape – stone bridge crossing points allow numerous access routes across the river such that there is a clear and ever present relationship with the water. The biologically rich River Tone, and its tributaries, contains a variety of habitats and legally protected species. Much of the river, and sections of its riverbank, is covered by Somerset County Wildlife Sites (often linked, forming significant tracts of interconnected sites).

17.4 This is a settled landscape, containing a number of hamlets and small villages – typically linear. Farms are evenly dispersed across the area. The landscape is notably absent of large settlement. Settlements and farms consistently relate, geographically, to the numerous springs and tributaries occurring within the landscape. A number of individual properties also sit on higher ground - their aspect seemingly taking advantage of the often-extensive views. There are two Conservation Areas – at the villages of Ashbrittle and Bathealton. Place and farm names reflect the influence of water and the landform in the landscape – Marshes Farm, Waterrow, Kittisford, Heniton Hill, Ridge Farm, Bovey Bottom to name a few.

17.5 The geology of the area is defined by Devonian rocks with Pilton Beds in the south (grey slates with thin sandstones) and by Pickwell Down Beds in the north (sandstones, siltstones and slates). Slate is commonly seen throughout the landscape - as a roofing material and as a rough walling stone defining gateways or entrances to villages. At Tracebridge, on the boundary of the area, are a number of old quarries that were last worked for slates in 1940. Within the eastern and southern parts of the landscape, clay roof tiles are also often seen – reflecting the proximity of the landscape to the nearby clay vale.

17.6 Narrow, rural lanes cut through the landscape. These are often sunken and surrounded by high hedges or flanking woodland. The lanes cut numerous routes through the landscape – rising up over ridges and dropping steeply down towards the narrow combe valleys defined by the River Tone’s tributary streams. Moving through the landscape along these lanes, the changing landform makes for changing views - from enclosed and channelled to open and far reaching.
17.7 The landscape has a well-treed character. Although absent of large woodland blocks, there are a relatively large number of small woodlands. A significant amount of woodland swathes flank the course of the River Tone and its tributary streams. The wooded areas, combined with hedgerow trees, provide a well-treed character throughout. Although the landscape contains predominantly deciduous woodland, there are some area of mixed woodland and some coniferous plantations – Kingston Copse and Heydon Hill for example. Beech becomes a more prevalent species within the higher, northern part of the landscape. Beech hedges become more common than the mixed species hedgerows seen further south. At Heydon Hill (the highest area within this landscape) there is a striking avenue of beech trees. The occurrence of beech hedges links the landscape to the character of the expansive area of enclosed farmed hills that surround the open moorland within Exmoor National Park.

17.8 The dismantled Barnstaple to Taunton Railway crosses through the area between (Venn Cross in the west to Manworthy Cross in the east). Where the railway once crossed the River Tone, prominent stone piers still exist, clearly marking the old line of the viaduct. The landscape contains one Scheduled Monument – The Castles hillfort, north of Surridge Farm, Bathealton.

17.9 This is an agricultural landscape with an overtly rural character. It is a landscape clearly tamed by human hand but where human influence generally complements rather than conflicts with the physical landscape. Although not remote, this is a very tranquil area with little in terms of aural or visual intrusions.

Landscape Evaluation

17.10 The matrix below has been used to guide judgements of Landscape Quality and to help determine the appropriate Landscape Strategy.

---

3 Beech hedges are a key feature of the Exmoor landscape – beech hedge bank enclosure dating to the 1800s when the Knight family of Worcestershire bought a large proportion of the Exmoor Forest and set about taming and reclaiming the landscape for agriculture.
## Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

17.11 The strength of landscape character is judged to be **strong** – the continuous tracts of farmland, the influence of the Tone and its tributaries, the varied and well-articulated rolling landform and the changing experience from enclosed valley floor to open hilltop, make for a highly characteristic landscape with a strong sense of place. Overall the characteristics, features and elements of this landscape appear to be in a good state of repair and combine to form a landscape in **good** condition overall.

17.12 Condition and strength of character combine to form a landscape of good quality.

---

### Landscape Strategy

Based on the judgements above, a landscape strategy for this area is to Conserve its tranquil rural character and the intimate mix of woodland, farmland (predominantly pasture), wetland and small-scale settlement.
Taunton Deane Borough

Fig. 7
Historic Landscape Characterisation

Key
- Recently Enclosed Land 18th to 21st century.
- Anciently Enclosed Land pre-17th century.
- Anciently Enclosed Land modified 17th to 18th century.
- Recently Enclosed Land 17th to 18th century.
- Settlement pre Time Map (c1640).
- Settlement post Time Map (c1640).
- Anciently Enclosed Land modified 19th to 21st century.
- Semi-natural ancient woodland (as defined by English Nature).
- Other woodland.
- Historic Landscape Park.
- Golf course.
- Military site.
- Geodiversity sites.

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. (C) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Taunton Deane Borough Council, LAS7677
Fig: 11
Nature Conservation Designations

Key
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- County Wildlife Sites
- Ramsar Sites
- Special Protection Areas
- Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Taunton Deane Borough Extents

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. © Crown Copyright. Unauthorized reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Taunton Deane Borough Council LAD07677
Fig: 12
Hydrology

Key
- Open Water
- Flood Zone
- Taunton Deane Borough Extents

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988. Taunton Deane Borough Council 1/3/2010

Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment
172
### Tree Distribution

**Landscape Character Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Farmed and Settled Low Vale</th>
<th>2 River Flood Plain</th>
<th>2A The Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Farmed and Settled High Vale</td>
<td>3A Quantock Fringes and West Vale</td>
<td>3B Blackdown Fringes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale</td>
<td>4A Fivehead Vale</td>
<td>5 Sandstone Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Clay and Peat Moors</td>
<td>5A North Curry</td>
<td>6A Curry and West Sedge Moors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes</td>
<td>7A Southeast Quantock</td>
<td>7B Kenley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves</td>
<td>8A Culm</td>
<td>8B Otterford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8C Yarty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Species</th>
<th>Alder</th>
<th>Ash</th>
<th>Aspen</th>
<th>Beech</th>
<th>Downy Birch</th>
<th>Silver Birch</th>
<th>Wild Cherry</th>
<th>Hawthorn</th>
<th>Field Maple</th>
<th>Small-leaved Lime</th>
<th>Common Oak</th>
<th>Sessile Oak</th>
<th>Black Poplar</th>
<th>Grey Poplar</th>
<th>White Poplar</th>
<th>Black Service Tree</th>
<th>Crack Willow</th>
<th>White Willow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taunton Deane – Landscape Character Assessment 175
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Species</th>
<th>Alder</th>
<th>Ash</th>
<th>Aspen</th>
<th>Beech</th>
<th>Downy Birch</th>
<th>Silver Birch</th>
<th>Wild Cherry</th>
<th>Hawthorn</th>
<th>Field Maple</th>
<th>Small-leaved Lime</th>
<th>Common Oak</th>
<th>Sessile Oak</th>
<th>Black Poplar</th>
<th>Grey Poplar</th>
<th>White Poplar</th>
<th>Rowan</th>
<th>Wild Service Tree</th>
<th>Crack Willow</th>
<th>White Willow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Clay with Chert Plateau</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9A Churchinford</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Wooded Escarpments</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10A Quantock Hills</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10B Blackdown Hills Greensand</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10C Blackdown Hills Limestone</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10D Wrantage</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Open Summit</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11A Cothelstone Hill</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Heathland Summits and Combes</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12A Lydeard to Triscombe</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Agricultural Fringe</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13A Triscombe to Cothelstone</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14A West Deane</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Farmed Hills with River Valleys</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15A Brendon Fringe</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Hedgerow Species Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Character Areas</th>
<th>Hedge Species</th>
<th>Cab Apple</th>
<th>Ash</th>
<th>Beech</th>
<th>Blackthorn</th>
<th>Alder Buckthorn</th>
<th>Wild Cherry</th>
<th>Dogwood</th>
<th>Hawthorn</th>
<th>Hazel</th>
<th>Holly</th>
<th>Field Maple</th>
<th>Guelder Rose</th>
<th>Common Oak</th>
<th>Wild Privet</th>
<th>Dog Rose</th>
<th>Field Rose</th>
<th>Rowan</th>
<th>Wild Service Tree</th>
<th>Spindle</th>
<th>Wayfaring tree</th>
<th>Goat Willow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Farmed and Settled Low Vale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A Vale of Taunton Deane</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 River Flood Plain</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A The Tone</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Farmed and Settled High Vale</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A Quantock Fringes and West Vale</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B Blackdown Fringes</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Farmed and Wooded Lias Vale</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A Fivehead Vale</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Sandstone Ridge</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5A North Curry Ridge</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Clay and Peat Moors</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6A Curry and West Sedge Moors</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hills and Fringes with Wooded Combes</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7A Southeast Quantock</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7B Kenley</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Farmed Valleys with Wooded Cleaves</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8A Culm</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8B Otterford</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8C Yarty</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Clay with Chert Plateau</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9A Churchinford</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Character Areas</td>
<td>Hedge Species</td>
<td>Cab Apple</td>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>Beech</td>
<td>Blackthorn</td>
<td>Alder Buckthorn</td>
<td>Wild Cherry</td>
<td>Dogwood</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Hazel</td>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>Field Maple</td>
<td>Guelder Rose</td>
<td>Common Oak</td>
<td>Wild Privet</td>
<td>Dog Rose</td>
<td>Field Rose</td>
<td>Rowan</td>
<td>Wild Service Tree</td>
<td>Spindle</td>
<td>Wayfaring tree</td>
<td>Goat Willow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Wooded Escarpments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10A Quantock Hills</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10B Blackdown Hills Greensand</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10C Blackdown Hills Limestone</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10D Wrantage</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Open Summit</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11A Cothelstone Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Heathland Summits and Combes</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12A Lydeard to Triscombe</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Agricultural Fringe</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13A Triscombe to Cothelstone</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Wooded and Farmed Vale Fringes</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14A West Deane</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Farmed Hills with River Valleys</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15A Brendon Fringe</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>