

Landscape Character Areas

Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance

Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 Revised Deposit Draft

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Landscape Character Areas

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 The Local Planning Authority has produced Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Landscape Character Areas, to:

- a) Explain the methodology used to assess and determine the different landscape character areas,
- b) Identify specific characteristics unique to each individual character area, and,
- c) Highlight the key issues relating to each character area that should be addressed when considering development proposals.

1.2 In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 *“Development Plans”*, December 1999 (paragraphs 3.15 to 3.18 refer), this draft supplementary planning guidance is:

- a) Consistent with national and regional guidance,
- b) Separate from the Local Plan and subject to public consultation,
- c) Reviewed on a regular basis, and,
- d) Cross-referenced to specific policies within the development plan

1.3 A fundamental point to note about supplementary planning guidance is that: *“While only the policies in the development plan can have the same status that Section 54A of the 1990 Act provides in deciding planning applications, Supplementary Planning Guidance may be taken into account as a material consideration.”* (Paragraph 3.16 PPG12 refers) Therefore, where development proposals are submitted in an area covered by this draft supplementary planning guidance, effectively those areas beyond Swindon’s urban boundary, the guidance itself shall be a material consideration in determining development proposals.

1.4 National and regional planning guidance appropriate to this issue is expressed through Planning Policy Statement 7 *“Sustainable Development in Rural Areas”* (2004) promotes sustainable economic growth and diversification in rural areas. Therefore, this Supplementary Planning Guidance does not seek to provide a restraint to development in the countryside, but ensures that where development is acceptable in principle it recognises, takes account of, and does not detract from, the attributes of the immediate landscape character area.

1.5 Although the majority of the character areas will not change dramatically over time, as they are based upon natural ecosystems, to ensure that this guidance remains up-to-date it will be reviewed on a regular basis. Both in its conception, and during each review, public consultation will be an important input to the planning process.

1.6 As referred to in paragraph 1.2, all Supplementary Planning Guidance should be clearly cross-referenced to the development plan. In this instance policy ENV10 *“Landscape Character Protection”* of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 provides the main policy reference and states:

“Within the countryside the Local Planning Authority will seek to protect and enhance the character and quality of the environment. Development shall only be permitted where it takes account of its natural surroundings and their landscape character.”

The Landscape Character Areas are defined within the supporting text of Policy ENV10 as:

- i) Thames Vale
- ii) Vale of the White Horse
- iii) Wroughton Vale
- iv) Scarp

- v) Downs Plains
- vi) High Downs
- vii) Midvale Ridge
- viii) Lydiard Ridge

1.7 Clearly, the definition of landscape character areas will have implications for development. Therefore, in order to inform applicants, and also to set out the criteria that the Local Planning Authority will use to assess development proposals, clear guidance is required to outline specific issues that will have to be reconciled. This SPG will therefore identify those key issues unique to each landscape character area, in order to provide an aid to decision-making.

Section 2: Methodology

2.1 The process of characterising the landscapes surrounding Swindon has not just been based on the visual aspects of the landscape. Instead, a combination of settlement patterns, geology, landform, land cover, vegetation, historical, cultural and social influences were used to define the Landscape Character areas. This process is based on the Countryside Agency's "Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England & Scotland" 2002, and is summarised in the following two stages:

Stage 1: Characterisation

- **Defining the scope**: Clear definition of the purpose of the assessment identifying the scale and level of detail required, resource implications and stakeholder input.
- **Desk top study**: Analysis of background documentation including map and photographic material.
- **Field survey**: Foot and car surveys across the whole of the Borough to inform written descriptions of landscape types, their current condition and add qualities unlikely to be evident from a desk top study.

- **Classification & Description**: Combining the above information to provide a detailed character area map and clear descriptions of their unique character.

2.2 In addition, the advice places particular emphasis on stakeholder involvement throughout the whole evaluation process. This has been accomplished through the input of interested organisations and individuals based on Communities of Influence, (those with an interest in an area) and Communities of Place (those living within an area).

2.3 Furthermore, the Borough Council has concentrated particularly on involving its constituent Parishes in the consultation process. This was carried out at two clearly defined stages in the project:

- Firstly, once the draft character areas had been established and plotted to form a draft Landscape Character Plan,
- Secondly, after the draft landscape types and the village studies had been completed, Parishes were invited to comment on and amend the Landscape Character Plan reflecting the initial field survey work.

2.4 Additional stakeholders included:

- **Adjacent District Councils**: Consulted on the draft Landscape Character Area plan, as well as requesting copies of their own landscape assessments, if already completed.
- **Downland Forum**: A group of local authorities and local interest groups with a territorial stake in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the Borough Council. The Forum has been consulted on the draft Landscape Character Plan.

Stage 2 : Making Judgements

2.5 With reference to making judgements, paragraph 6.41 of "Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland" 2002 states, "It is possible that a

Landscape Character Assessment could stop at the characterisation stage. The resulting map of landscape character types and/or areas, and the accompanying descriptions of character, would then stand as a neutral, relatively value-free summary of the current character of the landscape. In this form it could help to raise awareness of the distinctive character of an area and encourage appreciation of variations in this character. Beyond this, if an assessment is to play a part in informing decision-making, an approach to making judgements based on character must be developed.”

2.6 In line with this guidance, in order that landscape character designations can inform and aid development proposals, a series of landscape guidelines have been formulated to maintain what is best in the distinctive character of each area (as outlined in section 4). These guidelines express the various areas of concern that should be addressed and reconciled in relation to each unique landscape character type. Such guidelines may necessitate the imposition of specific conditions or additions to Section 106 Agreements to achieve appropriate amelioration measures, thereby ensuring that development proposals are integrated successfully into their surrounding landscape character area.

Section 3: Key Characteristics of Character Areas

i. Thames Vale



Geology

- Oxford Clay with substantial alluvial and gravel deposits relating to the Rivers Thames, Cole and Ray.
- Extensive flood plains surrounding these three main rivers.

Topography

- Generally flat, low lying large scale valley (75m-80m),
- Occasional areas of higher ground.

Vistas

- Extensive views across to the Midvale Ridge and Highworth,
- Churches form important focal points in the landscape (Lechlade).

Riparian

- Dominated by the Rivers Thames, Cole and Ray, along with the smaller Bydemill Brook,
- Drainage ditches provide alternative means of water removal.

Vegetation

- Very few woodlands except on areas of higher ground, as at Crouch Hill,
- Hedgerows & occasional trees,
- Pollarded willows important aspect of the Thames flood plain.

Human Influences

- Few scattered villages on higher areas of ground,
- The A361 runs south/north to the River Thames crossing point at Lechlade,
- The A419(T) runs north/south from Cricklade to Blunsdon.

Field Patterns

- Large scale fields with hedgerows generally forming the boundaries.

Historical References

- Important groups of circle enclosures,
- Greenways running east/west along the valley,
- Roman road (Ermine Street),

- Substantial tree cover pre 1970 (Dutch Elm disease).

ii. Vale of the White Horse



Geology

- Northern half of Kimmeridge Clay,
- Southern half of Gault Clay,
- Narrow band of Lower Greensand dividing the two clays.

Topography

- Broad, flat, low lying valley (90m).

Vistas

- Extensive views towards the Downs and Midvale Ridge.

Riparian

- Numerous small streams flow across the vale from south to north, joining the River Cole,
- Numerous ponds.

Vegetation

- Very few woodlands,
- Fields bounded by hedgerows with scattered standard trees.

Human Influences

- Few scattered farms in the less accessible areas,
- A419(T), A420 and the London to Bristol railway line form the boundaries.

Field Patterns

- Large fields with a strong north to south linear pattern following Parish boundaries.

Historical References

- A deserted mediaeval village adjacent to Wanborough,
- Roman settlement and roads at Lotmead,
- The disused Wilts & Berks canal runs along the northern boundary.
- Substantial tree cover pre 1970 (Dutch Elm disease).

iii. Wroughton Vale



Geology

- Kimmeridge Clay forms the whole Vale floor.

Topography

- Low lying, generally level vale with several small raised areas (approximately 100-115m),
- Enclosed by the Scarp slope and Swindon Hill.

Vistas

- The relatively open landscape allows for moderate distant views in an east - west direction along the Vale floor,
- Wide ranging views south towards the Scarp slope and north to Swindon Hill.

Riparian

- Several chalk streams flow northwards across the valley, forming tributaries of the River Ray,
- Numerous ponds.

Vegetation

- Hedgerows and their trees provide the main vegetation,
- Several small woodlands (Berry Copse).

Human Influences

- Wroughton dominates the eastern end of the Vale,
- Scattered houses and farms,

Field Patterns

- Fields generally of moderate size,
- Fields enclosed by hedgerows with standard oak trees,
- Post and wire fencing.

Historical References

- Several deserted mediaeval villages (Westleaze),
- Considerable areas of ridge and furrow,
- Disused Wilts and Berks canal crosses the Vale.
- Substantial tree cover pre 1970 (Dutch Elm disease).

iv. Scarp



Geology

- Lower Chalk together with Gault Clay in some sections,
- Shallow soils.

Topography

- A steep north west facing hillside overlooking the Clay Vales (115-170m),
- Dissected at intervals by very steep sided coombes (Liddington).

Vistas

- Sweeping views northwards towards Swindon, Vale of the White Horse, Midvale Ridge and the Cotswolds.

Riparian

- Numerous chalk springs along the lower part of the scarp slope flowing northwards (Clouts Wood),
- Wroughton reservoir formed by damming a spring.

Vegetation

- Substantial woodlands covering the scarp west of Chiseldon (Burderop Wood),
- Numerous hedgerows/standard trees.

Human Influences

- Number of springline settlements (Bishopstone),
- Several large country houses and associated parkland (Burdrop House),
- Small, twisting, sunken roads connecting the villages,
- The M4 forms the northern boundary of the area at Burderop.

Field Patterns

- Small scale fields generally enclosed by hedgerows with standard trees.

Historical References

- Parish boundaries form narrow bands running north/south, connecting the Clay Vales and Downs Plains (Bishopstone Parish).
- Farms follow a similar pattern that dates from the Iron Age.
-

v. Downs Plains



Geology

- Upper levels of the Lower Chalk,
- Shallow soils.

Topography

- High plain (approximately 170-180m) gently falling from north to south and of varying width,
- Lies between the Lower and Middle Chalk escarpments.

Vistas

- Sweeping views south across the open landscape towards the High Downs, Iron Age Hill forts & tree clumps

Riparian

- A limited number of minor watercourses flowing southwards into the River Og.

Vegetation

- Generally treeless except for areas adjoining Princess Alexandra Hospital and a few young shelter belts.

Human Influences

- Limited number of modern roads (generally B roads),
- Small number of dispersed farms and agricultural buildings,
- Settlements generally relate to military developments, e.g. Wroughton Airfield,
- M4 runs east-west through the area around Foxhill.

Field Patterns

- Large, extensive fields,
- Boundaries often defined by post and wire fencing with occasional hedgerows.

Historical References

- Roman roads run north/south,
- Ridgeway runs east/west,
- Disused Wroughton Airfield from World War II,
- Parish boundaries form narrow bands running north/south, connecting the Scarp and Clay Vales.

vi. High Downs



Geology

- Middle Chalk on the escarpment,
- Upper Chalk on the ridges and hilltops which sometimes has a clay with flints capping,
- Shallow soils.

Topography

- High rolling landform ranging from 170m to 277m,
- North west facing escarpment,
- Dry river valleys running southwards.

Vistas

- Sweeping views northwards across the Downs Plain towards the Midvale Ridge and the Cotswolds beyond.

Riparian

- None present.

Vegetation

- Dominant tree clumps located along the crest of the downs,
- Limited number of hedgerows defining field boundaries.

Human Influences

- Few roads (only A road A346),
- Limited number of well dispersed agricultural buildings,
- No modern settlements.

Field Patterns

- Large, extensive fields,

- Boundaries often defined by post and wire fencing with occasional hedgerows.

Historical References

- Extensive remains of early man's occupation including Iron Age Hill forts, the Ridgeway track and burial mounds.

vii. Midvale Ridge



Geology

- Main east/west ridge of Corallian Limestone with isolated areas of Oxford and Kimmeridge Clays,
- Lower Greensand and Kimmeridge Clay in the Coate area.

Topography

- Rolling landform of valleys, ridge, hill and plateau tops (90m-140m),
- Ridge is dissected by the south/north valleys of the Rivers Ray and Cole.

Vistas

- Open views across the Vale of the White Horse towards the High Downs,
- Open views across the Thames Vale towards the Cotswolds.

Riparian

- Rivers Ray and Cole run north/south through the area, with numerous tributaries draining the main valleys,
- Important lakes at Stanton Fitzwarren, Sevenhampton and Coate Water.

Vegetation

- Numerous substantial woodlands and shelter belts linked by hedgerows with standard trees (Stanton Great Wood).

Human Influences

- Important settlements occupy the highest hilltops (Blunsdon/Highworth),
- Smaller villages lie within the valleys,
- The A419 and A361 cross the area,
- The B4019 runs east/west along the ridge,
- The M4 motorway runs along the southern boundary in the Coate area,
- Extensive recreational areas between Swindon and Highworth.

Field Patterns

- Fields generally moderate in size,
- Smaller fields around South Marston, Kingsdown Lane and Blunsdon,
- Generally enclosed by hedgerows and woodland.

Historical References

- Iron Age hill fort at Blunsdon,
- Eighteenth century landscape at Stanton Fitzwarren,
- Disused Highworth railway line,
- Several mill sites,
- Coate Water supplied water to the Wilts and Berks canal.

viii. Lydiard Ridge



Geology

- Corallian Limestone forms the ridge,
- Northern boundary marked by a fault.

Topography

- This small area forms a raised plateau above the clay vales.

Vistas

- Woodland encloses much of area (Quarr plantation),
- In the north there are views across West Swindon,
- In the south there are views towards the North Wessex Downs.

Riparian

- Two small streams flow northwards through the area,
- The eastern stream flows through two large ponds and the dry bed of Lydiard Lake.

Vegetation

- There are substantial areas of parkland, woodland, parkland trees and hedgerows.

Human Influences

- Most of the area is in Lydiard Country Park,
- Lydiard House functions as a museum and management centre,
- Recent developments include a visitor centre and recreation facilities.

Field Patterns

- Fields lie within remnant parkland and are of moderate size,
- Field boundaries are a mixture of hedgerows, woodland and post and wire fencing.

Historical References

- Most of the area is occupied by Lydiard Church, Lydiard House and estate,
- The eighteenth century parkland estate was created from the Royal Braydon Forest.

Section 4: Landscape Guidelines

i. Thames Vale

By definition, the Thames Vale comprises the alluvial plain adjoining the river

Thames. Water plays an important role in forming this landscape, which includes a proliferation of ditches. Willows are an important tree in the floodplain. In conjunction with the existing hedgerows, there are occasional blocks of tree planting, punctuating the landscape. Although development has taken place within this area, it is dominated by a series of small settlements with scattered, isolated groupings making up the remainder. The Thames Vale Character Area adjoins the northern part of Highworth's settlement boundary, for which the Local Plan Policy ENV12 (Landscape Setting to Highworth), provides additional landscape guidance.

Development Considerations

Within the Thames Vale Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Ensure that the scale and massing of development does not adversely affect the area's perception of remoteness,
- ✓ Retain views and vistas to key local settlements and landmarks, for example local churches (Lechlade),
- ✓ Where appropriate, provide planting that reinforces existing hedgerows, compensating for the trees lost to Dutch Elm disease during the 1970's,
- ✓ Ensure that any woodland planting does not prejudice existing vistas,
- ✓ Reflect the high visibility of this area from the Midvale Ridge.
- ✓ Where appropriate, restore former landscape features such as meandering river channels, where these would benefit the landscape and its wildlife.

ii. Vale of the White Horse

The Vale of the White Horse extends eastwards from Swindon towards Shrivenham and beyond. Settlement patterns are generally limited to small scale agglomerations giving the perception of a remote landscape, which is distant from human activity. Views across this whole area are far reaching, due to its fairly level terrain with only minor undulations.

The south-western corner of the Vale of the White Horse Character Area, comprising the land to the south of Pack Hill, lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a nationally important landscape designation for which Local Plan Policy ENV11 provides a number of development constraints.

Development Considerations

Within the Vale of the White Horse Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Ensure that the scale and massing of development does not adversely affect the area's perception of remoteness,
- ✓ Where appropriate, have regard to the area's close proximity to, and in the case of the land to the south of Pack Hill, its location within, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- ✓ Where opportunities arise, provide additional tree planting to increase tree cover by creating blocks of woodland,
- ✓ Reflect the existing pattern of isolated units through an open, dispersed development pattern,
- ✓ Where opportunities arise, provide planting that reinforces existing hedgerows to compensate for the trees lost to Dutch Elm disease during the 1970's.
- ✓ Retain the perception of distinctiveness and separation from Swindon within the Rural Buffer area identified in the Local Plan.

iii. Wroughton Vale

The Wroughton Vale is bounded by Burderop Wood to the east, the M4 to the north and the scarp slope to the south, and is punctuated by Wroughton village. Beyond Wroughton itself the area is generally level with scattered farms and settlements focused around smaller field patterns for dairy farming. There are a series of buildings forming very small settlements. The area is dominated by the presence of Swindon to the north, with the

physical distance between Swindon (including the Southern Development Area) and Wroughton being partially covered by a Rural Buffer.

Development Considerations

Within the Wroughton Vale Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Ensure existing ponds and wildlife habitats, and sites that adjoin, abut or link these with other wildlife habitats, are conserved and where possible enhanced,
- ✓ Reflect the existing pattern of buildings, be they on an individual basis or in small groups,
- ✓ Maintain, and where possible enhance, the perception of separation between Swindon and Wroughton, through the use of planting,
- ✓ Have regard to the area's close proximity to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- ✓ Be accompanied by planting, whether woodlands, tree lines or hedgerows.
- ✓ Retain the perception of distinctiveness and separation from Swindon within the Rural Buffer area identified in the Local Plan.

iv. Scarp

The Scarp slope marks a dramatic step down into the clay vales. The steepness of the slope, accompanied by a generous quantity of planting, forms a highly visible backdrop to the Vale of the White Horse and Wroughton Vales. Existing settlements along the spring line are traditional small villages that are well integrated into their surrounding landscape. Public vantage points offer far reaching views over the clay vales towards the Cotswolds.

The Scarp Landscape Character Area lies partially within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a nationally important landscape designation for which the Local Plan Policy ENV11 provides a number of development constraints.

Development Considerations

Within the Scarp Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Maintain the scenic views northwards towards the Cotswolds,
- ✓ Integrate into the scarp slope with careful attention paid to new planting and maintaining the wooded appearance of the slope,
- ✓ Ensure that structures do not punctuate the scarp skyline when viewed from the clay vales or Downs Plains,
- ✓ Have regard to the area's location within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- ✓ Where appropriate, provide for a lowering of ground level through the removal of surface material, enabling the development to be inset into the slope, thereby reducing its overall height,
- ✓ Be restricted to single storey, where necessary, to reduce the development's visual impact,
- ✓ Retain the perception of distinctiveness and separation from Swindon within the Rural Buffer area identified in the Local Plan.

v. Downs Plains

The Downs Plains constitute an important "stepping stone" between the High Downs and the Vales. Again, an open landscape prevails with large field patterns and isolated, scattered forms of development. However, there are historic settlements present, for example Chiseldon village and the activity surrounding Wroughton airfield. There is a greater concentration of planting, focused around hedgerows, in contrast to the clumps of trees prevalent in the High Downs. The proximity and high visibility of this area from the High Downs ensures that any development could potentially be highly intrusive and should be considered accordingly.

The Downs Plains lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a nationally important landscape for which the Local Plan Policy

ENV11 provides a number of development constraints.

Development Considerations

Within the Downs Plains Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Reflect the existing pattern of isolated units through an open, dispersed development pattern,
- ✓ Ensure that scale and massing is restrained and low key, and appropriate to its surroundings,
- ✓ Where opportunities arise, ensure that existing elements of the built form, which compromise landscape character through their scale and visual intrusiveness, are integrated into the landscape,
- ✓ Where opportunities arise, provide for planting to create shelter belts based around hedgerow patterns rather than tree clumps,
- ✓ Have regard to the area's location within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- ✓ Ensure that Vistas towards the High Downs are not interrupted or compromised.

vi. High Downs

The High Downs are characterised by their openness, exposure and a perception of remoteness from urbanised settlements. Their height, minimal tree planting and large field patterns give this landscape far reaching views over its surroundings. Essentially, human settlements within this area are limited to small, isolated farms/dwellings, scattered in a dispersed pattern. Generally, very little development has taken place. For these reasons, in conjunction with inherent intrinsic qualities of the flora and fauna, the area has been designated as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Development Considerations

Within the High Downs Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Reflect the existing pattern of isolated units through an open, dispersed development pattern,

- ✓ Ensure that the scale and massing of the development does not adversely impact on the views into/out of the area, reflecting its high visibility and prominence, both inwards and outwards,
- ✓ Ensure that the skyline remains free from development,
- ✓ Where appropriate, ensure that any planting reflects existing planting levels and styles, e.g. tree clumps on the skyline and maintains the openness of the High Downs,
- ✓ Where appropriate, provide for alterations to the land form to screen the development in a manner that echoes the existing landform,
- ✓ Have regard to the area's location within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- ✓ Retain the area's perception of remoteness from urban development.

vii. Midvale Ridge

The Midvale Ridge is characterised by two distinct areas, one to the north-east and one to the south of Swindon. The southern Midvale Ridge area comprises the area of land to the south of Swindon that encompasses Coate Water and the open land to the west of Coate Water and is bounded by the M4 motorway, the eastern edge of Coate Water and Swindon's settlement boundary. The other Midvale Ridge Area contains the hilltop settlements of Blunsdon, Hannington and Highworth, which run along the Corallian Ridge. Included within the Corallian Ridge are the small valley settlements of Stanton Fitzwarren, Sevenhampton and South Marston. This Midvale Ridge area enjoys views over the surrounding lower clay vales, particularly northwards over the Thames Vale. This Midvale Ridge Area also adjoins the southern part of Highworth's settlement boundary, for which the Local Plan Policy ENV12 (Landscape Setting to Highworth), provides additional landscape guidance.

Development Considerations

Within the Midvale Ridge Landscape Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Ensure that non-developed hilltops remain free from development to preserve the prominence and quality of existing hilltop settlements,
- ✓ Where opportunities arise, provide for additional tree planting that maintains the scale and dispersed pattern of existing woodlands,
- ✓ Where appropriate, within the southern Midvale Ridge area, have regard to its close proximity to the Downs Plains and High Downs areas,
- ✓ Provide planting to contain the development within a discrete area, reflecting the undulations of the landscape.
- ✓ Retain the perception of distinctiveness and separation from Swindon within the Rural Buffer areas identified in the Local Plan.

viii. Lydiard Ridge

Lydiard Ridge lies on the western extremity of the Borough occupied by Lydiard House, a Listed Building, and its surrounding grounds, and is identified as being of historic value. This whole complex is situated on land marginally higher than its surroundings in a mature parkland setting. The house and grounds were constructed to complement each other, forming a dominant influence on the landscape. The grounds, which are open to the public, are one of the Borough's country parks.

Development Considerations

Within the Lydiard Ridge Character Area proposals should:

- ✓ Where opportunities arise, maintain and restore the 18th Century landscaped grounds of Lydiard House,
- ✓ Prevent adverse impacts on the setting of either the house or surrounding grounds,
- ✓ Maintain vistas into and out of the park,
- ✓ Retain the dominance of Lydiard House,
- ✓ Ensure linkages with Swindon through the Borough's network of Strategic Green Corridors are retained,

- ✓ Maximise accessibility by means of cycling and walking and such that they link into the existing cycle and footpath network.

Section 5: Contacts

5.1 As expressed in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6, the purpose of this guidance is to identify the key issues that should be addressed when considering development proposals within the eight landscape character areas. It should be stressed that this SPG is not exhaustive. Applicants are advised to contact the appropriate Council Officer for further guidance.

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Section 6: Further Guidance

6.1 The guidance contained within this SPG should not be considered in isolation. There are further Policies directly relevant to the Borough's Landscape Character Areas within the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 that will be referred to by the Borough Council when considering planning applications in the countryside.

6.2 Those Policies within the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 that warrant specific regard when producing planning applications within the Borough's Landscape Character Areas, comprise:

- Policy DS1 (Urban Concentration of Development)
- Policy DS6 (Standards of Design and Amenity)

- Policy ENV9 (Development in the Countryside)
- Policy ENV11 (North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
- Policy ENV12 (Landscape Setting to Highworth)
- Policy ENV13 (Rural Buffers)
- Policy ENV14 (Protection of Agricultural Land)
- Policy ENV16 (Biodiversity: National Sites)
- Policy ENV17 (Biodiversity: Local Sites)
- Policy ENV18 (Habitat and Species Protection)
- Policy ENV19 (Community Forest)
- Policy E7 (Employment at Rural Settlements)
- Policy E8 (Conversion of Buildings to Employment Use in the Countryside)
- Policy E9 (Farm Diversification)
- Policy H7 (Agricultural Workers Dwellings)
- Policy H8 (Conversions to Residential Use in the Countryside)
- Policy R2 (Visitor Attractions)
- Policy R3 (Science Museum)
- Policy R9 (Outdoor Recreation and Holiday Accommodation)
- Policy R11 (Country Parks)
- Policy CF11 (Renewable Energy Development)
- Policy CF12 (Wind Turbine Development)
- Policy T7 (National Trails)
- Policy T8 (Protection of Rights of Way).

6.3 Further guidance on development proposals affecting the North Wessex Downs AONB is contained within the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan. It should be noted that Swindon Borough Council has a statutory duty to have regard to the AONB designation and high priority will be given to maintaining and strengthening landscape character within the AONB.

