

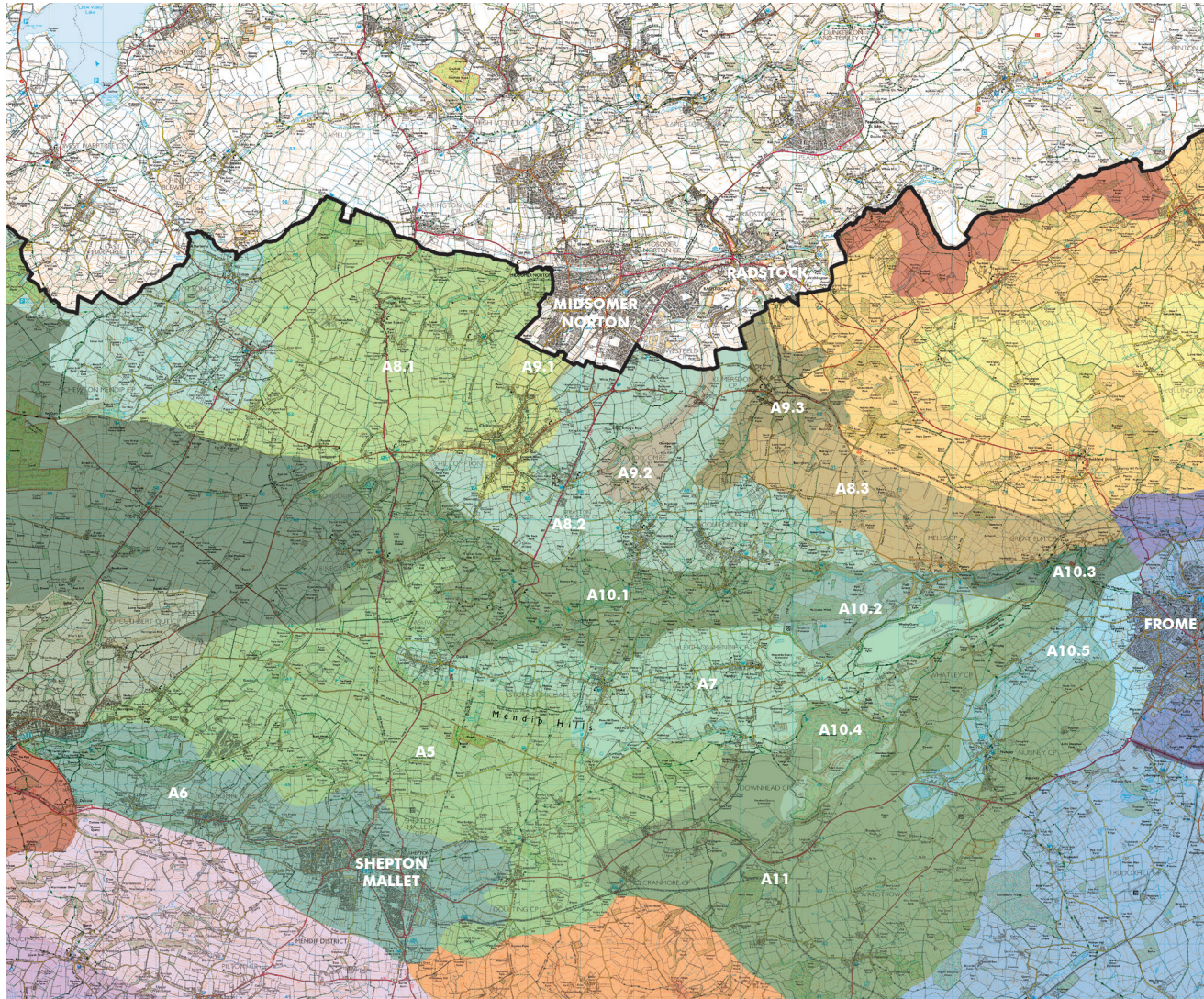
6.2 EAST MENDIP (BINEGAR TO FROME)



MENDIP CHARACTER AREAS

- A5** The Maesbury - Cranmore Ridge and Slopes
- A6** Sheppey Valley - Shepton Mallet, Croscombe & Dinder
- A7** The Leigh, Stoke & Oakhill Northern Flank
- A8** The Northern & Eastern Mendip Farmlands
 - A8.1** Ston Easton Plateau
 - A8.2** Chilcompton to Vobster
 - A8.3** Babington, Newbury Hill to Hapsford
- A9** The Radstock and Norton Valleys
 - A9.1** Chilcompton Village and Valley
 - A9.2** Halcombe / Charlton Valley
 - A9.3** Kilmerston Valley
- A10** East Mendip Valleys
 - A10.1** Gurney Slade, Nettlebridge, Edford, Lower Coleford to Vobster
 - A10.2** Mells
 - A10.3** Wadbury Valley and Vallis Vale
 - A10.4** Whatley Bottom
 - A10.5** The Nunney Brook / Egford Valley
- A11** Mendip South Eastern Farmlands

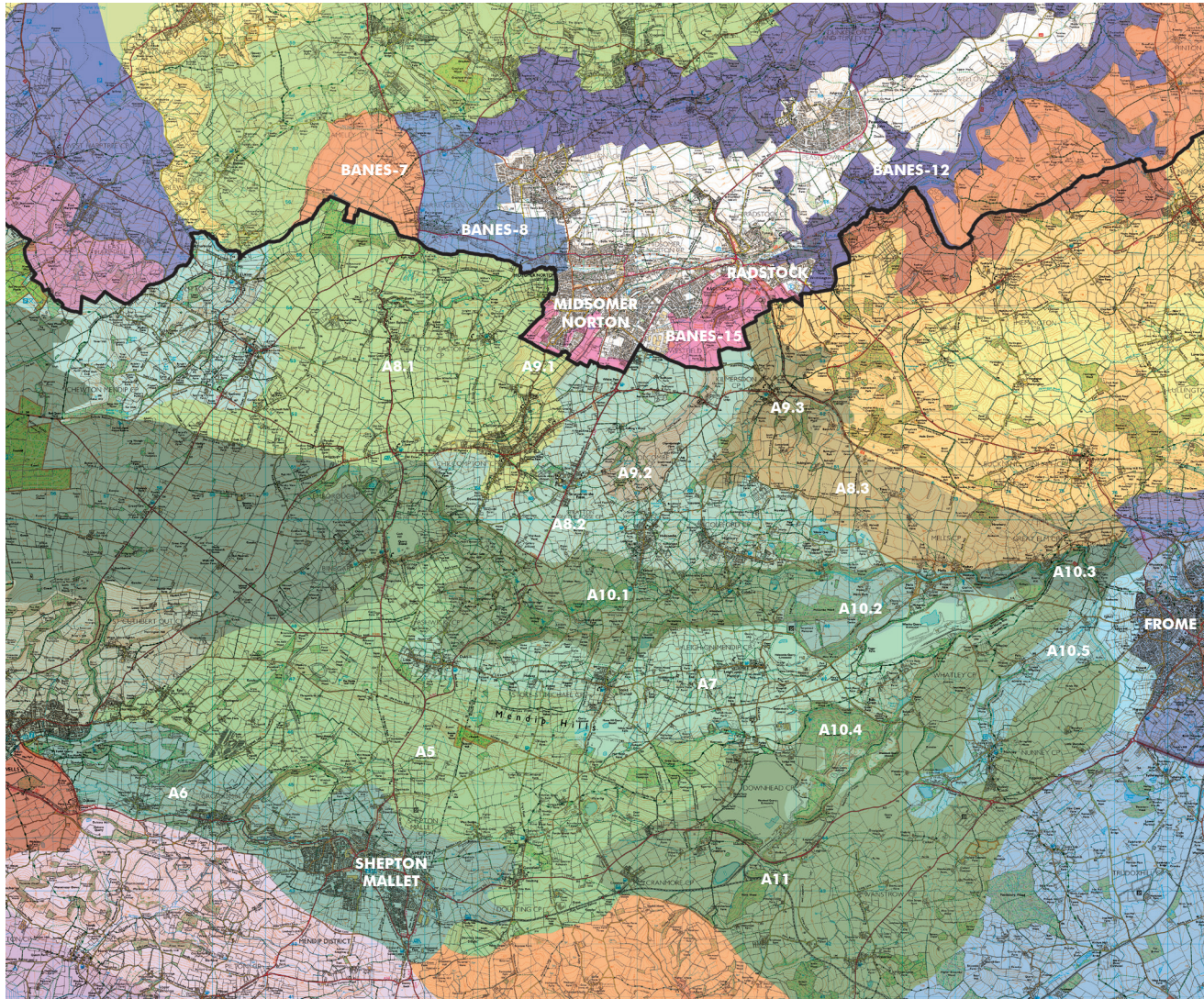
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ADJACENT CHARACTER AREAS

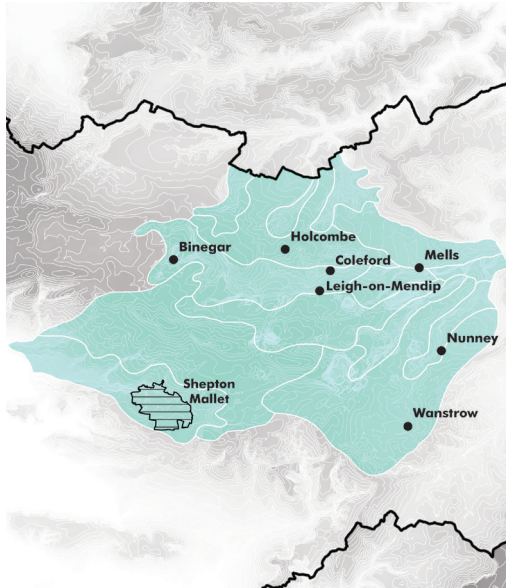
Bath & North East Somerset

- BANES-7** Hollow Marsh
- BANES-8** Farrington Gurney Farmlands
- BANES-12** Cam & Wellow Brook Valleys
- BANES-15** Norton Radstock Southern Farmlands

SETTLEMENTS IN EAST MENDIP

Minor Settlement Pattern Examples

Typical village settlement patterns only



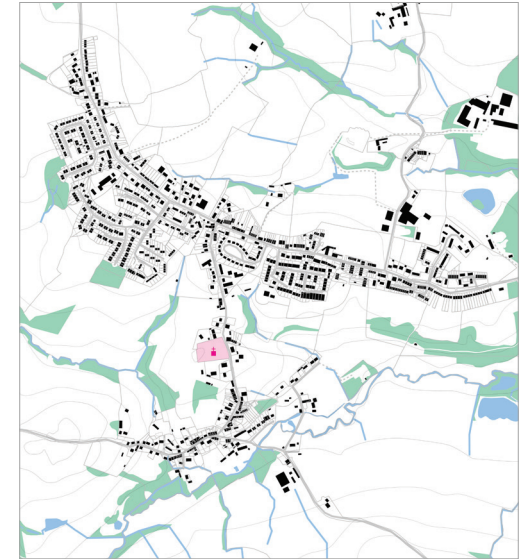
Binegar



Holcombe



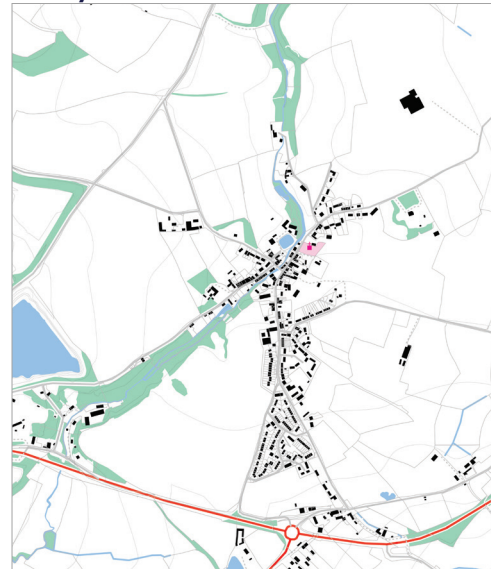
Coleford



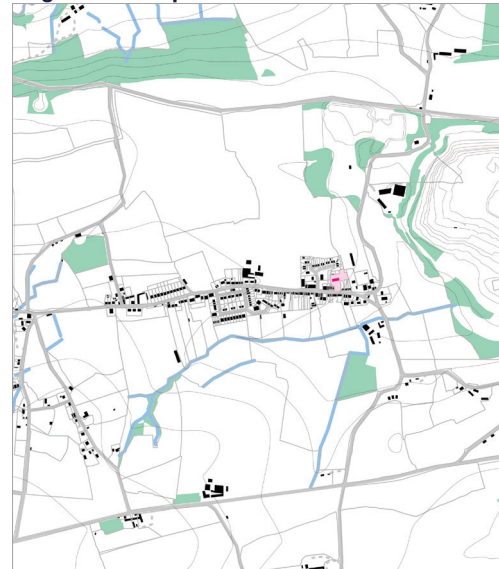
Mells



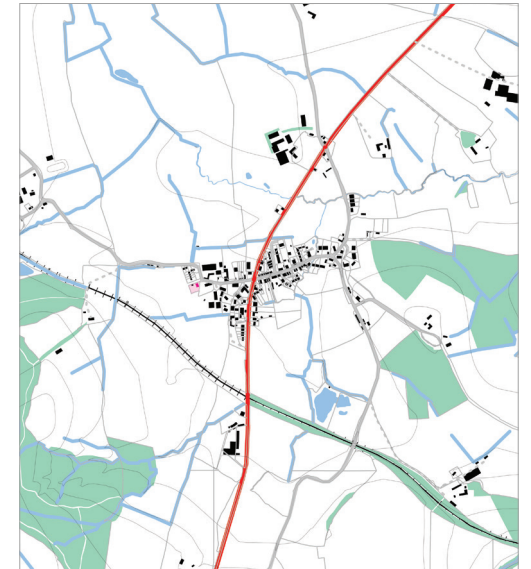
Nunney



Leigh-on-Mendip



Wanstrow



6.2 EAST MENDIP (BINEGAR TO FROME)

- 6.2.1 The division between the Central and Eastern Mendip areas does not follow a sharp break line between areas of strongly different character or clear physical boundaries on the ground. The AONB uses the line of the A39 through Green Ore but this was seeking to provide a definitive planning boundary for the highest quality landscape.
- 6.2.2 In the area between Binegar and Maesbury some subtle changes occur. Here the wide expanse of the upland plateau narrows to a more pronounced ridge with the strategic position of Maesbury castle marking the western end (as noted previously there are few such Iron Age forts within the Central Mendips as the wide open plateau offers fewer opportunities for defence). To the north west of the castle the main road to Green Ore (the B3135) follows the alignment of the former Roman Road to Charterhouse. Closer to Maesbury the current road abandons the line of the Roman route and takes a gentler more sheltered route lower down in the landscape. The sudden change in the nature of the road is notable along with the change to a more sheltered roadside landscape. To the north of the B3135 the landscape drops into a deep valley again serving to break the extent of the main plateau.
- 6.2.3 The distinctions between some of the various East Mendip LCA's are also less clearly defined than the areas to the west. Broad differences between seven character areas are drawn out in the following sections. These often start with the variations in topography which in turn has significant influence on many other aspects of character.
- 6.2.4 The principle areas and associated topography are:

- A5 The Maesbury – Cranmore Ridge – relating to the highest areas of the east Mendip spine with Maesbury Castle, Beacon Hill and Cranmore Tower.
- A6 The Sheppey Valley – containing Shepton Mallet, Croscombe and Dinder on the lower south side of the A5 ridge.
- A7 The Leigh, Stoke and Oakhill northern flank of the ridge.
- A8 (was A7) The North and East Mendip Farmlands – discrete tracts of more gently undulating plateau landscapes. This LCA is broken down into a series of landscapes by frequent deeply incised valleys which present their own distinctive character (set out as LCA's A9, - A10).
- A9 The Radstock and Norton Valleys – small scale valleys leading out to the adjoining BANES DC area to the north.
- A10 The Mells Valley – extending from Gurney Slade to near Frome and including the Whatley and Nunney Brook side valleys.
- A11 the Mendip South Eastern Farmlands – generally undulating farmland overlaid on the final section of the Mendip ridge that wraps around to the western side of Frome.

LCA A5 THE MAESBURY - CRANMORE RIDGE AND SLOPES

- 6.2.5 The landform between Maesbury and Cranmore is not a continuous ridge but within this character area the nature of the Mendips as a spine of high ground between the northern and southern slopes can be clearly appreciated. The route of the Old Frome / Old Wells Roads links many of the highest points and frequently provides simultaneous views to the north and south. The two ends of the spine are marked by the Maesbury Castle Hill Fort to the west and Cranmore Tower to the East. In between the few roads that cross the Mendip ridge north south find the low spots in the ridge to take the most sheltered crossings available.
- 6.2.6 The hard rocks of the Old Red Sandstone outcrop along most of the ridge as the high ground. This is overlaid by areas of later carboniferous and Jurassic geology on the lower side slopes. The geology on the southside of the ridge illustrates the succession through into the Jurassic with the golden yellow Oolitic limestones found at Doultong. Below Beacon Hill are



Old Frome Road, near East Horrington

the volcanic deposits of Silurian Andesitic lava; these are exposed as the hard rock deposits quarried near Stoke St Michael and Downhead.

6.2.7 While the geology varies through the LCA, the elevated topography helps define this as a continuous character area. On the north side of the ridge the land slopes steeply down towards the villages of Oakhill and Stoke St Michael both sheltered by the higher ground (located within LCA A9.1). On the southside the steep upper section of the ridge slopes flatten out to form more of a shelf of undulating high ground above Shepton Mallet and Croscombe.

6.2.8 With the elevated steep slopes and Krast geology there are few significant surface streams. A collection of sinks and swallets close to Thrupe Farm and at Windsor Hill take some of the local catchment. Thrupe Lane Swallet being the main cave among these follows the steeply sloping bedding of the limestone with a series of deep shafts; descending some 120 m over a 1.4 km length of cave.

6.2.9 The area is generally an open farmed landscape with only limited areas of woodland. A small area of ancient woodland, Ham Woods are contained within a deep combe. The majority of the other areas are larger blocks of plantation woodlands. These were predominantly planted as mixed woodlands often beech and conifer (pine and spruce).

6.2.10 The farmed landscape is generally livestock grazing with improved grasslands and occasional arable fields. The majority of the field boundaries are hedged with occasional field boundaries of dry stone walls on the higher ground to the west. Most of the fields are laid out as a medium scale regular later enclosure pattern.

6.2.11 With the elevated location there are few modern settlements. The easily defended high points of Beacon Hill and Maesbury attracted Bronze Age monuments and Iron Age Forts. The high ground also offered the benefit for navigation and dry ground conditions for the strategic routes east to west along the hills. The Roman road link from Charterhouse to Old Sarum ran close to the early hillforts and intersected with the Fosse Way at Beacon Hill. The line of the Roman Fosse Way up the steepest slope to the top of Beacon Hill can be traced within the woodland; the alignment pays little regard to the gradient and cuts across the hill fort. Sections of the east west route remained as a coaching route and then later a main road link. Two minor roads, Chilcote Drove and Bolters Lane have the wide verges characteristic of former drove roads.

6.2.12 South and East Horrington sit within the lower slopes clustered around the start of the Old Frome Road out of Wells. Doultong, Chelynch and Bodden are located within the shelter of Ingsdons Hill and close to the head of the Sheppy Valley. This group grew up around the particular industry of the Doultong Stone quarries. Elsewhere the pattern is of more scattered isolated farmsteads and cottages mainly on the lower shelf of high ground below the ridge. A few very exposed properties sit close to the ridgeline main roads; including the Wagon and Horses Inn a former coaching stop on the Frome Road near Beacon Hill.

6.2.13 The more modern north south roads follow the more gentle topography. The area is cut through by the busy A37 Shepton to Bristol and A367 Bath road. A second main road links the A361 to Stoke St Michael as an important connection for the heavy quarry lorry traffic. These routes are both heavily trafficked and generate noise and a degree of severance between parts of the landscape.

6.2.14 The former Somerset and Dorset Railway also avoided the highest part of the ridge by extending around the end of Maesbury Hill. The route cuts across the high ground north of Croscombe and Shepton with occasional elements of railway infrastructure remaining as part of the landscape. In particular road bridges, the former Maesbury Station and the viaduct at Windsor Hill / Ham Woods.

6.2.15 More modern infrastructure is limited within this area. There are clusters of telecommunication masts next to Cranmore Tower and at Warren Farm. The main wind turbine also at Warren Farm is visible from both the Maesbury Hill Fort and distant viewpoints. Within the undulating plateau a number of solar farms have been set up. One of these close to the A37 at Downside is located within an area where the degree of tranquillity is impacted by the main road. The others (a group of three separate approvals) are clustered around minor back road lanes at Crapnell Farm within an area that is otherwise quite remote and unspoilt.



Meadows next to Old Frome Road near Masbury

6.2.16 The lower slope areas of the southern flank are accessible via a network of minor lanes and public footpaths. The upper sections of the ridge have fewer paths and sections of the Old Frome/Wells Roads are not very suitable for walking. The hill fort is accessible via a footpath and provides spectacular views to Glastonbury, Wells, the Quantocks and to the north. Beacon Hill wood is a Woodland Trust woodland and is freely accessible.

6.2.17 The woodlands at Cranmore Tower include a number of public footpaths including the East Mendip Way. After a major restoration project the tower is open as a tea room and for the public to climb to enjoy the view. The owners of the tower currently promote circular walks within the wood as part of the experience of visiting. The land adjacent to Maesbury Castle is occupied by the Mendip Golf Course; which provides users with a dramatic range of views from both sides of the ridge.

6.2.18 The area of Beacon Hill, including the hilltop woodland and Bronze Age tumuli are identified as a Special Landscape Feature.



Maesbury Castle

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A5 - MAESBURY - CRANMORE RIDGE AND SLOPES	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Undulating long ridge of high ground • South facing lower section of ridge side forms shelf or plateau	• Settlement & Infrastructure • Small sheltered hamlet settlement and isolated farms • Disused railway route links across ridge with remaining engineering structures and former station building • Wind turbines on higher slopes • A37 main road • Ridge road with occasional coaching inns
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Managed farmland – mainly improved grasslands • Historic earthworks • Telecom masts	• Areas of semi natural appearance, remote hilltop spots, ridge road provides remote character • Presence of main roads source of background noise across many areas • Extensive areas of landscape alongside & in view from strategic routes provide sense of unspoilt landscape for road users • Hostile sections of road reduce amenity for non vehicular users
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Beacon Hill & surrounding landscape (SLF) Geological and archaeologically important site with accessible woodland with views • Bronze Age Burial Mounds & Iron Age Forts • Roman Road • Cranmore Tower listed building • Former railway with station, bridges, viaduct and tunnels	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Long ranging views from ridge to north and south • Tower iconic landmark with woodland setting and distant 360° views	

LCA A6 THE SHEPPEY VALLEY - SHEPTON MALLET, CROSCOMBE AND DINDER

- 6.2.19 The River Sheppy rises from springs in the narrow valley below Doultling (including the St Aldhem spring a listed stone dressed structure around the historic holy well). The watercourse flows down through Shepton Mallet and the deep narrow valley that contains Croscombe, Dinder and Dulcote.
- 6.2.20 The landscape of this area is generally separated from the landscape to the north and south by the steeper slopes of the lower valley sides. To the north the landform flattens out into an undulating plateau backed by the Maesbury Beacon Hill Ridge (LCA A5). To the south the area is contained by the Old Wells Road (the higher old route between Shepton and Wells). Within this lower section the landscape is more contained with fewer long views and has a more sheltered wooded character.
- 6.2.21 The valley takes a winding course and downstream of the town the path of the river is closely followed by the route of the Wells / Shepton Road. The valley drops by around 60 m over approximately 5 km between Bowlish and Dulcote. For the most part the river is contained in a narrow channel close to the main road with no real flood plain. In places the watercourse is channelled within mill leats and ponds; elsewhere it is culverted through parts of the villages. Downstream of Dinder the valley opens out to include some low-lying meadows alongside.
- 6.2.22 The nature of this as a typical Mendip combe is reinforced by outcrops of rock and hanging woodlands.
- 6.2.23 Around Dinder the valley widens out, but continues to be contained by steep ridge lines to the north and

south. The south side (within LCA E1.2) includes some prominent woodlands hanging on the steep slopes. On the northside a high wooded ridge separates the Sheppey Valley from another that contains South Horrington and the eastern side of Wells.

- 6.2.24 The wooded ridge includes the Hill Fort at Kings Castle and another deep combe at Dinder Wood. At its western end the ridge drops steeply down to the historic core of the city, where the cathedral sits close to the woodlands of Tor Hill. Much (but not all) of the ridge feature is identified as a Special Landscape Feature.



Chilcote Drove



Chilcote Drove

6.2.25 The area includes some small fragments of ancient woodland. East of Croscombe small thin strips of woodland on the north side of the main valley link up with Ham Woods in a side valley which extend into the adjacent LC area (A5). Dinder Wood while not listed as ancient is contiguous with Lyatt and Kings Castle Woods to the west which are. The area of Kings Castle Woods is owned and managed by the Somerset Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve.

6.2.26 The woodland areas are set amongst a small-scale field pattern of more irregular steeply sloping pastures. Some of these are identified as local wildlife sites. The combination of woodlands and tight network of connecting hedge lines creates a more enclosed landscape within the narrow sections of the valley.

6.2.27 Around the head of the valley and on areas of shallower gradients some larger fields are used for arable production. These have a larger scale and generally more rectilinear pattern.

6.2.28 The LCA adjoins and extends around the east, north and western sides of Shepton Mallet. Historically edges of the town were defined by the line of the Fosse Way to the east and the rising ground to the north. Larger scale post war development has extended across the line of the Roman road and infilled the gap to Frog Lane. The lane sits in a small side valley and with trees and smaller scale development provides a softer edge to the town on this side. The larger scale industrial and retail buildings are notable in the views in towards the built up area from the Doulting Hill direction.

6.2.29 The town is more contained from external views on its northern side due to the higher ground of the valley side. The built up edge is also contained by the impressive Charlton Viaduct this listed 300 m long structure marks the end of the visible section of the Shepton to Bath extension of the Somerset Dorset Railway (Grade II*). The railway continues to climb across the open hillside of Barren Down narrowly missing two Neolithic / Bronze Age burial mounds (SAM). A second viaduct shorter but taller and also listed crosses a narrow side valley providing a dramatic gateway to the Bath Road entrance to the town. Further west the increasingly steep landform has provided an obvious natural limit to the town around Bowlsh. At this point the Sheppey River reappears from the edge of the residential area and the strong character of the semi natural small valley landscape becomes more dominant.

6.2.30 The village settlements downstream of Shepton developed along the route of the Wells Road. Croscombe still has the main road forming the main village street. Dinder is bypassed by the road (the historical maps of the 1800's show the village set back from the road); the village developed around the big house alongside the river; the grounds separate the house and village from the main road creating a quiet backwater setting. Dulcote has been bypassed with the creation of the Wells Bypass in the late 1990's with only traffic heading into the eastern side of the city now passing through the village.

6.2.31 Although the LCA includes the built up area of Shepton the general area outside of the town is reasonably free of major infrastructure. The town sewage treatment works is visible from the main

road within the valley. The main aspect of modern intrusion are the busy roads; with very heavy traffic on the A37 and A361 links to Bristol, Bath and Frome (A37 fkiws exceed 7500 v/day). The Wells Road is quieter but as the route follows the narrow winding valley and runs through the middle of Croscombe it again has a major impact.

6.2.32 The existing main road network has an impact on the attraction of the local rights of way network through noise and severance of potential routes. Away from the larger roads the valley sides and woodland areas do offer some attractive recreational facilities. Part of the Fosse Way and the former railway line include path links (the line itself is not fully open to pedestrian access but there are paths below the Charlton Viaduct and at Windsor Hill. The woodlands include footpath links and the accessible nature reserve area at Kings Castle Wood. Dinder Woods are also listed as a recognised climbing location.



View from Sleight Lane above Dinder

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A6 - THE SHEPPEY VALLEY, SHEPTON MALLET, CROSCOMBE & DINDER	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
- Narrow steeply dropping small river combe valley with small side valley - Rock outcrops - Small areas of ancient woodland - Small scale irregular fields in narrower sections of valley some larger fields where cross section opens out. - Predominantly grazing / improved grasslands with hedged boundaries - Hedge and occasional field/parkland trees	- Town of Shepton sits within LCA - Smaller villages downstream in narrow valley - Main road dominates base of valley within villages - Bi-passed villages with less traffic effects - Villages with strong historic character and limited post war development. - Sewage treatment plant also notable within base of valley
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
- Managed improved grasslands - River contained within channels former mills - Former railway on viaducts on edge of built up area - Small areas of parkland in lower valley village	- Small scale intimate valley - Busy road, hostile conditions within villages - Remote tranquil spots on higher slopes away from main road
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
- Barren Down hillside slope containing north side of the town between viaducts – SLF - Substantial former railway viaducts - King Castle Tor Woods Ridgeline – includes iron age fort, areas of ancient woodland, parkland, WWII defences (comprehensive collection of pill boxes & anti tank blocks) & golf course (area partially covered by SLF)	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
- Limited long views due to relatively low topography. - Viaducts form local landmarks	

LCA - A7 - THE LEIGH, STOKE AND OAKHILL NORTHERN FLANK

- 6.2.33 This LCA extends along the lower slopes of the northern edge of the east Mendip Ridge. In this position the landscape provided more sheltered conditions for the three small villages found here. Although off the top of the ridge; Leigh on Mendip and Stoke St Michael are positioned in elevated locations at around 200m AOD, Oakhill is slightly higher at around 220m AOD.
- 6.2.34 The outline of the LCA broadly follows the geological outcrops along the ridgeline. Above Stoke St Michael the high ground reflects the outcrop of Andesite lava and volcanic ash deposits. These are quarried at the Moons Hill quarry as hard wearing roadstone. To the east the ridge is formed of the Old Red sandstone outcrop. The three villages sit on the narrow outcrop of Black Rock Limestone; this band of up ended strata is quarried near Leigh on Mendip and in the major quarry at Whatley. The Whatley Quarry falls within this LCA area as the continuation of this outcrop. At the northern edge of the area the land falls away steeply corresponding to a line of hard coarse red sandstone.
- 6.2.35 With the underlying limestone there are only a few surface watercourses. A small stream flows from Leigh on Mendip down into the Mells Park Finger Valley (LCA A10.2). Further west at Stoke St Michael there are a few small swallets feeding into the Stoke Lane cave system (see section 5).
- 6.2.36 The landform varies from the steep section of valley that contains Stoke St Michael to areas of gently rolling plateau. The high point of Tadhil is a continuation of the east Mendip ridge. Most of the

area has a north facing aspect. The main street of Leigh on Mendip follows the northern edge of the small stream valley providing the village with a south facing slope. The area includes a small area of south facing slope around the hamlet of Downhead.

- 6.2.37 The main section of ridge is occupied by the Old Wells Road (which links to Frome and continues to the west within the Maesbury - Cranmore Ridge area (LCA A5). This section still feels comparatively remote but with the lower and less pronounced ridge landform the sense of exposure is less than the section to the west. The route is slightly more sheltered with the Cranmore plantations (landscape mounding and planting around the Moons Hill quarry may increase this sense over time). Amongst the occasional farmsteads fronting on to the main road is Tadhil House Farm a former coaching inn on the high road (similar to the Wagon and Horses Inn in LCA 5).
- 6.2.38 The ridge provides occasional long distance views but with the more gentle landform these are more glimpsed.
- 6.2.39 Below the ridge the three villages are linked by a smaller (but quite busy) local lane. With parts of the villages extending out along this lane and occasional clusters of other properties on route this is a more settled landscape than the higher ridge (here and in LCA A5). The villages comprise of generally unassuming cottages and modest housing mostly built with the local limestone. Leigh on Mendip Church stands out as a feature on the small ridgeline through the village. Oakhill has a few more substantial buildings including the former brewery malthouse, Pondsmead House and Oakhill Manor.

- 6.2.40 The area includes only limited woodland cover. Although the boundary with the neighbouring LCA to the north (the Mells Valley LCA A10) is often wooded. This starts with the woodlands of the Mells Park Estate; to the north of Leigh on Mendip the edge of the plateau is marked by the long line of Leigh / Hurdlestone Wood. Between Stoke St Michael and Oakhill the area is fringed by Harridge Wood. The plantation woodland around Cranmore Tower (mainly within LCA A5) is a mixed pine beech woodland.

- 6.2.41 Between the villages the landscape is comprised of small scale irregular fields enclosed by hedges. These are mainly dairy and livestock grazing with a small amount of arable, mainly maize, production.



Whatley Quarry, Chantry

6.2.42 The area includes a network of minor winding lanes which combined with the tall hedges creates a more intimate landscape.

6.2.43 The quarries have had a substantial impact on the landscape within this LCA. Over the last 20 – 30 years the perimeters of these quarries have been progressively enclosed with mounding and planting. On some sections of the quarries this is now well established and starting to mature. The internal workings are generally creating deep sided excavations with stepped cliff faces that extend below the water table. The Whatley Quarry is one of the Mendip super quarries with its own rail link (LCA A10.4). Halecombe and Moons Hill quarries are smaller scale footprints operating excavation and crushing plants. Both of these quarries depend on lorry haulage with access heading south out to the A361. Other disused quarries remain as abandoned workings between Leigh on Mendip and Soho, Downhead and at Stoke St Michael. With little disturbance some of these are developing as more wild natural habitats.

6.2.44 Aside from the quarries the area has few infrastructure intrusions. A small solar farm is located on the edge of the LCA at Soho Farm (within LCA 10.2). The main roads and key lanes are relatively busy; which generates a low level of constant background noise. The most heavily route through the area is the short section of the A367 Fosse Way through Oakhill.

6.2.45 The area is accessible via a network of rights of way; mainly short sections of footpath between the lanes.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A7 - THE LEIGH STOKE AND OAKHILL, NORTHERN FLANK OF THE RIDGE	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
- Elevated generally north facing slopes - Localised shallow valleys within larger scale landform - Substantial areas of woodland form boarder with adjoining LCA's & buffers to quarries - Small scale irregular field pattern with predominantly grazing & some maize production - Disused quarries form significant natural wild spots	- Villages set within sheltered lea of higher ground with clear relationship to topography - Small solar farm
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
- Extensive quarrying part of history & ongoing large but generally well hidden extraction sites - Top ridge road link on former coaching route long straight road away from villages - Local lane linking villages busy for scale of route - A37 through Oakhill cuts through village separating areas & school	- Upper ridge area offer some sense of remote condition, glimpsed distant views hint at elevation - Generally quiet landscape away from main roads - Some tranquillity on edges close to woodland borders
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
- Ridge road – former coaching route - Distinctive farm / coaching inn buildings at Tadhil - Mells Park boundary wall / park corner	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
- Views to Cranmore Tower - Glimpsed distant views off ridge	

LCA - A8 - THE NORTH AND EAST MENDIP FARMLANDS - DISCRETE TRACTS OF MORE GENTLY UNDULATING PLATEAU LANDSCAPES

6.2.46 This LCA is broken down into a series of landscapes by frequent deeply incised valleys which present their own distinctive character (set out as LCA's A9, - A10). The landscape is generally comprised of gently undulating topography occupied by small scale mixed farming. The area subdivides into three main blocks, these include:

- A8.1 An extensive area of open farmland around Ston Easton
- A8.2 A more confined area stretching around the southern side of Chilcompton to Vobster including the villages of Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Holcombe and Highbury.
- A8.3 Babington, Newbury Hill and Hapsford includes an area of open farmland to the north of Vobster and Mells.



View within the Somer Valley close Chilcompton Road

A8.1 STON EASTON PLATEAU

6.2.47 The LCA borders the Chilcompton Valley and main roads at Old Down. Close to Emborough the boundary follows the route of East End Lane along the break of slope between the plateau and the rising ground of Nedge Hill. To the north west of this Chewton Mendip sits just beyond the edge of the plateau within a distinct valley (in LCA A3). To the north of Ston Easton the land drops away sharply at the district boundary. Much of the area is at around 150 – 200m AOD. The Wellow Brook starts within Ston Easton and drops to the district boundary close to Midsomer Norton (crossing the boundary at around 100m AOD).

6.2.48 Within this area the landscape is open and with the gently rolling landform there are many views across the expanse of the LCA. One small hill Chew Down stands out as a notable narrow steep ridge providing views in all directions.

6.2.49 The farmed landscape is mixed livestock grazing with silage and hay cropping and some limited arable production. The fields are laid out to a semi regular enclosure pattern with low drystone walls. Occasional field boundary and free-standing parkland trees stand out in the views.

6.2.50 By way of contrast the village and Ston Easton Park are more enclosed with buildings and the main estate wall enclosing the road. The park is a designated historic landscape (grade II) including parkland and garden areas. The estate is separated from the village by roadside shelterbelt and cottages fronting on to the high street. A fringe of woodland along the edge of a stream valley encloses the setting of the main manor house and the gardens. The house

(now a hotel) looks out over an area of parkland with trees and up to the village church at Manor Farm. The designated area includes an extensive area to the north and south of the main house. Within the areas more removed from the house the parkland landscape has fewer free-standing trees. The northern part of the park is given over to a golf course and country club most of which lies outside of the designated area. The rest of the course is more heavily treed than the open plateau and links with a woodland block on the edge of the district were the land starts to fall away into the Cam Valley.

6.2.51 Close to the main house a small natural valley on the north of the building was laid out as gardens and pleasure grounds. Humphry Repton was commissioned to produce a Red Book design for the grounds in 1792 but not all his proposals were implemented. The valley appears to be one area where some of his ideas were undertaken, with a previously stagnant pool converted to a more natural stream with cascades. Terraces extend from the north face of the house below which grassed slopes lead down to the stream. An area of more formal pleasure grounds and a kitchen garden sit in the up-stream section of the valley and parts are noted as pre-dating the Repton scheme. The combination of design using controlled views and natural elements of the landscape are carried through into vistas between clumps of trees and views along the valley.

6.2.52 Aside from Ston Easton the area is sparsely populated. The small hamlet of Clapton sits on a high spot close to the district boundary. Originally laid out as small collection of buildings around the larger group of Manor Farm; the hamlet is now a mix of historic and post war housing. A small quarry in the village having once provided local building stone is now

used for production of reconstituted walling stone. Historic maps indicated the village was at one time enclosed on most sides by orchards.

6.2.53 The B3114 forms a minor back road link from Emborough to Chewton Mendip. A number of farms and individual houses are dotted along this road and off the side road lanes such as at East End Lane. While there is no significant hamlet at Emborough the parish church stands out as a dramatic isolated building visible across parts of the open plateau.

6.2.54 In addition to the main road at Emborough two other relatively busy main roads cut across the plateau. The A37 road from Shepton to Bristol and the A39 Wells to Bristol route join north of Ston Easton. With the open landscape the road noise is audible across much of the area and the passing traffic often in open view.

6.2.55 Large wind turbines at Shooters Bottom (in adjacent LCA A2) are frequently visible in views from within this area. A solar farm is also contained within several fields close to Chilcompton.



Strap Lane near Ston Easton

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A8.1 - STON EASTON PLATEAU	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
Extensive open plateau occasional small topographic features Chew Down & Ston Easton Park valley	- Isolated small village of Ston Easton along with scatter of individual farmsteads - Main road across plateau cuts through village. - Large wind and solar farm developments
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
- Improved grassland managed landscape predominantly livestock and grassland - Regular medium scale enclosure landscape drystone wall field boundaries with trees & occasional free standing field trees - Parkland landscape trees	- Sparsely populated expansive landscape providing scope to experience remote spots away from main road - Limited tranquillity near road & solar / wind installations
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
- Ston Easton park Registered Historic Parkland and Gardens – influenced by Repton (Grade II) - Emborough Church of The Blessed Virgin Mary (Grade II*) - Chew Down Topographic Feature - Strap Lane Green-way	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
- Pen Hill Mast in view from many locations - Nearby wind turbines glimpsed in views - Open views across open plateau	

A8.2 CHILCOMPTON TO VOBSTER (INCLUDING THE VILLAGES OF STRATTON ON THE FOSSE, HOLCOMBE AND HIGHBURY)

- 6.2.56 This area starts at the western end as a narrow strip of landscape between Chilcompton and the Nettlebridge Valley; widening out to the south east of the village. It includes the area around Stratton on the Fosse, upper Holcombe and the Highbury end of Coleford Village. The landscape is a mix of small-scale farmland and the spread-out settlements, which are all former mining villages.
- 6.2.57 The topography is hard to follow as a consistent pattern through this area. Generally the landform is gently rolling high ground sandwiched between the deep long east-west tract of the Mells Valley (located to the south LCA A10) and the three Norton Radstock Valleys (LCA A9) that head north. Various parts of this LCA area drain into the adjoining areas north and south.
- 6.2.58 The general character of the landscape is irregular small fields subdivided by hedgerows with a good coverage of hedgerow trees. To the north of Stratton and Holcombe the landscape becomes progressively more open with larger scale fields on the ridges between the Norton Radstock Valleys.
- 6.2.59 This area forms an important part of the wider North Somerset Coal Field. Where the Nettlebridge Valley (LCA A10) provides interest from the remains of Roman and Medieval mining the higher landscape of this LCA perhaps bore the brunt of the later periods of coal extraction. Within the Nettlebridge Valley the coal measures are exposed at the surface; on the plateau they are overlaid by a cap of hard Dolomitic Conglomerate. The mines on these higher areas had to sink shafts down to reach the coal and then continue to significant depths to extract from workable seams. Amongst a cluster of pits to the south of Chilcompton / Downside Strap Pit was worked to a depth of 500 m; becoming the deepest in Somerset.
- 6.2.60 Holcombe and Highbury expanded as mining villages with the operation of the surrounding pits, miners relocated to Somerset from other coal producing areas such as Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. Although the Somerset Coal Field was not as productive as other parts of the county many of the mines continued active operations during both WWI and WWII. After the nationalisation of the industry in 1947 the production in Somerset began to diminish with the last pit closing in 1973 [BGS]. Very little really obvious mining influence remains within the area; the few coal tips are relevantly small and most of the wheel houses or other buildings have been removed or absorbed into other uses. The mine and coking plant at Vobster is scheduled as an ancient monument (with LCA A10).
- 6.2.61 In addition to the mines the area also includes the small former quarries at Vobster. These and the mines were linked to the North Somerset Railway by a tramway that extended through the area north of Vobster around to the Mackintosh and Newbury Colliery Sites north of Coleford.
- 6.2.62 The area to the north of Highbury remains as a heavily disturbed landscape with the site of the former Newbury Colliery having become a waste recycling centre and concrete stone plant. Elsewhere within this LCA many of the other mine sites have become small employment / light industrial sites. While many of these are unsightly or seem out of place within an otherwise rural landscape there is a connection to the historical activity that gave rise to the main villages and the reason why miners and their families relocated to this part of the county.
- 6.2.63 The village areas of Highbury and upper Holcombe within this LCA are dominated by the more recent mainly 20 century development growth (the lower parts of both of these contain some of the older buildings and are described in LCA A10.2). Of the two Highbury is to a greater extent more obviously developed as as mainly post war housing estates. In places the development is seen as extensive skyline development on the edge of the Mells River Valley. Holcombe has the Manor House, Hill House and the former village brewery as a few elements of more historic character.
- 6.2.64 The settlement pattern of Stratton-on-the-Fosse has two main parts; the Roman Road and Downside Abbey. The Roman Road has a continuous frontage of residential development on at least the eastern side of the road. A few cul-de-sac blocks of post war housing extend back from the main road; but

the overall impression is of the modern development being defined by the ancient road. The Abbey Church (grade I listed) stands out in distant views as a substantial building seen over the rest of the village. The rest of the Abbey site is occupied by the Downside School grounds and buildings which have a mix of historic and modern education buildings set within an extensive parkland / playing field setting. The school has a backdrop of small blocks of woodland and groups of individual parkland trees throughout the campus.

6.2.65 Although the area contains three substantial villages and the extensive areas of former minerals working there are few major elements of modern infrastructure within the landscape. A single modest wind turbine is located close to Downside Farm at the western end of the LCA. This is glimpsed from Coalpit Lane in an area that otherwise feels quite remote. As noted the various small employment/industrial sites located on the former mine workings are often encountered as intrusions in the rural locations. The A367 Fosse Way is the busiest section of road in the area; the traffic having the greatest impact on the internal character of Stratton-on-the-Fosse.

6.2.66 The villages of Holcombe and Highbury/Coleford are more remote from the main road network and for the scale of both settlements they feel a bit disconnected from the nearby towns. Traffic on the smaller roads that connect these villages to the main road network has an impact on landscape character. This is in terms of an impact on general tranquillity in and around the lanes through background noise and more hostile conditions for non-vehicular users.

6.2.67 At the western end of the LCA south of Chilcompton and around Stratton-on-the-Fosse the footpath network is limited. A few connections can be made via lanes and paths from these two villages out to neighbouring landscapes. Footpath or minor lane access out into the countryside from the urban edge of Midsomer Norton is poor with the limited number of paths and the busy Fosse Way and Wells Roads. The landscape on the immediate edge of the town is also quite open providing limited interest or distraction from the traffic.

6.2.68 To the east of Stratton-on-the-Fosse the lanes and footpaths provide more of a connected network providing links between the villages and into the adjoining landscapes. At the far eastern end of the area the disused Vobster Quarry has been converted into an inland diving and outdoor swimming centre.



View from Charlton Road near Charlton

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A8.2 - CHILCOMPTON TO VOBSTER	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Undulating plateau topography • Patterns of small & medium scale farmland • Irregular field patterns • Irregular blocks of small woodland cover, including some areas of Ancient Woodland.	• Several isolated mining villages areas of historic cores with post war expansion development • Former mine locations now small rural / light industrial enterprise sites
LAND USE MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Small scale farming with occasional areas of larger blocks of regular field patterns with arable/maize production • Areas previously part of active coal mining industry	• Areas of isolated remote back lanes & villages set away from strategic routes • Areas with some tranquillity away from main road
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Downside Abbey – strongly contrasting landmark building set within parkland setting • Former mine locations – mix of industrial heritage and modern light industrial use • Former quarries including inland diving centre • Former railways & tramways	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Limited views including glimpsed views to Ammerdown & Cranmore Towers	

A8.3 BABINGTON, NEWBURY HILL AND HAPSFORD

- 6.2.69 This area is a continuation of the varied rolling plateau that can be traced stretching around from Ston Easton to Great Elm. The area sits as a transition between the secluded narrow Mells Valley and the higher area of the Mells Down / Buckland Ridge (LCA C2). The area is contained by this rising ground of the area to the north.
- 6.2.70 The topography varies with parts of the plateau draining in different directions. At the western end the land drains into a shallow valley towards Kilmersdon (LCA A9.3). Nearby the area to the north of Mells falls gently towards the village draining into the Mells catchment. Further east the land rises up to the local high point of Newbury Hill (at 145 AOD) and then drops down to the Buckland Stream valley and Hapsford House.
- 6.2.71 Most of the area is open farmland laid out as medium scale regular hedged fields. The land is farmed as dairy/livestock grazing and some arable production. A small block of mixed woodland exists on Newbury Hill.
- 6.2.72 The hilltop at Newbury Hill is identified as having both a tumulus and hill fort earthwork (these are not scheduled or accessible). The hill fort may have connections to the other two similar sites on the Wadbury and Tedbury hills in the adjacent Mells Valley.
- 6.2.73 An area around Babington House is identified as a Registered Historic Landscape. The Park and Gardens were laid out from around 1750 onwards. The main house (listed grade II* - now a hotel) is located to take advantage of the shallow valley providing a

secluded setting and views over artificial lakes. The parkland extends to some 52 ha and includes some small areas of woodland shelter belts enclosing the gardens and areas of parkland with individual trees. These extend to include the area of Babington Wood an ancient woodland within LCA 9.3. The registered area also includes 5ha of gardens, pleasure grounds and the ornamental lakes.

- 6.2.74 A second registered garden exists within this character at Hapsford House to the east of Great Elm. The site which is grade II listed extends to some 5ha. The gardens were laid out in the early part of the 19 century and include a series of terraced garden spaces that lead down to a mill stream walk next to the Mells River.

- 6.2.75 As a direct contrast to the historic parks and gardens this character area was also involved in the local coal mining activity with the large Mells Colliery close to Holwell Farm north east of Vobster. The mine was originally open between 1863 and 1881, and then re-opened in 1909 until being finally closed in 1943. Some of the buildings and an overgrown spoil heap remain. The site now remains partially developed as a employment site and part as the disused tip.

- 6.2.76 The Mells coal mine was connected to the North Somerset railway via a small branch line (that went on to connect to the other Coleford/Highbury mines (marked as the Newbury Railway on the 1929 OS map). There was also a second small tramway line



Park Hill/Conduit Hill Lane

that connected to the Mells Quarry in the same area. The main line of the disused North Somerset railway is located on the edge of this LCA (bordering LCA C2). The former Mells Station was located at the junction of the Newbury Line. Another sizeable employment site is located in the same area of the junction.

6.2.77 The area is generally free from major infrastructure, other elements of modern intrusive infrastructure or major roads. The two employment sites located on the former colliery and railway junction are notable exceptions to this.

6.2.78 The area provides a good level recreational access. The local footpath network extends from Babington with some access through the parkland across to the area north of Mells. The former North Somerset Railway has been converted into a surfaced Sustrans Cycleway. The route extends along the northern edge of this area (within LCA C2 but with views out across this landscape) and is very popular. Two quiet lanes link the cycle track to the villages of Mells and Great Elm. The Great Elm link is part of the Sustrans route continuation to Frome and beyond (route 24) and also serves as a short section of the long-distance Macmillan Way footpath.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A8.3 - BABINGTON, NEWBURY HILL AND HAPSFORD	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
- Gently undulating plateau landscape - Medium scale regular pattern farmland - Limited woodland cover	- Scattered individual & groups of development - Isolated light industrial sites
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
- Parkland landscape - Coal mining area - Connecting disused railway and sidings now multi use path and employment sites	Areas providing degrees of remote isolation
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
- Babington Estate Registered Landscape - Hapsford Registered Garden - Former mine sites offering industrial heritage links – include listed buildings - Former railway multi use path	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
Few distant views but interesting landscape providing generally good visual	

LCA – A9 – THE RADSTOCK AND NORTON VALLEYS – SMALL SCALE VALLEYS LEADING OUT TO THE ADJOINING BANES DC AREA TO THE NORTH

6.2.79 Three small combe valleys drain from the MDC area into the towns of Midsomer Norton and Radstock. These share similar physical features but each has different character arising from human influences, primarily the presence or absence of settlement. These are described under the following headings:

- A9.1 Chilcompton Valley
- A9.2 Holcombe Wood – Charlton Valley
- A9.3 Kilmersdon Valley

A9.1 CHILCOMPTON VILLAGE AND VALLEY

6.2.80 Of the three valleys this one contains the most development with the village of Chilcompton filling a large part of what was once a small combe. The stream valley starts to the west of the village draining a shallow undulation in the plateau around Old Down (in LCA A8.1). Closer into the village the valley becomes more pronounced with steeper and deeper side slopes. A series of wells and springs are found within the narrow section and a second stream joins within the village creating the small river Somer. Downstream of the village the valley cross section widens out to provide a more flat-bottomed cross section but the surrounding valley sides remain as hills some 40 – 50 m above the water course. For most of its course the water is in a natural channel but within the village the stream fed a series of water cress beds and becomes a man-made feature in a constructed channel next to the lane.

6.2.81 The village has extended out from what was a cluster of development at and below Bowden Hill. The older parts of the village developed down in the lower part of the valley, with at least one mill. The now disused Somerset Dorset Joint Railway used the same valley to climb up onto the Mendip plateau from Radstock; a small station in the village marked the top of the steep climb. The bulk of the old village being located in the shelter of the valley below the line. A main road heading east west through the parish sat on the higher ground to the south of the railway providing a link between the distant towns of Wells and Trowbridge (Wells Road/Broadway). Inns along this road hint at its origin as a coaching route occupying the more easily transited high ground. Another lane Stockhill Road strikes out from the village centre towards the quarries and mines within the Nettlebridge Valley.

6.2.82 During the 20th century the village expanded as development spread along most of the roads out in all directions. In particular this included development along both sides of the Wells / Broadway Road infilling the area of shallower slopes between the railway and main road and land to the south. Development also extended out along the length of Stockhill Road as near continuous frontage to the edge of the Nettlebridge Valley.

6.2.83 Most of the surrounding landscape is outside of the LCA area (mainly the undulating plateaus of A8.1 and A8.2). Small pockets of farmland are contained between parts of the village and in the downstream section of the valley extending up to the district boundary. These are similar to the wider plateaus as a mix of grasslands and arable. The field pattern close to the village is small scale irregular paddocks and grass fields with hedges and hedgerow trees.

6.2.84 In the lower valley the fields are larger. The field boundaries are generally low hedges with few hedgerow trees. The course of the river stands out as a meandering line more heavily enclosed in trees.

6.2.85 There are few areas of established woodland in the landscape outside the village. Within the combe section of the valley there is a narrow strip of ancient woodland on the north side of the valley. On the south side of the valley the former railway line is defined by a belt of trees stretching along most of the line round to the cutting at Tunnel Hill.

6.2.86 Within the same section of the valley within the village there are a number of small stone quarries and rocky outcrops. The railway cutting on either side of the tunnel to the east of the village (on Tunnel Lane) is identified as a Geological Interest Site in the local plan.



Tunnel Lane, Chilcompton

- 6.2.87 This area is predominantly settlement; with a busy main road running through it. The village contains a number of commercial developments dotted along the main road in between the residential properties. A large wind turbine to the southwest of the village (near Stockhill Road in LCA 8.2) and sewage treatment works to the northeast of the village are the main elements of notable infrastructure located just outside the built-up area. With these elements, traffic noise and presence of the built up area the general landscape is not particularly tranquil or unspoilt.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A9.1 - CHILCOMPTON	
PHYSICAL /NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Combe valley landform with flatter plateau adjoining above • Small scale River Somer • Small areas of ancient woodland • Small scale irregular fields around village • Larger regular fields in lower valley • Low hedges with few trees • Stream course marked by more tree cover	• Older part of village set down in combe • Former coach road above the historic village • Disused railway climbs valley through village • Line marked by tree cover • STW intrusion in lower valley
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Mixed grassland and arable farming • Historic mining & quarrying industries • Stream contained within man-made channel • Water cress beds	• Busy main road • Settled suburbanised landscape • More historic character low in the valley
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Area of Ancient Woodland (note as significant asset within close proximity to village) • River Somer including wells, springs and water cress beds • Disused railway including station site, railway bridges and short tunnel • Geological RIG site	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Views to Cranmore Tower and Penn Hill Mast from end of Stockhill Lane	

A9.2 HOLCOMBE WOOD - CHARLTON VALLEY

- 6.2.88 The small back road between Stratton-on-the-Fosse and Holcombe cuts across the upper end of two small stream valleys. These drain the nearby plateau landscape (LCA A8.2). To the east of the lane the valleys drop into narrow wooded combs providing an interesting and very secluded area of landscape.
- 6.2.89 The streams flow through small man-made lakes before combining and continuing in a narrow valley towards the hamlet of Charlton and the district boundary. Two other small stream and side valleys within the woodland area create a complex landform and spurs of woodland branching off the main block.
- 6.2.90 At the upstream end the landscape is dominated by the woodland areas much of which is ancient woodland. The intervening field pattern is comprised of small irregular parcels defined by the woodland outlines. The down stream section of the valley is set in a more open landscape with no woodland and larger fields. The land use is mixed with grazing and arable production and some areas of shooting cover.
- 6.2.91 The upper parts of the valley are uninhabited, but the Holcombe Wood Valley provides the setting for the isolated Church of St Andrew. The building is Grade II* and set within a small walled church yard that also contains several other listed monuments. The building is set on its own at the very end of a long single lane track that drops down into the valley through a group of farm buildings. The woodland provides a strong natural backdrop to the building.
- 6.2.92 There are also occasional glimpsed views to the nearby farmsteads, villages and Downside Abbey in the distance from paths leading out of the woodland areas.

- 6.2.93 Downstream Charlton is a cluster of houses mainly on the side of the valley. The hamlet is located around the B3139 which serves as a busy main road linking the A362 and A36 to the Fosse Way and beyond.
- 6.2.94 The landscape within the upper valley is relatively tranquil although the Fosse Way is not much more than 1km distant the deep valley location helps reduce the level of back ground noise. Closer to Charlton the main road crossing the valley introduces a fairly constant level of traffic noise.
- 6.2.95 The upper section of the valley is well served by a network of footpath routes; which include links to Stratton-on-the-Fosse and Holcombe Village. These climb in and out of the bottom of the valley and the woodlands providing very varied routes. Downstream the base of the valley can be followed by a single path that heads down to the edge of Radstock.
- 6.2.96 The church, church yard and woodlands all fall within the area designated as a special landscape feature area within the MDC local plan.



St Andrews Church, Holcombe



Stream in Holcombe Wood

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A9.2 HOLCOMBE WOOD - CHARLTON VALLEY	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Small combe landform • Areas of ancient woodland • Stream valleys with man-made ponds • Small scale irregular field pattern	• Historic church & group of farm buildings
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Areas of shooting cover and estate managed woodlands	• Small scale intimate landscape • Sense of remote & isolated spot • Tranquil within deeper sections of valley adds to sense of isolation
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Grade II* church • Duck ponds within the woodland – private • Ancient woodland and other woodland blocks follow landform • Former mine shaft within area	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Generally contained landscape within valley attractive but few views out • Glimpsed views to Downside Abbey	

A9.3 KILMERSDON VALLEY

- 6.2.97 The Kilmersdon Valley is the largest of the three Norton Radstock Valleys within the MDC area. This is again a small stream valley with tributary streams and side valleys. The village of Kilmersdon lies at the confluence of several larger streams and their valleys. While the valleys are generally small with a deep narrow cross section the village sits in a wider section where the valleys join.
- 6.2.98 The landform of these valleys is generally a more gentle cross section than the two small narrow combs to the west (LCA's A9.2 and 9.3). While not as steep the valleys are still deep with around 40 m level difference between the stream and the surrounding plateau landscapes. The main stream course is also steep with a drop of around 70 m over 4 km.
- 6.2.99 The landscape contains a few blocks of woodland but is not heavily wooded. A small proportion of the woodland is ancient woodland. A younger belt of tree cover has become well established along the line of the disused North Somerset Railway (linking Radstock to Frome).
- 6.2.100 The agricultural landscape is mixed livestock and dairy and arable production. In the upper part of the valley with steeper slopes the field pattern is small scale and irregular. Further downstream the shallower slopes of the more open valley are laid out as larger more regular fields with more arable land-use.
- 6.2.101 Aside from the village and a few sporadic farm complexes the area is sparsely populated. Kilmersdon is a compact village set out around a substantial church building (St Peter and St Paul – Grade I listed with other listed structures and boundary features

including grade II* lych gate and wall). The main street is the B3139 link between the Fosse Way (A367) and the A362 and A36 main roads. The main road approaches into the village from both directions are fairly dramatic. From the east a sharp 90° bend and open field provide a view towards the historic houses with the church in the background. From the east Kilmersdon Hill provides a steep very straight descent down to the main street; the point where the road arrives is marked by buildings hard against the roadside (including a grade II listed toll house confirming the history of the road).

- 6.2.102 The main street is fronted by a collection of local stone terraced cottages (grade II listed) and the Jolliffe Arms (grade II* listed) a former Inn on the coaching road. Within the street frontage there is also the village lock up; The Blind House (Grade II listed) now used as a bus shelter. The assembly of listed buildings around the main road relate directly to the nature of the route as a former toll road and

as such add to the setting of the church and other nearby heritage features; the position of the village as a sheltered location along the otherwise quite elevated route between Trowbridge and Wells and the collection of well-preserved historic buildings provides a direct connection between them, the wider landscape character and the character of the settlement.

- 6.2.103 The upstream section of the valley is relatively tranquil as the main roads are more than 1km away and the landform provides shelter from the background traffic noise. Closer to Kilmersdon the road noise picks up but is more related to traffic within the valley. The area is generally free of other major modern infrastructure.
- 6.2.104 The historic railway line cuts across the valley to the east of the village; on sizable embankment; but is well contained within the associated tree cover. The dramatic Ammerdown Bridge (restricted headroom



View from Colliers Way

on a sharp bend) provides one of the few obvious reminders to the presence of the line from the outside. Inside the tree line the former track bed has been converted to a Sustrans cycle (route 24 linking Radstock to Frome / Bath to Eastleigh in Hampshire). The route is now a very popular recreational facility becoming quite busy at peak times. The character of the landscape along this section of the route is more influenced by the containing tree cover and interest of the grasslands/scrub line-side vegetation than the wider LCA character.

6.2.105 Elsewhere the valley has a few footpath connections that extend up the base of the two main valleys. One providing access through the area of ancient woodland on the edge of the Babington Estate (LCA A8.3)



View from Colliers Way

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A9.3 KILMERSDON VALLEY	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Deep stream valley with varied cross section • Areas of steep sided narrow form, wider at confluence • Limited woodland cover – some ancient woodland • Small scale irregular fields on steeper slopes • Larger more regular fields on shallower areas	• Village sits within natural landform taking advantage of sheltered location • Historic building cluster reinforce relationship between settled location & wider area as coaching stop on toll road
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Managed landscape within strong natural setting • Former railway absorbed into landscape	• Intimate unspoilt setting • Limited audible tranquillity due to roads
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Village cluster of listed buildings including Grade I church and former gaol now bus stop (Grade II listed) • Former railway converted to shared use path • Ammerdown railway bridge	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Landmarks Views and Viewpoints • Limited views out from area but attractive unspoilt views within.	

A10 THE MELLS VALLEY

6.2.106 Extending from Gurney Slade to near Frome and including the Whatley and Nunney Brook side valleys.

6.2.107 The Mells River can be traced back to a small stream flowing from the pond at Emborough Grove. Over the course of the approximately 10 miles to the point where it joins the Frome, the valley maintains a relatively deep and narrow cross section. The main valley and many side valleys contain a good proportion of the MDC areas' ancient woodland and a generally small-scale field pattern. The valley also contains numerous historic sites including many former mineral workings and areas of industrial heritage. Some areas of active quarrying remain within and adjacent to the LCA.

6.2.108 The LCA along the length of the valley is divided into three main subsections; namely:

- A10.1 Gurney Slade, Nettlebridge, Edford, Lower Coleford to Vobster
- A10.2 Mells
- A10.3 Wadbury Valley and Vallis Vale

6.2.109 Two further valleys with similar characteristics join the Mells within LCA A10.3. These are described under sub-sections :

- A10.4 Whatley Bottom (including Asham Woods) and
- A10.5 the Nunney Brook/Egford Valley

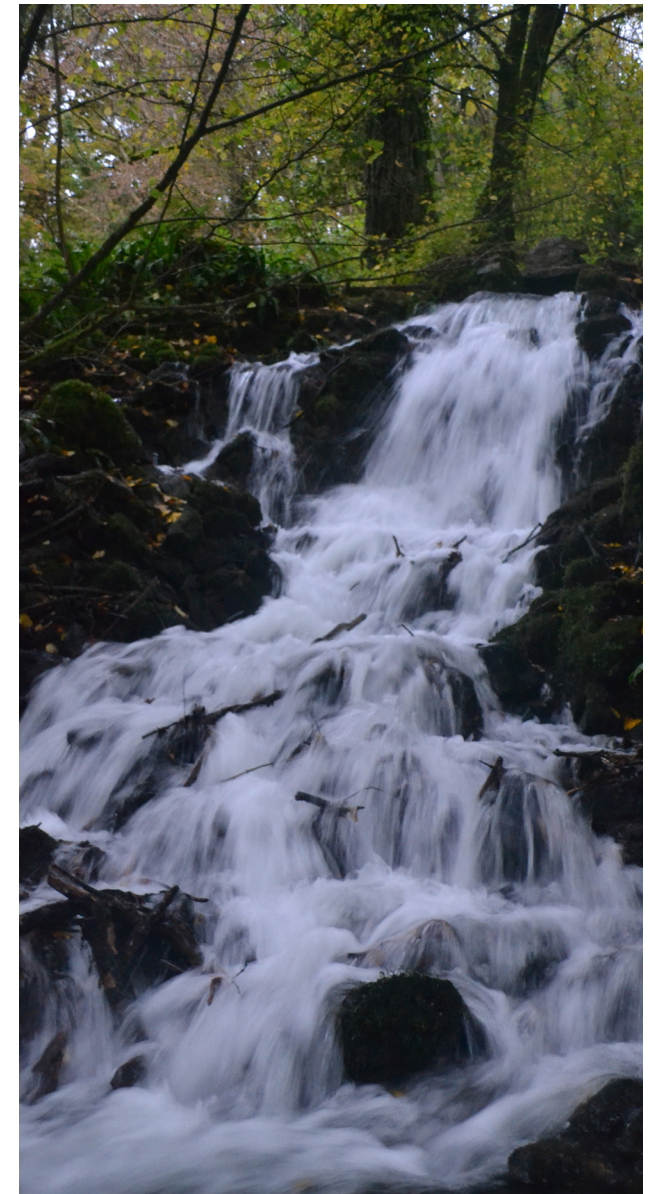
A10.1 GURNEY SLADE, NETTLEBRIDGE, EDFORD, LOWER COLEFORD TO VOBSTER

6.2.110 Fittingly the area around the head of the Mells stream valley contains ancient woodland, an historic reservoir/mill pond and disused quarries (elements that re-occur in the valley downstream). The uppermost parts of the valley start as the shallow small combes of Emborough Grove and Binegar Bottom. These offer intimate and sheltered environments contrasting with the more open Mendip plateau landscape to the west. The combes quickly descend into deeper section valleys so that by the lower part of Slade Bottom the valley is around 40m below the surrounding plateau.

6.2.111 The steep sided nature of the valley extends the length of the LCA. The water course drops some 60 – 70m in the section Slade Bottom to Vobster. The channel has very little flood plain on either side. With the steep descent the river provided opportunities for many mills, these often included short mill leat channels or ponds. A few remain as existing dwellings or visible ruins. Others are evident as not much more than small waterfalls or islands between channels. One such ruin forms a small cascade in Harridge Wood which could be mistaken for a natural waterfall.

6.2.112 The valley contains many areas of woodland much of this is ancient woodland. Generally the areas are broadleaved woodland with minimal commercial activity. The woodlands of Harridge Wood includes some historic conifer plantation but this is understood to be being actively managed out.

6.2.113 The agricultural landscape is predominantly early enclosure small scale irregular fields with extensive hedgerows and many hedgerow trees. This pattern



Cascade in Harridge Wood

overlaid on the complex topography creates a strongly irregular landscape. Most of the farming is small scale dairy or livestock grazing with silage and hay cutting. Some areas of small-scale arable production are included these being mainly maize fodder crop.

6.2.114 The steep valley sides include occasional rock outcrops; similar to other combes within the Mendip area. In addition, various minor former quarry sites exist through the valley with areas of exposed rock face becoming quite naturalised. The limestone geology is also the source of interest in respect of a number of small caves and rock shelters and a local tufa stream in Harridge Wood. The quarries around Stoke St Michael exposed and in some cases, removed parts of the local cave systems. A major active quarry is within the LCA at Binegar / Gurney Slade. This includes the industrial scale processing plant adjacent to the road frontage close to the village centre.

6.2.115 In addition to the limestone quarries the Mells Valley also included many coal mines. With evidence of medieval mining at Nettlebridge and nineteenth and twentieth century mines extending from here to Vobster. Several of these sites are identified as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (as examples of the Roman and medieval works in Nettlebridge and a mid C19 mine and coking complex at Vobster). With the lack of intensive land usage around these sites and the presence of some derelict structures the SAM areas are also of interest for their nature conservation value. Elsewhere some of the other later mine sites have become small scale light industrial employment sites.

6.2.116 With the mines also came railways with lines cutting through the valley at Emborough Quarry and a station

serving tramway links between Coleford and Mells. Sections of the coal canal intended to link Coleford with the Dorset and Somerset canal remain as a shallow cut through the fields near the village. The construction also included a listed aqueduct crossing a narrow side valley in the lower village. These features remain as part of the industrial heritage of the area and appear as reminders of the previous surprisingly extensive industrial activity of the locality.

6.2.117 The LCA area is sparsely settled; within the boundary of the identified area. The area includes part of several villages but in each case the larger or more modern parts of those settlements lie outside of the deeper section of the valley. Lower Binegar and Gurney Slade form a dispersed settlement in the lower part of the combe valley next to the major quarry. The Nettlebridge section of the valley includes a number of very small hamlets or simple clusters of housing within the network of narrow winding lanes. Edford (the lower part of Holcombe), Lower Coleford and Vobster comprise the original areas of these former mining villages. Edford (Holcombe) and Coleford (Highbury) have expanded on the more open landscape up from the base of the valley (more within the adjoining LCA A8.2).

6.2.118 The area is crossed by the A367 which roughly follows the line of the Roman Fosse Way. However, with the steep deep valley at Nettlebridge the modern road line diverges from the straighter historic route. Elsewhere within the rest of the LCA the roads are a network of minor lanes. These are generally contained often within banks and high hedges.

6.2.119 As a contained small scale landscape with few views out the area feels quite intimate. The combination of complex topography, woodlands, irregular small fields creates a rich landscape to explore. Away from the main road and quarry the valley landform also provides a higher degree of tranquillity and sense of remoteness.



The Nettlebridge Valley

- 6.2.120 The area is well served an extensive network of public footpaths. In addition woodland areas of Harridge Wood and other wildlife trust nature reserves provide extensive areas of open access. Emborough Grove is noted as a club fishery site providing an attractive location for angling; although the introduction of extensive fencing and signage has an impact on the wider enjoyment of this feature.

BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS FROM '97 ASSESSMENT

Adjustments to boundaries and LCA areas to include Emborough Grove, Gurney Slade and Binegar Bottom and lower Coleford and Vobster within outline.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A10.1 GURNEY SLADE, NETTLEBRIDGE, EDFORD, LOWER COLEFORD TO VOBSTER	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Deep steep sided valley with complex slopes and winding river course • Woodland cover including areas of ancient woodland habit • Small scale irregular hedged fields • Small scale steeply sloping river	• Sparse settlement pattern with small clusters of dwellings and sheltered villages • Settlements linked to local mining and quarrying industries • Extractive industries including historic and active sites • Frequent mill features
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT./HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
LANDSCAPE PATTERNS	
• Low key agricultural and forestry management • Substantial areas of nature conservation management with matrix of woodlands and grassland habitats	• Area presents opportunities for access to tranquil landscape and exhibits good degree of extensive unspoilt condition • Major quarrying activity present but tightly contained within small section of valley
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Blacker's Hill Iron Age Fort And wooded valley (SLF) • Nettlebridge and Edford collection of nature reserves • Geological exposures of former quarry sites and calcareous tufa stream • Former colliery sites including medieval and C19 SAM, in addition site of Strap Mine deepest shaft within the North Somerset Coal Field • Canal Aqueduct at Coleford and short sections of former railways • Emborough Pond (SLF)	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Views from Blacker's Hill Fort include Pen Hill and Cranmore Tower	

A10.2 MELLS

6.2.121 For a short section between Vobster and Mells the character of the valley is changed due to the presence of Mells Park and village. The form of the narrow natural valley continues albeit with a more modest cross section of around 25 – 30m below the undulating surrounding landform. The valley also includes some woodland cover and very steep slopes. From the Vobster Bridge down to the village of Mells the river is contained within the historic parkland and sections of the water course are included in the design of the landscape.

6.2.122 The LCA covers the parkland and village as an entity. The park is private and inaccessible but is listed as a registered historic landscape (Grade II). The park is thought to have been originally enclosed as a deer park between 1604 and 1642. A house within the park is shown on the 1682 manorial map of Mells and in the 1700's plans for a mansion were commissioned. In the late 1700's the park was laid out to create the structure of woodland plantations. The then owner Thomas Horner consulted Humphry Repton but there is no record of any formal commission for his involvement. More extensive parkland tree planting including a collection of conifers was undertaken in the nineteenth century. The mansion was destroyed by fire in 1917 and rebuilt on a more modest scale to designs by Edwin Lutyens who also collaborated with Gertrude Jekyll on the gardens. The estate is encircled by local roads with some farmland separating the road and designated landscape. The area includes a large block of ancient woodland, Melcombe Wood, but this is not within the registered area; although clearly in existence at the time of the original deer

park enclosure the woodland is noted as having been explicitly excluded [EH Entry]

6.2.123 The river valley is within the registered area. The river itself was remodelled to create two lakes with a large waterfall and line of stepping stones between them. The former northern entrance drive to the house crosses over a bridge and weir at the eastern end of the lower lake. The main river valley lies to the north of the main house. A second smaller stream valley extends to the south of the house. The narrow wooded valley known as Finger Valley extends around to Hare Warren and defines the southern edge of the park. The landform in between the two valleys is a more gentle plateau providing the larger part of the open parkland landscape.

6.2.124 Finger Valley extends up to the park boundary where the plantation woodlands provide an important buffer to the adjoining Halecombe Quarry. The road frontage around this side of the estate is enclosed by an impressive local stone wall.

6.2.125 The parkland includes various garden and parkland features that are listed within the citation for the registered parkland status. Some of the interest of the site also relates to the existence of the scrapbooks and sketches of Thomas Horner which included 'ideas for hot-houses, follies, grottos, and temples, rustic cottages, hermitages and Turkish tents, lakes, plantations and eyecatchers'. Some elements of his design and the later interventions of Lutyens and Jekyll were constructed and remain as important aspects of the historic assets. Of these the collection of 'magnificent C18 specimen trees, principally oak, lime and beech' and its 'heavily wooded perimeter' are noted as the parks most striking features. Of interest as connections to the wider landscape

character of the Mells Valley LCA the presence of natural rock outcrops and the creation of an artificial cave are also noted.

6.2.126 The park is effectively a secluded landscape with no public access. The boundary wall on the road frontage and the lodge at the main entrance near Bilboa House only hint at the estate inside. This seclusion was apparently used to provide the setting for the sensitive talks between the ANC and South African government in the late 1980's. The park and Elizabeth Horner also provided the setting (as Falls Park) and character for Thomas Hardy's First Countess of Wessex in *A Group of Noble Dames*. [EH citation & ANC Archive]

6.2.127 Downstream of the park the village maintains the character of a designed and protected setting. Mells is another village with dispersed settlement pattern, the areas of housing are divided by the river and areas of woodland and open greens. The valley topography helps contain and create a sheltered setting. The steeper slopes are generally wooded. Some of the roads drop down steep hills into and through parts of the village. The large area of village green by the school is open (unfenced) unimproved grassland as such has the character of a common.

6.2.128 The majority of the properties are built in local stone and include a mix of individual cottages and terraces and some other larger dwellings. Within this group is another notable house, Mells Manor (Grade I), the grounds of which also have registered historic status and design input from Edwin Lutyens. The site includes a former monastic garden; relating to the ownership of the Leigh, Mells and Nunney parishes by the Abbots of Glastonbury prior to the dissolution. The Manor is set in amongst the village

houses and next to the village church (St Andrews also Grade I listed).

6.2.129 The river is contained within a deep secluded section of valley between lanes and properties. The water course emerges at the lower end of the village in a small greenspace creating a local focal point next to the village Post Office.

6.2.130 An unusual small stone triangular bus shelter adds to the interest of this corner. The feature and the nearby war memorial were both designed by Edwin Lutyens. The bus stop is built of the local Doulling stone with a stone bench, and was erected in memorial to a member of the Horner family. The bus stop is Grade II and the war memorial Grade II*.

6.2.131 The overall LCA is relatively tranquil and unspoilt as a small village and valley setting. Overall this is an area of recognised importance as historic landscape and village conservation area, the village is noted as quite picturesque.

6.2.132 There are no major elements of infrastructure and only limited areas of post war development. A small solar farm is included within the LCA at Soho and the area adjoins two major quarries in the adjacent LCA (A10.4).

6.2.133 The village area is surrounded by a modest network of public rights of way. These extend out to the north and connect via lanes to the Sustrans route (in LCA C2) and to the east into the Wadbury Valley (SLFA). The network is constrained to the west by the private land of Mells Park and to the south by the extensive Whatley Quarry.

6.2.134 Mells is also noted in the cultural heritage overview section [refer to section 5.7.20] as the location of



Mells Bus Shelter - designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (Grade II listed)

the Village daffodil festival. The hedged lanes and many gardens through the village are planted with the bulbs which provide bright spring colour. This event started in 1979 and developed over the years into a major event for the village. The 2019 event attracted some 10,000 visitors on the day, but the attraction lasts for several weeks.

SPECIAL REFERENCES INFORMATION

Leigh-on-Mendip Parish Plan

BIBLIOGRAPHY / REFERENCES

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001150>].

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A10.2 MELLS	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• River valley • Rock outcrops • Ancient woodland areas	• Mells picturesque village with dispersed development pattern & significant green spaces. • Notable country houses and groups of local stone cottages.
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT./HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Extensive parkland estate • Plantation features • River remodelled as part of designed landscape • Estate enclosure wall and plantations	• Unspoilt historic village • Private secluded parkland
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Registered historic landscapes of Mells Park (including house and garden Lutyens and Jekyll collaboration) and Manor House and other Listed local stone features – designed by Edwin Lutyens	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• Few local views out from LCA but sensitive in respect of popular village and good visual amenity. Glimpsed view from upper village includes Ammerdown Tower	

A10.3 WADBURY VALLEY AND VALLIS VALE

- 6.2.135 Downstream of Mells the valley quickly reverts to the deep narrow wooded cross section and the strong semi natural character reasserts itself. The topography closes in with two hills forming steep rocky valley sides. As naturally defensive sites the hilltops were occupied by the Iron Age settlements of Wadbury Camp and Tedbury Camp on opposite sides of the river. The narrow valley form extends down to the point where the A362 crosses close to the confluence with the River Frome.
- 6.2.136 This section of the river is again narrow and drops steeply (around 30 m in around 4.5 km). The valley includes a wide range of natural and historic features of interest. Perhaps the most well known of these being the Fussells Iron Works. The majority of the valley woodlands are not identified as ancient woodland, but a large proportion of the valley is identified as a wildlife site within the local plan.
- 6.2.137 The valley is noted as a location for its geological interest. This is as an overall general location by the British Geological Survey and as a smaller area as a designated geological SSSI by Natural England [Vallis Vale 23ha]. There are several small caves and rock shelters within the upper end of the valley near Mells. One of these, Lime Kiln Hill Quarry Cave when excavated revealed a rich collection of Pleistocene fauna and a middle Palaeolithic chert hand axe. Near the Iron Works is a natural swallet/resurgence cave (the Mells River Sink). Near to this is another waterfall resurgence feature that is actually a pumped outfall from the nearby Whatley Quarry.
- 6.2.138 At Vallis Vale a small historic quarry face exposed the different age strata of the local bedrock. This feature

is noted as the important De La Beche Unconformity [see section 5.1].

- 6.2.139 The river channel was once the source of significant power with numerous mills. Weirs, channels and small islands remain as varied remnants of these structures. Within the Iron Works the channel includes a large waterfall and water wheel pit. Further downstream the industrial heritage includes listed Lime Kilns (grade II) and the Murtry Aqueduct (grade II). The aqueduct was constructed for the coal canal for which construction was started in 1795 but abandoned before the canal was completed in 1803 [EH Citation].
- 6.2.140 The valley is predominantly wooded with occasional areas of small steep paddocks and a few gardens backing on from the adjoining village. One of the larger areas of woodland is the regenerating tree cover over the Tedbury Camp and adjacent abandoned quarry.
- 6.2.141 The LCA is reasonably devoid of existing settlement; a few properties on the edge of Great Elm are located within the wooded setting. Most of the village is hidden from view but there are areas where large gardens blend with the natural setting. Where a small lane from the village crosses the river the channel widens out into a mill pond with an ornamental boathouse.
- 6.2.142 Within what is otherwise a very secluded and unspoilt landscape there are elements of modern infrastructure. Most notably the Whatley Quarry mineral railway cuts through the valley in part on a large concrete viaduct used by occasional long mineral trains. A small lorry park and light industrial area is located within a section of the valley at

Hapsford. The A362 also cuts across the end of the area crossing the river on a listed bridge, the road is well screened but brings traffic noise into an otherwise quiet location.

- 6.2.143 The valley is accessible via footpaths at various points. The iron works some of the woodlands and former quarries appear to be openly accessible and are heavily used by the public. The quarry site of the De La Beche Unconformity appears to have been turned into an informal BMX track. The East Mendip Way long distance footpath connects the edge of Frome to the riverside near Great Elm. The walk out from the town through Vallis Vale appears a regular dog walk and longer popular link out to a strongly semi natural landscape. The experience of the walk out from the urban edge is enhanced by the point the route crosses another LCAs (A10.5 and B2.1) with different character (particularly with the contrasting open views).



View from East Mendip Way - Vallis Vale

6.2.144 Another link to Frome exists in the form of the Sustrans cycle route 24 which cuts across the valley via the small back road lane linking to the Mells - Radstock former railway line.

6.2.145 As the area is very popular; the level of public access is notably higher than other adjoining paths. This has an influence on character in terms of the locality feeling well used and openly accessible but also less remote than other parts of the LCA A10 areas.

6.2.146 The bulk of this LCA area is identified as a Special Landscape Feature (SLF)

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<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/mendips/localities/greatelm.html>

<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/mendips/localities/mells.html>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1174214>

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1001131>



River below Vallis Vale

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A10.3 WADBURY VALLEY AND VALLIS VALE	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Deep narrow valley landform • Steeply dropping river within rocky channel • Ancient & regenerating woodlands • Caves	• Glimpsed properties / gardens • Mineral line railway (including tunnel & viaduct) • Light industrial site within lower valley • Main A362 road
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Extensive minerals and industrial heritage • River weirs, mill channels & islands	• Wild semi natural dramatic landscape • Remote isolated landscape (although often popular walking spot) • Tranquil in respect of limited road/background noise aided by presence of deep valley and river noise
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Historic Iron Works • De La Beche Unconformity • Rock shelters and small caves such as Mells River Sink & Spleenwort Shelter • Iron age forts • Disused quarries	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
• No views out, extensive walking area with good short visibility & good visual amenity	

A10.4 WHATLEY BOTTOM (INCLUDING ASHAM WOODS)

- 6.2.147 The Whatley Bottom valley contains a small tributary stream that joins the Mells River at Great Elm. The area shares many similar characteristics with the Mells River valley; specifically it is relatively deep narrow topography and a wooded landscape.
- 6.2.148 Two streams originate in Downhead at the head of the valley. The larger in the small combe of Leighton Hanging. The flow is presumed to be fed in part by pumped de-watering of the adjacent Merehead Quarry (LCA A11). The other is a resurgence from a small swallet close to a small disused quarry in the hamlet. The streams drop steeply with the main stream falling by 75 m over 7 km. A long section of the stream thorough Asham Quarry is contained within a constructed channel.
- 6.2.149 A third small stream rises to the north of Chantry joining the main watercourse at Railford Bottom. The extensive area of Whatley Quarry is located to the north of the stream. In this area the topography of the northern flank has been altered by the quarry works with sections of the valley side built up and others removed.
- 6.2.150 The limestone geology is exposed through the valley as the natural rock outcrop of Heale Ladder and as the quarry faces remaining from the former Asham Quarry. The outcrop contains the small rock shelter Tom Tivey's Hole; excavated in the 1960's to reveal Neolithic and Bronze Age remains. The past quarrying within Asham Woods have left substantial 'cliff' faces which are slowly naturalising with some vegetation becoming established on the ledges between the excavation lifts. Other rock is

exposed in the form of overburden debris mounds and as scattered boulders around the various quarry sites. On some parts of the quarry perimeters large mounds of material has been pushed up to form landscape screens to the extraction sites; in places this has left steep 'walls' of rock slopes often slowly becoming naturalised as woodland. Elsewhere large boulders are often used in gateways or other spots as simple vehicle deterrents or remain as a bi-product of the former quarrying.

- 6.2.151 The predominant land cover is woodland with a significant proportion of ancient woodland. The most extensive area being Asham Woods which are designated as SAC and an SSSI. Despite the SSSI designation the woodlands were subject to quarrying up until the 1980s (with Permissions lapsed in 1998). Other parts of the woodland are actively managed as a nature reserve with areas of traditional coppice and standards with coppice regimes. Further downstream the woodland cover is more restricted covering just



Whatley Brook

the areas of the valley sides. Parts of the woodland cover is maturing landscape screen planting for the quarries dating from the 1980's or 1990's. Close to the confluence with the Mells River the area of woodland on the Tedbury Camp Hill Fort is an older area of regenerating cover on a former quarry site.

6.2.152 Small areas of farmland exist within the valley; particularly around Chantry. This consists of small irregular grazing fields. Generally these areas are less intensively managed grasslands and informal hedges.

6.2.153 In the midst of the strongly semi natural valley a small section is recognised as an historic landscape. Chantry Court was the home of James Fussell the founder of the local iron works industry. The site includes C19 picturesque ornamental gardens and parkland surrounding a villa. The landscape setting includes a reservoir created to provide power for one of the works. The gardens are noted for their rustic stonework features, niches, caves and grottoes built into an artificial cliff. One grotto being a two story feature.

6.2.154 The adjoining settlement of Chantry is set up out of the steeper section of the valley. The small hamlet is dispersed along the Old Wells Road (at one time the main road from Frome to Wells).

6.2.155 A short section of modern roadway cuts across the valley near Bulls Green providing a link for heavy quarry lorries. At the lower end of the valley the Whatley Quarry Rail link follows the base of the valley; the route is generally well contained within the valley and treescape but occasional noise from the passing trains and the crossing points provide an indication of its presence.

6.2.156 The valley provides strongly variable degrees of tranquillity. Close to the railway and in locations where the quarry activity can be seen or heard the area is not tranquil. Away from these in the shelter of the valley the landform provides locations where the general background noise of the local main roads can be lost. This is often enhanced where the streams provide a natural background noise. The tranquillity is also impacted in a few points where the disused quarries have been closed off with intrusive forms of security fencing and extensive signage. Despite these measures there appears to be some level of use of

the tracks and quarry areas for off road motorcycle scrambling and some graffiti both of which also reduce the sense of a remote tranquil location.

6.2.157 Much but not all the valley is accessible via the rights of way network. For example part of the lower section between Murder Combe and Whatley Bottom occupied by the mineral line is inaccessible. Likewise the section around Chantry including the Park and Garden. The footpaths do include two sections of the long distance paths; the East Mendip Way and the Macmillan Way which run together for



Asham Woods

a section. The area of Asham Woods is not identified as a public nature reserve but part of the woodland is leased and managed by the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation. As part of this various activities such as conservation management tasks and guided walks occur.

6.2.158 Away from the more evident influences of the quarries and the more popular walking access points the valley feels more remote and isolated than the nearby parts of the Mells valley.

BIBLIOGRAPHY / REFERENCES

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1003657.pdf>

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A10.4 WHATLEY BOTTOM (INCLUDING ASHAM WOODS)	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
- Steep sided deep valley section - Heavily wooded including ancient woodland - Areas of important nature conservation status	- Iron Age Fort at Tedbury - Small hamlet at Chantry with church and manor house set in historic park and garden at Chantry
AND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
LANDSCAPE PATTERNS	
- Extensive mineral operations, active and abandoned within and adjoining LCA - Mineral line railway - Small areas of small scale grazing low level intensity management	Varied levels of tranquillity and semi natural character. Areas of disturbance from mineral line and quarries balanced by areas of deep tranquillity in sheltered valleys near streams. Areas of rich ancient woodland landscape.
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
- Asham Woods extensive area of ancient woodland (most extensive in MDC area - 193ha Special Landscape Feature (SLF)) - The Chantry Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	

A10.5 THE NUNNEY BROOK/EGFORD VALLEY

- 6.2.159 The Nunney and Egford Brook Valley is a further small tributary valley to the Mells River; joining the main watercourse in Vallis Vale. The Nunney Brook starts to the south of the A361 near Cloford in a shallow more open landform. At Holwell the stream drops down into a narrow deeper section valley forming Nunney Combe. This extends on either side of the village of Nunney down to the hamlet of Whatley. After this the brook becomes the Egford Brook set in a more open landscape for a while before the landform closes in again on the approach to the confluence with the Mells River.
- 6.2.160 The valley is smaller scale than other sections of the Mells Valley and Whatley Bottom. The streams fall around 50m over 7 km and the base of the valley is often only 15 to 25m below the surrounding farmland.
- 6.2.161 The combe sections are enclosed by woodland; but due to the shallower cross section these areas are thinner blocks of tree cover. The woodlands downstream of the village include areas of more managed plantation within areas of narrow flood terrace. Outside the combes the streams are in more open farmland. The landscape in these sections is a managed regular medium scale field pattern. The field areas are generally grazing or hay/silage meadows.
- 6.2.162 The valley includes the village of Nunney and the adjoining hamlet of Holwell. Other traces of occupation include the site of a Roman villa (a scheduled ancient monument) and various farmsteads. The village includes the impressive ruins of Nunney Castle besieged during the civil war

[ref section 5.3 - Scheduled Ancient Monument]. The ruin stands in its own landscape setting of the moat and open greenspace in the heart of the village.

- 6.2.163 The village has been bypassed by the A361, which passes through the valley on a raised embankment next to Holwell. The main road at this point is wide and includes climbing and turning lanes and is heavily trafficked. Holwell is a smaller collection of properties and other buildings set in between sections of the former main road and various quarry workings.
- 6.2.164 The limestone quarries at the head of the valley are generally well contained by landscape; there are glimpsed views from the lanes to the operations and the site fencing signage also confirms the presence of the extraction. The area also has a history of local small-scale mining for both iron and coal. There are links between these operations and the Iron Works down in the main Mells valley.
- 6.2.165 The combe sections of the valley including the village present a generally unspoilt landscape condition. Due to the shallow valley landform, main road, settlement and quarrying the sense of tranquillity is limited. The presence of the village sewage works in the lower section of the combe is also an intrusion.
- 6.2.166 The combe sections of the valley are accessible via the network of rights of way that extend out from the village. These include a section of the Macmillian Way that passes through the village. The more open sections of the valley are not accessible. The long distance path diverts out of the valley to connect with the Mells River through Whatley Bottom. The Castle at Nunney is freely accessible in daylight hours (owned and managed by English Heritage).



View from Cloford towards Holwell Hill



Nunney Castle



Nunney Combe

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A10.5 THE NUNNEY BROOK, EGFORD VALLEY	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
• Small scale valley including sections of shallow combes • Small scale stream water course • Combes enclosed by fringe of woodland including areas of ancient woodland • Open sections of shallow valley managed as open farmland • Medium sized regular hedge field pattern	• Compact village around historic monument • Narrow high street with Castle green and stream spaces/features
LAND USE/ MANAGEMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
• Managed grasslands semi-intensive dairy farming with some larger farm complexes • Quarrying activity and former workings	• Unspoilt qualities within village and sections of the combes, diminished in presence of quarry and sewage works. • Tranquillity limited by proximity to settlement, roads, quarry and larger farm complexes.
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
• Setting of Roman Villa - site of SAM not accessible but nature of landscape location may be relevant to historic siting • Nunney Castle - SAM	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	

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<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1003657.pdf>

A11 THE MENDIP SOUTH EASTERN FARMLANDS

- 6.2.167 This area represents the most easterly extent of the elevated and open Mendip farmland landscape. Extending between the villages of Cranmore and Wanstrow, and including the area of higher ground between the Watley and Nunney Valleys (LCA's A10.4 and A10.5) up to the Marston Gate Ridge approach to Frome. The area is a mix of predominantly farmland alongside areas affected by major quarrying activity.
- 6.2.168 The area is comprised of gently rolling topography ranging from around 90m to 180 m AOD. As the high ground at the head of several stream valleys (flowing into the adjacent LCA's) the surface watercourses in this area are generally very small. These include the streams flowing from East and West Cranmore and Dean that head down into the Tor rail head area these are presumed to be culverted through the edge of the workings to become the Asham Woods stream. In this same area is a large man-made lake understood to provide storage for groundwater pumped from the Tor Quarry Works [BGS Map for Eastern Mendip].
- 6.2.169 Further east a small stream rising near Wanstrow flows through Cloford to become the Nunney Brook and close to the edge of Frome another drains around to the base of Critch Hill / Egford Hill. The shallow undulating landscape has an open and often south facing aspect.
- 6.2.170 The farmed landscape includes areas of medium scale fields with some field enlargement having occurred (comparison between pre 1950 mapping). The field boundaries are generally close-cut hedges with some hedgerow trees. The land use is mixed arable and livestock with a greater proportion of arable than in the other Mendip LCA's.
- 6.2.171 The area is sparsely populated with the small village areas of East and West Cranmore, Wanstrow, Nunney Catch and the Hamlets of Whatley, Cloford, Leighton and Dean. In addition, there are occasional isolated farm complexes. The development at Nunney Catch includes services development around a main road roundabout and an area of post war housing expansion of the main village of Nunney (the main village area contained in LCA 10.5). The hamlet of Cloford provides the setting for a small isolated church (Grade II* listed).
- 6.2.172 East Cranmore was previously defined by an extensive parkland around Cranmore Hall (listed Grade II*) while West Cranmore was focused around the railway station. The Hall was a substantial mansion and is now a school set within the vestiges of the former parkland. The quarry balancing lake has been created within the area of the original park and has been landscaped to reflect the previous setting. West Cranmore is the larger part of the village clustered around the grade I listed church. The village station and engine shed have been restored alongside the track as a steam railway.
- 6.2.173 Wanstrow straddles the A359 with some houses fronting on to the main road. The bulk of the village lies on the side roads with a more historic street frontage to the east and west of the main road. The village lies within a sheltered position low in the rolling typography with the added sheltering effect of Breach Wood on the hill to the southwest. The village church (church of St Mary Grade II*) presents to the street with its church yard raised above the level of the lane.
- 6.2.174 Where the brook runs through the village the street includes adjoining fords and overbridges, which emphasises its presence.
- 6.2.175 The quarrying activity is mainly focused around the Tor Works Quarry (noted as Mearhead on OS maps). This is one of the two super quarries in the area covering some 140ha (working areas) and extending down to below the natural water table. The excavation is effectively screened by the natural landform and extensive earthworks, as a consequence it is not easy to gain an impression of the overall vast scale of the workings. The quarried stone is exported from the site via the mineral line that connects to the mainline railway at Witham Friary.
- 6.2.176 Smaller quarries are also located closer to Nunney. Active quarrying is underway at Holwell (within LCA A10.5) and associated with this is a quarry excavation close to Collie Corner. A further disused site is located between Holwell and Leighton. These areas are also well contained by mounding and boundary vegetation and not readily apparent from the wider landscape.
- 6.2.177 The railway and mineral line are well established features; which for the most part blend with the woodland and field pattern. The presence of the line being identified more by the occasional mineral train and the glimpsed view to the railhead facility. The railhead is lit at times with high mast lighting which is visible from the main road.
- 6.2.178 The A361 has a greater impact as a relatively fast busy road; climbing / overtaking and turning lanes around the Tor Works create a larger scale carriageway. These and another overtaking lane on the approach to the illuminated junction at Nunney

Catch accommodate the higher traffic flows and for slow moving HGV's on the hills. The A359 spurs off from the Nunney Catch roundabout as a smaller less busy route to Bruton. Both roads introduce a level of background noise to the area.

6.2.179 A large lorry depot established alongside the A361 at Leighton stands out as a substantial development with prominent signage in the open countryside alongside the main road. A second smaller depot (currently derelict) is located nearby but is more effectively contained away from the main road with a woodland backdrop.

6.2.180 Two similar large scale wind turbines are located within this area. While both are glimpsed together in views from around Wanstrow, they are often seen individually providing some confusion over their respective locations. A solar farm is also visible from the A359 close to Nunney Catch.

6.2.181 As an open landscape with busy roads and a limited rights of way network this area offers less by way of informal recreational access or interest. The long distance Macmillian Way footpath crosses the A361 close to Nunney Catch. The East Somerset Steam Railway attracts visitors to Cranmore; the line heads west from the station towards Shepton Mallet (into LCA A5).

6.2.182 With the busy road the area is not particularly tranquil; with the limited recreational access the majority of people viewing the area will be the road users. The position and setting of the quarries and railhead means their impact is relatively contained from the road and wider views. The other infrastructure intrusions are relatively localised; as such the

impression from the main road is of a continuous rural landscape in reasonable condition.



View to Whatley Village Church from East Mendip Way

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF :- LCA – A11 THE MENDIP SOUTH EASTERN FARMLANDS	
PHYSICAL/NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	SETTLEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
- Elevated plateau landscape - Small shallow headwater streams - Open landscape to east top edge of ridge overlooking Nunney Valley with distant views - To west more contained by higher ground of Tor Quarry hill and earthworks	- Sparse settlement pattern of very small hamlet / clusters of farmsteads - Cloford includes remote listed church
LAND USE/MANAGEMENT/HUMAN INFLUENCES	PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS
- Medium to larger scale fields - Arable / intensive improved grassland farm management - Remnants of parkland at Cranmore - Artificial lake as new feature within parkland - Area crossed by mineral line and power line - Rail head and lorry depots, truck stops and busy main road intrude - Large wind turbines	- Big open landscape with busy main road - Elements of intrusion but overall extensive landscape - Area not tranquil due to road & quarries - Although scale of these major features relatively well contained – given actual size / potential impacts - Off main road landscape feels more remote less populated while managed still offers some sense of isolation
SPECIAL FEATURES – NOTE NOT ALL FEATURES DESIGNATED	
- Cranmore parkland with few remaining trees and balancing lake, original house remains (as school) - Cloford Church (Grade II*)	
LANDMARKS, VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS	
- Main road provides glimpsed views from ridgeline approaching / leaving Frome out towards the Mendips and towards the forest ridge at Gare Hill. Cranmore tower in view, Alfred's and Ammerdown Towers glimpsed. - Mineral line and power line – both large scale elements but relatively well contained from most public view.	