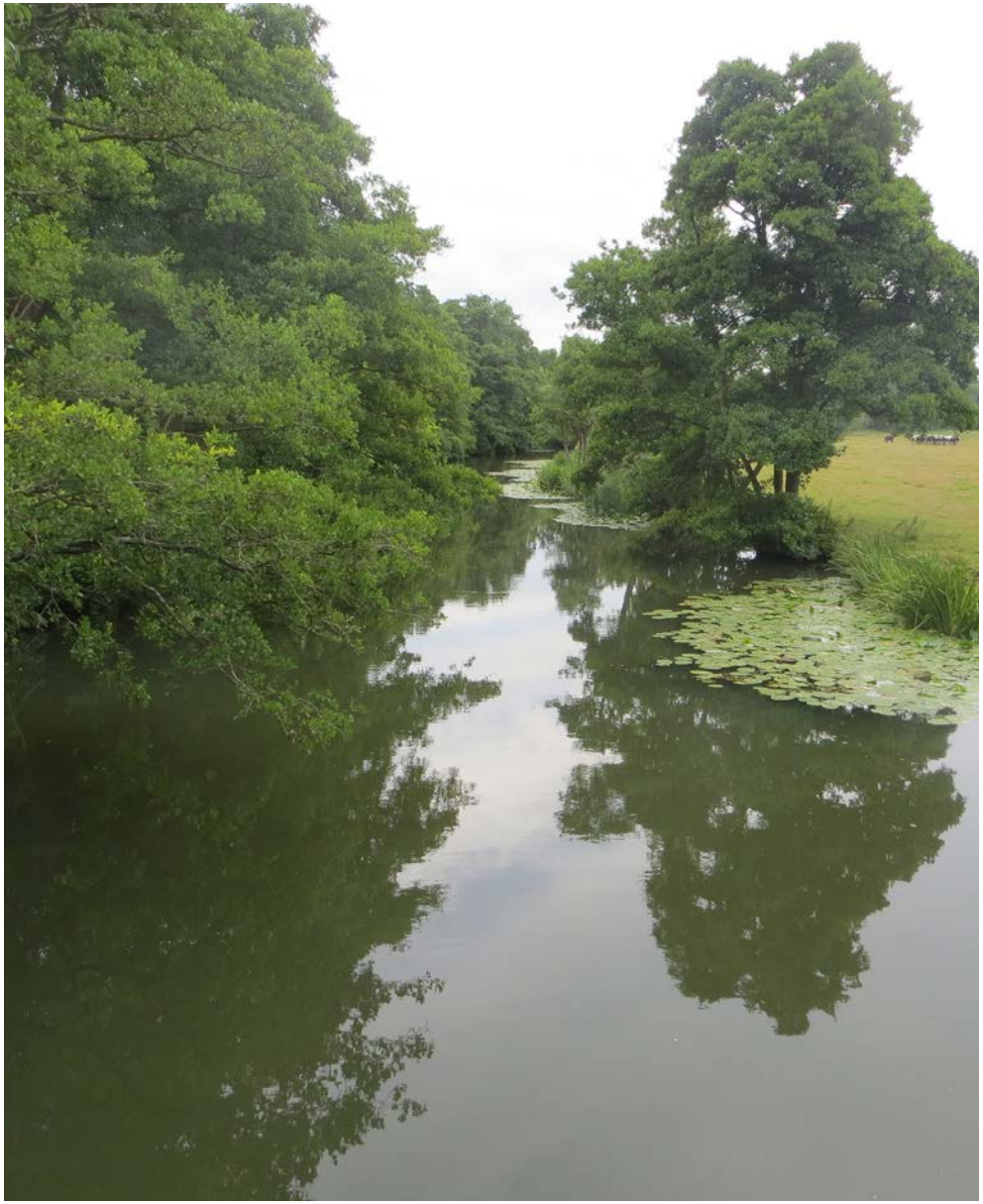


BECKINGTON LANDSCAPE VALUE STATEMENT

For Beckington Parish Neighbourhood Plan

August 2025

(V5: Updated 29 10 26)

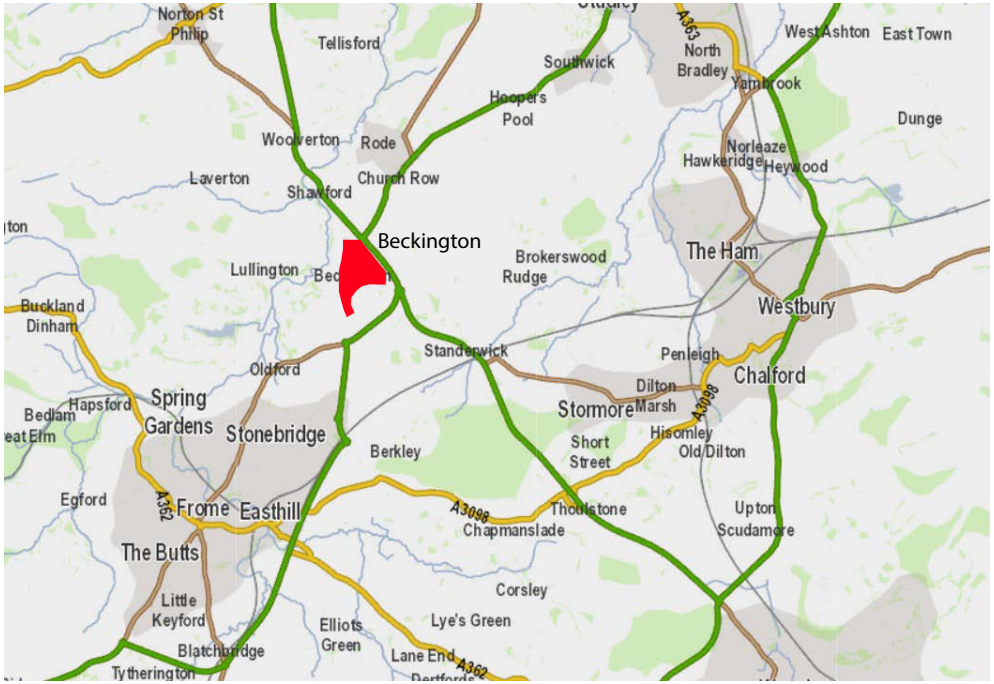


Fig 1: Location map

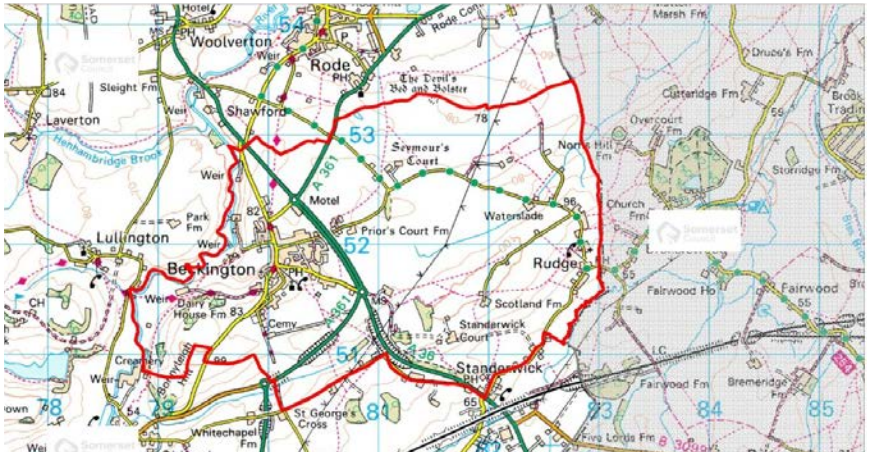


Fig 2: Beckington Parish Boundary

Chapter 1

The Report

1.1 This Landscape Value Statement has been commissioned by Beckington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) as part of the evidence for their forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan. The plan is a community endeavour to set out the parish's vision for the future and goals for development and conservation.

1.2 Beckington is an historic village in the Frome Valley in Somerset (Fig 1) which became prosperous from the wool trade, and subsequently has many listed buildings and a Conservation Area, which afford protection from inappropriate development. Beyond the village development boundary, the surrounding rural landscape has no designations recognising, defining or protecting landscape character and the setting of the village.

1.3 The NPSG wishes to manage change and identify landscape policy opportunities so that the special character of the village and its environs is identified, conserved and enhanced for the future. The parish boundary map (Fig 2) includes the hamlets of Standerwick and Rudge, but they are not included in this study because the Local Plan only considers development in primary villages, such as Beckington.

1.4 The author is Georgina Harvey (BA, MSc, Dip LA), a Chartered Landscape Architect and a member of the Landscape Institute (LI 20871) with 15 years' experience. She has worked for more than a decade for Novell Tullett in Bristol and North Somerset and previously with Balston Agius in Wiltshire. She has worked on many landscape planning reports for both councils and developers, including Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessments and Landscape Character Assessments.

Report Purpose and Scope

1.5 This report is intended to record the existing landscape character and analyse its value, so that change to the village can be controlled to support and enhance landscape character and be captured in local policy.

1.6 It will define the physical area of study based on desk analysis and a site visit. It will make a more detailed description of landscape character than currently exists and describe and define the area's special qualities, scenic value, biodiversity assets and cultural and historic features that contribute to its value. In doing that, it will elucidate the susceptibilities of the landscape that are vulnerable to future development or change management, although that is not the main focus of this report.

1.7 It recognises that landscape is a multi-faceted part of the natural environment providing many benefits to communities including mitigating the effects of climate change, alleviating flooding, improving air quality, supporting biodiversity, and providing amenity such as space for recreation and appreciation of attractive views with the associated positive impacts on health and wellbeing.

1.8 It will determine whether there is sufficient evidence of 'valued landscape' for new policy within the Neighbourhood Plan, and if so, to suggest a suitable wording that reflects the village's identity.

1.9 'Landscape value' is a recognised but recent term in planning to describe landscapes without designation which are still special, or distinctive, or particularly connected to a place, but lack protection.

1.10 Landscape Value reports are suitable for plan-making (CPRE What's Special To You) and are taken into account in decision-taking on planning applications.

1.11 The Guidance to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) states that: 'The value of a landscape should be assessed as one of two components of landscape sensitivity. Landscape value is the 'inherent' component, which is independent of the development proposal, while the other component, susceptibility, is development specific.' (5.26)

1.12 For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, a Landscape Value Report provides a sound basis of information, which can be drawn on in the future for further landscape reports.

Structure of the Report

1.13 The report will be presented in the following order:

- Chapter 2: Policy and Guidance will provide a resume of relevant national, regional and local planning policy and guidance which provides the context for the work.

- Chapter 3: Methodology will describe the methodology used for the determination of the study area and for the analysis of a valued landscape. This will include a methodology for assessing it.

- Chapter 4: Landscape Context and History will be a desk study of all the available and relevant baseline information with maps or illustrations where appropriate. This includes the natural, historic, social and environmental context. Further information will be drawn from a number of recent reports commissioned by the NPSG, such as a Views Assessment and Green Spaces Report and public consultation with parish residents. It also involves drawing information from other reports in the public realm such as the 2024 survey of Beckington Abbey, and a Phd study about the wool industry which offers historical information about Beckington. From this information a likely area of landscape that has physical, visual or cultural significance was plotted.

- Chapter 5: Landscape Character will draw from a range of sources at national, regional and local level including Natural England Landscape Character reports, Mendip District Council Landscape Character Assessments and designations from GIS website (www.magic.gov.uk), and Know Your Place. In addition it uses information from satellite maps, OS maps and photographs.



Fig 3: Village map

- Chapter 6: Valued Landscape Assessment contains the new assessment, based on a site visit to read the landscape on the ground, walk the routes and understand differences in landscape character around the village. A map was created of the landscape area surrounding the village core proposed for the study, setting out its internal and external boundaries, and divisions within the landscape, based on landscape types or character. Each parcel was named, described and analysed separately and written up with relevant maps and photographs. Following the assessment, a likely area of valued landscape was plotted.

- Chapter 7: Conclusion will make judgements based on the existing information and new assessments to determine whether there are special landscape qualities that are above the ordinary and record them. If found, to recommend suitable wording that could be incorporated in the Neighbourhood Plan to protect landscape which is deemed 'valued'. To see if there is any other suitable designation that could be applied for.

Chapter 2

2.1 The following section contains a resume of the most relevant policy and guidance on landscape from international to local level to inform the landscape study. Protection and management of landscape is focused on an understanding of landscape character and distinctiveness at all spatial scales.

European Policy

2.2 The European Landscape Convention (2006) describes landscape as: '*An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and or human factors*'.

2.3 Each landscape is different from another formed by geology, soils, water, land cover, climate and historic and cultural development to create places that are specific to their location. Identifying those special qualities and distinctive characteristics enables those landscapes to be protected and enhanced in line with national policy through the planning system.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.4 Planning Policy in England is determined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which makes presumption in favour of sustainable development, except where the harm would outweigh the benefits. Some landscapes are protected by formal landscape or ecological designations such as National Landscapes and SNCIs but many others are not.

2.5 Section 3.20: Plan Making says there should be an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and make sufficient provision for: '*Conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation*.'

2.6 Section 12, 135 says planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are: '*Sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)*'.

2.7 Section 14, Planning for climate change 162. '*Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures'*.

Section 15 of the NPPF outlines the Government's policy on the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes. Within Local Plans, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to set criteria based policies against which development proposals on or affecting landscape areas will be judged. The following policies are therefore designed to ensure that the most significant parts of landscapes are shielded from all but the most essential forms of development, and that the intrinsic value of the countryside is maintained while allowing forms of development that contribute to the social and economic health of the district.

Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment:

2.8 187. *Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) '*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)';*
b) '*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland*;

198. '*Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development*'.

b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason;

c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

'Valued Landscape'

2.9 The term 'valued landscape' was first used in the NPPF in 2012 but without an agreed definition of the meaning. The term was tested by the Stroud Appeal case (2014) in which the Inspector ruled, that in the absence of any formal guidance, that 'valued' would require the site to show some demonstrable physical attributes, rather than just popularity. This has since become the standard test of a 'valued landscape'.

2.10 In the Forest of Dean appeal (2016), it was established that the Inspector felt that a 'valued landscape' was one which had particular attributes which took it out of the category of 'ordinary countryside'.

2.11 So it is clear that to establish a definition of 'valued landscape' that the area must have demonstrable physical attributes and/or identified qualities and be above a level of ordinary countryside.

2.12 Various other appeal cases have suggested that it would be unusual for a particular parcel of land to be valued, or not valued, in isolation of the surrounding landscape, unless it was particularly enclosed or discrete, as the landscape is often seen as a series of patterns.

Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

2.13 *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification (213).*

2.14 A heritage asset is described as an irreplaceable building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

2.15 According to Historic England's guidance to The Setting of Heritage Assets, 'setting' is the surroundings in which the historic asset is experienced and can include any elements like views, spatial relationships or historical context which contribute to an asset's significance, regardless of its immediate proximity or broader placement. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Its contribution to the asset's significance, whether positive, negative, or neutral, must be taken into account.

2.16 The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Planning Practice Guidance: Non-designated heritage assets

2.17 The PPG Historic Environment defines non-designated heritage assets as follows: '*Non-designated heritage assets (NDHA) are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets'*.

2.18 NDHAs may only be identified by plan-making bodies for the purposes of Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans.

District Planning

2.19 Planning at district level falls within the remit of Mendip District Council (MDC) which has set out a series of Development Policies (DP) in the Mendip District Local Plan (2014). However, MDC became part of unitary Somerset in April 2023, as Somerset East, so the next Local Plan will be Somerset wide.

DP 1: Local Identity and Distinctiveness

'All development proposals should contribute positively to the maintenance and enhancement of local identity and distinctiveness across the district'.

'*Proposals should be formulated with an appreciation of the built and natural context of their locality recognising that distinctive street scenes, townscapes, views, scenery, boundary walls or hedges, trees, rights of way and other features collectively generate a distinct sense of place and local identity. Such features may not always be designated or otherwise formally recognised*.'

Spatial Strategy and Core Policy 1
2.20 Under Core Strategy 1, Beckington is designated a Primary Village for development as it offers key services. Fig 4 shows new housing in recent years.

2.21 The site allocation process says: ' *Landscape, biodiversity and heritage impacts must be key considerations in the selection of sites for development*'

2.22 Localised flood risk must be carefully assessed in rural areas during site selection. Information received from the Environment Agency has highlighted that nutrient discharge from sewage works is affecting water quality and ecology. Under the EU Water Framework Directive there will be an obligation to address this problem.

DP 2: Open Areas of Local Significance
2.23 Policy 6.14 and 6.15 identifies that there are open spaces which make a significant contribution to the quality of the built environment.

'*These spaces may provide views out of an otherwise built up street scene, allow views of significant local features or buildings beyond them, enhance the setting of the settlement, create a sense of space or otherwise contribute to the locally distinctive character of an area*'.

2.24 Neighbourhood Plans give an opportunity to review existing designated areas and provide an opportunity for new areas to be identified as Open Areas of Local Significance.

DP 3: Heritage Conservation
2.25 Justify any harm to a Heritage Asset and demonstrate the overriding public benefits which would outweigh the damage to that Asset or its setting. The greater the harm to the significance of the Heritage Asset, the greater justification and public benefit that will be required before the application could gain support.

DP 4: Mendip's Landscapes
2.26 '*Outside of designated landscape areas, proposals should demonstrate that their siting and design are compatible with the pattern of natural and man-made features of the Landscape Character Areas, including cultural and historical associations, as detailed in the "Landscape Assessment of Mendip District*."'

DP5: Biodiversity and Ecological Networks
All development proposals must ensure the protection, conservation and, where possible, enhancement of internationally, nationally or locally designated natural habitat areas and species (1).

DP6: Bat Protection
Planning Applications for development on sites within the Bat Consultation Zone will require a 'test of significance' under the Habitats Regulations to be carried out.

DP7: Design and Amenity of New Development
'Proposals for new development should demonstrate that they are of a scale, mass, form and layout appropriate to the local context'.

DP8: Environmental Protection
'Development (either cumulatively or individually) will be required to demonstrate that it does not give rise to unacceptable adverse environmental impacts on:
ambient noise levels;
air quality;
the quality of water resources, whether surface river or groundwater;
biodiversity;
light pollution;
land quality and ground stability;
residential amenity; and
public health and safety'

Development Policy 23: Managing Flood Risk
Development will follow a sequential approach to flood risk management, giving priority to the development of sites with the lowest risk of flooding. The development of sites with a sequentially greater risk of flooding will only be considered where essential for regeneration or where necessary to meet specific local requirements.

Neighbourhood Plan and Consultation
As part of its preparation for the Neighbourhood Plan, the NPSG carried out consultation with residents, including face-to-face public consultation events and two surveys. The results are available on the Beckington Neighbourhood Plan website.

Somerset Unitary Authority Plan
In 2023, MDC became part of the Somerset Unitary Authority which will set out a new Local Plan for the entire county from 2027 onwards. It has identified its core policies as:

- A greener, more sustainable Somerset
- A healthy and caring Somerset
- A fairer ambitious Somerset
- A flourishing and resilient Somerset

Chapter 3

3.1 To help guide analysis of 'valued landscape', the Landscape Institute (LI), which is the professional body for chartered landscape architects, produced a Technical Document Guidance Note TG02/21 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' (published in 2019) which states that value should be determined through a review of existing assessments, policies, strategies and guidelines, and where appropriate, by new survey and analysis.

3.2 The LI has further developed the 8 criteria, which have now been widely accepted in judgements and appeals, into Table 1 (shown in full in Appendix 1) which is in line with accepted guidance on Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England 2014) and GLVIA.

3.3 The 8 criteria are:

- Landscape Quality
- Scenic Quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation
- Recreational Value
- Perceptual Aspects – (wildness, tranquility)
- Association

Assessing Landscape Value

3.4 The assessment of 'landscape value' is considered suitable for Neighbourhood Plans. It can be assessed and mapped spatially through identifying areas for local designations. Studies should identify the landscape qualities of each area proposed for designation.

3.5 It has been established that high scores are not required in all criteria to be considered a 'valued landscape'.

3.6 The process should be based on a structure and transparent assessment process, including community-based evidence. Judgement must be made on a case by case basis, based on evidence. There should be a weight of evidence that supports the recognition of a landscape as valued above more everyday landscapes.

3.7 A 'valued landscape' would usually demonstrate a number of indicators, although it is possible for one indicator to be so important or rare that other indicators are not necessary.

3.8 Landscape value can change and is only a snapshot in time. Landscape condition does not always equate to landscape value as deliberately neglecting a landscape should not be allowed to diminish its value in a planning context.

3.9 While not all landscapes can be valued landscapes, it is well established that a landscape does not have to be a 'valued landscape' to be afforded protection from inappropriate development.



Fig 4: Satellite image Beckington

Chapter 4

The Site

4.1 Beckington lies at the very eastern edge of the Mendip Hills, separated by the Frome River, and the southern end of the Cotswolds. It is in the Frome Valley in east Somerset, 10 miles south of Bath and 3 miles north of Frome. Its western parish boundary is the River Frome and its eastern parish boundary is the border with Wiltshire.

4.2 It lies within the administrative area of Somerset East. In 2025, it had an estimated population of 1000 people, excluding the smaller communities in the parish of Rudge and Standerwick.

4.3 Beckington was historically on the main route between Bristol, Bath and Frome and the southern ports and also provided a road junction to Westbury and Trowbridge to the east, making it an ideal location for the trade in wool and cloth, which brought great prosperity between medieval times and the early 18th century. The river powered wool production, cloth-making and dyeing while the village slopes and lush river valley provided grazing for sheep.

4.1 By the 20th century the wool trade had been mechanised and the village largely returned to agriculture, alongside shopkeeping and plant nurseries. The road continued to bring trade but traffic volumes became insupportable. In 1989, a dual carriageway bypass was built to the east of the village which removed all but local traffic, and the village centre, with its many listed buildings, returned to a measure of rural tranquility.

4.5 The village has a main spine called Bath Road in the north and Frome Road to the south. Mill Lane and Stubbs Lane peel off to the west towards the river, while Goose St and Warminster Road head east. Church Road forms a loop round the south of the village.

Geology

3.15 Geologically the Beckington area sits on Middle and Upper Jurassic clays (around 160 million years old) which are deposits of tropical sea floors. The village sits on a bed of brownish grey oolitic limestone called Forest Marble which was traditionally used for rubble masonry for buildings and walls and stone roofing tiles, and is a notable feature of the village architecture. There are also seams of Fuller's Earth clay and 'Cornbrash', a shelly limestone which contains fossils of sea creatures. The parish website notes that the stone broke up easily when ploughed and made a well-drained medium for growing corn.

Soils

4.6 The Agricultural Classification map by Natural England (Fig. 5) shows Beckington has a large area of Grade 1 quality land (excellent), with the remainder Grade 3 (good to moderate). In the NPPF, the government directs planning authorities to protect the best agricultural land for the production of food.

4.7 The village has three different soil conditions according to Soilscapes (Fig 6). To the village and north of the village is a layer of slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, with moderate to high fertility. It indicates that farmed land is drained and therefore vulnerable to pollution run-off and rapid through-flow to streams.

4.8 The western area between the village and the river also has slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, but with high fertility soil. It drains to the stream network and has potential for rapid pollutant transport to the river.

4.9 The Frome River area has freely draining floodplain soils. Groundwater tables are shallow and therefore vulnerable to leached pollutants such as nitrate and pesticides. Flooding of cultivated fields can scour topsoil and increase silt in the river.

Landform

4.10 The village sits on a small plateau about 20 metres above the river valley, with land dropping away to the north and west, and rising to the south, before dropping back down to Frome and the river. The plateau stretches away to the east. The centre of the village nestles into a dip with the high point of 82AOD around the parish church of St George's at the top of Church Hill.

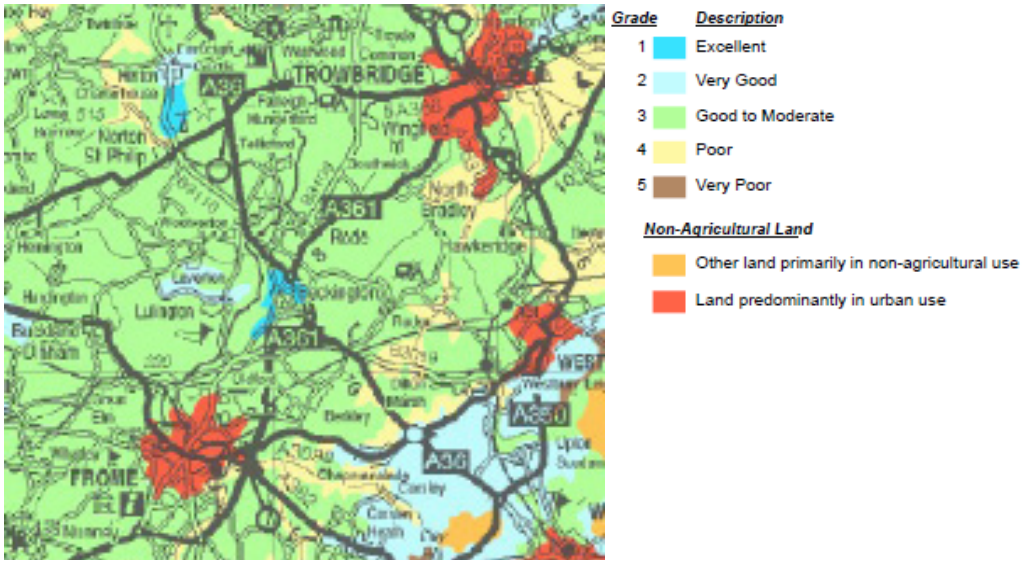


Fig 5: Agricultural Classification Map- Natural England



Fig 6: Soils types map and key (Soilscapes)

Land Use

4.11 Today, the land cover is arable and pasture surrounding the village, with wet carr woodlands in the old river meanders. The majority of open countryside is under dairy and sheep grazing, particularly on slopes, with the remainder of the farmed landscape typically used for crops such as wheat, barley and maize. The field sizes are small to medium, typical of the period when manor lands farmed by tenants were enclosed by hedges and walls for greater profits. The 1995 Mendip Landscape Character report (Chris Blandford Associates) noted that in some eastern parts of Mendip, hedgerow removal and trees loss had produced a more open landscape.

4.12 The landscape around Beckington is considered 'open countryside' which has a relevance in planning terms being considered an important part of the landscape character.

Woodland

4.13 Beckington once lay within the Norman Royal Forest of Selwood which stretched from Dorset in the south to Chippenham in the north. The forest demarcated royal hunting grounds, rather than dense woodland, but some ancient trees remain.
Overall this area is not known for its woodland with trees mainly along the rivers and in hedges, with some veteran trees surviving in fields. There are also areas of wet woodland in low-lying areas of high nature conservation interest. The Orchardleigh estate across the river from Beckington retains many important older trees. Bonnyleigh Wood on a hill at the southern end of the village is designated as ancient woodland, according to Environment Agency Variation Notice EPR/NP3839GZ/V006. No other reference to this was found.

Rivers and Streams

4.14 The parish lies in the catchment area of the River Frome which rises west of Frome. It is joined from the west by the River Mells where the valley opens out to a wider cross section and includes minor flood plains near Beckington. It then undulates north and joins the River Avon near Bath, At Farleigh Hungerford, upstream of Beckington, the Swimming Club achieved a local Bathing Water designation which has tasked the Environment Agency, since 2024, with monitoring water quality during the bathing season.

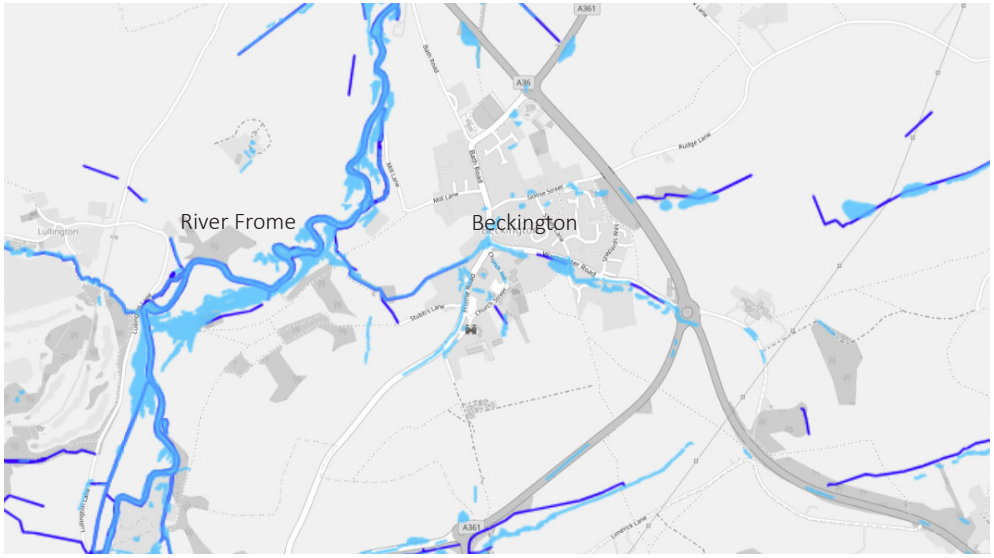


Fig 7: Watercourses and flood risk map (Natural England)



Fig 8: Beckington drainage improvement works- Somerset Council

4.15 The river (Fig 7) was an source of early hydropower for the settlement, leading to the building of mills and leats along its length. At Beckington, the medieval mills were used for grinding corn into flour for bread, but later were adapted or extended as 'fulling mills' which were an important part of the successful development of the cloth-making industry. The landscape of old mills, sluices, weirs and footbridges is particular to its riverside location.

4.16 Beckington Mill and Eden Vale Farm, which was mentioned in the Domesday Book, are now residential properties. Clifford's Mill is noted in the Mills Archive Trust.

4.17 The village had access to spring water via wells and village pumps which connected beneath the village via a system of stone-lined water culverts, including beneath Goose St in the village dip. The Beckington history book (Jordan et al) believes Goose St was originally Gosse St, meaning a channel or gutter, because water collected there. Two pumps remain visible, one by the church and one on the Warminster Road. The village only accepted mains water in 1939 after the quality of the water started to worsen.

4.18 The stone culverts were identified following a drainage survey in 2019 by Calm Engineering (Beckington Drainage Investigation 2022) to investigate flooding and sewage issues. The report identified that: 'Various small ordinary watercourses flow through the village, mainly via culverts. These culverts converge in the centre of the village, where the three main roads meet, before discharging into the open watercourse to the west of Frome Road. The watercourse drains in a westerly direction through Beckington until it joins the River Frome, just to the south of the sewage works'.

4.19 Calm Engineering concluded that the flooding was mainly caused by run-off from arable fields and pasture, converging on roads, flowing south down Bath Road and west along Goose St and Warminster Road and overwhelming the underground drainage network, combined with water from the culverts. Some improvements have been made to the drainage (Fig 8) but an overhaul of the sewage system was not considered immediately possible due to the presence of listed buildings among other constraints.

4.20 Interestingly the Beckington Abbey Heritage Statement (Keystone 2024) surmised that culverts under the Abbey provided water and drainage but also served the wool processing and cloth dying that took place there. All the water, including dye water, would have ended up in the Frome, via the stream/watercourse mentioned above (Fig 9).

Water Treatment

4.21 The village has a sewage treatment works (SWT) accessible from Mill Lane which deals with the village's waste water. A report by environmental scientist Dr Andrew Tyler (Assessment of Sewage Pollution in the River Frome, June 2025) identified from river testing that the Combined Sewage Outflows (CSOs) of Beckington and Rode release untreated sewage in the River Frome during heavy rain events, raising bacteria levels in the water, including at Farleigh Hungerford protected bathing area.

4.22 The report concluded that the SWT is already at capacity and that there will be more pollution incidents if additional homes are built without improvements to the SWT. It noted that neither the Environment Agency, nor Wessex Water, consider they have a statutory duty to comment on planning applications.

4.23 A 2025 application for new homes in Beckington (2024/1865/FUL) was deferred to allow for more information to be gathered on the capacity of the SWT, and has subsequently been refused partly because of the SWT capacity. At the time of writing in a dry summer, DEFRA reports that the water quality has a 'moderate' ecological status around Beckington.

4.24 While water levels are maintained by a series of weirs, there is believed to be little opportunity for increased abstraction from the River Frome due to its impact on water quality. Despite this, many wildlife species have been recorded on and beside the river between Frome and the Avon by volunteers monitoring otter recovery (Wildway Route 24). They include otter, water vole, beaver, kingfisher, heron, egrets, swans, badgers, roe deer, foxes, mink and brown hares. There are also locally reported sightings of bats, owls, snakes, fish, freshwater pearl mussels, slow worms, toads, newts and crayfish among other species.



Fig 9: Beckington stream in a dry summer and a makeshift swing

Ecology

4.25 There are no formal Sites of Nature Conservation Interest or Local Nature Reserves in Beckington. The river valley lies within Band C for Greater Horseshoe bats from both Mells Valley Bat Conservation Zone Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to the west and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC to the north. It is also within Vallis Vale Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone to the west which has a significant number of foraging bats.

4.26 The area also benefits from the proximity of the nearby Mendip National Landscape (AONB) and efforts made to protect its wildlife and ecology.

Archaeology

4.27 The development of the parish is detailed thoroughly in the Conservation Area Appraisal, written in 2010 by MDC, with the salient information for landscape that there are scatters of prehistoric flints and Roman-British pottery around the village. Beckington has been identified as an Area of High Archaeological Potential, (Know Your Place) particularly within the Beckington Conservation Area.

4.28 This designation indicates that there is a likelihood of encountering archaeological remains during development or ground disturbance. Previous assessments and geophysical surveys have already identified potential features like a possible Iron Age to Romano-British field system and a partially complete enclosure.

Settlement History

4.29 In the Domesday book, Beckington was recorded as land belonging to Roger Arundel with 9 villagers and 7 smallholders with ploughlands, meadow, pasture, woods and a mill. There were 100 sheep counted belonging to the landowner as well as goats and cows, although more would have been owned by the villagers but not recorded.

4.30 In 1318 a market charter was granted by King Edward II to John de Erlegh which helped push growth in the wool trade which, in turn, raised taxes for the Crown. By the late medieval period, wool became the most important occupation and living of the English population, and was internationally traded to many European countries. The charter is considered the beginning of Beckington's development as a village, although it never achieved town status. Many of Beckington's buildings had connections to the wool trade, whether the fine homes of traders, working buildings, or the cottages of spinner and weavers and dyers.

4.31 Beckington Abbey was recently the subject of a historic buildings study (Keystone Historic Building Consultants, 2024) which produced an in-depth study of the building and its occupants and drew for context on the PhD thesis of John Gaisford (2015).

4.32 Gaisford wrote: ''Tax accounts of 1395-6 show that the combined area of

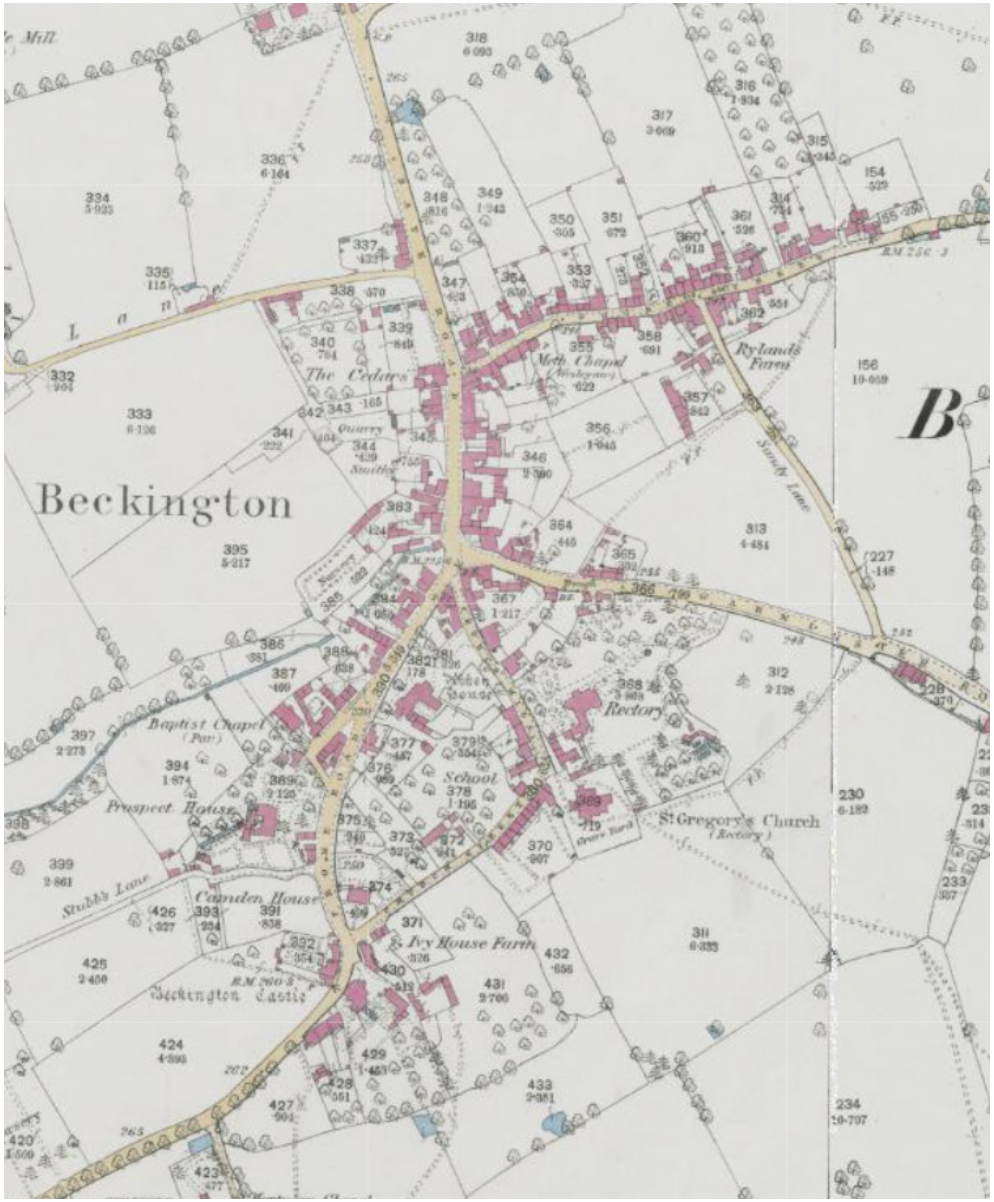


Fig 10: 1700s map of Beckington

Frome, Beckington, Rode and Mells produced around 26% of Somerset's cloth. This was mostly white unfinished cloth for the export trade, sent to continental Europe via Bristol and London for finishing in Italy and Flanders. Beckington was well-established as a cloth industry hotspot and in the 1530s the major supplier of cloth to the London merchant, Thomas Kytson, was John Clevelod of Beckington who supplied Kytson with 3,340 cloths in that decade (68).

4.33 A weaver's son from Beckington, known by the name Thomas Beckynton, had an opportunity for preferment through the Church and studied at Oxford, eventually serving as Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1433 to 1465. His choice of gift on a visit to the Pope was some fine cloth woven in the village and dyed papal scarlet.

4.34 Keystone established that Beckington Abbey, formerly Beckington Grange, became a key wool production building, showing that 1735 documentation establishes that the house was in a setting the authors describe as a 'protofactory' of dyed woollen cloth with watercourses, a dyehouse, a building for drying wool, workshops and a house. They propose a pattern of ownership from top clothiers in the 16th and early 17th century to less, but still very wealthy, woolmen in the late 17th and 18th centuries. By 1780 the Abbey was owned by the widow of the last clothworker documented there. They conclude:

4.35 '*The site is best explained as designed for clothier magnates in a locality that was of special importance for the production of woollen cloth in the 16th and 17th centuries and, in the early 17th century, at the cutting edge of the production of dyed cloth. In the 18th century the setting of the house had developed into a proto-cloth factory. If our interpretation is correct, the combination of the evidence in the building and its setting with documentation is highly significant, adding up to a rare example of a clothier's place in a locality that contributed to the nationally important cloth economy.*'

4.36 Wool production progressed from unfinished cloth, to the fulling of broadcloth. This was a process that used the water supply, usually at the mills, to clean and pound woollen cloth, sometimes with Fuller's Earth clay, to make it thick and denser, and consequently warmer and more water repellent. The production of broadcloth helped make the village prosperous and provided local employment. Later, as lighter



Fig 11: 1840 tithe map, Beckington

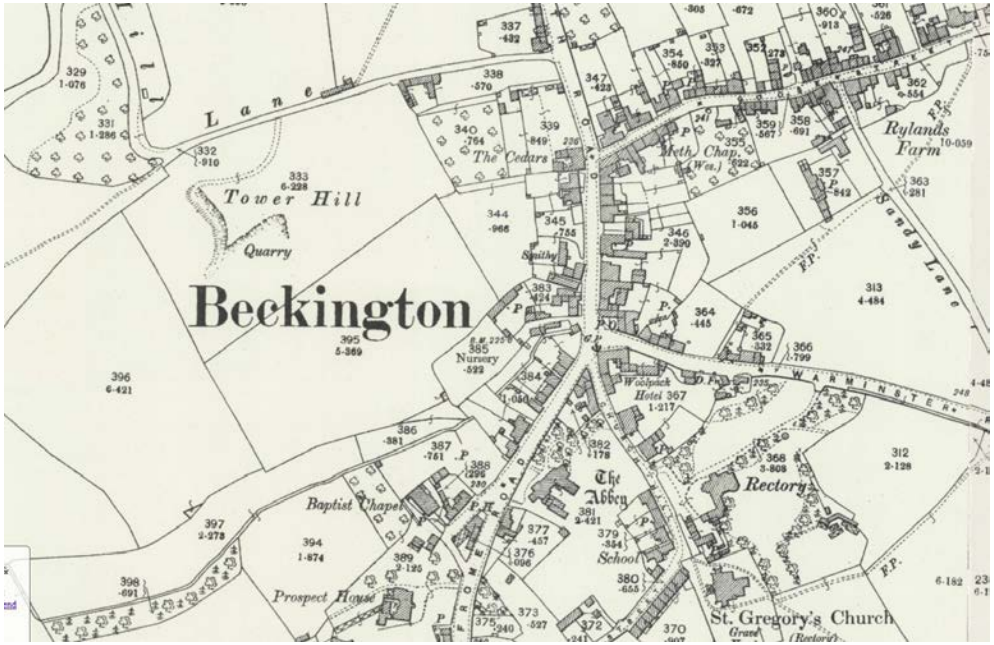


Fig 12: Historic map 1894-1903 OS, Beckington

wool clothing became fashionable, medley cloth using English wool and imported Spanish wool, was woven and dyed locally. In 1722, Daniel Dafoe claimed that that Frome had more inhabitants than Bath and marvelled at the industry that created so many rich families as a 'truly noble industry'. (Defoe, 1822, 1928 edn., 281).

4.37 While some areas experienced a decline in the wool trade, Gaisford (2015) argues that there was no drastic collapse in the early 17th century in the locality, demonstrated by the significant survival of 17th century houses in Beckington and phases of house rebuilding around that time.

4.38 '*It is difficult to find any 16th or 17th century documentation about the parish in the Somerset Heritage Centre where the named individuals are not 'clothmen' or 'clothiers' although some of the wealthiest, whom we know to have been involved in the trade, call themselves 'gentlemen*'.

4.39 Social unrest and other competition eventually caught up with Beckington as the trade faded with industrialisation, and the population dropped from 1645 inhabitants in 1821, to 742 in 1901, according to the Beckington History book.

Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

4.40 The older fabric of the village has been protected by a Conservation Area since 1973 (Fig 13) which was amended and extended by Mendip District Council (MDC) in 1996. There are some 90 listed buildings or features in Beckington, including the Grade 1 listed church and some locally listed buildings.

4.41 A Conversation Area appraisal (MDC) was completed in August 2010 which summarises the spatial layout, character and special features of the historic area within the boundary. It identified Landmark buildings which connect to the wool industry, such as The Cedars, Beckington House, The Woolpack and Beckington Abbey. The appraisal noted where the Conservation Area boundary and the development boundary are in sync.

'*There are clean edges to the village to the south and south-east, from the Frome Road 'gateway', south of Church Street and up to the undeveloped south side of Warminster Road; along most of the western side behind Bath and Frome Roads*



Fig 13: Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

and to the north-east, behind Goose Street. This undeveloped land is important in maintaining historic boundaries, preserving views into and out of the village and providing a setting for older buildings (2.3)'.

4.42 Prospect House in south west Beckington, named on the historic map in Fig 12, which overlooked Tower Hill was presumably named for the views over the valley. It has since been demolished, but a small round building remains on the corner of Stubbs Lane (Figs 14 and 14a). Its original use is unknown, but it bears resemblance to a round building in Frome, now serving as a tourist office, which was thought to be a wool drying building.

4.43 Newer development in the 20th century has expanded the village to the north, east and west (Fig 15), joining up the spaces between roads and altering the originally linear character of development hugging the streets.

4.44 Although not listed, a type 22 pillbox, part of a defensive line during the Second World War, has survived by the River Frome.



Fig 14: Prospect House, now demolished had views over Tower Hill. The round building has survived



Fig 14a: The round building, possibly for drying wool, survives on the corner of Stubbs Lane

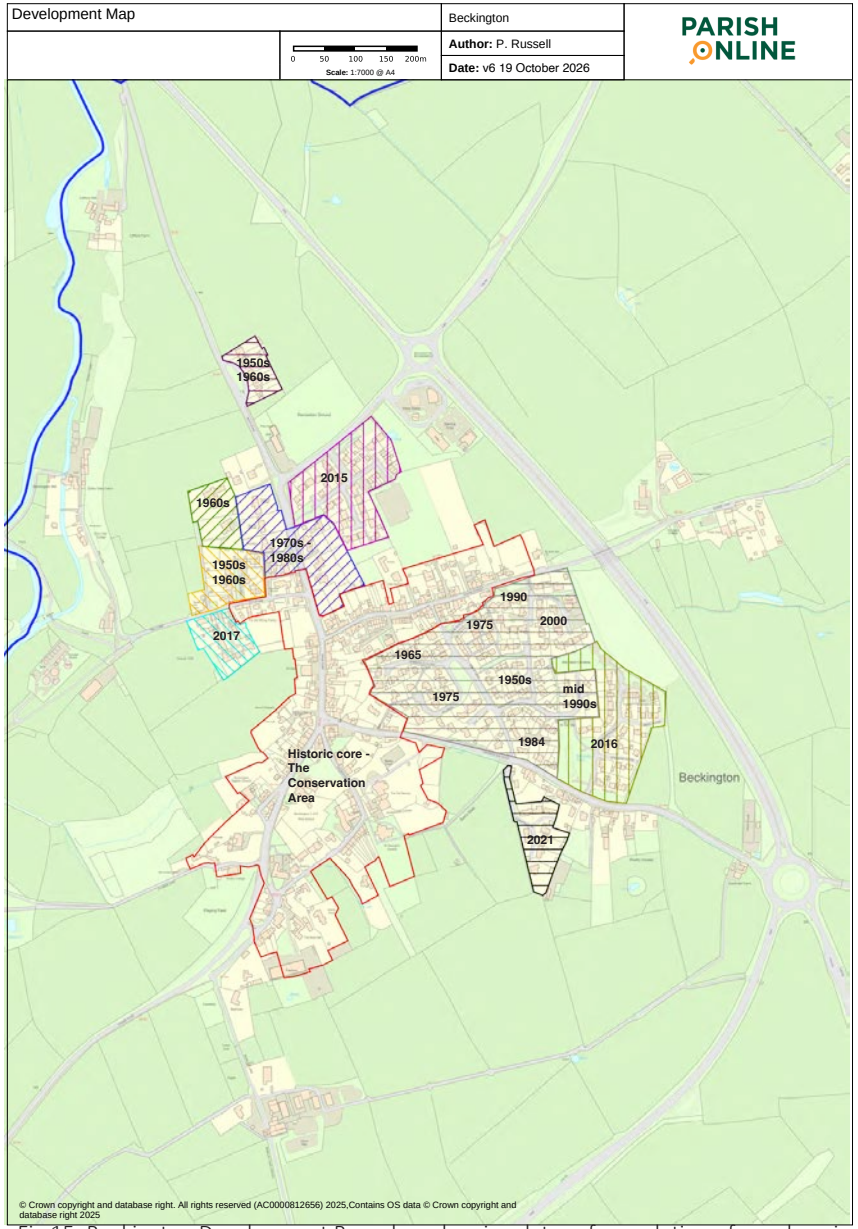


Fig 15: Beckington Development Boundary showing dates of completion of new housing

Registered Parks and Gardens

4.45 The largest registered park in the Mendip region is at the Orchardleigh estate, (Fig 16) on the west side of the Frome River Valley opposite Beckington and visible from the village. It was once part of the Selwood forest and is now a wedding venue and golf course, retaining estate features such as mature parkland trees and a lake.

Road links

4.46 As previously referred to, the bypass was built in response to unmanageable traffic volumes through the narrow main street (Fig 17). Villagers were consulted by the Department of Transport in 1985 about the route of the new road and given three options (Fig 17a) – the current 'blue' route, a 'red' route to the east closer to the village, and a 'yellow' western route (Fig 17a). Of the 264 responses, the current route was selected over the yellow route because of concerns about its impacts on the Frome Valley. The red route was deemed too close to the village. The bypass is now a 1km long section of dual carriageway with two large roundabouts which acts as a physical and visual barrier between the village and the wider landscape.



Fig 16: Orchardleigh Estate



Fig 17: Nose to tail traffic queues through Beckington prior to the bypass.

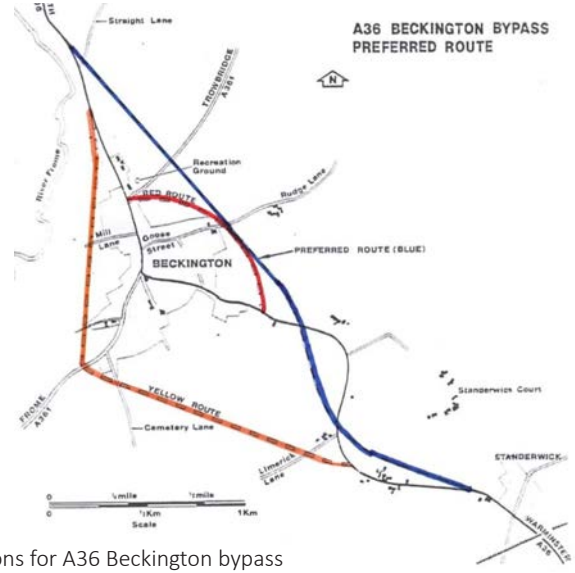


Fig 17a: Route options for A36 Beckington bypass

Footpaths

4.47 The village has a good public footpath network (Fig 18) which still follows original routes between the centre of village and the river, to Frome, to the parish communities of Standerwick and Rudge, and from the church outwards. In 2002, Beckington Parish Council carried out an audit of footpaths and subsequently designed a series of seven circular walks with the Ramblers Association to encourage access to the countryside. For each walk there is an accompanying map and description of the walk and often a local pub stop.

4.48 The Beckington Protected Views Assessment (Open Plan 2025) (Fig 19) found that for local people, walking in the countryside is closely linked to appreciation of rural views of countryside, green fields and grazing sheep. The majority of views assessed as being worthy of protection in that report were from public rights of way. It noted: '*The extensive network of public rights of way shows the value of the landscape surrounding the settlement as a recreational resource'*.

4.49 The National Trail, the Macmillan Way (PROW FR1/4) passes through the village along Stubbs Lane on its journey from Abbotsbury in Dorset to Boston in Lincolnshire. (Fig 20)

4.50 A popular local walk, known as the Beckington Loop, linking Stubbs Lane (PROW FR 1/4) with Mill Lane (PROW FR 1/3) , has a permissive path section (Fig 21) along the river. The importance of maintaining the footpaths was also apparent from the community consultation, saying that overgrown footpaths restrict access and enjoyment of views.

4.51 Sustrans cycle routes 254 and 244 also connect Beckington from the south east to the north west. Based on a survey in 2016, and subsequent consultation, the parish council commissioned consultancy work to design cycle paths and also a LCWIP (Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan).



Fig 18: Footpath Network



Fig 19: Location of Protected Views (Protected Views Assessment)



Fig 20: Rural character of Stubbs Lane which forms a section of the McMillan Way



Fig 21: Views from the permissive path



Fig 22: Community event on Tower Hill



Fig 23: Community event on Tower Hill

Community use of countryside

4.52 Tower Hill, south of Mill Lane, and its slopes were once enjoyed by villagers for community events and activities, as can be seen from old photographs (Figs 22 & 23).

4.53 The local independent primary school, Springmead, at Castle Corner, uses land at the junction of Frome Road and Stubbs Lane for sports, and pupils use the footpath network to reach both this and their Wildlife Work Area by the River Frome.

4.54 In the residents' survey carried out by the NPSG, the top two responses from those who took part said that the most important aspects of Beckington were its rural setting (41.8%) and its access to the countryside (40.2%).

4.55 In the Mendip Landscape Character Assessment, public nominations for Section 13 Favourite Walks, Views and Hidden Gems, included the circular route from Beckington, to Lullington and the Orchardleigh estate for its scenery, wildlife (birds of prey), sheep and the River Frome. Clifford View (from the ridge above Clifford's Farm) was nominated for its '*beautiful unspoilt river valley and associated wildlife*', '*uninterrupted views over the Mendip Hills towards Faulkland*' and ancient farmland.

Development Pressure and Forces for Change

4.56 With the current national need for more housing, development land is in demand. As a Primary Village in the current Local Plan, Beckington had a minimum housing requirement of 55 dwellings from 2006 to 2028, but exceeded the target for sustainable development, ending up with 111 new or completed dwellings which amounted to a 30% increase in 10 years. (Source: LPA 2024 Growth Monitoring Report).

4.57 The Local Plan was extended by a year, and in 2021 the LPPS identified a need for a further 505 dwellings in Mendip district which were all allocated in the north east area, including another site for Beckington. This interpretation was overthrown at judicial review and the Beckington site was rejected.

Description by landowner.	Mendip SHELAA.	Brodie Planning
Land West of Bath Road	BECK005a	BNDP SA 2b
Land to the North of Mill Lane	BECK005b.	BNDP SA 2c
Land to the South of Mill Lane	BECK005c.	BNDP SA 2d
Land west of the Bath/Frome Road	BECK005c.	BNDP SA 2e
Land off Bath Road	BECK023.	BNDP SA 3a
Land West of A36/A361 Roundabout	BECK023	BNDP SA 3b
Land off Bath Road (comprising sites BNDP 3a and 3b)	BECK023	BNDP SA 3c
Land between Warminster Road and the A36	BECK024	BNDP SA 7
Land North of Warminster Road	N/A	BNDP SA 36
Land at the Cedars	N/A.	BNDP SA 82
Land South of Great Dunns Close	BECK023.	BNDP SA 84
Land South of Bath Road (Wallmead)	BECK026	BNDP SA 85
Land Rear of 24 Warminster Road	N/A	BNDP SA 86

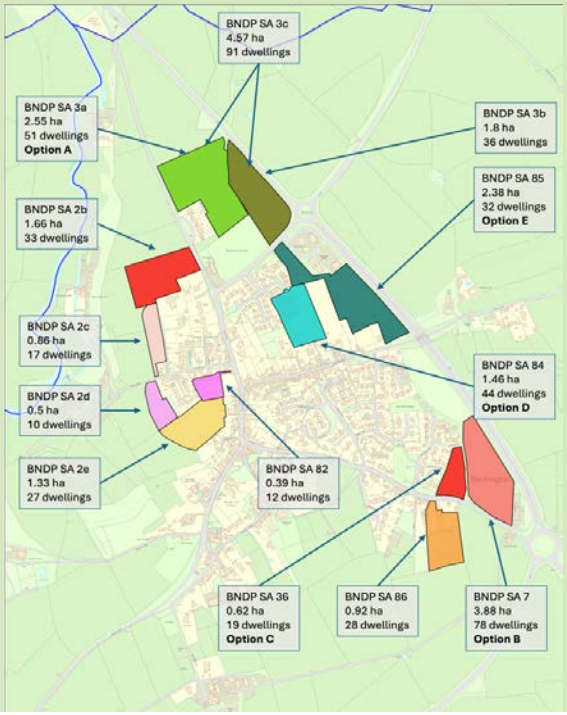


Fig 24: List of sites collated by Brodie Planning

4.58 Further planning applications are forthcoming, however, as the Mendip Plan became out of date in 2020 and Mendip does not have a 5-year housing supply. The Neighbourhood Plan has included a call for sites because if it allocates sufficient new housing to meet its allocation then it will carry planning weight.

Neighbourhood Plan Call for Sites

4.59 In October 2024, a Neighbourhood Plan call for sites was undertaken. A list of 13 sites (Fig 24) was assessed by independent planning consultants Brodie Planning for a parish residents' vote in early 2025. Following an assessment by an independent planning consultant of each site, a shortlist of 5 sites considered suitable for development on the east side of the village was put forward to residents. After 29% of the 557 households returned their votes, a preferred order of development emerged (Fig 25). Seven respondents disagreed with the choice of sites.

Land North of Warminster Road	N/A	BNDP SA 36
Land between Warminster Road and the A36	BECK024	BNDP SA 7
Land South of Great Dunns Close	BECK023.	BNDP SA 84
Land South of Bath Road (Wallmead)	BECK026	BNDP SA 85
Land off Bath Road	BECK023.	BNDP SA 3a

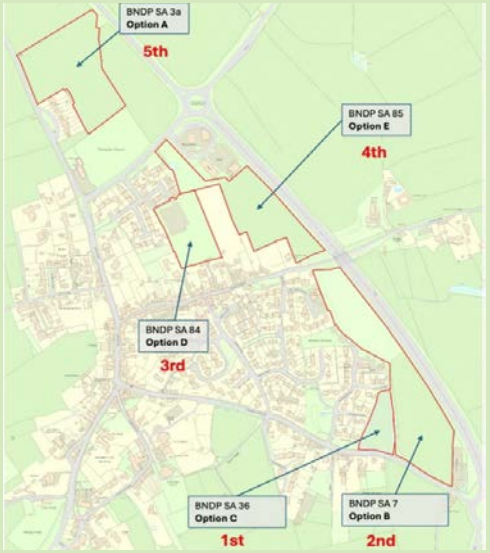


Fig 25: Sites selected by residents' vote

Neighbourhood Plan Survey

4.60 A survey of parishioners was made in 2024 to find out views about a range of topics to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. To question 1: '*What 3 things do you most value about living in the parish?*' the top response from the given options was Rural Setting with 41.8% of responses, the second was Access to Open Countryside (40%) and the third was Proximity to Larger Towns (36.8%). Additional comments however mentioned assets not offered in the options:

"Most value landscape views of green fields. The beautiful conservation area";

"MOST value? The views of fields with livestock. Views are the thing I most value. Far more than the things in this list. Seeing and enjoying the views is far more valuable than 'access to the countryside'";

"*I value most the spectacular views of the open countryside that we are so lucky to have in the Parish. So views above all the above*".

Question 35 asked for comments '*you feel are relevant and important for this survey'*. Comments included:

"Please, please protect the main views that contribute so much to daily life in the village of Beckington. This is not a NIMBY appeal but a call for balanced development. Any new housing can be on non-view land - land that does not contribute to the health and well-being of the community. Take the views away and it will be much harder to persuade kids to come on walks and to tempt the elderly to go outside and walk as part of their physical and mental well-being. I contest that these views make Beckington the place it is. Both historically and in the present day. We need to protect them."

4.61 Walking was the top leisure activity (83% of respondents), followed by gardening and dog walking.

4.62 To open-ended question 12 '*What would encourage you to walk more within the Parish*?', there were 145 answers. The largest number of comments (30) concerned the upkeep of footpaths, needed for accessibility and for seeing the views. 18 respondents asked for better footpath information and signage. Another 16 raised the difficulty and danger of crossing the A36 using public footpaths.

4.63 After traffic, the second most disliked thing about the parish was the threat to greenfield land from development (47 of 178 answers). Concerns included:
"*Anxiety and distress that plan to build on grade 1 agricultural land has caused. There is so little of it in the village, surely other fields could be built on."*

"*Worry that views of sheep and fields will be lost to housing estates. This would impact the quality of life in our beautiful village*".

"*The threat to those fields that are fundamental to the character of Beckington.*"

4.64 To question 23, *What priorities should the Neighbourhood Plan include for the natural environment and green spaces in the Parish*?, the top votes were for: Protection and improvement of existing green spaces and recreational areas (63.2%); promotion of the protection of trees and hedgerows (58.5%); and improved flood prevention measures (58.5%).

Comments included: "*The main priority should be protecting the fields that are the main views loved and enjoyed by everyone. Plan any new housing near the A36 and to the east that is already mainly modern not heritage homes and the conservation area*".

"Key priority that is more important than the above options is to protect the views from our village from being lost forever to new housing. Build the new houses on land that does not play such an important role in the setting of the village life and the quality of life for our community - the beauty of these is an essential part of what Beckington is and has been for decades."

4.65 The survey gives a good sense of the strength of feeling that the village environs are as important to the character and enjoyment of the village itself, for a significant number of the parishioners. The full survey report and accompanying statistics are available on the Beckington Plan website.

Beckington Character Assessment 2025

4.66 In May 2025, residents were invited to take part in consultation as part of a Character Assessment of Beckington. The report noted that while the remit of the report was to identify the special and different features and character inside the development boundary, 71% of written comments were instead focused on the importance of the rural setting, and in particular areas where countryside adjoins the Conservation Area, identified as CA1 and CA3 on the Character Assessment map.

4.67 Residents' views carry weight in an analysis of 'landscape value' and are considered alongside the judgement of professional consultants.

Local Green Space

4.68 The village survey also asked if there were any green spaces that the respondent felt should be protected. Of sites outside the village, the most important to 46 households of the 153 which answered, was the landscape south of Mill Lane and the so-called Beckington loop footpaths.

Responses included: "*The landscape around the Beckington Loop and the wider Frome valley*".

"*The remaining arc of the village perimeter (basically the west side of the village) that is not bounded by large roads should remain untouched to preserve the rural landscape and setting of the village. That is what makes Beckington a rural village and once it has been destroyed it can never be regained.*"

"Frome Road and the Bath Road, Beckington: the whole valley overlooking Lullington and Orchardleigh golf course! the most spectacular and beautiful views for many miles!"

4.69 A 6.3 hectare area between the Conservation Area and the three footpaths – the so-called Beckington Loop has been nominated as Local Green Space in the 2025 assessment for its local significance for beauty, views, tranquility and recreational value and will be taken forward in the draft NP.

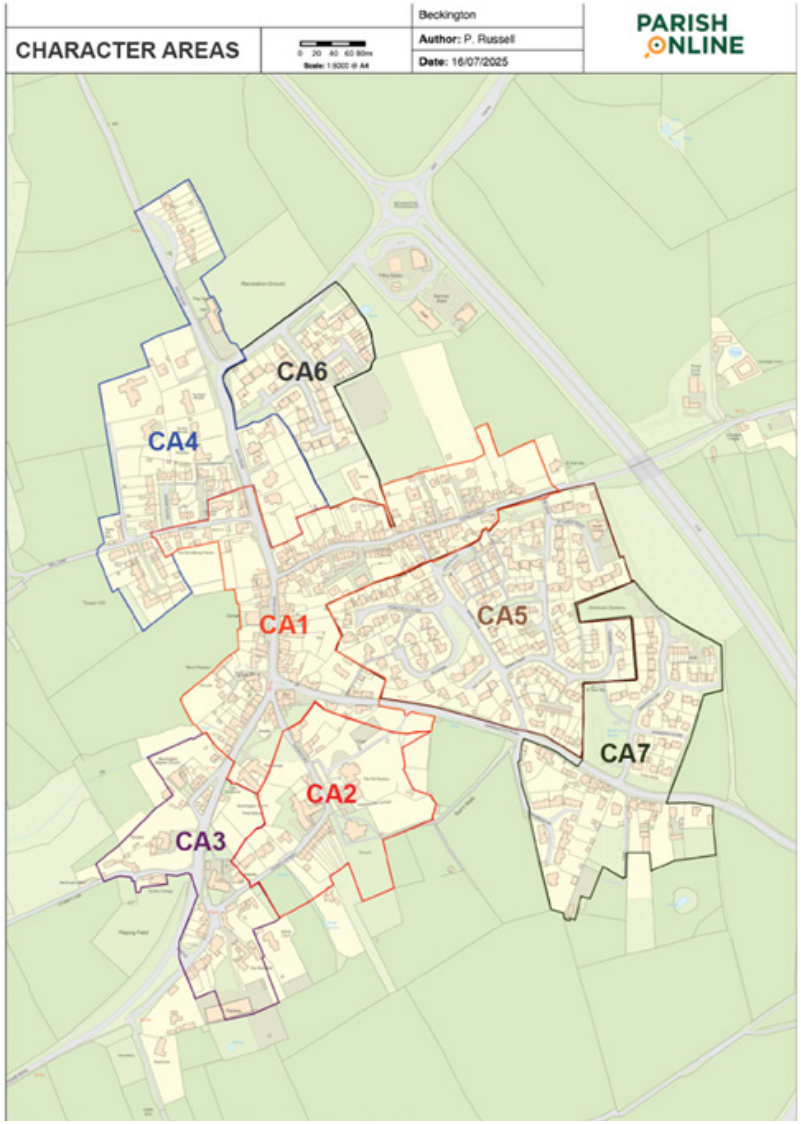


Fig 26: Beckington Character Assessment map

Chapter 5

5.1 The protection and management of landscape is focused on an understanding of landscape character and distinctiveness at all scales. Published Landscape Character Assessments (LCA) can provide, through descriptions and maps, an overview of the land, along with opportunities and constraints for its use and management. They describe key characteristics which foster a sense of place and identity.

Avon Vales LCA

5.2 At a National level, Beckington falls within Landscape Character Area 117 Avon Vales (Natural England). It is also very close to the Mendip Hills LCA (141) which lies directly west, with nearby Frome as the gateway, and the Cotswolds LCA (107) but is judged to have more in common in landscape terms with the wool-producing riverine areas of nearby Wiltshire.

5.3 The LCA provides a broad description of the natural and cultural features that shape the area, how the landscape has changed over time, the key drivers for on-going change and an analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. They are produced in brief here with more information from (https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4822288767647744)

5.4 Key characteristics of Avon Vales relevant to Beckington are:

- An undulating, low-lying landscape of mixed, predominantly pastoral agriculture and small limestone-built towns.
- 80 per cent agricultural (both arable and pasture, with some localised nurseries and market gardening) and less than 10 per cent urban, but from the late 20th century onwards it has been subject to much development.
- Priority habitats such as flood plain grazing marsh, calcareous grassland and lowland meadow are concentrated around the river corridors.
- The presence of hedgerows tends to be to be poorer in arable areas due to agricultural intensification, and more frequent and often overgrown in the lower-lying meadows. Hedgerow trees are characteristic.
- 'This area still reveals its past role in broadcloth production and trade in its fine late medieval churches and merchants' houses in market towns and in its many stream-side mills. Smaller settlements and farmsteads are clustered along streams and lesser rivers, linked by narrow winding lanes. Ancient patterns of flood meadows and drainage ditches dominate these valley floors, with their wet grasslands and woodlands'.

5.5 Flooding affects many communities in this LCA, and the opportunities to restore wetland habitats within river corridors to alleviate problems with water flow and to aid climate change mitigation will be important ecosystem services here, to add to food provision and cultural services.

5.6 Water quality in the River Frome, which was predominantly good in the early 21st century, has been affected by a rise in pollution of the waterways and work to address this has been noted.

Summary

5.7 The description indicates a landscape with many positive contributing features, natural habitats and identity. But it also warns of potential greater impacts on tranquility particularly along major road corridors around Frome, loss of agricultural and rural character, development pressure due to the lack of landscape protection compared with the better protected landscapes around it, development that is sometimes insensitive to landscape character, threats to water quality and water extraction availability due to existing extraction upstream and from quarries to the west.

Opportunities

5.8 The following advice points are given:

- Maintaining, extending and linking fragmented areas of species-rich calcareous and neutral grassland largely on the nearby limestone hills and in the river valleys where they can both enhance biodiversity (particularly invertebrate and landscape) and help to reduce soil erosion and nutrient run-off.
- Restoring, maintaining and extending flood meadows and wet woodland, to enhance the landscape and cultural environment and the sense of place, and to increase water retention capacity for the benefit of flood alleviation.

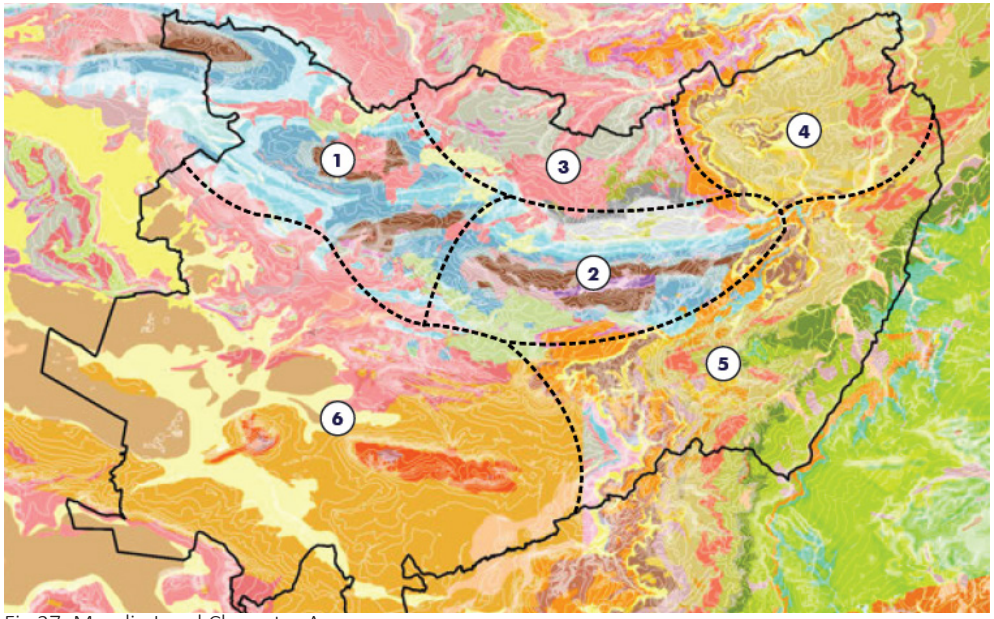


Fig 27: Mendip Local Character Area

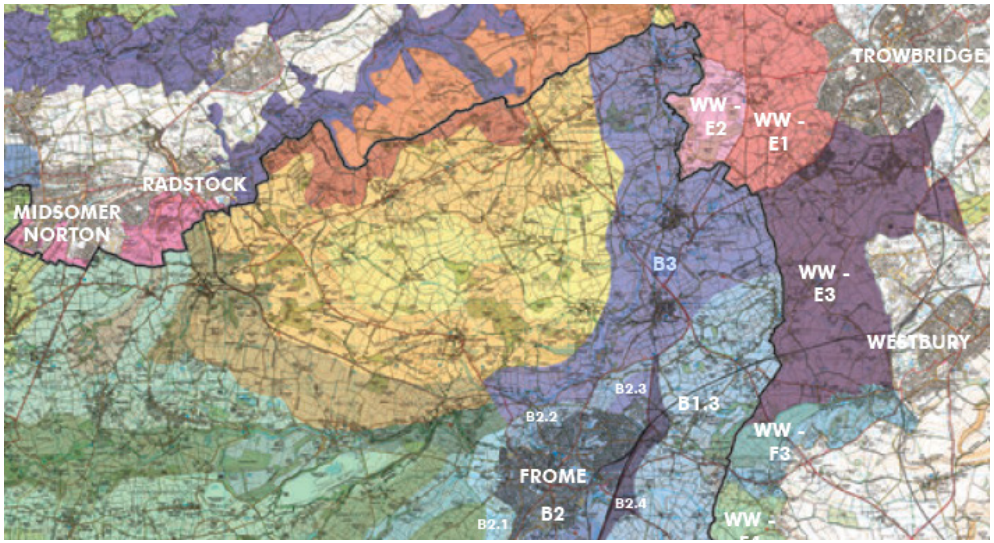


Fig 28: B3 Lower Frome Valley Spring Gardens, Beckington to Farleigh Hungerford

- Reinstating riverine habitats such as backwaters and reedbeds, lost largely through engineering work, to provide refuges for aquatic species, in the interests of biodiversity, and, by assisting with water filtration, to benefit water quality and water flow.
- Reinstating and managing hedgerows to restore the local landscape character, to help reduce soil erosion and to foster linear habitat networks for pollinators and pest regulation for the benefit of agriculture, biodiversity generally and – notably – farmland birds.
- Maintaining, restoring and extending existing woodland, including ancient woodland, to enhance wildlife networks and enhance resilience of existing woodland habitats, in particular in relation to the bat communities.
- Creating grassland buffer strips across slopes and alongside watercourses to help reduce soil erosion and nutrient run-off in areas of arable production and grazing.
- Protecting and encouraging planting of riverside trees, to help stabilise river banks, managing these by pollarding for longevity and aiding adaptation to climate change.
- Developing access on foot, and where possible on bicycle and horse, for recreation and other use, in the interests of reducing traffic (to benefit the climate) and the health and enjoyment of residents and visitors to the area.
- Protecting against insensitive development and/or alterations that would impact on the rural character, ensuring that buildings reflect traditional styles and methods such as limestone ashlar.
- Maintaining the distinctive stone-built centres to larger settlements and the overall settlement pattern of clustered villages along stream sides, linked with narrow winding lanes.
- Working to develop permissive access linking existing settlements, and developing circular routes, in the interests of sustainable transport and tourism, engaging local residents with their environment and for the benefit of recreation generally.

Mendip LCA

5.9 A more detailed landscape description (Figs 27&28) was provided by the Mendip Landscape Character Area report (McGregor Smith, 2024). In it McGregor Smith reverts to an assessment area defined in 1996 (Chris Blandford Associates)

following the River Frome catchment to the north east corner of the district (LCA Areas B1-B3 Section 6.3).

5.10 In Section 7 (Valued Landscapes) the report indicates how the area containing Beckington marks an important interface between different landscapes with the high Mendips to the west, the river valley and Cotswolds to the north, the Somerset coalfields to the north west, and quiet downs and combes to the south.
The specific B3 sub area of the LCA is described below (Fig 29):

Physical/Natural Characteristics
- Main river valley
- Modest scale river and flood plain landscape
- Areas of gently rolling plateau
- Limited woodland cover

Settlement and Infrastructure
- River character created with engineering for numerous mills (inc. weirs and mill leats and islands)
- Larger scale wool trade villages
- Modern roadscape and heavily trafficked route of A36 and other strategic links

Land use management/Human Influences
- More intensely managed mixed production farmland
- Moderate scale field pattern with mix of enclosure eras

Perceived characteristics
- Presence of major roads and built up area limits opportunities to find tranquil environments
- General quality of landscape diminished around roadways, although outlook from roads generally very good

Fig 29: Landscape Character summary of B3 Lower Frome Valley (inc. Beckington)

5.11 Section 6.3.75-80 confirms the characterisation of a riparian (river) landscape with engineered features, strong agricultural presence of arable and livestock, and a village set down in a more sheltered location with a clearly defined centre and a high number of significant buildings.

5.12 The Mendip LCA has shortlisted 8 special landscape characteristics, all of which have relevance to the area around Beckington in different measures.

- Valuable Collection of Distinct and Interesting Landscapes - as a collection there is a value in these landscapes as a sum greater than the sum of its parts.
- Geological and Geomorphology - the district landscapes encapsulate a complex geological history.
- Biodiversity Potential - the biodiversity interest provides specific contributions to the appearance and interest of the landscape.
- History - the district landscapes include a rich historical story that links across the whole collection.
- Continuous Landscape - there is a continuity of landscapes across the district providing the sense of an area dominated by rural undeveloped countryside.
- Tranquil, Isolated and Semi Natural Landscape Resource - the district landscapes include many different aspects of peaceful and strongly natural landscape.
- Views and Landmarks - exploring most parts of the district presents constantly changing good quality views. Within these, key features recur as interest and orientation points.
- Rich Cultural Heritage and Recreational Resource - the district landscapes accommodate, inspire and attract people for events, creative interest and as a cultural resource.
- The area includes a comprehensive network of recreational routes and the settings for adventure.

Valuation

5.13 In terms of landscape value within the whole of the Mendip LCA (Appendix 2), the B3 area, which includes Beckington, is categorised as Moderate.

Tranquility

5.14 In Chapter 7 Valued Landscapes, the Mendip LCA comments that one of the ways in which landscape value can be measured is by audible and visual tranquility.

5.15 The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) says that tranquility is a highly valued characteristic of the English countryside and one of the most important indicators of its quality. It defines tranquility as '*the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features, free from disturbance from manmade ones*'.

5.16 In 2007, the CPRE did tranquility mapping for the whole of the UK in response to PPG24 Planning and Noise which recommending adopting policies '*to avoid potentially noisy developments in areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise nuisance and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason*'.

5.17 It also argues that tranquility is part of the 'intrinsic character' of the countryside (to quote the term from the NPPF) and interprets this as some protection for areas of open countryside not specifically identified as 'areas of tranquility' or not able to pass the test of demonstrating they 'are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason'. Beckington is affected by disturbance to the north, east and south (Fig 30).

Dark Skies

5.18 The CPRE has also mapped light pollution in England and recommended that local authorities implement national policy on controlling light pollution and protecting dark skies in their area. It states that they should also develop policies in Local Plans to ensure new developments do not increase local light pollution, with their maps as evidence to inform decisions.

5.19 The dark skies map of Beckington (Fig 31) shows the village in brighter road corridor with light pollution diminishing towards the river valley (Fig 31).

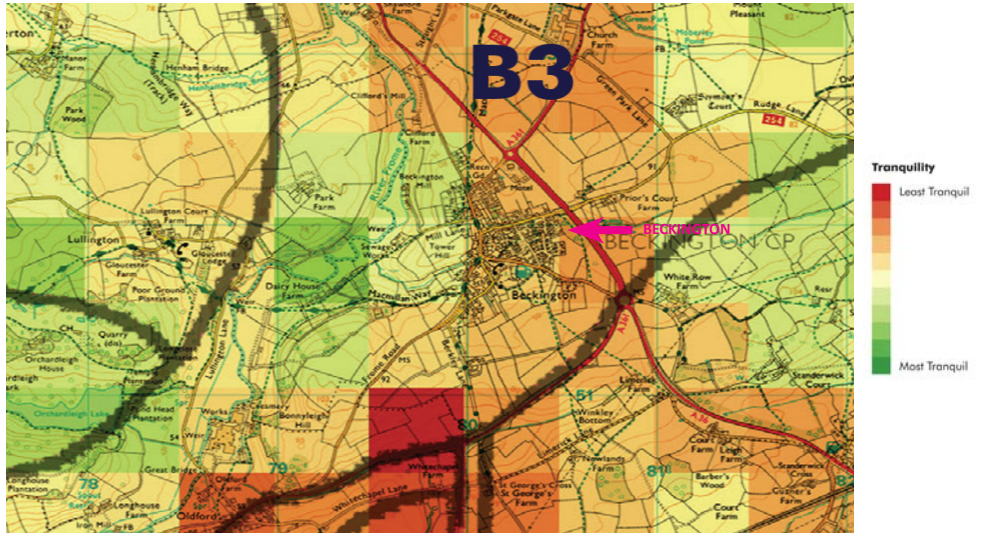


Fig 30: Intrusion Map tracks least tranquil (red) to most tranquil (green), early 1990s CPRE

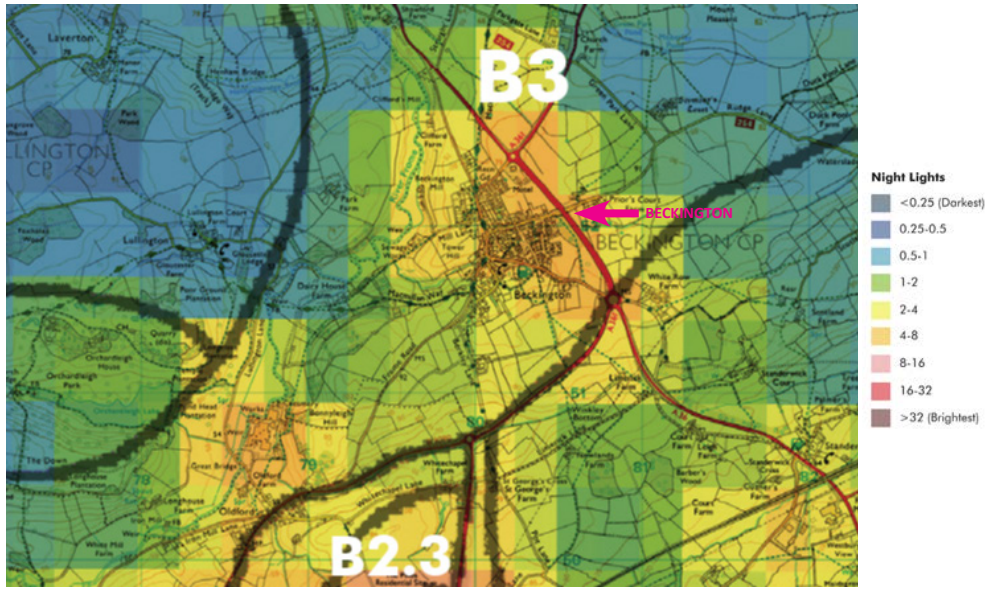


Fig 31: CPRE Map of Light Pollution tracks higher pollution (orange/yellow) to lower (blue/purple)

Chapter 6

Valued landscape Assessment

6.1 A site visit was undertaken on Tuesday July 1st 2025 during which streets, public footpaths, permissive paths and lanes were walked, photographs taken and contemporaneous notes made.

6.2 The weather was hot and dry, sometimes overcast, with a heat haze in the air. It is worth noting that in winter when there are no leaves on the trees, that the landscape would be more open, with more opportunities for long views.

6.3 The focus was on the landscape between the village development perimeter and either the parish boundary, or the perceived edge of the landscape setting, which was sometimes outside boundary lines. The landscape was assessed according to the landscape value methodology, and the views highlighted in the views assessment were looked at in the light of landscape value.

6.4 The site visit quickly clarified the connection between the village and its topography. The village lies on the edge of a plateau, with the historic heart nestling into a shallow bowl in the centre. Land drops down to the river valley, more gently to the north, and more steeply to the west. The topography remains fairly level to the east where the village is truncated by the road network, and rises to a higher hill to the south towards Frome.

6.5 A section of views showing valued features or scenic compositions are shown here and commented upon. The photos are included to show the character of the landscape, the landform and the visual experience from public rights of way. They are supplementary to the Views Assessment document and do not include village valued views which are considered a vital part of local identity and distinctiveness.

6.6 The photos were taken with a Canon GPS SLR. The photographs presented on the following pages are either single shots, or panoramic images made up from two consecutive images with an approximate 30 % overlap. The photographs are intended for representation only, as is sufficient for a project of this scale, and should not be treated as verifiable.

Defining the landscape area

6.7 The focus was on the landscape surrounding the village development perimeter, and finding the outward point at which the landscape character no longer seemed to have visual, physical or a character connection with the village. The perimeter ‘doughnut’ was then divided up into sections, named A to E, (Fig 32) and photographed and described according to land type, character, function and atmosphere.

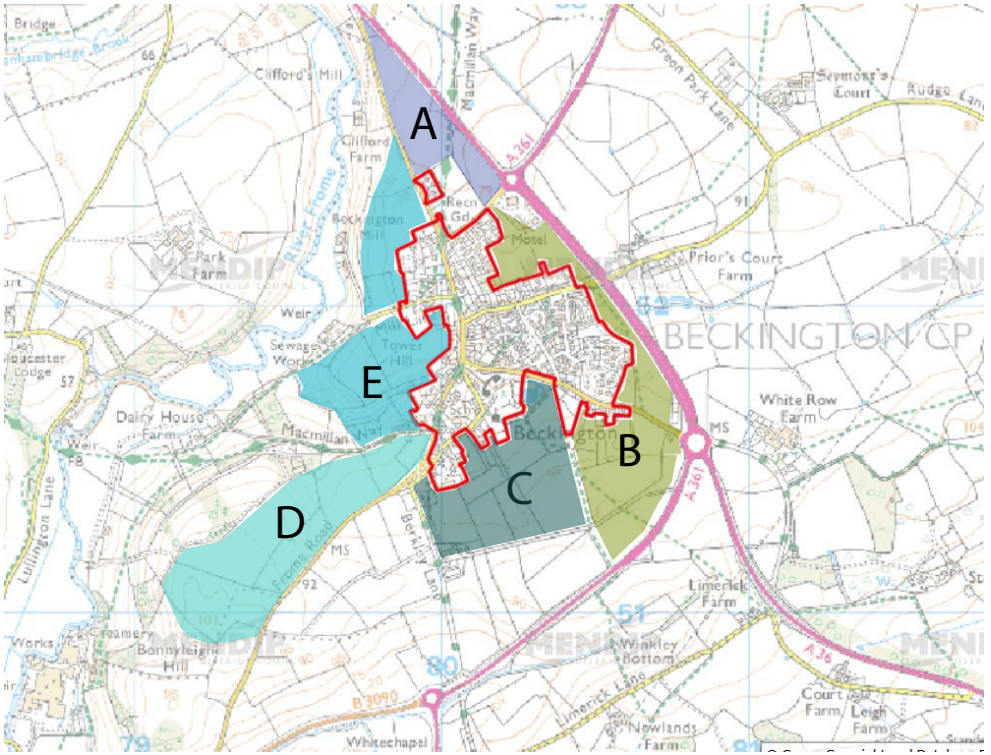


Fig 32: Landscape survey area

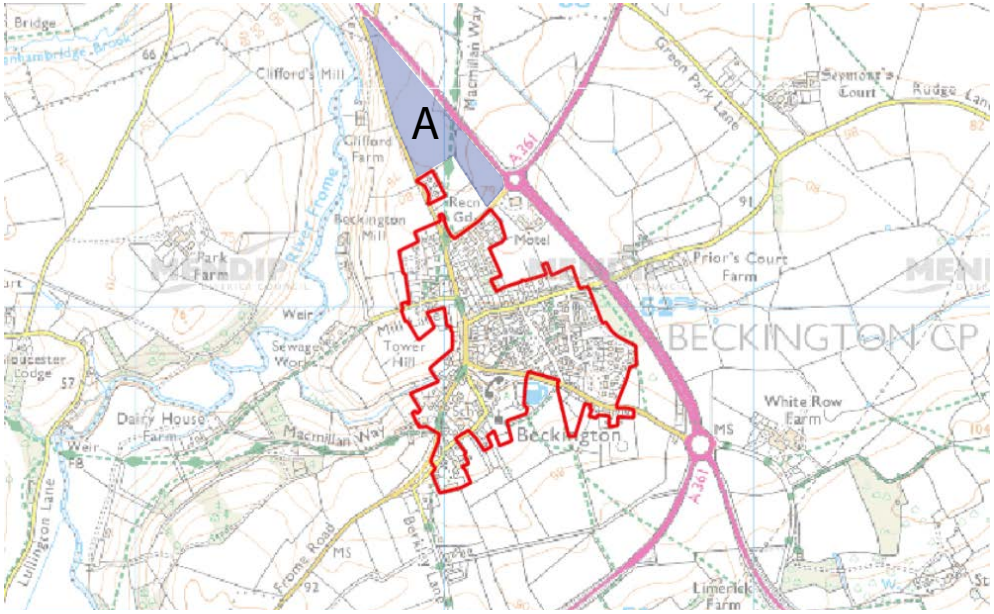


Fig 33: Area A North

Area A: Village north (Fig 33)

6.8 The Recreation ground is protected under local legislation so excluded from the analysis, but it was noted that it was well used by dog walkers (Fig 34). Beyond the rec is a greenfield site being used for arable agriculture which slopes north away from the village (Fig 35). The field is large and open, narrowing to a point where the Bath Road joins the A36, and notable for its long-distance rural views over the Frome River Valley towards Norton St Philip on the next hill. The boundaries are hedges, a small copse of evergreens, and to the east a ditch (dry at the time of survey) with oak, willow and hazel. Conservation boxes hanging from hazel trees were presumed to be part of a dormouse survey.

6.9 The Macmillan Way leads from the north end of Bath Road across the rec, and round the field perimeter to the east where it rises up steps to a crossing point over the A36 which is a couple of metres higher than the field at that location. While the landscape is generally peaceful, the sound of traffic is prominent on this side of the field.

6.10 On the boundary of Area A lies a small development of 20th century houses, standing separate from the village but marked with its own discrete red development line. Also relevant to Area A are three listed buildings behind stone walls to the west of the rec within the historic village boundary. Known originally as Clifford's Villas, they were built in the 19th century by the owner of Clifford's Mill in the valley below with proceeds from the wool trade.

6.11 This landscape fits into the rural, rolling hills and river valley of the landscape character type with the long distance views and big open skies offering a special character. The view to the north was not part of the remit of the Views Assessment, but provides an important panoramic view that gives context to the village location.

6.12 The area has the following special qualities: Long views over open countryside and river valley



Fig 34: Photo looking north over recreation ground towards Norton St Philip (Area A)



Fig 35: Photo looking north over arable fields towards Norton St Philip (Area A)

Area B: Village East adjoining bypass (Fig 36)

6.13 Landscape to the east of the village is squeezed into a long narrow strip by the relocated bypass. It is crossed by several roads including Goose St and the Warminster Road, each junction bringing slight character changes. While the village dips down in the centre, the A36 remains level, meaning that the bypass is elevated above ground level until they rejoin at the south of the village.

6.14 At the northern end, between the A36 roundabout and petrol station, and Goose Street lie two separate fields. The most easterly is an attractive large open pasture (Fig 37), accessible from Goose St, and the other was used as the construction base for the building of the adjacent Great and Little Dunns Close (Fig 38), now within the development zone, with access from the new estate. Some of the lot has been laid to hard-standing, with a couple of buildings visible at the south end, but the remainder is overgrown pasture and scrub, with lots of birds and butterflies. The roofs of nearby housing on Bath Road and Goose St can be glimpsed above hedges. The tranquility is affected by a low and constant background noise of traffic.

6.15 Both parcels are relatively level and have good enclosure by hedges and mature trees, albeit somewhat unmanaged.

6.16 South of Goose Street the road is buffered by a narrow stretch of woodland, with a footpath running along the backs of original and new housing until the landscape opens out again into a field of corn (Fig 39). There is good enclosure from mature hedges to the east and the A36, with less enclosure to the housing and allotments.

6.17 The field is large and open, with only road noise, and some telegraph poles as detractors to the rural scene. The edges have been left scrubby along the footpath which has encouraged birds and butterflies. The tennis club can be glimpsed in the distance on the Warminster Road on a site that once used as a nursery.

6.18 Special qualities: This area is a common type of rural village edge and has no special or distinctive features

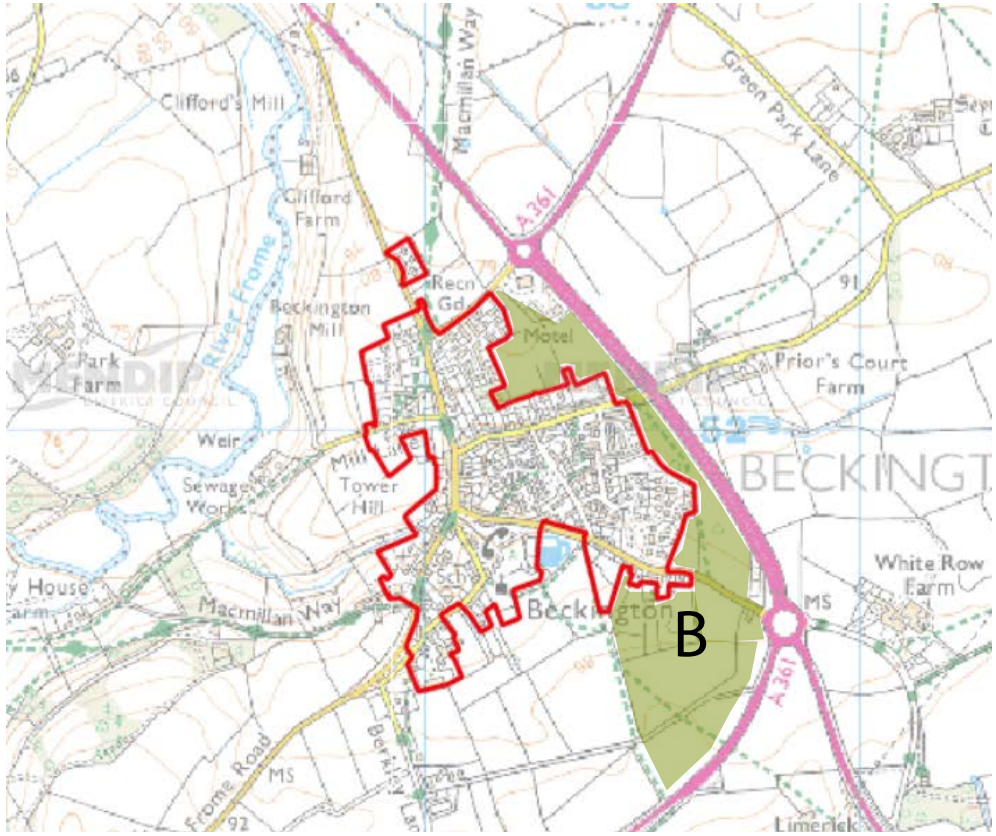


Fig 36: Area B East Beckington



Fig 37: Photo taken from rear of petrol station, looking south towards pasture, with A36 beyond east hedge (left) (Area B)



Fig 38: Photo looking south over former construction site and pasture at Great Dunns (Area B)



Fig 39: Photo looking south over arable field towards Warminster Road (Area B)

Area C Village South and church area (Fig 40)

6.19 The land is elevated again at the top of the village where the parish church of St George's is located at the top of Church Hill. The village is able to breathe more at this end where the road network is further from the development edge and noise from the road network is no longer audible.

6.20 Around the church and churchyard, which is loosely defined by a footpath known as Sue's Walk (named in memory of a church warden) are a particular set of small land parcels, some of which were formally glebe land, which have a more ancient feel, due to the presence of sections of church wall, a glimpse of the church tower (see Protected View 1) and mature park style trees such as lime, cedar and fir. The land use is more domestic than farmed with horses and equine shelters and harshly grazed lower sections of trees and hedges (Fig 41).

6.21 The quarterly chiming of the church clock and the peaceful nature of the landscape make it feel very much part of the cultural side of the village. The presence of a clipped non-native hedge around the primary school playing area also separates it from the more rural fields beyond (Fig 42).

6.22 The remainder of the southern fields (shown in a paler green) are centred around Ivy House Farm which grazes dairy cows and other pasture (Fig 43). The large open, gently sloping fields have hedgerow boundaries with some hedgerow trees.

6.23 Special qualities: The fields provide the setting for the Grade 1 listed church and other heritage assets clustered in that part of the village.

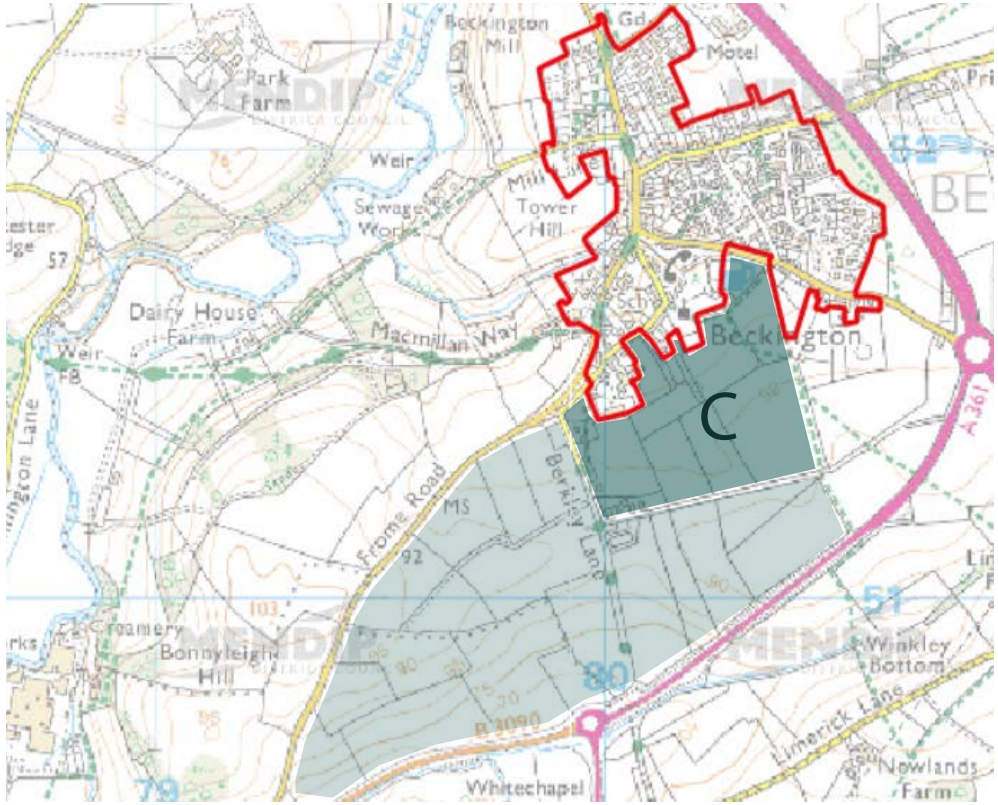


Fig 40: Area C: South Beckington



Fig 41: Photo looking south from Sue's Walk towards paddocks near church (Area C)



Fig 42: Photo looking north towards church (just visible in trees) (Area C)



Fig 43: Photo looking south towards pasture, with A36 beyond east hedge (left) (Area C)

Area D Frome Road and Bonnyleigh Hill (Fig 44)

6.24 The road from Frome to the village centre is the line of the former main road prior to the bypass. It rises up to the top of the aptly named Bonnyleigh Hill before descending into the village, giving attractive long-distance views over hedgerows and through gateways to arable fields and stands of trees leading to the Frome river valley below, and the wider landscape of the southern end of the Cotswold scarp (Fig 45).

6.25 While the historic village would hardly have been detected from this approach in the past, it can now been seen in the form of a recent development, Valley View, which sits prominently on the west edge of the village, unsoftened by screening vegetation, before the land slopes down to the floodplain.

In the Call for Sites exercise undertaken by Brodie Planning for the Beckington Plan, managing director Wendy Hopkins stated: *'In my opinion the existing development at Valley View when viewed from the west appears at odds with the prevailing urban grain and softly screened verdant edge of this part of the settlement. Development of the site would further compound and increase the prominence of this alien feature causing harm to the rural characteristics and distinctiveness of this settlement edge'.*

6.26 As the road descends to the village edge, it is lined by outgrown hedges and new tree planting forming a green approach right into the Conservation Area, offering an historically little-changed entrance to the village.

6.27 Special qualities: Long views to the river valley, with the village perched on the plateau.

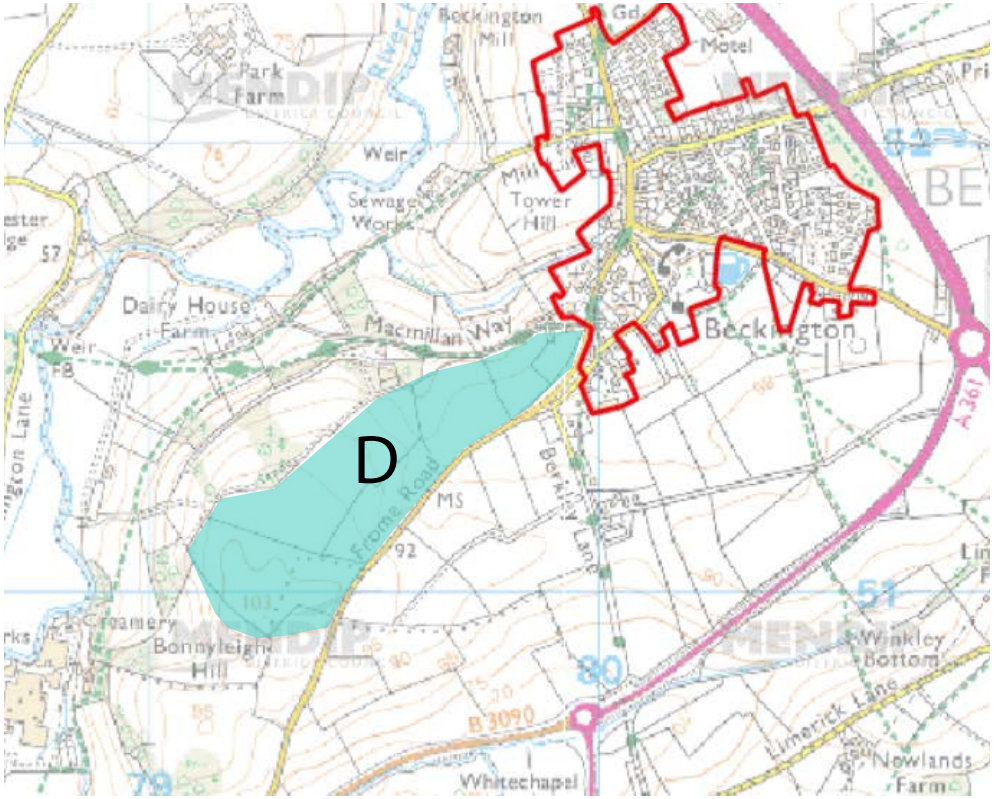


Fig 44: Area D Bonnyleigh Hill



Fig 45: Photo looking north from top of Bonnyleigh Hill (Area D)

Area E Village West (Fig 46)

6.28 From Bath/Frome Road, within the village, there are a series of glimpsed views west towards Tower Hill (Fig 47) which is a low mounded hill which looms surprisingly close to the housing. It provides the background setting for a number of listed buildings, including the Baptist Church (View 2, Protected Views Assessment). The 1840 Tithe Map shows trees on the hill, as there are today. The map shown in Fig. 12 shows a historic small quarry on the top of the hill.

6.29 The name Tower Hill has been appropriated by housing developers in slightly different locations, but the historic map makes clear that this is the original location of Tower Hill (between Mill Lane and Stubbs Lane).

6.30 The hill has clearly been an important gathering point for the village as old photographs (Figs 22&23) show that various village activities took place there, close to housing on the Bath Road. Villagers in possibly late Victorian, early Edwardian dress, can be seen sitting on the slope overlooking the river valley, with the large stone walls of The Cedars seen in the background of one image. The location where people were sitting is probably close to the site of the recent Valley View development, which sits adjacent to the west wall of The Cedars garden. Tower Hill is in private hands and has no public access. The origin of the name is not known.

6.31 The land is still used as sheep pasture (Fig 48), as it has been for many centuries, and currently shows signs of heavy grazing with very short grass. The trees, which provide shelter and shade to the flock have a distinct browsing line.

6.32 As the Protected Views Assessment shows, there are long views from the south west and west to the hill.

6.33 To the south west of the village, Stubbs Lane, which is also the route of the Macmillan Way, is a narrow country lane descending towards the river that ends at a private property. It has high stone walls close to the village end which give way to native hedges.

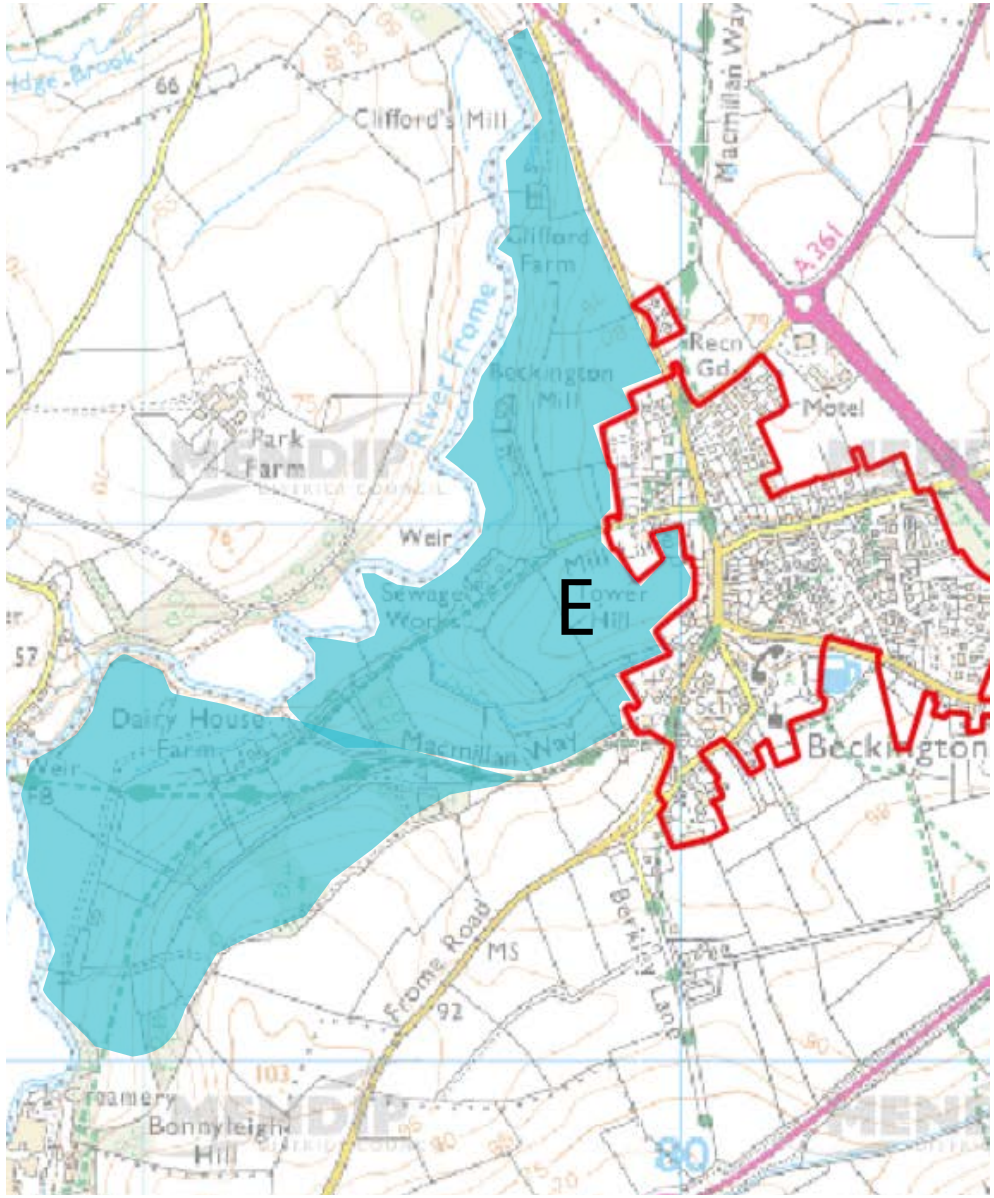


Fig 46: Area E Frome River Valley

6.34 A permissive path, forming part of what is called the Beckington Loop, (Fig 49) links Stubbs Lane with Mill Lane across the dip of the valley. It offers views back to the village which are shown as Protected Views 3, 4 and 5 in the assessment. Views 3 and 4 clearly show the how the modern village is now perched on the ridge, with land dropping away on all sides into the valley.

6.35 The Beckington Loop also follows the stream that flows from the village, connected to the old springs and culverts, down through woodland to join the river. Although shallow at the time of survey, when the stream floods it would function as wet woodland. Ropes and swings attest to the recreational use of the woodland.

6.36 As the Views Assessment has described, views to and from the west are considered by locals to be one of the most high value assets of the village, as they provide a historic connection between the village and its past, can be enjoyed by everyone and encourage people out into the countryside.

6.37 Special qualities: Tranquil pasture descending via a stream towards the river, with glimpsed views back to the village. Historical association between land and village.

6.38 While the desk-top survey suggested a more limited area of the village's western countryside having potential for a 'valued landscape', the site visit identified the strong interconnection between the slopes and the river valley as the setting for the village. This is based on views to the village, the topography of the high village and low river valley, and how that landscape defined the village's evolution. The area of potential valued landscape to the west has been extended as previously noted in Fig. 46.

Frome River Valley

6.39 The river valley can be accessed via Stubbs Lane (and the Macmillan Way) and Mill Lane, or from the Lullington direction on the other side of the River Frome, via footbridge, or road bridge using a longer route. The river has a strong meander at this point and there are priority habitat river meadows to both sides with lush grazing for sheep which are indicative of the local landscape character.

6.40 During the site visit, herons, great egrets and a red kite were spotted in flight. The meadows are an important part of the floodplain reducing potential for alleviating flooding upstream.

6.41 Public footpaths are limited and access to the river banks mostly fenced off by owners for rural sports. The sense of private land ownership is very present here with electric fencing protecting a pheasant shoot (Fig 50), keep out signs and warnings to dog owners (Fig 51), which slightly mars the enjoyment of passing through a pretty and ancient rural landscape. Despite the loss of naturalness, the tranquility remains.

6.42 The footbridge to Lullington provides welcome access to, and long views of, the river which flows north to nearby Lullington Mill, an old saw mill, and the weir. It also has views back to the village (Fig 52) showing how it fits in to the overarching landscape character of gentle hills and rolling plateau that are typical of the Avon Vales).

6.43 There is a sense of excitement as the rural peace transforms to the sound of rushing water. At the time of the survey, water lilies were seen flowering in the upper stretches (Fig 53). The tranquility and the ability to appreciate natural sounds without the intrusion of traffic noise or aircraft is palpable and rare.

6.44 The footpath on the opposite bank ascends to the 500-acre Grade II* Registered Park and Garden at Orchardleigh, now a private wedding venue and golf course, which looks back at Beckington village across the river. Lullington provides further public long-distance views to Beckington from the road travelling north between the estate's Gloucester Gate and the A36 (Fig 54).



Fig 47: Photo from Bath Road/Frome Road looking west to Tower Hill a view that is being eroded by tall boundary treatments (Area E)



Fig 48: Photo looking west towards Mill Lane and the top of Tower Hill (Area E)



Fig 49: Photo from Beckington Loop looking north east towards village (Area E)



Fig 50: Photo of footpath alongside electric fencing (Area E)



Fig 51: Photo from river looking south east (Area E)



Fig 52: Photo from river footbridge looking east across the floodplain towards Beckington. A pillbox in the foreground, and newer housing on the hill (Area E)



Fig 53: Photo looking north along the River Frome towards Lullington from the footbridge



Fig 54: Photo from Lullington Road looking east from over the river valley to Beckington on the hill



Fig 55: View from Mill Lane looking west over the river valley to Orchardleigh Estate, once part of a Selwood royal forest (Area E overlooking Area F)



Fig 56: Photo looking north from Mill Lane where the development edge has crept down from the crest of the hill (Area E)

6.45 Returning towards Beckington, the footpath ascends up Mill Lane to the village, passing through the Sewage Works access road, past recent developments which have expanded the village out to the west on a prominent ridge (Figs 55&56). The lane has the character of a sunken lane as it approaches the village with hedges above low stone walls.

6.46 The area has the following special qualities: Priority habitat and distinctive landscape type with the village above.

6.47 Despite being beyond the parish boundary, Area F (Fig 57) has been included in this study as it offers an important 'borrowed landscape' completing the opposite side of the river valley and an important view from Mill Lane and Tower Hill (south of Mill Lane). The survival of the estate and its listing as a registered Park and Garden has protected that view.

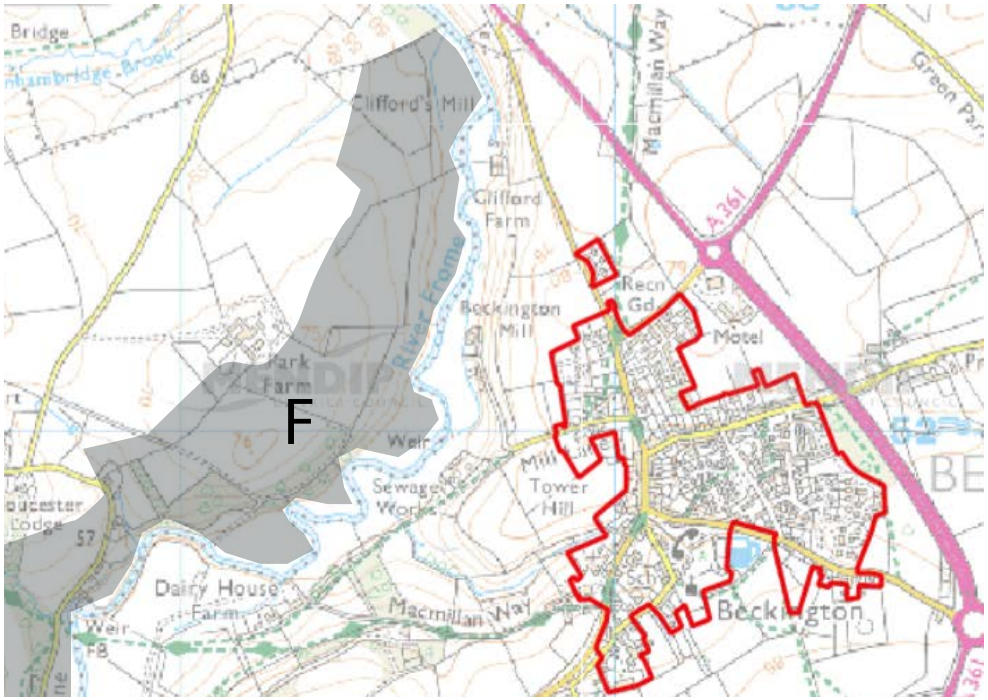


Fig 57: Area F Borrowed landscape

Overall assessment findings

6.48 The landscape is predominantly agricultural and therefore supports the village economy through the farming of sheep and cows and the growing of crops. The river valley provides much more than just scenery as it provides lush grazing and flood relief, as well as habitat making it an important part of Somerset's Green Infrastructure strategy. Public rights of way offer access to the countryside which supports the physical and mental health of villagers.

6.49 The landscape is more distinctive to the south, west and north, and less to the east where the bypass has severed easy visual and physical connections. The slopes and river valley to the west have the combined qualitities and physical attributes which have defined the village's story, landscape beauty, tranquility, ecological value and amenity for villagers. Area E (Fig 58) is therefore judged to be eligible for 'valued landscape' status.

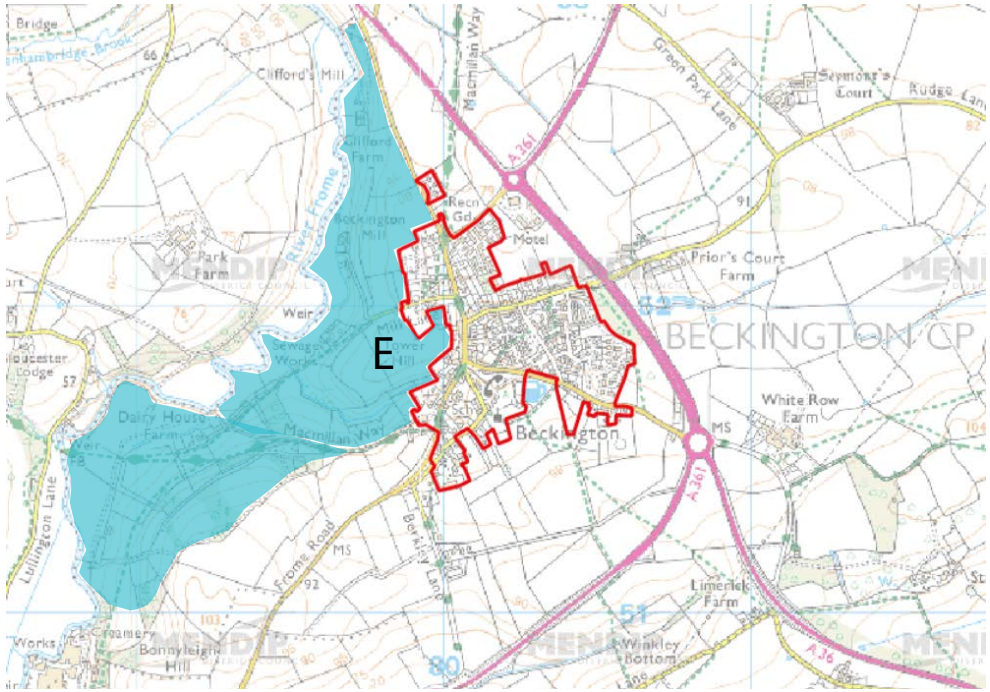


Fig 58: Area nominated for 'Valued Landscape'

Beckington Landscape Character Description

Natural Heritage
Beckington has several different priority habitats including flood meadows, wet woodland and rivers and streams which are almost exclusively to the west of the village in a secluded valley setting. Tree cover is strong in the village and along all the waterways, fitting with the landscape character of more open hills, with woodlands being few and far between. The village water source and its connection by stream to the river demonstrates the village's evolution and history.
Cultural Heritage
The presence of buildings which were built for the wool and cloth industry, or paid for by its proceeds, directly adjacent to the meadow and hillside landscape which supported the flocks, around the working mills that were powered by the river, tells a powerful story of the cultural evolution of Beckington from rural pastoral to industrial. The field patterns are remarkably similar to the historic maps which shows enclosure-era moderate scale fields. Some hedgerows have been lost to enlarge grazing areas, but most are intact. Much of the landscape to the south and west is in the setting of listed buildings and the Conservation Area, which means that proposed changes must take into account the avoidance of harm to that setting. In Beckington, the landscape has a direct connection to the listed buildings because the topography defined where the village would be constructed, the river meadows and slopes supported the cultivation of sheep, the river and streams enabled the wool industry. Anything that disconnects the village visually or culturally from the landscape that defined it, would harm the setting of the local heritage assets.
Landscape conditions
Generally the landscape condition surrounding Beckington is high quality arable or pasture land, with some top quality Grade 1 agricultural land with a presumption for protection for growing food. Some of the land appears to be overgrazed and some arable fields are planted right to the margins, with limited room for wild strips around the edge. These are changes that could be supported by rural funding measures. As an observer, the river looked in good health, perhaps helped by months of dry weather reducing sewage overflows. However the report into bacteria levels indicated the inability of the sewage treatment works to deal with its current load in high rainfall events, with pollution incidents affecting the protected bathing status of Farleigh Hungerford. Farming or development pressures which could have negative impacts on river quality and biodiversity or increase flood potential along the whole river should be resisted.

Associations

The historical population of Beckington, as described in detail in the Abbey report, supported by the thesis work by Gaisford, reads as a Who's Who of the wool trade, from the rich landowners and international traders at the top, to the middlemen running the mills and wool halls, to the skilled workers and farmers doing the physical graft. For many centuries, Beckington was one of the key wool trade villages in England, making some of the top quality cloth, or finished products that were prized abroad. The majority of buildings and homes were connected to an industry that survived longer there than in other places.

There are other associations such as the Bishop of Bath and Wells and some royal associations with Catherine Parr, surviving wife of Henry VIII, and her last husband Thomas Seymour, who had a manor house locally, but it is the completeness of the wool trade's interconnection with the village that makes Beckington's evolution and identity so rounded.

Distinctiveness

The landscape is a good example of its landscape character type with the village built in locally quarried stone, many fine, listed buildings, and surrounding land relevant to the village's wealth and success. There is a correlation between the river, the hills and the availability of stone quarries which meant that Beckington evolved the way it did. Farmers tend to choose flatter land for arable and slopes for sheep, so the slopes encouraged sheep farming. The flood plain meant that the village was built on higher ground above, built with access to good stone from quarries around, including locally from Tower Hill (south of Mill Lane).

The landscape is more distinctive to the south, west and north, and less to the east where the bypass has severed easy visual and physical connections.

Recreational

The recreational opportunities are easier for the community to the west than the east due to all footpaths having to cross over or under the bypass to reconnect with other parts of the parish. Goose St provides the best access east as the A36 bridges overhead. The roads leaving the village north and south are country lanes with no footways, but are also relatively quiet and suitable for cycling.

The recreational routes to the west are the biggest draw as they enjoy the best views, the most tranquility and give access to the river valley. The popularity of this area is confirmed by the residents' survey and parishioner consultations.

Perceptual scenic
The altitude of the village in comparison to the surrounding landscape allows for good views in several directions, notably overlooking land to the north, west and looking uphill to the south. The bypass curtails some views to the east, although there is a good outlook from the roads in general. Towards the west, the presence of the 500 acres of Orchardleigh means that there is a large expanse of a landscape that has remained as a single estate and provides an undeveloped and scenic outlook for Beckington, notable for its mature and potentially ancient trees. The shape of the landscape is soft and presented in rolling layers with distant views to the Mendip Hills and the Cotswold Hills from high points. It is a comforting landscape that speaks of centuries of rural life. Landscape views are coherent with the colours of crops or pasture within hedged fields creating a gently consistent pattern. The riparian corridor can easily be read from the lush swathes of trees and vegetation following its path.
Perceptual wildness and tranquility
There is a pronounced difference between the village's east environs which are close to the noise and pollution of the busy road network and the peace and tranquility of the river valley. The lack of buildings in the valley and the undeveloped nature of Lullington opposite mean that light pollution is reduced to the west which would support the bat population using the trees and hedgerows paths along the water for foraging. Birdsong is heard everywhere throughout the village, even in busier areas.
Functional
The landscape is predominantly agricultural and therefore contributes to the village economy through the farming of sheep and cows and the growing of crops. The river valley provides much more than just scenery as it provides lush grazing and flood relief, as well as habitat making it an important part of Somerset's Green Infrastructure strategy. Public rights of way offer access to the countryside which supports the physical and mental health of villagers.

Chapter 7

7.1 This summary looks at whether there is evidence within existing policy and the new landscape assessment to see if Beckington has landscape of sufficient distinctiveness to quality as a 'valued landscape'.

7.2 In the Mendip area, only 22 percent of the landscape is protected by policy and the area around Beckington has no specific designation. There are however implicit safeguards within the NPPF and Local Plans which protect many types of open landscape from inappropriate development.

7.3 In Beckington's case, the village is notable for the number of listed buildings within a small area and the presence of a Conservation Area. These heritage assets are sensitive receptors which extend their importance to their setting. As a result there is more sensitivity to changes in views, topography, tranquility and cultural associations to the south and west of the village where the development boundary and the Conservation Area boundary are closest to open countryside.

7.4 The report into Beckington Abbey by Keystone Historic Building Consultants and the Beckington History book, written by parishioners, made clear the inseparable relationship between the village's development and wool trade history and the surrounding landscape. This is an important cultural link that needs to be preserved to protect the village's distinctive identity.

7.5 The site assessment by Brodie Planning, relating to the parish call for sites, identified that there were more constraints to the west of the village than to the east. The shortlist offered to residents did not include any sites to the west because they were considered to be on the edge of a prominent plateau over the river valley and potentially visible in sensitive views.

7.6 The Sensitive Views Assessment identified six key views to be protected from change from development which were all on the south and west of the village. There is also an important borrowed landscape from Lullington and Orchardleigh which provides a backdrop to the village from the opposite side of the river valley.

7.7 This landscape assessment indicates that there is less sensitivity to the east due to the noise, light and disturbance of the bypass, despite a buffer from trees and hedgerows, and more sensitivity in varying degrees to the north, south and west. It is notable that when the bypass consultation was done in the 1980s that the eastern route was selected over the western route in order to protect the Frome valley and the views.

7.8 To the south of the village, the bypass is directed further east creating a wider zone of tranquility. As the land descends to the west into the river valley, the level of peace and quiet rises significantly, with no plane, road or intrusive noises. During the site visit, the sounds were of birds, grazing animals, insects and water which provided a special feature of the landscape.

7.9 The light pollution was not assessed during the site visit, but the CPRE map shows high levels of light pollution along the road network, reducing within the development boundary and reducing further still into the valley. The map clearly shows the relationship between residential areas and light levels, so it follows that wherever there is additional development, there will be an increase in light pollution.

7.10 The landscape is within the zone of influence of two different protected areas for bats which forage at night and are disturbed by bright light. Dark Skies guidance is a useful tool which could be harnessed to protect the rural tranquility of the night and protect biodiversity.

7.11 The village has seen some significant development in the past century as previously seen in the development map (Fig 15). Most of the new housing has been infilled between roads and is not visible from beyond the village. Three developments of different eras to the north and west are more noticeable as they project beyond the village edge in prominent locations and are not screened by hedges or trees.

7.12 They can be seen from:

- The descent from Bonnyleigh Hill along the Frome Road
- The permissive path
- Lullington Road
- River Frome footbridge

7.13 The more recent residential development of Valley View lies close to the edge of the ridge and sits forward of the original village in a way that changes the landscape character. While the housing doesn't break the skyline in summer due to trees in leaf, in winter they would be more prominent.

7.14 A landscape officer's comments on a recent application (2024/2309/FUL)noted that the proposals are in an exposed location and push the building line over the sensitive ridge line of the slope into the river valley, and do not respect the settlement pattern which has a distinct settlement edge 'nestling' into the landscape.

7.15 New housing becomes even more prominent if materials and colours are used that are not in keeping with, or complementary to, the village character, which is described in some detail in the Conservation Area statement and the Aecom guidance and codes.

7.16 The sewage pollution assessment of the River Frome (Tyler) confirmed that it is beyond reasonable doubt that there is a direct link between pollution events at Farleigh Hungerford Bathing Water site and CSO events at Beckington and nearby Rode. It concludes that further planning applications should be refused until the SWTs are upgraded as additional impacts would be a material consideration under NPPF para 187, NPPG Water supply, wastewater, and water quality Guidelines, Water Environment Regulations, and Somerset East Development Policy 8 (BANES).

7.17 Some of Beckington's historic village flooding problems have been partially alleviated by recent maintenance work. New development reduces the area for water to return to the soil and sustainable urban drainage should be considered to keep water out of the mains drainage.

7.18 As the STWs are not expected to be upgraded for some years, the only short-term measure that would prevent further exacerbation of the pollution in the River Frome and harm to the water quality at the Farleigh Hungerford designated Bathing Water would be to refuse any further planning applications in Beckington and Rode until the STWs are upgraded. It appears that the legal framework and associated policies and guidance would clearly support full consideration of failure to properly manage wastewater as a material planning consideration.

7.19 During public consultation for the Beckington Character Assessment and the Neighbourhood Plan, countryside views and rural character were consistently the most appreciated aspects of Beckington, and those that the parishioners who took part most wished to protect.

7.20 All the village landscape is much appreciated for its access to open countryside and is well used. The areas of greatest tranquility and with the best views are most popular for walking, as evidenced by the Views Assessment, parish survey and public consultation. Impacts on the most tranquil areas would subsequently have an impact on the enjoyment of the landscape.

7.21 Finally, It is also possible for harm to be caused to a landscape by 'cumulative impacts' caused when a development or change is proposed which has an impact singly, but a much greater impact when seen as part of several changes at once. It is important that Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments as part of a planning application take into account other proposals that are pending, under consideration or under construction.

The Future

7.22 From the evidence of the desk study and site visit, it is considered that the landscape to the west of Beckington noted in Fig 58 is typical of its landscape character, but rare in the completeness of its landscape and cultural associations.

7.23 It has sufficient demonstrable physical attributes and identified qualities, as specified by the NPPF, to be described as a 'Valued Landscape'. These include the setting of the listed buildings, panoramic views over the rolling hills and river valley,

the historic grazing slopes and flood meadows, the river and the mills, which take it above the level of ordinary countryside.

7.24 There is a clear cultural identity which would be weakened by the loss of any one of those features. There is also a special perception of tranquility, which is recognised and appreciated by parishioners, which has great value in an area with an acknowledged busy transport network.

7.25 It is also possible that the area of land could be considered for a Non Designated Heritage Asset, which can include landscape, because it is valued by the local community and is considered to have heritage significance.

7.26 Conserving and enhancing the special qualities which arise from this report is a key aspiration of existing planning policy. The evidence base provided here should be used to develop and carry out enhancement initiatives. It can be used by planning departments to help make evidence-based decisions and by developers to design homes with a good fit in terms of location and character.

7.27 The following wording, or similar, is recommended to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan to form local policy. It can guide planning departments to make evidence-based decisions, and developers to design sustainable housing which responds to site and protects Beckington's special qualities.

7.28 The recommendations are:

- To define the area shown on Fig 58 as the Beckington 'Valued Landscape Zone' VLZ as defined in the NPPF (2019 paragraph 170), due to its special physical attributes and identified qualities.

- Development proposals must have regard to the findings of Beckington's Valued Landscape Assessment in order to protect and enhance its special landscape qualities. They will not be supported if they adversely affect its Valued Landscape Zone

- Development proposals must respect identified and valued views in and out of the village which contribute to the appreciation of the landscape, understanding and setting of the village. No development should be permitted which blocks or negatively changes views identified in the Protected Views Assessment.

- For developments within or affecting the Valued Landscape Zone, an LVIA should be requested by the planning authority so that the proposals can be tested for visual and landscape impacts, including cumulative impacts.

- Development proposals in the Valued Landscape Zone to the west of Beckington will only be permitted where they maintain and enhance the special landscape qualities of the area identified in the assessment, and are designed and sited so as to harmonise with the landscape setting.

- All development proposals should respect the local character and historic and natural assets of the surrounding area, and takes every opportunity, though design and materials, to reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place.

- Proposed changes to landscape should respect the setting of heritage assets, including listed buildings, and preserve or enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset). Historic England considers a conservation area 'is likely' to have its own landscape setting.

- Vegetation along footpaths should be sensitively managed to maintain existing views for the long-term, keep them accessible for walkers, while recognising the value of the habitat.

Footnote

Beckington parish councillor Paula Fox declared a conflict of interest to the author at the commissioning stage of this report as she lives on Stubbs Lane, adjacent to open countryside. In her position as part of the Beckington Neighbourhood Plan team, she helped with factual information and did not accompany the author during the assessment.

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Appendix 1: Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Table 1 Assessing landscape value outside national designations
https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2021/05/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf

Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
Natural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape	Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place Extent and survival of semi natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network	Landscape character assessment LANDMAP Geological Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects (in Wales) Ecological and geological designations SSSI citations and condition assessments Geological Conservation Review Habitat surveys Priority habitats Nature recovery networks/ nature pathways Habitat network opportunity mapping/ green infrastructure mapping Catchment management plans Ecosystem services assessment/ schemes Specialist ecological studies

Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
Cultural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape	Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels) Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies) Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity)	Landscape character assessment LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape Services Aspect (in Wales) Historic environment and archaeological designations Conservation Area appraisals, Village Design Statements Historic maps Historic landscape character assessments[13] Historic Land Use Assessment[14] and Historic Area Assessments[15] Place names Specialist heritage studies

Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
Landscape condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees) Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns) Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence)	Landscape character assessment LANDMAP condition and trend questions (in Wales) Hedgerow/ tree surveys Observations about intactness/ condition made in the field by the assessor SSSI condition assessments Historic landscape character assessments/ map regression analysis
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts	Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape	Information about arts and science relating to a place Historical accounts, cultural traditions and folklore

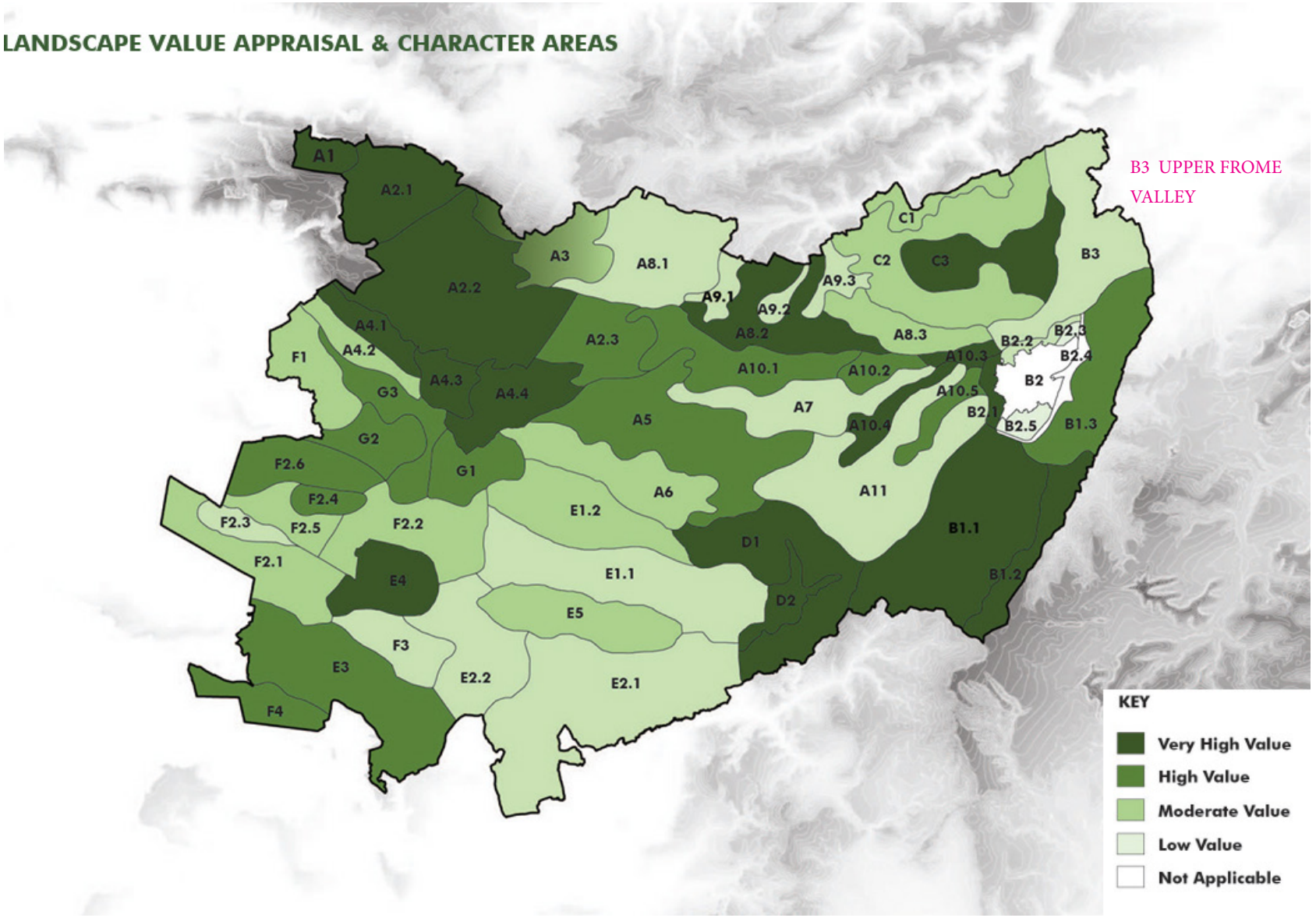
Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
		Associations with science or other technical achievements Links to a notable historical event Associations with a famous person or people	Guidebooks/ published cultural trails LANDMAP Cultural Landscape Services aspect (in Wales)
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics) Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic)	Landscape character assessment LANDMAP Visual & Sensory question 3 and 25, – Historic Landscape question 4 (in Wales) Guidebooks Observations about identity/ distinctiveness made in the field by the assessor

Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration Presence of town and village greens Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity	Definitive public rights of way mapping/ OS map data National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths, Core Paths Open access land (including registered common land) Database of registered town or village greens Visitor surveys/ studies Observations about recreational use/ enjoyment made in the field by the assessor

Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges) Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks	Landscape character assessment LANDMAP Visual and Sensory scenic quality question 46 (in Wales) Protected views, views studies Areas frequently photographed or used in images used for tourism/ visitor/ promotional purposes, or views described or praised in literature Observations about scenic qualities made in the field by the assessor Conservation Area Appraisals Village Design Statements, or similar

Factor	Definition	Examples[11] of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence[12]
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet[16] Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness[17], rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts) Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness Dark night skies	Tranquillity mapping and factors which contribute to and detract from tranquillity Dark Skies mapping Wildness mapping, and Wild Land Areas in Scotland Land cover mapping Field survey LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect
		A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting	
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities	Land cover and habitat maps Ecosystem services assessments and mapping (particularly supporting and regulating services) Green infrastructure studies/strategies Development and management plans for nationally-designated landscapes, Local Plans and SPDs Landscape character assessments

Appendix 2



Mendip LCA Landscape Value Appraisal