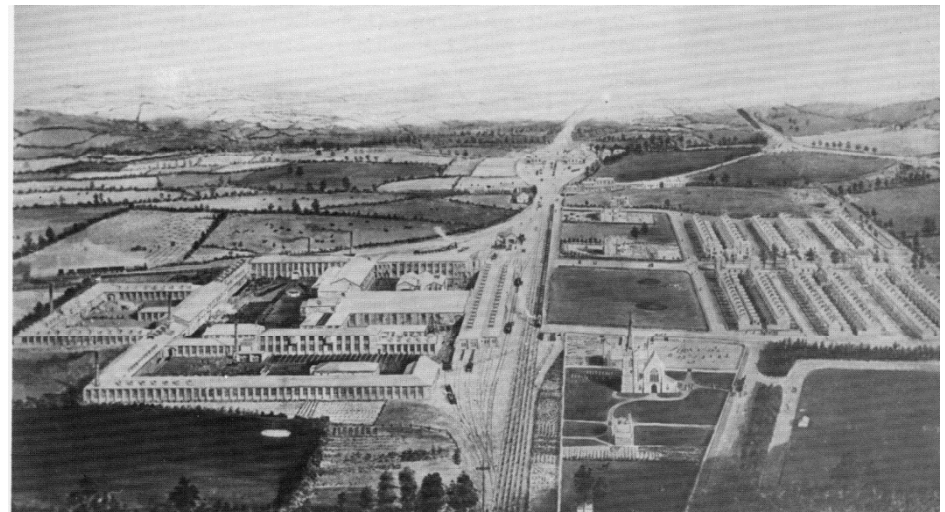# The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Landscape Characterisation Project

Tom Sunley

What is historic landscape characterisation (HLC)?

Technical description:

*   HLC is an archaeological method used to define and map the historic/archaeological dimension of the present day landscape.

But basically HLC is:

*   An examination of the historic and archaeological processes which have influenced the form and use of the modern landscape.

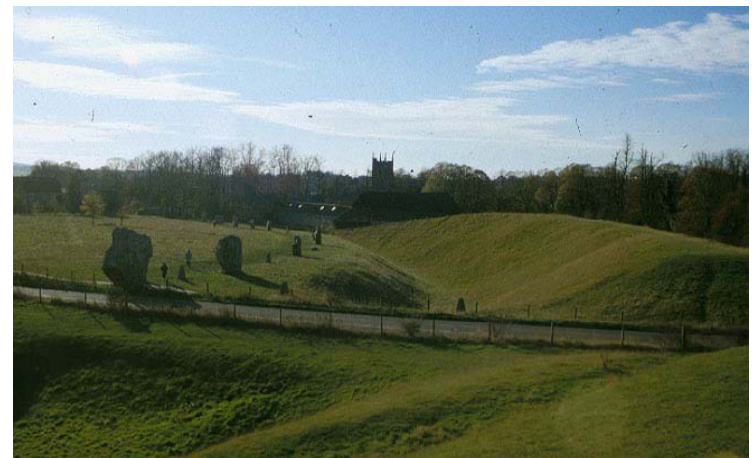Wiltshire Council
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Why is HLC important?

- It is a holistic study of the landscape which does not focus only on sites, finds and structures.

- It allows an understanding of the evolution of the landscape to be built up.

- HLC identifies the characteristics that make each place special and distinct.

- By interpreting the current landscape, HLC allows us to make informed decisions regarding the landscape of the future.

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What can HLC data be used for?

HLC can play a key role in:

- Strategic planning and development.
- Shaping the regional and local archaeology research frameworks.
- The conservation and management of heritage sites and landscapes.
- Academic research and local study.
- Community engagement.
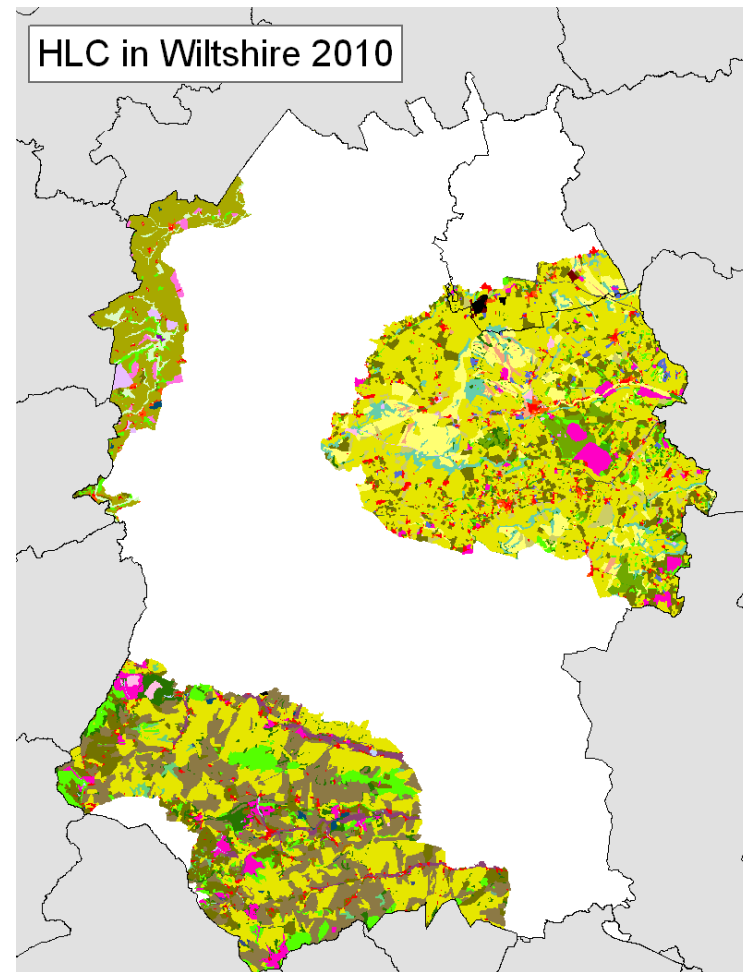

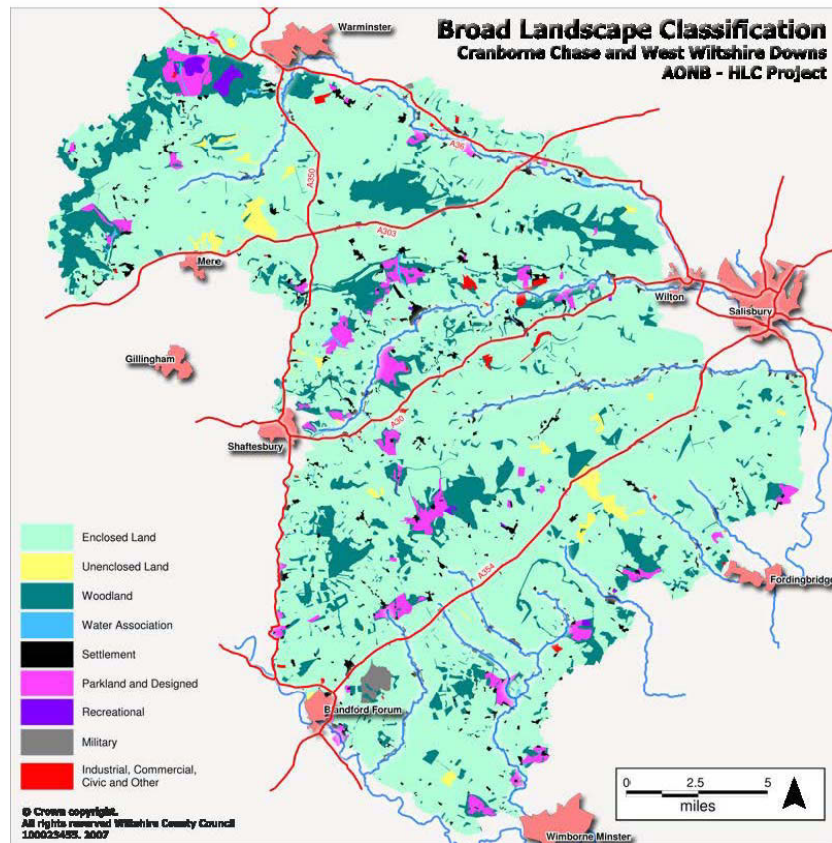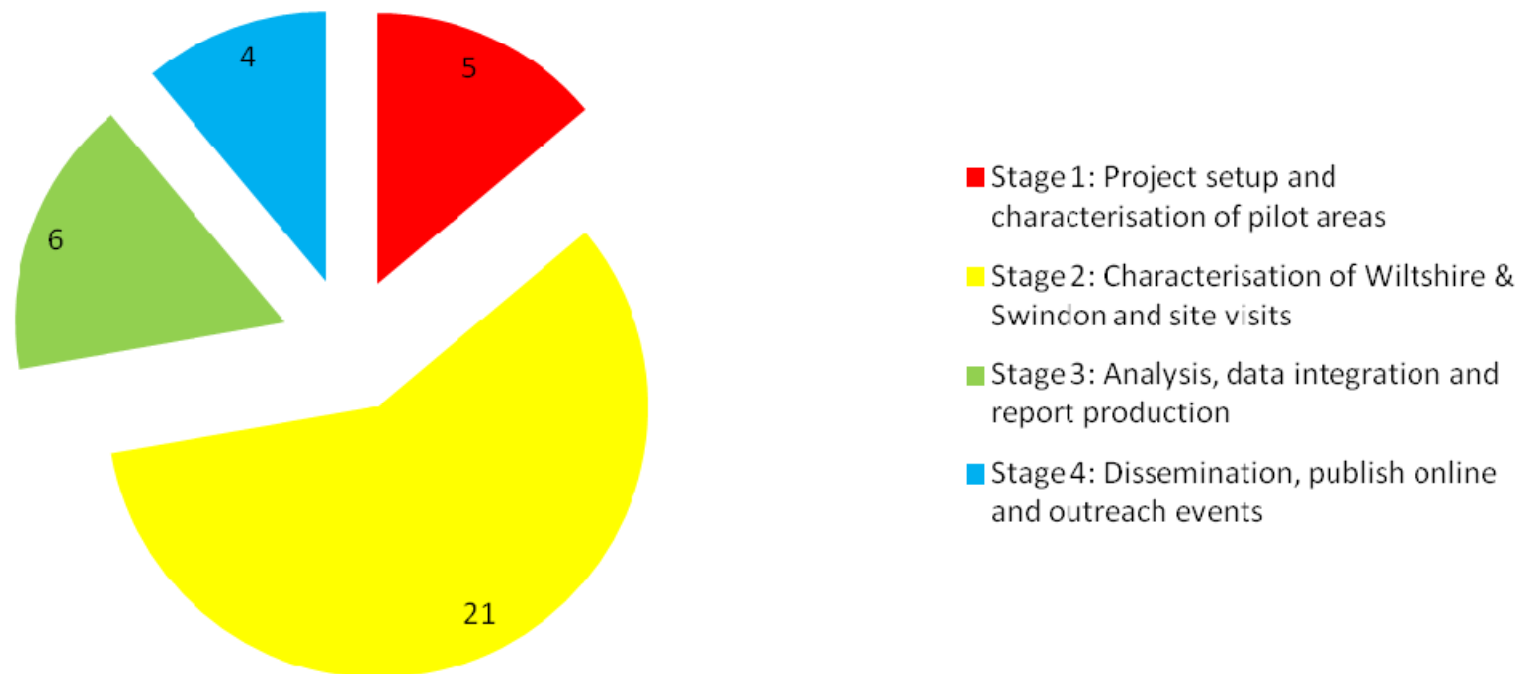**Wiltshire Council**
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Project aims

- To characterise and analyse the entire landscape of Wiltshire and Swindon (c.350,000ha).
- To integrate with existing HLC data for the Cranborne Chase/West Wiltshire Downs and North Wessex Downs AONBs.
- To create:
  - GIS dataset.
  - Hardcopy/electronic report.
  - Project website.
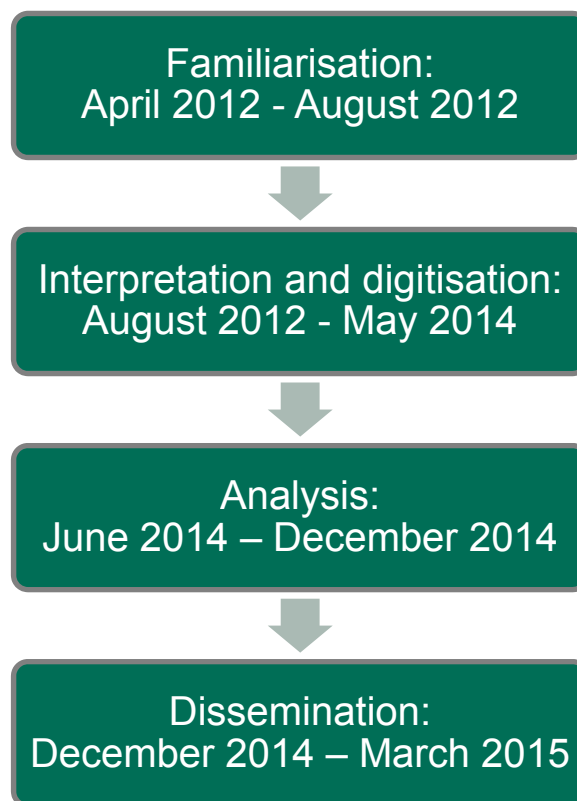 - Outreach materials/events.

AONB HLC Data

HLC in Wiltshire 2010

Project Stages

Time allocated to task in HLC Project (months)

- Stage 1: Project setup and characterisation of pilot areas
- Stage 2: Characterisation of Wiltshire & Swindon and site visits
- Stage 3: Analysis, data integration and report production
- Stage 4: Dissemination, publish online and outreach events

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Project timescale

Familiarisation:
April 2012 - August 2012

↓

Interpretation and digitisation:
August 2012 - May 2014

↓

Analysis:
June 2014 – December 2014

↓

Dissemination:
December 2014 – March 2015

Also including:

• 3 Stakeholder meetings.

• 3 Project Team meetings.

• Meetings with EH Assurance Officer.

Who are the Project Stakeholders?

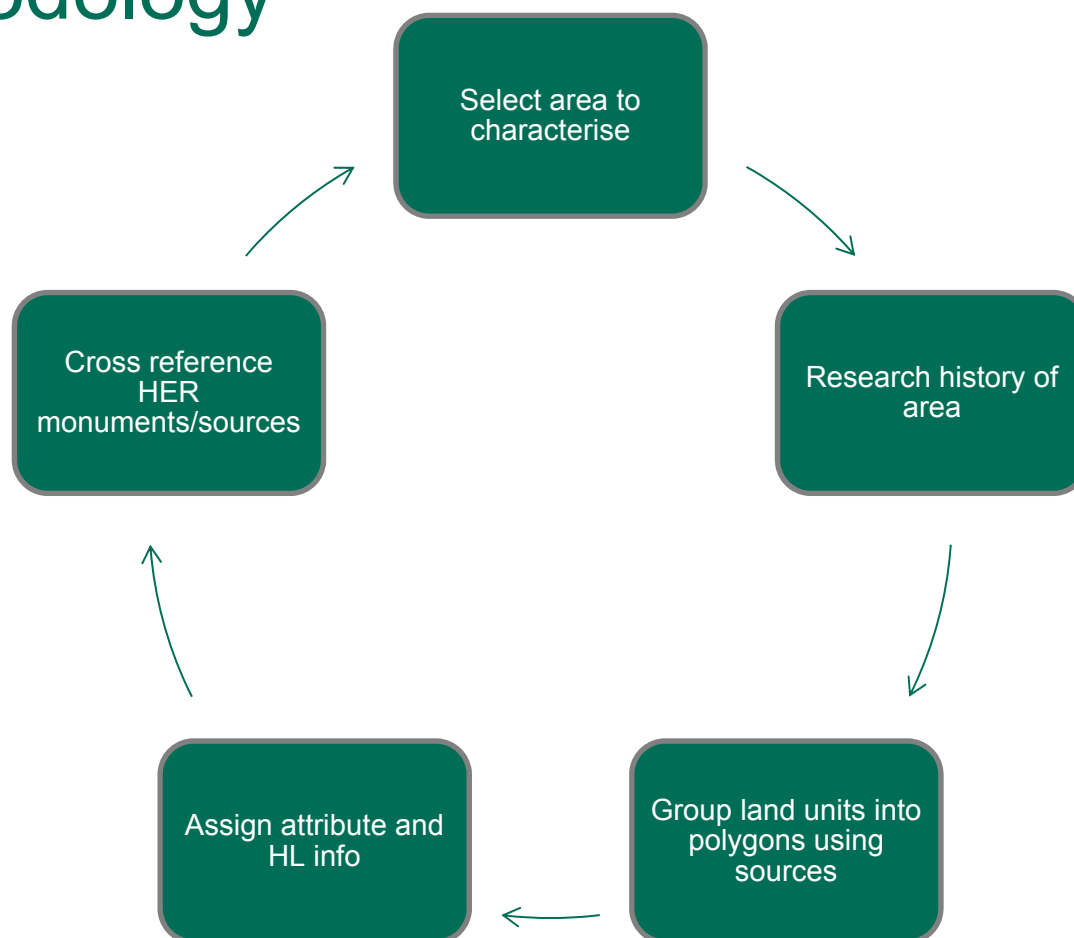Diverse range of interested parties including:

- English Heritage.

- Natural England.

- National Trust.

- Wiltshire Council.

- Swindon Borough Council.

- Cranborne Chase, North Wessex Downs and Cotswold AONBs.

- MOD.

Sources

- Modern OS maps.
- 2001 aerial photographs.
- OS 1st edition 6" map.
- Margary (1818) 1st ed. 1" maps.

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Methodology

Select area to characterise

Research history of area

Group land units into polygons using sources

Assign attribute and HL info

Cross reference HER monuments/sources

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HLC Data

• **14 Broad HLC Types**
E.g. Fields and enclosed land

• **132 HLC Types**
E.g. Parliamentary enclosures

• **15 Attribute categories**
E.g. Internal morphology and boundary morphology

HLC Broad Types

- Enclosed land.
- Unimproved land.
- Woodland.
- Orchard and horticulture
- Water and valley floor.
- Rural settlement.
- Urban settlement
- Ornamental
- Recreation.
- Industrial and extractive.
- Communications.
- Military.
- Civic
- Commercial.

HLC Database

- Same software as used by Wiltshire HER.

- Database links to GIS mapping.

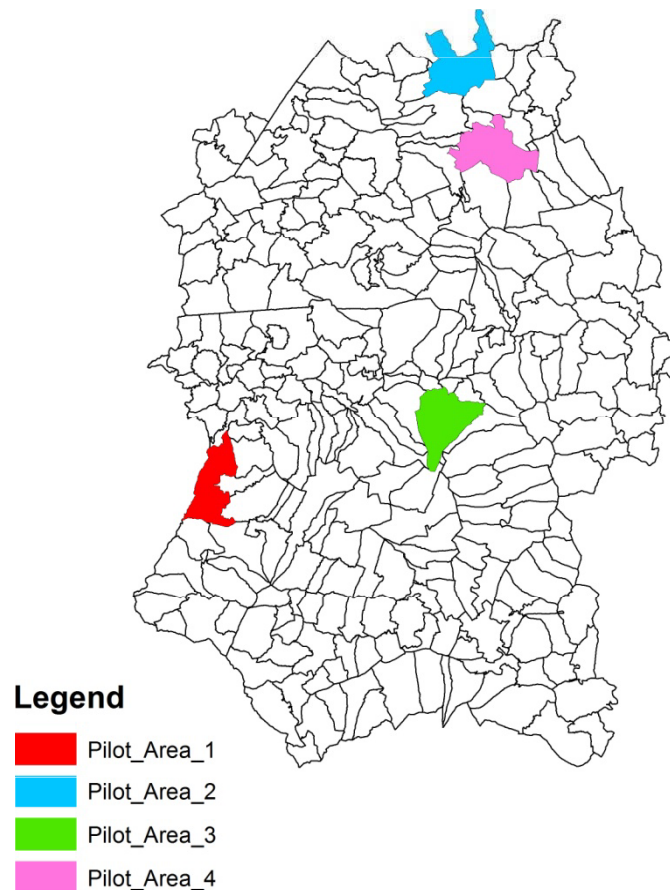- Wealth of information recorded for each HLC 'polygon'.

Special areas of study

The overall project methodology may need adaptation to record special areas of the county:

- Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA).
- Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS).
- Urban centres (e.g. Swindon).

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HLC Pilot areas

1. Corsley, Chapmanslade and Dilton Marsh.

2. Cricklade, Latton and Marston Maisey.

3. Chirton, Marden, Wilsford, Charlton and Rushall.

4. Swindon Old Town and New Town.

Legend

- ■ Pilot_Area_1
- ■ Pilot_Area_2
- ■ Pilot_Area_3
- ■ Pilot_Area_4

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Project Progress

In order to see how the project is progressing you can:

- Check the project webpage that will be hosted on the History Centre Website (http://www.wshc.eu/).
    - *Review documents, mapping and the 'Totaliser'.*

- Contact me by email (Thomas.Sunley@wiltshire.gov.uk) or telephone (01249 705526).

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Thank you for listening and any questions?