

The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Landscape Characterisation Project



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What is historic landscape characterisation (HLC)?

“An examination of the historic and archaeological processes which have influenced the form and use of the modern landscape”





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

Fieldsapes



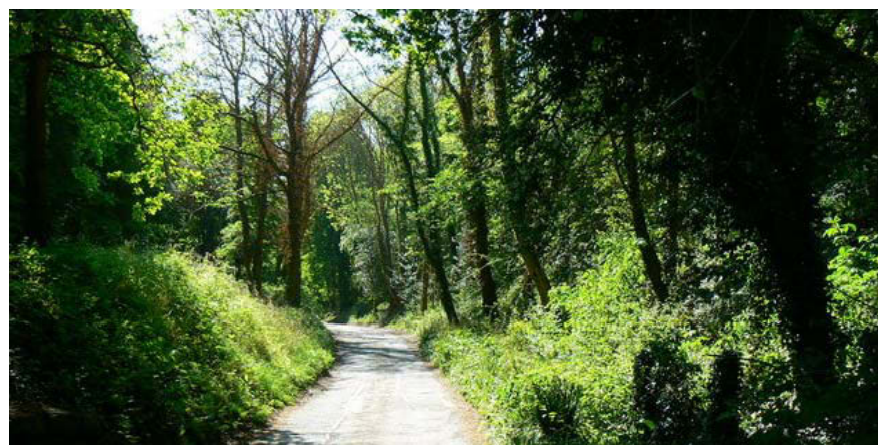
Open Landscapes



Towns and Villages



Woodlands



Military Landscapes



Ornamental Landscapes



Industrial Landscapes



What can the HLC data be used for?

The Wiltshire and Swindon 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



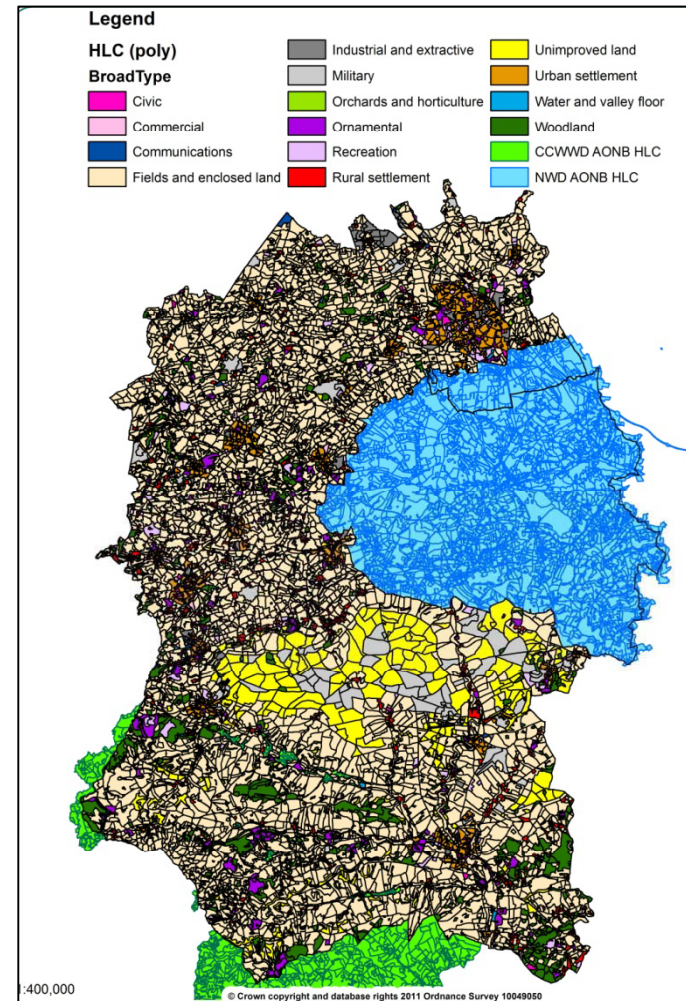


Project aims

- Characterise/analyse the entire landscape of Wiltshire & Swindon
- Use the existing HLC data for the Areas Of Natural Beauty
- Include data from the Extensive Urban Surveys for towns
- Integrate the HLC dataset into the Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (HER)
- Distribute the HLC data

Current HLC Progress

- All of the non AONB areas of Wiltshire and Swindon
- Most of the Cranborne Chase and West Wilts Downs AONB
- 20 of 28 Towns with Extensive Urban Surveys
- c.272,000 ha complete (77%)



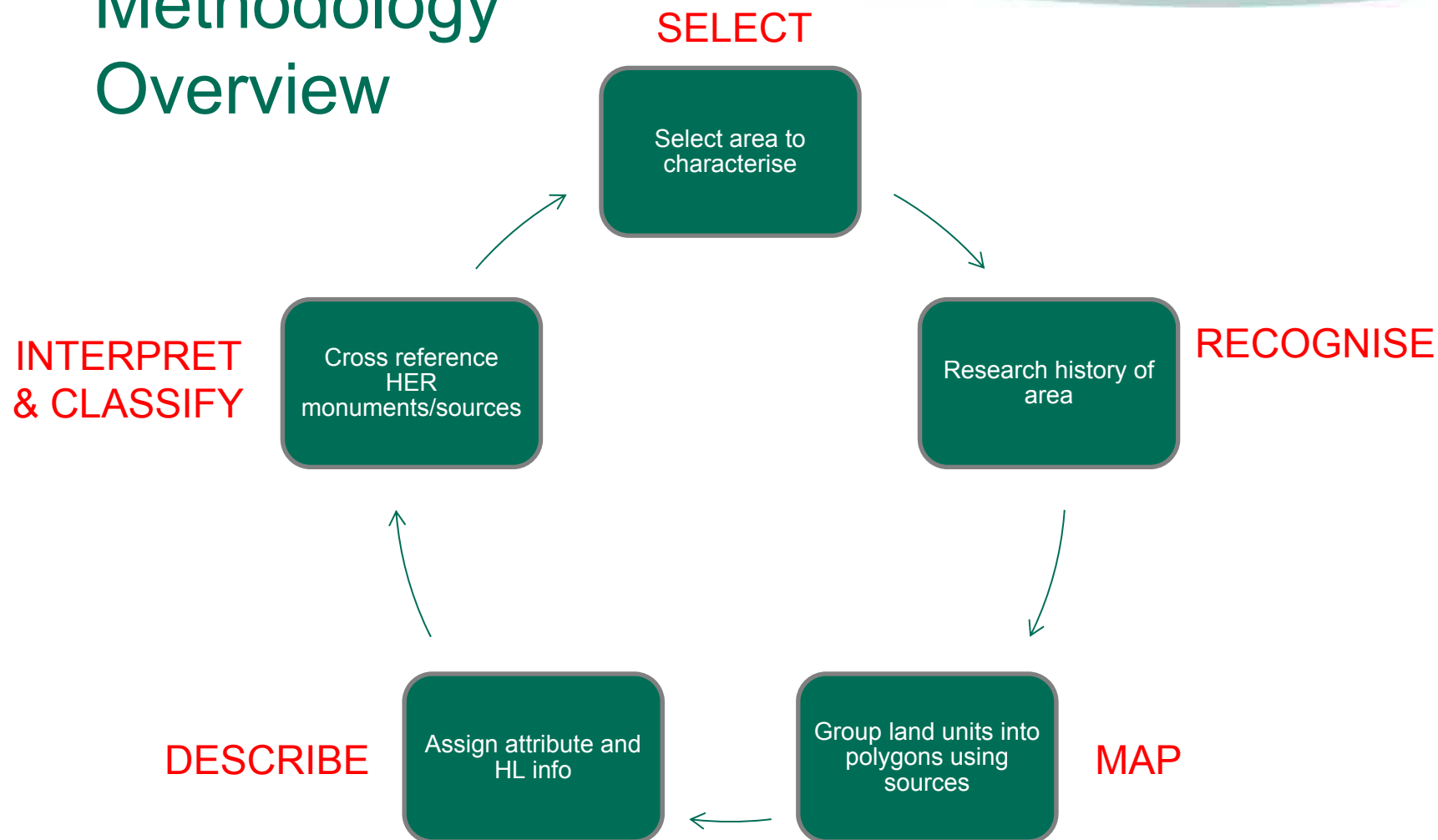
HLC Project Methodology



From the
Present Day
to the Past



Methodology Overview



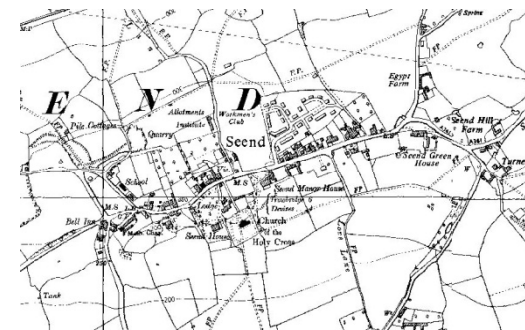
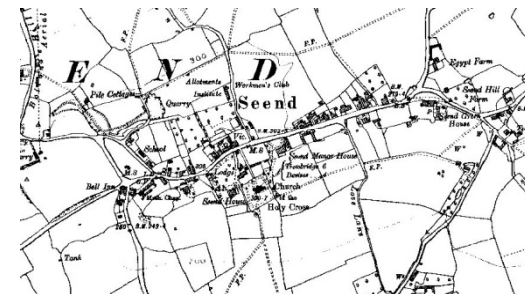
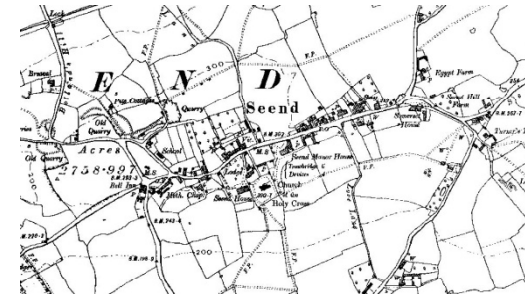
Core sources

- Modern OS Master Map
- Modern OS 1:25,000 map
- 2001 & 2005/06 aerial photographs
- OS 1st edition 6" maps (1872-94)
- OS 1st edition 1" map (c.1818)
- Natural England ancient woodland map
- Wiltshire enclosure award map



Additional Sources

- Urban areas (defined by those towns having an EUS) require more detailed recording
- This is due to the rapidity of change within the C19-C21
- Extra sources used to compliment the core ones include:
 - **Epoch 2 OS mapping (1897-1914)**
 - **Epoch 3 OS mapping (1910-1933)**
 - **Epoch 5 OS mapping (c.1961)**
- This will allow more sophisticated analysis as we will see later...



HLC Data

NATIONAL LEVEL

- **14 Broad HLC Types**

E.g. Fields and enclosed land

LOCAL LEVEL

- **Over 100 Narrow HLC Types**

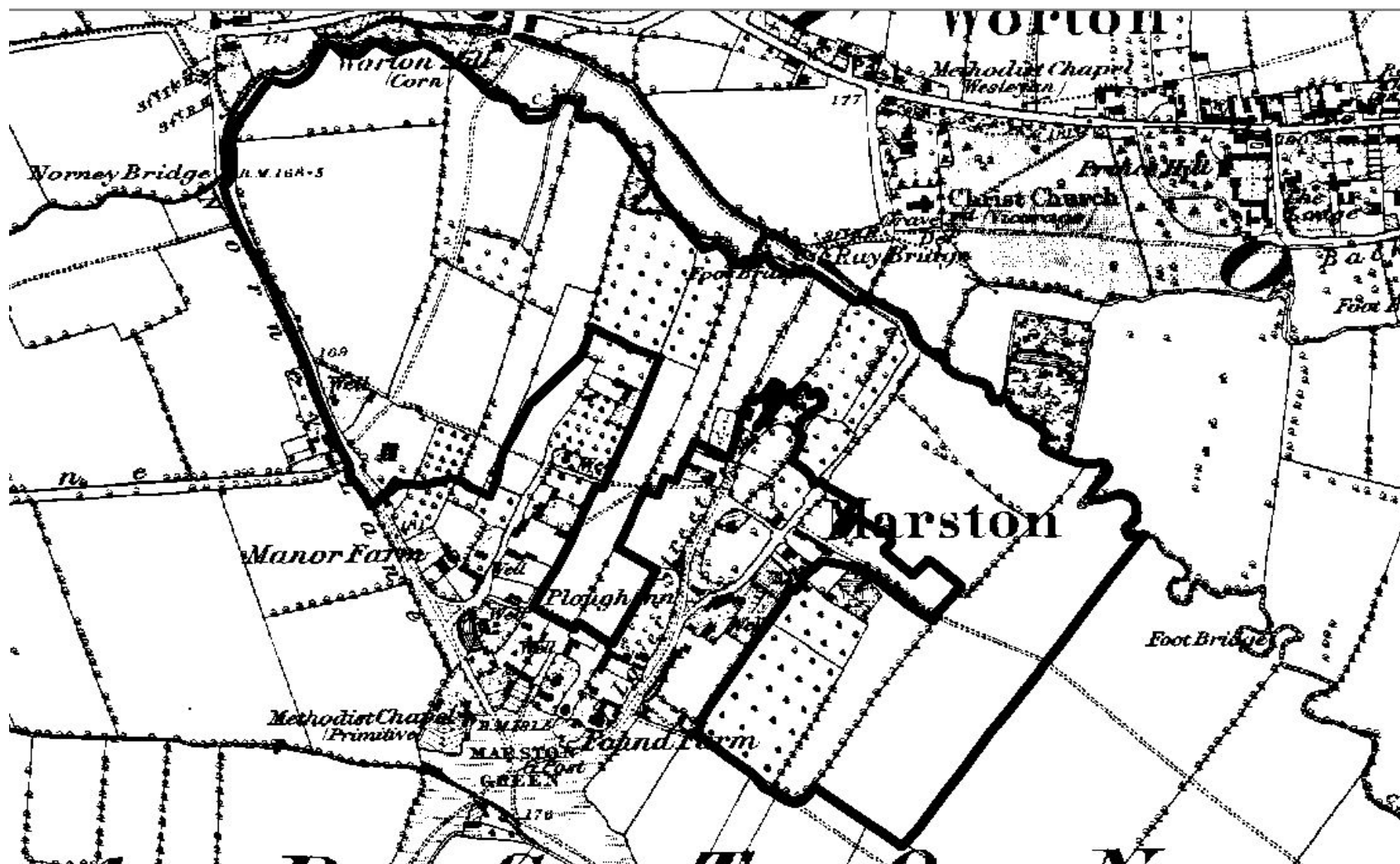
E.g. Parliamentary enclosures

- **15 Attribute categories**

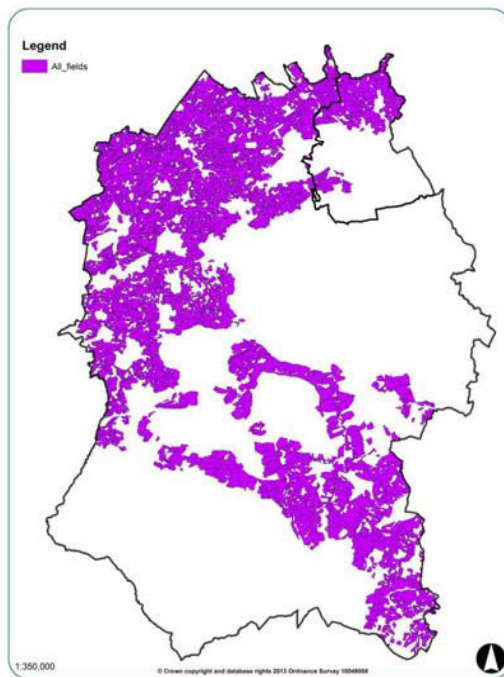
E.g. Internal morphology and boundary morphology



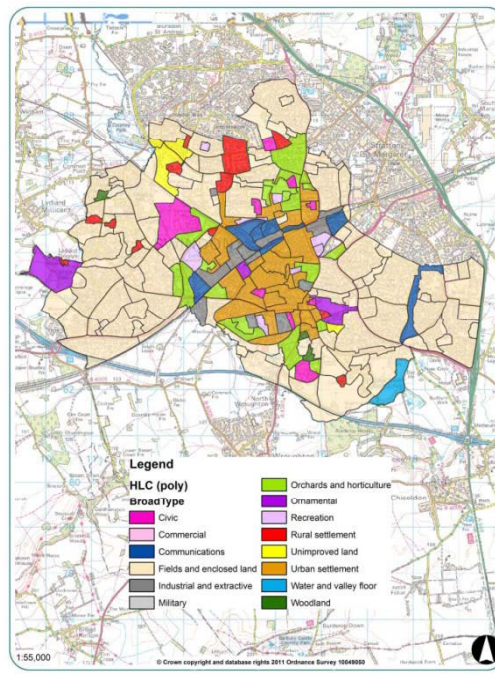
HLC In Action!



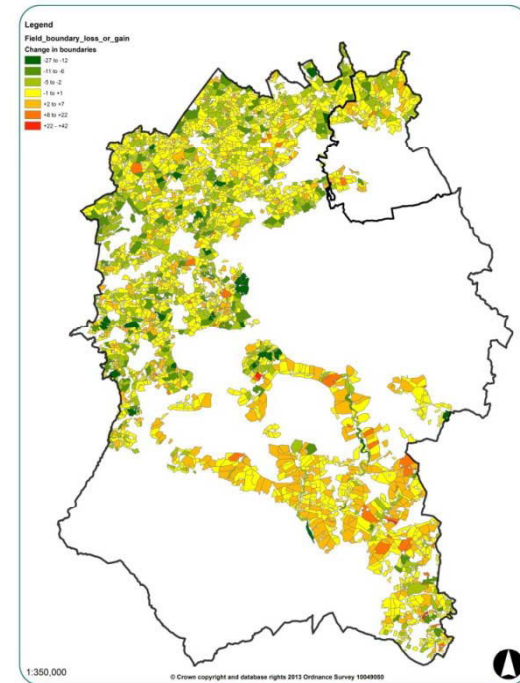
HLC Data Analysis



Distribution maps



Time-slices



Statistics/Calculations

Analysis of HLC Data

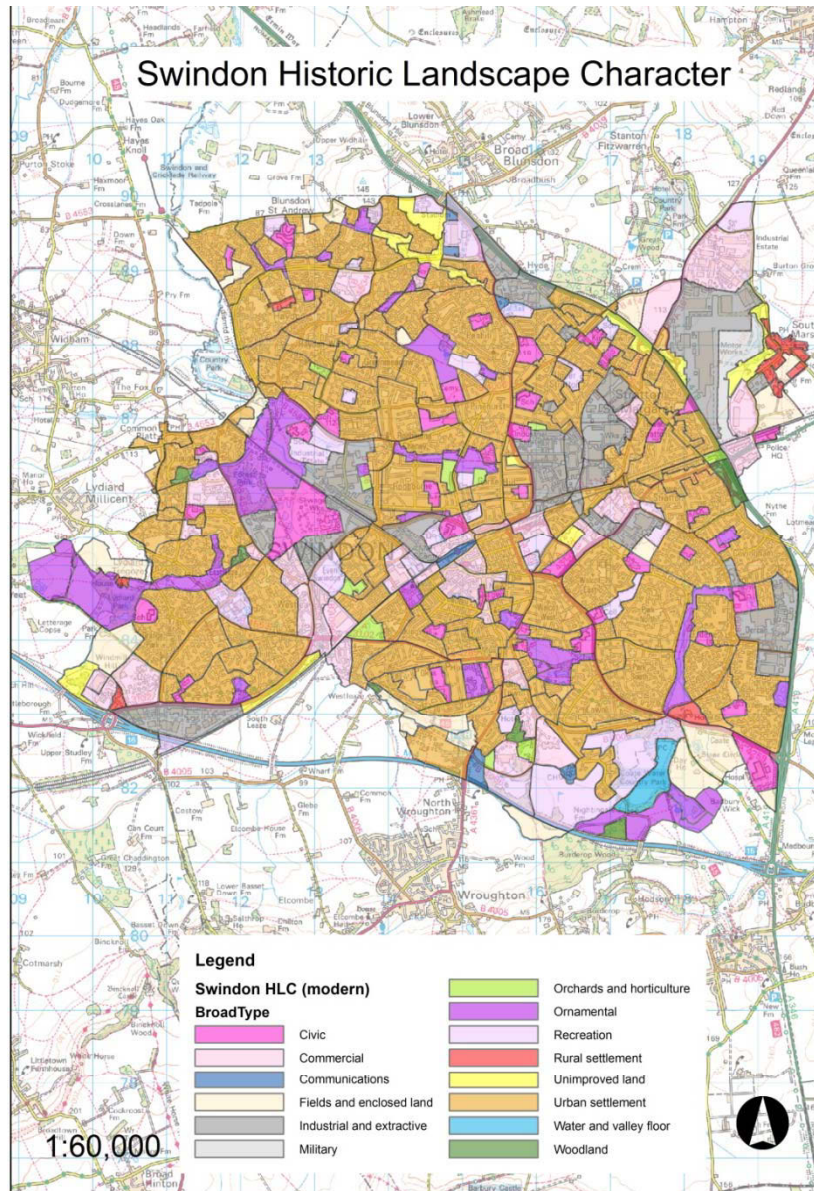
Even at this early stage the HLC data has a number of uses as we will explore:

- **‘Time slices’** – showing evolution of modern landscape
- **Statistics** – break down of landscape types, rarity, survival, characteristics
- **Narrative** – descriptions of landscape types, significance, threats & potential
- **New interpretations** – challenge the known and preconceptions
- **Relationships** – overlay archaeology, farmstead data, ecology, geology etc.



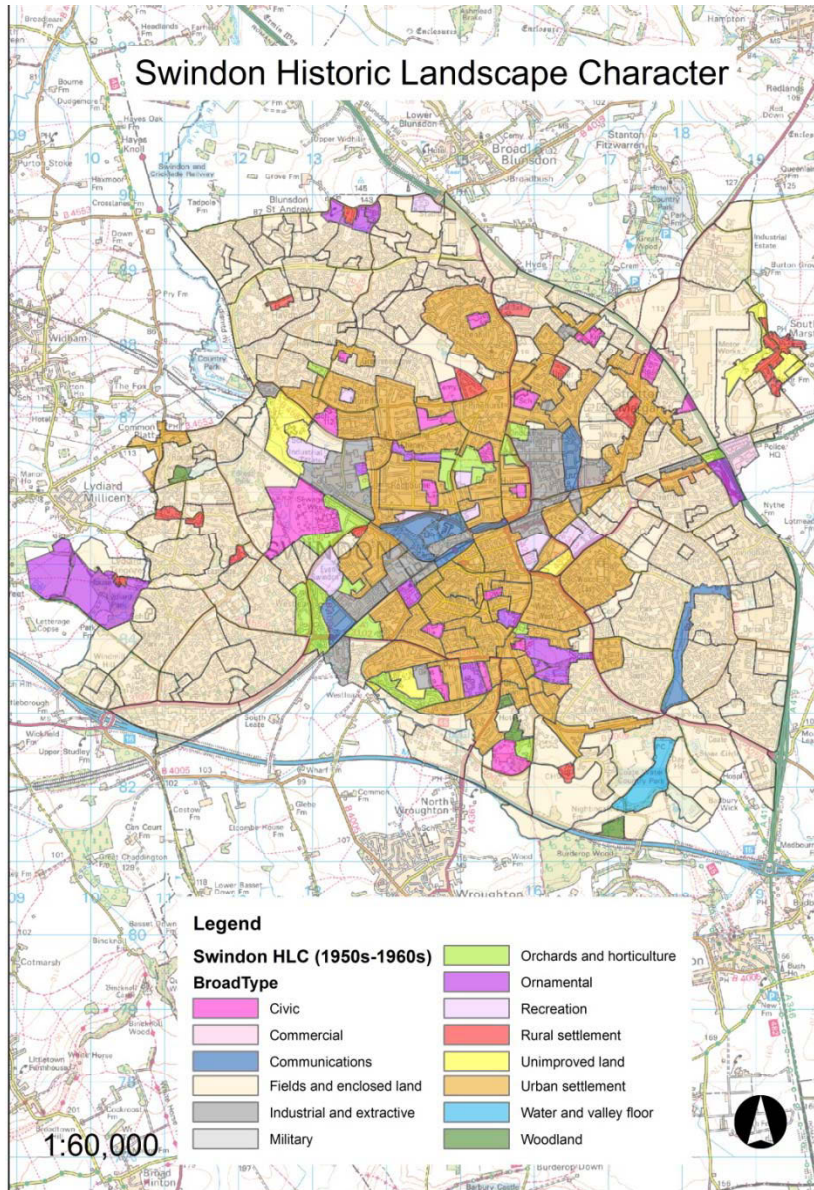
HLC Time slices - Swindon

- Shows the evolution of the town in the recent past
- Possible due to the data structure employed and the extra historic maps
- Also informed by the Extensive Urban Survey
- Occasionally captures unique points in the past
- Works particularly well for urban areas



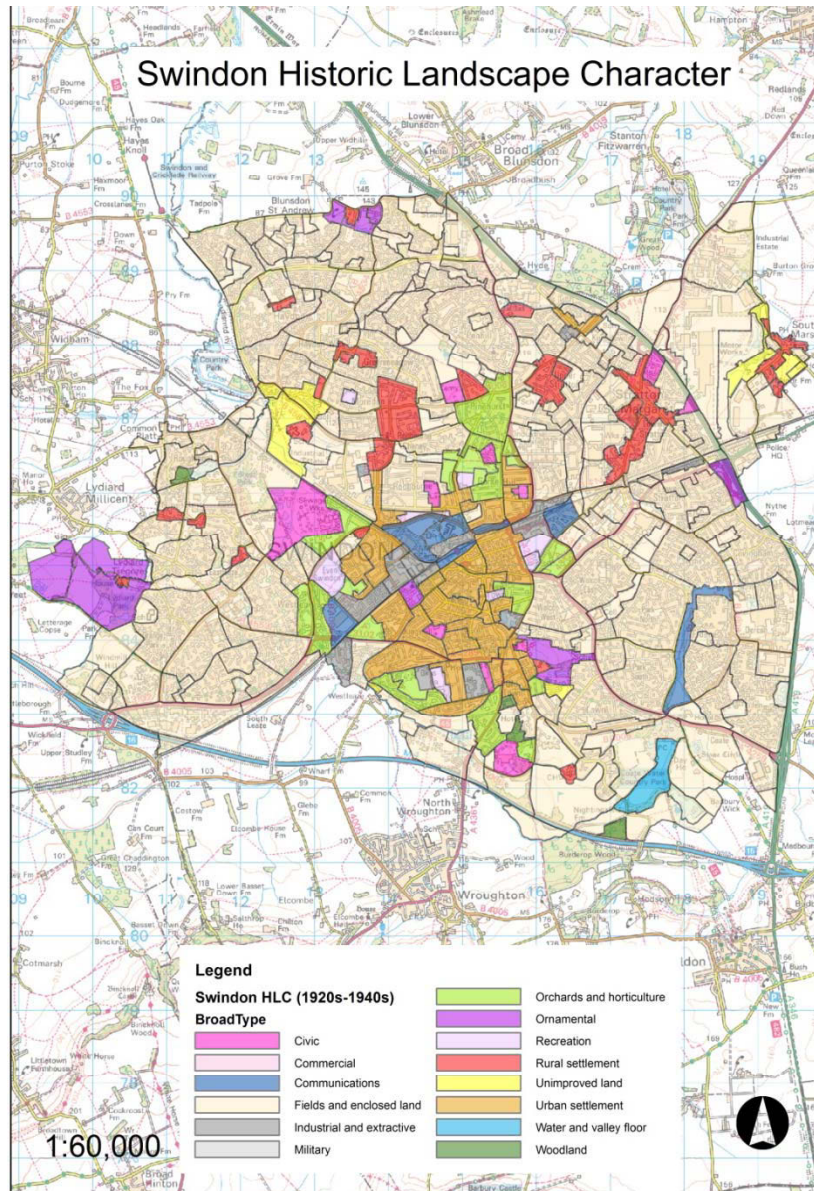
Swindon (Modern)

- A very large town dominated by blocks of housing
- Still lots of parks and recreational space
- Industrial activity focused on transport routes (roads/rails), not purely automotive works
- Limited amount of natural land and wood
- Historic core swamped?



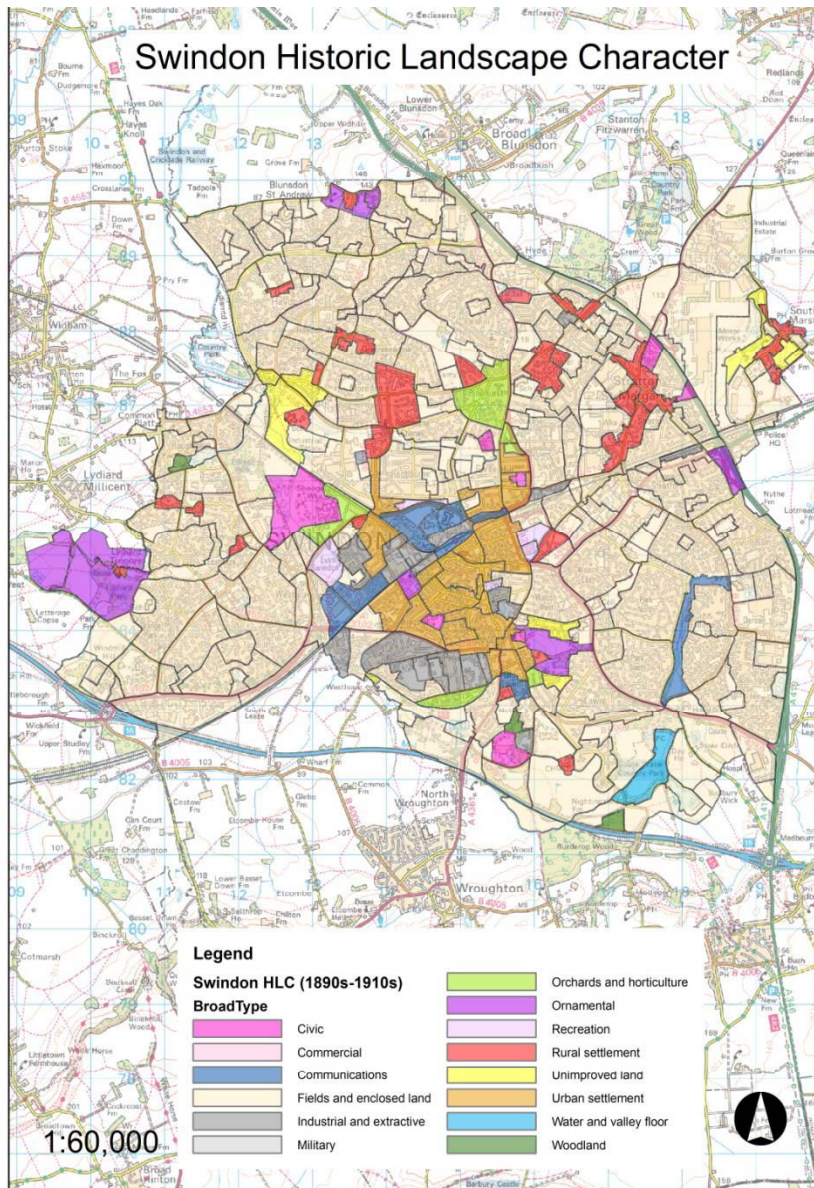
Swindon (1950s-1960s)

- Lots more agricultural land – new houses were built inside parcels (e.g. North and West Swindon)
- Not as many amenities and ornamental/recreational spaces
- Industry really only the railway works and quarries
- Allotments cluster at periphery of housing
- Mix of urban/rural housing types



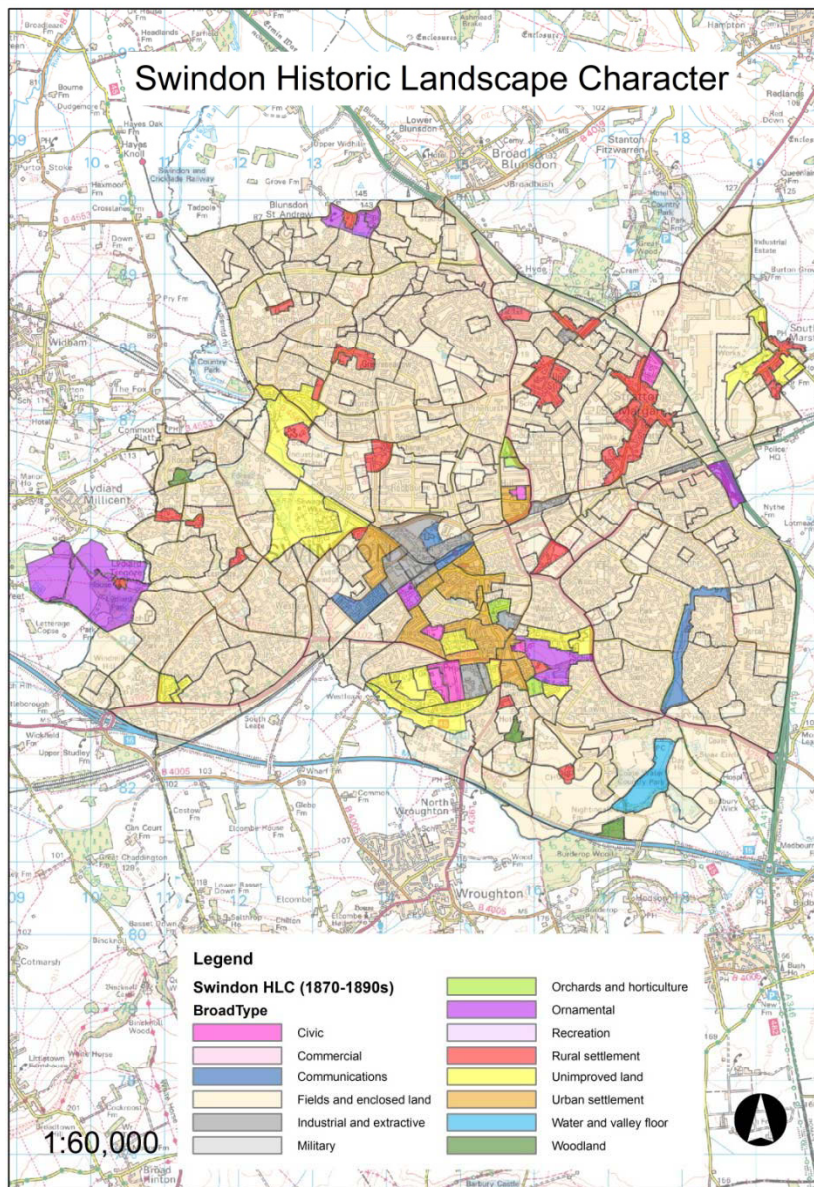
Swindon (1920s-1940s)

- Little urban development north of the railway/railway works
- A number of small villages yet to be absorbed into Swindon
- Mainly agricultural land
- Only the substantial, historic, parklands are present
- Lots of allotments
- Bear in mind many wartime industries don't appear on sources so are not represented



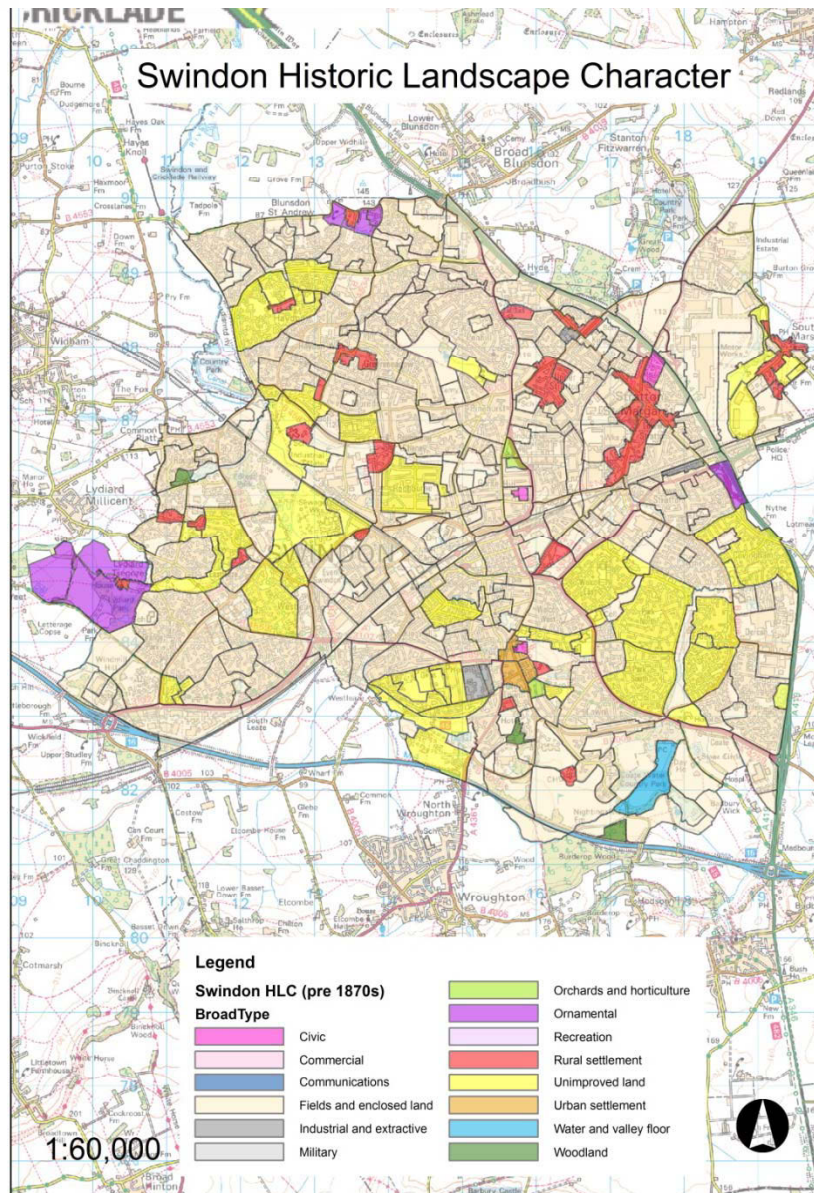
Swindon (1890s-1910s)

- Strong industrial character – mainly provided by the stone quarries
- Quarries contemporary with railway?
- Little green space – few allotments, playing fields etc.
- Small urban core – historic character obvious
- Some common land survives and Swindon is ringed by villages



Swindon (1870s-1890s)

- Very little urban character – Swindon smaller than other Wiltshire towns
- Fewer settlements but some of the rural ones are nearly as big as Swindon
- Common land around Swindon is abundant
- Railway works is the one of the only legible industries



Swindon (Pre 1870s)

- Swindon is tiny and arguably a rural village?
- Why did Swindon grow compared to surrounding settlements?
- Very much a typical Wiltshire fieldscape with lots of common land and heath/grassland
- Not a varied landscape – few land changes associated with expansion/urbanisation

Samuel Lewis writing about Holy Rood (Swindon) in 1848...

“This place, which is mentioned in Domesday Book, is pleasantly situated on the summit of a considerable eminence, commanding beautiful views of parts of Berkshire and Gloucestershire. The principal street is wide, containing some good houses; the general aspect of the town is prepossessing, and there is an adequate supply of water of excellent quality.”

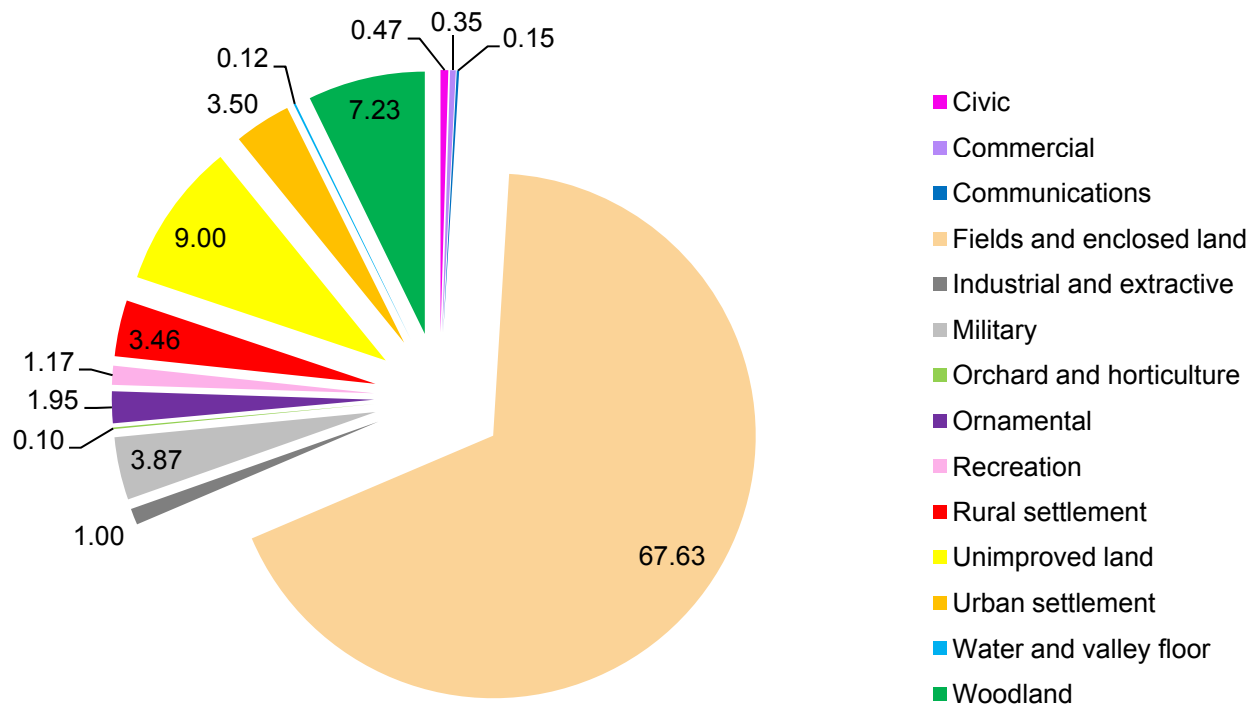
So HLC poses some interesting questions about Swindon....

- Has Swindon grown up due to transport routes?
- Why did Swindon grow and become dominant when it could easily have been Stratton or Wanborough?
- Why has Swindon grown in the pattern it has – reuse of available industrial land or expansion on periphery?
- Is the quarrying industry as important as the railway?
- What factors are behind the rapid growth?

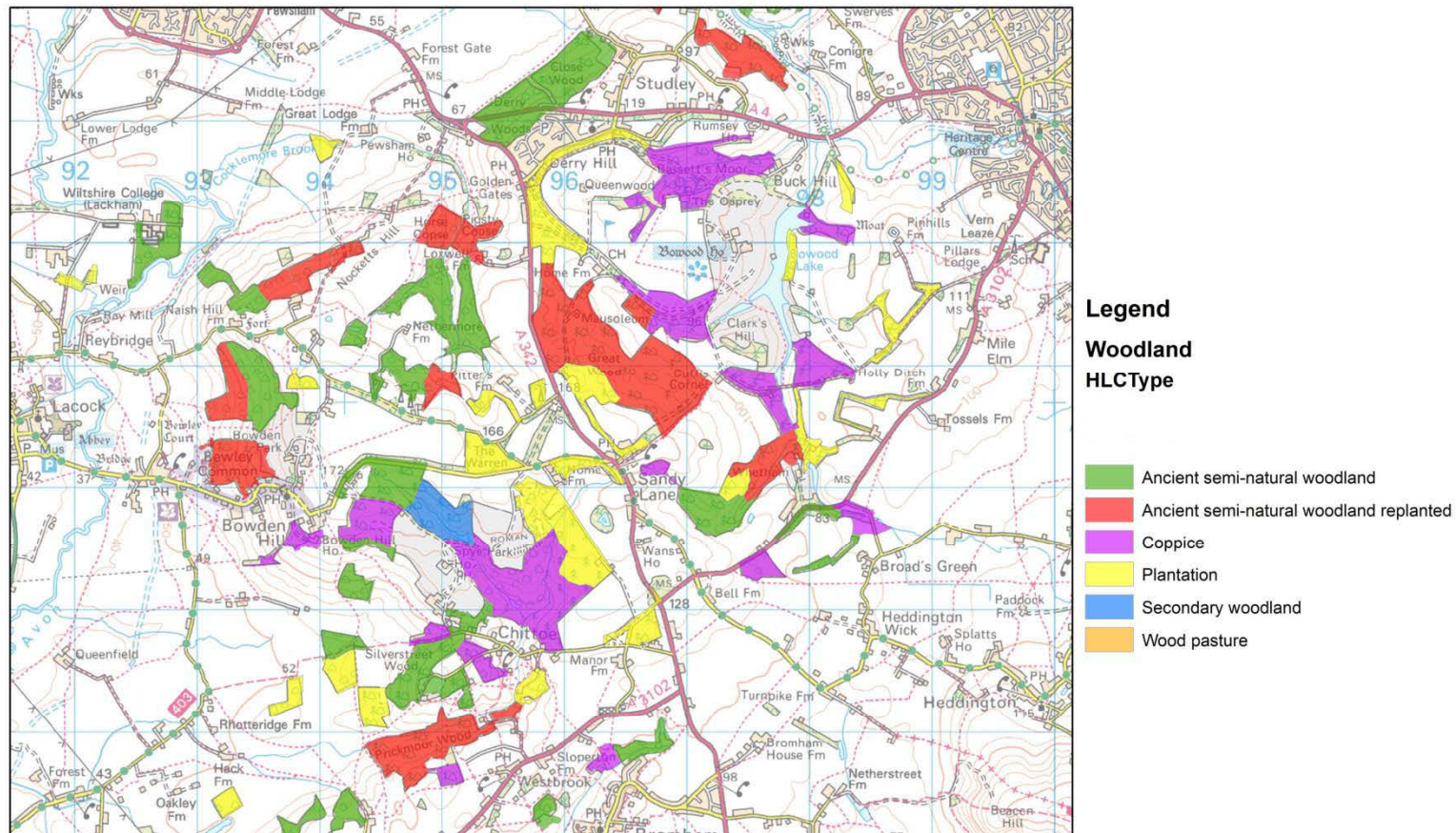
Statistics – Current Land-use

	No of polygons	Area (Ha)	%
Civic	225	1269	0.47
Commercial	82	943	0.35
Communications	43	408	0.15
Fields and enclosed land	5226	183830	67.63
Industrial and extractive	157	2733	1.00
Military	118	10509	3.87
Orchard and horticulture	56	265	0.10
Ornamental	272	5286	1.95
Recreation	221	3174	1.17
Rural settlement	1496	9416	3.46
Unimproved land	439	24500	9.00
Urban settlement	675	9510	3.50
Water and valley floor	45	316	0.12
Woodland	1406	19662	7.23
TOTALS	10461	271821	100.00

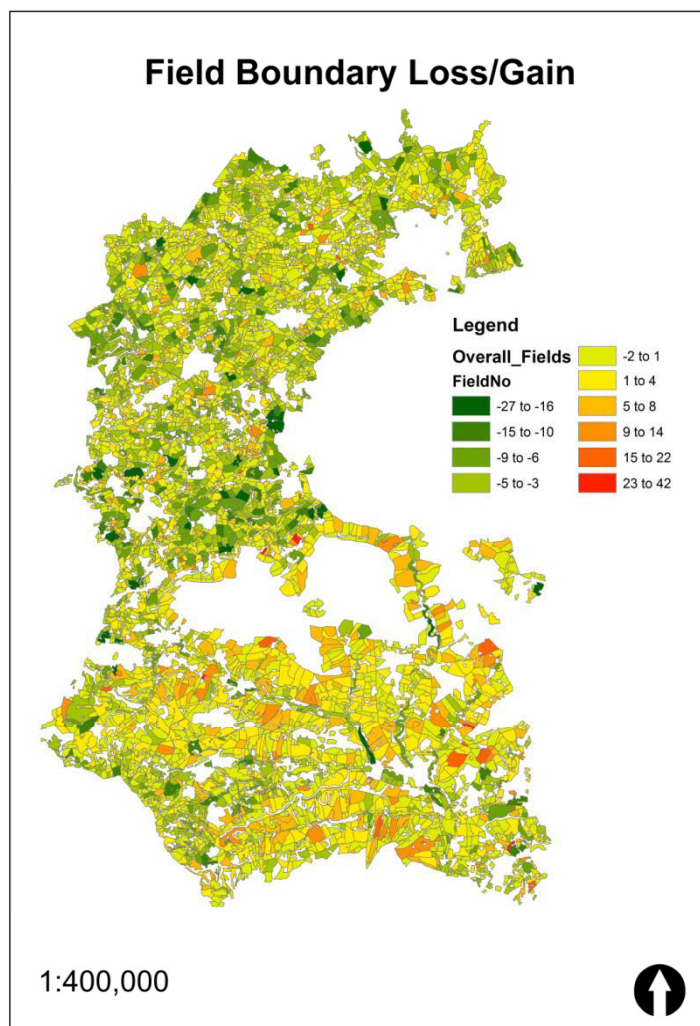
Statistics – Current Land-use



Narratives – Woodland Types

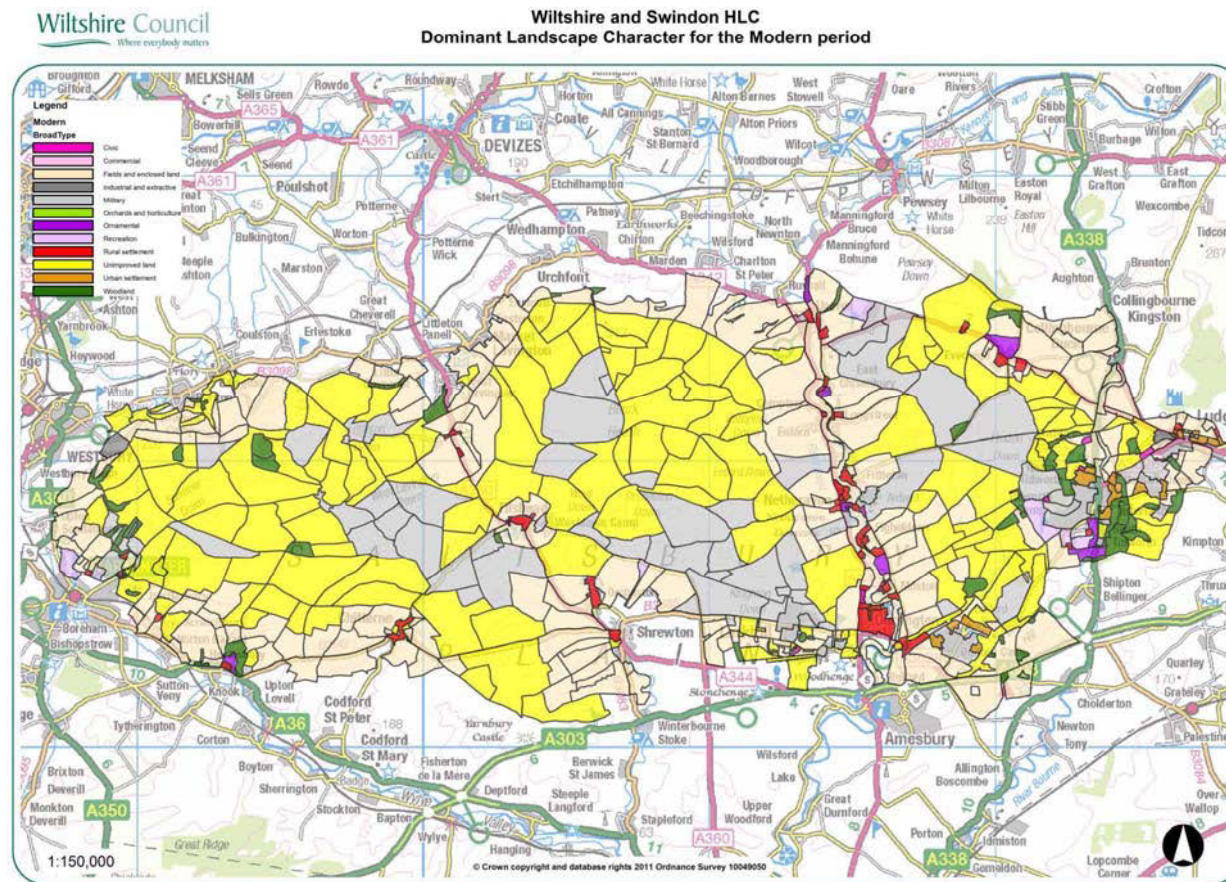


Narratives – Field Boundaries



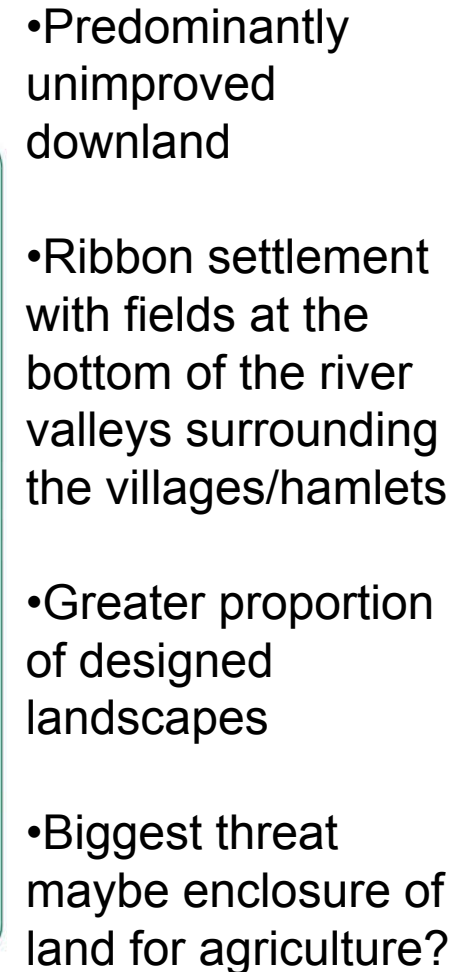
- Darker colours indicate heavier loss/gain of field boundaries
- Seems to be a general North-South divide with loss in the North and gain in the South
- Why is this the case:
 - Geology?
 - Changes in technology?
 - Development pressure?
 - Remoteness?

New Interpretations – SPTA

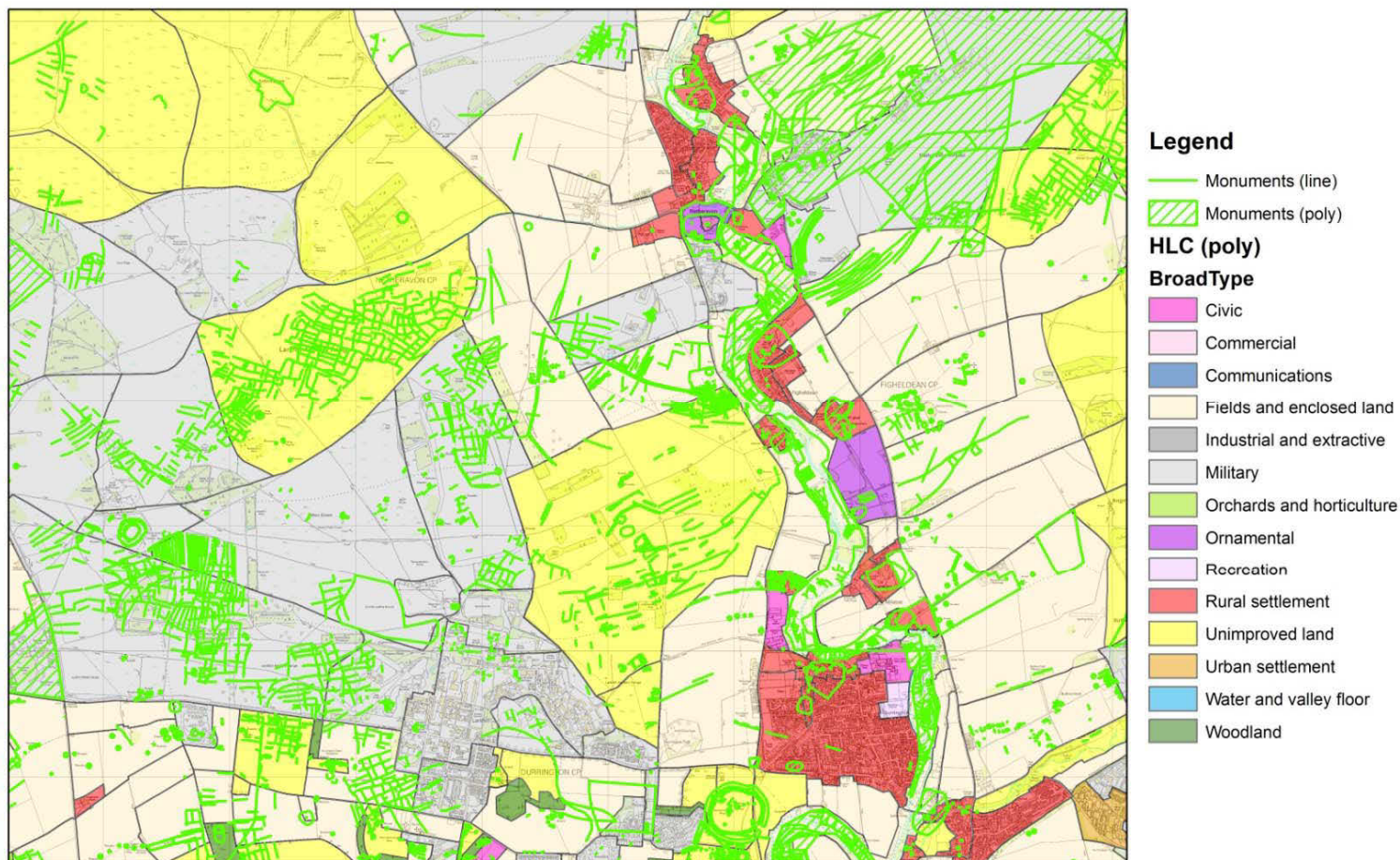


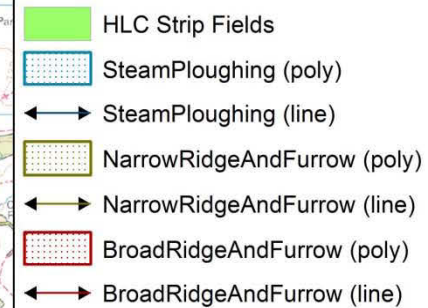
- Not a hugely diverse landscape but intriguing
- Large military areas
- Lots of new fields
- Still good survival of downland
- Downland preserves early character
- No alteration in settlement patterns yet!

Wiltshire and Swindon HLC
Dominant Landscape Character for the Late Post Medieval period



Relationships – HLC and the HER





A Summary

- **HLC is a strategic tool**
 - **77% complete**
 - **Data produced swiftly at a county scale**
 - **Sources restricted to ensure speedy completion**
 - **Varied analysis possible for current and previous character**
 - **Some interesting/surprising trends identified**
-

Your questions?



Further Information

- Check the project webpage:
www.wshc.eu/about-wshc/archaeology/581.html
- Think about how you might like to use the data?
 - Landscape is an idea
 - Landscape relate to people/perceptions
- Contact me:
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 - 01249 705526

