



# Character Map of Stratford-on-Avon District

## A COUNTRYSIDE DESIGN SUMMARY

Stratford-on-Avon District lies in Midland England in the county of Warwickshire. It is a rural district corresponding to the southern third of historic Warwickshire and encompasses the towns of Stratford-upon-Avon, Henley-in-Arden, Alcester, Shipston-on-Stour and Southam. The general character of Stratford-on-Avon District is one of rolling lowland countryside, much of it arable farmland. That character is all the more obvious when compared with such areas as the flat fenland of the east Midlands, the mountains of the Peak District or the estuaries of Essex. A closer look reveals, however, that the character of Stratford-on-Avon District is far from uniform. The geological features and climate of the area and the impact of several thousand years of people living and working on the land have created a landscape of subtle but real variation. Travelling from north to south, for example, the differences are clear. The hamlets, winding lanes and small fields of

the more wooded north-west give way to the open areas of grazing and larger scale fields of the Avon and Stour valleys with their closely built villages. From there, south, the ground rolls gently to the steep scarp slope of Edgehill and the downland of the Cotswold fringe with its medium scale fields of arable and pasture, dotted with compact stone villages. These differences form the basis for identifying distinct regions within the District. The features taken into account include the underlying geology, the shape of the land or topography, the variety and number of trees and other plants, the shape and size of fields and the way they are managed, the pattern of roads and settlements and the building materials out of which the towns and villages are made.

There are five main character areas within Stratford-on-Avon District as shown in the map below: the Arden, the Avon and Stour Valleys, the Cotswold Fringe, the Feldon and the Ironstone Uplands. The Feldon and Arden correspond in large part to historically recognized

regions. The terms Arden and Feldon were current by medieval times. Arden derived from the British ardu meaning 'high, steep', Feldon from the Old English field meaning 'open land'. Further, early settlements and agricultural activity tended to centre on river valleys, principally the Avon, Arrow, Alne and Stour. It is also notable that while the District is an administrative entity with 'artificial' boundaries, many of those boundaries correspond to 'natural' boundaries such as river basin divides. The District lies almost entirely within the drainage basin of the River Avon, the northern and southern boundaries of the District falling approximately on the divides with the greater basins of the Rivers Trent and Thames.

Each of the character areas is further divided into sub-areas to account for more local differences. The areas and sub-areas are intended to provide a general record of the character of the district as a whole but is not intended to account fully for the details that make

places unique. The boundaries identify areas in which there is a degree of similarity in terms of landscape and settlement pattern. The summary therefore describes both similarities as well as differences that make each area identifiable. Examples of some of the shared features are illustrated on the companion sheet Character & Design in Stratford-upon-Avon District. More detailed descriptions and views of particular settlements are set out in Conservation Area documents and Village Design Statements.

The character map and descriptions have been drawn up on the basis of the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines. The areas correspond in broad outline to the those identified in the Guidelines and the Character Map of England produced by the Countryside Commission and English Nature. Differences are due to the intended use of this document as design guidance focusing on settlement location, structure and predominant building materials.

### Birmingham plateau fringe A

- Gently rolling land form, the upper end of the River Blythe basin, draining north to the Trent with no clearly defined valley;
- Belts of mature trees associated with estates; many ancient woodlands, small in size and often with irregular outlines; areas with a well defined pattern of small fields and paddocks; thick roadside hedgerows, often with bracken;
- A network of minor lanes with scattered hamlets and ribbon development;
- Main building materials are timber frame and brick;

### Ancient Arden B

- Varied undulating land form with occasional steep scarp slopes, principally draining to the River Alne without a clearly defined basin;
- Hedgerow and roadside oaks; an ancient irregular pattern of small to medium sized fields; field ponds associated with permanent pasture;
- A network of winding lanes and trackways often confined by tall hedgebanks; many scattered hamlets and farmsteads, mostly on slope sides with larger villages or towns on hilltops or valley bottoms;
- Main building materials are timber frame and brick with some Arden Sandstone and Blue Lias Limestone;

### Alne and Arrow valley floors C

- Middle reaches of the Alne and Arrow rivers in fairly distinct basins, the edges defined by narrow floodplains extending to large scale rolling land form;
- Winding hedgerows along the edge of the floodplain; grazing meadows, often with patches of wet grassland; a semi-regular pattern of medium to large sized fields; mature hedgerow and roadside oaks;
- A varied settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farmsteads, generally lying near a river or stream;
- Main building materials are timber frame, brick and Blue Lias Limestone;

### Arrow ridgeway slope D

- Higher side of the River Arrow basin, including dividing ridge and ridgeway; large scale rolling land form with occasional steep scarp slopes;
- Large woodlands, often associated with rising ground; mature hedgerow and roadside oaks; a semi-regular pattern of medium to large sized fields;
- Very few small villages and scattered farmsteads; Main building materials are timber frame, Blue Lias Limestone and brick;

### Avon and Arrow terraces O

- Broad flat gravel terraces at the meeting of the rivers Arrow and Avon;
- A large scale geometric field pattern; some small arable plots growing a wide variety of vegetable crops; well wooded streamlines;
- Small compact villages, generally on or next to a river; scattered greenhouses and other horticultural buildings;
- Main building materials are timber frame, Blue Lias Limestone and brick;

### Avon vale P

- Flatter side of the lower Avon basin; narrow river corridors defined by flat floodplains with steeply sloping, often wooded bluffs extending out to broad flat valley with occasional low rounded hills;
- Grazing meadows often with meanders, islands, steep banks and much marginal vegetation; fringing alders and scrub; winding hedgerows and ditches along the boundary of the floodplain; a medium to large scale geometric field pattern on the valley land with many small often abandoned orchards;
- Straight roads with wide roadside verges typically bounded by a tall hedge and ditch; a strongly nucleated settlement pattern of medium sized villages, often fringed by greenhouses or other horticultural buildings;
- Main building materials are timber frame, Blue Lias Limestone, 'Cotswold Limestone' (Oolitic Limestone) and brick;

### Stour vale Q

- Flatter side of the lower Stour basin; broad flat valley with occasional small rounded hills;
- A medium to large scale geometric field pattern; small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow; wide roadside verges typically bounded by a thick hedge and ditch; numerous hedgerow elm stumps;
- Small compact estate villages and clusters of farmsteads and dwellings;
- Main building materials are Blue Lias Limestone, 'Cotswold Limestone' (Oolitic Limestone), 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed) and brick;

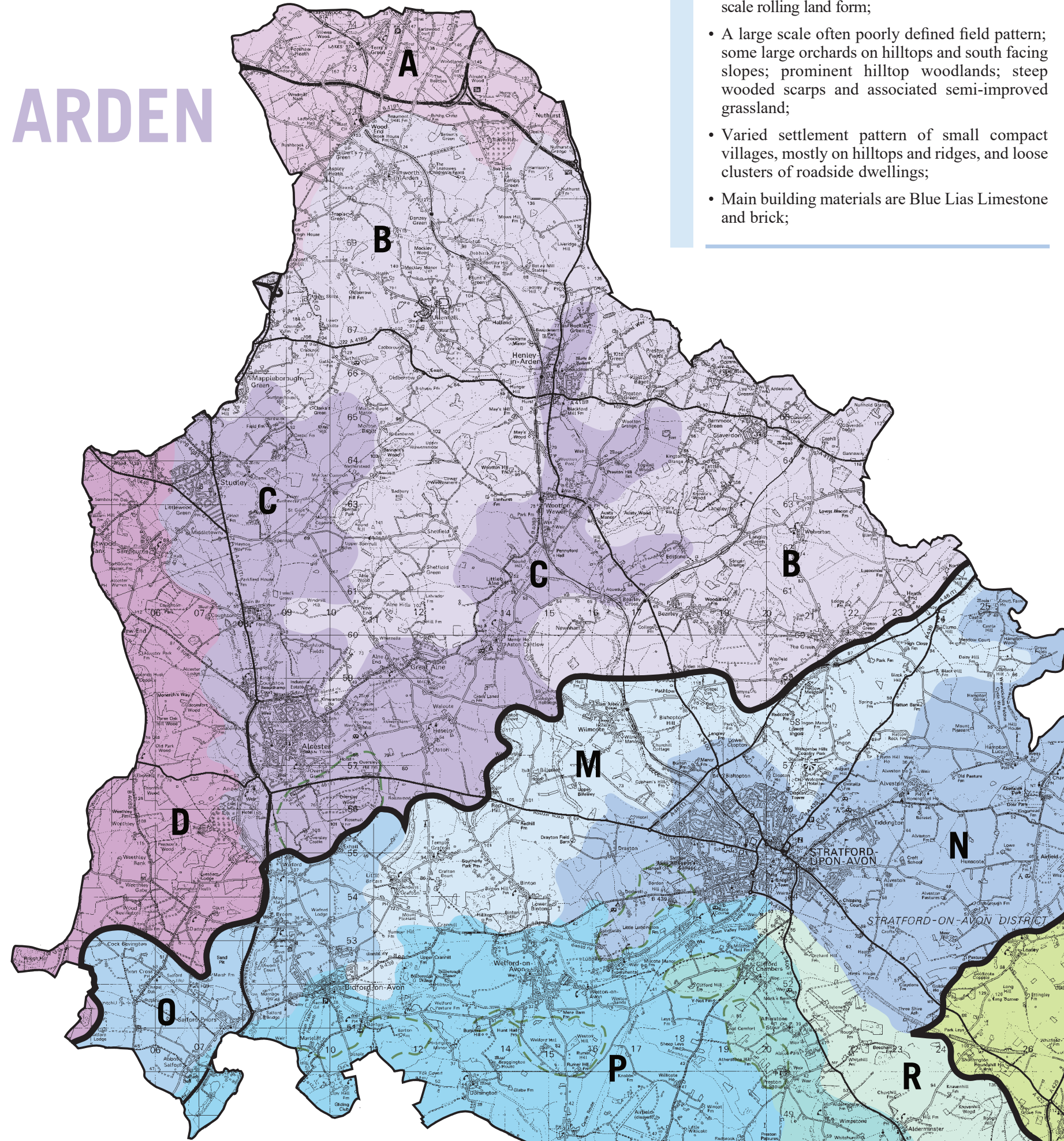
### Stour Feldon edge R

- Steeper side of the lower Stour basin; large scale rolling land form with occasional steep scarp slopes;
- Large woodlands often associated with rising ground; many small coverts and belts of trees; mature hedgerow and roadside oaks;
- Scattered farmsteads and a small compact village;
- Main building materials are White Lias Limestone (now known as Langport Member Limestone) and brick;

### Upper Stour S

- Middle reach of the Stour valley, a distinct basin defined by the rounded Tredington hills and the flatter, rolling southern edge of the Feldon;
- A medium to large scale geometric field pattern; small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow; wide roadside verges typically bounded by a thick hedge and ditch; numerous hedgerow elm stumps;
- Compact valley bottom settlements and small estate villages;
- Main building materials are Blue Lias Limestone, 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed), 'Cotswold Limestone' (Oolitic Limestone) and brick;

## ARDEN



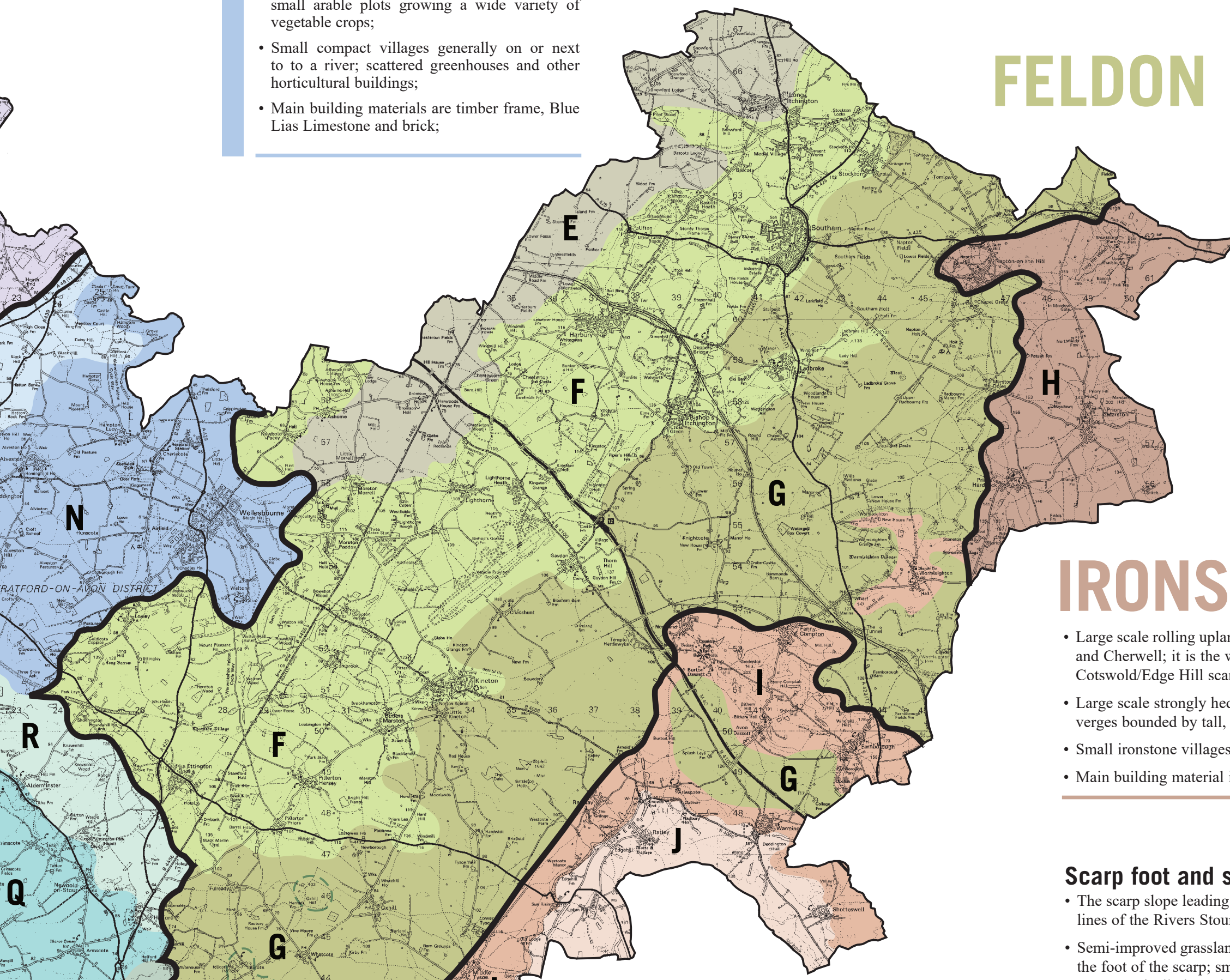
### Avon ridgeland M

- Steeper side of the Avon basin including the ridge dividing the Rivers Avon and Alne with a large scale rolling land form;
- A large scale often poorly defined field pattern; some large orchards on hilltops and south facing slopes; prominent hilltop woodlands; steep wooded scarps and associated semi-improved grassland;
- Varied settlement pattern of small compact villages, mostly on hilltops and ridges, and loose clusters of roadside dwellings;
- Main building materials are Blue Lias Limestone and brick;

### Upper Avon N

- Flatter side of the upper reach of the Avon basin; narrow river corridors defined by flat floodplains with steeply sloping, often wooded bluffs to the north west side extending to broad flat gravel terraces on the south east side;
- Grazing meadows often with meanders, islands, steep banks and much marginal vegetation; fringing alders and scrub; winding hedgerows and ditches along the boundary of the floodplain; a large scale geometric field pattern on the terraces with well wooded streamlines and some small arable plots growing a wide variety of vegetable crops;
- Small compact villages generally on or next to a river; scattered greenhouses and other horticultural buildings;
- Main building materials are timber frame, Blue Lias Limestone and brick;

## FELDON



### Mudstone vale E

- Small flat valley with occasional small rounded hills, draining to the Avon at right angles to the line of the valley; a further area forms the foot of the River Itchen;
- A medium to large scale geometric field pattern; small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow; wide roadside verges typically bounded by a thick hedge and ditch; numerous hedgerow elm stumps;
- Scattered farmsteads and dwellings and the village of Long Itchington;
- Main building materials are Blue Lias Limestone and brick;

### Lias uplands F

- A varied rolling land form often associated with steep wooded scarp slopes, mostly draining to the Rivers Dene and Itchen without clearly defined basins;
- Many hedgerows and roadside trees; well defined geometric pattern of small to medium sized fields; disused quarries with semi-natural grassland and scrub
- Compact villages sited on hill and ridgetops, hill sides and along narrow valley bottoms;
- Main building materials are White Lias Limestone (now known as Langport Member Limestone), Blue Lias Limestone and brick;

### Clay vale G

- Broad flat valley with occasional small rounded hills, the valley running at right angles to the lines of the Rivers Stour, Dene and Itchen;
- A medium to large scale geometric field pattern; small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow; wide roadside verges typically bounded by a thick hedge and ditch; numerous hedgerow elm stumps;
- Relatively few, straight roads with few, small compact villages sited by streams along with scattered farmsteads and dwellings;
- Main building materials are Blue Lias Limestone, 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed) and brick;

## AVON & STOUR VALLEYS



## COTSWOLD FRINGE

## IRONSTONE UPLANDS H

- Large scale rolling upland with occasional prominent ironstone hills, includes the divide between the Rivers Leam and Cherwell; it is the western edge of the Northamptonshire Uplands yet at the same time a continuation of the Cotswold/Edge Hill scarp;
- Large scale strongly hedged field pattern; small areas of permanent pasture with ridge and furrow; wide roadside verges bounded by tall, thick hedgerows; steep hillsides with semi-natural grassland and scrub;
- Small ironstone villages often situated on rising ground;
- Main building material is 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed);

### Scarp foot and slope I

- The scarp slope leading down to the broad flat Feldon Clay Vale, the scarp and vale running at right angles to the lines of the Rivers Stour, Dene and Itchen;
- Semi-improved grassland, scrub and wood on steep valley sides; a medium to large scale geometric field pattern on the foot of the scarp; small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow; wide roadside verges typically bounded by a thick hedge and ditch;
- Small compact villages sited at the foot of the scarp slope; many dry stone walls;
- Main building materials are 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed) and brick;

### Ironstone plateau and valleylands J

- Flat land at the top of the scarp slope, deeply cut by steep sided river valleys, draining to the Cherwell, the scarp edge forming the divide between the greater Thames and Severn basins; Steep wooded slopes; large arable fields with red soils on the plateaux; semi-improved grassland and scrub on steep valley sides;
- Roads run along ridgetops; small compact villages sited at the rim of the valleys and dropping down along the valley sides; many dry stone walls;
- Main building materials are 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed) and brick;

### Fringe downlands K

- A varied rolling land form of rounded or flat topped hills and secluded river valleys; includes Meon Hill, Ilmington Downs, and Brailes Hill;
- A medium to large scale geometric field pattern; rich red soils supporting productive arable farmland with some woodland on higher ground; small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow; steep hillsides with semi-improved grassland and scrub;
- Small compact stone villages, mostly sited on ridgetops or the foot of the scarp slope; many dry stone walls;
- Main building materials are 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed), 'Cotswold Limestone' (Oolitic Limestone) and brick;

### Broad valleys L

- Valley floors with some varied undulation and small rounded hills;
- A medium to large scale geometric field pattern with small areas of permanent pasture often with well preserved ridge and furrow;
- Small compact stone villages, mainly on the valley bottoms; many dry stone walls;
- Main building materials are 'Hornton Stone' (Marlstone Rock Bed), 'Cotswold Limestone' (Oolitic Limestone) and brick;

Outlying hills

Not to Scale



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