

Green Road Surfacing North Wessex Downs Landscape Analysis

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/the-landscape/landscape-character/>

1. National Landscape designation requires conserving natural character

The North Wessex Downs is a “Nationally Protected Landscape.

Authorities “must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty”.

Policy gives “great weight” to conserving landscape and scenic beauty.

Analysis:

Any intervention must conserve and enhance natural beauty, not alter it.

A formally surfaced byway:

introduces engineered, artificial materials.

changes visual appearance and texture.

alters how the landscape is experienced.

Conclusion:

Surfacing would conflict with the statutory purpose of the Landscape Character Assessment and its associated policy framework.

2. Management must reflect local distinctiveness and rural character

Public rights of way must be managed in a way that reflects:

“local distinctiveness, character and quality” of the North Wessex Downs

Analysis:

Green Road is-

An unsurfaced rural route.

part of the wider landscape experience.

A hard or imported surface would:

erode “local distinctiveness” (i.e. replacing natural track with engineered finish)

standardise a route that is currently landscape-led.

Conclusion:

Surfacing is inherently at odds with the requirement to respect local character rather than impose engineered uniformity.

3. The Landscape Character framework supports appropriate, low-impact management

Establishing a management hierarchy:

Routes should be:

managed for access but in a way that reflects landscape sensitivity and quality.

It also recognises the need for: responsible use of rights of way.

Analysis:

Where use threatens landscape character, the response should be to manage the use—not fundamentally change the landscape.

Surfacing does the opposite:

It modifies the landscape to accommodate damaging use

rather than managing incompatible users.

Conclusion:

Surfacing is inconsistent with the Landscape Character approach, which is landscape-led, not engineering-led.

4. Surfacing is explicitly identified as harmful within this landscape context

Surfacing ... would not be in keeping with the local North Wessex Downs landscape. It would likely impact on biodiversity, for example run off from plainings.

Analysis:

This is a direct policy-consistent statement:

Landscape character harm (visual + experiential)

Environmental harm (biodiversity)

5. The Landscape Character framework links access to landscape experience

Access is one of the “special qualities” of the North Wessex Downs.

Rights of way allow people to “enjoy the landscape and heritage.

Analysis:

The experience being protected is:

natural

rural

landscape-led.

A surfaced track:

changes visual qualities (colour, texture, reflectivity)

alters sensory experience (from natural track to constructed route)

Conclusion:

Surfacing would diminish the very qualities the Landscape Character Assessment is designed to protect.

To Conclude

Green Road lies within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, where statutory policy requires that great weight is given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. The Landscape Character Assessment and associated Management Plan make clear that public rights of way should be managed in a manner that reflects the local distinctiveness, character and quality of the landscape.

The introduction of a formal or engineered surface would not be in keeping with this setting, as it would introduce an urbanising influence into an otherwise rural and naturally surfaced environment. This would erode the intrinsic character of the route and conflict with the requirement to conserve natural beauty.

Furthermore, the landscape framework recognises the need for responsible use of rights of way. Where use gives rise to damage, the appropriate response is to manage that use, rather than to fundamentally alter the character of the landscape through engineered surfacing.

For these reasons, surfacing Green Road would be inconsistent with the identified landscape character of the North Wessex Downs and would not represent an appropriate or sustainable intervention within this protected setting.