

M3 Junction 9 Improvement

Scheme Number: TR010055

6.3 Environmental Statement Appendix 7.2 - Landscape Character Baseline

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Planning Act 2008

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Procedure) Regulations 2009**

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6.3 ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT - APPENDIX 7.2: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE

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1 Introduction

1.1.1 This appendix includes baseline landscape characterisation studies which have been reviewed for the Scheme. This includes the following:

- Natural England (2015), National Character Area Profile 125: South Downs
- Natural England (2014), National Character Area Profile 130: Hampshire Downs
- South Downs National Park Authority (2020), South Downs Landscape Character Assessment
- Hampshire County Council (2012), Hampshire Integrated Character Assessment

1.1.2 Summary descriptions of the relevant National Character Areas (NCAs) and Local Character Areas (LCAs) are provided in the following sections, with relevant extracts from the published documents provided later.

2 National Character Areas

2.1 National Character Area Profile 125: South Downs

2.1.1 NCA125 is described as:

“The South Downs National Character Area (NCA) comprises a ‘whale-backed’ spine of chalk stretching from the Hampshire Downs in the west to the coastal cliffs of Beachy Head in East Sussex... The majority of the area falls within the South Downs National Park, a recognition of its natural beauty and importance for access and recreation and allowing for local decision-making processes to manage this nationally important area. Some eight per cent of the NCA is classified as urban, comprising the coastal conurbation of Brighton and Hove in the east. The South Downs NCA is an extremely diverse and complex landscape with considerable local variation representing physical, historical and economic influences; much of it has been formed and maintained by human activity, in particular in agriculture and forestry...

This is a landscape of contrasts. Dramatic white chalk cliffs and downland create a sense of openness. Enclosure and remoteness can be found in woodland and even in close proximity to urban areas. This NCA provides a rich variety of wildlife and habitats; rare and internationally important species, such as the Duke of Burgundy butterfly, mature elms and rare ground-nesting birds all benefit from the characteristic mixed farming systems. Recreational activities within the NCA include cycling, walking and horse riding on the South Downs Way National Trail which follows the ridge of the northern scarp and provides extensive panoramic views. National Park status enhances the NCA’s recreational opportunities.

...

In the west of the NCA, groundwater in the chalk feeds many of the rivers, streams and wetlands in the area and provides most of the water abstracted for public supply. The porosity of chalk is one of its most notable properties. Rain is largely absorbed through tiny, connected pores instead of lying on the surface and forming rivers, lakes and ponds. Rainwater moves through the thin chalk soils and slowly replenishes the chalk aquifer below.

...

In many instances, farming has shaped the NCA over centuries; characteristic farming patterns range from arable in the west, wooded areas and mixed farming in the central areas and chalk grassland increasingly to the east. Over 80 per cent of the South Downs NCA is farmed.

The NCA has a wealth of well-conserved historical features including a range of archaeological sites from the Bronze and Iron Ages and early industrial sites from flint mines to ironworking furnaces. This is a landscape with a rich cultural

heritage of art, music and rural traditions. Many well-known writers, poets, musicians and artists have drawn inspiration from its distinctive sense of place. Tranquillity is experienced most on the escarpment, dip slope and within the valleys of the chalk ridge and eastern and central downs, providing a sense of escape in a crowded corner of south-east England...

2.1.2 Relevant SEOs include:

- *“SEO 1: Plan for an expansion of species-rich chalk grassland and other seminatural habitats and manage and enhance other existing chalk habitats for wildlife connectivity, reinforcement of the distinctive landscape character, and improvement to water resource management.*
- *SEO 2: Manage, expand where appropriate and enhance the downland farmed landscape, the arable mixed farmed landscape of the dip slope and the broadleaved woodland cover, conserving wildlife habitats, contributing to food provision, maintaining a distinct yet evolving landscape pattern, improving water quality and providing local sources of renewable fuels.*
- *SEO 3: Conserve and promote the South Downs’ rich historic environment, its unique geodiversity and national and local geological sites for the contribution they make to cultural heritage, biodiversity and landscape. Maintain and enhance quality of access, including via the South Downs Way National Trail, providing interpretation to enhance educational and recreational opportunities.*
- *SEO 4: Manage, enhance and integrate recreational opportunities and public enjoyment with conservation of the natural environment and tranquillity, reflecting the ambitions of the South Downs National Park.”*

2.2 National Character Area Profile 130: Hampshire Downs

2.2.1 NCA130 is described thus:

“The Hampshire Downs are part of the central southern England belt of Chalk... The majority of the area is an elevated, open, rolling landscape dominated by large arable fields with low hedgerows on thin chalk soils, scattered woodland blocks (mostly on clay with flint caps) and shelterbelts. To the east hedgerows are often overgrown and there are larger blocks of woodland. A fifth of the area is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 6 per cent in the South Downs National Park due to the scenic quality of the landscape. Flower- and invertebrate-rich remnants of calcareous grassland remain mostly along the northern scarp and on isolated commons throughout.

The Chalk is a large and important aquifer...The aquifer feeds several small streams flowing north and east, but the dominant catchment of the area is that of the rivers Test and Itchen, which flow in straight-sided, relatively deeply incised valleys across most of the National Character Area. The Itchen is a Special Area of Conservation and, with the Test, is designated as a Site of

Special Scientific Interest. These rivers, with the water meadows, peat soils, mires and fens of their flood plains, are the most important habitats of the area. The valleys are also home to the main settlements, the local road system and important economic activities such as watercress growing and fly fishing.

The water, supplied by the chalk aquifer feeding these catchments, is also the main ecosystem asset of the area, providing high-quality water to large populations...

The main challenges facing the area are the continued high levels of population and economic growth in these urban areas, their associated demands for water, traffic levels on major trunk roads crossing the Downs, and further intensification of farming. The corollary is that the tranquillity of the Downs and river valleys, and their historic environment, is a magnet for informal outdoor recreation..."

2.2.2 Relevant Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) include:

- *“SEO 1: In the catchments of the rivers Test and Itchen, work with partners, landowners, land and river managers, user groups, businesses and local communities to implement sustainable management regimes that conserve, enhance and restore the priority habitats and species of the watercourses and associated wetlands.*
- *SEO 2: Ensure that the remnant areas of biodiversity-rich chalk grassland are retained and managed to ensure good condition and seek opportunities to restore areas in poor condition and extend the area of this habitat. Protect and manage the associated historic features of these sites.*
- *SEO 4: Encourage woodland management regimes that: ensure good condition of priority habitats and species; maximise the potential ecosystem benefits of woodland such as carbon sequestration, water quality and regulation, timber provision, recreation and biomass potential; and enhance the landscape visually.”*

3 South Downs Landscape Character Assessment

3.1 LCA A5: East Winchester Open Downs

3.1.1 This is a landscape of open downland, with fields of older origin than other parts of the LCA to the east. There is occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes, and game coverts, linear tree features and beech clumps on hill tops. However, the western end of the LCA is already heavily influenced, particularly in terms of reduced tranquillity and remoteness, by the presence of the existing major transport routes (M3, A31, A272) – the 2017 South Downs National Park Authority *Tranquillity Study* (South Downs National Park Authority, 2017) mapped the relative tranquillity of the study area landscape as low in proximity to the M3 corridor, increasing to intermediate further to the east (and higher in certain locations). The landscape is also influenced by (ribbon) development extending out from the city of Winchester. At the same time, severance of the South Downs National Park from Winchester caused by the transport routes is also noted as an issue.

3.1.2 Key sensitivities:

- *“The remote and tranquil character of the East Winchester Open Downland is threatened by its proximity to numerous transport routes.*
- *Given its proximity to, and views over, Winchester, the area is sensitive to changes in the urban area beyond the National Park boundary.*
- *The historic parkland of Avington Park, which extends into the Open Downland, and the hill fort at St Catherine’s Hill are both historically significant features which are sensitive to change.*
- *High recreational value due to promoted recreational routes located in close proximity to the urban population at Winchester.*
- *The prominent scarps and open undeveloped skylines are particularly sensitive to change, with pockets of 'deep' remoteness and dark skies associated with the downs around Cheesefoot Head in the south-east of the area, including Gander Down, Longwood Warren and Temple Valley*
- *Open views across the undeveloped Open Downs”*

3.1.3 Relevant forces for change are noted as:

- *“Infrastructure upgrades to major roads which cross or skirt the character area eroding tranquillity, e.g. improvements to Junction 9 of the M3, which adjoins the western boundary of the area.*
- *Increasing recreational pressure on the sparse public rights of way network due to the proximity of the urban population in Winchester. The severance*

caused by the M3 concentrating recreational use in the highly sensitive areas of St Catherine's Hill SSSI and along the River Itchen."

3.1.4 Relevant development considerations are noted as:

- *"Seek opportunities to reduce the impact of visually intrusive elements such as the infrastructure and traffic associated with the M3, A272 and A31, and prominent built elements on the edge of Winchester.*
- *Consider use of whisper tarmac on major routes such as the M3 to reduce traffic noise."*

3.1.5 Although the Scheme occupies only a very limited area adjacent to the existing motorway and main roads within LCA A5, topography and the openness of the landscape means that the Scheme is likely to be visible from, and therefore to have indirect perceptual/experiential effects on, a larger part of the LCA.

3.1.6 Being within a nationally designated landscape, the LCA within the South Downs National Park Authority is considered to be of **very high** value.

3.2 LCA F5: Itchen Floodplain

3.2.1 The character area comprises a floodplain landscape of relatively recent enclosure and scattered trees along the course of the river. The floodplain has high biodiversity interest with a large number of designated sites covering a diversity of habitats including the clear alkaline river, fen/marsh/swamp, neutral grassland and pockets of woodland. Historic features associated with the river and the Itchen Navigation are still apparent today. Although the floodplain has an overall tranquil quality this is disrupted in place by the audible 'hum' of traffic. The character area is crossed in two locations by the M3 and in several places by A roads.

3.2.2 Key sensitivities:

- *"The historic course of the Itchen Navigation, historic bridges and the watercress beds which are particularly distinctive cultural features*
- *The panoramic viewpoints over the valley from St Catherine's Hill which increases the sensitivity of the floodplain landscape.*
- *The tranquillity of the floodplain arising from low noise levels, infrequent river crossing points, and absence of settlement or artificial lighting."*

3.2.3 Relevant forces for change are noted as:

- *"Future road expansion and upgrades of M3, A34 and A31 further affecting the tranquillity of the floodplain."*

3.2.4 Relevant development considerations are stated as:

- *“Ensure that any future traffic regulation and road upgrades associated with the M3, A34 and A31 are integrated into the rural valley landscape and ensure any signage is sensitively detailed.”*

3.2.5 Being within a nationally designated landscape, the LCA within the South Downs National Park Authority is considered to be of **very high** value.

3.3 LCA G5: Itchen Valley Sides

3.3.1 The LCA is described thus:

“The Itchen Valley Sides are smoothly rounded and less steep than the valley sides of the chalk valleys in the eastern half of the National Park. The valley sides support arable cultivation with some pasture. The enclosure pattern is a mixture of informal fieldscapes resulting from piecemeal enclosure and formal fieldscapes resulting from planned enclosure. Smaller fields are located close to the villages. There is relatively little woodland, although distinctive tree belts mark the edge of the floodplain ... There is also woodland associated with historic parkland... There are a number of designed landscapes on the valley sides including the large landscape park at Avington...”

Although the valley has an overall tranquil quality this is disrupted in place by the audible ‘hum’ of traffic. The character area is crossed in two locations by the M3 and in several places by A roads.”

3.3.2 Key sensitivities:

- *“Historic villages and designed landscapes parks which provide a sense of history.*
- *The panoramic views over the valley from St Catherine’s Hill also increase the sensitivity of the valley to change.*
- *The dark skies associated with the South Downs International Dark Skies Reserve. The visibility of this landscape from opposite valley sides and from the adjacent downs increases the visual sensitivity of the valley sides. From within the valleys, the valley crests are seen against an open sky and are particularly visually sensitive which are vulnerable to light sources.”*

3.3.3 Relevant forces for change are noted as:

- *“Continued road upgrades and expansions”*

3.3.4 Relevant development considerations are the same as for LCA F5.

3.3.5 Being within a nationally designated landscape, the LCA within the South Downs National Park Authority is considered to be of **very high** value.

4 Hampshire Integrated Character Assessment

4.1 Landscape Character Areas

LCA 3C: Itchen Valley

4.1.1 LCA 3C: Itchen Valley overlaps with South Downs National Park Authority LCA's G5: Itchen Valley Sides and Itchen Floodplain. LCA 3C lies partly within the South Downs National Park and partly beyond its boundaries but within the perceived setting area for the South Downs National Park.

4.1.2 Relevant key characteristics of LCA 3C: Itchen Valley are summarised as a valley of contrasts from a classic chalk stream to a fast-flowing river, then a deep estuary, all lying within a largely undeveloped floodplain. The chalk stream habitat is designated in places where it is rich in plants, invertebrates and fish. Important remnant water meadows, and the largest assemblage of species rich neutral grassland in England. There is fairly good access to the valley by rights of way, and the Itchen Valley path follows the former towpath from Cheriton to Southampton.

4.1.3 The presence of existing major roads is noted in the published description:

“More modern infrastructure development such as the M3 cutting, increasing commuter traffic and rapid expansion of settlements in the south are significant detractors which threaten to subsume increasingly isolated and small areas of a rural landscape.”

4.1.4 Opportunities to create extensive chalk grassland areas on south-facing valley sides within the LCA are noted.

4.1.5 Being partly within a nationally designated landscape, the LCA is considered to vary between a **very high** (within the South Downs National Park) or **high** (within the setting of the South Downs National Park) value.

LCA 8G: East Winchester Open Downs

4.1.6 LCA 8G: East Winchester Open Downs overlaps with South Downs National Park Authority LCA A5: East Winchester Open Downs. LCA 8G lies predominantly within the South Downs National Park.

4.1.7 Relevant key characteristics of LCA 8G: East Winchester Open Downs are noted as a topographically varied and striking rolling landscape, dominated by large 18th and 19th century fields of arable and pasture bounded by sparse thorn hedgerows, creating an open landscape. Occasional areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland occur, for example at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill, along with patches of scrub and woodland on steeper slopes, and game coverts, linear tree features and visually distinctive beech clumps on hill tops. A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity away from the major transport routes (M3, A31, A272) which cross the landscape. Good public

access with a network of public rights of way, including the South Downs Way national trail, and open access land at Magdalen Hill Down and St Catherine's Hill. Panoramic views from Cheesefoot Head and from St Catherine's Hill across the Itchen Valley. The area forms an important eastern setting to Winchester.

4.1.8 Main roads on the western edge of the LCA are noted as restricting access and causing fragmentation of the recreational experience, while light pollution arising from Winchester is also noted as affecting tranquillity in the western part of the LCA. The potential for carefully designed planting schemes to assist in integrating urban fringe land uses into the landscape and thereby enhancing the setting of Winchester is identified as an opportunity for the future, but the importance of appropriate species choice (including considering the potential implications of climate change) and management is also highlighted.

4.1.9 Being predominantly within a nationally designated landscape, the LCA is considered to be of **very high** value.

4.2 Townscape

TCA 8a: Winnall Trading Estate

4.2.1 Relevant key characteristics of TCA 8a: Winnall Trading Estate are described as:

“Medium- to coarse-grain mix of small, medium-sized and large industrial units with some limited ancillary office uses and large retail (foodstore). Buildings are highly utilitarian in character, using modern materials with very-low-pitch roofs. There are generally large areas of hardstanding used for parking and/or storage forming the setting to built form. This area, by virtue of the nature of the uses, is very poorly connected with its neighbours and access is via a single exit and egress point. This character area is divided into two sub-areas which are physically separate but share very similar underlying characteristics.”

4.2.2 TCA 8a is considered to be of **low** value.

TCA 5: Riverside

4.2.3 TCA 5 lies within the Winchester Conservation Area. TCA 5: Riverside relevant key characteristics are described as:

“This is a mixed-use but predominantly residential suburb of narrow streets and lanes following the contours (north–south) of steeply rising ground on the east bank of the River Itchen. Medieval in origin and comprising a number of early buildings, its modest scale and tight urban grain is distinctive within the city. The area is historically constrained by the river to the west and the steeply rising ground and dismantled railway to the east.

Trees to St Giles' Hill form a significant green backdrop to the character area and the river is a nationally important wildlife habitat as well as a highly-valued amenity space and access route to and from the city."

4.2.4 TCA 5 is considered to be of **high** value.

TCA 6: St Giles Hill and environs

4.2.5 TCAs 6a and 6b both lie adjacent to the Scheme.

4.2.6 Relevant key characteristics of TCA 6 are described as:

"This character area comprises mid- to late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century residential suburbs distributed around the slopes of a pronounced spur to the river valley to the east of the historic core of the city. The central part of the character area (sub-area WIN06a) between Alresford Road and Petersfield Road is strongly defined by wooded slopes and large areas of open space, both public and private, and a medium- to coarse-grain layout of predominantly Victorian villas with some terraced and semi-detached housing set in good-sized mostly irregular plots. To the northern slopes of the character area is Winnall Manor Estate (sub-area WIN06b); council-built housing at a medium grain with curvilinear layout, dating from the 1950s and 1960s but incorporating some better-quality contemporary development. To the southern slopes, Highcliffe (sub-area WIN06c) originally dates from the late-nineteenth century; St. Catherine's Road and Highcliffe Road being long streets of relatively fine-grain terraced housing. The remaining built form is immediate-post-war semi-detached housing at medium grain on medium-sized plots but exposed to the open side of the spur. Below this is the large expanse of sports grounds and green recreation areas between Bar End Road and the M3 motorway transport corridor.

For ease of description, this character area has three distinctive sub-areas. However, the character area remains cohesive as a large residential extension of the city to the east, in three main phases of development."

4.2.7 The western section of TCA 6a (furthest from the Scheme) lies within the Winchester Conservation Area. The value of TCAs is therefore assessed as follows:

- TCA 6a – **Medium** (outside of the Conservation Area) or **High** (within Conservation Area)
- TCA 6b and 6c – **Medium**

5 Published Landscape Character Assessment Extracts

- 5.1.1 The following sections include relevant extracts from the published character assessments noted above, and those within the study area as detailed in **Chapter 7 (Landscape and Visual)** of the **ES (Document Reference 6.1)**.

**South Downs National Park Authority (2020), South Downs Landscape
Character Assessment.**

Appendix A

Landscape Character Type A: Open Downland

The *Open Downland* type comprises the distinctive upland landscape on the south facing dip slope of the South Downs. The chalk downs extend east from the Arun Valley to the sea at the Seven Sisters, and rise above the Itchen Valley east of Winchester. This is Kipling's classic 'blunt, bow-headed, whale-backed Downs' (Sussex, 1902). This type contains some of the highest and most remote parts of the South Downs National Park.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Large scale open elevated landscape of rolling chalk downland, with distinctive dry valleys and 'mini-scarps' that relate to faults in the chalk.
- Underlain by solid chalk geology with very occasional surface clay capping and windblown sand creating local pockets of variation in the landscape.
- Large scale geometric arable fields, resulting from 20th century field amalgamation or 19th century enclosure in Sussex with a greater variety of historic field pattern of 17th to 19th century origin in Hampshire.
- Visually permeable post and wire field boundaries. Few hedgerow boundaries and woodland cover limited to small deciduous woodland blocks and distinctive hilltop beech clumps.
- Strong seasonal variation in the landscape with ploughed arable fields scattered with flints contrasting with swathes of arable crops at other times of year.
- General absence of surface water due to the porosity and permeability of the chalk bedrock, although the ephemeral winterbournes and dew ponds are distinctive features.
- Fragments of chalk downland grassland and rare chalk heath, together with associated scrub and woodland habitats are confined to steep slopes where arable cultivation has proved difficult.
- Use of the land for sport (shooting and game rearing) in some part of the *Open Downland* has created a distinct land cover pattern of open downland interspersed with small woodlands.
- Ancient earthworks and flint mines, including visually dominant Iron Age hillforts which crown the highest summits. Many ancient routeways, including the South Downs Way National Trail, rise and cross the downs following historic pilgrimage, trading and farming routes.
- Sparse settlement, with occasional isolated farms and barns. Blocks of modern farm buildings punctuate the open landscape. At a more detailed level flint sheepfolds, barns and shepherds' cottages are a visual reminder of the former extent of sheep grazing.
- Large open skies and distant panoramic views – creating a dramatic and dynamic landscape changing according to prevailing weather conditions.

- A tranquil landscape, often seemingly remote and empty, with a windswept exposed character. The type, alongside parts of LCT B, C and D contains some of the highest and most remote part of the National Park.
- The elevated landform and open character enable panoramic views, including long views along the downland and out to the sea.
- Strong artistic and literary associations.
- Good access opportunities associated with areas of chalk downland, plus extensive areas of land in public ownership – with high recreational use, including sports such as paragliding. Access is more limited on the downs east of Winchester.

Physical Landscape

A.1 The *Open Downland* is formed from a solid geology of undivided Upper and Middle Chalk. It is the consistent physical qualities of this chalk that gives rise to this extensive area of gently undulating dip slope chalk descending southwards from a prominent escarpment ridge. Some of the highest points in the South Downs occur along this ridge, for example Ditchling Beacon which reaches 248m.

A.2 The surface of the chalk dip slope is furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems and winterbournes which are most likely early natural drainage patterns that retreated as the level of the water table in the chalk fell. In the east, where these dry valleys meet the sea this results in a dramatic undulating cliff line, for example at the Seven Sisters. The cliffs provide a cross-section through the chalk – the cliffs of Beachy Head provide excellent exposures of Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk formations.

A.3 There are also steep 'mini-scarps' within the downs that relate to faults in the chalk and the formation of a secondary escarpment. These form asymmetrical dry valleys. Embedded within the chalk are hard flints which are formed from silica. These flints remain long after the softer chalk has eroded and have been exploited by man as tools and building materials.

A.4 The underlying chalk geology has given rise to Brown and Grey Rendzina soils which are characterised by their shallow, well drained, lime-rich (calcareous) nature and are easily eroded. Veins of sand and gravel (dry valley deposits) are found along the bottom of the dry valleys and in these areas the soils tend to be deeper, slightly acid and loamy.

A.5 Accumulations of clay and embedded flints are located on the higher ridges of the downs where they give rise to the more clayey Paleo-argillic brown earths. All of these soil types give the land a generally good agricultural capability, with the majority being classified as Grade 3 in Defra's Agricultural Land Classification (good-moderate quality agricultural soils). The landscape is characterised by vast arable fields, plus areas of pasture, bounded by post and wire fencing or sparse thorn hedgerows.

A.6 The steeper slopes of the dry valleys and minor scarps are more difficult to farm and these areas often support an irregular mosaic of chalk grassland, scrub and hanger woodland.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

A.7 The sense of scale in this landscape is vast owing to the expansive, rolling topography, the extremely large fields, and the relatively low presence of vertical features which reveals expansive open skies. These large skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence and create a dynamic, landscape varying with the seasons. The rolling topography gives rise to constantly changing views. Field boundaries, that are geometric in form, appear to curve as they cross the undulating landscape. The general absence of hedgerows and woodland creates a strong sense of openness and exposure – this is particularly evident on the coast where the on-shore winds have sculpted hawthorns into contorted, stunted shapes. However, in other inland areas beech clumps create focal features in the open landscape. This is a homogenous, organised landscape as a result of the consistent scale and form of the rolling topography and field patterns.

A.8 The low noise levels, sense of naturalness arising from the presence of chalk grassland, elevation and views combined with low presence of overt built human influences, and low density of roads, settlement and people all contribute to a sense of remoteness and tranquillity across the majority of the downs. This is interrupted only by the presence of occasional car parks and signage related to recreational use. The most elevated 'plateau' areas of the downs and the secluded dry valleys which lack visibility of main settlements, enjoy the darkest skies and provide the greatest sense of remoteness.

A.9 The proximity of the *Open Downs* to many local centres of population mean that there are a large number of potential users of the area. East of the Arun, there are considerable areas of downland in public ownership plus areas of open access land which coincide with areas of chalk grassland. A good network of public rights of way and car parking facilities

has resulted in a landscape which is very accessible for recreation. However, the presence of roads reduces accessibility of the open countryside from urban areas on foot, by bicycle or on horseback, particularly from Winchester.

A.10 The dramatic landscape of the *Open Downs* has been a source of literary inspiration throughout the centuries, but the perception of their aesthetic value has changed significantly. As early as 1772 the naturalist Gilbert White, described the ‘*broad backs*’ and ‘*shapely figured aspect*’ of the open rolling downs. Vast flocks of sheep once roamed the downs and these inspired many writers. In 1813 the Reverend Arthur Young wrote ‘*the whole tract of the Downs in their full extent, is stocked with sheep, and the amazing number they keep, is one of the most singular circumstances in the husbandry of England*’.

A.11 In the 19th century the open chalk landscapes were often described unfavourably. William Gilpin described the landscape of the open downs as ‘*ugly*’, Cobbett found the downs ‘*all high, hard, dry, fox-hunting country*’ and Samuel Johnson described the landscape as being ‘*so desolate that if a man had a mind to hang himself in desperation he would be hard put to find a tree on which to fix a rope*’.

A.12 The downs stirred Kipling to write his poem ‘Sussex’ in 1902 in which he describes the ‘*blunt, bow-headed, whale-backed Downs*’. He also described the intangible elements of the downs such as the voice of the shepherd, the cries of sheep, clamour of sheep bells, jingling of harnesses, sounds of the sea and absence of mechanical noise. This is now hard to find and illustrates how the downs have changed. Virginia Woolf was apparently rendered speechless by the beauty of the downs writing, ‘*One is overcome by beauty more extravagantly than one could expect.... I cannot express this.*’¹

A.13 Many painters have also been inspired by the dramatic landscape including Copley Fielding who painted atmospheric watercolours of the downs in the 19th century, Philip Wilson Steer who painted his watercolour ‘Sussex Downs’ in 1914, and Eric Ravilious whose 20th century paintings depict the chalk downlands and agricultural landscapes.

Biodiversity

A.14 This arable dominated landscape has retained significant ecological interest in the form of areas of unimproved chalk grassland, together with associated scrub and woodland. The majority of these semi-natural habitats are confined to steep slopes where arable cultivation has proved difficult – here significant areas of lowland calcareous grassland, scrub and deciduous woodland (all BAP habitats)

are retained along with pockets of rare chalk heath (the most significant at Lullington Heath NNR,SSSI). The chalk grassland habitats are recognised through extensive national and international designation (e.g. the Lewes Downs SSSI, SAC, NNR). Areas of arable land, particularly those managed less intensively, also provide valuable habitat and support a range of farmland bird species, arable weeds and invertebrates. Along the coast, maritime cliff and slopes (also a BAP habitat) support a range of birds and coastal flora and the most significant areas are designated as SSSI.

A.15 In the wider landscape, the character type supports small scattered blocks of secondary and plantation woodland, together with occasional boundary hedgerows. Although these are largely gappy and defunct, they could provide opportunities for enhancement.

Key Biodiversity Features	Importance
Significant areas of lowland calcareous grassland and lowland heath (both BAP Priority Habitats).	Chalk grassland and heathland is a nationally scarce habitat highly valued for important populations of vascular plants, birds and invertebrates. Chalk heath is a particularly rare habitat.
Mosaic of arable and permanent pasture.	Provides habitat diversity at a landscape scale and is particularly notable for supporting a range of farmland bird species.
Occasional areas of scrub and deciduous woodland (BAP Priority Habitat).	The presence of occasional scrub and woodland adds to the overall diversity of chalk grassland habitats and provides additional ecological interest within the agricultural landscape. Some significant blocks notified as LWS.
Areas of vegetation on cliffs and sloping ground adjacent to the sea (BAP Priority Habitat).	Coastal habitats are particularly important in supporting populations of breeding seabirds.

A.16 Extensive areas of BAP Priority Habitats, particularly calcareous grassland, are identified as providing effective habitat networks in Natural England’s National Habitat Networks Mapping Project². Many adjacent areas are identified as being suitable for restoration and in others work is already underway to restore habitats, including chalk grassland. Network Enhancement Zones extend across the *Open Downs* type and identify where land is suitable for the creation of connecting habitats.

¹ Woolf, Virginia. (1927) ‘Evening over Sussex – Reflections in a Motor Car’

² Natural England (2018). National Habitat Networks Mapping Project

Historic Character

A.17 Open chalk downland has been favoured for settlement throughout early history, although largely devoid of settlement today. Finds of flint hand axes within the remnant clay-with-flint deposits indicates the presence of Palaeolithic hunters, while the fertile and thick deposits of loessic soil which formerly capped the chalk attracted Neolithic farmers, who farmed within clearings in the wildwood. Agricultural communities continued to clear the tree cover and farm the downland on an increasing scale until the Romano-British period, leaving extensive traces of their field systems and settlements across the character area. The land was also valued as a ritual landscape, with a number of different monuments constructed, including causewayed enclosures, long barrows and round barrows. Many of these sites were prominently located on, or just below, the ridgeline and are still visible in the modern landscape, many of them used since the early medieval period as significant markers on parish boundaries.

A.18 Anglo-Saxon settlers initially settled the dipslope of the downland, but later communities settled along the river valleys and the greensand shelf, with some of the original settlements surviving into later centuries as isolated farms on the downland. By the medieval period, centuries of arable cultivation had exhausted the downland soils, and the character area was given over to pasture. A sheep-corn husbandry system developed, with huge communal sheep flocks pastured on the downland during the day, and brought down onto the arable lands at night to provide valuable manure. This system was put under pressure in the 13th century as rising population pressure saw the spread of arable land back up onto the downland, but the economic downturn of the 14th century, exacerbated by climatic change and pestilence (affecting animals and humans), saw the downland returned to sheepwalk. The arable lands of the *Open Downs*, tended to be unhedged common fields creating a 'prairie'-like landscape, operating a highly developed form of arable farming based around crop rotations within several large fields and continuous cultivation (i.e. no fields left as fallow).

A.19 Downland near Winchester was mostly enclosed during the 17th -19th centuries and is still characterised by planned enclosure from this period. The area east of the Arun was characterised by open sheepwalk until the middle of the 20th century, with some areas of 18th-19th planned enclosure associated with new farmsteads established at this time. Some of the downland was ploughed during the Second World War, but the landscape was transformed from the 1950s onwards when modern farming techniques and political pressure allowed vast areas of the downland to be ploughed and converted to arable production.

A.20 The character of the landscape is now one of large and regularly shaped 20th century fields, often bounded by wire fencing but with hedgerows and tracks surviving from the medieval manorial downland landscape, although their historic character is largely subdued by more recent agricultural change.

A.21 Slopes too steep to plough survive as isolated blocks of unenclosed downland, often neglected and overgrown with regenerated scrub, but often preserving ancient terraced field systems. A narrow belt of downland also survives along the top of the escarpment, and it is here that many of the prehistoric and later monuments survive as earthworks. Scattered farmsteads, some of medieval origin representing shrunken hamlets, exist in some of the sheltered dipslope valleys, sometimes with isolated outfarms (small groups of barns and animal shelters). Woodland cover is generally very scarce, comprising isolated shelter belts of post-1800 date associated with farmsteads, or occasional game coverts.

Key Features of the Historic Environment	Importance
Preservation of prehistoric and later earthworks in unploughed areas.	Provides strong sense of historical continuity – many are protected as Scheduled Monuments.
General absence of woodland.	Indicates extent of past land clearance.
Low level of surviving settlement, with earlier settlements existing as earthworks/archaeological sites.	Reflects the fluctuations in settlement patterns through time due to changing environmental/cultural conditions.
Scattered post-medieval farmsteads.	Indicates the changing nature of farming practice following decline of traditional manorial system.
Modern enclosures.	Evidence for complete reorganisation of landscape.

Settlement Form and Built Character

A.22 The settlement pattern in this area is characterised by a low density of dispersed settlement and an almost complete absence of nucleated settlement. This conforms to Historic England's rural settlement designation of East Wessex Sub-Province within the South-eastern Province, where the dominant settlement form comprises nucleated villages situated beyond the downs. The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin, and comprises isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century origin set within areas of recent enclosure derived from former sheepwalk where they are often visually prominent. However, some of the farmsteads are of medieval

origin and represent former dependent hamlets which have subsequently shrunk. Aisled barns are an iconic feature of the open downland landscape, contained by distinctive flint boundary walls which are critical to their setting.

A.23 Building materials are typically flint, red brick, clay tiles and Welsh slate, with some modern materials including concrete, corrugated iron and asbestos used in farm buildings. Flint is particularly characteristic of the agricultural barns and walls.

A5: East Winchester Open Downs

Location and Boundaries

The *East Winchester Open Downs* is located to the east of Winchester - parts of the downland boundary are shared with the built edge of Winchester. To the north the boundary is defined by the crest of the Itchen Valley, to the west the boundary is clearly defined by the A31 ring road and built edge of Winchester. The eastern and southern boundaries are defined by a change in field pattern and density of woodland cover – this represents a transition to the Downland Mosaic landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Open rolling upland chalk landscape of rolling downs reaching 176m at Cheesefoot Head.
- Furrowed by extensive branching dry valley systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded coombs – for example at Chilcomb and the Devil's Punchbowl.
- Dominated by large 18th and 19th century fields of arable and pasture, bounded by sparse thorn hedgerows creating a very open landscape supporting a range of farmland birds.
- Modern fields at Longwood Warren indicate late enclosure of this area that was set apart from the surrounding fieldscape (for the farming of rabbits).
- Hedgerows and tracks surviving from the earlier manorial downland landscape are important historic landscape features.
- Occasional areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland occur, for example at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill, Magdalene Hill and Matterley Bowl.
- Occasional scrub and woodland on steeper slopes, and game coverts, linear tree features and beech clumps on hill tops (notably at Cheesefoot Head and Deacon Hill) contribute to biodiversity and provide visual texture in the landscape.
- A landscape frequently managed for country sports (game shooting) which preserves the shape and form of the landscape but also creates a distinctive landcover including small woodlands and game cover plots, which can be incongruous when rectilinear in layout and planted with non-native species.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic, moody landscape, particularly on higher ground e.g. at Cheesefoot Head.
- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity away from the major transport routes (M3, A31, A272) which cross the landscape.
- Large number of prehistoric and later earthworks, long barrows and round barrows, providing a strong sense of historical continuity. St Catherine's Iron Age hillfort occupies a commanding position overlooking Winchester.
- The typical settlement form is relatively late in origin and comprises isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century with more modern buildings along the B3404 on the edge of Winchester.
- Chilcomb village is located in a dry valley, surrounded by an area of small-scale irregular enclosures dating back to the medieval period.
- Expansive views over Winchester and the Itchen Valley due to the open character of the landscape, including panoramic views from Cheesefoot Head and from St Catherine's Hill.

Specific Characteristics Unique to East Winchester Open Downs

A.68 This character area exhibits chalk scenery typical of the *Open Downs* landscape type. However, the composition of

soil types is more varied than is typical of the type in East Sussex. Although the majority of the area comprises well drained calcareous soils, there are some localised areas of clay-with-flints which cap the chalk in the north of the character area and this gives rise to more clayey soils that

support areas of woodland, including the relatively large and ancient Hampage Wood (designated locally as a LWS). Woodland across the remainder of the area is limited to game coverts, secondary regrowth on uncultivated slopes, and clumps of beech on hill tops. Notable tree clumps are located at Cheesefoot Head and Deacon Hill.

A.69 The main difference between this character area and others in the *Open Downland* landscape type is the date of the fields. This character area is dominated by large fields which reflect 18th-19th century planned enclosure of what was probably open downland. There is a small area of modern fields at Longwood Warren, indicating the late enclosure of this area that was set apart from the surrounding fieldscape (for the farming of rabbits), but modern fields are relatively scarce compared to the areas of *Open Downs* east of the Adur Valley.

A.70 Occasional areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland occur, including Cheesefoot Head SSSI, which is located on a predominantly north-facing horseshoe-shaped dry valley. The St Catherine’s Hill SSSI also falls within the character area. Hedgerows and tracks which survive from the earlier manorial downland landscape are important historic landscape features and a late medieval landscape survives around the village of Chilcomb.

A.71 Transport routes cause severance within the area – the M3 runs along the western boundary and the A31/A272 cut across the character area in an east-west direction. The sense of tranquillity and remoteness of this character area is diminished in the vicinity of these major transport routes. Also associated with the major transport routes out of Winchester is ribbon development, as seen along the B3404 and peripheral development encroaching the edge of the National Park from the eastern edge of the city.

A.72 The settlement type is predominantly scattered farmsteads constructed from red brick and flint and clay tiles. The exception to this is the nucleated village of Chilcomb. This village, located within a dry valley, has a Norman church and is surrounded by fields that were enclosed during the medieval period. Within this domestic settled area there is evidence of well-tended grass verges.

A.73 The location of this area close to Winchester, and the proximity of the M3, A31 and A272, makes it potentially accessible to a large number of users. However, these same roads are barriers to movement on foot/ horseback into the National Park. There is a relatively sparse network of public rights of way, and opportunities for circular walks from

Winchester are limited. Car parking facilities at Cheesefoot Head provide access to two important recreational routes – the South Downs Way National Trail, which provides access onto the downs from Winchester, and the King’s Way which crosses Longwood Warren. The safety area for the Chilcomb firing range restricts access to rights of way when the ranges are in use.

A.74 The area's large number of prehistoric and later earthworks are typical of the landscape type – of particular note is the Iron Age hillfort at St Catherine’s Hill which occupies a commanding position overlooking Winchester. The downs provide panoramic views into adjacent landscapes, particularly over the Itchen Valley from Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine’s Hill which is noted in South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis report¹². Part of Avington Park extends into this character area, although the main house is located in the Itchen Valley below.

Sensitivities Specific to East Winchester Open Downs

A.75 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area, although there may be a greater potential for mitigation of change due to some existing woodland cover. Specific to this character area are:

Key Landscape Sensitivities	
1.	The open downlands with their ecologically rich habitats, including unimproved chalk grassland, most notably at Cheesefoot Head SSSI and St Catherine’s Hill SSSI and the large deciduous woodland at Hampage Wood LWS.
2.	The remote and tranquil character of the <i>East Winchester Open Downland</i> is threatened by its proximity to numerous transport routes.
3.	Given its proximity to, and views over, Winchester, the area is sensitive to changes in the urban area beyond the National Park boundary.
4.	The intact 18 th -19 th century planned enclosure landscape is relatively rare within the <i>Open Downs</i> landscape type and is sensitive to change.
5.	The historic parkland of Avington Park, which extends into the <i>Open Downland</i> , and the hill fort at St Catherine’s Hill are both historically significant features which are sensitive to change.
6.	The role of the downs in providing a setting for historic features, such as the hillfort at St Catherine’s.
7.	High recreational value due to promoted recreational routes located in close proximity to the urban population at Winchester.

¹² South Downs National Park Authority (2015) South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis (View 14)

Key Landscape Sensitivities	
8.	The prominent scarps and open undeveloped skylines are particularly sensitive to change, with pockets of 'deep' remoteness and dark skies associated with the downs around Cheesefoot Head in the south east of the area, including Gander Down, Longwood Warren and Temple Valley.
9.	Open views across the undeveloped <i>Open Downs</i> .

Change Specific to East Winchester Open Downs

A.76 In addition to the generic changes listed in the landscape type evaluation, specific changes relevant to this character area are:

Forces for Change	
1.	Pressure for development within the adjoining urban area affecting popular viewpoints within the National Park.
2.	Pressure for change on the urban edge of Winchester encroaching into the <i>Open Downland</i> which could dilute rural character on the edge of the National Park.
3.	Infrastructure upgrades to major roads which cross or skirt the character area eroding tranquillity, e.g. improvements to Junction 9 of the M3, which adjoins the western boundary of the area.
4.	Increasing recreational pressure on the sparse public rights of way network due to the proximity of the urban population in Winchester. The severance caused by the M3 concentrating recreational use in the highly sensitive areas of St Catherine's Hill SSSI and along the River Itchen.
5.	Changes in agricultural management eroding historic field patterns or the setting for historic features.
6.	Pressure for the development of communications masts or other vertical features on the skyline.
7.	Nutrient Neutrality requirements for housing development in this area, may force a change of use from farmland to woodland, biomass or pasture.

Landscape Management / Development Considerations Specific to East Winchester Open Downs

A.77 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

a.	Encourage landowners to soften rectilinear blocks of woodland, particularly where they occur on prominent escarpments, by selective felling and the planting of indigenous edge species. Remove
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	inappropriate game coverts i.e. those that occur on prominent escarpments or hill tops or contain non-native species.
b.	Avoid field expansion and hedgerow boundary loss that would erode the intact 18 th -19 th century planned enclosure landscape pattern.
c.	Conserve and enhance the historic parkland at Avington Park through management of woodland features, replacement tree planting and the conservation/restoration of parkland pasture.
d.	Provide appropriate management for significant skyline tree groups e.g. The Clump at Cheesefoot Head. Support limited planting of new landmark tree groups at carefully selected key locations as landmark features.
e.	Preserve the hillfort at St Catherine's Hill and manage scrub encroachment.
f.	Seek to link areas of chalk downland through the creation of headlands and arable reversion.

A.78 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

a.	Prevent further fragmentation of the East Winchester Open Downs by roads and development, avoiding ribbon development encroaching on the downs from Winchester.
b.	Seek opportunities to reduce the impact of visually intrusive elements such as the infrastructure and traffic associated with the M3, A272 and A31, and prominent built elements on the edge of Winchester.
c.	Consider use of whisper tarmac on major routes such as the M3 to reduce traffic noise.
d.	Maintain the open and undeveloped scarps and skylines – avoid siting of buildings, telecommunication masts, power lines and wind turbines on the sensitive skyline.
e.	Encourage use of traditional building styles and materials when expanding/ modernising farm buildings and encourage sympathetic re-use of any traditional farm buildings that may become redundant (such as the flint barns) so as to maintain their external fabric, appearance and setting. Refer to guidance contained in the Historic Farmsteads study ¹³ .

¹³ Forum Heritage Services (2005) *Historic Farmsteads & Landscape Character in Hampshire, Pilot Project*. Report by Bob Edwards for Historic England.

- f.** Take account of views from this area when considering change in adjacent areas beyond the study area, such as in Winchester. Pay particular attention to popular viewpoints at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill. Refer to guidance in the View Characterisation and Analysis report.
- g.** Manage large recreational events in order to minimise incremental impacts on the landscape, including access tracks, storage and temporary structures, which can erode the remote character of the downs

Appendix F

Landscape Character Type F: Major Chalk River Floodplains

The *Major Chalk River Floodplains* form the base of the major chalk valleys that have been carved through the chalk uplands and contain the major rivers of the Itchen, Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Wide flat valley floodplains forming the base of distinctive U-shaped valleys cutting through the chalk - topographically and visually distinct from the sloping valley sides.
- The valleys have historically formed a link between the Weald, downland and sea.
- Rivers meander across the floodplains in broad loops. Some sections are embanked with artificially straightened courses. Historically the rivers were navigable.
- Extensive open valley floor, with long views, enclosed and contained by the rising valley sides. Tree and woodland cover frequently mark the edge of the floodplain where contours begin to rise.
- Land cover of rectilinear small-scale grazed pastures, reclaimed from the former marshy margins of the river from the medieval period onwards.
- Remnant areas of wetland, reedbeds, fen, floodplain grassland and marsh – of high biodiversity interest and supporting large numbers of birds.
- Fields are bound by ditches and occasional hedgerows. Groups of willows and alders occur sporadically alongside the river and drainage channels.
- The Arun and Ouse Valley widen out to include a more extensive area of drained pastures and seasonally flooded water meadows.
- Roads often mark the boundary of the flat floodplain and valley sides; railways occasionally on embankments within the floodplain.
- General absence of settlement on the floodplain, with small nucleated villages characterising the lower valley sides, with views to church spires being a distinctive feature. Occasionally larger settlements (often former ports) extend onto the valley floor, in lower reaches of the river.
- Important historic attributes include medieval bridges – and water management features including water meadows and mills.
- Away from transport corridors the valleys retain an unspoilt and tranquil pastoral character.

Physical Landscape

F.1 The Major River Floodplains form the valley floors of the large U-shaped valleys that cut through the eastern part of the South Downs. The landscape type also includes the extensive floodplains north of the chalk beds where the rivers have been unrestricted by landform and have formed particularly extensive floodplains.

F.2 The valley floors are underlain by Lower, Middle and Upper Chalk formations. However, it is the alluvial drift geology which creates the distinctive characteristics of the floodplain landscapes. River alluvial deposits give rise to stoneless clayey, fine and silty soils known as alluvial gley soils. The fluctuating water levels and the low lying nature of the floodplains (under 5m) result in periodic waterlogging. Despite the generally fertile nature of alluvial soils, the fluctuations in water table and waterlogging mean the valley floors are relatively poor in terms of their agricultural land capability and are therefore retained as permanent pasture. The floodplains are criss-crossed by regular man-made drainage ditches and winding tributaries, which subdivide the valley floors into small to medium sized irregular fields, often bordered by post and wire fences, reeds, scrub, or willow/alder trees. There are many areas of marshy ground and pools of water which include some large reed beds.

F.3 The rivers are generally tidal in their lower reaches and meander across their floodplain between artificial floodbanks which often screen the river from view. There are typically artificially straightened sections of river and isolated meanders, or marshy depressions marking abandoned earlier courses of the river, in the floodplains.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

F.4 This is a landscape of apparent large and expansive scale as a result of the flat landform, lack of vertical elements and far-reaching open views. Views are contained and channelled by the rising valley sides and wooded fringe of the floodplain. It is a simple and uniform landscape type as a result of the consistency in pasture land use.

F.5 The artificial geometric drainage ditches and canalised sections of the rivers contrast with the naturalistic dendritic tributary streams and large sweeping meanders. Despite the artificial nature of the drainage channels and canalised, embanked courses of the rivers, the floodplains tend to have a strong sense of tranquillity as a result of the lack of settlement (and roads) leading to low noise levels and dark skies [<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/dark-night-skies/>].

F.6 There are typically few roads across the floodplain although roads and car parks along the adjacent valley sides provide access to the edges of the floodplain. Public rights of

way are typically located along the top of the artificial floodbanks that border the rivers and these provide good access up and down the valley. In addition, there are opportunities for water sports on the rivers.

F.7 John Constable (1776-1837) was drawn by the floodplain landscape – particularly in the Arun Valley where he painted Arundel Mill and Castle.

Biodiversity

F.8 The floodplains of these major rivers and their associated alluvial soils support a rich and varied range of wetland habitats including riverine habitat, permanent pasture, water meadows, ditch systems and wet woodland. The river channels themselves also often support fringing willow and alders.

F.9 Of particular note are the extensive areas of floodplain grazing marsh (a BAP Priority Habitat), which together with the ecologically rich ditch systems are of great value. Important sites include the Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI, the Lewes Brooks SSSI and River Itchen SSSI. As a whole these grazing marshes and associated wetland habitats, provide a key habitat for a range of wildfowl and over-wintering birds. Other BAP Priority Habitats include good quality semi-improved grassland and deciduous woodland which are commonly found across the landscape, as well as areas of lowland fens and lowland meadows that typically exist along the Itchen floodplain in the west.

F.10 Aside from their ornithological importance, these floodplain grasslands and marshes also support a number of notable plant species, for example cut grass *Leersia oryzoides*, a plant that is restricted to ten UK locations, and the nationally vulnerable true fox sedge *Carex vulpina*. The ditches also support an important aquatic flora and are rich in invertebrate species.

F.11 To the south, the Cuckmere and Adur floodplains support habitats that reflect a coastal influence, with nationally important sites such as the Adur Estuary SSSI and the Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI.

Key Biodiversity Features	Importance
BAP Priority Habitats of floodplain grazing marsh, good quality semi-improved grassland, deciduous woodland, lowland fens and lowland meadows.	Grazing marsh supports internationally important bird populations, and lowland meadows support a specialist group of scarce and declining plant species and farmland birds.
Riverside trees of willow and alder	Riverside vegetation supports the banks (reducing erosion) and provides habitats for wildlife.

Key Biodiversity Features	Importance
Saltmarsh and mudflats in lower reaches close to the coast (e.g. in the Adur and Cuckmere)	Saltmarsh and mudflats support nationally important estuarine plant communities and wading birds.

F.12 The majority of BAP Priority Habitats across the floodplains are identified as being suitable for restoration in Natural England's National Habitat Networks Mapping Project¹, as they exist in a degraded or fragmented form. Some of the areas in the floodplains also form part of a Network Enhancement Zone, where green infrastructure provision can help to improve connections between habitats.

Historic Character

F.13 The Major River Floodplains have formed links between the Weald, downland and sea from the earliest prehistoric periods up to the present day. Numerous finds of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts have been discovered along the valleys testifying to the passage of hunting bands. The rivers would have once flowed in much larger channels and the alluvial floodplains, although very fertile, were also narrow and vulnerable to flooding, rendering them unsuitable for prehistoric and later settlement and arable agriculture. It is likely that the rich meadows may have been used for pasture by communities situated on the higher land to either side of the rivers.

F.14 By the medieval period, the floodplains formed an integral part of a medieval agrarian landscape based on the villages located along the lower slopes of the valleys, and utilising a wide range of resources. The villages were typically surrounded by open fields, with woodland and downland pastures towards the extremities of the parishes. The rich meadowlands on the floodplains would have been an important component in this integrated mixed farming regime.

F.15 The rivers would have been important routeways from prehistory onwards, and remained navigable until well after the medieval period. Some settlements on the valley sides remained in use as small river ports into the 20th century. Post-medieval changes, including the gradual silting up of the rivers and the competing demands of other interests such as fisheries and the creation of water meadows, reduced the ability of the rivers to support waterborne trade.

F.16 The floodplains are now mostly occupied by a series of enclosed fields (referred to as brooks innings or salt marsh innings in the Sussex HLC² and as relic watermeadows in the Hampshire HLC³). The brooks innings are the drainage and

enclosure of fresh water marshland in river valley flood plains from the late post-medieval period onward, resulting in meadows bounded by 'wet fences' or ditches. Fields situated in the lower reaches of the river valleys are typically more regular or semi-regular dominated by straight ditches, often undertaken by the larger landowners as part of strategic flood defences. Fields in the upper reaches tend to be informal with more irregular or semi-irregular patterns of enclosure and with boundaries dominated by sinuous ditches often following the course of former streams and tributaries and associated with irregular piece-meal enclosure. In Hampshire the relic watermeadows are surviving features of former water meadows that played a crucial role in the farming economy between 1600 and 1900. They allowed for the for the artificial control of watering using a series of hatches, weirs, channels and drains to allow lush crops of grass to grow. Culverts and bridges provided access to the meadows for carts to allow harvest. Bridges, weirs and mills are also features associated with the river floodplains.

Key Features of the Historic Environment	Importance
Absence of settlement	Evidence of unsuitability of the floodplain for settlement.
Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river including brooks innings, relic watermeadows, bridges, weirs, and mills	Evidence of the importance of the river and its margins to the local economy throughout history.
Former tidal reaches, extent of navigation, former river ports	Provides evidence of past use of the river for waterborne trade

Settlement Form and Built Character

F.17 The major river floodplains are notable for their absence of settlement. Built structures are typically small scale and comprise individual buildings such as mills and pumping stations, and other structures such as bridges and weirs.

F.18 However, settlements are located at strategic locations such as bridge crossing points and ports and while the historic cores of these settlements tend to be outside the floodplain, some of the settlements have extended into the floodplain, for example at Lewes and on the edge of Arundel. The City of Winchester lies within the floodplain of the River Itchen (although the urban area is just outside the National Park).

F.19 Building materials are typically red brick, concrete, timber and clay tiles.

¹ Natural England. 2018. *National Habitat Networks Mapping Project*

² West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority and English Heritage. 2010 *Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation*

³ South Downs National Park (2017) *Historic Landscape Characterisation Report (Hampshire)* by Wyvern Heritage and Landscape

F5: Itchen Floodplain

Location and Boundaries

This character area includes the floodplain of the River Itchen north and south of Winchester, located on the western edge of the National Park. The boundaries are defined by the extent of the flood zone.

Key Characteristics

- Flat valley floor of the Itchen Valley that flows through and provides a landscape setting for Winchester.
- A landscape with flat landform and predominantly pastoral.
- Contains the meandering course of the River Itchen.
- The watercourse and banks of the Itchen are designated as a SAC incorporating a diversity of habitats including the clear alkaline river, fen/marsh/swamp, neutral grassland and pockets of woodland.
- Historic features associated with the presence of the River and the Itchen Navigation are apparent today. Remnant features relating to water management and agricultural/industrial use of the river, including fragments of watermeadows, weirs and mill ponds, fish farms, trout lakes, and watercress beds.
- Downstream of Itchen Abbas the landscape is of recent enclosure, comprising regular field systems with very little woodland.
- General absence of settlement, but the area is close to Winchester and crossed by the M3 and A roads which interrupt the otherwise tranquil landscape.
- Frequent minor river crossing points are marked by stone bridges.
- One of the most renowned fly fishing rivers in the world with populations of wild brown and rainbow trout.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the Itchen Floodplain

F.67 The physical characteristics of the *Itchen Floodplain* are typical of its landscape type. The character area comprises a floodplain landscape of relatively recent enclosure and scattered trees along the course of the river.

F.68 The *Itchen Floodplain* has high biodiversity interest with a large number of designated sites. Throughout this character area the watercourse and banks of the Itchen are designated as a SSSI incorporating a diversity of habitats including the clear alkaline river, fen/marsh/swamp, neutral grassland and pockets of woodland. Part of it is also designated as a SAC. Non-statutory LWS sites include the Itchen Meadows Chilland and the River Itchen Meadow at Easton. The river also supports a good otter and water vole population.

F.69 The river itself would have been an important routeway from prehistory onwards, although probably too small to be navigable beyond its lower reaches until artificially canalised in the medieval period. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the development of water meadows, regulated systems of ditches and channels that provided a continuity of access to winter feed for the sheep flocks, but with a greater degree of control. These ceased to be used in the 19th century and the canalised stretch of the river was also abandoned at this time. Historic

features associated with the river and the Itchen Navigation are still apparent today.

F.70 Fragmentary systems of watermeadows are evident, together with a number of archaeological features characteristic of flood plains, including bridges, weirs and mills. The route of the former canal is still evident in places where it runs parallel with the river, and is marked by a series of locks. Watercress beds are also a feature.

F.71 Although the floodplain has an overall tranquil quality this is disrupted in place by the audible 'hum' of traffic. The character area is crossed in two locations by the M3 and in several places by A roads. Hockley viaduct (a Victorian brick built structure with a concrete core) which once linked the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton railway with the Great Western Railway is now disused but remains an important landmark feature. There is also a disused railway line between Winchester and Alresford. Stone bridges mark the points where rural lanes cross the river and there are numerous foot bridges.

F.72 The Itchen Valley Way allows public access all along the valley and to places of interest. The river is popular for chalk stream fishing and is famous for its wild brown and rainbow trout. Avington trout fishery is one of the oldest stillwater trout fisheries in the country.

F.73 Part of Avington Park (listed Grade II* on the Historic England Register) extends into the floodplain from the valley side south of Itchen Abbas.

F.74 The settlement pattern in this character area is typical of the type with a general absence of settlement in the floodplain, except for the occasional mill and Shawford House.

Sensitivities Specific to the Itchen Floodplain

F.75 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. Specific features sensitive to change in this area are:

Key Landscape Sensitivities	
1.	The historic course of the Itchen Navigation, historic bridges and the watercress beds which are particularly distinctive cultural features
2.	The panoramic viewpoints over the valley from St Catherine's Hill which increases the sensitivity of the floodplain landscape (identified in the South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis report). ¹¹

Change Specific to the Itchen Floodplain

F.76 In addition to the generic changes listed in the landscape type evaluation, specific past changes to this area include: ,

Forces for Change	
1.	Built development extending from nearby Winchester and other settlements into the floodplain.
2.	Noise from aircraft flying into Southampton airport affecting tranquillity.
3.	Future road expansion and upgrades of M3, A34 and A31 further affecting the tranquillity of the floodplain
4.	Ongoing sand and gravel extraction and visual impact of fish farms.

Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Itchen Floodplain

F.77 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following management considerations are specific to this character area:

- a. Maintain watercress beds as a distinctive cultural feature of the Itchen Valley.

- b. Restore, and improve access to, the Itchen Navigation and its banks.

F.78 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- a. Conserve the historic bridges which provide river crossing points.
- b. Ensure that any future traffic regulation and road upgrades associated with the M3, A34 and A31 are integrated into the rural valley landscape and ensure any signage is sensitively detailed.
- c. Avoid development extending into the floodplain. Minimise light spill from settlements and individual buildings.
- d. Pay particular attention to the varied nature of views throughout the area and in particular the panoramic views from St Catherine's Hill (in adjacent character area) in relation to change within the Itchen Floodplain.
- e. Seek opportunities to reduce the impact of existing trout lakes, fish farms and their associated development through appropriate tree planting.
- f. Seek to minimise extraction of sand and gravel within the Itchen Valley and ensure sensitive restoration of on-going schemes.

¹¹ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Viewshed-Study-Report.pdf>. View 15

Appendix G

Landscape Character Type G: Major Chalk Valley Sides

The landscape type encompasses the valley sides/slopes which enclose and provide the setting for the major valley floodplains (landscape type F). The boundaries are defined by the change in slope to the flat floodplain and by the crest of the slope, as seen in the view from the valley floor.

Description

Key Characteristics

- Valley sides of varying steepness enclosing the major river floodplains and linking to the adjacent downland. The sides are often indented by dry valleys, and occasionally form steep chalk cliffs.
- An expansive large-scale landscape containing, and providing the setting for, the floodplain. Some slopes provide excellent views down onto the floodplain revealing the patterns of the river channel and meanders that are not perceptible at ground level.
- Soils support arable land on shallower slopes, where large 20th century fields represent extensive re-organisation of the landscape. A mix of pasture/chalk grassland, scrub and woodland occupies steeper slopes.
- The valley sides frequently contain rural roads running along the contour above the floodplain and have formed a link between the Weald and the sea from the earliest prehistoric periods up to the present day. Minor lanes and unsurfaced tracks typically descend the valley sides.
- A string of nucleated villages and ports, of medieval origin, lie along the lower slopes of the valleys, positioned to exploit the varied riverine and downland resources, and surrounded by early enclosures of late medieval origin.
- Typical building materials include flint, red brick, timber and clay tiles.
- Woodlands along the lower slopes are particularly distinctive and form a strong wooded edge to the floodplain.
- Away from the roads, the valley sides form a tranquil, rural setting to the floodplain.

Physical Landscape

G.1 The *Major Chalk Valley Sides* are the sides of the deep U-shaped valleys that cut through the Chalk beds of the South Downs. These valleys were most likely deepened and enlarged by periglacial erosion to leave steep chalk slopes often indented by dry valleys, and occasionally forming steep chalk cliffs.

G.2 The underlying chalk geology has given rise to Brown Rendzina soils which are characterised by their shallow, well drained, calcareous and silty nature. Where the valley sides

are shallow, the land generally has a good agricultural land capability, with the majority of the land being classified as Grade 3 in Defra's Agricultural Land Classification (good-moderate quality agricultural soils) and are dominated by large fields of arable crops. The steeper slopes support areas of pasture, unenclosed chalk grassland or hanger woodland. Woodlands linked by hedgerows along the lower slopes mark the edge of the floodplain.

Perceptual/Experiential Landscape

G.3 This landscape type is of apparent large and expansive scale as a result of the large scale of the valleys and their open rolling valley sides, with extensive views encompassing and looking down onto the floodplain and river. The geometric field patterns, resulting from planned enclosure, contrast with the sinuous woods, which provides texture and create shadows on the valley side. This is a landscape of contrasts where the exposed upper valley sides contrast with the deep, hidden and wooded coombes.

G.4 Despite the intensity of agricultural production in less steep areas, the low noise levels, sense of 'naturalness' arising from the presence of open downland, and absence of overt built human impact contribute to a sense of remoteness and tranquillity across much of the valley sides.

G.5 Roads frequently follow the valley side, above the floodplain, making these landscapes easily accessible on foot and by car. Most notable in terms of access is the network of rural roads that link the villages along the lower valley sides and connect to areas of land in public ownership. There are also some areas of open access land coinciding with areas of chalk downland on the steeper valley sides.

G.6 Landmark buildings set against the imposing backdrop of steep valley sides have been a focus for artistic inspiration. Constable (1776-1837) painted Arundel Castle set on the valley side above the River Arun. The elegant Gothic chapel of Lancing College and the imposing medieval fortress of Amberley Castle have also formed subjects for paintings.

Biodiversity

G.7 The valley sides are typically dominated by a mixture of arable land, open improved pasture grassland and interspersed with occasional woodland, wet grassland (that extends up from the river floodplain) and chalk grassland (extending down from the chalk downland). Occasional chalk pits occur along the valley sides (particularly in the Ouse Valley), and many of these former pits are of significant geological interest.

G.8 The woodlands associated with these valley sides are of particular ecological value, being a priority habitat and many are recognised as statutory and non-statutory designated sites. Of particular note is the large area of Arundel Park SSSI, which comprises an old deer park dominated by chalk grassland with dense or scattered scrub and mature semi-natural woodland. This site is considered to be one of the

most important sites in the country for invertebrates, and also supports a diverse range of breeding birds.

G.9 Some grassland areas located in the southern section of the Cuckmere valley are strongly influenced by their coastal location and include an area of the Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI.

Key Biodiversity Features	Importance
Semi-natural deciduous woodland	Includes nationally important sites such as Arundel Park, together with many non-statutory woodland sites.
Chalk grassland (extending down valley sides from the chalk downland)	Chalk grassland supports important populations of vascular plants, birds and invertebrates.
Mosaic of arable land, open improved pasture grassland and interspersed with occasional woodland and wet grassland (that extends up from the river floodplain)	Provides an important habitat mosaic.

G.10 Many parts of the valley sides are identified by Natural England as providing potential for connecting existing BAP Priority Habitats such as woodland and chalk grassland to provide effective habitat networks.

G.11 Extensive areas of BAP Priority Habitats, particularly calcareous grassland, are identified as providing effective habitat networks in Natural England's National Habitat Networks Mapping Project¹. Many adjacent areas are identified as being suitable for restoration and in others work is already underway to restore habitats, including chalk grassland. Network Enhancement Zones extend across the *Open Downs* type and identify where land is suitable for the creation of connecting habitats.

Historic Character

G.12 The slopes vary in steepness, with the more gentle slopes suitable for settlement. Numerous finds of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts have been discovered along the valley sides. Evidence for prehistoric occupation is scarcer, due to suitable deposits being buried beneath later colluvial deposits. The fertile soils were identified by the Anglo-Saxons, who established a string of settlements along the lower slopes of the valleys, positioned to exploit the varied riverine and downland resources.

¹ Natural England (2018). National Habitat Networks Mapping Project

G.13 By the medieval period, the area formed an integral part of a sophisticated and efficient agrarian landscape based around sheep-corn husbandry. Nucleated villages were established along the lower valley slopes. The villages were surrounded by open fields, with woodland and downland pastures towards the extremities of the parishes. The rich meadowland forming the valley floor would have been an important component in this integrated mixed farming regime.

G.14 The valley sides are now mostly occupied by a series of enclosed fields, a mixture of planned and informal fields. The planned areas reflect 20th century expansion of arable farming onto land which was formerly sheepwalk, but also remodelling of earlier enclosed land. Some of the surviving medieval settlements are still surrounded by early enclosures of late medieval origin. There are also some areas of designed parkland, and some of the steeper slopes still remain as unenclosed downland.

during the 18th-19th centuries, and are set within large regular field systems that have replaced earlier patterns.

G.16 Building materials are typically flint, red brick, timber and clay tiles.

Key Features of the Historic Environment	Importance
Finds of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts	Indicate long history of settlement in the valleys.
String of settlements along the lower slopes of the valleys	Evidence of settlements being positioned to exploit the varied riverine and downland resources.
Nucleated settlements	Indicative of medieval manorial system based around open fields.
Early enclosures around settlements	Indicative of relative prosperity of character area, allowing early response to changing economic and social conditions.
Modern enclosures	Evidence for major reorganisation of landscape.

Settlement Form and Built Character

G.15 The settlement pattern is characterised by strings of nucleated settlements along both sides of the valley, linked by rural roads which follow the edges of the floodplains. This conforms to English Heritage's rural settlement designation of East Wessex Sub-Province within the South-eastern Province. Some of the settlements on the lower valley sides are medieval ports, which thrived when the rivers were used as transport routes between the Low Weald and the sea. The typical settlement form is of mid-late Anglo-Saxon origin, and comprises nucleated groups of former farmsteads situated around the church and manor house, and set within groups of fields enclosed in the later medieval period but originally forming open fields farmed on a communal basis. Scattered isolated farmsteads derive from more recent enclosures

G5: Itchen Valley Sides

Location and Boundaries

This character area includes the valley sides of the River Itchen downstream of New Alresford. The boundaries of the valley sides are defined by topography with the lower boundary drawn along the edge of the floodplain and the upper boundary drawn roughly along the apparent skyline of the valley sides as seen from the valley floor.

Key Characteristics

- Smoothly rounded valley sides carved from chalk, generally less steep than the valley sides of the major chalk valleys in east of the National Park.
- Shallow well drained, calcareous silty soils support intensive arable cultivation on shallower slopes of the valley sides. Other areas are pasture.
- Field patterns are a mixture of informal fieldscapes resulting from piecemeal enclosure and formal fieldscapes resulting from planned enclosure – the smaller fields are around settlements.
- Generally little woodland, but some distinctive belts along the edge of the floodplain and on steeper slopes e.g. ancient woodland at Beech Hill.
- A sequence of villages and settlements occur along the lower valley sides, linked by roads which run parallel to the floodplain – many are designated as conservation areas and some are associated with designed landscapes.
- The large landscape park at Avington, which is listed on the English Heritage register, is the most notable of the designed landscapes but others exist at Bambridge Park, Twyford Lodge, Worthy Park, Itchen Stoke House and Ovington House.
- Crossed by the M3 and A roads which interrupt the otherwise tranquil valley landscape.

Specific Characteristics Unique to the Itchen Valley Sides

G.60 The Itchen Valley Sides are smoothly rounded and less steep than the valley sides of the chalk valleys in the eastern half of the National Park.

G.61 The valley sides support arable cultivation with some pasture. The enclosure pattern is a mixture of informal fieldscapes resulting from piecemeal enclosure and formal fieldscapes resulting from planned enclosure. Smaller fields are located close to the villages. There is relatively little woodland, although distinctive tree belts mark the edge of the floodplain and an area of ancient woodland exists at Beech Hill. There is also woodland associated with historic parkland.

G.62 The importance of the valley for settlement is expressed through the remains of some bowl barrows (on the valley side above Compton Lock and 200m east of Twyford Pumping Station), a Roman Villa at Twyford, an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Worthy Park, and a moated site 300m south east of Compton House.

G.63 The settlement pattern today is typical of the type with a sequence of nucleated and linear settlements on the valley sides above the floodplain: Itchen Stoke, Ovington, Avington,

Itchen Abbas, Martyr Worthy, Easton, Abbots Worthy, Twyford (and Winchester which is outside the National Park). Many of these historic villages are designated as conservation areas and contain many listed buildings, illustrating the historic importance and architectural interest present within these settlements.

G.64 There are a number of designed landscapes on the valley sides including the large landscape park at Avington, which is listed on the English Heritage register, and other smaller parks/ gardens at Bambridge Park, Twyford Lodge, Worthy Park, Itchen Stoke House and Ovington House.

G.65 Although the valley has an overall tranquil quality this is disrupted in place by the audible 'hum' of traffic. The character area is crossed in two locations by the M3 and in several places by A roads. Hockley viaduct (a Victorian brick built structure with a concrete core) which once linked the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton railway with the Great Western Railway is now disused but remains an important landmark feature. There is also a disused railway line between Winchester and Alresford.

G.66 The Itchen Valley Way allows public access all along the valley and to places of interest.

Sensitivities Specific to the Itchen Valley Sides

G.67 All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. In addition, specific to this character area are:

Key Landscape Sensitivities	
1.	Historic villages and designed landscapes parks which provide a sense of history.
2.	The panoramic views over the valley from St Catherine's Hill also increase the sensitivity of the valley to change.

- c. Consider the panoramic views from St Catherine's Hill (in adjacent character area) in relation to any change within the Itchen Valley. Refer to guidance in the View Characterisation and Analysis report⁷.
- d. Seek to limit further encroachment of suburban influences (such as fencing) around village properties and conserve areas of flint walling which are particularly distinctive features of a number of settlements.

Change Specific to the Itchen Valley Sides

G.68 In addition to the changes listed in the landscape type evaluation, specific changes to this area include:

Forces for Change	
1.	Continued pressure for built development on the outskirts of existing settlements, affecting the nucleated and historic character of settlements and resulting in increased lighting.
2.	Continued road upgrades and expansions.

Landscape Management / Development Considerations Specific to the Itchen Valley Sides

G.69 In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following management considerations are specific to this character area:

- a. Conserve the historic designed parkland landscapes that are characteristic of the valley sides.
- b. Seek to conserve/ reinstate grassland and woodland on the valley sides to stabilise soils.

G.70 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- a. Ensure that any future traffic regulation and road upgrades associated with the M3, A34 and A31 are integrated into the rural valley landscape and ensure any signage is sensitively detailed.
- b. Maintain the nucleated form of villages and avoid extending linear development along roads. Minimise light spill from settlements.

⁷ LUC. 2015 *South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis*

**Hampshire County Council (2012), Hampshire Integrated Character
Assessment.**

Townscape

2 CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS

2.1 WIN01 Historic core (City centre)

2.1.1 Character Summary

The historic core of Winchester is strongly defined by the progressive layering of historic town planning which have produced a tight and fine-grained urban grid of streets, roads, lanes, courtyards and alleys within the former walled part of the City. Within this character area, there are some memorable historic spaces and building ensembles. This includes the Cathedral Precinct and Close, the Peninsular Barracks area and the Abbey Gardens environs (including the Guildhall) and The Broadway. There are a significant number of statutory listed buildings, many of which are of Grade I and II* status. The entire area is designated as a conservation area which extends to include the historic suburbs and part of the riverside setting of the City. The often tree-lined ridge to the landscape setting of the City (particularly St Giles' Hill) and its relationship with the Itchen Valley and its chalk stream watercourses are an integral characteristic of the City, with the green fingers of the water meadows penetrating almost to the heart of the historic core.

2.1.2 Key Characteristics

- Roman, Saxon and Medieval overlays producing a rigid walled town plan still well-defined to the present day
- The landform steadily rises to the west from the Itchen Valley
- Tight urban network of streets with narrow plots and retention of historic boundaries and plot division
- Consistent back of pavement building line almost throughout, boundary walls and/or railings where buildings are set back
- Red/orange bricks, sometimes with grey/flushed headers, some painted brick, render and stucco, exposed and re-fronted timber-framing. Roofs are predominantly old red plain clay tiles, some natural slate to later buildings
- Predominantly three storey, some taller buildings but these are exceptions
- Mixed use throughout, some areas of predominantly residential use (mix of flats and houses) and commercial core centred on the High Street
- Trees to the parks and Cathedral Close and precinct, occasional but limited individual trees to rear gardens (these tend to be large to very large specimens)
- High-quality public realm throughout, shared spaces and pedestrianised areas, soft landscaping to historic areas, notably absence of tarmac to key settings of historic buildings (for example the Cathedral)
- Good access and connectivity despite significant barriers such as the railway line and Itchen River

2.1.3 *Boundaries and setting*

This character area comprises the extent of the historic walled city of Winchester and its immediate setting and environs to the west. It is bounded to the north by Hyde historic suburb (WIN07), to the east by Riverside (WIN05) with which it has a very important and historic relationship, to the south by Winchester College and its historic campus (WIN02) and Christchurch Road, the Victorian and Edwardian suburb of the City (WIN04). To the west is the mainline railway line which passes through the City north–south and effectively cuts the centre off from its residential hinterland (sub-area WIN10a) which lies beyond.

The wider setting of the City comprises the extent of the valley of the River Itchen as it passes between two hills overlooked by surrounding high chalk downland. There are a series of escarpments, to include Magdalen Hill Down, Deacon Hill, Telegraph Hill and Fawley Down, and the steep escarpments surrounding St Catherine’s Hill (a former Iron Age hillfort), which form the wider landscape setting of the City. Views from St Catherine’s Hill to the south-west of the City provide a clear understanding of the wider setting of the historic core of the City and its relationship with its suburbs and penetrating landscape features (e.g. the water meadows).

With regards to the City’s more immediate setting, due to the topography and the fact that Winchester sits in a bowl with high, mostly tree-lined ridges surrounding, there are excellent views over the townscape from St Giles’ Hill to the east, in particular (WIN06a) and up into High Street from Riverside (WIN05). There are also views from Oram’s Arbour (sub-area WIN10a) into the City although these are marred by the 1960s extension to the County Council buildings. The valley landscape setting is an integral part of Winchester with the cathedral and city being effectively subservient to a strongly defined and encompassing landscape.

2.1.4 *Designations*

There are seven Scheduled Monuments within the character area, and a significant number of sites listed on the Hampshire Sites and Monuments Record including below ground archaeology, ruins and some substantially complete buildings (usually statutory listed as well); these include Cathedral Close, the Cathedral and the remains of Wolvesey Castle. Several stretches of the city wall are scheduled, together with the two surviving gates, Westgate and Kingsgate, and the Buttercross and City Bridge.

There are 33 Grade I listed buildings within the character area and a number of these are also Scheduled Monuments. This includes the Cathedral and Close, a number of Winchester College buildings, the prominent Westgate at the top of the High Street, the Great Hall, surviving parts of the city wall and walls to the Cathedral Close, and the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity – Winchester Cathedral. There are 36 Grade II* listed buildings within the character area and over 300 Grade II listed buildings. The majority of buildings within this character area are either listed or within the setting of a listed building, many of which are at the higher grades or within the setting of a Scheduled Monument.

The large number of buildings which make a positive contribution towards the character and/or appearance of the conservation area are identified in the Winchester Conservation Area Appraisal. Some of these are likely to fulfil the criteria for statutory listing. This is particularly the case with the survival of intact terraces within the City from various periods, most notably the mid to late Victorian period.

The entire character area is part of the much larger Winchester Conservation Area designation; a very large conservation area which covers the whole of the walled city and all of its immediate suburbs.

2.1.5 *Townscape types present*

TCT01, 08, 09, 11, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22.

2.1.6 *Topography*

The steady slope of High Street down to the river contributes to the City's picturesque qualities. When looking up High Street from the river, the rise in level gives prominence to large local government buildings which dominate the roofscape in these views.

The change in level becomes exaggerated on moving further west, with a significant change in some places, particularly to the south of the High Street, where a sequence of steadily rising lanes, and in some cases steps, take the pedestrian from the Cathedral to the barracks and castle areas. The sense of north–south orientated roads being terraced up the gradient is conveyed in the progressive roofscape seen in longer distance views and sometimes in local views along streets and lanes.

The area of the Cathedral Close and surrounding streets and roads is relatively flat in comparison, with relatively little change in gradient or level throughout.

2.1.7 *Layout and Pattern*

The historic walled city retains its strongly defined grid plan of streets and lanes, inherited from the preceding historic periods of planned settlement, but predominantly the overlaying of medieval planning on a Saxon town plan with remnant Roman survival (particularly the High Street). This has led to a tightly knit pattern of street, lanes and footpaths on a fine grain with a strong survival of the narrow plot division laid out in the medieval period. The narrow plots are accentuated by the diverse and juxtaposing architectural treatment throughout High Street and adjoining streets and often it is this diversity which gives Winchester such a unique and attractive sense of place.

The character area possesses a hierarchy of transport networks (street, road, lane, footpath and alley) linking spaces of varying degrees of scale but with a consistent formality due to their setting out in a grid pattern and generally grand character of the architectural styles seen to principal spaces. This is true of the Great Hall and Law Court environs, Peninsular Barracks and the Cathedral Close, down to more intimate areas such as The Square and the pedestrianised areas around the Brooks Centre.

To most streets within the historic core, buildings are set to back of pavement with very few exceptions. Where these occur the street frontage is often continued with railings or brick walls (e.g. the Grade II* listed Serles House (1740), Southgate Street). This is also the case to side streets where gardens sit on the edges of roads but are invariably enclosed behind high brick boundary walls with only intermittent interventions of timber gates or the occasional early coach house or stable block. This continuous building line throughout, be it built form or boundary treatment, provides good and, to the most part, comfortable enclosure. The Georgian proportions of many of the houses (a good number being re-fronted earlier timber-framed buildings) retains a human scale to most streets and is not overbearing or oppressive despite the narrow section of some streets, roads and lanes.

2.1.8 *Buildings and materials*

There are predominantly three building types within the character area; non-secular and secular buildings and former defensive structures. Within the first type, non-secular buildings, there are a number of sub-types. These comprise: residential; residential but converted to commercial uses (usually but not always with the insertion of a shopfront); and purpose-built commercial, mixed-use and civic buildings. Commercial shops date back to the fourteenth century with timber-framed buildings on High Street which started as commercial premises with residential elements above and to the rear (although their true original plan form is still a matter of speculation). These buildings display a diverse and sometimes eclectic array of architectural styles and use of materials. Of particular note is The Pentice to the south side of the High Street, a group of substantially intact medieval buildings with a covered walkway projecting into the High Street, a rarity in terms of building type nationally.

This rich mix of vernacular and polite and the sense of evolution and adaptation of buildings rather than replacement (with many timber-framed buildings having been re-fronted in brick or clad in hanging tiles or mathematical tiles; tiles made to imitate high-quality brickwork) is part of the essential character of the buildings to the commercial core and to residential streets leading from this but still within the historic core of the City. There are some fine civic buildings to the historic core including the Library, formerly the Corn Exchange (O B Carter, 1838), a significant landmark building whose deep portico is a key feature of Jewry Street; the high gothic grandeur of the Guildhall (1871) to the lower end of the High Street; and the rather austere but well detailed Council offices (1959–60) opposite the Westgate. There is also the exuberant and highly stylised (with the use of flint and stone) Castle Hill Offices and the Law Courts precinct and Great Hall to the other side of the street. These buildings form a very attractive and cohesive group at the upper end of the High Street.

Buildings to the commercial core can range from two to five storeys. There is much use of roofspaces for upper floors (utilising rooflights and dormers) but most have storage or commercial uses such as offices rather than residential, although there are some residential units above shops.

The second building type is associated administration and outbuildings; the Cathedral, Wolvesey Castle (a.k.a. Old Bishop's Palace), Deanery, Priors Lodgings, St Swithun's Gate, and Pilgrims' School and Hall contained within the area known as the Cathedral Close. There are also individual churches and chapels, such as St Lawrence in the Square; a church dating from 1150, almost completely enclosed by later development with only the door visible from the Square. St Swithun's, above the fourteenth-century Kingsgate, is another good example of this maximum use of space within the tight urban plan of the historic core.

The third building type is an important part of the city fabric; structures associated with defence. This would include the highly formalised and large-scale Peninsula Barracks (converted to residential in the late-twentieth century), to the south-western corner of the character area, and its associated buildings such as the successfully converted former Garrison Church to Southgate Street (now The Screen cinema) and the City's surviving defences; city gates, fragments and larger sections of wall (particularly to the south-eastern corner of the character area).

The principal building material seen across the character area is brick (orange and red with some flared headers and buff and yellow stocks), sometimes painted (mostly white). Render and some plaster and stucco are seen, also usually painted. Stone (sometimes re-used and seen as ashlar and rubble stone) generally demarks older buildings, with the notable exception of the Guildhall in sandstone with red sandstone bands (Council Offices). Flint is also seen in very early buildings and revived as a local material in Victorian buildings within the City. A number of buildings have exposed timber-framing. This would be considered substantial or massive framing with arch braces with remarkable survivals of very early (fourteenth-century and occasionally earlier) material. Infill to framing is invariably painted plaster or render with some brick infill seen (although this is usually a later insertion or faux framing from the Victorian period and later). Of note is the almost ubiquitous use of timber vertical sliding sash windows, sometimes with exposed frame and sometimes inset. There are casement windows but these are usually seen on secondary elevations or to upper floor openings (such as dormer windows).

The skyline is varied but mostly comprises parapet walls with stone copings and some stone or plaster or sometimes timber cornices of degrees of architectural accomplishment (usually depending on the architectural style and period of the building). Some gables are interspersed within the townscape adding interest to the roofline; these are usually in brick or hanging tiles. Roofs are generally hidden by parapets or restricted from view because of the narrow section of the street and scale of the buildings.

Roofs have predominantly handmade red/orange plain clay tiles. Later buildings have natural slate and this is usually seen on a decreased roof slope often contrasting with much steeper tile slopes adjacent. This variation adds to the quality and dynamic character of the historic roofscape throughout the character area and is particularly prominent in extended views into the City.

Boundary treatments are an important part of the character of the historic core (and other character areas). They can include, on a strategic city level, the precinct boundary walls and then, on a more local level, the high boundary walls to private gardens in red/orange brick, and brick and knapped flint panels (sometimes banded with brick), with half round brick copings, wrought iron and cast iron railings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and gates and gate piers. These structures often provide a good indication of the local vernacular and help define townscape throughout the City's hierarchy of streets, roads and lanes.

2.1.9 *Predominant land use*

The walled City or historic core of Winchester, as defined in this character area, has historically been an area of consistently competing land holdings between church and state. This historic conflict has resulted in the division of the core into well-defined areas of land use which are subsequently reinforced by building types, scale, plot division and to a lesser extent, but in some cases distinctive, material use.

The Cathedral Close and environs is well-defined and largely hidden from the commercial core and activity of High Street and connecting streets. This has much to do with uses and traffic movement; the former has very few traffic movements and is a largely tranquil pedestrian space. The latter is also pedestrianised in parts but rarely tranquil and is surrounded by vehicular movement and significant traffic intervention.

The commercial core has a strong mixed-use character emphasised by the multiple uses often found in single buildings. For example, buildings in High Street might be occupied by a retail unit at ground level, a restaurant or hairdresser on the first floor, and offices or residential above. There are degrees of this multiple use and there still remains under-use of the upper storeys to many units. High Street is the focus of trading activity although local markets (Middle Brook Street) and other areas of enclosed shopping, such as the Brooks shopping centre, are also key focal points for commercial activity. Retail shops are invariably high street chains rather than independent retailers although cafés and restaurants tend to be more independent.

The south-western corner of the 'walled' city, originating as the site of a Norman castle, has remained a centre for local government, and is now occupied by the offices of Hampshire County Council and the Law Courts.

There is a good degree of evening activity throughout the City, focusing on the bars, restaurants and public houses.

Private dwelling houses and flats in converted buildings are found throughout the character area, predominantly to the north of High Street where a sequence of roads have terraced housing from the eighteenth (substantial townhouses, many of which remain in single-family ownership), nineteenth and twentieth centuries (more modest terraced cottage-scale housing, typical of the Victorian period and historically associated with a working class ownership). Most houses have no front gardens but a private enclosed rear garden. These range from small courtyards to substantial areas of private space. This is particularly the case south of High Street and within the Cathedral Close.

2.1.10 *Public realm*

There is a very high-quality public realm throughout the character area. This is due to a combination of very well-defined townscape throughout which includes a hierarchy of spaces from the large scale of the Cathedral precinct, to the more intimate (and largely hidden) Cathedral Close, down to the tight urban grain of The Square. These spaces are often linked by narrow alleys and lanes which serve to emphasise the special character of the public realm and particularly how spaces can be enjoyed in different ways (from different approaches and in different mediums). Built form of a high quality and generally in proportion with these spaces, combined with a quality of material both to buildings (including boundary treatments) and surface treatments, including some historic paving and later sensitively laid modern materials, add to the sense of a well-maintained and carefully monitored environment.

Watercourses to the lower section of the historic core constantly surprise and disappear and reappear beside streets and through open spaces greatly adding to the general quality of the public realm. These urban watercourses are an historic legacy from early periods of settlement where the presence of running water had a far more practical use and was woven into the town plan as an integral element of urban life.

Of note is the general lack of street trees other than to sections of Friarsgate where they help soften the impact of this very heavily trafficked route.

Street lighting is kept to a minimum, with some survival of historic lamp standards, and the careful siting of new columns and lights on buildings wherever possible.

There is on-street parking to some of the residential streets; this is usually only to one side because of the narrow section of most of the carriageways in the historic core. Parking is a significant issue in the character area as built form generally prevents cars from being taken off the street. There is limited space for surface-level car parks, and within the historic core there is only limited multi-level parking because of the sensitivity of the environment. Much of this is related to the retail areas (the Brooks Shopping Centre and adjacent to the bus station) and to offices to the western edge of the character area (e.g. under the County Council's modern offices) on Sussex Street.

There is a high degree of public art throughout the historic core (e.g. Dame Elisabeth Frink's bronze statue of "Horse and Rider" outside the Law Courts entrance), public monuments (some fine monuments and war memorials in the Cathedral precinct including modern pieces of public art), and statues (most notably King Alfred to the lower end of The Broadway). This area is a good example of best practice in terms of public art and the preservation of existing historic paving materials and the use of modern materials. The management of the public realm, in a sensitive location with minimal signage, 'soft' materials for footpaths (resin-bonded gravel) and a noticeable lack of clutter, is befitting of its role as the setting of a Grade I listed building of outstanding architectural and historic interest.

Traffic is diverted away from most of High Street and streets to the south, being directed along St George's Street, Friarsgate, North Walls and the west end of the High Street. The level of traffic is very high during peak periods. Noise, pollution and difficulty in crossing the road are significant issues and are having an impact on the character of these areas, as well as the setting of important historic buildings within the conservation area. Highways interventions in these areas tend to be heavy-handed and over-engineered with little consideration for the use of traditional materials for carriageway and footpath surfacing.

2.1.11 *Open space*

There are two very attractive and well-used public open spaces linked by footpaths; these are the Cathedral precinct to the north and west of the Cathedral and Abbey Gardens to the south of The Broadway. Both these spaces are well maintained landscaped urban parks. Both form the setting to important historic buildings and groups of buildings and both get intensive daytime use from a wide spectrum of users; residents, people working in the City, and tourists. These spaces have mature trees in groups carefully placed so as not to overwhelm the areas or impact upon important views of buildings within these open settings. They are very important amenity spaces and valuable green spaces in a very fine-grained urban environment. The Close, a publicly accessible open space during daytime, is a high-quality environment and the even more secluded precinct to the north is a quiet contemplative space, free of vehicular traffic and surprisingly calm for a city centre space.

There are further public open areas which include the public space between the Law Courts, the Great Hall and the County Council offices. This area is hard landscaped in good quality materials on a split level. However, the general lack of active frontage to these spaces and poor integration with the street grid discourages continuous use of this space, particularly at night. The gardens to the west of the Hampshire Record Centre are landscaped and form part of the setting to this striking building. They are, however, underused and undervalued as public open space. A more successful space is the newly formed square between the library building (former Corn Exchange, now the Winchester Discovery Centre) and the Theatre Royal.

For a city of this scale, set out on such a tight urban grid, there is a considerable amount of private open space, particularly to the south and south-east of the Cathedral. This includes private gardens to the Deanery, Wolvesey Castle (although the ruins of the castle are accessible by day), private gardens to houses set on Dome Alley and the Pilgrims' School grounds. A feature of some of the spaces is the presence of water-courses; channels of the River Itchen which were originally diverted for land management purposes. Riverside walks through and out of the character area are popular, and add to the townscape quality. Three long-distance footpaths also start or finish at the cathedral, enabling people to access the countryside almost from the city centre.

There are also large gardens to houses north, but predominantly south, of the High Street. These are usually enclosed by other houses or high brick boundary walls. They often include mature trees which are seen from public view and often frame or obscure the houses set within.

2.1.12 Biodiversity

The River Itchen, flowing along the eastern boundary of the character area, is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated for its classic chalk stream and river, fen meadow, flood pasture and swamp habitats. There is a narrow belt of trees along much of the river corridor. The secondary channel running through Abbey Gardens is channelised along much of its length.

Much of the character area is built up with few urban or semi-natural habitats, although the combination of public and private green spaces to the south-east of the character area creates a larger habitat patch of urban parks and amenity grassland, mature trees, the water courses, and areas of private garden with strongly defined hard boundaries. This area is adjacent to a number of extremely important natural habitats including the River Itchen corridor and its associated water meadows, water courses, navigations and ponds, which are also accessible to the public and closely linked to the city centre green spaces.

There is good tree cover to Abbey Gardens, particularly lining The Broadway and to its boundaries with Colebrook Street. However, there are not significant groups of trees in the city centre, outside the Cathedral precinct or in Abbey Gardens. Individual trees, most often set in large rear gardens, can be very prominent in local views and provide an attractive backdrop to parts of the historic core, most notably within the Cathedral Close.

The railway line to the west of the historic core provides a green semi-wild corridor linking the open countryside to the north and south, and rear gardens and open spaces in between.

2.1.13 Access and connectivity

The gridded street pattern and hierarchy of streets, roads, lanes and alleys provides a high level of permeability and choice of routes throughout the city. The only exception to this is the Cathedral Close which is open and well-defined but limited (at times) in terms of access. Being pedestrian only, it is a permeable space during the daytime and evening but closed to the public at night. St Swithun's Gate is the only southern entrance to/exit from this space for members of the public and residents of The Close. This does however connect to principal routes around the City and Close walls and onto the outer suburbs of Winchester.

To the west, the railway line in its cutting could act as a barrier but is well served with crossing points allowing relatively easy access to the western suburbs. Similarly, to the east the river presents a potential barrier but is also served by multiple vehicle and pedestrian crossings. North Walls presents a perceived barrier to connectivity, not in terms of built form as there are a number of pedestrian connections to the suburbs beyond, but in terms of the volume of traffic which uses this route and the narrow pavements which line this major road.

2.5 WIN05 Riverside

2.5.1 Character Summary

This is a mixed-use but predominantly residential suburb of narrow streets and lanes following the contours (north–south) of steeply rising ground on the east bank of the River Itchen. Medieval in origin and comprising a number of early buildings, its modest scale and tight urban grain is distinctive within the City. The area is historically constrained by the river to the west and the steeply rising ground and dismantled railway to the east.

Trees to St Giles’ Hill form a significant green backdrop to the character area and the river is a nationally important wildlife habitat as well as a highly valued amenity space and access route to and from the City.

2.5.2 Key Characteristics

- Development to the riverside corridor with medieval origins and good survival and mix of early buildings
- Flat river valley to riverside but steeply rising landform to east
- Regular plots; generally long and narrow but also occasional large plots
- Consistent building lines almost throughout; houses to back of pavement with no front areas
- Red brick, flint, stone rubble, some painted brickwork, distinctive use of hanging tiles, mostly tile roofs
- Mostly two-storey, some three-storey houses, three- to four-storey offices and multi-storey car park
- An interesting mix; Residential – mostly private houses, some sheltered housing, offices, car park, youth hostel, museum, shops and public houses
- Trees to rear gardens and dense backdrop of trees to west slopes of St Giles’ Hill
- Good quality public realm throughout, especially to riverside spaces
- Good access and connectivity for pedestrians, poor connectivity for car users

2.5.3 Boundaries and setting

To the west are the historic core of the City (WIN01) and a small section of the Winchester College grounds (WIN02). To the east is the steeply rising landform of St Giles’ Hill (WIN06) with one of the two industrial estates to the City at the south-eastern corner of the boundary. To the south-west, the water meadows provide a broad flat open setting for the City (and this character area) from the south but are also inexorably linked to this riverside character area (beyond the City settlement boundary).

A wide public footpath runs adjacent to the City wall and down the western side of the river. From this footpath, views are characterised by the mature back gardens of houses along Chesil Street and the trees of St Giles’ Hill above forming a significant backdrop to the setting of this character area.

2.5.4 *Designations*

The City Bridge, partly contained within this character area, is a Scheduled Monument. There are a lot of statutory listed buildings within the character area, particularly to Chesil Street, including the early-sixteenth-century Old St Peter's Rectory (Grade II*). Houses generally date from the sixteenth to early-nineteenth century, with a number of re-fronted brick houses, including an unassuming house with one of the oldest surviving sections of roof in Hampshire (c.1300) behind its brick façade. This house is Grade II* listed to reflect the importance of this survival. The City Mill is Grade II* (now part converted to a Youth Hostel). There are two medieval churches; St Peter's (Grade II* and now converted to a theatre) and St John the Baptist (Grade B). Wharf Mill (converted to flats) is Grade II.

The character area falls within the designated Winchester Conservation Area.

2.5.5 *Townscape types present*

TCT01, 05, 08, 27 and 28.

2.5.6 *Topography*

The immediate river setting to the west is flat and low lying. To the east of the river, the steeply rising west and north-west facing slopes of St Giles' Hill dominate the character area. This is perhaps most apparent to the east of Chesil Street, with the trees of St Giles' Hill clearly seen above the houses, offices and multi-storey car park, and on looking across to the steeply rising gardens of houses backing onto the river on the west side of Chesil Street.

2.5.7 *Layout and Pattern*

A series of gently winding but essentially north-south orientated streets, lanes and footpaths, tightly constrained by natural features (the river and St Giles' Hill) and the former line of the now dismantled railway to the eastern edge of the character area. Plots are fairly regular and planned throughout, often relatively narrow but deep, creating a fine grain of development running down to the river. Most of the area is developed to what would be considered a medium to fine grain.

2.5.8 *Buildings and materials*

The character area has a good mix of historic building types providing interest to the townscape. It is predominantly a mix of early and late Victorian terraces, later-twentieth-century housing, also terraced, and older houses making up rows of almost continuous frontage (some have alleys leading to the rear of the property). Houses are two- and sometimes three storey, mostly flat-fronted with much use of the multi-paned timber-framed vertical sliding sash windows. The character area contains a number of notable survivals of timber-framed buildings in Winchester. It also contains some of the higher quality large houses in the City (notably The Soke, Chesil Street). There are two medieval churches surviving within the character area; St Peter's (now converted to a theatre) and St John the Baptist. There are two water mills; City and Wharf, both of significant architectural and historic interest because of the survival of historic fabric in both.

'Flint and red brick' is often seen in this character area as well as stone rubble and some ashlar stonework, mostly re-used stone components. There is some painting to brickwork and a limited number of rendered houses (usually originally brick or timber-framed). Exposed timber-framing is also seen. There is a distinct use of hanging tiles to this part of the City and it is seen frequently on buildings. Roofs are predominantly clay tile and usually well articulated. Roofs are important as they are seen from high level and their scale, pitch and detailed design contribute to the character of individual buildings and groups.

Some sections of the character area are characterised by tall boundary walls, traditionally built and often retaining, in order to regulate dramatic changes in the level through certain parts of the character area.

2.5.9 *Predominant land use*

Use is a mix of private housing (mostly single-family dwelling houses) with offices, multi-storey car parks, a theatre, a church, a small number of shops, public houses and a restaurant. There is also the working City Mill, with a shop and museum space and also part converted to a Youth Hostel. Wharf Mill is converted to flats.

2.5.10 *Public realm*

Chesil Street is a heavily trafficked route with narrow pavements and a narrow carriageway in places. This can cause conflict between car users and pedestrians. Remaining roads in this character area often have single entry and exit points making them quiet non-trafficked carriageways, but with pedestrian routes through. This makes them very attractive, walking from the eastern suburbs.

There is a good attention to materials used and their detailing in the public realm, particularly to the riverside. The riverside is a sequence of high-quality landscaped spaces. The central section is an area of tranquility, starkly contrasting with bustle, noise and urban character of High Street a short distance away. Its character is defined by mature trees, swans, ducks and clear running water. The riverside paths are well-used and there are a lot of places to stop, pause and sit. Mature trees often enclose and frame views along the river.

2.5.11 *Open space*

There is access along much of the river within this character area, linking to the wider countryside to the south along the River Itchen and Itchen Navigation, and to Winnall Moors Nature Reserve adjacent to the north. There are a series of break-out open green spaces and landscaped areas along the length of the river within the character area and a small tree-lined green space to the rear of Wharf Hill (with a public footpath running across). Some of the most notable areas of open space are private gardens, however, particularly those of houses to the west side of Chesil Street, many of which are open to the riverside.

2.5.12 *Biodiversity*

The River Itchen corridor is internationally important for its biodiversity (see WIN01), and the character area is also interlinked with two connected SSSIs – Winnall Moors to the north and water meadows to the south. The Itchen valley is the most extensive area of semi-natural vegetation within Winchester, and the most important for biodiversity. The water meadows to the south of the character area are a major component of the City, providing the setting for many of the City's historic buildings, including Winchester College, Wolvesey Castle and the Hospital of St Cross.

The river is very shallow and the water very pure due to the underlying chalk geology, and on clear days the river bed can be clearly seen. On the east bank, an island contains a group of mature trees that shelter the river and give some screening and privacy to the houses in Chesil Street.

There are a good number of mature trees within the character area, mostly confined to rear gardens. Mature trees to the western slopes of St Giles' Hill and to the gardens of the west side of Chesil Street provide important backdrops and rich wildlife habitat for the houses and offices of Chesil Street and the river respectively.

2.5.13 *Access and connectivity*

The riverside public areas with their walks, bridges and grassed spaces provide for ease of movement and access to important natural resources as well as providing recreational amenity. Riverside has an important pedestrian and cycling route into the centre from Highcliffe, Wharf Mill and the College area, and a starting point for recreational walks to St Cross, St Catherine's Hill and beyond.

For the car user connectivity is poor with most roads pedestrianised to one end, effectively creating cul-de-sacs with pedestrian priority.

2.6 WIN06 St Giles' Hill and environs

2.6.1 Character Summary

This character area comprises mid- to late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century residential suburbs distributed around the slopes of a pronounced spur to the river valley to the east of the historic core of the City. The central part of the character area (sub-area WIN06a) between Alresford Road and Petersfield Road is strongly defined by wooded slopes and large areas of open space, both public and private, and a medium- to coarse-grain layout of predominantly Victorian villas with some terraced and semi-detached housing set in good-sized mostly irregular plots. To the northern slopes of the character area is Winnall Manor Estate (sub-area WIN06b); council-built housing at a medium grain with curvilinear layout, dating from the 1950s and 1960s but incorporating some better quality contemporary development. To the southern slopes, Highcliffe (sub-area WIN06c) originally dates from the late-nineteenth century; St. Catherine's Road and Highcliffe Road being long streets of relatively fine-grain terraced housing. The remaining built form is immediate-post-war semi-detached housing at medium grain on medium-sized plots but exposed to the open side of the spur. Below this is the large expanse of sports grounds and green recreation areas between Bar End Road and the M3 motorway transport corridor.

For ease of description, this character area has three distinctive sub-areas. However, the character area remains cohesive as a large residential extension of the City to the east, in three main phases of development.

2.6.2 Key Characteristics

Sub-areas of WIN06

06a. St Giles' Hill

- A late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century suburb situated on a distinct spur looking over the riverside setting of the City. It is characterised by its wooded nature which significantly contributes to the unique setting of the historic core of the City
- The area comprises a steep-sided spur running east-west with the level change being a distinct part of the character throughout
- Medium to coarse open-grain character, large detached houses and villas in irregular plots dating from Victorian, Edwardian and later periods
- Inconsistent building lines throughout, mostly intentional
- Brick, tile, tile hanging, slate, flint
- Two-storey houses, some on a grand scale, some with accommodation in the roofspace with dormers
- Almost entirely residential – large single-family dwelling houses (some converted to flats)

- The mature trees and hedgerows are an essential feature of this area, and are a crucial setting for the wider city. Large, well-vegetated and treed plots. Strong open spaces
- Hedges, soft verges, limited on-street parking, tree-lined lanes
- Reasonable access and connectivity due to network of footpaths to St Giles' Hill and The Soke

06b. Winnall

- An area of immediate-post-war social-type housing and associated facilities
- Northern slope of the spur (principally comprising St Giles' Hill)
- Medium-grain terraced and semi-detached housing and flats set in good-sized plots with open boundaries and curvilinear in layout
- Consistent buildings lines throughout, those to south-eastern corner defining parking courtyards
- Brick, stained timber, concrete interlocking tile
- Two-storey houses and three-storey blocks of flats
- Almost entirely residential with a small parade of shops and a primary school
- Very low level of tree cover throughout but a high degree of open green space
- Open front boundaries give the impression of wide spacious roads despite on-street parking, no street trees
- Poor access and connectivity due to significant barrier to east (M3 motorway corridor) and limited road or footpath networks to north and south

06c. Highcliffe

- An outlying, isolated suburb of an unusual mix of Victorian and immediate-post-war housing
- Located on the southern slopes of the spur at the foot of St Giles' Hill
- Regular plots of small-scale terraced and semi-detached Victorian/Edwardian houses and post-war housing in semi-detached and short terrace groups, small front gardens and long rear gardens
- Consistent building lines throughout
- Red brick, slate, terracotta tile and dressed stone
- Two-storey houses
- Residential suburbs with ancillary uses; school, corner shop, public house and church
- Very limited tree cover throughout, but very large open green spaces (sports fields and allotments) to southern boundary
- On-street parking, limited grass verges and no street trees
- Access and connectivity is very limited for pedestrians and car users

2.6.3 *Boundaries and setting*

To the west of the character area is the Riverside environs (WIN05). Riverside is a well-defined area and distinct from the generally coarser grain of sub-area WIN06a, with which it shares most of its boundary. The trees to the lower slopes of St Giles' Hill (sub-area WIN06a) are an important part of the character of the setting of the Riverside character area. To the south, the Bar End Industrial Estate sits beyond the open sports and recreation fields and, due to the topography, is clearly seen in views from St Giles' Hill. To the north, there is the Winnall Industrial Estate. Here,

however, the estate buildings are not as prominent as they step down and across the hillside, which diminishes their impact in longer views. To the east is the M3 and A31 transport corridor, a strongly defined boundary with open countryside beyond.

St Giles' Hill provides spectacular views over the Cathedral and the City, especially from St Giles' Park and its surrounding roads. Conversely, the slopes of the hill, particularly to the southern side, are open to long views and perhaps most familiar to daily commuters and regular users of the M3 motorway. On travelling past Winchester the houses sit above the roadside. In this respect the transport infrastructure could be considered to impact on the setting of some parts of this character area.

2.6.4 *Designations*

There are no statutory listed buildings within the character area. The Character area lies partially within the Winchester Conservation Area. This mainly covers the area of St Giles' Hill (to the western section of sub-area WIN06a).

2.6.5 *Townscape types present*

TCT02, 05, 07, 08 16, 24, 27 and 28.

2.6.6 *Topography*

The character area comprises a steeply sided spur running west-east. St Giles' Hill itself dominates the character area, rising steeply from the river valley. This radical level change contributes to the positive characteristics of much of the older built form within the character area and ensures exceptional views into the City, particularly from the park. Similarly, due to its topography, St Giles' Hill figures prominently in views south out of the City from the High Street, where it sits as a green backdrop to development at the eastern end of Winchester.

2.6.7 *Layout and Pattern*

Sub-area WIN06a comprises medium-sized to large irregular-shaped well-treed plots laid out in formal and informal patterns along roadsides and around cul-de-sacs respectively. There is more uniformity to the north side of Alresford Road, including the late Victorian terraced houses of St John's Road. The remaining houses to WIN06a have an inconsistent building line, with an informal distribution of houses in large plots to the south side of Alresford Road (e.g. houses to the roads; St Giles' Hill and Palm Hall Close).

Sub-area WIN06b is post-war development generally in long curvilinear roads, with good-sized plots and front and back gardens. The front gardens are generally open to the roadside adding to the sense of spaciousness throughout this sub-area. To the south-eastern corner is a notable plan of houses set in groups around three sides of a quadrangle at ninety degrees to each other. This allows for very generous areas of green space between the groups and shared parking courts to the courtyard spaces. These developments are at a medium grain throughout but there is a general sense of openness.

Sub-area WIN06c is a mix of fine-grain, late-nineteenth-century houses set out in a grid of roads (running east-west, roughly corresponding to Quarry Road) with perpendicular link roads. The latter run up and down the slope of the spur and parallel with the river valley, to the north-western corner of the sub-area, and form rectilinear blocks of housing. Houses generally have small front gardens with low brick boundary walls. The remaining part of the sub-area comprises predominantly a large immediate-post-war housing estate set on a series of rectilinear roads, some of which are through roads and some are feeder roads with cul-de-sacs. This area is laid out in short terraces and occasional semi-detached houses (to corners and elsewhere). There is generally the feeling of space and an intentionally varied building line to groups throughout.

2.6.8 *Buildings and materials*

Sub-area WIN06a; houses are almost entirely two-storey large detached Victorian and Edwardian villas with some large and detached twentieth-century infill, the latter is often at a finer grain. Some houses are characterised by high-quality flint and brick walls, stone lintels and doorcases. Some of the older houses have accommodation in the roof space lit by dormers or rooflights. Predominant materials are red brick, tile hanging, slate and flint and clay tile.

Sub-area WIN06b; houses are two storey and there are also blocks of flats at three storey. Development is flat-fronted and in groups of either semi-detached houses, short and long terraces, simple-pitch roofs with ridge parallel to the road. Predominant materials are brick, stained timber and concrete interlocking tile.

Sub-area WIN06c; the Highcliffe group in the north-western corner (Canute Road and St Catherine's Road) is characterised by two-storey brick terraced houses, with arched double entrances, bay windows and small front gardens. The consistency of these terraces and the repetition of features is key to the character of this distinctive small suburb. Predominant materials are red brick, slate, terracotta tile and some dressed stone.

2.6.9 *Predominant land use*

The character area is almost exclusively residential, with supporting uses for a district community such as school, church, a nursing home, and a number of small parades of shops (to Winnall, WIN06b and Highcliffe, WIN06c) and public houses.

2.6.10 *Public realm*

The public realm varies throughout the character area. In sub-area WIN06a, the townscape changes dramatically on travelling up the hill away from the central core of the City. On St Giles' Hill, the large number of trees and wide roads give a suburban feel. Some roads, especially Northbrook Avenue, have a semi-rural informal character helped by soft verges and mature boundaries. This helps to reduce the emphasis on their traffic function and provide a sense of pedestrian priority.

There are very few street trees in this character area.

Alresford Road, Magdalen Hill and Quarry Road, while more heavily trafficked, enjoy some dramatic slopes and occasional long-distance views over the City. The buildings on Quarry Road to the south are set down the slope taking advantage of the dramatic change in level at this point.

Elsewhere there is more demand on the carriageways with on-street parking a common characteristic. There are very few grass verges, with no boundaries to the front gardens of the post-war development, giving a strong sense of space. This is accentuated by the wide carriageways despite on-street parking.

2.6.11 *Open space*

St Giles' Hill and The Soke are two linked areas of semi-wooded and grassed areas to the western slopes of the area known as St Giles' Hill. These spaces are a valuable amenity for the City and form the very attractive green backdrop to views down through Winchester from the west.

Below the residential development to the slopes of sub-area WIN06c are Winchester's largest playing fields, with public football and cricket pitches, Bar End Sports Ground and King George V Playing Fields. Bordered by the M3 motorway corridor and Bar End Road, this area forms an important green amenity space for the immediate area and a major municipal asset for the City. The South Downs Way enters the City via the Chalk Ridge Open Space in WIN06c, and provides a link to the South Downs National Park, although the M3, A31 and A272 otherwise restrict access to the wider countryside.

There are a series of smaller amenity green spaces built into the housing estates of WIN06b. In contrast there are large areas of private open space within the extensively treed and well landscaped gardens of the houses to sub-area WIN06a.

2.6.12 *Biodiversity*

The parkland, woodland and grassland habitats of St Giles' Hill provide wildlife-rich semi-natural habitats within the character area. The space is isolated from the green river corridor and wider open countryside by the busy Chesil Street, although mature trees within large gardens of St Giles' Close, and landscaping along Barfield Close, do provide some links to habitats in WIN05. Hedges and soft verges also contribute to the semi-rural feel of some the roads to the older core of St Giles' Hill. To the east, the area is also truncated from the open countryside of the South Downs National Park by the M3 transport corridor. '

There is very good tree cover within sub-area WIN06a (St Giles' Hill), to both the parkland and private gardens throughout, and some trees lining the open spaces to the south of WIN06c. There are also allotments to the north of the playing fields.

2.6.13 *Access and connectivity*

For car users, access and connectivity is an issue throughout this character area as many of the estates have single entry and exit routes providing limited access. Connectivity is also greatly restricted due to the topographical framework, natural features such as the river corridor and man-made features such as the M3 motorway/A31 transport corridor. In many cases one or more of these features has led to restricted connectivity and, particularly with the transport infrastructure, significant restriction on access to open countryside (although there is a footpath crossing to the South Downs Way) and other parts of the City.

2.8 WIN08 Winchester Industrial Estates (Winnall and Bar End)

2.8.1 Character Summary

Medium- to coarse-grain mix of small, medium-sized and large industrial units with some limited ancillary office uses and large retail (foodstore). Buildings are highly utilitarian in character, using modern materials with very-low-pitch roofs. There are generally large areas of hardstanding used for parking and/or storage forming the setting to built form. This area, by virtue of the nature of the uses, is very poorly connected with its neighbours and access is via a single exit and egress point. This character area is divided into two sub-areas which are physically separate but share very similar underlying characteristics.

2.8.2 Key Characteristics

Sub-areas of WIN08

08a. Winnall Trading Estate

- Enclosed coarse-grained industrial estate on a medium to large scale
- Steadily falling landform, down to motorway junction and then on down to river valley and into the City (particularly apparent along Easton Lane)
- Large, often skewed, regular grid of plots of varying sizes
- Consistent building lines throughout
- Profile metal cladding and asbestos-cement sheeting to steel frames, some brick to plinths and gables but limited
- Industrial shed-like structures the equivalent of two-storey domestic buildings (to eaves height)
- Industrial manufacturing, storage and distribution and associated ancillary uses
- Very little tree cover to the character area but good tree screening to the eastern (M3) and western (River Itchen) boundaries and some limited tree belt to adjacent residential areas to south
- Poor public realm, favouring the car user

08b. Bar End Industrial Estate

- Enclosed coarse-grained industrial estate on a small scale
- Flat and low lying
- Regular grid of plots of a consistent size
- Consistent building lines throughout
- Profile metal cladding and asbestos-cement sheeting to steel frames, some brick to plinths and gables but limited
- Industrial shed-like structures the equivalent of two-storey domestic buildings (height to eaves)
- Industrial manufacturing, commercial services (garage and workshop) and associated ancillary uses
- Very little tree cover to the character area but good tree screening to the River Itchen boundary (to west)
- Poor public realm, favouring the car user

2.8.3 *Boundaries and setting*

Sub-area WIN08a (Winnall Industrial Estate) is to the north of Win06b, part of the St Giles' Hill spur. It is centred on Easton Lane which leads to junction 9 of the M3 Motorway. Its boundaries are strongly defined by significant natural (the Itchen River Valley) and man-made (the M3/A31/A34 transport corridor) barriers. Beyond these is open countryside to the north-west, north and east (this edge is also the boundary of the City settlement). The setting of this sub-area comprises these barriers, particularly the transport corridor where, on travelling along the A34, the industrial estate is readily apparent.

Sub-area WIN08b is on a small scale and is bounded by the edge of the City settlement boundary on its southern, part eastern and part western boundaries. The recreation and sports grounds of WIN06c border the remaining section of the eastern boundary, beyond the B3330, Bar End Road. To the west and north is the Riverside character area (WIN05). The setting of this area comprises the transport interchange of junction 10 of the M3/A31 transport corridor and the Bar End Park and Ride.

2.8.4 *Designations*

There are no statutory listed buildings or designated conservation areas in this character area.

2.8.5 *Townscape types present*

TCT08, 12, 15 and 31.

2.8.6 *Topography*

Sub-area WIN08a steadily falls from the St Giles' Hill Spur towards junction 9 of the motorway but also falls steadily from here into the Itchen Valley. There is a distinct level change along Easton Lane on travelling south down into the City from the motorway junction.

2.8.7 *Layout and Pattern*

Varying footprint of building (almost entirely rectangular in plan) laid out in places on a simple grid but often skewed due to the site constraints (motorway and river valley) with the area tapering to the north and becoming tighter as a result. Roads mostly running parallel and perpendicular to either the river valley or Easton Lane (for sub-area WIN08a) or Bar End Road (for sub-area WIN08b). The building line is usually consistent to the grid or roadside or both, but this is not always the case. This gives a uniform and rigid structure to parts and an informal unplanned disparate character to other parts of the character area.

2.8.8 *Buildings and materials*

The area comprises small (mostly small to sub-area WIN08b), medium-sized and large industrial units comprising clear-span, steel-framed sheds with various modern cladding materials, mostly profiled metal. There is some brick to gables or plinths but often materials used for the walls are replicated on the roof. Otherwise asbestos-cement sheeting is used. There are low pitches and flat roofs throughout.

2.8.9 *Predominant land use*

The area is of predominantly small- and medium-scale industrial use; some manufacturing but mostly storage and distribution, with some office facilities incorporated where appropriate. There are also some large-scale retail uses (foodstore and wholesale stores) and car dealerships.

2.8.10 *Public realm*

The public realm is very poor for the pedestrian although all units are, to a degree, accessible by pavement. There are some grassed and/or landscaped areas to the roadsides and to individual units.

2.8.11 *Open space*

There are large areas of open space but this is given over to parking areas or storage or both. The Itchen Way runs to the west of WIN08a but there no access to this pathway from the estate, which acts as a pedestrian barrier to the facility. There are rights of way through WIN08b, linking the Bar End Recreation Ground to the Itchen Way running south along the Itchen Navigation and a former railway line, now a public right of way.

2.8.12 *Biodiversity*

Both sub-areas run adjacent to (or very close to) the River Itchen SSSI. There is limited landscaping within this character area, and few vegetated areas. Within WIN08a however, the boundaries with the A34 where it meets the River Itchen are well-treed and provide a limited buffer between the river and the industrial estate. Within WIN08b, the old railway line provides a well-treed buffer between the estate and the river habitats, and a strong green corridor.

2.8.13 *Access and connectivity*

There are single access and egress roads for both subs-areas with feeder roads to each unit or groups of units. Due to the nature of the uses within this character area, and the significant barriers of river and transport corridor, these sub-areas are not well connected to their surroundings.

**Hampshire County Council (2012), Hampshire Integrated Character
Assessment.**

Landscape

3C: ITCHEN VALLEY



Valley floor in downland setting between Itchen Abbas and Ovington. Permanent pasture, numerous small woods and scattered individual trees, few hedges.



Ovington – Clear chalk streams, often wooded banks.



Valley floor– Lower reaches urban edge, pony paddocks and wooded ridge backdrop at Bishopstoke.



There are numerous historic mills and bridges – along the Itchen. (from SDILCA)



Cheriton – canalised section of the Itchen on the left.

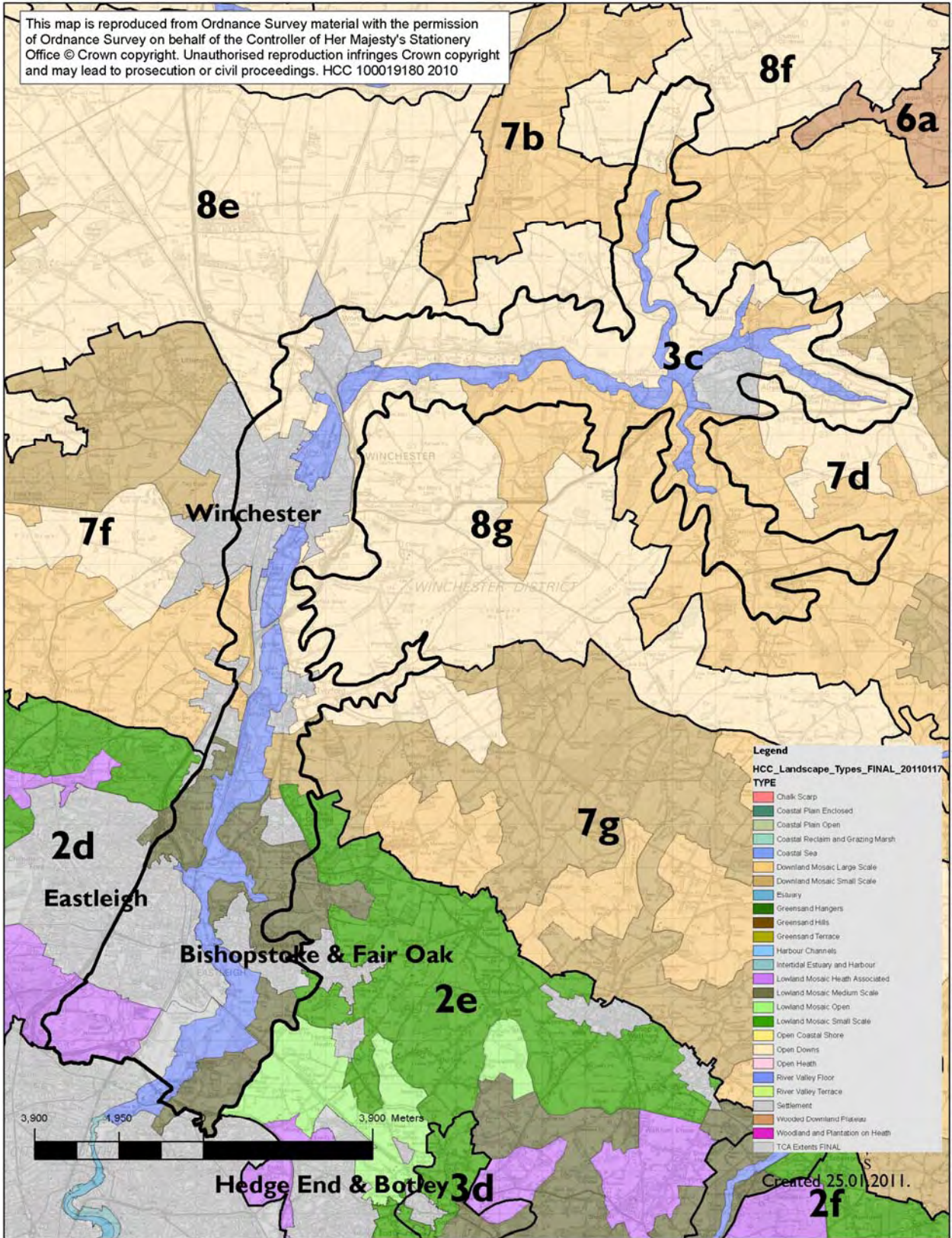


Itchen Valley Country park; sluice as part of restored water meadows.



Playing fields with poplar windbreaks in Lower Itchen Valley.

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ITCHEN VALLEY



1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 This character area includes the river valley floor and its sides which make up the visual envelope of the valley. The valley tops are defined approximately where there is a break/slackening in slope angle. The southern boundary is formed at the County/Southampton unitary edge. The upper most reaches of the valley follow three spring fed



tributaries/headwaters, which join close to New Arlesford namely the Candover stream to the north, River Arle to the east and Cheriton stream to the south.

1.2 Component County Landscape Types

Open Downs, Downland Mosaic Large Scale, Downland Mosaic Small Scale, River Valley Floor, Lowland Mosaic Medium Scale, Lowland Mosaic Small Scale, Lowland Mosaic Heath Associated, Settlement.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Winchester CC

Upper Itchen Valley

Lower Itchen Valley

Eastleigh BC

Broom Hill Farmland and Woodland

Upper Itchen Valley Floodplain

Lower Itchen Valley Floodplain

Eastleigh Airport

Itchen Valley Sports Pitches

The extent of the valley sides is comparable with the two Itchen valley character areas in the Winchester assessment. This LCA boundary is drawn on the approximate valley top of the adjoining dry valleys (hence the wavy boundary), on the rough break in slope indicated by the contour spacing and the approximate visual envelope of the valley. Variations occur between the LCA and local assessments as a result of the perceived extent of valley influence.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas

NCA 125: South Downs, 128: South Hampshire Lowlands, 130: Hampshire Downs
NA 74: South Downs, 75: South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands, 78: Hampshire Downs

1.5 Townscape Assessment Areas:

Winchester

2.0 Key Characteristics

- The Itchen is a classic chalk stream, running through an area of soft permeable rock, supplied by underground aquifers.
- A valley of contrasts from a small stream to a fast flowing river and then deep estuary but the largely undeveloped floodplain is a unifying feature.
- The stream and some of floodplain is internationally designated as a SAC because of its chalk stream habitat, rich in plants, invertebrates and fish.
- Important concentration of remnant water meadows.
- The valley floor is mainly neutral grassland, a complex mosaic of fen species rich meadow and improved meadows, considered to be the largest assemblage of species rich neutral grassland in England⁶¹.
- The small villages and scattered farms sit comfortably within the valley.
- An extremely rich built heritage and setting to Winchester and developed valley sides in lower reaches.
- Frequent minor crossing points marked by white parapets to bridges.
- The upper reaches support the most important watercress industry in the country⁶¹.
- There is fairly good access to the valley by rights of way, and the Itchen Valley path follows the former towpath from Cheriton to Southampton.
- Internationally renowned as a fly fishing river especially for wild brown and rainbow trout.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1

The Itchen Valley passes through chalk in its upper reaches and Tertiary clays south of Otterbourne and Colden Common. The downland section comprises mainly Seaford Chalk, while the valley tops often coincide with the presence of Newhaven Chalk which has greater clay content. North and east of Winchester the top of the valley sides are typically 60m AOD increasing to 90m in the three headwater valleys but vary considerably with underlying geology to as low as 20m AOD towards the coast. At Winchester the valley turns sharply south and cuts through the main South Downs ridge while in the Hampshire lowlands the valley passes through a narrow band of the Lambeth formation, then London Clay followed by narrow bands of Whitecliff and Wittering formations. These coincide with locally undulating and raised topography including where the valley breaks through a minor ridge between Colden Common and Bishopstoke. The valley floor broadens out still further where it meets a large outcrop of London Clay. The river valley floor calcareous alluvium overlies river terrace gravels and is stone free and fertile but seasonally waterlogged. The soil pattern echoes the changes in the geology - the valley sides in the downland section are steep, with shallow flinty soil while south of the spring line settlements of Colden Common and Otterbourne the soils are predominantly stoneless and silty, but of lower agricultural grade than the valley sides in the chalk.

3.2

The river valley floor is dominated by permanent pasture and semi or unimproved grassland – often with visible remain of watermeadow features such as field undulations and carriers. Watercress beds particularly around New Alresford and ornamental ponds such as Northington and Avington are a feature of the downland section. The downland section in particular, is world famous for fly fishing of brown trout. Further south and particularly south of Winchester there urban influences

increase although the valley floor is extensively pastoral. The M3 and airport take up substantial areas just above on the river terrace. Around Eastleigh and Southampton playing fields are common, often with windbreak planting which include poplars. The valley floor is particularly well wooded in places, typically small copses, scattered trees but few hedges. Moving up the valley slopes in the lowland section the fields are generally small to medium in size and irregular in pattern. In the downland section the fields become more regular in pattern and larger away from settlements and support an increasing arable land use. The fields in the lowland section are generally smaller and have more wooded hedgerows than in the downland section.

- 3.3 The River Itchen is 45km from its source at New Cheriton to Southampton Water, with a catchment area of 400sq km²⁹. For much of its length, the Itchen is divided or naturally 'braided' into two or more channels. This includes the Itchen Navigation between Winchester and Southampton which has many sluices and man made courses to ensure a permanently filled channel. The Itchen had three main historic uses giving rise to a multiplicity of channels; the harnessing of water power for milling, the use of water meadow systems to provide early growth of pasture and the development of navigation. There are smaller tributaries in the lowland mosaic section due to the comparatively impermeable geology. In extremely wet prolonged weather the chalk aquifers can reach capacity and flooding of low lying settlements (including those further downstream in the hydrological basin) can occur. Summer flows can be maintained in especially dry periods by two boreholes in the Alre and Candover catchments.

4.0 **Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics**

- 4.1 This is a landscape visually contained by the tops of the valley sides creating a sense of enclosure which is greatest where the valley sides are highest, such as where it cuts through the South Downs chalk ridge, or on the narrow twisting valley floor of the headwater valleys, where the sides are steep and close to the valley floor. South of Kings Worthy the valley floor broadens out and where it flows through the lowland mosaic, the low valley sides and broad adjoining tributaries give a sense of openness and larger scale. High up the valley sides there are contrasting views of settlements set within a well treed landscape and beyond the character area boundary, expansive arable and downland in the chalk and a more wooded scene linked with pasture and arable fields in the clay lowlands. The twisting valley of the headwater water tributaries limits views along the valley whereas the straighter course of the Itchen from North of Alresford to Kings Worthy and then Winchester to Eastleigh affords views along the valley – reducing the sense of enclosure.
- 4.2 There are numerous long distance paths, often associated with historical pilgrimage routes, which follow and/or cross the Itchen Valley providing excellent linear walks (The Itchen Way, St Swithun's Way, Kings Way, 3 Castles Path, Ox Drove, Wayfarers Walk, Pilgrims Trail and Clarendon Way). These routes indicate that the Itchen Valley has long been a significant transport route, with Winchester as its focus in the downs. Access land and open spaces tend to be located south of Winchester such as at Shawford Down, St Catherine's Hill, Itchen Valley Country Park and Winnal Moors. Together with accessible local woodland sites such as Stoke Park at Bishopstoke and Otterbourne Park Wood they form important doorstep countryside for local residents. Other access opportunities include

Wolversley Palace, Avington Park, Grange at Northington and Hinton House which have partial public access. The Itchen Navigation project which aims to protect and enhance the biodiversity, archaeology and access of the canal was set up in 2004.

- 4.3 The Itchen is nationally renowned for brown and rainbow trout fishing. There are numerous riverside pubs which attract locals and tourists and add to the area's popularity.
- 4.4 The Itchen Valley retains a strong sense of being rural with a long history of old settlement with relatively little modern expansion apart from the far south of the character area – associated with Eastleigh, Bishopstoke, Allbrook and Colden Common. The locally distinctive land management practices of watermeadows and watercress beds and the Itchen Navigation sit harmoniously in the landscape. More modern infrastructure development such as the M3 cutting, increasing commuter traffic and rapid expansion of settlements in the south are significant detractors which threaten to subsume increasingly isolated and small areas of a rural landscape. Air traffic noise from light commercial aircraft associated with Southampton airport has a localised negative effect on tranquillity. The high tranquillity of the river valley floor landscape with its fast flowing braided chalk stream and rough pasture with woodland and scrub has a high sense of naturalness.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 Much of the River Itchen is internationally and nationally designated as a SAC as well as a SSSI because it is a classic example of a chalk river with associated habitats including fen meadow, flood pasture and swamp. The river is dominated throughout by water-crowfoot (pond water-crowfoot as well as stream water-crowfoot, and river water-crowfoot). Strong populations of southern damselfly occur here, estimated to be in the hundreds which is unusual in this managed chalk-river flood plain context rather than heathland. The river supports high densities of bullhead throughout much of its length with extensive beds of submerged plants that act as a refuge for the species, and coarse sediments that are vital for spawning and juvenile development. Also valuable are Riparian vegetation communities (including wet woodlands) and side channels, runnels and ditches associated with the former water meadows supporting otter, water vole, freshwater fishes including bullhead, brook lamprey and Atlantic salmon, and an assemblage of breeding birds including tufted duck, and shoveler, the waders lapwing, redshank and snipe, and wetland passerines including sedge warbler, reed warbler and Cetti's warbler.
- 5.2 Alresford Pond is another SSSI comprising a relatively large, shallow calcareous lake in the north of the area, formed in the headwaters of the River Arle in the late 12th century as a balancing lake for the River Itchen Navigation. The lake is bordered by extensive fen vegetation, including large reed beds which have gradually encroached into the former open water, whilst the main water body is now shallow and extensively dominated by dense Mare's-tail. The lake as a whole supports a rich aquatic plant community and supports large breeding populations of Reed Warblers and Sedge Warblers and other wetland birds; and relatively large autumn and winter numbers of surface feeding and diving duck. Similar eutrophic lakes are rare in chalk stream valleys and Alresford Pond is considered to be the best example within the county.

- 5.3 Beyond specific designations this landscape character area comprises a variety of habitat types. At the outer peripheries of the area, in the north, arable land with patches of improved grassland and amenity grassland dominates. Adjacent to the river course, habitats become more diverse with a strong riverine influence including marshy grassland/water meadows and base rich fen often with significant floristic diversity and species rich communities. Unimproved and semi-improved grassland becomes common, with neutral grassland dominating in the north and calcareous grasslands more common in the south. There are small patches of woodland associated with the watercourse, this is mainly broadleaved but there is also some patches of parkland and mixed plantations. In the south there is a considerable patch of broadleaved woodland in a mosaic with dry heath/ acid grassland, surrounded by semi-improved neutral grassland, improved grassland and grass sports fields. Nevertheless ancient and semi-natural woodland is limited.
- 5.4 This landscape is covered by the Itchen Valley BOA. The BOA describes the Itchen as a classic chalk stream that is botanically very important with extensive areas of unimproved vegetation along its length. There are also over 70 SINCs, designated mainly for the ancient woodland and unimproved grassland resources which they support. There are also a few wetland SINCs.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 There are Mesolithic artefacts from the valley, particularly from Winchester southwards and through the lowland belt to the coast. This implies that the valleys were exploited in this period. Whilst no Mesolithic sites are currently identified in the Itchen valley there may be undiscovered sites under the later alluvial deposits, as has proved to be the case in other river valleys.
- 6.1.2 There are Neolithic long barrows on the chalk to the northwest and southeast and it seems likely that the proportion of the valley that runs through the chalk forms part of a wider settled and farmed landscape. Settlement and Neolithic pottery (which may be indicative of settled activity) have been found in the valley where it is flanked by chalk. This pattern does not extend into the lowland belt to the south, and the long barrow at the head of the Itchen valley seems to be the very eastern extent of the pattern.
- 6.1.3 In the Bronze Age there was settlement in the Itchen valley, again where it is flanked by chalk between Winchester and the lowland belt. It is also interesting to note that there are two Bronze Age hoards at the point where the valley chalk and valley lowland meet, as though this is genuinely part of the Bronze Age landscape. Whilst there are few Bronze Age burial mounds in the valley itself there are considerable numbers on the chalk flanks of the valley and it is certain that the valley fell within a wider farmed and settled landscape.
- 6.1.4 There were Iron Age settlements in the Itchen Valley reflecting the pattern of the wider chalk hinterland. Winchester is the link between the downs to the northwest and the South Downs and is overlooked by two Hillforts. At a later stage an important Oppida developed in the valley here.

- 6.1.5 In the Roman period the Iron Age settlement at Winchester developed into a Roman civitas Capital and as such became the hub of the local Roman road system. The density of settlement in the valley still reflected the wider chalk hinterland, but Roman settlement is also very apparent down the Itchen valley from Winchester into the lowland zone and on to Southampton, possibly as a result of the Roman road. However, the evidence of settlement in the valley and its hinterland was less pronounced in the east-west stretch of the Itchen towards Alresford.
- 6.1.6 Saxon burials and churches in the river valley, and mediaeval churches and settlement indicate that in the post Roman period the valley became the focus of nucleated settlement that utilised the land beyond the valley itself.
- 6.2 **Historic Landscape**
- 6.2.1 There are three main periods of formal and parliamentary enclosure - the head water valleys to the East of New Alresford, the New Alresford to Winchester section and the southern section to the Southampton unitary boundary.
- 6.2.2 Watermeadows are a consistent historic landscape feature along the length of the Itchen and likely to have originated in the early 17th to 19th centuries around the headwaters below natural springs. They were introduced to encourage early growth of grass, in the Spring and enabled early grazing and an increased number of hay crops. In particular, sheep were grazed on the river valley floor and taken to higher land to be folded and manure the arable, often corn crop. The years between 1640 and 1750 saw a great boom in the construction of meadows¹⁷. The pattern of watermeadow types is mixed but there are trends and differences which can be discussed in the three areas referred to above. With the decline of the watermeadows in the 19th century, the river valley floor has become more wooded. The condition of the surviving water meadows is very varied – about 80% are in condition 3 or worse i.e. extent of survival is only partial¹⁷.
- 6.2.3 East of New Alresford the narrow valley floor shares similarities with the upper parts of the Meon Valley in that the watermeadow types are predominantly ‘simple’ and associated with a significant amount of early formal field enclosure in the 17th century. This area seems to have been favoured for watercress growing, particularly New Alresford, the ‘Watercress line’ providing the transport to the local and London markets.
- 6.2.4 The New Alresford to Winchester section shows a similar pattern on the valley sides of predominantly small formal and some informal enclosures, but generally the enclosure seems to have been a little later than east of New Alresford resulting in small straight sided fields. Like the area to the west the area is associated with historic parks and gardens. The valley floor broadens in this section and the more complex water meadow systems are evident.
- 6.2.5 The section south of Winchester is set within a landscape dominated by early and informal enclosures to the west and south of Colden Common and late parliamentary enclosure to the east in the downland section and in a few isolated parts of the Lowland Mosaic hinterland. The formal enclosure that does exist is typically mid 19th century, predominantly on isolated downland and areas of common. The valley floor is broadest here and the watermeadow systems most

extensive. Within the lowland setting the field pattern is irregular and smaller scale than in the Downland section.

6.2.6 There are numerous parkland landscapes throughout the Itchen Valley. Some originated as Deer Parks such as Avington Park (EH Grade II), Tichborne Park, Worthy Park and North Stoneham Park. Other significant pre 1810 parks include The Grange at Northington (EH Grade II), Old Alresford Park (EH Grade II), Shawford Park, Hinton Ampner, Ovington, Arlebury Park, Twyford Lodge, and Brambridge Park. Some houses may have developed in the late seventeenth century because of Winchester being chosen by Charles II as the site for a new palace and possibly some of the significant avenue plantings at Avington, The Grange, North Stoneham and Brambridge park may date from this period or the beginning of the eighteenth century. A number of parks were enhanced by the creation of lakes in the eighteenth century as at The Grange, Avington Park and North Stoneham. Twyford has some large houses with gardens and grounds and there were clusters of nineteenth century villa landscapes in Kingsworthy and in the suburbs around Winchester. However some have been lost to subsequent development but the surviving features and planting contribute to the character of these areas. Dean Garnier made a particular contribution to this area with his planting in his own garden at the Rectory Bishopstoke and around the Cathedral precincts in Winchester and influenced the planting of other properties in Bishopstoke in particular the Mount. As with the River Test the enjoyment of country sports, hunting, fishing and shooting has been an influential factor in the development of the parks in this area. In Winchester there are some notable public parks.

6.3 **Built Environment**

Lanes in the headwater valleys are typically narrow and twisting and follow the valley floor, with frequent crossing points. Routes up to the surrounding downland are often partially sunken. Roads become progressively wider, straighter and busier further south from the B3047 to the A333 and A335. The M3 south of the Worthys and the railway reduce the rural feel to the Valley but the densely wooded character helps to minimise the extent of noise and visual intrusion into the adjoining landscape.

6.3.1 The Itchen Valley is extremely rich in building and settlement history, indicated by the number of conservation areas and listed buildings. The nucleated settlement pattern is typical of river valley settlement patterns. The historic integrity of the settlement layout, strong and intact historic rural edges and limited modern 19th century growth in most instances adds to this character area's importance. Where the Itchen passes through the chalk settlements they are linear in form and at least 11th century origin lying on either side of the river. Some of the smaller villages appear to be the remnants of shrunken villages³⁷.

6.3.2 The settlement plan form of most of the villages is regular row. There appear to be more irregular row settlements than regular row suggesting the influence of different periods and stages of historic development in the settlement morphology. There are several settlements classified as agglomerations reflecting different historic periods of growth, such as Itchen Abbas, Martyr Worthy and Headbourne Worthy. The 'Worthys' by definition of their place names were thought to be part of an estate landscape the Micheldever Hundred and it seems as though the area

must have been a royal estate of high importance³³. Typically, in the downland section north east of Winchester, the parish shapes are elongated, at right angles to the Itchen and of similar size and link the valley floor with the downs above, often with the church in the settlement close to the valley floor.

- 6.3.3 There are two market towns in the valley, Winchester and New Alresford. New Alresford is located at the junction of the River Alre, Candover Stream and the stream from Bishops Sutton to New Alresford. The town's economy was based on sheep and corn husbandry. The town was densely developed originally and suffered several fires, culminating in a Royal brief from George III to rebuild the town centre. Hence today, the Georgian style architecture, with vibrant coloured rendering and deliberately wide streets of the town centre reflect the need to minimise the further risk of fire. The sheep-corn economic slump of the 19th century was tempered by the success of the local watercress industry and the arrival of the railway.³⁴
- 6.3.4 The villages tend to be bounded by the floodplain for some of their edge and this has ensured an intact historic settlement rural edge boundary. Some settlements such as New Alresford, Bishopstoke and Eastleigh, where the valley side is terraced or less steep, have been subject to substantial and often massive 20th century expansion.
- 6.3.5 The Itchen Valley has a significant concentration of 17th century farmsteads in its upper head water valleys and upper reaches, and their occurrence is fairly frequent, particularly the section from Cheriton to New Alresford. There is a similar density and clustering in the lowland mosaic section. Medieval origin farmsteads occur occasionally. The oldest farmsteads are generally located within settlements, most lying close to the roads. Enclosure by agreement from the 17th century onwards resulted in some farmsteads being located out of villages³⁷. The size of some of the barns is an indication of the success of the adjoining downland. Often two barns were provided on a farmstead and sometimes the second barn was a straddle barn. Barns are typically three or four bays and aisled at least to one side.
- 6.3.6 The Itchen Navigation runs from Woodmill in Southampton to Winchester and was constructed following an Act of Parliament in 1665. Shallow draught barges plied their way through 15 locks. There are numerous historic built features including turf locks, mills such as Wharf Mill, Winchester, Shawford and Allbrook. There were four wharves along the Navigation and bridges such as Blackbridge as well as several canal side houses. The Navigation also seems to have had an important role in maintaining the irrigation of the adjoining watermeadows.
- 6.3.7 Watermills are particularly characteristic. There are about ten surviving mills of late 18th early 19th century origin, most having been listed. The Itchen valley represents the eastern most river valley with cob buildings and although less abundant than the Test they are significant features. There are frequent brick and flint buildings and surviving timber frame buildings. Straw thatch has been the traditional roofing material. There are several longstraw examples in the upper part of the Itchen. High chalk cob walls with thatch or tile cappings can be found occasionally.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. New housing development mainly small scale and the cumulative impact of small infill sites to settlement morphology but also larger scale extensions.
2. Farmstead conversion to other uses.
3. Pressure from urban fringe use related activities.
4. Recreation pressures and increase visitor draw because of National Park.
5. Climate change in particular increase in frequency of storms, and changes to rainfall and drought patterns.
6. Sand and gravel extraction in the southern section.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1 <i>Distinctive pattern of nucleated settlements and associated long thin parishes within outstanding river and downland landscapes. High quality built heritage reflected in the concentration of listed buildings and conservation areas.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2.3	<p>Threats: Development/change in land use around the valley floor that adversely affects the industrial archaeology, remnant water meadows/water management and stream realignments. The importance of the historic landscape settings to the numerous valley floor conservation areas that are vulnerable to change as they fall outside existing boundaries. Farmsteads in the southern part of the area are susceptible to modern conversions. Alteration to built form and extent of nucleated villages by spread of development along the valley floor as at Itchen Abbas. Loss of historic integrity of built features such as narrow stream crossings and bridge structures due to traffic and insensitive highway design responses, insensitive water mill conversions and loss of watermeadow structures.</p> <p>Opportunities: Raise awareness of the historic association and setting the fieldscape provides to settlement in local level assessment work and explore incorporating valued areas of landscape setting into the conservation areas - the Winnall moors area north of Winchester and between the Hockley viaduct and Winchester college are of particular cultural significance. Where feasible explore the extent of Roman influence south of Winchester.</p>
7.2 <i>Notable range of enclosure types and good examples of early irregular formal enclosures, designed landscapes and nationally important watermeadows with strong connections to the higher surrounding land through valley side drove routes.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.3.4.5.6	<p>Threats: Boundary adjustment of early irregular rectangular fields around nucleated settlement associated with building plots especially for example around Cheriton and Bishops Sutton. Loss of watermeadows due to sand and gravel extraction in the lowland valley. Urban fringe related land management changes such as proliferation of horticulture fields and formal amenity areas on land traditionally supporting pasture management. Economic viability of the watercress beds in the headwater tributaries.</p>

	<p>Opportunities: Identify the extent of open field systems pre enclosure, the age of the first planned enclosures and where the longest established boundaries and lines in the landscape occur to gain a better understanding of how the farmed landscape evolved. Emphasise the importance of the watermeadows when considering minerals sites and sensitive choice of stocking in agri-environment schemes. Promotion of watercress as locally distinctive and historic Hampshire Fayre.</p>
<p>7.3 <i>An internationally important chalk stream habitat which extends along most of its course and associated nationally important flood plain habitat which flows into the RAMSAR habitat in Southampton Water.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.3.4.5.6	<p>Threats: Diffuse source pollution in particular from sediment and in lower stretches, Nitrogen, urban related pollutants and pesticides /sheep dip stretches south of Winchester. Changing salinity levels in lower reaches of the Itchen valley from sea level rise. Greater instance of weather extremes affecting water levels and thus valley floor habitats. Physical damage to habitat from projected increase in tidal flooding.</p> <p>Opportunities: Collect more information on soil erosion and growing lower risk crops particularly for chalk stream habitats which are particularly sensitive to sediment diffuse pollution. Agri-environment schemes targeted at addressing diffuse pollution issues. Opportunity for extensive chalk grassland creation on south facing valley sides from Winchester to Alresford and St Catherine's Hill and Abbotstone. Support the Itchen navigation project which is important in maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity interest in the Winchester to Southampton stretch. Maintain water levels and river valley floor habitat with sensitive abstraction and supply particularly through monitoring and management of surface water run off quality in particular Nutrient, Manure and Crop protection Management Plans. Potential to assist and influence in the Itchen navigation project to conserve enhance and join wetland related habitats and influencing bioengineering design solutions.</p>
<p>7.4 <i>Varied and contrasting valley setting with undeveloped slopes and valley crests, natural beauty in harmony with cultural heritage and high tranquillity close to settlement.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
All	<p>Threats: Development creeping up the valley side and tall structures on the skyline or mineral extraction adversely affecting the tranquillity of the valley in the lowland section. Proliferation of horse grazing paddocks on the valley floor landscape altering the traditional grazing management visually (field subdivision) and sense of extending the urban fringe. Valley crests are particularly vulnerable to development and tall structures particularly in the more open and narrower downland section.</p> <p>Opportunities: Support green infrastructure strategy work which links this area with South Hampshire and initiatives like the Itchen navigation project which promotes access and enjoyment. Maximising the green infrastructure function of Southampton and Eastleigh strategic gap and local gaps between by co-ordinated stewardship and provision of local accessible natural green space. Encourage local level assessment work to identify valued views particularly associated with valley crests, settings to villages and Winchester and natural and historic valley features.</p>

7B: HANNINGTON AND DUMMER DOWNS



Dummer – the large scale character is due to the field and woodland size and also the gently rolling less frequently undulating landform.



North Waltham – large scale fields and woodland.



There are extensive blocks of woodland often ancient in origin – such as Micheldever Woods.



There is a higher proportion of grazing land in this character area than in the adjoining open downs dominated landscapes.



Popham Beacon round barrow cemetery (SAM)

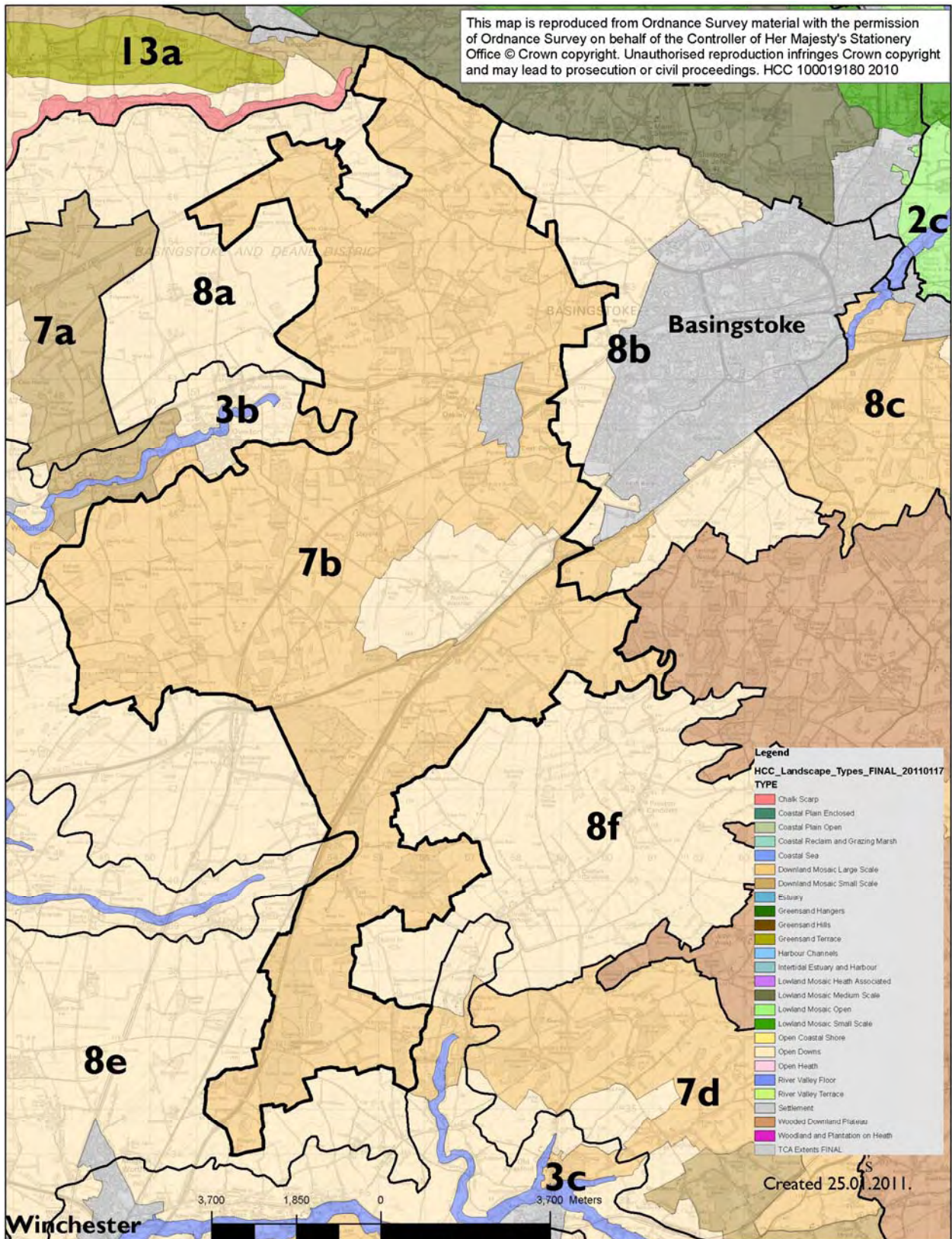


There are few settlements in the character area and fairly small eg North Waltham

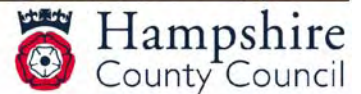


East Stratton row settlement at the top of the Dever valley.

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HANNINGTON AND DUMMER DOWNS



1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 This character forms wooded downland between Basingstoke in the East and the Test Valley in the West. It is distinguished from the land around it by its elevation and woodland cover, and the transitional nature of its historic evolution of land use from intensive in the west to extensive in the east. The northern extent of the area is defined by the change in geology from the chalk to the lower lying clay landscapes and to the south by the lower lying Candover Valley and downland which fringes the Dever Valley.



1.2 Component County Landscape Types

Downland Mosaic Large Scale
Open Downs
Settlement: Oakley

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Basingstoke and Deane

Hannington Down
Oakley Steventon Down
Dummer and Popham Down
South Test Down

Winchester

Stratton-Woodlands

This character area extends across each of the character areas listed above. The differences in boundaries reflect the transitional nature of the landscape from wooded downland to adjacent areas of more open downland.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas:

NCA 130: Hampshire Downs
NA 78: Hampshire Downs

2.0 Key Characteristics

- High elevated open chalk plateau covered by a thick and continuous clay with flints cap giving rise to a gently undulating topography.
- Large open arable farmland enclosed with low hedgerows, trees and extensive woodland blocks.
- Contains part of the BOA Longparish Important Arable Plans Area, providing habitats for rare plants and farmland birds.
- Varied field pattern with medieval assarted fields in association with woodland, and formal enclosures set between older origin ladder system of droveways and tracks.
- Varying intervisibility due to areas of extensive semi-natural woodland blocks and small linear plantations on more open slopes.

- Historically, a frontier landscape between the more intensively farmed downs to the west and the less intensively exploited landscape to the east.
- Notable areas of parkland landscape.
- Settlement consists of nucleated, small hamlets and scattered farms located on hilltops or within valleys.
- Intricate network of narrow winding lanes contrasts with major transportation corridors.
- Quiet and unspoilt rural character with a sense of openness and space, the northern part of which is designated AONB

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1 The underlying geology of this landscape is formed by Upper Chalk which is overlain with a thin and continuous layer of Clay with Flint. The erosion of the chalklands has led to the formation of extensive dry valleys which, combined with the overlying clay cap, gives rise to a gently undulating plateau landscape. This character area stretches across two ridges of higher land; the first in the north of the area which forms the eastern extent of the Clere Scarp, and the second in the centre of the character area which forms an extension of the East Hampshire Wooded Downland Plateau. The highest land can therefore be found around 175m AOD east of Hannington and 165m AOD at Pophams Beacon. Agricultural land quality is predominantly medium, with a small area of higher quality around Oakley.

3.2 Landcover is a patchwork of open and semi-enclosed arable farmland and woodland mosaic, resulting in a changeable degree of intervisibility. The more elevated northern and central areas are predominantly open, with large to medium arable fields, sometimes divided by low hedgerows and occasional small linear plantations. Elsewhere mature hedgerow trees and woodland create a more enclosed arable landscape containing blocks of semi-natural woodlands of varying size and shape e.g. Hay Wood and Great Dean Wood which visually break up the downland landscape. In places the influence of parkland is apparent, with areas of pasture and parkland trees e.g. Oakley Park, Stratton Park and Manydown Park. This adds further visual variety and contributes to the generally wooded character.

3.3 The majority of this area falls within the Environment Agency Upper Test catchment area, with the north-eastern fringes falling within the Loddon catchment and the southern fringes within the Itchen catchment. This character area contains no major rivers as a result of its chalk geology.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

4.1 Within the more open, exposed areas such as north of Hannington or around North Waltham, there are long views and the landscape feels open and uncompromising. Elsewhere, where tree cover is greater, views are more constrained and the vegetation and topography combined create a simple and balanced composition. The northern part of this area is valued for its scenic quality and is designated AONB.

4.2 The Wayfarers Walk long distance route crosses this landscape between Hannington and Becket's Down. The Oxdrove Way also extends into the southern fringes of this character area around Itchen Wood. The larger woodlands found in the southern half of this character area are also areas of accessible woodland owned

and managed by the Woodland Trust. Apart from Peak copse to the south of Basingstoke the woods are the major accessible land resource. There are no open access downland sites. Elsewhere the landscape is covered by a moderate density of public rights of way and bridleways, although this still leaves extensive areas of arable land and woodland which remain inaccessible.

- 4.3 Over much of this area there is a high degree of quietness and rural tranquillity. However where the A303, A30 and M3 come together and cut through this landscape to the south of North Waltham, tranquillity is much reduced by noise intrusion. The transport corridors are generally screened by the high incidence of woodland in this part of the character area. Where the landscape is more open other man made features such as pylons and masts detract from tranquillity.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 This landscape comprises arable land with patches of improved grassland which are larger and more frequent in the north. The area is wooded, with thin strips around fields and woodland patches of varying size, tending to be larger in the south of the area. Woodland type is varied with broadleaved dominating. In addition to thin boundary strips, there are parkland, mixed woodlands, and mixed and coniferous plantations with some active coppice with standards. Two large woodland areas exist in the south of the area: Black Wood, a mixed plantation and broadleaved woodland; and Micheldever Woods, a coniferous woodland with patches of broadleaved woodland, mixed woodland and mixed plantation. Patches of ancient and semi-natural woodland are distributed throughout the area and larger replanted ancient woodlands also exist, particularly in the south. Small patches of unimproved grassland are often associated with woodlands.

- 5.2 Micheldever Spoil Heaps SSSI comprises 19th Century chalk spoil heaps, derived from railway cuttings, which now exhibit various stages of colonisation by a range of plant communities. The site is of quite exceptional botanical importance. Most species appear to have been recruited from adjoining or nearby downland habitats but others have evidently colonised from a distance. The whole plant assemblage remains in a condition of ecological flux. Of particular nature conservation interest is the occurrence of many rare or local plants - Thrift occurs in a totally atypical habitat and there are exceptionally large populations of fly orchids.

- 5.3 This landscape character area contains 132 SINC's. Most are designated for the ancient and semi-natural woodland resource that they provide.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 The northern part of this LCA consists of a block of downland, which is crossed at about its mid point by the Test valley. The southern part is a narrow linear ridge of higher land that separates two blocks of lower lying open downland. This linear 'tail' tends to be a frontier or liminal zone between similar areas.

- 6.1.2 There is a scatter of Mesolithic material in the central part this LCA, but this appears to reflect a wider distribution: a linear trend of Mesolithic evidence from the Greensand over to Basingstoke and the head of the Test valley.

- 6.1.3 Evidence of Neolithic activity (as opposed to settlement) follows a similar linear pattern. However, this LCA appears to have remained unintensively used during the Neolithic, situated between areas of open downland which are associated with Neolithic activity. To the north (just outside this LCA) is evidence of Neolithic settlement and burial. In the southern part of the LCA there is some evidence of a Neolithic occupation.
- 6.1.4 This area is of considerable interest archaeologically, as it contains a land-use divide which appears to have developed from Neolithic to Roman times. To the east, the land appears to have been less intensively settled, with a greater reliance on stock-based land use. To the west, the land appears to have been more intensively settled and farmed.
- 6.1.5 The northern part of the LCA does not appear to have been settled in the Bronze Age, although it is immediately adjacent to the open downland at Basingstoke in the Loddon valley which is very rich in Bronze Age remains. However, the presence of Bronze Age burial mounds does imply that the area was being exploited, despite not yet being settled. In the southern part of the LCA there are Bronze Age sites along the boundary with the open downland to the west. These probably reflect the settled agricultural nature of the open downland west of southern 7B in the Bronze Age. Their linear trend along the edge of this character area may well result from the excavations that took place ahead of the M3 which closely follows the character area boundary. Bronze Age barrows fall on the eastern edge of the character area and may well emphasise this zone as being at the divide between land uses. At the very southern tip is a linear trend of Bronze Age burial mounds which may be related to land use in the Itchen valley.
- 6.1.6 Evidence for Iron Age settlement in the area is limited, suggesting it was a land use change frontier zone of low exploitation compared to dense settlement to the north and south-west. Banjo enclosures (associated with stock management) are distributed in the area to the east of this zone. At the very southern tip of the LCA there is evidence for extensive Iron Age settlement with field systems adjacent to the open downland and above the flank of the Itchen valley. This suggests that this area started to be exploited intensively in this period, with an expansion of the agricultural landscape
- 6.1.7 There is evidence for a line of settlement linking the major Iron Age towns of Silchester (Calleva) and Winchester (Belgarum) along what emerges as the line of the Roman road. This line seems to follow the line of land-use change that had been emerging and strengthening since the Neolithic, .
- 6.1.8 In the Roman period this linear trend of sites along the line of the Roman road between the Civitas centres continued and strengthened and included a number of villas. In the surrounding open downland and in the Loddon valley to the north there is was continued intensity of settlement. In the northern block of this LCA there is a scatter of Roman villas. This may well be an area of large scale downland mosaic where there was 'de novo' Roman estate creation, either by the state or as a result of private expansion, perhaps due to improved technology.

6.1.9 In the medieval period there is a line of nucleated medieval settlement across the northern block where it is cut by the test valley.

6.2 **Historic Landscape**

6.2.1 This landscape can be divided into two broad types of historic landscape – firstly assarted landscape as seen around Hannington and Steventon and secondly formal enclosure of former open downland as found around North Waltham and Oakley.

6.2.2 The assarted landscapes are evident by their higher concentration of woodland which has wavy boundaries and is associated with often small/medium irregular enclosures with sinuous edges. These enclosures are likely to reflect medieval and early post medieval boundaries.

6.2.3 In the areas where a more regular pattern of enclosure is evident, woodland would have already been cleared in Mediaeval times and in these places it is likely there operated an open field system with common grazing on open downland away from settlements. Livestock, mostly sheep, would have been moved onto downland along droveroads, which date to the medieval period or possibly earlier, and which still exist in the landscape today. This system of agriculture was replaced by formal enclosure during the 17th and 18th centuries and later by parliamentary enclosure resulting in the pattern of regular fields particularly seen around Oakley and North Waltham. In some places further 20th century boundary removal has resulted in the creation of much larger enclosure patterns.

6.3 **Built Environment**

6.3.1 This landscape contains two distinct tiers of road network. Firstly the ancient road network which comprises narrow winding or sinuous rural lanes which connect the villages and hamlets and may sometimes be lined with avenues of trees, and secondly the large scale trunk routes and transportation corridors which date to the 20th century e.g. M3, A303 and A30 as well as the railway line connecting Basingstoke to Winchester and the south coast.

6.3.2 Within this character area there is a distinct pattern of nucleated villages and hamlets. Some are hill top settlements namely Hannington and Dummer while others are associated with dry valley heads for example Deane, Steventon, Oakley and North Waltham. The town of Oakley is the largest and most recent settlement in this character area. It has grown considerably in the 20th century as a result of its close proximity to Basingstoke.

6.3.3 Many of the villages/hamlets are covered by Conservation Area status and date back to the Medieval period e.g. Hannington, Dummer and Steventon. These settlements have remained relatively intact both in terms of their concentration of historic and listed buildings as well as their overall nucleated form. Settlements are either ridge top e.g. Hannington or valley focused e.g. Deane and Steventon. Their origins date back to early medieval manors around which a loose cluster of dwellings developed, sometimes centred on a village green and manor church. The settlements show clear historical links to the agricultural economy through the number of agriculturally related dwellings (such as farm cottages, manors and barns), as well as associated lanes and field enclosures. The combination of these buildings and spaces collectively make up the special characteristics of the villages. Some of the villages

reflect changing population levels through the centuries for example Deane shows evidence of once being much larger than it is today with earthworks reflecting the former extent of dwellings around the 14th century. Steventon, Deane and Oakley are all associated with notable areas of parkland. Most of the parklands are pre 1810 and a few have 19th century extensions e.g. Manydown Park. Some originate from deerparks e.g. Malshanger, Manydown and Stratton Park. Other significant parks include The Grange in the south of this character area, and part of Ewhurst Park in the north. A more recently designed landscape of interest is the garden to the Lutyens designed house at Berrydown Court.

- 6.3.4 Within the wider landscape there is a dispersed pattern of farmsteads. This area demonstrates a wide range of building materials – those that are most common include thatch, red clay tile roofing (and some slate), timber frame with brick infill, orange-red brick (particularly in the north) flint with brick and stone dressing, and some occurrence of stucco or cob walling.
- 6.3.5 The village of Steventon was the birth place of Jane Austen and here she wrote *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*. Also of particular interest are the distinctive early 19th century estate cottages in the East Stratton Conservation Area which are built of red brick with steep thatched roofs.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. Changes in agricultural practice and woodland management, particularly relating to intensification of agriculture.
2. New development, including future expansion of Basingstoke and (potentially) Overton (all adjacent to this character area) and potential future development of wind turbines and other vertical structures.
3. Major transport routes, leading to loss of tranquillity and local character
4. Climate change, particularly potential impacts on farming patterns and tree loss.
5. Minerals and Waste development- there is a safeguarded quarry site in the north of the area.
6. Demand for access and recreation, due to proximity of the area to centres of population.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1

A landscape of contrasts between elevated, open arable downs and woodland blocks, but which combine with areas of extensive parkland to create a simple, balanced landscape composition. Biodiversity of arable areas is unusually rich, containing part of the Longparish Important Arable Plants area.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:

CONSEQUENCES

1.2.4

Threats:

Weakening of the landscape structure (in parts) due to hedgerow removal and past (and potential future) loss/ neglect of broadleaved woodland resulting in changes in the visual composition of the landscape, and loss of biodiversity.

intensive farming practices resulting in loss of habitats in some parts of the area,

Past decline in extent of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture, primarily as a result of conversion to arable farmland.

Potential loss of woodland and parkland trees due to over maturity (possibly exacerbated by disease or drought caused by climate change) altering the visual composition of the landscape.

Crop type changes in response to climate change could have dramatic effects on the character of this open landscape.

Opportunities:

Target agri-environment and other grant schemes to encourage retention of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands, and replanting where the landscape structure has been lost.

Manage arable land in accordance with BOA objectives to conserve and enhance habitats for rare arable plants and birds.

Use woodland grant schemes to continue traditional management techniques for ancient semi-natural woodlands (including management of active coppice) for their biodiversity value and to retain their presence in the landscape

Possible use of plantation timber as sustainable woodfuel, thereby helping to ameliorate the effects of climate change.

Survey, management and replanting if necessary of parkland trees and other parkland features.

Potential to carry out conservation management plans as appropriate for parkland landscapes within this landscape character area.

<p>7.2 <i>A strong sense of time-depth, created by the evolving enclosure patterns which are apparent in the landscape, and since the Iron Age have represented the dividing line between settled and farmed landscapes to the west, and less intensively farmed land to the east.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2	<p>Threats: Past (and potentially future) field amalgamation and neglect of hedgerows resulting in loss of discernable ancient field patterns and features. Insensitively sited development may damage or detract from historic landscape features and reduce the sense of time-depth.</p> <p>Opportunities: Target agri-environment (and other grant schemes) to encourage retention of hedgerows and field boundaries, and historic features such as drove roads and tracks. Interpretation panels along public rights of way to explain visible historic landscape features, in association with CAP actions. Use planning policy and conditions to minimise the impacts of future development on archaeological sites and their settings.</p>
<p>7.3 <i>Generally unspoilt rural character, with a sense of remoteness, tranquillity and limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise, except where motorways, main roads and other infrastructure routes cut through the landscape.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
2.3.5	<p>Threats: Continuing visual and noise intrusion of motorway and trunk roads, locally reducing the tranquillity of the landscape. Other infrastructure such as pylons and radio masts remain locally prominent on skylines in parts of the character area. The openness of the landscape means that potential new development or tall structures would be visually intrusive. Potential reduction in tranquillity as a result of proposed quarrying activities.</p> <p>Opportunities: Explore measures to reduce the visual and acoustic impact of main roads on levels of tranquillity, primarily through sensitive screen planting. Retain rural character, sense of openness and space, and long views. Use planning policies and conditions to seek to minimise impacts on them from new development or prominent features. Use AONB management plan policies to retain the quality of the rural landscape in the northern part of the area. Use minerals planning policy and conditions to ensure that any future quarrying activity has minimal impact on the tranquillity of the area, and that the site is restored to enhance the character of the landscape.</p>

7.4

A generally sparse settlement pattern, including distinctive nucleated villages (often in historic settings and containing agricultural buildings) and scattered farms on hilltops or within valleys, connected by an intricate network of narrow, winding rural lanes.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:

CONSEQUENCES

2.3.6

Threats:
Recent development and incremental change affecting the form and settings of villages, and resulting in a loss of local distinctiveness.
Development/ expansion proposed in towns just outside the character area (Basingstoke and Overton).
Potential loss of rural character of lanes due to insensitive engineering works, signage, traffic calming etc.
Lack of access into areas less well served by public rights of way (for example around Basingstoke, and Micheldever parish).

Opportunities:
Promote reference to historic building guidance documents (EH, HCC and local), particularly in relation to locally-distinctive materials.
Use planning policies and conditions to ensure that any new development respects the scale, form, styles and building materials of traditional settlements.
Village Design Statements could give the opportunity to emphasise the importance of historic farm buildings and manors within villages, and the relationships between villages and their settings.
Use planning policies and conditions to ensure that larger –scale developments associated with surrounding towns are well sited and designed to enhance the settings of these settlements, and minimise visual intrusion into this rural area.
Potential use of Rural Roads Initiative to retain the character of narrow, winding rural lanes, whilst enabling them to meet Highways standards,
Promote CAP actions to retain the public rights of way network, and expand it into areas such as around Micheldever where it is currently sparse.
Promote LDF and CAP actions to improve links between Basingstoke and the surrounding countryside, and to provide additional countryside recreation facilities.
Promote good management of accessible woodland/ plantation (e.g. Micheldever Woods) to ensure it provides a good level of recreational interest, but is also robust in terms of its biodiversity.

7F: WEST WINCHESTER DOWNS



Wooded and open downland scarps are north, east or west facing (as are many associated with the main South Downs chalk ridge) and located in the Large and Small Scale Downland types only – Ashley Downs.



Mixed woodland at Farley Mount – in Downland Mosaic Small Scale setting



Downland Mosaic large scale south of Oliver's Battery. Note shelter belts and wood on ridge tops.



Open Downland at Pitt Down



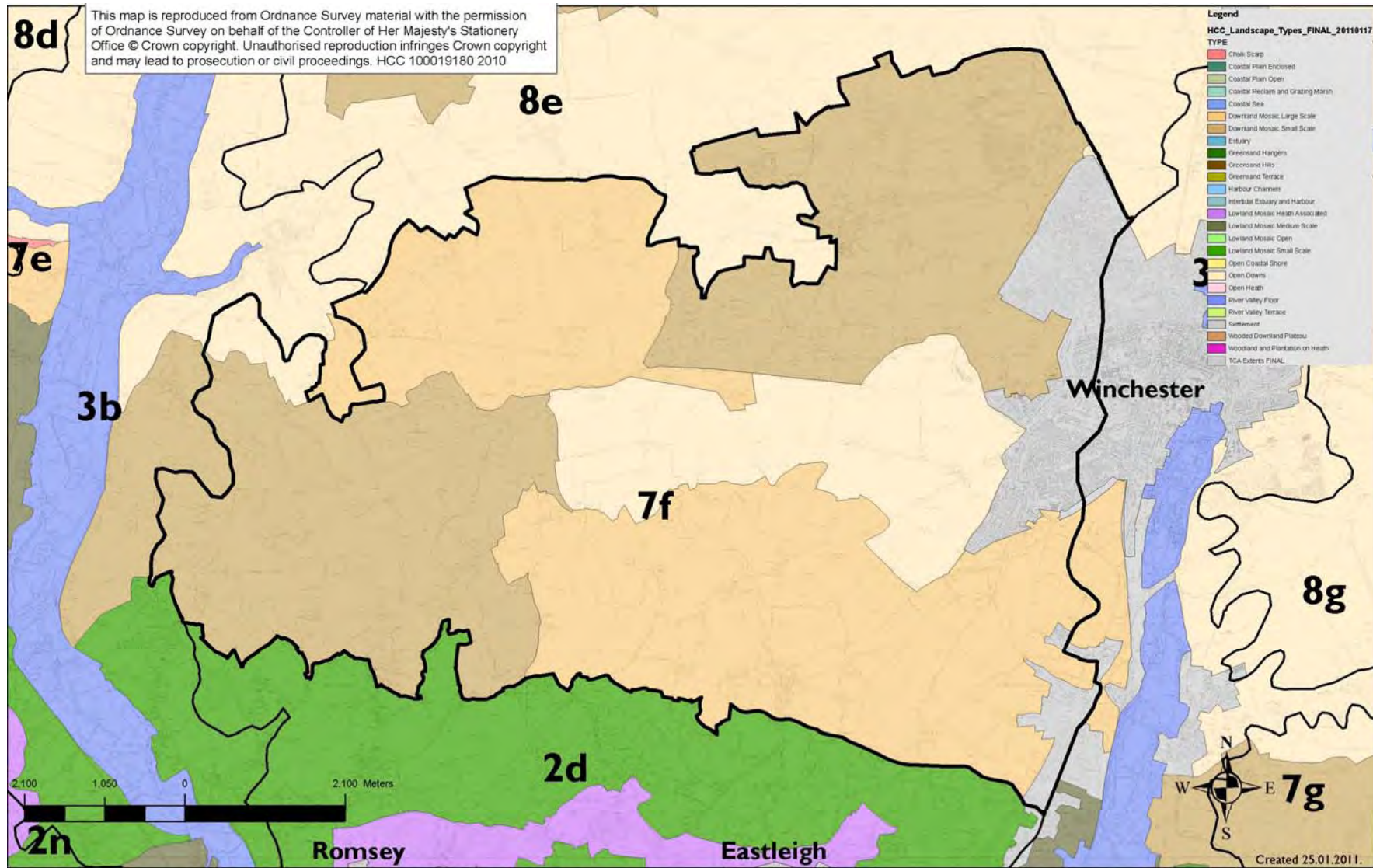
Compton village and Down with Winchester cathedral in distance. Line of beech runs above the Itchen valley and M3.



Teg Down and Royal Winchester Golf course on the main chalk ridge, NW Winchester suburbs are very visible



Hursley, situated in a dry valley on the chalk clay boundary. Large chimneys are a distinctive feature.



WEST WINCHESTER DOWNS



I.0 Location and Boundaries

I.1 A very undulating downland landscape which is a continuation of the main South Downs chalk landscape. The main escarpment is less distinct than further to the east, but there is a dominant east-west main ridge in this LCA with numerous spurs and mini escarpments. The southern boundary is formed by the southern extent of the chalk where it meets the lowland clay landscape. The western and eastern boundaries are the Test and Itchen valleys.



I.2 Component County Landscape Types

Downland Mosaic Large Scale, Downland Mosaic Small Scale, Open Downland, Significant sized settlement.

I.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Test Valley BC

Ashley Downs
Compton with Parnholt
and Michelmersh Woods.

Winchester CC

Hursley Scarplands
Sparsholt Woodlands

The boundaries of this LCA correlate reasonably with the local character assessments particularly to the north and south. To the east the west the boundary reflects the definition of the adjoining Test and Itchen Valleys which are more broadly defined at the County level.

I.3 Associations with JCAs and Natural Areas:

JCA 130: Hampshire Downs
NA 78: Hampshire Downs

I.4 Townscape assessment areas:

Western suburbs of Winchester.

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A landscape of mixed downland scale, dominated by the main west – east South Downs chalk ridge, with small escarpments and dry valley spurs off this feature.
- Very undulating landscape often with far reaching views over adjoining downs and lowland landscapes, but also more visually enclosed landscapes in dry valleys and woodland.
- Substantial tracts of interconnecting ancient and semi-natural woodland blocks which are located on higher and steeper ground as small hangers to the north and west.

- Strong time-depth, including prehistoric barrows on open downland, a range of enclosure processes and drove routes reflecting historical corn-sheep farming practises.
- Valley side settlements, nucleated villages and dispersed farmsteads.
- Hung tiles are a prevalent decorative feature on buildings

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

- 3.1 The broad and sweeping landform is punctuated by small steep scarps and low hills, broken spurs of the main South Downs chalk ridge which runs east to west. This is a continuation of the Lewes Nodular formation which reaches its most westerly extent at Crab Wood. The Seaford and Newhaven formations continue in a westerly direction to the Test. These formations coincide with an undulating and twisting ridgeline which includes Teg Down c160m, Crab Wood c150m, Farley Mount 178m and Parnholt wood 140m. The main ridge becomes less distinct and more broken west of Crab wood resulting in hills with dry valleys between, and branching of the chalk ridge in the form of spurs. These appear as mini scarps predominantly north, east and west facing, parallel with the spurs such as Ashley Down and Combe bottom. They are often about 40 to 50m in height with 1:4 / 1:5 slopes. The area of Open Down is associated with the Seaford formation of soft flinty chalk with no marls.
- 3.2 The varied topography in this area has given rise to substantially different chalk soil types and in turn different land cover patterns. The presence of clay with flint capping typically occurs on the highest land and particularly in the west but occurs less frequently in the east. The presence of clay capping has a strong association with increased woodland cover such as Parnholt and Crab Woods. The thinner clay over chalk soils on well drained undulating dip slopes support large open arable fields. The thinnest soils on the mini scarp slopes support ancient hanger and chalk downland. Agricultural quality is predominantly medium.
- 3.3 Arable land use is dominant overall, but the proportion of pasture is greater within the Small Scale Downland Mosaic areas, where its distribution is abundant. There are broad differences in character between the field sizes and boundaries of the different downland types. The Open Downs have a high proportion of low/missing hedges surrounding fields between 25-100+ha. The Downland Mosaic Large Scale has taller and more treed hedges, field sizes ranging from 15 to 50+ha and occasional banks and ditches. The Downland Mosaic Small Scale has more fields formed by woodland edges, typically 7-30ha in size. Hedges on banks with ditches are more frequent and field shape is very varied and often irregular, indicative of early and informal enclosure. However, there are also fields of more regular shape and pattern with straight boundaries, particularly in the northwest. There are numerous small woods, copses and game spinneys. Dowland Mosaic Large Scale is associated with the dry valley east of Kings Somborne. Woodland occurs as large blocks along some scarp slopes (e.g. Crab and Parnholt woods), and as small copses and fragmented woodland.
- 3.4 The chalk geology means that there is almost no naturally occurring open standing or permanently running water. Winterbournes have been recorded running from Hursley to Shawford and Littleton eastwards to just south of Headbourne Worthy (winter 2001).

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

- 4.1 The variety of topography and landcover results in varying degrees of enclosure and richness of texture: The high, open and wooded landscapes of the major chalk ridge with views over Winchester; expansive and smooth open arable fields; and the seclusion and intimacy of the downland mosaics, with their dry valleys, large woodlands, hangers and fields bounded by thick tall hedges. There are distant and long views to the landscapes beyond the Test and Itchen valleys. Ampfield wood to the south is a strong visual boundary between the character areas.
- 4.2 The road network is not particularly dense. B and C class roads tend to follow the bottom of dry valleys and are often winding. Lanes and minor roads are often lined with thick hedges on banks. An exception is the Winchester to Old Sarum Roman road, which follows the main chalk ridgeline and gives dramatic views over low hills and valleys in between the woodland.
- 4.3 The area is well served by public rights of way, particularly from the west, the Itchen Valley and Kings Somborne. There are notably few routes in the open downs and the former extent of Hursley Park. Countryside service sites at Crab Wood and Pitt Down and Monument, plus accessible woodland at Parnholt provide a good resource of public access sites. Many of the mini scarps are not classed as open access, reflecting that many are wooded or improved grassland and not unimproved downland.
- 4.4 The diversity of settings in this very rural downland landscape leads to a mix of tranquillity experiences. There are opportunities for prospect and refuge from ridge lines and dry valleys and thick hedge lined tracks. The area retains dark night skies typical of more remote downland, but these are affected by night time glow from development along the south coast. The hilly topography and line of Beech to the east of Compton Down lessens the spread of noise from the M3 to the east. The relatively high proportion of woodland in the small scale downland and the very visible wooded mini scarps impart a strong sense of naturalness. Apart from spread of development from Winchester up the dry valleys, the character area is free of sprawl and urban fringe land uses.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 This is an arable farming landscape with improved grasslands which are more prevalent in the south and the west than elsewhere. There are some patches of unimproved calcareous grassland and large patches of amenity grassland in the east on the peripheries of Winchester. In terms of woodland there are thin strips of broadleaved woodland, along with strips and patches of mixed woodland, mixed, broadleaved and coniferous plantations, active coppice with standards and parkland. There is a large woodland mosaic at the Farley Mount Country Park, comprising mainly mixed plantation with some broadleaved woodland and active coppice with standards. Ancient and semi-natural woodland exists throughout and there are two large plantations which represent replanted ancient woodlands.
- 5.2 Bere Ashley BOA covers the north and much of the west of this landscape character area, including Crab Woods SSSI, several ancient woodlands and relict downland sites which are frequently designated as SINC.

- 5.3 Crab Woods SSSI and LNR lies on shallow clay-with-flints soil, and is dominated by oak standards over a hazel shrub layer, although coppicing has recently ceased. The hazel stools are large and the coppice is now 4-6m high with the largest stems about 15cm in diameter. The oldest generation of oaks has largely been creamed from the canopy within the past two decades, possibly at the time of the last coppicing, and the dominant oak generation is around 100 years old. There are occasional large crowned beech and recent intrusions of ash and birch and some oak regeneration, mainly in small clearings beneath the canopy. The woodland ground flora is a fine example of a former coppice on clay-with-flint and is widely dominated by either bluebell or dog's mercury.
- 5.4 There are over 80 SINC's within this landscape character area, mainly designated for their ancient and semi-natural woodland resource. West Wood/ Crab Wood complex is a significantly large SINC, covering 251 ha.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 There is a spread of Mesolithic activity within this area which appears to be part of a wider association with the broad lowland belt of southern Hampshire.
- 6.1.2 There is evidence of Neolithic activity within this area as part of a wider distribution both in the lowland belt and in the river valleys, and includes a Neolithic site. There are no long barrows in the area and it seems likely that although this zone was exploited, it was not a settled area. It is likely, but not demonstrable, that the north-south valley corridors on either side were the focus of settlement and movement.
- 6.1.3 There is Bronze Age settlement associated with the open downland to the north, and the valleys to east and west. There are Bronze Age burial mounds within the character area but generally the distribution is weak south of the open downland. There is a tendency for the burial mounds to cluster on the southern edge of the open downland, and along the high ridge that overlooks the enclave of open downland at Pitt Down. Other burial mounds seem to overlook the Test and the Itchen valleys. It would appear that in general this area was being extensively rather than intensively exploited in the Bronze Age. It is possible from general assumptions, but not proven by records, that there was Bronze Age occupation on Pitt Down.
- 6.1.4 The area also appears to be marginal to some degree in the Iron Age. There is a range of settlement, enclosures and field systems in the large and small downland mosaic which lies to the north of the Pitt Down open downland. This suggests that the intensive land use of the open downland extended southwards into the character area during the Iron Age. There are also signs of a settlement on Pitt Down, particularly at the eastern end overlooking the Itchen Valley. To the south of this there is little Iron Age evidence, with the exception of the southwest corner of the LCA, overlooking the Test.
- 6.1.5 The area is crossed by the Roman road between Winchester and Old Sarum. North of the Roman road there are three Roman villas, suggesting the continued evolution of the small and large mosaic downland. Surprisingly, whilst the Itchen valley is rich in Roman evidence the open downland at Pitt Down has little evidence to offer. Subsequent Saxon burials in this area may hint at continuity. There is also a cluster of villas in the small mosaic landscape north of Ampfield. It may be significant that

Roman kilns (industrial activity associated with the lowland mosaic) existed to the south of these villas.

- 6.1.6 The large and small mosaic downland is an area where medieval settlement was less nucleated and more dispersed, and where significant woodland cover appears to have survived. Its status as Saxon forests may have been influential and the settlement and field patterns suggest this area was not extensively cleared until after Forest law had ceased to hold sway. The southern half fell within the Forest of Bere Ashley – which was disafforested in the 14th century.

6.2 **Historic Landscape**

- 6.2.1 The variety of landscape types is reflected in the diversity of historic landscape types. A large range of historical enclosure processes is evident in this landscape including medieval and earlier origin enclosures, medieval assarts, post medieval and later formal enclosures. The early enclosure landscape survives best between the Downland Mosaic Small Scale in the south west and the area of more recent enclosures found within the Open Downs.

- 6.2.2 The earliest extant field systems spread from the south and west. The Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscape in the south west has a strong pattern of irregular informal enclosures which are likely to have evolved from assarts. Much of the land had been enclosed by 1615. The sinuous long field arms which reached up to Pitt Down and woodland on the higher ground are quite strongly discernible in the present landscape. Between these arms the pattern of field is very irregular, with evidence of lynchets on the steep dry valley sides. Further east in the Downland Mosaic Large Scale, the landscape is a mixture of assart and large scale irregular enclosures which evolved from deer park and post medieval estate reorganisation. Ralph Treswell's map of Hursley and Ampfield parishes of 1588 shows the landscape to be a mix of small assarts and regular informal wavy field boundary enclosure associated with Hursley estate. The extent of woodland at the time of the OSD mapping appears to be far less than the extent today on the small scarps. However blocks of woodland like Out Wood and Out Park of Hursley have survived only as small fragments on steeper ground. There are areas of very regular grid pattern fields associated with early 19th century enclosure around Merdon, and with late 19th century enclosure on Compton Down (high ground to the southwest of Winchester).

- 6.2.3 To the north of the main east-west chalk ridge the pattern is slightly different. There are still the long sinuous ladder-like field boundaries which stretch from the northwest around King Somborne to former downland areas such as Ashley and Pitt Down. However, enclosure details suggest fields have been enclosed predominantly from the 16th century; the process being complete by 1738²⁶. Many of the hedges are well treed and indicated as having mature trees along their length on the 1st edition OS mapping. There are sinuous arms to the field boundaries from Winchester in the east up to downland at Sparsholt and Teg Down. There are more regular enclosures of 18th and 19th century origin than in the south of this LCA. They occur between drove routes and around settlement such as Littleton. The presence of predominantly 19th century farms and the regular field pattern point to reorganisation of older fields to create the more regular pattern evident today.

- 6.2.4 The Medieval Forest of Buckholt and Bere Ashley extended into this landscape. The woodland and assarts on the higher ground and north facing side of the main chalk ridge are reminders of the medieval forest landscape which probably extended over much of the character area. There has been a recent trend (late 19th and early 20th century) for replanting ancient assart wood with conifers (e.g. at Crab Wood and Farley Mount).
- 6.2.5 Pitt Down and Mount Down (in the Open Downs area in the centre of the LCA) remained as predominantly open downland from Saxon/ Medieval times until the 19th century. There is crop mark evidence to suggest celtic field systems in this landscape extended across to Somborne Down to the north. Boundary loss of these regular enclosures from 20th century intensification is fairly substantial, resulting in the predominant classification of prairie fields. Other historic pressures on former downland have been from 20th century suburb expansion from Winchester and Littleton, and the development of two golf courses. Whilst retaining significant time depth, this area has suffered most from 20th century changes.
- 6.2.6 This area contains parts of deer parks at Merdon, Michelmersh and Brook (Compton). At Merdon the deer park underlies the later landscape park of Hursley Park. Lainston House is a significant park with a lime avenue possibly dating back to the seventeenth century. At Beacon Hill there is the Farleigh Mount folly (a monument to a horse) with distant views of the surrounding landscape. Nearby is Parnholt Wood which was linked to Farley House. Taylor's map of 1759 shows an elaborate design of rides through the wood with a temple at the centre.
- 6.3 **Built Environment**
- 6.3.1 Overall, the settlement pattern tends towards low density nucleation. The village sizes of the mid 19th century tend to be smaller than in the adjoining river valleys and at a lower density. Throughout the medieval period Church-owned manors were normally farmed in hand. There are several examples of this settlement type in this area such as Oakfield, Eldon and Lainston. Some have become subsumed by later development such as at Littleton. In some cases these may have been locations for larger medieval settlement, but from the 16th century may have been shrunk due to processes such as the removal of peasant dwellings to make landscape settings for larger houses (probably the case with Merdon). The deserted and shrunken medieval settlement distribution here, in the adjoining area of Test valley and to the south appears to be quite dense in pattern but due to a variety of causes. Linear settlement forms are also common at the periphery of the character area. The spring line settlements of Braishfield, Lower Slackstead, Hursley fall partly within the southern boundary of the character area. There are good examples of valley side settlements at Compton and Otterbourne, although both have been subject to substantial 20th century expansion. The highest settlement and farmstead density occurs within the Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscapes. Sparsholt, a piecemeal agglomerated settlement, Littleton Hursley and Braishfield all have conservation areas. The latter two cover the majority of the settlement footprint and have an extensive rural edge with strong historical landscape connections such as Hursley Park to the west of Hursley and small early field enclosures around the north and west of Littleton.
- 6.3.2 Farmsteads are of mixed age. The oldest farmsteads tend to be located in the Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscapes and associated with villages. There are

villages of medieval origin (often consisting of a green surrounded by early enclosures) such as at Littleton and Michelmarsh and in more isolated locations such as Eldon, Lainston and Woolley. There is a greater farmstead density in the southern landscape types adjoining the clay, and especially on the boundary where there is a source of water and different soils. Like much of the Downs corn-sheep husbandry was the predominant historical land management practice. Communal flocks were brought up to pasture on the Downs in the day and down onto the arable, open field systems at night to provide valuable manure. This practice reached a peak in the 17th and 18th. Some parishes (such as Ashley) had grazing rights in the Forest of Bere Ashley within the clay and heathy landscapes to the south. Modern and 19th century origin farmsteads are distributed at low density throughout the character area. They developed in the Open Downs and northwest of the character area, especially in areas associated with former downland and common. Post WW2, agricultural intensification and increased mechanisation has brought a trend of large metal sheds and granaries, particularly amongst larger holdings.

- 6.3.3 The densest area for traditional buildings is in the southern half of the character area, especially close to the boundary with the clay lowlands. Use of tiles is particularly prevalent and there are a few examples of timber framing. There are fewer brick and flint buildings here than in similar south Hampshire down landscapes to the east of the Itchen. There are a few cob examples, particularly on the Open Downs landscape, such as at Pitt. There are some locally distinctively architectural elements such as tall and decorative chimney stacks on some buildings in Hursley. Sparsholt has quite steeply pitched roofs⁶². Historically, there were local brick supplies to the south with distinctive orangey-red bricks from Michelmersh brickworks.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. New small scale development within and on the fringes of Winchester and Hursley
2. Farm conversion to residential farmstead enlargement.
3. Pressure for urban fringe related activities and recreational pressures on open access and country park/countryside service sites.
4. Climate change; storm and winterbourne frequency and intensity.
5. Take up of land management grant schemes.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1 <i>A wide variety of historic landscape types, with many surviving ancient sinuous hedge and track lines leading up to higher ground. Substantial time depth reflected in number of extant ritual/defence related sites on high ground in/or close to woodland.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most influence: 2.3.5	Threats: The long and visible ancient sinuous field boundaries are associated with tracks and lanes that make them well used features and perhaps susceptible to widening / realignment. Cropmark presence, possibly associated with Bronze and Iron Age field systems which occur on the open downs landscape are vulnerable to damage from ploughing. A trend towards larger storage sheds and increases in farm size, with land taken from neighbouring farms and consequently field enlargement / amalgamation.
	Opportunities: Emphasise the historical importance of retaining the intactness and form of these ancient tracks and lanes through transport and rights of way planning. Greater awareness of the likelihood of cropmarks associated with former open fields could be raised with land managers. Further interpretation of the historic landscape identifying ancient drove tracks, former open field systems and extent of former downland to influence local level assessments.
7.2 <i>A very mixed settlement pattern but overwhelmingly rural character of moderate density. Dispersed in the south, with spring line hamlets and farmsteads and a more nucleated pattern in the north. Eastern side of LCA forms setting to Winchester.</i>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most influence: 1.2.4	Threats: Cumulative impact of small scale development in visually prominent parts of hill top settlements and prominent farms in the more open downland areas could dramatically increase their visual presence in the landscape. Trend towards change of use and domestication of existing farmsteads and farmland to residential and employment use, with gardens, horse paddocks and car parking, especially in the southern half of the character around Hursley and west Winchester. Possible changes and increase frequency of damage by winterbournes to valley bottom settlement and steadings.
	Opportunities: Local level assessments and village design statements could give the opportunity to emphasise the variety of settlement patterns and guide style and material choice. Conservation area appraisals of Littleton, Sparsholt, Hursley, Braishfield and Compton St. provide basis for monitoring condition and retaining character of the most historically

	<p>important built parts of settlement.</p> <p>The rural setting to Winchester is of fundamental importance to retain.</p> <p>When designing new or built additions promote reference to historic building guidance documents (HCC, EH and local) particularly in respect of farmsteads, and local vernacular.</p>
<p>7.3 <i>Predominantly an arable farmland landscape but with significant areas of semi-natural habitat including semi natural and ancient woodland, small hanger woodland and pockets of downland. Woodlands tend to be visually prominent.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most influence: All	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Balancing nature conservation interest of the relic downland with recreational pressures. Changes in species composition change due to climate change – particularly associated with the steep elevated relic downland sites.</p> <p>Crop type changes in response to climate change (particularly in more open areas such upper parts of dip slopes) could have dramatic effects on visual characteristics of the area.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>There are substantial ancient woodland reversion opportunities at Parnholt and Farley Mount and opportunities for connection through hedge and woodland management / creation, particularly on the main chalk ridge.</p> <p>Agri-environment and grant aiding is likely to continue in respect of permanent grass margins to fields. Promote take up of woodland grants schemes and HLS.</p> <p>Ways to ensure the continuation of the trend for recent positive change in the form of conversion of arable land back to pasture and management of chalk grassland habitat (particularly in the BOA area) could be investigated.</p> <p>Support BOA target habitats for conservation, habitat linking, creation and reversion opportunities for unimproved grassland, relic downland and semi natural ancient woodland.</p>
<p>7.4 <i>Undulating landform, dry valleys and scarps are enduring features, often set against a backdrop of woodland. There are also tranquil areas along the exposed chalk ridge which can be appreciated via a strong network of tracks and open space.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most Influence 3.4.6	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Over formalisation of semi-natural areas to provide recreation facilities.</p> <p>Close proximity to large population of Winchester immediately to the east can introduce greater likelihood of conflict through misuse (e.g. fly tipping, trespassing) on local farmland and pressure for edge of town development.</p> <p>Proliferation of vertical structures on escarpment tops, particularly the north-south smaller scarps where there is no woodland, disrupting the sweeping lines of the landscapes.</p> <p>The small exposed hanger woodlands may be most susceptible to predicted increased frequency of storms - their loss could alter perceptions of the area's wooded character.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>Increase draw to the area from national park designation– particularly as striking off point from settlements to the south and Butser Country park. Also increase feasibility of reducing reliance on car to access the area.</p> <p>Take into account and identify the main exposed ridges and downland in new development proposals and the main visual receptor sites. Local opinions could be sought on particularly valued views to help with identifying important receptor sites.</p>

8E: MID HAMPSHIRE OPEN DOWNS



Alresford drove nr Waller's Ash looking towards Micheldever wood (in adjoining character area). Expansive elevated arable farmland views. Occasional to frequent straight tree belts amongst very straight, low and broken clipped hedges.



Golden fields of late summer – quintessential mid Hampshire Downs scene near Micheldever Station



View over Dever Valley- Weston Colley



'Barton Stacey Belt' – narrow tree belts are a distinctive feature – in this case marking a parish boundary.



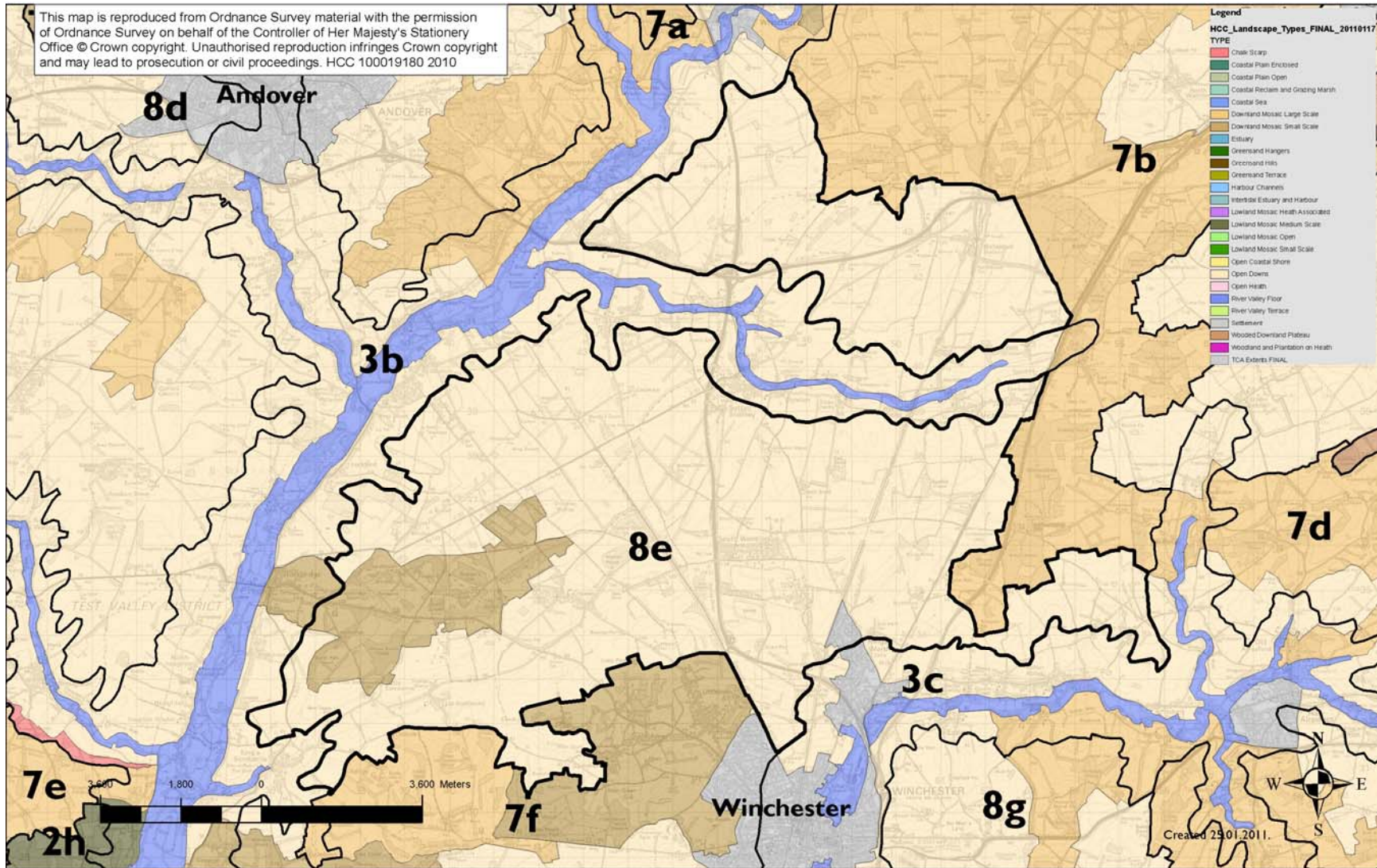
Modern arable intensification and larger holdings replacing older barns.



Large brick farmhouses- many of 19th century origin.



Crawley –thatch and timber frame and brick infill buildings. 1½ storey.



MID HAMPSHIRE OPEN DOWNS



1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 Located on elevated chalk landscape above the Test and Dever valleys on shallow well drained chalk soils. To the east the soils become more clayey and to the north east the landform more elevated and wooded. To the west the area is bounded by the top of the Test Valley and to the south the landform becomes more wooded, and more frequently and steeply undulating.



1.2 Component County Landscape Types:

Mid Hampshire Open Downs, Open Downland, Downland Mosaic Small Scale, River Valley Floor, Settlement.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Test Valley BC

Leckford and Chilbolton Chalk Downs

Drayton Chalk Downland

Basingstoke and Deane BC

South Test Down

Winchester CC

North Dever Downs

Dever Valley

Wonston Downs

Crawley Downs

North Itchen Downs (small part)

Sparsholt Downs (small part)

A wide mixture of local level character assessment styles. There is consistency in the break between the chalk and the lowlands in the south and the break created by the river valley tops of the Dever and Itchen Valleys. The Test Valley assessment does not identify valley side but the floor.

1.4 Associations with NCA and Natural Areas:

NCA 130: Hampshire Downs

NA 78: Hampshire Downs

2.0 Key Characteristics

- A sense of elevation, space and expansive views.
- A landscape of straight edges and sense of planned countryside on a large scale.
- Straight and direct fast roads, some of Roman origin.
- Large farm holdings dominated by cereal crops with little grazing.
- Woodland is rare and largely consists of 19th century shelterbelts – apart from assart woodland in the Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscape.
- Important arable plants supporting farmland bird populations.

- Historic drove routes survive as prominent hedgerow lines in the landscape. These provided the framework for the ladder field systems which serviced the open field system and downland prior to formal enclosures.
- A landscape of considerable perceptual time-depth and an early focus for farming. Extensive crop marks visible, especially on higher ground associated with the east-west ridge between the Itchen and Test valleys.
- Very few settlements. Most are farmsteads, often with large modern storage sheds.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1 The underlying geology is Upper Chalk – Newhaven and Seaford members, with very small isolated areas of clay and silt. This gives an elevated, rolling landscape predominantly between 70 – 110m AOD. The extreme south west and north east contain the highest points, at Woolbury Hill (158m) and White Hill (139m) respectively. Landform is generally sloping towards the west and the Test Valley and contains short dry valleys of the Test such as Up Somborne. This character area is split east- west by the Dever valley. Apart from the steep downland to the west of Stockbridge Down there are no other areas sufficiently steep to be termed scarp faces, although the topography is more steeply rolling in the more wooded and less intensively exploited Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscape west of Crawley.

3.2 The very regular fieldscape pattern is an abiding characteristic, with hedges that are frequently less than 2.5m high and have few mature trees. Shelterbelts, 10-50m wide and of mixed broadleaf species or conifers are also characteristic. There is very little woodland apart from the isolated copses of the Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscape. An overwhelmingly arable landscape with medium to large size rectangular fields 10 to 40ha with their long axis mostly perpendicular to the line of the Test or Dever rivers. Farm holding size is comparatively large, indicated by the density of farmsteads and the size of the CSS agreement areas. There is a very high proportion of crops and fallow areas and a comparatively low proportion of grazing (including sheep). The latter aspect is a clear distinction from the more clayey and wooded areas in other downland landscapes. There has been a recent trend in stewardship agreements for field margin buffers, benefiting wildlife and game cover. The smaller fields are located closer to the river valleys and the Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscape.

3.3 The lower and upper catchments of the Test are in this character area. Many of the valleys are dry but winterbournes can occur (e.g. Up Somborne valley) There are major aquifers below the chalk.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

4.1 Expansive views over rolling arable fields, with big skies, often framed and reduced in extent by woodland shelter belts. Distant views westwards over the Test and eastwards to more elevated wooded downland. From more elevated viewpoints the lack of woodland in this character area is very apparent.

4.2. There is a good network of tracks and rights of way. Long lengths are associated with former drove routes. There is quite a high proportion of bridleways and restricted byways, perhaps an indication that these were historically well used transport routes. They often have junctions or connections along busy fast roads⁵⁰.

For example include Alresford Drove (part of the Oxen way). There are no countryside access sites – reflecting the areas historical importance for agriculture and its distance from urban centres. Open access land is restricted to Stockbridge Down and Worthy Down.

4.3 There are several roads of Roman origin which radiate from Winchester and pass through this character area. These routes to the south of the Dever Valley give the framework to the original open field system and subsequent enclosures. Some of the former droves from the valley landscapes have been formalised into modern roads and generally retain their original alignment. The A34 is predominantly a new alignment, as is the A303. These dual carriageways and straight roads encourage fast moving traffic.

4.4 A feeling of space and remoteness results from the extensive arable fieldscape with relatively little development. There are few urbanising influences from competing recreational and amenity land uses typical of landscapes closer to major settlement. The road noise and associated visual intrusion are major detractors of tranquillity in this open landscape. Away from the main roads and in isolated dry valleys the ruralness of this large scale landscape can be appreciated, and there is a strong sense of tranquillity.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

5.1 This is an arable landscape with some patches of improved grassland. Other habitats are limited to small patches throughout. These include unimproved and semi-improved calcareous grassland (often associated with areas of improved grassland, rather than the arable land). There are areas of amenity grassland and sports pitches often associated with small settlements. Woodland is limited, confined mainly to strips, often defining fields. Woodland type varies, including mixed and broadleaved woodlands, and mixed, broadleaved and coniferous plantations. Woodland is most significant in the southwest where orchards are a significant feature. Ancient and semi-natural woodland is very limited and most of it is concentrated in the southwest of the area.

5.2 SSSIs within this landscape character area include Brockley Warren SSSI, which comprises the largest of the few remaining areas of chalk grassland and chalk scrub on the Hampshire chalk plateau (as opposed to escarpment sites). It supports a mosaic of chalk scrub mainly of juniper, bramble and hawthorn, with scattered planted pines and fescue-dominated grassland rich in herbs. The juniper is now mostly moribund and there is little recent regeneration. The grassland includes local or exacting calcicoles such as round-headed campion, bastard toadflax and felwort. The site is intensively rabbit grazed. Stockbridge Down SSSI is similar and comprises a wide range of chalk scrub and grassland communities occupying a north-west facing chalk scarp and an extensive plateau on clay-with-flints. The various stages in seral development, ranging from short-sward chalk grassland, through mixed scrub to yew and beech woodland, are considered to be of outstanding ecological interest.

5.3 The north of this landscape character area is covered by the Longparish Important Arable Plants Area which has been identified by Plantlife as an important area for arable plants (IAPA) of European importance. The western half lies within this character area, and is also exceptionally important for farmland birds.

5.4 Over half of the 35 SINCS in this character area are designated for the ancient and semi-natural woodland resource which they represent. There are also unimproved grassland SINCS which support notable species.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

6.1.1 This block of open downland might be seen as half of a much larger block with 8D (Andover Downs) - which is bisected by the Test Valley and shares some of the archaeological characteristics with this adjoining character area.

6.1.2 The limited Mesolithic evidence in the area suggests that the focus of activity was associated with the adjoining river valleys. There was some activity in the lowland belt to the south, and some evidence in the north, which is part of a wider pattern of activity stretching from the Greensand in East Hampshire to the head of the Loddon and the Test.

6.1.3 In the Neolithic there is a correlation between the open downland and the distribution of long barrows. This suggests that early farming and agriculture have their origin in this landscape. The long barrows have three areas of distribution: two clusters lying in the south between the Itchen and the Test, and two long barrows lying north of the Dever.

6.1.4 This area is also associated with Bronze Age activity. There is evidence of both settlement and burial mounds. Both sets of evidence appear biased towards the west and southwest of the area where it flanks the Test valley. We may assume that this is a landscape whose agricultural origins continued to evolve, but with evidence of field systems (which are not specifically dated to the Bronze Age but may have Bronze Age origins) and settlement biased to the southwest, it is possible that there is greater evolution of the landscape in the south of the area, or that the south and north of 8E have different agricultural emphases.

6.1.5 In the Iron Age there is extensive evidence of settlement, including hill forts. The settlements and fields systems seem to favour the southern part, and banjo enclosures (possibly reflecting stock ownership) tend to cluster in the northern area north of the Dever. We may again be seeing a different agricultural emphasis between the north and south of the character area. These are not mutually exclusive patterns, but have different weights and are suggestive of a complex landscape.

6.1.6 In the Roman period there is settlement across the open downland, with a marginal bias to south of the Dever valley and, oddly, away from the Test valley. There are examples of villas in this area, but there is a greater density to the south, close to the line of the Roman road from Winchester to Old Sarum. The Roman road between Winchester and Andover is still very evident in the landscape and is a good example of how long lived landscape features can be where they retain significance. However, although the road is evident it seems to have had little influence on settlement patterns.

6.1.7 There are Saxon cemeteries on the open downland, but these are associated with the Dever, Test and Itchen, and presumably reflect the origins of the medieval

nucleated settlements in the river valleys. There are very few medieval settlements outside valley bottoms. The extent of open downland that this created is reflected in the extensive subsequent formally enclosed landscape which dominates this area. But even these enclosures are set within frameworks (such as ladder systems) from a much older landscape, which is discernible from cropmark distributions.

6.2 Historic Landscape

6.2.1 The historic agricultural practice of corn and sheep husbandry was closely linked with the adjoining valley landscapes of the Test, Dever and Itchen. Drove lanes led up to large field open field systems and extensive areas of downland. The alignment of the tracks up the valley sides and the survival of some tracks linking these routes suggest evidence of ladder field systems extending in to this elevated landscape pre 1750. The ladder systems are clearest running north and south out of the Dever Valley. This landscape pattern was probably in practice from early medieval times.

6.2.2 From 1750 to 1790 there were a series of large scale parliamentary and formal enclosures resulting in extensive changes to the landscape and a very regular grid pattern of large fields. Barton Stacey parish was the first with the enclosure award of 1755 of some 2500 hectares. By the time of the OSD mapping, at the turn of the 19th century, formal enclosures had swept through the parishes across the character area with new straight hedges dominating the landscape. Isolated areas of downland remained including Worthy, Stockbridge and Weston. These areas of downland have subsequently been enclosed. In amongst these reordered postmedieval boundaries are some boundaries which are much older and have survived from previous landscapes. These are often boundaries that provide the structure to the landscape such as parish boundaries, and ladder 'arms' in the form of tracks and lanes. These are often visually quite distinctive. There was a racecourse at Worthy Down which subsequently became the base for the Royal Flying Corps during WWI and this remains an MOD camp.

6.2.3 Much of the hedgerow network has remained intact with some boundary loss, post WW2. 19th century plantation and shelterbelts are typically linear in form with the grain of the field pattern. The older tree belts are associated with landscape boundaries such as Barton Stacey belt or along old drove routes – these often cut across the 18th century planned field layout. The more modern belts are typically anything up to 100m wide and comprised often of a mixture of conifers and broadleaf trees. They tend to be 250m-1km in length.

6.2.4 There are two pre 1810 parks in this area: Crawley Court and Little Somborne House and Park. This area was not a particularly favoured location for parks and gardens, with a very low density dispersed settlement pattern.

6.3 Built Environment

6.3.1 Settlement is concentrated and nucleated in the adjoining river valleys. The arable farmland landscape of this character area is generally very low density and predominantly farmsteads rather than villages. The close historical land management links between the two areas is important to emphasise. The oldest farmsteads are generally found in the Dever and Test valleys and until the widespread enclosures of the mid to late 18th century there were few farmsteads in the character area.

- 6.3.2 The typical isolated 18th and 19th century farmsteads of this landscape can be very prominent in the landscape due to the size of buildings and barns and their proximity to public highways and tracks. Modern shelterbelts often emanate from the farmstead. The importance of cereal farming is reflected in the size and number of barns and granaries that can be seen on many farmsteads. Typically the latter are timber framed and weatherboarded on straddle stones. The farmhouse only occasionally forms one side of the farmyard. Typically it is separated and at right angles to the yard barns, as with much of the rest of the County- however this pattern is more consistent in this landscape where the farmsteads date almost entirely from the 18th and 19th centuries. The wealth of the farmers in this landscape is also often demonstrated in the farmhouses. Many were enlarged, refaced in brick or totally rebuilt in the 19th century. The gardens were sometimes walled to give greater separation and privacy from the working farm. Post WW2 trends in arable intensification have led to large steel-clad barns (which are visually very dominant in the farmstead layout) and round steel grain silos replacing traditional buildings. The trend for increase in holding size and amalgamation of farms has led to selling off of farm buildings which have either been lost or converted to commercial or residential use. More recently, the number of holdings has stabilised⁵⁹. Isolated Inns and farms converted to commercial use can be found at the crossroads of some major routes.
- 6.3.3 Micheldever Station, Crawley, South Wonston and Little Somborne are the major villages in the character area. Crawley (origins from clearance in a crow wood) and Little Sombourne (origins associated with a stream used by pigs) reflects the wooded setting in the Downland Mosaic Small Scale landscape. The historical significance of these settlements is reflected in conservation area status in their historic cores. Micheldever Station grew from a couple of large farmsteads with the development of the railway, and has a large proportion of Victorian buildings. The settlement has so far resisted the pressure of large scale new development. South Wonston was established as a stopping off place for gypsies on the drove road between the hopfields of Alton and Salisbury. At the turn of the 19th century the farmland was divided up and sold in one acre plots which led to the very linear block development of plots. The majority of buildings are post WW2, with many single storey houses.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. New small scale development within and on the fringes of valley settlements.
2. Farm conversion to residential and farmstead enlargement.
3. Climate change; storm and winterbourne frequency and intensity, changes in crop choice.
4. Take up and continuation of agri-environment land management and woodland related grant schemes.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

7.1

A landscape which has considerable time depth of farming practices and layering, with visible and cropmark evidence for utilisation and settled activity from Neolithic times to the present day, Ancient ladder field systems (which connected the river valleys to areas of former downland), routes from the Test to Winchester and areas of extensive 18th C. formal enclosure field patterns are particularly noticeable features.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most influence: 2.3.4	<p>Threats: Loss of presence and visibility of upstanding archaeology if there is a change in land management – crop choice, scrub and tree encroachment on the site. Prehistoric field system crop marks which occur on the open downs landscape are vulnerable damage from ploughing as well as other extant archaeology. Trend towards larger storage sheds and increase in farm size, with land taken from neighbouring farms and consequently field enlargement / amalgamation could affect the regular field and ancient ladder arms to fields.</p> <p>Opportunities: Emphasise the historical importance of retaining the intactness and form of these ancient tracks, lanes and parish boundaries, and undertake further identification which could inform transport and rights of way planning. Greater awareness of the likelihood of cropmarks associated with former open fields could be raised with land managers. Further interpretation of the underlying historic landscape – perhaps into the evidence that the concentration of cropmarks is related to extensive co-axial field systems of late Bronze Age / Iron Age.</p>

7.2
Sparsely populated rural character, with low density of large visible farmsteads and holdings, a few valley settlements and out-farms on the peripheries associated with the adjoining river valleys.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most influence: 1.2	<p>Threats: Continued trend for larger farm holdings in this landscape could continue and likely to make some farmsteads redundant and susceptible to conversion. Particular pressure for larger farm shed development (associated with above) and perhaps removal of older smaller barns and increased visual presence in the landscape – subsuming the older farmstead layout. Cumulative impact of small scale development and holdings / plots extending up from the valley sides into this landscape could dramatically increase their visual presence in the landscape. Trend towards change of use and domestication of existing farmsteads and farmland to residential and employment use with gardens and horse paddocks and car parking (no particular single area)</p> <p>Opportunities: Local level assessments, parish planning and village design statements could give the opportunity to emphasise the detriment large new sheds can have to the historic farmstead setting and layout. Conservation area appraisal of Crawley provides basis for monitoring condition and retaining character of the most historically important built parts of settlement. When designing new or built additions promote reference to historic building guidance documents (HCC, EH and local) particularly in respect of farmsteads and brick and flint.</p>

7.3
Predominantly an arable and occasionally permanent grass farmland landscape, with field boundaries of a mix open, hedges, low hedges and tree belts. Also contains areas of ecological importance for arable weeds.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
Most influence: 3.4	<p>Threats: Possible continued arable intensification on areas with potentially particularly good potential for chalk grassland creation currently – thereby reducing their potential in the future because of higher soil fertility. Coppice management of Somborne woods heavily dependent on grant aiding. Species composition change from climate change – particularly associated with remaining small isolated downland sites.</p> <p>Opportunities: Agri environment funding and grant aiding is likely to continue in respect of permanent grass margins to fields – which will promote the conservation of arable weeds. Much of the tree and woodland cover is in the form of tree belts and small woods which do not currently fall under woodland grant schemes and on farms. Specific grant aiding measures could be investigated. In particular ensuring continued support for Somborne woods coppice conservation management which is the only BOA in the area. The physical conditions for arable reversion to chalk grassland are on the high ground on the central south west to broad ridge and particularly overlooking the Test at Stockbridge Down and high ground above the confluence of the Dever and Test valleys.</p>

7.4

An open, rolling and expansive landscape, with long panoramic views over a regular pattern of large arable fields. It is often viewed and experienced from direct and fast straight roads and prominent rights of way associated with ancient transport routes.

FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
<p>Most Influence 1.2.3</p>	<p>Threats: Realignment and diversions which alter the characteristic straightness of the rights of way. As the road network attracts fast traffic because of its straightness, insensitive speed calming measures could erode the traditional rural character. The open nature of the roads increases the distance affected by the perceived traffic noise. Tall structure development can often be very visible – reducing the rural character of the landscape. Fragmentation of rights of way routes and connections using the fast road network can deter users as mentioned in the CAP and particularly relevant here, thereby deterring the potential number of users. Crop type changes from traditional arable crops in response to climate change could have dramatic effect on the visual character of the landscape.</p> <p>Opportunities: Suggest approaching HCC RoW to seek the best linking routes in terms of permissive routes to re link the recreation user trail network, in particular close to the busy A272 on the line of the Winchester to Middenhall Roman Road from which many rights of way radiate. Take in to account and identify the main exposed ridges and downland in new development proposals and the main visual receptor sites. Local opinions could be sought for particular valued views to help with identifying important receptor sites. Opportunities may exist for more accessible woodland opportunities, particularly in the south west.</p>

8G: EAST WINCHESTER DOWNS



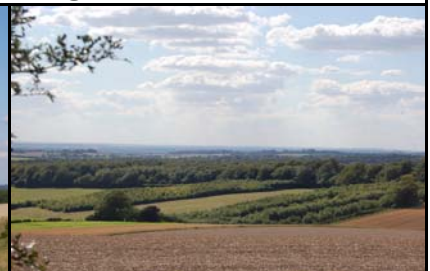
Towards Cheesefoot Head – distinctive tree clumps on the horizon – across regular pattern of large scale straight sided fields and often low hedges.



Downland on steep slopes – near Exton (mid foreground)



Far reaching views to the north – large open skies.



View from near Beacon Hill over adjoining character area which in contrast is much more wooded as well as lower elevation.



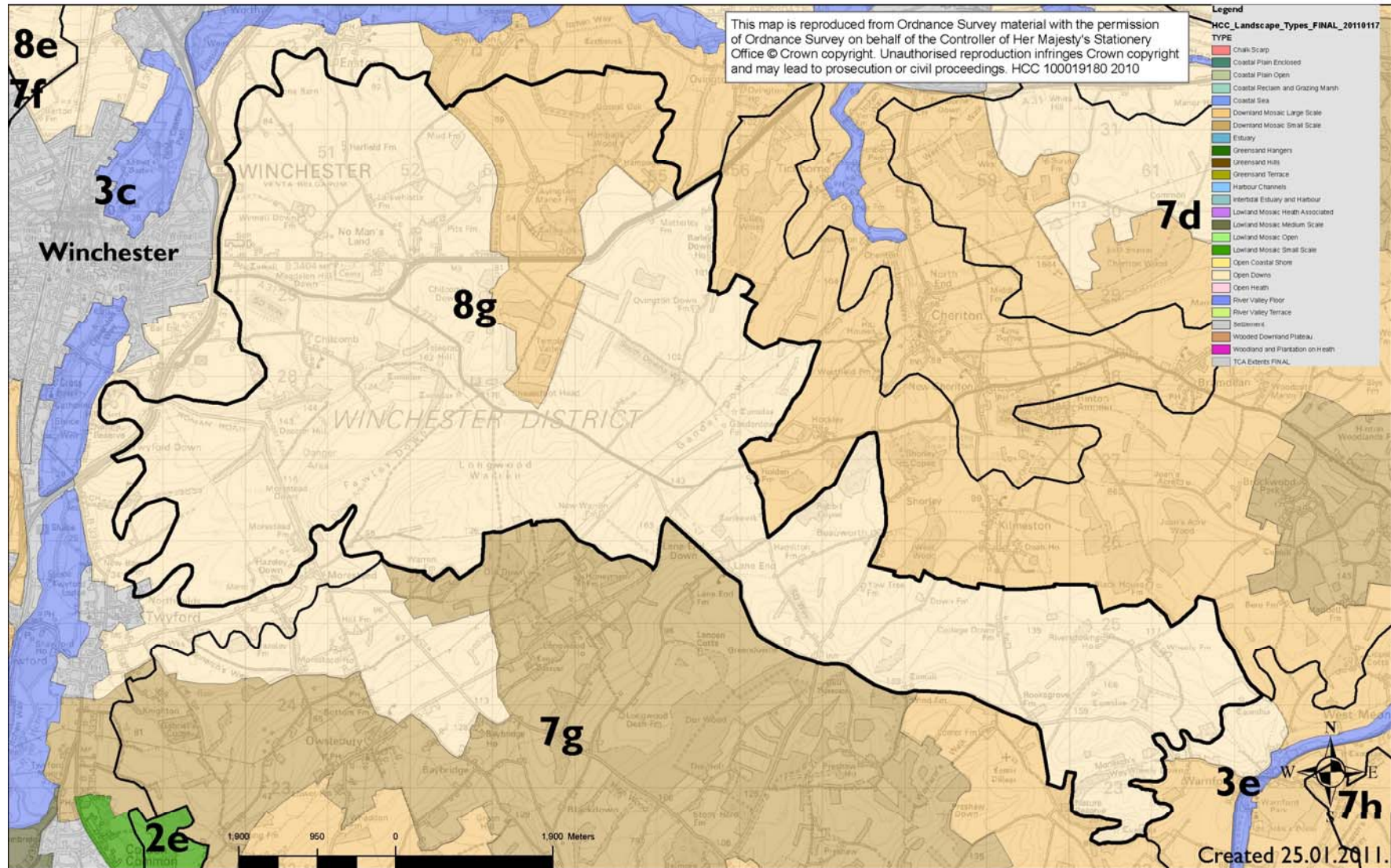
Chilcomb village – only small settlement in this elevated landscape.



Intech centre on the north east side of Winchester visible from Cheesefoot Head



St Catherine's hillfort.



EAST WINCHESTER OPEN DOWNS



1.0 Location and Boundaries

1.1 This landscape is located to the east of Winchester. Its western boundary is defined by the M3. To the north it is flanked by the Itchen Valley while to the south it undergoes a transition into the more wooded downland landscape of 7G. Its western edge is delineated by the Meon Valley.



1.2 Component County Landscape Types:

Open Downs, Downland Mosaic Large Scale.

1.3 Composition of Borough/District LCAs:

Winchester District

East Winchester Downs
South Winchester Downs (in part)
Bramdean Woodlands (in part)
Upper Meon Valley (in part)

South Downs Assessment

East Winchester Open Downs
South Winchester Downland Mosaic (in part)
Brandean and Cheriton Downland Mosaic (in part)

The boundary of this character closely follows the East Winchester Downs as defined in the Winchester District Assessment and the East Winchester Open Downs defined in the South Downs Assessment. It also extends in a narrow band further east following the elevated chalk ridge between Cheesefoot Head and Beacon Hill above the Meon Valley. This ridge continues to express the characteristics of open downland typical of this character area.

1.4 Associations with NCAs and Natural Areas:

NCA 130: Hampshire Downs and JCA 125: South Downs
NA 78: Hampshire Downs and NA 74: South Downs

2.0 Key Characteristics

- Topographically varied and striking rolling landscape including steep scarps, extensive branching dry valleys systems which produce deep, narrow, rounded combs for example at Chilcomb and the Devil's Punchbowl.
- Dominated by large 18th and 19th century fields of arable and pasture, bounded by sparse thorn hedgerows, creating an open landscape.
- Tracks surviving from the earlier manorial downland landscape are important historic landscape features.
- Occasional areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland occur, for example at Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill along with patches of scrub and woodland on steeper slopes, and game coverts, linear tree features and visually distinctive beech clumps on hill tops (notably at Cheesefoot Head and Beacon Hill).

- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity away from the major transport routes (M3, A31, A272) which cross the landscape.
- Large number of prehistoric and later earthworks, long barrows and round barrows, providing a strong sense of historical continuity.
- Good public access with a network of public rights of way, including the South Downs Way national trail, and open access land at Magdalen Hill Down and St Catherine's Hill.
- Sparse settlement including medieval village of Chilcomb and isolated farmsteads of 18th-19th century, with more modern buildings along the B3404 on the edge of Winchester.
- Panoramic views from Cheesefoot Head and from St Catherine's Hill across the Itchen Valley.
- Large open skies ensure that weather conditions are a dominant influence creating a dynamic, moody landscape, particularly on higher ground.
- The area forms an important eastern setting to Winchester.

3.0 Physical Characteristics and Land Use

3.1 The underlying chalk geology of this landscape has given rise to its strong topography and distinctive landform features, including steep scarps e.g. St Catherine's Hill and combes e.g. the dry valley west of Cheesefoot Head. The landscape in places has an rolling 'wave like' character and forms simple, smooth rounded skylines. The prominent hills in the landscape form a central spine which is part of the Meon anticline and the western end of the South Downs which rises to 176m at Cheesefoot Head. Erosion of the chalk has resulted in areas of lower lying land contained by inward facing escarpments, e.g. the Vale of Chilcomb contained by Deacon Hill and Magdalen Hill Down.

3.2 This area of high rolling downs and lower lying vales is predominately used for arable agriculture. Fields are generally medium sized and defined by well-trimmed hedgerows or large scale 'prairie' fields where hedgerows are absent. This gives rise to a simplistic landscape pattern where topographic variation is visually dominant. The steep sided long winding escarpments provide a notable contrast to the swathes of arable cultivation, and support areas of protected unimproved chalk grassland e.g. Cheesefoot Head and St Catherine's Hill. This pattern varies in the northeast where there is an area of more clayey soil and where woodland (some of which is ancient e.g. Hampage Wood) is more prevalent, creating a more enclosed character. In some places more recent plantations have been planted such as at Great Clump, Long Clump and Lodge Clump. Many of these plantations are used for game cover and much of the area is managed for country sports (game shooting) which preserves the shape and form of the landscape. Of particular note in this character area are distinctive clumps of beech trees on prominent hills/knolls which add interest and local distinctiveness.

3.3 The area falls within the Environment Agency River Itchen catchment area. Although the area does not contain any major watercourses (the river valleys form dry chalk valleys or winterbournes) this area is hydrologically important as part of a wider chalk aquifer. There are however occasional dew ponds.

4.0 Experiential/Perceptual Characteristics

4.1 The elevated nature of the downs in this area coupled with the rolling topography and steep sided scarps give rise to constantly changing views and regular

opportunities for panoramic views across this landscape and into areas beyond. These wide ranging views contrast with the more enclosed and intimate areas found at the base of the steep scarps e.g. Deacon Hill.

- 4.2 The South Downs Way extends across this landscape from west to east following the elevated chalk ridge of the South Downs. The Wayfarer's Way also crosses through the eastern part of this landscape while the Pilgrim's Way passes through the west close to Winchester. These long distance routes along with a relatively high concentration of public rights of way, bridleways and areas of open access on chalk downland, e.g. Magdalen Hill Down and St Catherine's Hill, make this landscape relatively accessible. Nevertheless certain parts of this landscape do have restricted access as a result of the firing ranges around Fawley Down/Deacon Hill and Chilcomb Ranges and also in relation to the sewage farm east of St Catherine's Hill. The road network which crosses this landscape and flanks its western side creates some barriers to access and fragments the recreational experience to some degree.
- 4.3 This landscape lies in close proximity to the city of Winchester forming an important landscape setting to the city. The western boundary of this character mostly follows the edge of the M3 motorway and this coupled with night blight from Winchester results in reduced tranquillity levels in the west. Further east however, tranquillity levels readily increase, the open, simple form of the downs and the relatively limited population and roads give rise to a sense of remoteness, emptiness and stillness.

5.0 Biodiversity Character

- 5.1 This is an arable landscape with large areas of improved grassland. In the west and south west, there are also strips of unimproved and semi-improved calcareous grassland. There are sports pitches at the western extent of the area and amenity grassland in the east.
- 5.2 Woodland exists as copses and strips in the west and east. In the west, woodland strips are often associated with unimproved calcareous grasslands. Woodland types include broadleaved woodland, mixed, broadleaved and coniferous plantations and a small patch of active coppice without standards. Ancient and semi-natural woodland occurs in the north at Hampage Wood/ Bushy Copse. There is no broadleaved woodland in the west of the area.
- 5.3 There are two SSSIs in this character area. Cheesefoot Head SSSI is a large area of steeply-sloping chalk downland around a predominantly north-facing horseshoe-shaped dry valley. Almost the whole of the site comprises species-rich turf. Beacon Hill, Warnford SSSI is a chalk spur capped with clay-with-flints, overlooking the Meon valley from the west and extends into LCA 7G. The steep north and south facing slopes of the spur support herb-rich chalk grassland flora, beech, ash, hazel woodland and chalk scrub. Hawthorn encroachment of open grassland has occurred in the relatively recent past but is now held in check by heavy rabbit grazing. Beacon Hill, Warnford is also designated as a NNR for the downland flora, scrub and woodland it supports. A third SSSI extends into the west of this character area namely St Catherine's Hill SSSI – information on this can be found in LCA 3C.
- 5.4 This character area contains parts of the St Catherine's Head to Cheesefoot Head BOA. It comprises a series of steep chalk scarp slopes facing south, north, east and

west with species-rich chalk grasslands, including mosaics of improved/ semi-improved grasslands with encroaching scrub. It is important for a diverse range of butterfly species, farmland birds and rare arable plants.

- 5.5 There are more than 20 SINCs in this landscape character area, designated for their ancient and semi-natural woodland, unimproved grassland or for the notable species which they support.

6.0 Historic Character

6.1 Archaeology

- 6.1.1 This can be divided into two sections: a larger area immediately east of Winchester (edged to the north and the west by the Itchen valley), and a narrow tail of chalk ridge cutting south east to the Meon valley. The latter area is suggested as an ancient long distance prehistoric route way.

- 6.1.2 There is a little Mesolithic evidence, and it is a reasonable assumption that the focus of activity in this period was the Itchen and Meon valleys.

- 6.1.3 Neolithic evidence is strongest along the Itchen valley, suggesting that exploitation and settlement was associated with the valley. There are two long barrows which overlook the southern part of the open down land east of Twyford. Evidence suggests patterns of settlement on the open downland are weaker to the east of Winchester than to the west. This pattern continued in the Bronze Age, although the distinct nature of the distribution might reflect the archaeological work associated with the M3. The absence of identified Bronze Age settlement on the downs leaves it ambiguous as to how intensively they were settled. There are Bronze Age burial mounds in the area of 8G overlooked by the long barrows which might suggest that this area was being intensively exploited. There is also a broad band of burial mounds along the central spine of the narrow chalk corridor. This may be suggestive of the putative route way, but may also be due to the linear and narrow nature of the distinctive chalk downland.

- 6.1.4 This ambivalence and weaker settlement distribution continues into the Iron Age. Although it is clear from enclosure, settlement and field systems that there was an extensive farmed landscape, again it does not have the intensity of other open downland landscapes to the west. The strongest concentration of Iron Age settlement is overlooking the Itchen valley around St Catherine's Hill (overlooking the major Iron Age centre of Venta Belgarum).

- 6.1.5 In the Roman period the settlement is concentrated in the Itchen valley, where Winchester was major civitas town, and the route way north and south is well marked by settlement. There is a relatively weak distribution of Roman settlement going east. Roman villas lie to the south in the Small Scale Mosaic Downland as though this represents a zone of expansion. The Roman road running southeast out of Winchester is a dominant historic landscape feature and reflects the capacity of features to fossilise in the landscape.

6.2 Historic Landscape

- 6.2.1 This landscape has a strong historic homogeneity, especially in the west, reflecting the Parliamentary enclosure acts of the 18th and 19th centuries which resulted in the conversion of open fields and common downland to privately owned fields. This

character area covers land in the more remote parts of parishes which stretched down to the adjoining valleys. Areas of open downland and fields were evident in many of the parishes in the early 19th century. Evidence of former downland can still be seen on the steeper slopes that have not been ploughed e.g. Beacon Hill, Wheely Down, Morestead Down and Cheesefoot Head, although some areas are neglected and overgrown. The relatively late enclosure of this landscape such as in Kilmiston parish of 800 acres in 1803 is typical. This led to an increase in the cultivation of arable crops and the loss of downland pasture. The remnant drove roads which form rural lanes and tracks in today's landscape reflect the former movement of livestock between areas of grazing and are associated with early (Saxon or medieval) ladder fields which extend out of the valleys and form a framework for the later enclosure patterns on former downland.

6.2.2 Recent trends towards the rationalisation of field boundaries and field amalgamation has led to large scale 'prairie' fields with few hedgerows. The modern fields at Longwood Warren indicate late enclosure of this area that was set apart from the surrounding fieldscape for the farming of rabbits.

6.2.3 An exception to this general pattern can be found around the village of Chilcomb. Here there is evidence of a smaller scale medieval field pattern reflecting former open fields and comprising small scale enclosures with irregular boundaries defined by hedgerows and hedgerow trees and grass verges. The small scale, enclosed nature of these fields and their association with the village of Chilcomb is in contrast to the rest of the character area.

6.3 **Built Environment**

6.3.1 The M3 corridor forms the western limit of this character area. Other secondary routes through this landscape include the Alresford and Morestead Roads which are typically straight reflecting their Roman origins. The A272 runs east-west generally following the line of the ridge. Other roads comprise a collection of winding single track rural lanes which connect farmsteads to the main road network and are often of ancient drove road origin.

6.3.2 Today Chilcomb village is the only settlement within the area. It has a Norman church and is surrounded by fields that were enclosed in the medieval period.

6.3.3 Other settlement is limited to isolated farmsteads, (some of which are medieval in origin), located in sheltered positions within valleys and at the base of the mini scarps. Building materials are typically flint, red brick, clay tiles and Welsh slate, with some modern materials including concrete, corrugated iron and asbestos used in farm buildings. Flint is particularly characteristic of the agricultural barns and walls.

6.3.4 Part of Avington Park extends into this character area in the north, although the main house is located in the Itchen Valley below. Underlying this parkland is an earlier medieval deer park (the Prior of St Swithin's). The parkland has established trees and expansive views of the countryside to the north. There are no other parks and gardens within this character area.

EVALUATION

7.0 Forces for Change

1. Intensification of agriculture and changes in land management.
2. Demand for access and recreation, due to National Park and proximity to centres of population.
3. Potential development of masts and other tall structures.
4. Detracting modern development including large agricultural buildings. Major residential development is planned for Winchester, just outside this character area.
5. Climate change, potentially affecting species composition, crop choice and tree loss as a result of increased storms, droughts and disease.
6. MOD land- live firing at Chilcomb.

KEY QUALITIES AND EFFECTS OF FORCES

<p>7.1 A strong sense of time depth created by landscape features such as prehistoric earthworks, Roman road, medieval droeways and the historic village of Chilcomb, centred on its Norman church and surrounded by historic field patterns.</p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2.3.4	<p>Threats: Potential loss of the settings to archaeological sites through development. Impact of traffic on rural roads, especially commuter routes such as the Morestead Road. Damage to historic tracks by four-wheel drive vehicles, affecting these historic landscape features. Potential incremental loss of historic character of settlements by insensitive modern development (for example, modern garden boundary treatments replacing traditional hedges or flint walls). Damage to buried and upstanding archaeology by ploughing, erosion by visitors, and other means.</p> <p>Opportunities: Conserve archaeological sites and their settings through appropriate management and sensitive siting of any new development within the setting. Use of the Rural Roads Initiative to conserve the routes and rural character of the historic roads whilst enabling them to meet Highways standards. In particular discourage speeding on minor roads, and encourage appropriate management of chalk grassland roadside verges. Promote CAP actions to minimise damage caused by off-road vehicles and reduce conflicts of interest between different users of routes. Promote reference to historic building guidance documents (HCC, EH and local) with regard to the use of traditional building materials. Use Planning policies and conditions to ensure that any new development is sympathetic to existing settlement form, styles and materials, and is well integrated into the landscape. Village Design Statements could provide an opportunity to emphasise the nucleated form and rural character of Chilcomb, the important open views of the village (and its landmark church) from surrounding escarpments and from Winchester, and the importance of the medieval fields which form its setting.</p>

<p>7.2 <i>Elevated downland with distinctive topography, hill-top beech clumps and panoramic views has a strong sense of place and openness, which is enhanced by the wide skies and changing patterns of cloud.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.4	<p>Threats: Visual impact of prominent structures on skylines, such as telecommunications masts and potentially wind turbines. Trend towards poor management of woodland cover and tree clumps, resulting in potential loss of these distinctive landscape features. Plethora of signage at popular sites (e.g. Old Winchester Hill) resulting in an inadvertent urbanising influence on the natural beauty of the area.</p> <p>Opportunities: Use of planning policies to retain the open and distinctive skylines of the area, in accordance with the South Downs Management Plan. Use planning policies and conditions to minimise the impact of intrusive structures through sensitive siting, and screening if possible. Target woodland grant schemes to improve management of tree clumps to retain their presence in the landscape. Ensure that signage and interpretation is undertaken in a sensitive way, in accordance with CAP actions.</p>
<p>7.3 <i>Scarp slopes have a greater sense of enclosure, and provide valuable ecological habitats including unimproved calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2.5	<p>Threats: Visitor pressure on fragile grassland areas. Hawthorn/ scrub encroachment onto downland. Past (and potential future) lack of management of remnant species-rich calcareous grassland. Rectilinear form of recently established woodland blocks and shelterbelts does not fit with the grain of the landscape. Lack of woodland management, resulting in trees having less resistance to drought, storm damage and disease (all potentially exacerbated by climate change).</p> <p>Opportunities: Management of land to retain the balance between conservation, recreation and production, in accordance with CAP targets and South Downs Management Plan. Target agri-environment schemes to conserve and enhance chalk downland including appropriate grazing strategies, link patches of remnant unimproved grassland, and support reversion opportunities in accordance with BOA objectives. Monitor the restored chalk downland on land adjoining Magdalene Hill. Target woodland grant schemes to restore replanted ancient woodland to a more semi-natural character, and promote traditional management practices such as thinning, coppicing, replanting, ride and edge management and removal of invasive alien species. Encourage any new woodland/copse planting to use locally indigenous species and to respond positively to the contours and landform.</p>

<p>7.4 <i>An open agricultural landscape, with large regular fields of arable crops, extensive areas of improved pasture and isolated farmsteads.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.4	<p>Threats: Continued visual intrusion of large modern farm buildings in the landscape. Past loss of grassland to arable use changing the pattern of the landscape. Agricultural intensification may lead to a loss of biodiversity. Potential pollution of rivers and chalk aquifers by agricultural runoff. Crop type changes in response to climate change could have dramatic visual impacts in this open agricultural landscape.</p> <p>Opportunities: Use planning policy and conditions to ensure that new agricultural buildings are sensitively sited and/or screened within the landscape. Target agri-environment schemes to: Restore and enhance existing hedgerow structures through replanting (where appropriate) and management, whilst retaining the openness of the downland; encourage sustainable agricultural practices to minimise pollution of watercourses and restore and enhance the biodiversity of arable farmland, through (for example) provision of conservation headlands.</p>
<p>7.5 <i>The proximity of the western part of this Landscape Character Area to Winchester means that it forms a distinctive setting for the city, and also provides recreational access for residents.</i></p>	
FORCES FOR CHANGE:	CONSEQUENCES
1.2.3.4.5	<p>Threats: Impacts on the historic setting of Winchester through the introduction of large or intrusive structures such as wind turbines on skylines. Fragmentation of the recreation experience and barriers to access (e.g Firing ranges (Chilcomb); major roads). Visitor pressure at key locations such as St Catherine’s Hill and Cheesefoot head. “Night-blight” from Winchester reduces tranquillity in the western end of the landscape character area. Development, and urban-fringe land uses such as sports pitches change the appearance and pattern of the landscape and affect the setting of the city.</p> <p>Opportunities: Use planning policies and conditions to retain open and distinctive skylines, especially where they contribute to the setting of Winchester. Any new development should be sensitively located to avoid prominent ridgelines, and screened with indigenous species where possible. Promote CAP actions to improve signage and walking routes out of Winchester Investigate measures for reducing light pollution. Use of carefully designed planting schemes to integrate urban fringe land uses and development into the landscape, thereby enhancing the setting of Winchester.</p>

Natural England (2014), National Character Area Profile 130: Hampshire Downs



Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper¹, Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention³, we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

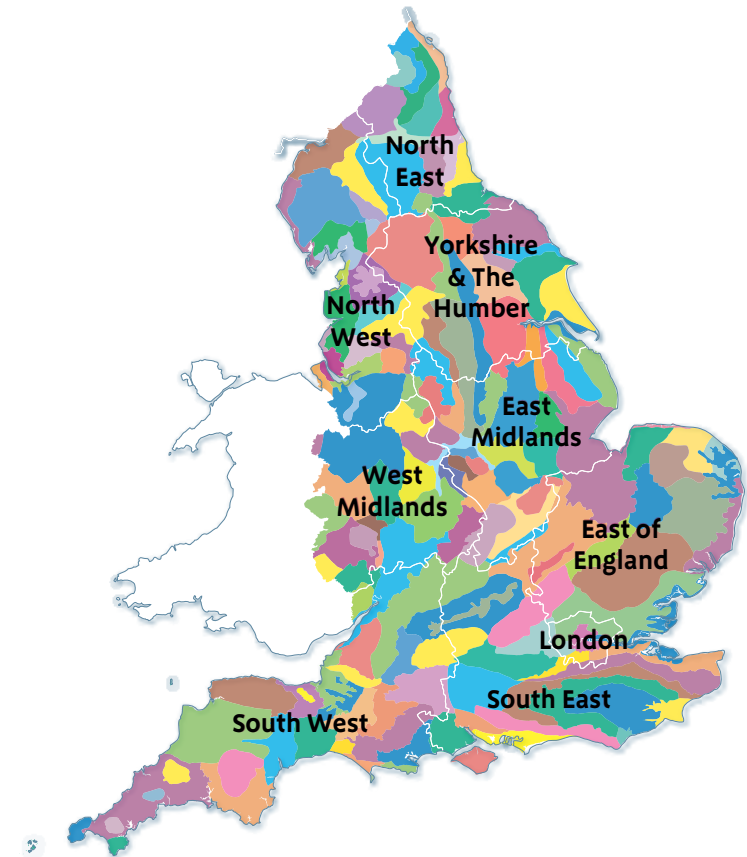
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The Hampshire Downs are part of the central southern England belt of Chalk, rising to 297 m in the north-west on the Hampshire–Wiltshire border. A steep scarp face delineates the Downs to the north, overlooking the Thames Basin, and to the east, overlooking the Weald. The majority of the area is an elevated, open, rolling landscape dominated by large arable fields with low hedgerows on thin chalk soils, scattered woodland blocks (mostly on clay-with-flint caps) and shelterbelts. To the east hedgerows are often overgrown and there are larger blocks of woodland. A fifth of the area is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 6 per cent in the South Downs National Park due to the scenic quality of the landscape. Flower- and invertebrate-rich remnants of calcareous grassland remain mostly along the northern scarp and on isolated commons throughout.

The Chalk is a large and important aquifer; hence groundwater protection and source vulnerability designations cover most of the area, and catchment sensitive farming – to control pollution, run-off and soil erosion – is a vital activity. The aquifer feeds several small streams flowing north and east, but the dominant catchment of the area is that of the rivers Test and Itchen, which flow in straight-sided, relatively deeply incised valleys across most of the National Character Area. The Itchen is a Special Area of Conservation and, with the Test, is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. These rivers, with the watermeadows, peat soils, mires and fens of their flood plains, are the most important habitats of the area. The valleys are also home to the main settlements, the local road system and important economic activities such as watercress growing and fly fishing.

The water, supplied by the chalk aquifer feeding these catchments, is also the main ecosystem asset of the area, providing high-quality water to large populations in Andover, Basingstoke (both post-Second World War expanded

towns that accommodate the London overspill population), Winchester (the ancient capital of England on a key crossing point of the Itchen), the Southampton and Portsmouth conurbation and the Isle of Wight.

The main challenges facing the area are the continued high levels of population and economic growth in these urban areas, their associated demands for water, traffic levels on major trunk roads crossing the Downs, and further intensification of farming. The corollary is that the tranquillity of the Downs and river valleys, and their historic environment, is a magnet for informal outdoor recreation. This provides opportunities for increased awareness of the potential threats to the environment and the behavioural changes needed to mitigate them.

Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.



The River Itchen at Itchen Abbas, the home of fly fishing.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

- **SEO 1:** In the catchments of the rivers Test and Itchen, work with partners, landowners, land and river managers, user groups, businesses and local communities to implement sustainable management regimes that conserve, enhance and restore the priority habitats and species of the watercourses and associated wetlands.
- **SEO 2:** Ensure that the remnant areas of biodiversity-rich chalk grassland are retained and managed to ensure good condition, and seek opportunities to restore areas in poor condition and extend the area of this habitat. Protect and manage the associated historic features of these sites.
- **SEO 3:** Work with landowners and the farming community to encourage sustainable food and fodder production that also retains or enhances landscape character, provides habitats for wildlife, and minimises the impacts on ecosystems such as water and soil and on the historic features in the landscape.
- **SEO 4:** Encourage woodland management regimes that: ensure good condition of priority habitats and species; maximise the potential ecosystem benefits of woodland such as carbon sequestration, water quality and regulation, timber provision, recreation and biomass potential; and enhance the landscape visually.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The Hampshire Downs are the central block of a broad belt of chalk downland that runs through southern England from west Dorset to East Sussex and Kent. North-west and west of Hampshire the landscape morphs imperceptibly into the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs National Character Area (NCA) and the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs NCA. To the south-east the landscape rises to form the South Downs. Steep scarp slopes mark the boundary with the Thames Basin Heaths NCA to the north and, in the east, the East Hampshire Hangers mark the boundary with the Wealden Greensand. To the south the transition is more gradual, descending to the South Hampshire Lowlands and the South Hampshire Coast Plain NCAs.

This major aquifer is the source of rivers flowing into three systems: short sections of the Loddon, Lyde, Wey and Whitewater flow north and east from their source on the Chalk into the Thames; the Rother, from the base of the Hangers, flows east to join the Arun; while the Test and Itchen, in long narrow valleys, flow south through the Chalk to Southampton Water at the centre of the Hampshire Basin. The latter are the key fluvial features of the NCA and their waters provide not only a quality domestic source for the Southampton and Portsmouth conurbations, but also fresh, clean water for the aquatic habitats of the river systems and their flood plains and for the natural harbours, estuaries and marshes of the North Solent shore.

The elevation and steepness of the northern scarp provide long-distance views over the Thames Valley, and a clearly demarked 'north face' of the Downs if looking, or travelling, south. Similarly, the wooded scarp of the Hangers

dominates the skyline viewed from the A3(M) and Petersfield in the east, clearly marking the edge of the Chalk and the start of the Upper Greensand of the Weald.

Major radial transport arteries cut through the Downs connecting London with Hampshire and the South West: the M3, A31, A303 and the main railway lines from London Waterloo to Salisbury, Southampton, Bournemouth and Poole, and Weymouth. The A34 cuts north-south through the centre of the NCA connecting Southampton docks with the Midlands. Traffic on these routes has a significant impact on the landscape.



The Chalk and Greensand scarp of the East Hampshire Hangers, overlooking the Western Weald.

Key characteristics

- The rolling, elevated, chalk arable downland has an open, exposed character that provides open skies and long-distance views.
- Elevated plateaux and upper valley slopes are characterised by extensive open tracts of large, low-hedged fields with thin chalky soils, shelterbelts, and ancient semi-natural woodland blocks on clay-with-flint caps on some of the steeper slopes.
- In contrast, within the sheltered valleys and to the east of the area, the network of hedgerows, interspersed by numerous areas of oak/ash or hazel woodland coppice and smaller meadow fields, gives a strong sense of enclosure.
- The rivers and streams of the Test and Itchen catchments are internationally significant, and distinctive chalk rivers, running in deep valleys, cut into the Chalk.
- A network of distinctive and ancient droving roads and trackways is a particular feature across the Downs.
- There is widespread evidence of prehistoric settlement on the open downlands, including burial mounds with visually prominent iron-age hill forts. In the valleys, there is evidence of Roman estates and nucleated medieval village settlement patterns, and fieldscapes and farmsteads across the downlands evidence the gradual and planned enclosure from the medieval period.
- The area's distinctive appearance derives from the use of chalk cob (in the west), weatherboarded timber frame and small, handmade local brick with flint in traditional rural buildings and walls surrounding farm courtyards, with thatch surviving in many places.
- The settlement pattern varies between the relatively dense strings of villages along the lower river valleys and the very low-density, nucleated settlements in the upper reaches of the rivers and on the Downs.
- The ancient city of Winchester is located at the heart of this landscape and at the centre of the Itchen Valley, and the more modern, rapidly expanding towns of Basingstoke and Andover are on downland sites at the head of the Loddon and Test valleys.

Hampshire Downs today

The Downs are an elevated block of Middle and Upper Cretaceous Chalk that rises to 297 m at Walbury Hill near Inkpen in the north-west, from where it descends gradually to approximately 100 m to 150 m in the south. The countryside is large-scale, open and rolling, with broad, gently domed, undulating plateaux and distinct hill tops, ridges and scarps, which are dissected by both steep and shallow valleys. Soils are mainly free-draining, thin chalky loams, with heavier, younger clay-with-flint soils on the caps and some of the valley sides. These coincide with much of the scattered woodland in an otherwise uniform arable landscape of large fields, shelterbelts (many of them acting as cover for game birds) and low, thin hedgerows. A northerly scarp (much of it calcareous grassland), from Inkpen to Cottington's Hill near Kingsclere, overlooks the Thames Basin; and an eastern scarp, from Selborne to Langrish, which is heavily wooded with beech and known as the 'East Hampshire Hangers', twists sinuously north-south overlooking the Weald. The outstanding scenic quality of the landscape, in parts of the area, is recognised in the designations of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park.

Cutting through this high, chalk landscape are the valleys of the rivers Itchen and Test. These are relatively narrow, with steep sides in places, and flat, lush valley bottoms of thick peaty and gravel deposits, through which flow fast, clear streams with a rich diversity of aquatic plants, insects and varieties of fish, including trout and salmon. At the head of the valleys and in small side valleys, flowing water can be seasonally intermittent, hence their name – 'winterbournes'. The main rivers, with fast-moving, well-oxygenated water, are largely fed by the chalk aquifer and much of the characteristic wildlife associated with these aquatic habitats is dependent on the quality and content of this water.



Burghclere Beacon. A hillfort on the northern scarp, popular for recreation, and managed for its chalk grassland habitat.

Although these watercourses appear 'natural', many have been engineered – for example, to power mills or for agricultural (watermeadows) or flood management reasons – often increasing the biodiversity until the mid 20th century when some engineering of watercourses resulted in some meadows and side streams drying out and losing their value for biodiversity.

In contrast to most of Hampshire, early clearance of the Downs has left relatively few areas of ancient woodland; where they remain most are associated with clay-with-flint soils of varying acidity, or with thin chalk soils on steeper slopes. The most extensive and important are the ancient sessile oaks in Harewood Forest near Andover; Crab Wood near Winchester with a rich diversity of woodland plants; Thorneycombe Wood near Vernham Dean with stands of wych elm and ash and field maple; and, the East Hampshire Hangers and Ashford, Noar and Selborne.

Across most of the downland, land use is dominated by intensive arable farming of cereals and fodder crops, some rotation pasture, and pig and cattle farming. This land management works within a framework of large historic fields. Some with sinuous boundaries and species-rich hedgerows with trees dating from 15th century and later enclosure, often in tandem with the establishment of farmsteads over that period. Regular enclosed landscapes, especially on the thinner soils, date from the late 18th century and have the largest fields and farmsteads, the latter often with workers' houses; here hedgerows can often be low and thin. Hedgerow quality has, however, improved recently as a result of agri-environment agreements. The thin chalk soils throughout the area enable high levels of spring cropping that are above the national average and support populations of rare arable flora. In contrast, the valley bottoms have a more intimate landscape of small fields, which have in many places been drained for arable crops, or for permanent grassland for cattle and sheep – the latter including widespread use of the locally distinctive 'Hampshire Down' breed.

The main semi-natural habitats are remnant chalk grassland, along the northern scarp and scattered throughout on commons; ancient woodlands (see above); the river valleys with chalk streams and aquatic valley habitats; and field margins that are the most important area in England for plants of arable cultivation and disturbed soils.

Of these the most important international designation is the River Itchen Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which covers the entire river and some of its flanking meadows. This is designated because the river supports several species of water-crowfoot and the presence of southern damselfly, bullhead fish, white-clawed crayfish, brook lamprey, salmon and otter. The quality of the Itchen Valley landscape, its habitat and recreation interest, led to its inclusion in the South Downs National Park. The valleys and watercourses of both the Itchen and the Test, and other rivers such as the Whitewater, support several other rare and important wetland species and habitats, such as those found at Greywell Fen.

In the south-west, the woodland around Mottisfont (National Trust), on the western flank of the River Test, is also an SAC principally because of the maternity site and foraging area for barbastelle bats, although nine other bat species also occur. This area is also important for fritillary butterflies.

In the south-east, the East Hampshire Hangers SAC is designated for its beech-associated vascular plants, mainly hellebores and rare bryophytes.

Three major settlements dominate the Downs. Winchester, with its cathedral, college and historic town centre, developed on an ancient meeting of trackways ('dongas') at a strategic crossing point of the Itchen. This was a major Roman settlement, the pre-Norman capital of England, and is now the home of county administration and an increasingly popular international visitor attraction.

Andover (at the head of the Test catchment) and Basingstoke (at the head of the Loddon) are two market towns that were expanded to accommodate the London overspill population after the Second World War. Largely 20th-century, urban features demonstrating planned communities, they continue to experience rapid economic and housing growth. The river valleys provide the focus for smaller, nucleated settlements and market towns such as Alresford, Stockbridge, Whitchurch and Overton, and the communications that connect them.



Stockbridge High Street crossing the River Test. A typical Hampshire Downs market town.

Major transport arteries cut through the Downs connecting London with Hampshire and the South West: the M3, A31, A303 and the main railway lines from London Waterloo to Salisbury, Southampton, Bournemouth and Poole, and Weymouth. The A34 cuts north–south through the centre of the NCA connecting Southampton docks with the Midlands. Traffic has a significant impact on the landscape, but, away from these roads and the main towns, levels of tranquillity and remoteness remain relatively high, particularly in the area north-west of Andover, towards the South Downs, and in the river valleys. These features are all valued by walkers, cyclists and horse riders who are well served by a dense rights-of-way network. Offroad cycling is very popular, attracting large numbers using the specific routes promoted by the county council. There are several, well-used, long-distance routes, such as the Wayfarers Walk along the Chalk scarp, and the Clarendon Way connecting Winchester and Salisbury.

The rivers Test and Itchen are both internationally renowned as the birthplace of fly fishing. This attracts anglers from all over the world, supports an important and prestigious industry, and has been the literary inspiration for influential fishing writers such as Frederic Halford and Harry Plunket Greene.

The Hampshire Downs have inspired many artists and authors, notably the naturalist Gilbert White on Selborne Common, Jane Austen at Chawton, and Richard Adams at Watership Down. The chalk rivers have been remarked on by many authors, notably Isaak Walton, writing in 1676. William Cobbett, writing in 1825, vividly describes the landscape and farming practices of the Downs as he rode from Winchester to Whitchurch.

The landscape through time

The Upper Cretaceous Chalk, forming the main bedrock geology of this NCA, was deposited in a warm, shallow, tropical sea between 75 and 90 million years ago. It has retained its horizontal bedding across most of the area, but in places shows evidence of folding and tilting caused by earth movements related to the Alpine orogeny that elevated this landscape. Occasionally outliers of the older Middle Chalk strata, distinguished by their lack of flint nodules, have been exposed. Most exposures of the Chalk are confined to the coast, but in this NCA there are a few places – for example, Ladle Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) near Burghclere – where it can be studied inland.

The distinctive, incised, straight-sided valley systems of the chalk streams are a product of post-glacial erosion of the chalk bedrock that remained frozen and therefore not porous. Rivers, swollen with meltwater and eroded material, cut the deep valleys with wide bottoms in which now flow much smaller watercourses. This phenomenon also explains the numerous dry valleys at the upper end of the catchments, now unable to hold water because of the porosity of the bedrock, except when swollen after heavy – usually winter – rainfall. As rivers slowed, this allowed the deposition of sediment and plant material which, because of the high water table, allowed deep peat beds to accumulate.

Clearance of the primeval forest cover and evidence of human occupation date back to the Neolithic period when, about 4,000–6,000 years ago, agricultural practices enabled settled communities to develop, helped by the local abundance of flint for tool making. The most notable evidence, in the form of long barrows, occurs in the remnant chalk grasslands of the northerly scarp. Woodland clearance continued during the Bronze Age and Iron Age, agriculture intensified, field systems and settlement hierarchies were established,

and the hill forts such as Danebury and Burghclere beacons were built. Also at this time, many of the ancient trackways following higher ground across the Downs, now familiar as footpaths such as the Wayfarers Walk, were established. The Romans added their own roads between their major camps and settlements, many of them now followed by modern roads such as the A33 north of Winchester. In addition to opening up the landscape, woodland clearance and early agriculture also led to widespread erosion of the former deep, non-calcareous, forest soils and the formation of the thin soils upon which the chalk grasslands developed.

During the Anglo-Saxon period, farming developed further and much of the framework of the modern-day land divisions was established, along with the beginning of settlements focused in the upper valleys. A notable surviving feature of this early pastoral farming is the 'ladder' field system that links valley-bottom meadows with woodland and cleared downs on higher ground, many of the boundaries surviving as banks, ditches and parish boundaries.

King Alfred is associated with the establishment of Winchester as the capital of Wessex, which developed in the late Saxon period as a centre for trades and commerce with a cathedral, royal mint and garrison. Modern estimates suggest that up to 50 per cent of the woodland had been cleared by this time, although the influence of Forest Laws to protect land for hunting began to have an effect. Medieval influences can be clearly seen in the lush bottoms of the Itchen and Test valleys where the parish boundaries are still reflected in field boundaries and tracks, and the settlement pattern is highly nucleated and very low density.

The 15th and 16th centuries saw a rise in the importance of arable and sheep farming on the Downs, often driven by large-scale renter farmers, and this period represents the maximum extension of the chalk grassland. Woodland continued to be cleared, but many of the remaining woodlands were intensively managed

to support the thriving sheep economy, producing large quantities of hurdles from coppiced hazel, with oak and ash standards. During the same period the flood plains began to be intensively managed as watermeadows, a system of critical importance to sheep and dairy farming, providing an early spring flush of growth and a rich source of hay for winter. Animals were also used to fertilise arable land by turning them out overnight.

Arable farming continued to develop over the 17th and 18th centuries, driving the gradual and planned enclosure of downland which had reverted to grass since the 14th century. The decline of the sheep economy during the 19th century and the need to produce more home-grown cereals led to the ploughing of increasing areas of chalk grassland and the gradual dereliction of the old watermeadows. Nevertheless, the distinctive pattern of ridges and furrows is still widespread in the valleys – a precious historic landscape that supports rich flora and invertebrate life.

The area of chalk grassland has historically fluctuated; however, the last fifty years have seen an unprecedented level of chalk grassland being ploughed, or reverting to scrub. Today unimproved (species-rich) chalk grassland is confined to the steepest slopes: marginal land out of the reach of machinery, or land managed primarily for conservation.

Game fishing, which began in chalk rivers in the 19th century, has become a high-value land use and the rivers Itchen and Test are largely managed to this end. This has resulted, in the past, in some distortion of the natural fish stocks, weed cutting with implications for silt deposition and channel erosion, grazed banks of the watercourses being fenced and regular mowing of bankside paths. More sympathetic management is being slowly introduced that can benefit the natural ecosystems as well as fly fishing.

Continuing growth in population, housing and economic development in South Hampshire, Basingstoke and Andover affects the Downs in several ways, but also benefits from their proximity as a recreational outlet, with benefits for health and wellbeing. Direct effects are the increasing visual impact of towns and cities visible from the Downs, increased traffic, noise and lighting. More indirect effects are the pressures on water supply and quality through abstraction, pollution and sewage discharge.



Most of the Downs is arable land, large open fields with thin hedges and a backdrop of woodland and shelter belts.

Natural England (2015), National Character Area Profile 125: South Downs



Introduction

As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper¹, Biodiversity 2020² and the European Landscape Convention³, we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

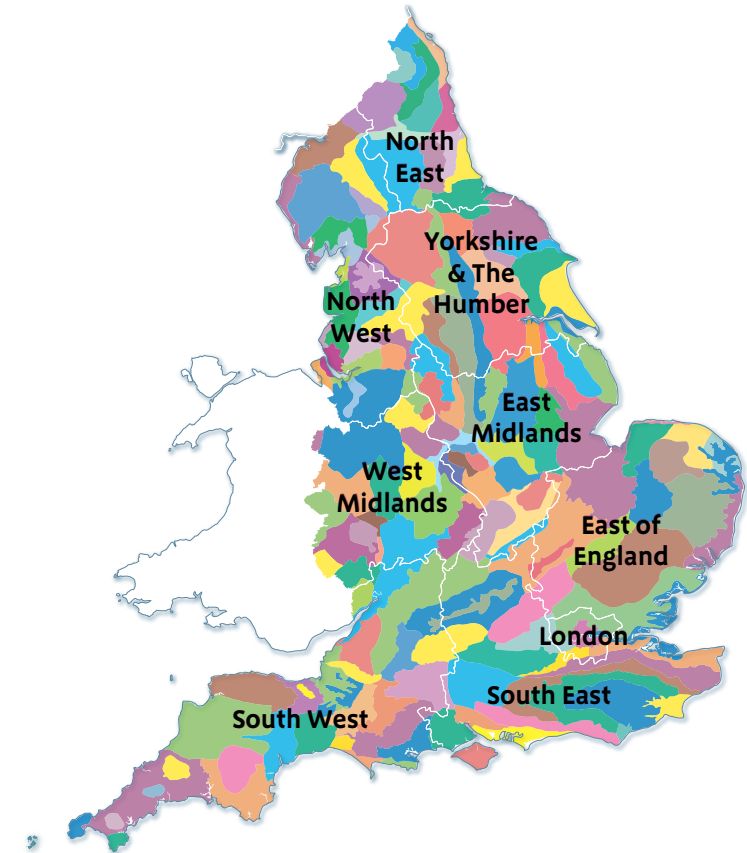
NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk

National Character Areas map



¹ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra (2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf)

² Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)

³ European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe (2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

Summary

The South Downs National Character Area (NCA) comprises a 'whale-backed' spine of chalk stretching from the Hampshire Downs in the west to the coastal cliffs of Beachy Head in East Sussex; two per cent of the NCA between Eastbourne and Seaford is recognised as Heritage Coast. The majority of the area falls within the South Downs National Park, a recognition of its natural beauty and importance for access and recreation, and allowing for local decision-making processes to manage this nationally important area. Some eight per cent of the NCA is classified as urban, comprising the coastal conurbation of Brighton and Hove in the east. The South Downs NCA is an extremely diverse and complex landscape with considerable local variation representing physical, historical and economic influences; much of it has been formed and maintained by human activity, in particular in agriculture and forestry. International Biosphere status was confirmed for Brighton and Lewes Downs in June 2014, securing it as the first completely new Biosphere site in the UK established for almost forty years and the first ever in south-east England.

This is a landscape of contrasts. Dramatic white chalk cliffs and downland create a sense of openness. Enclosure and remoteness can be found in woodland and even in close proximity to urban areas. This NCA provides a rich variety of wildlife and habitats; rare and internationally important species, such as the Duke of Burgundy butterfly, mature elms and rare ground-nesting birds all benefit from the characteristic mixed farming systems. Recreational activities within the NCA

include cycling, walking and horse riding on the South Downs Way National Trail which follows the ridge of the northern scarp and provides extensive panoramic views. National Park status enhances the NCA's recreational opportunities.

The Brighton groundwater management unit is the principal chalk aquifer supplying Brighton and surrounding areas. It has been identified as being under significant stress and is classified as having 'no water available', as is the River Ouse water resource management unit (WRMU). The River Adur WRMU, however, is classified as having 'water available'.⁴

In the west of the NCA, groundwater in the chalk feeds many of the rivers, streams and wetlands in the area and provides most of the water abstracted for public supply. The porosity of chalk is one of its most notable properties. Rain is largely absorbed through tiny, connected pores instead of lying on the surface and forming rivers, lakes and ponds. Rain water moves through the thin chalk soils and slowly replenishes the chalk aquifer below.

⁴ *Adur and Ouse Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy*, Environment Agency (March 2005) (accessed March 2013; URL: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GESO0305BVIG-E-E.pdf>)

In the centre of the NCA, the Worthing chalk aquifer is classified as having 'no water available'. The Arun, Adur, Cuckmere and Ouse dissect the chalk ridge in its eastern half, separating it into blocks, as they drain from the Low Weald south to the sea. The River Meon in the west follows a similar course, though it is a chalk stream in a typically narrower valley that subsequently broadens in the adjoining coastal plain before it reaches the south coast.



The South Downs consist of an archetypal chalk landscape of rolling hills, steep scarp slopes with dry valleys and a rich archaeological character. Centuries of sheep grazing on steep slopes have produced a network of tracks following the contours of the hills.

In many instances, farming has shaped the NCA over centuries; characteristic farming patterns range from arable in the west, wooded areas and mixed farming in the central areas and chalk grassland increasingly to the east. Over 80 per cent of the South Downs NCA is farmed.

The NCA has a wealth of well-conserved historical features including a range of archaeological sites from the Bronze and Iron Ages and early industrial sites from flint mines to ironworking furnaces. This is a landscape with a rich cultural heritage of art, music and rural traditions. Many well-known writers, poets, musicians and artists have drawn inspiration from its distinctive sense of place. Tranquillity is experienced most on the escarpment, dip slope and within the valleys of the chalk ridge and eastern and central downs, providing a sense of escape in a crowded corner of south-east England.

The coastline protects the area from increasing storms and rising sea levels while supporting important rare habitats for wildlife, from chalk cliffs and vegetated shingle beaches to the hidden treasures of chalk reefs that lie beneath the waves.

The chalk cliffs at the eastern extreme of the South Downs around Beachy Head represent yet another scarce type of habitat with its own ecological and geological importance. Constantly eroded by the sea, these magnificent cliffs support a range of specialised plants including algae and provide nesting sites for fulmar, kittiwake and peregrine falcon.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

- **SEO 1:** Plan for an expansion of species-rich chalk grassland and other semi-natural habitats, and manage and enhance other existing chalk habitats for wildlife connectivity, reinforcement of the distinctive landscape character, and improvement to water resource management.
- **SEO 2:** Manage, expand where appropriate and enhance the downland farmed landscape, the arable mixed farmed landscape of the dip slope and the broadleaved woodland cover, conserving wildlife habitats, contributing to food provision, maintaining a distinct yet evolving landscape pattern, improving water quality and providing local sources of renewable fuels.
- **SEO 3:** Conserve and promote the South Downs' rich historic environment, its unique geodiversity and national and local geological sites for the contribution they make to cultural heritage, biodiversity and landscape. Maintain and enhance quality of access, including via the South Downs Way National Trail, providing interpretation to enhance educational and recreational opportunities.
- **SEO 4:** Manage, enhance and integrate recreational opportunities and public enjoyment with conservation of the natural environment and tranquillity, reflecting the ambitions of the South Downs National Park.



Cissbury Ring, one of the largest iron-age hill forts in England.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The chalk ridge that comprises the South Downs National Character Area (NCA) extends west into the chalk plateau of the Hampshire Downs NCA, while the South Coast Plain NCA forms a transitional area between the central part of the southern chalk dip slope of the South Downs NCA and the sea. Extensive views

are afforded from many of the scarp slopes to the north over the Low Weald NCA and Wealden Greensand NCA.

The catchments of the rivers Cuckmere, Ouse, Adur and Arun drain south through prominent valleys in the eastern chalk ridge from the High Weald NCA via the Low Weald NCA – and the latter via the Wealden Greensand NCA – into the sea along the south coast, passing through major coastal settlements. River catchments that rise on the downs also drain into Chichester and Langstone Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site, while erosion of the chalk cliffs helps to feed the Dungeness shingle foreland to the east with a limited amount of new sediment.

The South Downs NCA shares many species with the adjacent Hampshire Downs NCA as they are ecologically and functionally linked. The South Downs Way National Trail extends westwards into the Hampshire Downs NCA.

A number of A roads dissect the ridge along its length, connecting the towns of the south coast to London. The area has linear parishes and estates reaching up to their former grazings from the farmland on either side, creating direct land use links and explaining the numerous lanes that climb and fall from the downs.

The Chichester chalk aquifer includes streams that feed into the internationally important habitat sites of Chichester and Langstone Harbour SPA⁵ and Pagham Harbour SPA, both of which fall within the South Coast Plain NCA.

Distinct areas

- Lullington Heath
- Kingley Vale

⁵ *The Arun and Western Streams Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy*, Environment Agency (April 2003) (accessed March 2013; URL: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GES00403BNMT-E-E.pdf>)



Walkers accessing the public rights of way along the downland providing panoramic views across the Downs and Low Weald.

Key characteristics

- A broad elevated east–west chalk ridge with a predominantly steep north-facing scarp slope and a gentle southerly dip slope, breaking into a series of hills in the west and terminating in distinctive chalk cliffs in the east.
- Cliffs between Beachy Head and Seaford Head are part of a Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site of international importance for its landscape and for research into coastal geomorphology.
- The principal rivers – the Arun, Adur, Cuckmere and Ouse – slice through the eastern half of the downs as wide U-shaped valleys with steep sides and flat alluvial flood plains with intensive dairying and crops, and characterised by criss-crossing ditches and meandering river channels. The meanders of the River Cuckmere by Seven Sisters chalk cliffs are particularly significant. Remnant wetland habitats including flood plain grazing marsh, fens and reed beds.
- Chalk streams running off both the north- and south-facing scarp slopes providing a key habitat for the scarp and the flood plain landscape, supporting species such as the brown trout.
- Woodland a feature of the central downs and, to a lesser extent, the western downs, also concentrated on the steep scarp slopes, consisting of both broadleaved, mostly ancient, woodland with beech, veteran trees, ash and sycamore, and conifers, with some large plantations. Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve (NNR) contains a wealth of yew woodland.
- Several different types of heathland habitat, including wet heath, wooded heath and chalk heath dependent on loess soils. Lullington Heath NNR near Eastbourne is one of the largest areas of chalk heath in the UK.
- The eastern downs characterised by large open arable and grassland fields, mostly enclosed by the 16th century, with a general absence of woodland and hedgerow boundaries, creating an open, exposed landscape. To the west of the River Arun, where holdings were smaller and ‘sheep-and-corn’ farming less important, hedgerows enclose medium to large irregular fields between the woodlands and designed parkland landscapes, the latter a particular feature of the central areas.
- Poor soils on the north-west area of the downs with patches of birch woodland, conifer plantation, bracken and rough grassland. The Gault Clay forms shallow, gently rolling lowland crossed by many streams flowing northwards. On the chalk hills, the infertile soils are generally thin, well drained and rich in calcium.
- Distinctive fragments of semi-natural chalk grassland dotted with chalk springs on scarp and combe slopes, with important associated habitats including rare chalk heath and species-rich chalk scrub.

Continued on next page...

Key characteristics continued

- A vast array of wildlife such as otters and barn owls; lesser known species such as the barbastelle bat, the chalk carpet moth, sundews (carnivorous plants) and the round-headed rampion, the county flower of Sussex; threatened species include the bee orchid, small blue butterfly and nightjar.
- Roads and villages concentrated in the river valleys, the more elevated areas sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads. The eastern end of the Downs is squeezed against the coastal plain conurbations of Brighton and Hove, and Worthing, which contain a wealth of architecture and give the area a strong sense of identity. There is also an almost continuous string of seaside towns: Rottingdean, Saltdean, Peacehaven, Newhaven and Seaford.
- Flint, brick and timber frame conspicuous in the built environment in walls, buildings, churches and barns, while roofs are of tile, slate or traditional thatch. The South Downs was once lined with windmills, some of which survive.
- Bronze-age round barrows and prominently sited iron-age hill forts, such as Cissbury Ring and Old Winchester Hill, are notable prehistoric features of the scarp and hill tops, especially in the west, as well as Mount Caburn in the east, and further bronze-age barrows and a causewayed camp at Willingdon (most of which are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments).
- The Long Man of Wilmington – a large hill figure located on the steep slopes near Eastbourne. One of only two extant human hill figures in England, it is 69 metres tall and is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Current archaeological research suggests that it dates from the 16th or 17th century. Others believe it to be more ancient, perhaps contemporary with the nearby Neolithic flint mines and barrows, or the work of medieval monks from Wilmington Priory.
- Public rights of way following drove roads and ancient routes along the accessible downland tops, benefiting from panoramic views across the downs and the Low Weald NCA. Roads and lanes striking across the downs perpendicularly and following historic tracks that originally brought livestock to their summer grazing.



The rivers Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere cut through the Downs and provide contrasting narrow belts of flat land within the rolling chalk landscape.

The South Downs today

The South Downs NCA is defined by a prominent ridge of chalk that stretches from Winchester in the west to Eastbourne and the East Sussex coastline in the east, where it meets the sea in the distinctive chalk cliffs of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters. Ninety per cent of the NCA falls within the South Downs National Park. The eastern half of the NCA is cut into distinct blocks by the four major river valleys of the Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere. Here the chalk topography is most pronounced, with a dramatic north-facing escarpment and dry valley systems carving the dip slope, and a discontinuous secondary escarpment further south. The topography combines with large fields, the result of successive enlargement and reorganisation reflecting the size of its farms, and an absence of woodland to create a vast landscape. The area is further characterised by fragments of nationally and internationally important chalk grassland that cling to the steep scarp and valley slopes and support many threatened species of plants, such as the frog and musk orchids and the critically endangered red star-thistle, as well as many scarce butterflies and invertebrates. Dominant along the south coast are the conurbations of Brighton and Hove, and Worthing.

By contrast, the central downs between the River Arun and the A3 London to Portsmouth road are characterised by extensive areas of often ancient woodland, with beech, ash and sycamore, conifer woods, some large plantations and historic parkland. These combine with large, hedgerow-bounded arable fields to create a large-scale landscape of importance for farmland bird species such as grey partridge and corn bunting. The topography is also less articulated and forms a broad, gently-sloping plateau stretching south from the steep, north-facing scarp.

Further west, the chalk ridge separates into a series of hills that gradually merge into the plateau of the adjoining Hampshire Downs NCA. Though less extensive, woodland is still a feature of the area and combines with ancient hedgerows to create the appearance of a well-wooded downland landscape supporting species such as the yellow bird's-nest plant. The landscape is nevertheless dominated by arable fields and grassland. Where the woodland combines with species-rich grassland, it can support populations of the rare fly orchid and the Duke of Burgundy butterfly, for which the South Downs is a national stronghold.

The major rivers of the eastern section meander through wide flood plains enclosed by steep-sided slopes, forming distinctive U-shaped, pastoral valleys leading down to estuaries on the coast. Small pastures at the edge of the flood plain are often enclosed by hedgerows, copses and lines of alder, willow and poplar, the hedgerow boundaries contrasting with the more modern drainage ditches and engineered stretches of river sections. The River Meon in the west is a chalk river that runs through a typically narrower valley. Remnant wetland habitats, such as wet meadows and flood plain grazing marsh, and now mostly derelict watercress beds are important surviving features of the river valleys. These are largely the result of traditional management practices and provide habitat for breeding and wintering waders, as well as a wide range of wetland invertebrates and plants such as the critically endangered sharp-leaved pondweed.

At the coast, there are stretches of chalk cliffs, largely unaffected by coastal protection measures in the east. Where there is development, groynes and cliff toe protections have been installed to reduce rates of cliff erosion. There are areas of semi-natural vegetation on the cliff tops, but arable cultivation often extends right up to the cliff edge, resulting in a loss of natural transitions. The estuarine sections of the rivers have also had artificial constraints for navigation, development or flood prevention at their seaward end. As a result, the original shingle bars across the river mouths are limited in their natural function and some long-shore drift is prevented.

The Arun Valley in West Sussex, designated as an SPA/Ramsar site, is located north of the South Downs escarpment. It consists of low-lying grazing marsh, largely on alluvial soils but with an area of peat derived from a relict raised bog. Variation in soils and water supply lead to a wide range of ecological conditions and a rich flora and fauna. As the thin soils become saturated, the water moves slowly down through the porous chalk below. Southern parts of the Arun Valley are fed by calcareous springs, while to the north, where the underlying geology is Greensand, the water is more acidic. The ditches and margins between grazing marsh fields have outstanding aquatic flora and invertebrate fauna, although the majority of flood plain grassland in the Arun Valley is of poor quality for wildlife. Amberley/Pulborough/Waltham are the main high-quality areas. For its size, there is comparatively little good wetland habitat (fen or reedbed) in the flood plain, so the small areas which exist are extremely valuable. The Arun Valley supports important numbers of overwintering water birds, which feed in the wetter, low-lying fields and along ditches. There are over 900 ha of candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC) providing increased protection to a variety of important habitats and species.

Today, remnant areas of reedbeds, fen, flood plain grassland and grazing marsh are of high biodiversity interest. They support large numbers of birds such as lapwing, redshank and snipe and plants such as flowering rush, water violet and greater water-parsnip.

Settlement away from the architecturally important coastal towns is sparse and concentrated in villages and hamlets that occur within the valleys, with dispersed farmsteads dating from the medieval period throughout. In the Hampshire section of the area, timber framing was used for most buildings until the 17th century and continued to be used for farm buildings until the 19th century. Flint and cobbles were used more widely in Sussex. Flint combined with brick for quoins, dressings to windows and as banding within the flintwork is characteristic of the 18th and 19th centuries. Straw thatch was the traditional roofing material, but the use of clay pan tiles, available from the nearby clay lowlands to the south, is widespread. Bronze-age round barrows and prominently sited iron-age hill forts, such as Cissbury Ring, are notable historical features of the scarp and hill tops and are particularly prominent in the west. Large estates, such as Goodwood and Cowdray Park, are features of the central downs, each with its own distinct livery.

Many of the footpaths and bridleways follow drove roads and transport routes along the scarp and cutting across the Downs, and have been used for centuries. These often afford panoramic views over surrounding areas and are valued for their apparent sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The 160 km of the South Downs Way National Trail follows the old routes and droeways along the escarpment and ridges of the South Downs, offering public access and recreational opportunities.

International Biosphere status was confirmed for Brighton and Lewes Downs in June 2014, securing it as the first completely new Biosphere site in the UK established for almost forty years and the first ever in south-east England. The Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere covers around 390 square kilometres of land and sea in Sussex, between the Rivers Adur and Ouse. It incorporates a variety of important habitats and species, including chalk grassland, undersea reefs, Adonis Blue butterfly and Short-snouted Seahorse and lies partly within the South Downs National Park.



The South Downs escarpment in West Sussex showing the mixture of land uses. All the chalk grassland visible on the escarpment is managed by countryside stewardship schemes.

The landscape through time

The chalk of the South Downs was formed by Cretaceous deposits laid down over 100 million years ago, and represents the southern remnant of a once extensive dome of Chalk eroded during the Tertiary Period. The chalk of the Upper Cretaceous Period is extremely rare in the whole of geological time. Apart from the Albanian red chinks and Tertiary chinks such as the Danian of Denmark and some Middle East deposits, nothing quite like it had been deposited before that time, and nothing has since. Chalk is a particularly pure form of limestone, a sedimentary rock formed by the deposition in water of solid calcium carbonate. The calcium carbonate in chalk is largely made up of the skeletons of marine algae, which accumulated in the sediments during the 35 million years of the Cretaceous Period. The geology of the South Downs is dominated by tilted layers of Upper Cretaceous Chalk which were deposited in a shallow sea and which contain many fossils and bands and seams of flint nodules. The Chalk dips to the south with the consequence that increasingly younger rocks are exposed in this direction.

At the margins of the NCA, Cretaceous Greensand and Palaeogene (Tertiary) Lambeth Group and London Group sediments are exposed at the surface. The South Downs are structurally part of the Wealden Anticline, a large dome of rocks folded during the Alpine Orogeny (mountain-building episode) and since eroded; the North and South Downs partially surround older sediments which have been exposed by erosion.

The most significant period of erosion of the chalk occurred during the Pleistocene glaciations, which eventually began to decline around 12,000 BC. All but the most hardy plant and animal species were driven south by the ice, only to begin re-colonising as the ice retreated. Many species never returned as their path had been blocked by the inundation of the English Channel around 5500 BC. People had already arrived in Britain in the early Pleistocene Period, mainly hunter-gatherer tribes, but archaeologists have detected forest clearances attributable to Mesolithic man from around 7500 BC.⁶



The Long Man of Wilmington is an extant human hill figure whose origin remains unclear.

⁶ *Ecology of the English Chalk*, C.J. Smith (1980)

More recently, thin wind-blown loess, which formed in dry tundra-like conditions during the last ice age, remains over the chalk in a small number of places. Clay-with-Flints deposits occur over the dip slope.

Neolithic and bronze-age clearance of woodland for grazing and cultivation, particularly in the eastern half of the NCA, led to the open, treeless downland which remains characteristic of the area to this day, as well as to the acid loess soils in its surviving heathland which is critical for wildlife. Bronze-age farmers also left evidence of their settlements, hill-top enclosures, field systems and boundaries, known as cross-dykes. During the Bronze Age, there may have been a return to predominantly nomadic, pastoral farming. Cropmark evidence shows that in the Iron Age and Roman periods the landscape was intensively farmed, with characteristic square fields in large axial systems covering wide areas and with many scattered farmsteads. Iron-age hill forts sited at strategic locations, such as Cissbury Ring, served as political and economic centres, while in the Roman period villas administered large estates.

The first purpose-built road systems in the South Downs were constructed by the Roman army to link coastal landing places with London⁷. Since Roman times market conditions have influenced whether the semi-natural chalk grassland was used as open sheepwalks or for arable cultivation. The Saxon period saw the first development of towns, with Lewes being occupied in the late Saxon period. Some Roman land units were developed and became the basis for some of the large, wealthy estates of the medieval period. These were predominantly in ecclesiastical ownership, with owners including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the bishops of Winchester and Chichester. Much of the land held by monastic institutions up to the 16th century came into the hands of wealthy secular lords after the Dissolution of the

Monasteries, leading to the creation of impressive country houses and parks concentrated in the central downs. The prominent parkland landscapes that characterise the area today are largely a product of the Georgian period, with distinctive beech woodlands framing planned views.

From the 15th century, sometimes earlier, the open fields and downland were subject to gradual or piecemeal enclosure, in tandem with sheep husbandry, though 'enclosure by agreement' was prominent. At times of greater demand for food, arable cultivation, which was usually centred on the richer soils of lower-lying areas, was extended to higher ground and steeper slopes. Stock-rearing dominated up to the end of the 16th century, with arable cultivation increasing after this time, establishing the mixed farming economy of the late 18th century. Considerable areas of open common fields survived into the 19th century, predominantly in West Sussex. Windmills were a feature of the landscape and some still survive.

From the 17th century, water meadows were constructed to allow the managed flooding of pastures during winter and thus protect the grass from frost to ensure early and rich hay harvests. Even where the common fields had been enclosed, the rich meadowland of the valley floors often remained in common use, some until the 19th century. The wide, flat flood plains of the main river valleys that dissect the eastern ridge have historically provided rich grazing land for dairy cattle and sheep and continue to do so today. The narrow chalk valley of the River Meon in the west was traditionally dammed to support the watercress beds that are a distinctive feature of chalk streams. The rivers of the South Downs played an important role as transport conduits, allowing trade to and from the South Downs, and as energy generators, with water and tide mills being used to mill grain, for example at

⁷ *State of the National Park 2012*, South Downs National Park Authority (2012)

Bishopstone in East Sussex which operated until 1883. Over time, siltation of the rivers affected their natural courses, with historic inland ports such as Steyning and Arundel becoming land-locked⁸.

By the mid-18th century, coastal towns such as Brighton, Hove and Worthing were in decline as fishing communities and experienced extensive growth as resorts, particularly after the opening of the London to Brighton mainline railway in 1841. Brighton and Hove's distinctive architecture reflects royal patronage and their transformation into a service sector economy. Further into the 20th century, the residential and economic development of the main settlements was further stimulated by their strong links to London.

Sheep farming has been important on the South Downs since prehistoric times; up until the early 20th century, sheep were grazed on the steep grass banks by day and moved to the lower, flatter arable areas at night where the flock would be 'folded' on fields near the village to provide manure for the naturally shallow and unproductive soil. As a result, the South Downs has linear parishes and estates reaching up to former grazings from farmland on either side and numerous lanes that climb and fall from the downs. By the end of the 19th century, this way of managing sheep was already in decline as chemical fertilisers became available and foreign imports made sheep farming less profitable.

The shoreline has been retreating for centuries and attempts have been made to control this natural process. Coastal defence works carried out over the last century have not prevented natural change from occurring; they have simply delayed its full implications from being felt. After the First World War, settlements expanded along the whole coastal plain. This development was often unplanned and uncontrolled. A few stretches of coastal chalk cliffs remained undeveloped, such as the section between

Seaford Head and Beachy Head. Timely intervention and lobbying for development controls during the 1920s and 1930s began the task of conserving the beauty of this famous coastline⁸.

Since the 1950s, the main roads that run north–south across the NCA in valleys and cuttings have also had an increasing impact. Post-war, the area's semi-natural chalk grasslands, woodlands and wetland habitats were further diminished through agricultural intensification.

In 1962 and 1966, the special scenic qualities of East Hampshire and the Sussex Downs respectively were formally recognised through designation as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The coastal cliffs of Beachy Head have also been identified as Heritage Coast. Access to the area was enhanced in 1972 with the opening of the South Downs Way National Trail. In 2009, there was further recognition of the area's importance for access and recreation and for scenic beauty with the designation of the South Downs as a National Park. Superseding the AONB, the National Park accounts for 90 per cent of this NCA and allows a local decision-making process to manage this nationally important landscape.

⁸ *State of the National Park 2012*, South Downs National Park Authority (2012)