Part 2: The Landscape Character Areas

1. HIGHCLERE AND BURGHCLERE
2. ECCHINSWELL
3. WOLVERTON
4. NORTH SHERBORNE
5. NORTH SILCHESTER
6. LODDON AND LYDE VALLEY
7. THE CLERE SCARP
8. GREAT LITCHFIELD DOWN AND WILLESLEY WARREN
9. ASHMANSWORTH AND BINLEY DOWN
10. LITCHFIELD DOWN
11. WYKE DOWN
12. TEST AND BOURNE VALLEY
13. SOUTH TEST DOWN
14. OAKLEY/STEVENTON DOWN
15. HANNINGTON DOWN
16. BASINGSTOKE DOWN
17. DUMMER AND POPHAM DOWN
18. TUNWORTH AND UPTON GREY DOWN
19. ELLISFIELD CLAY PLATEAU AND VALLEY
20. CANDOVER VALLEY
1. Highclere and Burghclere

Key characteristics

- subtle but complex landform, steep in places but generally gently undulating and falling towards the River Enborne in the north, dissected by a network of minor tributary valleys;
- small-scale mosaic of woodland, some mixed farmland and numerous paddocks, giving an enclosed, intimate character in parts;
- area west of the A34 lies within the North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ (AONB) and generally has a quiet, rural character away from larger residential areas, apart from some noise and visual intrusion from the A34 and A343;
- generally medium to small-scale fields, with a predominance of pasture, enclosed within an established assarted woodland and intact hedgerow structure with a high proportion of hedgerow trees;
- high percentage of woodland cover, particularly close to Penwood and Highclere, between the A34 and A343, where extensive coniferous plantation encloses and contains views. Large-scale broadleaf woodland within Highclere Park contributes to a strongly wooded character;
- examples of scarce and fragile heathland and forest landscapes (e.g. Burghclere and Newtown Common), with evidence of heathy vegetation characteristics in many areas. Also remnants of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland;
- high proportion of well-managed parkland of varying scales, notably the Grade 1 listed medieval deer park of Highclere Park, plus other parklands associated with smaller private estates and stud farms;
- low intervisibility across the area, with vegetation and the low-lying nature of the landscape containing views;
- numerous scattered small villages, hamlets, farmsteads and many residential properties, some accessed through a fairly dense network of narrow lanes. However, the paddocks, together with recent residential development, stud farms and a relatively high local population lend a rather urbanised character;
- certain settlements of probable medieval origin, eg East Woodhay and Highclere, with the site of a former medieval town marked by an ancient monument at Newtown.
Location and boundaries

This gently undulating area of mixed farmland and woodland lies to the extreme north-west of the Borough, bounded to the north and west by the Borough boundary. Its southern boundary is defined by a distinct change in underlying geology and relief, between the northern limit of the rolling chalk uplands and the clay lowlands. The eastern boundary marks a general transition to a more open mosaic of farmland and woodland, which characterises the Ecchinswell character area.

Formative influences

This area is underlain predominantly by a mosaic of clay, gravels, sands and loam, which results in subdued relief, contrasting strongly with the chalklands to the south. The area gently slopes away northwards to the River Enborne on the northern boundary of the character area. A series of tributary streams, running perpendicular to the river, form shallow valleys, creating a gently undulating but quite complex landform. The acid, unproductive soils over parts of this area are subtly reflected in some small pockets of remnant heath, occasional evidence of heathy species in hedgerows and verges, and a predominance of ‘poorer’ pasture over arable in these areas.

The formerly extensive woodland cover in this part of the Borough was progressively cleared through the process of ‘assarting’ in the medieval period to form irregularly shaped fields of arable or grassland. However, the poor, acid soils limited this process, and much of the open land reverted to open heathland vegetation. The Highclere area is part of a region formerly known as ‘The Woodlands’ and in 1848 was described as ‘very heavy strong wet land’ [21]. It was characterised by small-scale mixed farming involving cereals and livestock.

Overall landscape character

This is a complex and diverse landscape of varied topography, covered by a medium to small-scale mosaic of woodland, some mixed farmland and many paddocks, creating a relatively enclosed, well-treed and intimate character. Some areas exhibit signs of a former heathy character on poorer quality soils. Other localised variations in character include some extensive areas of coniferous woodland and a number of areas of well-managed parkland, typically with a strong broadleaved woodland component. Despite its variety, the landscape has a coherent and balanced character, and localised variations in character are unified by the enclosure provided by the strong structure of woodland, hedgerows and trees.

Parts of the area have become rather urbanised in character, partly due to the numerous horse paddocks and stud farms, but also due to recent residential development around some of the small villages, such as Highclere and Woolton Hill. There are now many residential properties scattered throughout the area, together with individual farmsteads, and the local population has increased. The A34 and A343 facilitate north-south movement through the area, although a fairly dense network of narrow lanes still connects many of the villages, hamlets, and individual properties.

Key issues

- decline in extent of heathland vegetation through inappropriate management (scrub invasion), or conversion to forestry and agriculture, and the need for continued/extended management of heathland commons;
- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands including hazel coppice woods;
- continuity of traditional management of pasture woodlands;
- loss of broadleaf woodlands;
- management and retention of hedgerows (including tree saplings) and field patterns of historic significance;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to rivers, streams and other sensitive wildlife habitats;
- management of floodplain habitats to sustain or improve biodiversity levels;
- management of unimproved/semi-improved neutral/acidic grasslands to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- some adverse impacts of horse grazing (e.g., rank grassland with weeds, poorly-managed boundaries or inappropriate styles of fencing etc.);
- reduction in biodiversity levels through agricultural practices;
- maintenance of uninterrupted views to the scarp;
- suburbanising influence of built development and roads in many parts of the landscape, including suburban styles of fencing, signage, lighting and planting.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newtown (SM 520) - site of medieval town founded 1218</td>
<td>Highclere Park</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’</td>
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<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highclere (Grade I)</td>
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2. Ecchinswell

Key characteristics

- gently undulating landform created by north-south running streams which flow into the River Enborne, forming a series of minor valleys and a complex landform;
- diverse and complex pattern of small to medium-scale mixed farmland, occasional well-managed parkland, numerous, relatively small, irregular-shaped copses and woodland areas, and a generally intact hedgerow and tree structure;
- generally well-wooded, unspoilt, rural character giving distinctive sense of place, the tree cover creating enclosure and intimacy, and reducing the impact of occasional roads or buildings, except near the A339;
- medium-sized fields under arable and pasture reflecting assarted land and, in the northern half, 18th –19th century parliamentary enclosure (possibly including post-parliamentary enclosures of downland or woodland) and the large wavy-edged fields resulting from 17th - 18th century informal enclosure;
- pockets of more open farmland, characterised by larger assarted arable fields, fewer woodland blocks and hedegrows at Cottismore Farm and Woodside Farm, and large wavy fields at Old Farm;
- smaller fields predominantly under pasture within the stream valleys;
- numerous scattered remnants of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, of ecological and historic landscape value, together with small remnants of unimproved neutral grassland;
- generally low intervisibility through the area, with views contained by frequent hedgerows and woodland blocks. The more open farmland and woodland areas have slightly longer views, but are still contained within the woodland framework;
- network of narrow roads links scattered small villages, hamlets farmsteads and individual dwellings, whilst the more direct A339 disturbs the generally quiet and secluded nature of the landscape.
Location and boundaries

This character area lies in the north of the Borough, bounded to the north by the Borough boundary and the River Enborne. The southern boundary is defined by the distinct change in geology and relief of the chalklands and Upper Greensand to the south. The western boundary marks a transition to the more enclosed farmland and woodland of the Highclere character area. The eastern boundary identifies a change to the more wooded Wolverton character area.

Formative influences

The underlying geology is predominantly heavy London Clay, which results in the generally low-lying relief and heavy soils of this area. However, localised areas of Bagshot Beds (sand) and Higher Level Terrace Deposits result in some areas of higher ground and drier, acidic soils. Drift deposits of alluvium and low level terrace deposits have been laid down where the river Enborne and its tributaries cut through the landscape. The numerous springs which emerge between the permeable chalklands to the south and the impermeable clay form north-south tributary streams which flow into the River Enborne. These form minor valleys and a gently undulating but quite complex landform.

As in the Highclere character area, the once widespread woodland cover in Ecchinswell was gradually cleared in medieval times to form assarts. It was also part of ‘The Woodlands’ region (see p.30), and was characterised by small-scale mixed farming involving cereals and livestock.

Overall landscape character

This area is characterised by a medium-scale mosaic of mixed farmland and relatively small, but numerous, copses and areas of woodland. These small, irregular-shaped woodlands are predominantly broadleaved, although larger, less-frequent areas of mixed conifer and broadleaf are evident to the west of Headley. Fields are under a mix of pasture and arable, and bounded by a strong structure of hedgerows and trees. Added diversity is created by areas of more open farmland on higher ground and smaller, more enclosed fields, under pasture, within the minor stream valleys. As in the Highclere Character Area, the landform is gently undulating and the landscape has an intimate, relatively secluded character.

Numerous small villages, hamlets and individual farmsteads and properties are scattered throughout the area accessed through a fairly dense network of narrow lanes, often enclosed within high hedgerows. Some parts in the west and south-west have a feeling of remoteness and, overall, the character area has retained a rural character away from the A339 and fringes of Kingsclere and Headley.

Key issues

- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands including hazel coppice woods;
- continuity of traditional management of pasture woodlands;
- past loss of broadleaf woodland;
- removal of hedgerows (including tree saplings) and weakening of landscape structure in more open farmland areas;
- the unity of the hedgerow network, and retention and management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to rivers, streams and other sensitive wildlife habitats;
- management of unimproved/semi-improved neutral/acidic grasslands to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- some adverse impacts of horse grazing (e.g. rank grassland with weeds, poorly-managed boundaries or inappropriate styles of fencing etc.);
- reduction in biodiversity levels through intensive agricultural practices;
- maintenance of uninterrupted views to the scarp;
- suburbanising influence of roads and built development on the fringes of Kingsclere and Headley (including suburban styles of fencing, signage, lighting and planting) and impacts on quiet, rural character in immediate areas.

**Key designations**

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<tr>
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<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland Hedgerows Arable Land</td>
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English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens

| None | None |
3. Wolverton

Key characteristics

- gently undulating landform draining north-eastwards to the River Enborne and crossed by a network of minor tributary valleys;
- complex and diverse pattern of small to medium-scale mixed farmland and woodland;
- typically rural and quiet, but more urbanised character along its north-eastern edge near Tadley and Baughurst;
- generally medium to small-scale pasture and arable fields, predominantly assarts with a small area of parliamentary fields south-east of the village of Ashford Hill;
- high proportion of woodland cover, including large assarted woodland blocks, other old woods, and numerous small, predominantly broadleaf copses, giving a distinctive wooded and semi-enclosed/enclosed character;
- examples of scarce habitat types including remnant areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and the Ashford Hills Wood SSSI, a woodland and unimproved meadow complex with remarkable habitat quality supporting a number of rare and threatened species. Also small area of remnant dry heath to the west of Tadley;
- parkland at Wolverton lending a more formal, managed element to the landscape;
- low lying nature of the landscape, and a high proportion of vegetation cover, limits intervisibility across the area;
- apart from the larger settlement of Baughurst to the north, the settlement pattern is dominated by hamlets, isolated farmsteads and individual properties reached through a network of narrow, winding lanes;
- important geological exposures along the Kingsclere Stream Section (SSSI).
Location and boundaries

This character area lies in the north of the Borough, lying between the more open character areas of Ecchinswell to the west and North Sherborne to the east. The northern boundary is marked by the Borough boundary and the settlement of Baughurst. The southern boundary marks the distinct change in geology between the clay/bagshot beds of the lowland mosaic and the chalk geology to the south.

Formative influences

This area is underlain predominantly by clay and permeable sands and gravel, forming a subdued, low-lying landform which strongly contrasts with the elevated chalkland to the south. Minor streams, which have laid down alluvium and gravel deposits, dissect the surrounding clays and sands, giving rise to the characteristic gently undulating landform.

Formation of the present landscape probably began as long ago as the early prehistoric period (Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was beginning to be cleared for agriculture and grazing. In the medieval period much of this area was part of the Royal Forest of Pamber, used for hunting and the managed production of timber. During the medieval and post-medieval periods, patches of this woodland were cleared for agriculture and settlement, but some still survive. More areas were cleared for agriculture, grazing and settlement, sometimes through encroachment, and sometimes by agreement or formal enclosure during the 17th-19th centuries.

Occupation was established within the area by the medieval period with ‘Woolverton’ among the settlements mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086.

Overall landscape character

This area is characterised by a medium to small-scale mixed farmland and woodland mosaic. The area has a high proportion of woodland cover, including large, ancient semi-natural woodland blocks and numerous irregular broadleaf copses, creating a relatively enclosed and textured landscape. Fields are under a mix of pasture and arable and bounded by a strong structure of hedgerows and trees.

Hamlets and individual properties are dispersed throughout the area linked together by a network of narrow, winding lanes, often enclosed within high hedgerows/hedgebanks. The landscape generally retains a rural, quiet character, although the urban influences of Tadley and Baughurst are evident along the north-eastern edge of the area.

Key issues

- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands, including hazel coppice woods;
- some loss of broadleaf woodland;
- the identification and management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance;
- management of road verges and hedgerows, with damage from scrub encroachment and road improvements;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips adjacent to streams and sensitive wildlife habitats;
- management of unimproved neutral grassland and neutral/acidic unimproved/semi-improved grassland, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- some adverse impacts of horse grazing (e.g. rank grassland with weeds, poorly managed boundaries, or inappropriate styles of fencing etc.);
- reduction in biodiversity levels through agricultural practices;
- suburbanising influence of built development and roads associated with Tadley/Baughurst, including suburban styles of fencing, signage, lighting and planting.
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<td>Kingsclere Stream Section</td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
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<td>Arable Land</td>
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4. North Sherborne

Key characteristics

- gently undulating, subtle landform dissected by a network of minor tributary valleys;
- pattern of predominantly arable farmland and improved grassland with occasional well-managed parkland, enclosed within an established woodland and hedgerow structure with many hedgerow trees;
- south-west corner lies within North Wessex Downs AONB, and overall landscape typically has a rural character, except near Tadley and Mortimer to the north and Basingstoke/Chineham to the southeast. Generally quiet, apart from areas along the busy A340;
- predominantly assarted and small parliamentary fields, giving way to large wavy, small wavy and parliamentary fields to the east;
- two pockets of more open arable farmland towards the south-east, characterised by parliamentary fields with infrequent woodland cover and low, well-cut hedgerows, notably between The Vyne and North Chineham and to the north-west of Bramley;
- variety of woodland, including small predominantly broadleaf copses and larger woodland such as Morgaston Wood and Carpenters Down Wood. Also Pamber Forest, which has placed a crucial role in the historical development of the area;
- remnant areas of scarce habitat types including ancient semi-natural woodland, heathland (notably part of the Pamber Forest and Silchester Common SSSI), and neutral/acidic unimproved grassland. The latter includes Ron Wards Meadow with Tadley Pastures SSSI, one of Hampshire’s finest surviving hay meadow/pasture complexes;
- three distinctive areas of parkland, ‘The Vyne’ (Grade II), Beaurepaire Park and Ewhurst Park, contributing a well-managed element to the landscape;
- moderate intervisibility across the area, with vegetation and low-lying nature of the landscape containing distant views;
- apart from the larger settlement of Tadley, a settlement pattern dominated by small villages, hamlets, isolated farmsteads and individual properties distributed throughout the rural landscape, reached through a network of narrow, winding roads;
- remarkably preserved Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) and its associated earthworks, together with many other Scheduled Ancient Monuments, reinforcing the historic richness of the landscape.
Location and boundaries

This character area lies in the north of the Borough and stretches from the more wooded Wolverton character area to the west, to the Loddon and Lyde valley system to the east. The northern boundary is marked by the settlement of Tadley, the enclosed plantation and heathland landscape of the North Silchester character area, and the Borough boundary. Its southern boundary is defined by the distinct change in geology between the clay/Bagsht Beds of the lowland mosaic and the chalkland to the south.

Formative influences

This area is underlain predominantly by heavy clay, permeable sands and gravels, forming a subdued, low-lying landform which strongly contrasts with the elevated chalklands to the south. Minor streams have dissected the underlying geology, resulting in a gently undulating topography.

Much of this area was formerly part of the Royal Forest of Pamber. In medieval times, the process of 'assarting' progressively cleared the once large-scale woodland cover. Of particular archaeological importance is the remarkable preserved Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) and its associated earthworks, which were built on an existing Iron Age settlement. Occupation was established elsewhere within the area by the medieval period. For example Ewhurst, Sherborne St John and Monk Sherborne are amongst settlements mentioned in Domesday survey of 1086.

Overall landscape character

In common with much of the lowland landscape to the north of the Borough, this area is a patchwork of mixed farmland and woodland, which forms the setting for a diversity of other landscapes including managed parkland, minor valleys, and more extensive areas of woodland. Despite its diversity, the overall effect is a unified and balanced landscape, with the low-lying and gently undulating landform linking the various landscape types into one distinct character area. A small southern part of the area, between Wolverton and Ramsdell, lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB.

In many areas the landscape has retained a quiet, rural character, with a network of narrow, winding roads linking the dispersed villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads. The quietness of the area is disrupted, however, in those areas along the A340 corridor, and the rural character affected near the larger settlements of Tadley, Mortimer and Chineham.

Key issues

- poor species and structure diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- under-management of the numerous ancient semi-natural woodlands, including hazel coppice woods;
- loss of broadleaf woodlands;
- relatively weak landscape structure, primarily within more open arable landscapes, and resulting need to encourage hedgerow planting;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to rivers, streams and other sensitive habitats;
- loss of heath associated vegetation through inappropriate management and more intensive agricultural use;
- management of unimproved neutral grassland and areas of neutral/acidic unimproved/semi-improved grassland, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- some adverse impacts of horse grazing (e.g. rank grassland with weeds, poorly-managed boundaries or inappropriate styles of fencing etc.);
- conservation and management of Calleva Roman town and associated historic features;
- localised suburban influence of some built development and roads, including suburban styles of fencing, signage, lighting and planting, and impacts on quiet, rural character in immediate areas.
### Key designations

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<tr>
<td>Earthworks S. of Silchester (SMs 24333,24334)</td>
<td>Pamber Forest and Silchester Common</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
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<td>Medieval moated site and fishponds, Pamber parish (SM24335)</td>
<td>Ron Wards Meadow and Tadley pastures</td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
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<td>Earthworks south of Silchester (SM24335)</td>
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<td>Iron Age oppidum and Roman town walls/gates in Silchester/Mortimer West End parish (SM24336)</td>
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<td>Medieval moated sites and associated fishponds, Silchester (SM12062)</td>
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<td>Iron Age fort earthworks west of former Pond Farm (SM24332)</td>
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**North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’**

**English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens**

The Vyne (Grade II)
5. North Silchester

**Key characteristics**

- plateau landscape draining eastwards;
- predominantly coniferous heath plantation, giving an enclosed, formal, relatively uniform character to the area, with small areas of mixed heathland and forest, and disturbed landscape;
- mainly quiet and rural character, although the latter is affected in western parts by the urban influence of Tadley, and to its north-east by Mortimer;
- area of quarry and landfill site on the north-western boundary of the area enclosed within the coniferous plantation structure;
- heathland areas at Silchester Common (part of the Pamber Forest and Silchester Common SSSI) form a scarce habitat type, the best example of Calluna/Erica/Ulex heathland on the Tertiary deposits in the Thames Basin;
- low intervisibility across the area with plantation and trees within heath limiting views;
- settlements of Silchester and Pamber Heath disrupt rural nature of southern parts of the area. Other individual properties are located adjacent to the plantations, reached along relatively straight, direct roads;
- Iron Age fort earthworks (SM24332) west of the former Pond Farm, and traces of the Roman Road running north-west from Calleva Atrebatum.

**Location and boundaries**

This small character area lies in the north of the Borough, its northern edge marked by the Borough boundary, although its character extends beyond. The western boundary is defined by the Borough boundary and the settlement of Pamber Heath. The southern and eastern boundary marks the transition to more open, mixed farmland and woodland of the North Sherborne character area.
**Formative influences**

This area is underlain predominantly by plateau gravels, giving rise to the heath soils and resulting vegetation characteristic of this area.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the early prehistoric period (Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was beginning to be cleared for agriculture and grazing. Heathland formation was the result of forest clearance from this time and from later periods. Over exploitation of areas of poorer soil led to a relatively rapid deterioration in soil fertility, and the emergence of distinctive heathland vegetation. In the medieval period this area was part of the Royal Forest of Pamber, used for hunting and the production of timber. In the 19th century timber plantations were established on some of the heathland, the plantations to the west of Mortimer having existed from 1810 onwards.

**Overall landscape character**

This area is characterised and unified by distinct heath associated vegetation. The majority of the area is covered by coniferous heath plantation, which extends northwards beyond the Borough boundary, and gives a relatively formal, managed and uniform character to the area. In contrast to this managed landscape is a small area of remnant heathland at Silchester Common, east of Tadley, which has a rough and scrubby appearance.

Much of the area retains a quiet character, although its predominantly rural nature is disrupted in western parts by the urban influence of Tadley, and to the north-east by Mortimer. These settlements and other individual properties are linked by a network of typically straight roads which cut through the plantation structure.

**Key issues**

- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- under-management of the small areas of ancient semi-natural woodland;
- management of road verges;
- loss and fragmentation of heathland and former heathland areas through inappropriate management (scrub invasion) and conversion to forestry or agricultural use, and the need for continued/extended management of heathland commons;
- management and appropriate restoration of the landfill/quarry site on the northern boundary;
- localised suburbanising influences of some built development and roads, including suburban styles of fencing, signage, lighting and planting.

**Key designations**

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<td>Flex Ditch, Silchester Parish (SM24331)</td>
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<td>Arable Land</td>
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**English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens**

None
6. Loddon and Lyde Valley

Key characteristics

- broad, shallow valley sides of the River Lyde and River Loddon that meander through, and unify, the varying landscape types;
- pattern ranging from open farmland around Stratfield Saye, Blacklands Farm and Mapledurwell, to that which is smaller-scale and more enclosed in the mid-section of the area and within the valley itself. The flat, low-lying valley floor pasture has a distinctive pattern of drainage ditches, willow-lined watercourses, water meadows and an often pastoral, remote character;
- generally unspoilt, quiet and rural character, and a sense of remoteness in less accessible parts of the river valley, but with intrusion by major roads, the railway and electricity pylons in some areas, and by an incinerator immediately east of Chineham;
- relatively large-scale, open arable fields with low, well-trimmed hedgerows and infrequent woodland in the north and far south, reflecting 17th - 18th century informal enclosure and late 18th – 19th century parliamentary enclosure respectively;
- more enclosed assart fields within an intact, strong hedgerow and woodland structure (some of it assarted) between Stratfield Saye and Newnham;
- nationally important habitat types, including the ancient semi-natural woodland, unimproved neutral grassland associated with the River Loddon alluvial floodplain (including the Stanford End Mills SSSI), areas of fen vegetation (the SSSI at Mapledurwell Fen holding one of central southern England’s richest associations of fen species), and Greywell Tunnel SSSI (sheltering Britain’s largest bat population);
- localised, well-managed quality added by the Grade II Stratfield Saye Park, and 17th garden at Basing House;
- relatively low intervisibility within the area, due to landform and vegetation minimising views, but more extensive views possible in the more open northern and southern landscapes;
- low settlement density, with dispersed villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads, linked by a network of narrow winding roads, except for the adjoining urban areas of Basingstoke and Chineham and the village of Old Basing;
- many historic landscape features across the area, from medieval moated sites, deer parks, hunting lodges and castles, to scheduled ancient monuments including Bulls Down Camp Iron Age hillfort and remnant enclosed strips and furlongs in Stratfield Saye parish. Old mills, which have contributed to the Valley’s development, add to the sense of place.
**Location and boundaries**

This character area lies in the north-east of the Borough with its northern and eastern edge defined by the Borough boundary. Its southern boundary defines the extent of the Loddon and Lyde valley system. The western boundary is formed partly by Old Basing, Chineham and Basingstoke and partly by changes in relief and vegetation characteristics.

**Formative influences**

This area is underlain predominantly by clays which have been dissected by the River Loddon and River Lyde, giving rise to the broad, shallow slopes characteristic of this area. The heavy soils are prone to waterlogging, as evidenced by the network of drainage ditches which characterise the flat valley floor landscape and areas further afield. The southern extremity of the character area encompasses the north-facing chalkland slopes, from which the rivers rise before flowing northwards. The distinct change of geology to chalk south of the M3 is reflected in a larger-scale, more open, arable landscape.

Much of the Loddon and Lyde Valley was probably incorporated into the medieval Royal Forests of Pamber and of Eversley. Despite the royal protection, patches of woodland were cleared for agriculture and settlements in the medieval and post-medieval periods although some woodland patches have survived. More areas were cleared for agriculture and grazing, as parts of the medieval open fields systems were changed by enclosure, achieved mainly by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, although some areas, particularly in the south, were formally enclosed by act of parliament in the 18th-19th centuries. The area is particularly notable for the relatively large number of medieval moated sites, deer parks and other sites (such as hunting lodges) which have been preserved, or are known from documentary evidence.

**Overall landscape character**

This is a diverse landscape of varying landcover and degrees of enclosure, ranging from mixed farmland and woodland on clay to arable chalklands. It is nevertheless unified by the broad and shallow slopes of the Loddon and Lyde river valleys, which give a coherence to the landscape. The northern and southern parts are characterised by large, open arable fields with low, well-trimmed hedgerows containing isolated mature trees, and only a few isolated copses of oak and ash woodland interspersed across the landscape. Woodland cover increases significantly within the centre of the area, such as Wildmoor where it is associated with the valley floor, creating a more enclosed, intimate and well-treed landscape (except in the vicinity of Blacklands Farm). Fields are predominantly arable on the higher valley slopes, with pasture on the lower valley slopes and the river floodplain.

Basingstoke and Chineham exert an urban influence on the immediate south-western edge of the character area. Outside this urban area and the village of Old Basing, settlement density is low, with a number of villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads scattered throughout the area, accessed through a network of narrow winding roads. In these parts the landscape retains a particularly peaceful, rural character, although the quietness is disturbed in those areas near to the M3, A30, A33 and the railway.

**Key issues**

- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands including hazel coppice woods;
- loss of broadleaf woodlands;
- extensive hedgerow removal in the past, and general decline in condition of hedgerows and trees (with frequent stag-headed trees), particularly within more open arable landscapes on clay areas to the north;
- management of hedgerows (and retention of tree saplings within them), and field patterns of historic significance;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to rivers, streams and other sensitive wildlife habitats;
management of unimproved/semi-improved neutral/acidic grasslands, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
• reduction in biodiversity levels through agricultural practices;
• identification and conservation of all water meadows, and their appropriate management to allow for shallow winter flooding;
• inappropriate management of floodplain grazing marsh;
• some localised visual intrusion and noise from built development and roads, especially around the fringes of Basingstoke, and near the M3, A33, A30 and the railway, which have an impact on the tranquility of immediate areas;
• the intrusion caused by the high number of electricity pylons/lines north, east and south-east of Bramley/Bramley Green, and also north of Old Basing, along the River Loddon;
• potential visual intrusion of new incinerator under construction east of A33.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulls Down Camp, an Iron Age plateau hillfort, Bramley (SM 35)</td>
<td>Stanford End Mills</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Age Bowl barrow, Mapledurwell &amp; Up Nately (SM 27927)</td>
<td>Mapledurwell Fen</td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval moated site and associated fishponds, Silchester (SM 12062)</td>
<td>Greywell Tunnel</td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basing House, Old Basing (SM 7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lowland Wet Pasture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithe Barn at Grange Farm, Old Basing, (SM 85)</td>
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<td>Chalk Streams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyott's Hill entrenchment, Old Basing (SM 128);</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver’s Battery Earthwork, Old Basing (SM 24337).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basing House (Grade II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratfield Saye (Grade II)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2: Landscape Character Areas Loddon and Lyde Valley
7. The Clere Scarp

Key characteristics

- dramatic steep chalk scarp face, forming an impressive backdrop to the lowland landscapes to the north, and affording long views from points such as Beacon Hill. The landform and semi-natural character of the vegetation which clothes parts of it creates a strong sense of place;
- predominantly open pasture with small areas of encroaching scrub and occasional woodland blocks on the steep scarp slopes, with arable fields present on more shallow slopes;
- lies within North Wessex Downs AONB, generally possessing an unspoilt character. Landform restricts extent of built form or roads. There is limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise, except in particular locations, for example Beacon Hill, and near the A34 and A343. Radio mast at Cottington’s Hill is a landmark;
- generally large, open parliamentary arable fields below the scarp. Slightly more enclosed fields to the west with greater woodland cover and stronger hedgerow structure;
- many examples of nationally scarce habitat types including six SSS1s. Areas of valuable remnant unimproved chalk grassland on the scarp face, from Sydmonton to the east, and also at Beacon Hill, although scrub encroachment is threatening its extent and quality. Scattered remnants of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland;
- parkland at Sydmonton bringing a more managed element to the central area;
- generally high intervisibility within and outside the area, particularly from the top of the scarp and the open arable fields to the north;
- low settlement density with only a small scattering of farm buildings. Roads are relatively straight and direct;
- significant number of extant prehistoric monuments along the edge of the scarp, including the dramatic landscape feature and Iron Age hillfort of Beacon Hill, plus numerous barrows and earthworks.
**Location and boundaries**

This linear character area is located to the west of the Borough, running from the south of Kingsclere, past Highclere Park, to the Borough boundary and beyond. Its northern boundary is defined by the lowland mosaic landscape, marking a distinct change in underlying geology, relief and vegetation characteristics. Its southern boundary generally marks the transition between the top of the north-facing scarp slope and the open dip slope, which falls gently to the south.

**Formative influences**

The scarp face is the product of erosion of the east-west chalk anticline at Kingsclere, which has exposed the hard middle chalk layer, forming the dramatic scarp face and part of the lower footslopes. At several points, such as at Watership Down, coombes penetrate into the scarp face. A narrow belt of sand and sandstone has been exposed on the scarp footslopes between Kingsclere and Old Burghclere resulting in a strongly undulating landform, protruding from the surrounding lower lying chalkland.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, and after which only limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. In addition to extant monuments of Bronze and Iron Age date, which are clearly visible in the landscape today, time depth is indicated by remnant field systems (soilmarks and lynches), preserved on the southern slopes of Beacon Hill (an extant Iron Age hillfort) and on Lower Woodcott Down. These may result from prehistoric or medieval agriculture. Sydmonton is amongst settlements mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval open fields systems were replaced by enclosure by both informal and formal (parliamentary) means during the 17th-19th centuries.

**Overall landscape character**

This is an area dominated by the dramatic escarpment, an example of a distinctive and scarce chalk landscape type. Its strongly linear form brings a unifying and cohesive character to the scarp footslopes and offers long views from points such as Beacon Hill. Both the scarp and its footslopes display localised variations in landcover and use. The escarpment is characterised by calcareous grassland with small areas of encroaching scrub and blocks of infrequent woodland. A slightly higher proportion of woodland exists on the scarp and footslopes to the west of the area, creating a rather more enclosed landscape than that in the east. Oak woodland is dominant within the western part of the area, giving way to predominantly beech woodlands within the coombes. Racehorse gallops and stud farms characterise the bottom and top of the scarp, south of Kingsclere, whilst at Sydmonton, parkland provides a more ornamental and managed element.

Settlement density within this area is limited with only a small scattering of farm buildings. As a result, a sense of remoteness and tranquillity pervades the landscape, except in the vicinity of the A34 and A343. Roads are relatively straight and direct.

**Key issues**

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands, including hazel coppice woods;
- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations and the proportion of conifers on alkaline soils;
- loss of broadleaf woodlands;
- loss of hedgerows within the scarp footslopes, fragmenting and compromising the unity of the hedgerow network;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic importance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- scrub encroachment on the scarp and on Beacon Hill;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- loss, fragmentation and inappropriate management of unimproved calcareous grassland;
- erosion and other impacts on fragile chalk grassland and archaeological sites from increasing visitor pressure, particularly at Beacon Hill;
- some adverse impacts of horse grazing (e.g., rank grassland with weeds, poorly-managed boundaries, or inappropriate styles of fencing, etc.);
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats;
- loss of biodiversity value due to intensive farming practices;
- maintenance of uninterrupted views to the scarp; 
- visual and noise intrusion from the A34 and A343. Further visual intrusion from major pylon line at Watership Down, and landmark of radio mast at Cottington’s Hill.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Hill (large Iron Age hillfort) Burghclere (SM 24318)</td>
<td>Burghclere Beacon</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross dyke and bowl barrow, Burghclere (SM 25611)</td>
<td>Burghclere Old Limeworks</td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl barrow, Burghclere (SM 25612)</td>
<td>Duncroft Farm Pit</td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Barrows (group of barrows), nr. Thorn Down (SMs 24315, SM 24316 &amp; SM 24317)</td>
<td>East Woodhay Down</td>
<td>Lowland Calcareous Grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl barrow, Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25614)</td>
<td>Ladle Hill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectangular enclosure, Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25615)</td>
<td>West Woodhay Down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladle Hill (unfinished hillfort, with saucer barrow, disc barrow and sections of two linear earthworks), Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25616)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear earthwork, Burghclere/Litchfield/Woodcott parishes (SM 25617)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Great Litchfield Down and Willesley Warren

Key characteristics

- dramatic sweeping landform and smooth curves of open chalk downs, with a sense of elevation and expansiveness and open, uninterrupted views, giving a distinctive sense of place;
- generally remote rural character, lying within the North Wessex Downs AONB, with limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise, except in west of area where the A34 disturbs the quietness;
- very large, open and regular arable fields, reflecting high ground parliamentary fields of the late 18th – 19th centuries, 17th and 18th century ‘ladder fields’ and, in western part, large wavy fields;
- infrequent woodland blocks, including scattered remnants of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, and other fragments of broadleaved woodland and coniferous plantation;
- examples of scarce habitat types such as small remnants of unimproved chalk grassland, in addition to the fragments of ancient woodland, which are particularly valuable due to the area’s otherwise low ecological diversity;
- open, exposed character and high intervisibility within and outside the area, due to low or absent hedgerows and infrequent woodland. More confined views within the dry valleys;
- long-standing small-scale settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and infrequent roads, engendering sense of remoteness;
- typically straight, direct roads, including the Roman road running south-west from Calleva Atrebatum which is marked by the distinct linear wooded feature of Robley Belt;
- important ancient hill fort site at Ladle Hill, with many barrows, earthworks and other archaeological features (and extant prehistoric monuments) elsewhere on the chalk.
Location and boundaries

This open, rolling area forms a distinct character area within the middle of the Borough and constitutes a central part of the south-facing chalk dip slope. Its northern boundary is defined by the dramatic scarp face, which marks a significant change in topography. The southern boundary is marked by the River Test valley, with a change in topography and enclosure. The east and west boundaries mark a general transition to a more enclosed landscape, with a greater frequency of woodland blocks and stronger, more frequent hedgerow structure.

Formative influences

This area is underlain predominantly by chalk, which has been covered in places by clay with flint deposits. Erosion of this underlying geology has led to the formation of a rolling, strongly undulating landform, with numerous dry valleys. Elevated relief and lack of vegetation cover contributes to an exposed and remote character.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated at least as long ago as the Neolithic period, when the original forest cover began to be cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. This process continued through the prehistoric period, after which only limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. Further evidence for the time depth in the area is indicated by remnant field systems (soilmarks and lynchets), preserved to the east of the unfinished Iron Age hill fort of Ladle Hill. These may result from prehistoric or medieval agriculture, and are currently under arable cultivation. The medieval open fields and downland were replaced by enclosure, achieved by both informal and formal (parliamentary) means during the 17th-19th centuries. Settlement in this area is small-scale and scattered and appears always to have been so.

Overall landscape character

Landscape character within this area is comparatively uniform, with coherence and unity provided by the area’s scale and openness. Large, open arable fields, with a weak hedgerow and woodland structure, separate it from the surrounding, more enclosed, chalkland landscapes. Occasional small areas of pasture are distributed throughout the area. A regular, formal, wooded element within the open landscape is formed by Robley Belt, part of a series of linear plantations marking the route of the straight Roman road that traverses the area. The north of the landscape is notable for the ‘gallops’ for racehorse training, which take advantage of well-drained springy turf.

The landscape is sparsely populated, with infrequent farmsteads dispersed across the area. Due to the low density of settlement, roads are also few and, where they are present, generally follow a straight and direct route. The area is remote from major urban influences, ensuring that the landscape has retained a quiet, rural character, apart from around the A34 in the west, and the detracting feature of a major pylon line across the north.

Key issues

- the simplicity of the landscape, created by the limited number of hedgerows, woodland or other landscape elements, reduces ecological diversity;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- management of roadside verges and hedgebanks;
- loss and fragmentation of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture, through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland, reducing biological diversity;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and buffers;
- intensive arable farming resulting in ecologically sterile landscape, with low habitat and species diversity;
- localised visual intrusion in open landscape of fencing in association with gallops for racehorse training;
- some visual intrusion from large-scale farm buildings in this open landscape. Also the detracting features of the A34, a major pylon line in the north, and landmark of radio mast at Cottington’s Hill.
Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Neolithic long barrows, 650m SE of Ridgeway farm (SM 12107) and one 250m SE of Willesley Warren Farm (SM 12108), 2 Bronze Age (bell &amp; saucer) barrows, Eccinswell and Sydmonton parish (SM 25613), Seven Barrows bowl barrows, Burghclere parish (SM 24313 and SM 24314), 2 round barrows, Ashmansworth parish (SM 469 and SM 12153), Rectangular enclosure, Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25621), Bowl barrow, Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25614), Rectangular enclosure, Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25615), Ladle Hill (incl. unfinished hillfort, saucer barrow, disc barrow and sections of 2 linear earthworks), Litchfield and Woodcott parish (SM 25616), Linear earthwork, Burghclere/Litchfield and Woodcott parishes (SM 25617),</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Hedgerows, Arable Land, Lowland Calcareous Grassland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’

English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens None
9. Ashmansworth and Binley Down

Key characteristics

- varied landform, consisting of a steep, relatively enclosed, valley system in the north around Ashmansworth and, in the south, a series of shallow ridges and valleys running parallel to each other into the Bourne valley;
- dominated by rolling chalkland and unifying pattern of woodland blocks which (combined with open farmland, frequent hedgerows, trees and occasional parkland) form a landscape with a distinctive sense of place;
- lies within North Wessex Downs AONB and generally possesses an unspoilt, quiet and rural character, with a sense of remoteness and limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise;
- predominantly medium to large-scale arable fields reflecting 17th/18th century informal enclosure in the centre and, in the north, later parliamentary enclosure, bounded by intact hedgerows and frequent woodland blocks. Smaller fields, mainly under pasture, lie within the steeper valley slopes;
- slightly more enclosed assarted land to the north on the steeper slopes of the clay plateau, with a higher proportion of hedgerow trees and a denser vegetation pattern;
- in the south, 17th and 18th century small wavy-edged fields and ladder fields. The range of field types throughout the character area indicates historic time-depth in the landscape;
- examples of scarce habitat types, especially small remnants of unimproved calcareous grassland in the far north, and frequent scattered blocks of ancient woodland, including Sidley Wood (an SSSI containing ancient hornbeam coppice, with no comparable stands known elsewhere in south central England);
- moderate to low intervisibility within the area with the high proportion of vegetation cover limiting the extent of views;
- low settlement density, with isolated villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads along the narrow roads that wind through the area;
- earthworks in Danegrove Copse (SM 450) and a long barrow (SM 12084) within Litchfield and Woodcott parish.
**Location and boundaries**

This diverse area lies on the western edge of the Borough. Its northern boundary is clearly defined by the top of the steep chalk scarp, marking a change in relief and vegetation characteristics. Its southern boundary is defined by the distinct Bourne valley, with its change in topography and landcover. The eastern boundary marks a general transition to the slightly more open mosaic of semi-enclosed arable farmland, which characterises the Litchfield Down character area.

**Formative influences**

The geology within this area consists of chalk beds overlain with areas of clay with flint deposits on areas of higher ground, creating an undulating landform. Steep slopes near Ashmansworth mark the transition between clay deposits and the lower lying chalk beds. To the south of the area, tributaries of the Bourne erode into the surrounding chalk beds, forming shallow, parallel valleys.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. After this time only limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. There is an extant Neolithic long barrow within the area, and good evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity (Hampshire SMR). The settlements of Crux Easton and Woodcott are among those mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval open field systems were largely replaced by enclosure, mainly by informal means, during the 17th-18th centuries. However, S-shaped boundaries of some rare remnant fields may still reflect their former position within the field systems.

**Overall landscape character**

This is a landscape of varied topography, ranging from steep slopes to more linear, shallow valleys, and is unified by a general consistency in landcover. A medium to large-scale mosaic of farmland and frequent woodland blocks characterises the area, creating a semi-enclosed or enclosed landscape. Predominantly arable fields lie on higher ground, bounded by a relatively strong structure of hedgerows and trees, with pasture generally confined to steep valley sides and floor. The steeper slopes of the clay plateau to the north have a slightly more enclosed nature with a denser pattern of vegetation.

Scattered farmsteads, isolated villages, and hamlets characterise this sparsely populated area. Settlements have developed along narrow roads which form a winding network through the landscape, that has maintained its unspoilt, intimate and rural character, remote from urban influences.

**Key issues**

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands including hazel coppice woods;
- some localised weakening of landscape structure in the slightly more open landscape types, resulting from hedgerow removal, and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural improvement;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedge banks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- decline in extent of chalk grassland, and sheep pasture through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement;
- management of unimproved/semi-improved grassland, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- loss of biodiversity within areas of intensive farmland;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitat areas;
- localised noise intrusion from the A343, and visual intrusion from major pylon line across the centre of the area.
### Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic long barrow, Litchfield the Woodcott parish (SM 12084)</td>
<td>Sidley Wood</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthworks, Danegrove Copse (SM 450).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10. Litchfield Down

Key characteristics

- rolling chalkland, falling towards the River Test and Bourne Rivulet in the south, with a discernible sense of place, strengthened by its unifying pattern of large woodland blocks;
- patchwork of arable fields interspersed with woodland blocks, creating a semi-enclosed landscape. One area of contrast exists to the south-west with more open, arable fields and low, trimmed hedgerows;
- lies within North Wessex Downs AONB and generally possesses an unspoilt, remote, quiet and rural character, with few detracting influences. An exception is within the vicinity of the A34, which cuts through the area north-south, bringing noise intrusion and limiting east-west movement;
- generally large-scale fields, predominantly reflecting 18th and 19th century parliamentary enclosure and, in the west (where there are large wavy-edged fields), 17th and 18th century informal enclosure, enclosed within a relatively strong hedgerow structure;
- fields bounded by tracks and roads, resulting from post-medieval informal enclosure;
- examples of scarce habitat types, especially small fragments of unimproved chalk grassland (mainly associated with roadside verges along the A34) and a number of large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland to the north and west of the area;
- moderate to low intervisibility within the area, confined by the woodland and hedgerow structure. More extensive views within the more open, south-western section of the landscape;
- isolated farmsteads and villages/hamlets scattered throughout the area interconnected by narrow, winding roads;
- three Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including a length of Roman road in Bradley Wood, barrows and Egbury Camp.
Location and boundaries

This undulating, semi-enclosed character area lies within the central part of the Borough. Its northern and eastern boundaries mark a distinct change to the open, large scale arable fields that characterise the Great Lichfield Down and Willesley Warren character area. The southern boundary is defined by the Test and Bourne valleys, and the western boundary by the more enclosed farmland and woodland of the Ashmansworth and Binley Down character area.

Formative influences

This landscape is underlain with chalk beds, which are masked in places with areas of clay with flint deposits. Dry valleys with alluvial deposits dissect the area and, together with the surrounding geology pattern, create a distinctly undulating landform.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. After this time only limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. There is evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity (including the line of the Portway Roman road to Andover) in the character area (Hampshire SMR). Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure, mainly by informal means, during the 17th-18th centuries.

Overall landscape character

This is an undulating landscape of varied scale and enclosure, unified by the mosaic of farmland and woodland that covers the area. The fields are predominantly arable and large-scale, bounded by a strong hedgerow structure which, interspersed with the frequent woodland blocks and shelter-belts, create a semi-enclosed landscape. An area of more open arable farmland exists in the south-west of the area, adjacent to Hurstbourne Park, where woodland blocks are less frequent and hedgerows are low and well-trimmed.

Isolated farmsteads, villages and hamlets are scattered throughout this landscape, interconnected by a network of winding roads. Overall it retains a quiet, rural character. The only urban influences (apart from a major pylon line that diagonally crosses the landscape) are in the far south of the area where it adjoins the settlement of Whitchurch, and alongside the A34 dual carriageway (the main road corridor which bisects the area from north to south).

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- weaker landscape structure, particularly in the more open landscape types to the south of the area, resulting from hedgerow removal and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, particularly in the more open landscape types, and retention of tree saplings in hedgerows;
- management of road verges and hedge banks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- decline in extent of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- management of unimproved/semi-improved grassland, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- loss of biodiversity through intensive farming practices;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats;
- localised intrusion of traffic on the A34, and of major pylon line that crosses the landscape.
Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
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<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman road, Bradley Wood (SM 468). Long barrow and adjacent bowl barrow, 500m SW of Twinley Manor (SM 12105). Egbury Camp, St Mary Bourne parish (SM 88).</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland Hedgerows Arable Land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’

English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens
None
11. Wyke Down

Key characteristics

- gently undulating landscape of rolling chalkland and a unifying pattern of large woodland blocks, lending a discernible sense of place;
- medium to large-scale mosaic of arable farmland with a semi-enclosed or enclosed character, resulting from small broadleaved woodland blocks and relatively strong hedgerow structure with hedgerow trees;
- area lies within North Wessex Downs AONB, except south of the railway, having few detracting influences, and a remote, quiet, rural character;
- medium to large-scale farmland, the mix of parliamentary fields, track-bound fields and large wavy-edged fields indicating historic time-depth;
- small fragments of ecologically valuable woodland habitat;
- moderate intervisibility within the area, although often confined by woodland blocks, strong hedgerow structure and hedgerow trees.
- sparse settlement pattern with isolated farmsteads and hamlets scattered through the area, many accessed by relatively straight, narrow roads running southwest to north-east;
- Devil’s Ditch (SM 26791) in St Mary Bourne parish.

Location and boundaries

This small, gently undulating area lies in the west of the Borough, bounded to the north-west, west and south by the Borough boundary, although its character does extend beyond. The north-east and eastern boundaries are defined by the distinctive Test and Bourne valley marking a change in topography and vegetation characteristics.

Formative Influences

This gently undulating landscape is predominantly underlain with chalk beds, which merge with a relatively open clay plateau on higher ground to the north-west. The area gently slopes to the south-west, away from the Bourne Rivulet, linking it primarily with the Andover area outside the Borough boundary.
Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age) when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. After this time only very limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. There is some evidence for earlier prehistoric activity in the character area, including extant monuments, and also for Iron Age and Roman activity (Hampshire SMR). The prehistoric track known as the Harrow Way passes through this character area, as does the line of the Portway Roman road to Andover. Although settlements in the area are small and dispersed, Litchfield is amongst those mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th - 18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

**Overall landscape character**

This is a consistent and balanced landscape, characterised by a medium to large-scale mosaic of arable farmland and small broadleaved woodland blocks. This structure of woodland, together with the relatively strong hedgerows that bound the fields, creates a feeling of semi-enclosure. The clay plateau landscape to the north-west of the area merges into the lower lying chalkland, unified by the gently undulating, south-west sloping landform.

The landscape displays a sparse settlement pattern, with isolated farmsteads and hamlets scattered through the area. Its distance from major settlements has helped to ensure that it remains distinctly rural, quiet and unspoilt.

**Key issues**

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- some areas of weaker landscape structure, resulting from hedgerow removal or fragmentation, and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedge banks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- decline in extent of chalk grassland and sheep pasture through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- loss of biodiversity through intensive farming practices;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats;
- visual intrusion of major pylon line, which cuts diagonally across the area.

**Key designations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Devil's Ditch, St Mary Bourne parish (SM 26791) | None | Ancient Semi-natural Woodland
| North Wessex Downs 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' | | Hedgerows
| English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens | None | Arable Land |

 LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES JUNE 2001  
Page 59
12. Test and Bourne Valley

Key characteristics

- two distinct river valleys, merging south-west of Whitchurch, with flat floors, abrupt sloping valley sides and a strong sense of place;
- narrow valley floors, dominated by pasture, with linear woodland belts in upper reaches and with a distinctive riparian vegetation and pastoral character, widening south-west of Whitchurch and developing a more open character;
- patchwork of predominantly medium to large-scale parliamentary fields, with intact hedgerows under mixed farmland, and with small woodland blocks along valley sides;
- area west of Whitchurch lies predominantly within the North Wessex Downs AONB, generally possessing an unspoilt, intimate character, with limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise. A sense of remoteness pervades some of the less accessible parts of the river valley;
- semi-enclosed nature to the 17th-18th century informally enclosed ladder fields, and small wavy-fields on the slopes of the Bourne, due to their strong hedgerow and tree structure, in contrast to the slightly more open slopes of the Test;
- valuable aquatic and wetland habitats along the river valleys (the whole of the Test being an SSSI and Environmentally Sensitive Area), including East Aston Common (SSSI), supporting extensive fen communities and riparian habitats associated with one of Britain’s finest chalk stream systems;
- areas of water meadow and unimproved grassland habitats, including Bere Mill Meadows (SSSI), a damp, unimproved herb-rich neutral grassland in the Upper Test Valley;
- scattered remnants of ancient semi-natural woodland along the valley sides, the larger examples associated with parkland;
- nationally important historic parklands including the Grade II Hurstbourne Park and Grade II* Laverstoke Park, contributing a well-managed character to the landscape;
- intervisibility varying with location, minimised significantly by vegetation and landform within the valley floor and lower slopes, with more open views across the valley system obtainable from higher ground;
- fairly high settlement density, particularly along the Test valley, with towns, villages and hamlets developing along the lower valley sides and valley floor, bringing an urbanised character in places. Main routes through the landscape running along the lower valley slopes and valley floor, except for the A34 dual carriageway that crosses the Test Valley and;
- medieval settlements of Overton and Whitchurch.
Location and boundaries

The Test and Bourne rivers form a distinct character area within the south-western section of the Borough. The character area embraces the rivers’ floodplain and valley sides, which unify and define the character area boundary. The central southern boundary is marked by the Borough boundary, although the character area extends beyond this into the neighbouring Test Valley Borough.

Formative influences

The Test and Bourne rivers cut through an underlying geology of predominantly chalk beds with small areas of clay deposits on higher ground, giving rise to the distinct flat valley floors and abrupt rising valley sides characteristic of this area. The alluvial, loam and valley gravels deposited by the rivers result in a change in vegetation characteristics from that of the surrounding chalkland.

The present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable, agriculture and grazing. After this time only very limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. The area includes the medieval settlements of Overton and Whitchurch, both of which are referred to in the Domesday survey of 1086, as were Polhampston, Freefolk, Laverstoke, Tufton and Hurstbourne Priors. Southington also appears to have been a medieval settlement. Occupants of the valley settlements almost certainly exploited the chalk downland on the valley sides for agriculture and to provide grazing for their stock. This is reflected in the shape of the parishes. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

Overall landscape character

This mixed area of valley floor, slopes, parkland and built form, is unified by the distinct landform which forms the Test and Bourne valley system. The floodplain is predominantly under pasture with a high proportion of linear woodlands and copses, typically of willow and alder, creating a relatively enclosed, intimate and textured landscape. Where the Bourne and Test converge to the south of Whitchurch, they begin to meander across a widening valley with shallower sides. The valley sides have a mosaic of pasture and arable farmland interspersed with small woodland blocks, the fields bounded by a strong hedgerow structure and hedgerow trees. The slopes of the Bourne valley are generally semi-enclosed, with those of the River Test slightly more open. Parkland forms an important element within the Test Valley, with two such areas on the valley sides containing mature specimen trees and managed woodland.

Settlement density is fairly high within this character area, particularly along the Test Valley, with towns, villages and hamlets developing along the lower valley sides and valley floor.

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- poor species and structural diversity and ecological value within coniferous plantations;
- loss of broadleaf woodlands;
- loss and fragmentation of hedgerows, particularly in the more open parts of the valley sides and floor;
- management of hedgerows (particularly in the more open areas) and field patterns of historic importance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- some adverse impacts of low-intensity management of grasslands, particularly where under horse grazing (eg rank grassland with weeds, poorly-managed boundaries or inappropriate styles of fencing);
- loss, fragmentation and inappropriate management of unimproved, and semi-improved, neutral and calcareous grassland;
- identification and conservation of all water meadows, and their appropriate management to allow for shallow winter flooding;
- management of floodplain grazing marsh, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- eastwards movement of source of River Test due to flooding;
- maintenance of water quality and flows;
- maintenance of historic disused watercress beds;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips next to the Test and Bourne rivers and tributaries and other sensitive wildlife habitats;
- some localised visual intrusion and noise from built development and roads within the river corridor, and from the A34 dual carriageway, which crosses the Test Valley.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowl barrow, 120m ESE of the Croft, St Mary Bourne parish (SM 30258).</td>
<td>Bere Mill Meadows</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East Aston Common River Test</td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lowland Wet Grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chalk Streams</td>
</tr>
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<td>North Wessex Downs 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurstbourne Park (Grade II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laverstoke Park (Grade II*)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. South Test Down

Key characteristics

- rolling chalkland and pattern of large woodland blocks giving a discernible sense of place. Its gently undulating topography and degree of diversity contrasts with adjacent character areas;
- pattern of farmland, woodland, hedgerows and trees;
- generally unspoilt, rural character, but occasional detracting influences from built development and, on the western edge, visual and noise intrusion from the A34;
- large open arable fields (reflecting late 18th-19th century parliamentary enclosure) adjacent to the A34, bounded by low, insignificant hedgerows and infrequent woodland blocks, and with geometric shelterbelts;
- semi-enclosed arable land (comprising both parliamentary fields and ladder fields) in the centre of the area between Brickkiln Wood and Laverstoke Wood (and, south of Overton, large wavy fields) with more woodland blocks and tree-lined hedgerows. Area opens up around White Hill creating a general overall open character;
- examples of valuable habitat types, especially several large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, mainly assarted on the southern edge;
- generally high intervisibility within the area, although woodland and undulating landform inhibits views from certain locations;
- sparse settlement pattern, with only a small number of isolated farmsteads/properties scattered through the area accessed along narrow roads;
- a number of Scheduled Bronze Age barrows in Overton parish.

Location and boundaries

This gently undulating, open arable landscape lies in the south-west of the Borough, bounded to the south and west by the Borough boundary. Its northern boundary is defined by the abrupt valley sides of the River Test, which marks a change in topography and vegetation characteristics. The eastern boundary signals a transition to the more enclosed patchwork of arable farmland and woodland, which distinguishes the Oakley/Steventon Down character area.
Formative influences

This area is underlain with chalk layers and occasional deposits of clay with flint on higher ground, creating a gently undulating landform. Dry valleys cut into the landscape from the north, creating a slightly more rolling landscape within the northern reaches.

Although there is relatively little modern settlement in this character area, evidence of human activity in the form of extant monuments, goes back to the prehistoric period. The formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. After this time only very limited patches of woodland survived or regenerated. There is considerable evidence for Bronze Age activity, including extant barrows, in the character area (Hampshire SMR). There are also more limited indications of Iron Age and Roman activity. Medieval open field systems, related to settlements located in the Test-Bourne valley and downland, were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and by some parliamentary enclosure.

Overall landscape character

This area has two distinct landscape types which creates some diversity within the overall character area. The eastern and western parts are characterised by large, arable fields with low, well-cut hedgerows and limited woodland cover. This creates an open, uniform landscape, despite the presence of geometric shelter-belts. This large, open patchwork merges with an area of semi-enclosed arable fields in the centre of the South Test Downs. This more enclosed area has a higher frequency of woodland blocks and shelter-belt planting, with a slightly stronger hedgerow structure, although fields maintain a large-scale. The character area, as a whole, is unified by topography, and is distinct from the more enclosed landscape to the north and east.

There is a sparse settlement pattern within the area, with only a small number of isolated farmsteads and other scattered properties, typically accessed via narrow roads. Whilst much of the landscape remains peaceful and unspoilt, the A34 disturbs the western edge of the area through which it crosses from north to south.

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- weaker landscape structure in the more open landscape types to the west and east of the area, resulting from significant hedgerow removal or neglect and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows (particularly in more open areas), and field patterns of historical significance, and retention of tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, with damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- decline in extent of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture primarily as a result of conversion to arable farmland;
- loss of biodiversity due to intensive farming practices;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats,
- localised noise and visual intrusion of traffic on the A34.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abra Barrow, Overton parish (SM 31167)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tumulus E. of Abra Barrow (SM 31168)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrow SE of Abra Barrow (SM 31169)</td>
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<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td>None</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Oakley / Steventon Down

Key characteristics

- rolling chalkland with unifying pattern of large woodland blocks, trees and hedgerows, giving a discernible sense of place;
- mosaic of arable farmland, managed parkland and mixed woodland. The latter brings semi-enclosure to much of the area and, where more extensive in the south, creates a more enclosed, intimate landscape;
- unspoilt, rural and remote character, with limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise, the northern third of the area lying within the North Wessex Downs AONB;
- generally medium to large-scale arable fields enclosed within a generally intact, well-managed hedgerow and woodland structure, the range of assarts, parliamentary fields and large wavy-edged fields reflecting enclosure from early medieval to 19th century times;
- examples of valuable habitat types comprising frequent, sometimes large, scattered remnants of ancient semi-natural woodland, some of it assarted;
- pre-1810 Ashe Park, Deane Park and Oakley Park bringing an ornamental and well-managed element to the landscape;
- generally low to moderate intervisibility within the area, with frequent woodland blocks and strong hedgerow structure minimising long or panoramic views;
- dispersed settlements within the area, ranging in size from the large village of Oakley to the smaller villages, many hamlets, and scattered individual properties, linked by a network of narrow roads;
- important archaeological features, including an Iron Age settlement and the Micheldever Spoil Heaps (SSSI), a site of quite exceptional botanical importance made from 19th century spoil heaps.

Location and boundaries

This large area forms a distinct swathe of relatively enclosed landscape within the centre south of the Borough, bounded on its southern edge by the Borough boundary. Its enclosed nature contrasts and defines its boundaries with the more open character of the South Test Downs, the Great Lichfield Down, and Willesley Warren character areas to the west, Hannington Down to the north, and Basingstoke Down and Dummer and Popham Down to the east.
**Formative influences**

This area, underlain by chalk beds, is covered by widespread deposits of clay with flints (particularly on higher ground) which creates the characteristic undulating landform. Land generally slopes from higher ground to the north and south of the area down to a dry valley that extends eastwards from the Test.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. After this time patches of woodland survived or regenerated. Prehistoric monuments exist in the character area, and the settlements of Deane, Oakley and Steventon are among those mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Clearance of woodland continued in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

**Overall landscape character**

This diverse but balanced landscape comprises a patchwork of medium to large-scale arable fields, interspersed with frequent broadleaf woodland blocks and managed parkland. The relatively enclosed nature created by the woodland distinguishes this area from the surrounding more open character areas. Fields are bounded by a strong structure of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, whilst mature specimen trees and managed landscapes are evident in the numerous parks within the area.

Dispersed settlements of varying size are a characteristic of the area, the largest being Oakley, with the village of North Waltham, a number of hamlets and scattered individual properties being linked by a network of narrow roads. In spite of these villages and dwellings, the area, as a whole, retains a quiet, rural character.

**Key issues**

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- some localised areas of comparatively weaker structure and a more open landscape, particularly to the north and east of the area, and resulting need to encourage hedgerow planting;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- decline in extent of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- loss of biodiversity through intensive farming practices;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats.

**Key designations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Age White Barrow, Oakley parish (SM 485); Iron Age settlement, Oakley parish (SM 486); 3 round barrows nr. Bulls Bushes Farm (SM 484).</td>
<td>Micheldever Spoil Heaps</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
15. Hannington Down

**Key Characteristics**

- high open plateau in the north, from which surrounding landform slopes quite steeply, becoming gentler to the south-east;
- pattern of open and semi-enclosed farmland with woodland blocks, hedgerows, trees and well-managed formal parkland;
- lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB (except for south-eastern corner), generally possessing an unspoilt, rural character, with a sense of remoteness and limited intrusion from people, traffic and noise;
- large, open arable fields bound by low hedgerows and infrequent woodland blocks to the north and east of Hannington and south of Ibworth, reflecting both 17th and 18th century informal enclosure and late 18th and 19th century parliamentary enclosure. Slightly greater enclosure on chalklands to the east, where hedgerow structure is stronger;
- generally small woodland blocks, a limited amount assarted, varying in frequency between the two landscape types that this area encompasses;
- examples of valuable habitat types, especially several blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland and small remnants of unimproved calcareous grassland;
- two parklands, adding an ornamental and managed character to the surrounding farmland landscape;
- intervisibility varying with location, with long, panoramic views from the open plateau at Hannington, but significantly reduced views in lower, more enclosed areas;
- scattered small villages, hamlets and farmsteads linked by a network of narrow, often winding roads.

**Location and boundaries**

This undulating area of large-scale arable fields lies within the centre of the Borough. Its northern boundary is defined by the distinct change in geology and relief between the chalklands and the clay to the north. The western boundary marks a transition to the more open and exposed character of the Great Litchfield Down and Willesley Warren area and, to the east, the open arable landscapes of the Basingstoke Down character area. The southern boundary defines the more enclosed mosaic of woodland and farmland that distinguishes the Oakley/Steventon Down character area.
Formative influences

The geology within this area consists of chalk beds covered with deposits of clay and flint. One large area of clay deposit to the north of the area has formed a high plateau from which the surrounding landform slopes. This creates a distinct and fairly steep landscape, becoming gentler to the south-east of the area.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, although some patches of woodland survived or regenerated. The settlements of Hannington and Wootton St Lawrence are among settlements mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and a probable medieval settlement with fishponds exists at Cottington’s Hill, north-west of Hannington. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

Overall landscape character

This area is characterised by a mix of open and semi-enclosed farmland, woodland and parkland, unified by the distinct topography created by the high, open clay plateau at Hannington. Large-scale, arable fields predominate, bounded in the more open areas by low, weak hedgerows which become slightly stronger and denser in the semi-enclosed areas. The fields are interspersed with typically small woodland blocks, varying in frequency between the more open northern and western part of the area and the semi-enclosed eastern section. Well-managed and mature planting is characteristic within the parklands.

Small villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads are spread through the area, linked by a network of narrow, often winding roads. The area retains a quiet, rural character, unspoilt by major development or road corridors.

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- weaker landscape structure in the more open landscape types to the west of the area, and resulting need to encourage hedgerow planting;
- management of hedgerows (particularly in large-scale open areas) and field patterns of historic importance, and retention of tree saplings;
- decline in extent of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture, through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- management of road verges and hedge banks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- areas of intensive farming leading to a lowering of the biodiversity level;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips adjacent to sensitive wildlife areas;
- some intrusion of roads on rural qualities of the landscape, such as the A339. Further intrusion from a major pylon line on very high ground north of Hannington, and landmark of radio mast at Cottington’s Hill.
Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Wessex Downs ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’

English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens

None
16. Basingstoke Down

Key characteristics

- rolling landform to the north, becoming more undulating and northward sloping to the south;
- predominantly large-scale farmland, lacking a distinctive sense of place;
- provides landscape setting for the western and southern parts of Basingstoke, whilst the western third of the area lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB. Urban influences affect much of the area, with hospital and golf course development north of Basingstoke, further golf courses south-west of Basingstoke, and significant noise intrusion from M3 and A-roads;
- open character formed by large-scale, arable fields, the mix of track-bound fields, large wavy-edged fields and parliamentary fields reflecting enclosure from post-medieval to 19th century times;
- low, well-cut hedgerows and very few woodland blocks, although shelter belt planting exists north of Basingstoke, and very occasional remnants of ancient semi-natural woodland exists, especially concentrated in the south of the area;
- high intervisibility within the area due to the lack of woodland or strong hedgerow structure, enabling views of Basingstoke from many parts of the character area;
- limited settlement outside Basingstoke, with scattered isolated farmsteads and small villages/hamlets, linked by relatively small, narrow roads, contrasting with effective but intrusive road network linking Basingstoke with surrounding areas via the M3 and A-roads. Roman road defines the abrupt, straight, western built edge to Basingstoke, and the M3 corridor marks a similar sharp edge on the southern side;
- various Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including Woodgarston ring motte, and a Roman site north-west of Woodgarston Farm.
Location and boundaries

This irregularly-shaped area lies in the centre of the Borough, taking its form from the settlement of Basingstoke, which defines its eastern boundary and, for a part to the south, its northern edge. Most of its northern boundary is defined by the distinct change in geology, relief and vegetation characteristics between chalkland and lowland mosaic landscapes. The western and southern boundaries mark a transition to a more enclosed mosaic of farmland and woodland characteristic to the surrounding character areas.

Formative influences

This area is underlain predominantly by chalk layers with occasional deposits of clay and flint. Erosion of the chalklands to the north of Basingstoke gives rise to a characteristic rolling landscape. This landform merges into a gentle rising slope to the south, which becomes steeper to the south of Basingstoke, rising to a high clay plateau at Farleigh Wallop.

The present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing. A few patches of woodland survived or regenerated in the north of the character area. The settlement of Worting is amongst those mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

Overall landscape character

This is an area of relatively consistent landscape character, the urban form of Basingstoke creating a unifying element within a landscape of varying landform. The area is characterised by a large-scale pattern of arable fields with low, well-trimmed hedges that have become weak and broken in places. These elements, together with the fact that woodland blocks are infrequent and very small-scale, bring a feeling of openness to the area. Urban influences, such as golf courses and main roads/motorway development, affect the character of parts of the landscape.

The major settlement of Basingstoke, and its associated infrastructure, exerts a strong influence on the character of the immediate surrounding landscape, affecting its original rural character. In terms of settlement pattern, however, development outside Basingstoke is limited to a scattering of isolated farmsteads and small villages/hamlets.

Key issues

- under-management of some ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- weakened hedgerow structure across the more extensive, open landscape types, resulting from previous hedgerow removal;
- inappropriate general over-management of hedgerows (including 'gapping up') and field patterns of historic importance;
- decline in extent of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- areas of intensive farming with low biodiversity levels;
- management of grass field margins, road verges, hedgebanks, and uncultivated buffer strips adjacent to sensitive wildlife habitats to maintain or increase biodiversity;
- intrusion of built development, urban land uses and major roads on the landscape.
Key Designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Special Sites of Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodgarston ring motte, Wootton St Lawrence parish (SM 103);</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wootton St Lawrence parish (SM 316);</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman site NW of Woodgarston Farm,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wootton St Lawrence parish (SM 319);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyhole enclosure, SE of Field Barn Farm,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monk Sherborne (SM 551);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserved windmill mound, Farleigh Wallop House (SM 555).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Wessex Downs 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. Dummer and Popham Down

Key characteristics

- well defined dry valley running through, and unifying, the landscape;
- varying landscape pattern comprising open farmland, semi-enclosed fields and road network;
- some unspoilt areas, but others suffer significantly from the visual and noise intrusion of three major roads (M3, A30 and A303) which run through the valley;
- predominantly large-scale arable fields reflecting late 18th-19th century parliamentary enclosure and, through the northern large wavy-edged fields, 17th-18th century informal enclosure, bounded by low hedgerows and infrequent woodland blocks, creating an open character;
- degree of enclosure created by woodland blocks close to the M3 and A30/A303 corridor, particularly at junction 8 where the complexity of the roads creates small pockets of land;
- very occasional blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland contributing some ecological value;
- varying intervisibility within the site, generally being high but impeded by woodland blocks and landform;
- scattered farmsteads and the villages of Dummer and North Waltham, linked by a network of narrow lanes;
- Popham Beacons group of barrows, located in Overton parish on the southern edge of the Borough (SM 31151).

Location and boundaries

This character area is located in the south of the Borough, bounded to the south-west by the Borough boundary. The western boundary marks the transition to the more enclosed, smaller scale landscape of Oakley/ Steventon Down. The distinct Candover Valley and the more enclosed mosaic of farmland, woodland and parkland characteristic of the Ellisfield Clay Plateau and Valley character area defines the extent of the south-eastern boundary. The golf course and motorway in the Basingstoke Down character area demarcate the north eastern boundary.
Formative influences

The geology within this area predominantly consists of chalk layers, covered with occasional deposits of clay and flint. Erosion of the chalklands has led to the formation of an extensive dry valley, running south-west/north-east through the area and providing a unity and coherence to the character area.

The present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, although patches of woodland survived or regenerated. Evidence for prehistoric activity has survived in the form of extant barrows, and the Hampshire SMR shows evidence of Iron Age, Roman and (limited) Saxony activity in the area. The settlements of Dummer and Popham are amongst settlements mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

Overall landscape character

This is a varied landscape of open arable farmland, a more enclosed part around the road network and North Waltham, and an area of semi-enclosed arable fields, given coherence by the well-defined dry valley that runs through the area. The predominant large arable fields are bounded by low, trimmed hedgerows and infrequent woodland blocks, creating a feeling of relative openness. In contrast, the complexity of roads around the M3 and A30/A303, especially at Junction 8, creates small pockets of land, with enclosure provided by the significantly greater percentage of woodland blocks. Tree planting also creates the small pocket of semi-enclosed farmland that lies to the north and west of Dummer Farm.

With the exception of the village of Dummer, this landscape is populated only by a number of scattered farmsteads, which are linked by a network of narrow lanes. The major road corridors of the M3 and A30/A303 significantly disturb the tranquillity of the landscape in adjoining areas.

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands and inappropriate infill planting;
- weakened landscape structure across the more extensive, open landscape types, resulting from hedgerow removal or neglect and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows (particularly in more open areas) and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of tree saplings;
- loss, fragmentation and inappropriate management of unimproved chalk grassland and sheep pasture;
- lack of permanent grass field margins, including uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats;
- intensive farming practices leading to a loss of biodiversity levels;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- visual and noise intrusion of major roads and other urban land uses on rural qualities of the landscape.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popham Beacons barrows group, Overton parish (S edge of Borough), (SM 31151).</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. Tunworth and Upton Grey Down

Key characteristics

- undulating landform, generally sloping north-eastwards from the Ellisfield Clay Plateau to the Loddon/Lyde and Whitewater valleys in the north;
- unifying pattern of large woodland blocks, trees and intact well-managed hedgerows, creating a semi-enclosed landscape with a discernible sense of place. More open arable landscape with infrequent, small woodland blocks to the north-east of the area around Upton Grey;
- generally quiet, unspoilt rural character, with a sense of remoteness and limited intrusion from people and traffic;
- medium to large-scale arable fields comprising parliamentary fields, large wavy-edged fields and track bound fields, reflecting enclosure from post-medieval to 19th century times;
- examples of valuable habitat types comprising scattered, large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, some of it assarted;
- a number of well-managed historic parks, Grade 1 Hackwood Park in the north being the largest. Other important parks include Great Park in the south-west corner of Weston Patrick parish, and the Grade II* early 20th century garden at the Manor House, Upton Grey;
- generally high intervisibility to the north-east of the area, becoming more confined with the increase in woodland cover and hedgerow structure;
- scattered small villages, hamlets and isolated farmstead/properties throughout the area linked by a winding network of narrow roads;
- important archaeological features including an earthwork in Great Park (SM 442).

Location and boundaries

This area lies in the south-east of the Borough, bounded along its eastern edge by the Borough boundary. Its southern and south-western boundary marks a change in underlying geology, and relief to the flatter clay plateau of the Ellisfield Clay Plateau and Valleys character area. The northern boundary is marked by the north facing slopes of the Loddon and Lyde valley system. The urban form of Basingstoke and the M3 motorway demarcate the north-western boundary, while its western boundary defines the distinct change to the more open, arable landscape characteristic of the Basingstoke Down landscape.
**Formative influences**

The geology within this area predominantly consists of chalk layers, covered with very occasional and small deposits of clay and flint. Although undulating, the land generally slopes to the north-east from the high, flat clay plateau at Ellisfield, to the Loddon and Lyde and Whitewater valleys in the north and east.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, although patches of woodland survived or regenerated. There was Iron Age and Roman activity in the area, and the settlements of Tunworth, Winslade, and Weston Patrick are among settlements mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Survey. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

**Overall landscape character**

This diverse but coherent landscape comprises a patchwork of arable farmland, woodland and parks, unified by the undulating, sloping topography between the high plateau and large valley systems. In the southern and western parts, fields are medium to large-scale with relatively large woodland blocks, and bound by strong hedgerows creating a feeling of semi-enclosure. This landscape merges in the north-east to one that is more open, with low, trimmed hedgerows and infrequent woodland blocks. Three parks within the area contribute a managed character to the rural farmed landscape.

Small villages, hamlets and isolated farmstead/properties are scattered through the area, linked by a winding network of narrow roads. Away from the north-western boundary with Basingstoke and the M3 and A339 through the west of the area, the landscape retains a peaceful, rural and unspoilt character.

**Key issues**

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands;
- some localised areas of comparatively weaker structure and a more open landscape (particularly surrounding Upton Grey), resulting from hedgerow removal and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic value, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- the decline in extent of unimproved grassland through agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips adjacent to sensitive wildlife areas;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- noise intrusion from the M3 and A339, and visual intrusion of major pylon line that cuts from north to south through the area.

**Key designations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earthwork, Great Park, Weston Patrick parish (SM 442)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackwood Park (Grade I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Manor House, Upton Grey (Grade II* garden)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES JUNE 2001 Page 76*
19. Ellisfield Clay Plateau and Valleys

Key characteristics

- flat to gently undulating clay plateau to the east of the area, merging to a distinct ridge and valley landscape to the west;
- pattern of arable farmland, parkland and well-managed woodland blocks. Relatively large blocks of the latter combine with topography to create an enclosed and intimate landscape with a distinct sense of place within the valleys;
- generally quiet, unspoilt rural character, with a sense of remoteness and limited intrusion from people and traffic;
- generally large-scale fields with intact boundaries, reflecting enclosure from post-medieval to 19th century times, the range of track-bound fields, large wavy-edged fields and parliamentary fields indicating historic time-depth;
- examples of valuable habitat types comprising the scattered large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, much of it assarted;
- localised ornamental, managed element contributed by the Grade II Herriard Park to the east and Grade II* 20th Century Moundsmere Park;
- generally low intervisibility contained by the high proportion of woodland cover and strong hedgerow structure;
- scattered small villages, hamlets and isolated farmstead/properties throughout the area, linked by a winding network of narrow roads, often along the bottom of valleys. Disused pits characterise the area along the B3046 and the road from Axford to Herriard;
- Ellisfield Camp (SM 107).

Location and Boundaries

This area lies in the south east of the Borough, bounded to the south-east by the Borough boundary. Its northern and eastern boundaries are defined by the more undulating and south-east sloping landform characteristic of the Tunworth and Upton Grey Down landscape. The south-western boundary marks a distinct transition to the Candover Valley landscape, whilst the north-west boundary is defined by the open, arable landscape associated with Basingstoke Down.
Formative influences

The plateau to the east of the area is underlain by a shallow deposit of clay and flint, which characterises its high elevation. Erosion to this clay deposit has led to a flat or gently undulating landform, which sets it apart from the surrounding chalkland. To the west of the area, erosion has worn away the majority of the clay deposit, resulting in a series of ridges and valleys above the chalk beds.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, although patches of woodland survived or regenerated. There was Iron Age and Roman activity in the area, and the settlements of Herriard, Ellisfield, Farleigh Wallop and Nutley are among settlements mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Survey. Medieval open field systems were largely replaced by both informal and formal enclosure, the latter enforced by parliament in the late 18th/19th century.

Overall landscape character

This landscape is characterised by a pattern of large-scale farmland, frequent woodland blocks and parkland. Diversity is created through variations in topography, but the underlying clay, with its associated dense vegetation, serves to unify the high plateau and valley slopes. woodland cover throughout this area is generally high, creating a feeling of semi-enclosure, and the larger woodland blocks on some of the steep valley sides add to the dramatic valley landscape. Fields are predominantly arable, bounded by a strong hedgerow and tree structure, and parkland in the east of the area brings an ornamental, managed element to the landscape.

The landscape is scattered with small villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads or properties, linked by a winding network of narrow roads. Both settlements and roads are often located in the bottom of valleys. The landscape retains a quiet, rural quality, unspoilt by major development, and has an intimate character within the valleys.

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodland;
- some localised areas of comparatively weaker structure and a more open landscape on the plateau to the east of the area, resulting from hedgerow removal and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedge banks and damage from agricultural practices and road improvements;
- loss and fragmentation of unimproved/semi-improved grassland, and need to manage grassland to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- areas of intensive farming practices lowering biodiversity levels;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats;
- noise intrusion of A339.

Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellisfield Camp, Ellisfield parish (SM 107)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herriard Park (Grade II)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moundsmere Manor (Grade II*)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
20. Candover Valley

Key characteristics

- distinctive river valley with narrow bottom, sloping valley sides and a discernible sense of place;
- diverse pattern of arable, pasture, woodland and parkland;
- typically quiet, unspoilt rural character, with a sense of remoteness and limited intrusion from people and traffic;
- generally arable, large-scale open fields on higher ground, the assarts, large wavy-edged fields, ladder fields and parliamentary fields reflecting enclosure from early medieval to late 19th century times, with limited woodland blocks and hedgerows that are low or with few hedgerow trees;
- more enclosed landscape on lower valley slopes and bottom, with smaller fields, stronger hedgerow structure, greater proportion of pasture and distinctive riparian vegetation;
- examples of valuable habitat types, comprising a few scattered blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland (some of it assarted), and remnant areas of unimproved pasture within the river valley;
- many parklands along the valley floor giving a sense of a well-managed landscape;
- intervisibility varying with location, linear views possible within the lower valley slopes, contained by landform and the strong tree and hedgerow structure, and more extensive across the valley from higher ground;
- small settlements developed along floor and lower slopes of the valley through which B3046 runs;
- many barrows of Scheduled Ancient Monument status.

Location and boundaries

This distinct valley landscape lies in the extreme south of the Borough, bounded to the west, south and south-east by the Borough boundary. The boundaries to the north and north-east are defined by a change in topography and vegetation cover.
Formative influences

The geology within this area predominantly consists of chalk layers covered with occasional deposits of clay and flint. There is a distinct linear north-east/south-west running valley with a narrow floodplain and sloping valley sides.

Formation of the present landscape was probably initiated as long ago as the earlier prehistoric period (Neolithic and Bronze Age), when the original forest cover was largely cleared for arable agriculture and grazing, although patches of woodland survived or regenerated. Extant earlier prehistoric monuments attest to important activity in the character area, whilst the Hampshire SMR confirms the presence of people in the Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as some Roman, (limited) Saxon, and medieval activity. The settlements of Preston Candover, Chilton Candover, Brown Candover and Bradley are amongst those mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Medieval open field systems and downland were largely replaced by enclosure by informal means during the 17th-18th centuries, and later by parliamentary enclosure.

Overall landscape character

This is a diverse landscape of farmland, woodland and parkland that is unified by the underlying, well-defined linear valley form. It is characterised by large, arable fields on higher valley slopes, their low, well-trimmed hedgerows and infrequent woodland blocks lending an open feel. In contrast, the lower valley slopes and floor are overlain with smaller-scale fields of pasture. These are bounded by a strong hedgerow structure, interspersed with small, frequent woodland blocks, creating an enclosed and intimate landscape. The valley floor and sides are also distinguished by the presence of parkland in places, which contributes an ornamental, managed character.

Small settlements have developed along the route of the B3046 that runs along the valley bottom, and then onto the lower valley slopes. Despite the intrusion of the main road, the area as a whole retains a peaceful and rural character.

Key issues

- under-management of ancient semi-natural woodlands, including hazel coppice woods;
- weakened landscape structure across the more extensive, open landscape types, resulting from hedgerow removal or neglect, and loss of broadleaf woodland to agricultural intensification;
- management of hedgerows and field patterns of historic significance, and retention of hedgerow tree saplings;
- management of road verges and hedgebanks, and damage from scrub encroachment, road improvements and legacy of agrochemical use on adjacent farmland;
- decline in extent of grassland and sheep pasture through scrub encroachment and agricultural improvement, particularly conversion to arable farmland;
- inappropriate management of floodplain vegetation and wetland habitats;
- intensive farming practices lowering biodiversity levels;
- management of unimproved neutral grassland, to maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- lack of permanent grass field margins and uncultivated buffer strips next to sensitive wildlife habitats.
### Key designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</th>
<th>Special Sites of Scientific Interest</th>
<th>Biodiversity Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic Long barrow, Preston, Candover parish (SM 12106). Round barrow SW of Lower Farm, Preston Candover parish (SM 322.). Round barrows S of Down Farm, Preston Candover parish (SM 323.). Enclosures S of the Cowleys, Candovers parish (SM 526). Bowl barrow 600m NE of Totford Farm, Candovers parish (SM 12144).</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ancient Semi-natural Woodland Hedgerows Arable Land</td>
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English Heritage Listed Parks/Gardens
None