

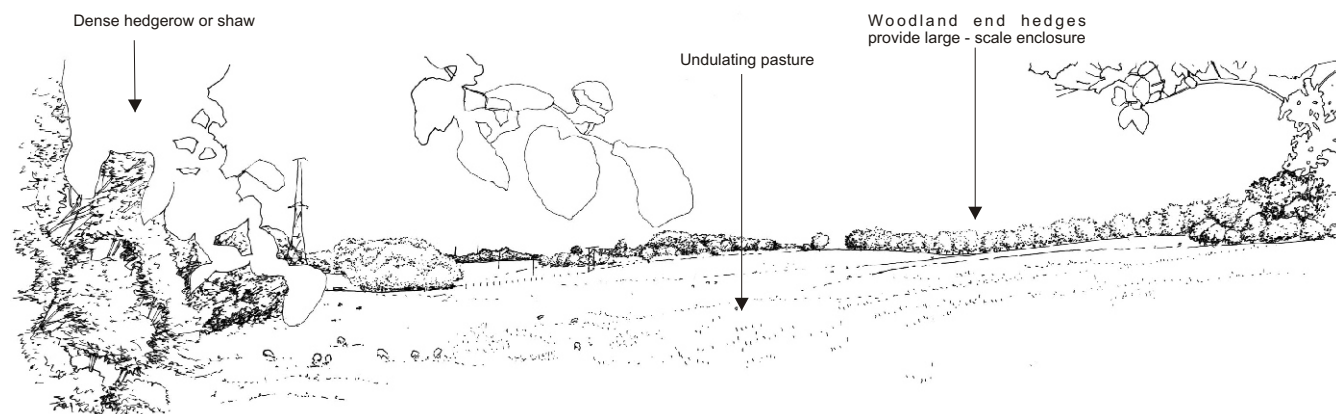
Landscape Character

This continuation of the North Downs dip slope is characterised by the very undulating topography, with a very small plateau above Harrietsham. It has many small to medium size blocks of woodland, of great nature conservation interest, and a mix of large arable fields (on the plateau and more level areas) with pasture on the slopes. It has a timeless well-maintained yet remote character, and very few settlements. Hamlets cluster at remote crossroads and farmsteads are scattered. This terrain is small in scale and high in biodiversity, especially amid the woodland, which appears much more fragmented than the large blocks to the east.

Along the northern edge of the area there are many orchards, marking the transition to the northern fruit belt. There are also extensive orchards and nurseries around Bicknor, where the topography is less variable. Here the lines of fruit trees and shelter belts provide a contrasting geometry, but this local landscape is rather bleak and sterile, lacking the diversity and the patchwork effect of the blend of small-scale arable and woodland found elsewhere.

Landscape Designations

The whole of this area is designated AONB and SLA, denoting its high scenic value. It is therefore protected in its own right for its natural beauty. All development will be subject to a high level of scrutiny. Any development that would adversely affect the natural beauty of the landscape will be resisted and large-scale development proposals must be accompanied by an environmental impact assessment.



Physical Influence

The chalk landform is very dominant here, with an exhilarating, large-scale character that is reinforced by the medium to large-scale field pattern. The topography is dramatically undulating, except in the vicinity of Bicknor, with extensive views both north and south. The cruciform war memorial, carved into the chalk above Lenham, is visible over an extensive area.

Historical and Cultural Influences

Although there are few settlements of any size, hamlets such as Otterden have Old English place names (Otter's people rather than to do with otters) and are long established, unlike the central part of the North Downs dip slope. Wormshill means 'Woden's Hill', dedicated to the chief of the Teutonic gods. This variant dates from the 13th century.



Chestnut coppice with oak standards

Torry Hill Park lies 1¼ miles east of Frinstead village. This private family home, a copy of the original Georgian building, lies within a 930ha/2,300 acre estate with extensive mid-19th century parkland and 4ha of largely 20th century garden. Otterden Place is also of local significance as a historic garden and parkland.

There are many 'deneholes' in this area, especially to the south of Wormshill. These chalk mines, usually dug at the edge of fields upon which the chalk marl was to be spread, were cylindrical in shape and 30-100 feet deep. Some are pre-Roman.

Buildings and Settlement

This area contains several tiny villages and hamlets connected by a network of small, often sunken, single-track lanes which often prevent views out, and no settlements of any significant size.

White painted weatherboard and red brick are characteristic of domestic buildings, with flint churches and farm buildings.

The roofs of the industrial buildings of the Marley Works near Harrietsham (see Area 4: Hollingbourne Vale) are very intrusive in views to the south from this area.

Landcover and Biodiversity

The landscape pattern of this area is of pasture and wide arable fields, contained by dense belts of deciduous woodland which run along the upper slopes of the dry valleys and frequently obstruct long views in any direction.



The dip slope valleys are well wooded

Key Characteristics:

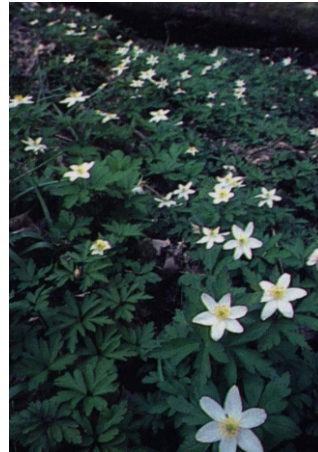
- high, rolling chalk downland dominates;
- less extensive dip slope;
- wide arable fields contained by dense woodland belts;
- network of small, often sunken, narrow lanes;
- occasional dramatic extensive views over the Low Weald.

Area 3: Wormshill to Otterden North Downs

Landscape Character Areas

Much of the extensive woodland lies near the northern boundary, i.e. on the dip slope, but the Hollingbourne Downs SSSI lies on the top of the chalk scarp above the village. It consists of unimproved chalk grassland and beech woodland with oak and ash, with at least three rare species, including two orchids. At the top of the slopes there is an extensive area of very large hawthorn, and a chalk quarry contains yew and whitebeam scrub. Development proposals relating to SSSIs and SNCIs are dealt with below and are referred to more fully in the general landscape guidance notes. Lenham Quarry is a geological SSSI, designated because it appears to be a deposit from the Pliocene time period, which is poorly represented in the British Isles.

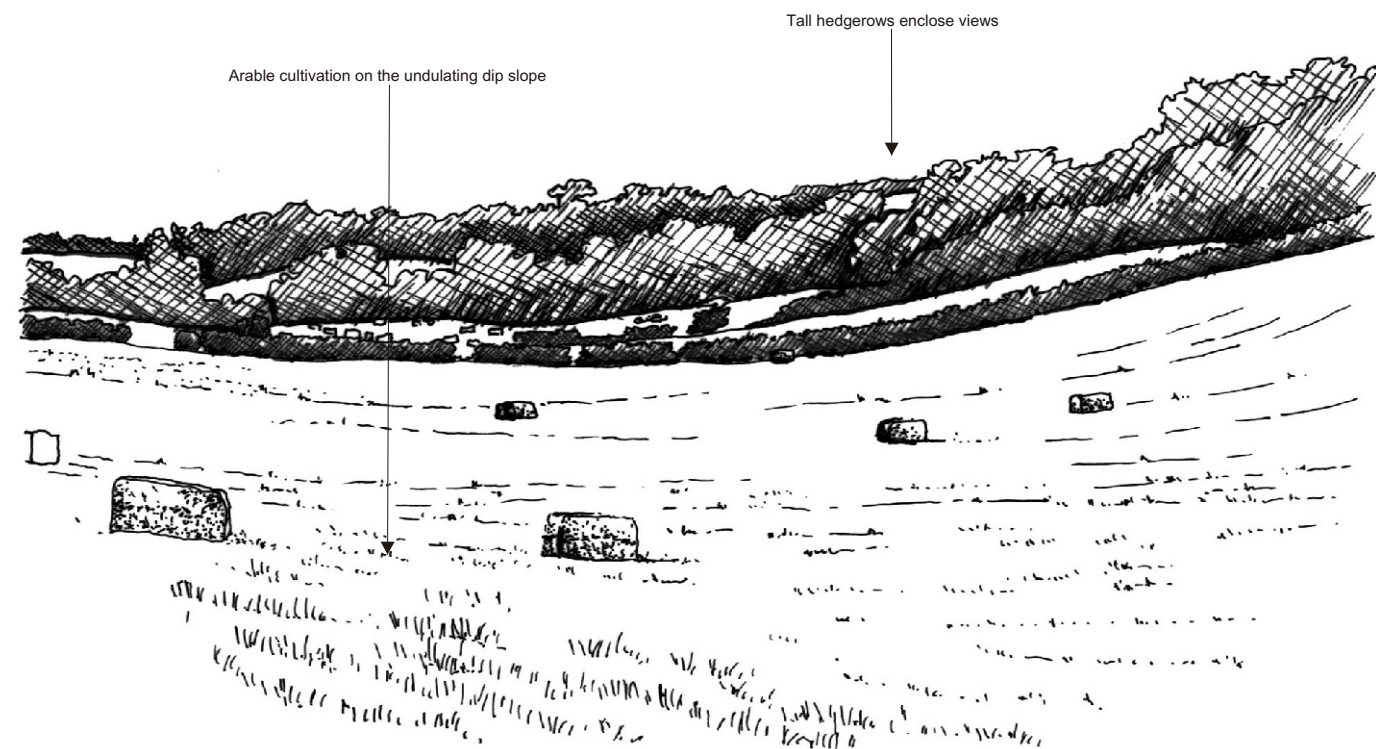
Wichling Wood and Oakenpole Wood, Greet, at the eastern end of this area, are SNCI ancient woodland, mostly converted to actively managed sweet chestnut coppice; bluebell and wood anemone are characteristic of the ground flora. Filmer Wood and King's Acre at Wichling (both SNCI), also at the eastern end of this area, are fragmented ancient woodland with a rich variety of species and contain old pollards, coppice stools and woodbanks. The ground flora includes orchids, cow wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*).



Wood anemone
(*Anemone nemorosa*)

Gorham Wood, Bicknor (SNCI) contains a variety of woodland types on both chalk and clay-with-flints soils and a fine variety of ground flora, including several orchid species. Nightingales and hawfinches are present, some rare molluscs and over 400 species of fungus. Badgers, foxes and rabbits are common. The Torry Hill estate (SNCI) is a mosaic of ancient woodland and grassland with very varied ground flora, except under the yew on the upper slopes, as is Stock Wood and chalk slopes at Frinstead (also SNCI). Trundle Wood, Bedmonton (SNCI) is a complex of habitats, soils and species. A particular feature is a line of old layered large-leaved lime along the northern boundary; this species is extremely rare in Kent. Danes Bottom Wood and Pasture, also at Bedmonton, is a dry chalk valley below beech high forest, with many chalk grassland species, including orchids. Bluebells and dog's mercury dominate the ground flora.

Hucking Hill House pasture and woods SNCI supports one of the few remaining unimproved fields on heavy clay-with-flint soils, now very rare in Kent due to changes in agricultural practice. It contains hay rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*).



Landscape Condition:

Condition

Detracting features: few
 Visual unity: strong
 Cultural integrity: high
 Ecological integrity: fragmented
 Functional integrity: strong

Robustness

Pattern of elements: simple
 Consistency of pattern: coherent
 Distinctive features: landform
 Historic continuity: ancient
 Impact of landform: strong
 Extent of tree cover: fragmented but widespread
 Extent of visibility: variable, extensive views out

CONDITION	Good	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	Moderate	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	Poor	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		ROBUSTNESS		

Landscape Guidance: improve area and conserve character where condition is poor

Principles

- avoid development proposals for areas within the AONB unless overwhelming need can be proved. Ensure that any proposals for development pay due regard to the need to protect and enhance the landscape of the AONB/SLA;
- all SSSIs are firmly protected from development that would have an adverse effect on their special interest. This interest may extend beyond the site boundary. Any developer must ensure that development proposals within or adjacent to an SSSI would not have any adverse effect;
- development harmful to the interest of SNCI sites will not be permitted;
- Ancient Woodland will be protected from development and encouragement will be given to the maintenance and sympathetic management of Ancient Woodland sites and chalk grassland;
- actively manage existing woodland, especially coppice woodland;
- manage and restore, where necessary, existing hedges, trees and woodland, especially in the valleys;
- preserve the small scale of roads and hamlets, and the remote tranquillity of the countryside;
- maintain the existing diversity of orchards, parkland, farmland, paddock and pasture;
- extend the principle of securing management agreements for high quality habitats.

Practical Measures

- seek to re-establish or create shaws of deciduous woodland, using species appropriate to the soil type, i.e. either chalk or clay-with-flints;
- encourage reversion of subsidised arable crops to pasture, especially on the chalk, where it may be possible to recreate chalk grassland;
- on chalk soils, plant yew with whitebeam, ash and pedunculate oak, with hawthorn, spindle and guelder rose in the shrub layer or in hedges. The main hedgerow species are oak, chestnut, beech and hazel, allowed to grow quite tall (2-3m);
- on the clay-with-flints soils plant hornbeam, hazel, pedunculate oak, beech, field maple hedges and holly, damson and black thorn. There is also some hornbeam and chestnut coppice, and both large-leaved and small-leaved lime are rare and notable local species. Local hedge species are field maple with holly;
- development proposals should consider views out of the site. Consideration should also be given to the likely need to provide screen planting around part of the perimeter of any development to baffle views of the transport corridor or the industrial buildings at the Marley Works.

Landscape Sensitivity

The landscape character of this area has already been compromised by the fragmentation of woodland and the encroachment of arable cultivation. Any potential development should respect the small scale and high biodiversity of the area, and should also take account of the local topography, which could assist in screening. There are local examples in flatter areas of a diminution of landscape character, which should be resisted. Any significant large-scale development would detract from the landscape character of this area which, while sensitive to change, could accommodate small-scale development which respects and continues the existing settlement pattern.

Typical Planting Mixes (Area 3: Chalk)

In this area there tends to be greater variety in woodland species composition than elsewhere in the North Downs. Although hedges are often single species, a mix of species with one dominant would also be appropriate and would provide increased biodiversity without reducing landscape character.

Woodland:

Ash	20
Guelder Rose	5
Hawthorn	25
Pedunculate Oak	20
Spindle	5
Whitebeam	15
Yew	10
	100%

Hedges:

Guelder Rose	10	Chestnut	Beech	10
Hawthorn	80	or	Hazel	70
Spindle	10	Beech	Oak	15
			Spindle	5
	100%			100%

Plant in double row at 30-45cm centres.
 30cm between each row

(Area 3: Clay-with-flints)

Woodland:

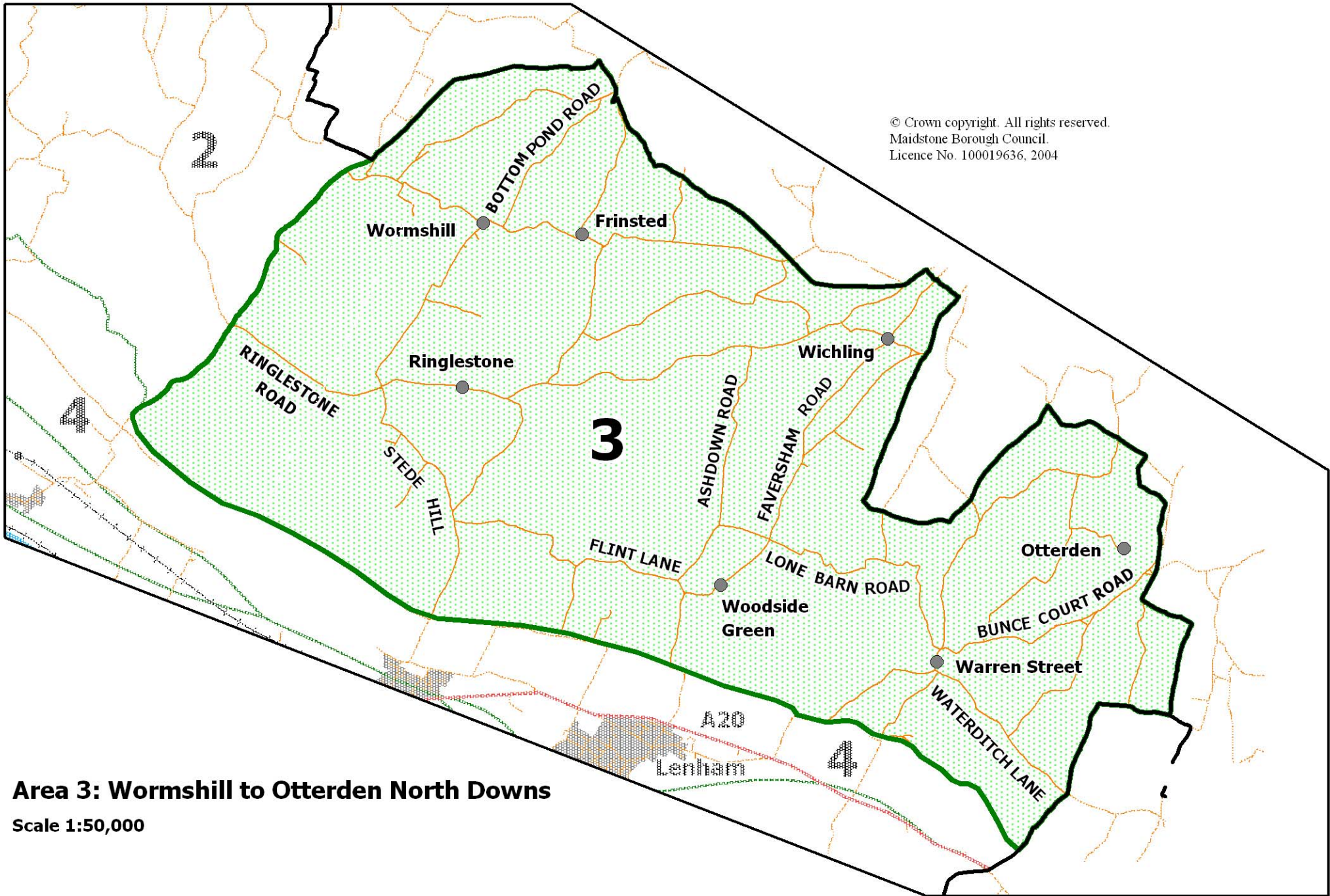
Blackthorn	10
Damson	5
Field Maple	15
Hazel	10
Holly	5
Hornbeam	30
Large-leaved Lime	10
Pedunculate Oak	10
Small-leaved Lime	05
	100%

Hedges:

Guelder Rose	10	Field Maple	85	Hazel	100%
Hawthorn	80	Holly	15		
Spindle	10				
	100%		100%		

Plant as double staggered row 45cm apart.
 30cm between rows.

Ensure that all species used are of local provenance, but note that local relic populations are landlocked and not propagating by seed; there is therefore an argument for fresh genetic input. Seek specialised advice, eg. Kent Wildlife Trust.



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Area 3: Wormshill to Otterden North Downs

Scale 1:50,000