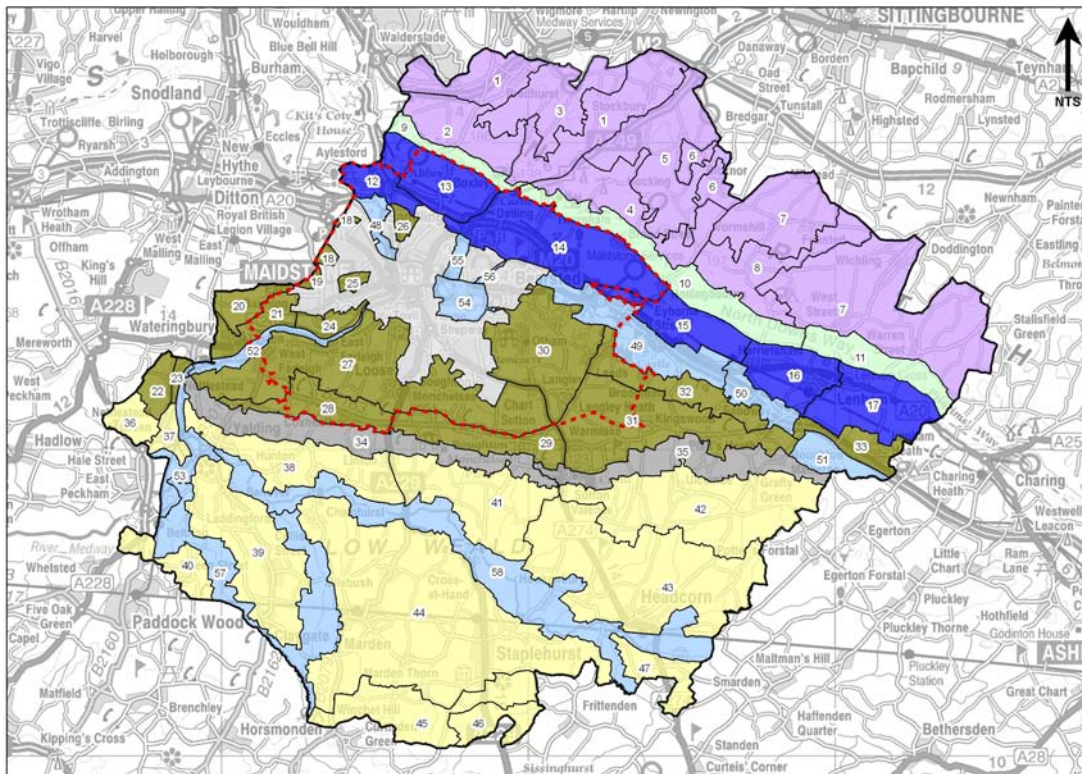


MAIDSTONE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



MARCH 2012

JACOBS


MAIDSTONE
Borough Council

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Preamble

The Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines was adopted by Maidstone Borough Council in 2000. This assessment was carried out by the Landscape Partnership using best practice guidance available at the time. This study provided robust and clear descriptions of the borough's landscape character as well as guidelines to assist those involved with landscape management, and the siting and design of new development.

Time does not stand still though. Since the study's publication, landscape character assessment techniques have evolved and been refined. Changes have taken place across Maidstone which need to be accounted for. Significant advances have been made in the understanding of the likely implications and impact of climate change, even if our understanding of the processes and speed of change is still incomplete. In order to be able to continue to make sound land use decisions we must have up-to-date information to hand. This requires a review of the existing landscape character toolkit. In order to achieve this, Maidstone Borough Council commissioned Jacobs to undertake a new borough-wide study.

The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 represents the findings of that study. It is intended to update our knowledge and understanding of the range and variety of landscape character present throughout the borough, and how these landscapes function and relate to one another.

The study provides detailed profiles of each landscape character area identified, highlighting the main characteristics and influential factors, and setting out analyses of the overall condition and sensitivity. It aims to be relatively free from judgements based on the value or capacity of a landscape to accommodate change, these being separate, much more complex exercises which usually see wider stakeholder involvement. 'Sensitivity' in this assessment is the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration: it is not the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular type of change or development. 'Condition' is an indicator for future land management options, which may or may not include development.

It needs to be made clear from the outset that land assessed as having a 'poor' condition does not mean it has an increased likelihood of being allocated for development. Development is just one of many potential landscape management options and indeed, development itself can fall into one of many categories (residential or commercial, high or low density to name but a few examples). Whilst the study will be used to help inform the Development Plan Documents that allocate land for development it will be as part of a much wider evidence base. In some areas of 'poor' condition the landscape management option may be to enhance and restore that condition in order to conform with areas around it that are of a better condition or a higher value, or to enhance an area of designation.

The landscape character assessment is the first step in the review of the existing landscape character guidance. The next stages will see the information being used as the basis for the development of criteria-led policies in the Maidstone Local Development Framework as well landscape guidelines in a new landscape character guidelines supplementary planning document. The latter will involve wider stakeholder consultation in order to capture more local knowledge than could be taken on board by the more prescribed landscape character assessment methodology. It also allows for a landscape value assessment exercise to be undertaken, to help gain a better insight into those landscape areas which are locally cherished. This is considered to be particularly relevant in determining the best approach to identifying, protecting and positively managing the setting to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area of landscape of special relevance to the people of Maidstone.

Preamble

The study is not just intended for use by those involved directly in the planning system (such as policy makers, development management teams, developers and architects). Indeed, many of the guidelines identified fall outside the remit of the local planning authority's functions. It is a community resource which can help inform other work, such as village or parish design statements, neighbourhood development plans, and landscape management strategies. It can complement other work undertaken with respect to historical landscape character, biodiversity networks and green and blue infrastructure planning.

Change is inevitable. But by continually reviewing and developing landscape character guidance, we can ensure the land use change and development proposals that take place are planned and designed to achieve an appropriate 'fit' with their surroundings as well as contributing more to the enhancement of Maidstone's diverse landscape.



Section 1 Introduction

Report Structure

This document is structured as follows:

Section 1 Introduction: Sets out the background and context; the importance of landscape character; aims, objectives and outcomes.

Section 2 Methodology: Outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology and provides guidance on how to use the document.

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape: Outlines and describes the existing influences on the landscape outlined, including soils and geology, landform and drainage, historic background, land use and agriculture, ecological and landscape and heritage designations. Maps in this section are for indicative purposes only. Detailed information about any of the individual data sets should be obtained from the data set owners or other appropriate sources.

Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation: Gives an overview of landscape character across the borough within the national and county context. It then goes on to provide detailed profiles of the landscape character types and areas identified by the assessment, with key characteristics, an analysis of landscape condition and sensitivity, and landscape guidelines.

Section 5 Summary and recommendations: Sets out the main findings of the assessment.

Background

The countryside has evolved over many hundreds of years. It has been created by the interaction of the natural environment and human activities, in particular the combination of physical, biological and cultural influences. Physical influences such as geology and landform, together with the overlying pattern of settlement and land uses are key determinants of landscape character.

Maidstone Borough covers an area of 363 km², of which over 90% is rural in nature. Landcover is predominantly arable or pasture with smaller areas of woodland and unimproved grassland. Topographically the borough ranges from low-lying land and river valleys to higher ridges, scarps and downland.

There is a need to retain pattern and diversity in the landscape to ensure that character and local distinctiveness are maintained. This is not necessarily about keeping the landscape as it is but is more about preventing everywhere becoming the same. In addition we need to ensure that landscapes are visually satisfying and give enjoyment to those who visit them, and those who live and work in them.

Government policy¹ requires that planning authorities should ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced. The use of landscape character assessments based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned is advocated.

¹ Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development; Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

Section 1 Introduction

Context

Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines was produced in 2000. Since then there have been changes within Maidstone's landscapes; landscape character assessment techniques have evolved; and there is an increased awareness of the impacts resulting from climate change.

In order to take account of these changes, Maidstone Borough Council commissioned Jacobs to undertake a landscape character assessment of the borough. The borough-wide study area encompasses the whole of the rural area up to and including the urban edge and green wedges of Maidstone, but does not include the main built-up area of Maidstone. This assessment was carried out at a scale of 1:25,000. A more detailed assessment of the rural setting of Maidstone's urban area, carried out at a 1:10,000 scale, is also incorporated (Figure 1). The study area broadly defined at project inception used the Key Diagram contained in the Core Strategy Preferred Options Development Plan Document 2007, and was further refined to follow the edges of landscape character areas. The assessment used the Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines 2000 document, prepared by The Landscape Partnership Ltd, to help inform the new assessment. However provision of a toolkit of further landscape guidelines, including detailed planting schedules as per the Landscape Character and Guidelines 2000, falls outside the scope of this brief.

The importance of landscape character

Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as:

"an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

The ELC is an international agreement devoted to the protection, planning and management of all landscapes, whether they are of outstanding beauty, degraded or ordinary landscapes. It applies to rural, urban, coastal and marine areas. The convention calls for the integration of landscape in all relevant policies (cultural, economic and social) and the active engagement of the general public in shaping future landscapes.

The overall aim of landscape, planning, design and management should be to achieve sustainable landscapes that are as visually, ecologically and culturally as rich as possible to meet society's social, economic and environmental needs. Landscape character assessments provide essential information about landscape diversity, character and distinctiveness, evolution, and sensitivity to change as well as landscape management needs. This information is essential in helping to work towards the goal of developing a better understanding of landscapes.

Aims, objectives and outcomes

The main aims of the study are to provide an up-to-date assessment of landscape character in accordance with current guidance and best practice, and serve as an updated baseline of environmental information. It will also aim to provide logical, robust and defensible justifications for managing pressures for change in Maidstone Borough, without diminishing the value of the landscape.

Section 1 Introduction

The key objectives of the study are to:

- Undertake a systematic assessment of the borough
- Provide a comprehensive description and evaluation of landscape character areas identified in the borough, integrating field data with historical, ecological and geodiversity information
- Engage with key technical stakeholders during the process to obtain their views and data for landscape character issues
- Assist in forming the basis of policies in Maidstone's Local Development Framework, in particular the Core Strategy, and set the foundation for a landscape character supplementary planning document
- Set the foundation for the development of integrated guidance for use as part of the development management process
- Identify those areas requiring landscape conservation, restoration, reinforcement or improvement

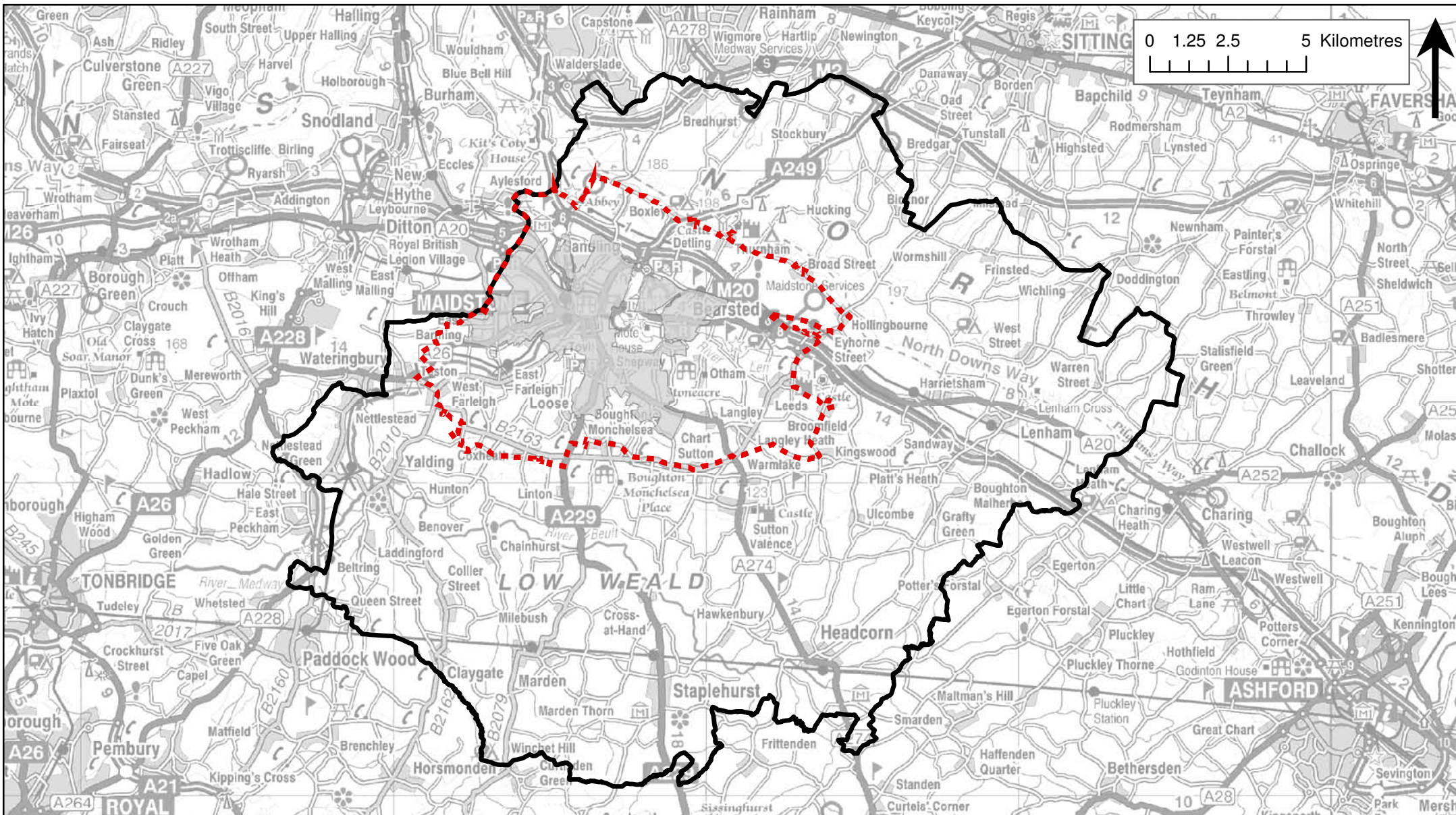
Outcomes of the study are anticipated to be:

- Ensuring the diversity of landscape character in the borough is recognised and managed in a more sensitive manner
- Ensuring decisions on the landscape are underpinned by a robust and widely accepted assessment of the landscape character
- Promoting a better understanding of the borough's landscapes
- Guiding the process of accommodating change throughout the borough whilst maintaining the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape




Many of the judgments regarding landscapes are subjective, which means that they are open to equally valid but different individual interpretations. The process of landscape character assessment has to resolve this matter and has evolved so that current practice is now based on a logical and well thought out procedure. This procedure breaks down the analysis into the component parts, which collectively make up the landscape as we know it. It is a logical process, which enables decisions to be revisited over time as well as enabling different assessors to understand and contribute to the decisions reached.

This document will form the basis for future work associated with developing landscape guidelines. The challenge will be to find ways of identifying the important characteristics of the landscape that assist the process of accommodating change, where this is both desirable and practicable, whilst maintaining the links with the past and the natural environment.





Legend

-  Maidstone Borough Boundary/
Borough Wide Study Area
-  Detailed Study Area
-  Urban Area (excluded from
detailed study area)

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Figure 1 Study Area

Section 2 Methodology

Approach

The methodology used to undertake the landscape assessment is based on the latest guidance: 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002). Appendix B sets out the technical methodology in full. There are essentially two elements to the assessment. Firstly the characterisation of the landscape where the landscape character areas are defined, and secondly the analysis of these character areas where judgements are made.

Landscape characterisation

Draft landscape character types and landscape character areas were established through desk based research and mapping, and then verified through field survey. The desk based research aims to be consistent in terms of the level of detail each background factor is analysed in. This is so that the draft landscape character types and areas are based on areas of common character which balance natural and cultural factors. In summary, the desk based research included analysis of the following:

- Geology and soils
- Landform and drainage
- Historic background
- Settlement and land use
- Agricultural land classification
- Biodiversity and ecological designations
- Landscape and heritage designations
- Aerial photographs of the study area
- Mapping of existing landscape character assessments covering the study area and adjacent boroughs/districts at national, regional and local level

Field survey

Field surveys were carried out during summer 2010. The aims of the field survey were to confirm or amend character area boundaries and to gain an understanding of the physical and visual aesthetics of each landscape character area, and how different elements combine to create distinctive landscape patterns. The Field Assessment Sheets are designed to analyse the component factors of the landscape, to reach a series of decisions on the:

- Aesthetics
- Key characteristics
- Pattern of elements
- Visual detractors
- Ecological integrity
- Cultural integrity
- Sense of place
- Visibility

Landscape analysis

Judgements regarding the landscape condition and landscape sensitivity of each landscape character area were made during the field surveys.

Landscape condition is strongly influenced by the impact of external factors, such as land use. Landscape condition is a measure of 'visual unity' (concluded through an analysis of the pattern of elements and detracting features) and 'functional integrity' (concluded through an analysis of the condition of cultural and ecological features).

Section 2 Methodology



Landscape sensitivity refers to the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. Landscape sensitivity is a measure of 'sense of place' (concluded through an analysis of landscape distinctiveness and continuity) and 'visibility' (concluded through an analysis of landform and tree cover).

Evaluation

The conclusions reached regarding the evaluation of each of the character areas have been expressed using a matrix that encompasses both the landscape condition and sensitivity. This analysis gives a broad indication of each area's ability to accommodate change in management or use without loss of overall landscape character. Landscape guidelines for each landscape character area have been developed from this analysis. Many of these guidelines are not within the remit of the Local Planning Authority to implement directly as they are not responsible for managing the land in most cases. However, the guidelines, together with the matrices can be used to inform the:

- Application of criteria-based landscape protection and enhancement policies within the Local Development Framework
- Identification of spatial development options within the Local Development Framework
- Identification of landscape issues that may need to be considered in greater detail in relation to development management decisions

Limitations

It has to be recognised that whilst the process adopts a complex but logical critique of the landscape, many of the individual decisions are still based on the trained but subjective judgements of the assessors. Although conclusions have been reached for each of the character areas, it is not the purpose of this study to rank one character area against another. Likewise this study is not intended to identify in detail areas suitable for development. It may however offer guidance to both the Local Planning Authority and developers, when guiding policy and deciding the type and scale of development that may be appropriate, whilst respecting the character of the landscape.



Section 2 Methodology

How to use this document

The primary aim of this document is to guide the process of accommodating change throughout Maidstone Borough, whilst maintaining the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape.

1. Locate the Landscape Type and Landscape Character Area you are interested in (Front Cover/Figs 11 and 12).
2. Identify the corresponding number of the character area (Figure 12).
3. Check the contents page to locate the borough wide landscape description and to identify where the detailed information can be found if applicable (Fig 13).
4. Each character area falls within a broader landscape character type which is identified by the colour of the title bar. An introduction and generic guidelines for each character type are located at the start of the corresponding section with that coloured bar.
5. Character areas on the edge of Maidstone have been analysed in more detail. Detailed landscape character areas are described as subsections of borough wide character areas in this location.

Worked example

The area of interest is Coxheath.

- Figure 11 shows Coxheath to lie within the Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands landscape character type, coloured a dark green on the map. Details of the main characteristics are found in the introduction to this landscape character type on page 160, identified by a dark green title bar at the top of the page. This information should be reviewed to gain a broad understanding of the landscape character and generic guidelines.
- Figure 12 shows Coxheath to lie within landscape character area 28, entitled Coxheath Plateau. A description of this character area is provided on pages 257-260.
- Lying as it does on the edge of Maidstone, Coxheath Plateau is divided into three detailed subsections - Coxheath is found in 28-3, entitled Coxheath Orchard. Information at a more detailed scale is given on pages 267-269.



Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

Geology and soils

Figure 2 illustrates the geology and Figure 3 illustrates the soil types across Maidstone Borough. The underlying geology of Maidstone Borough consists of four distinct rock types that define the landform and character of the borough – chalk, Gault Clay, Lower Greensand and Wealden Clay which run in bands of varying widths in a north westerly to south easterly direction across the borough.

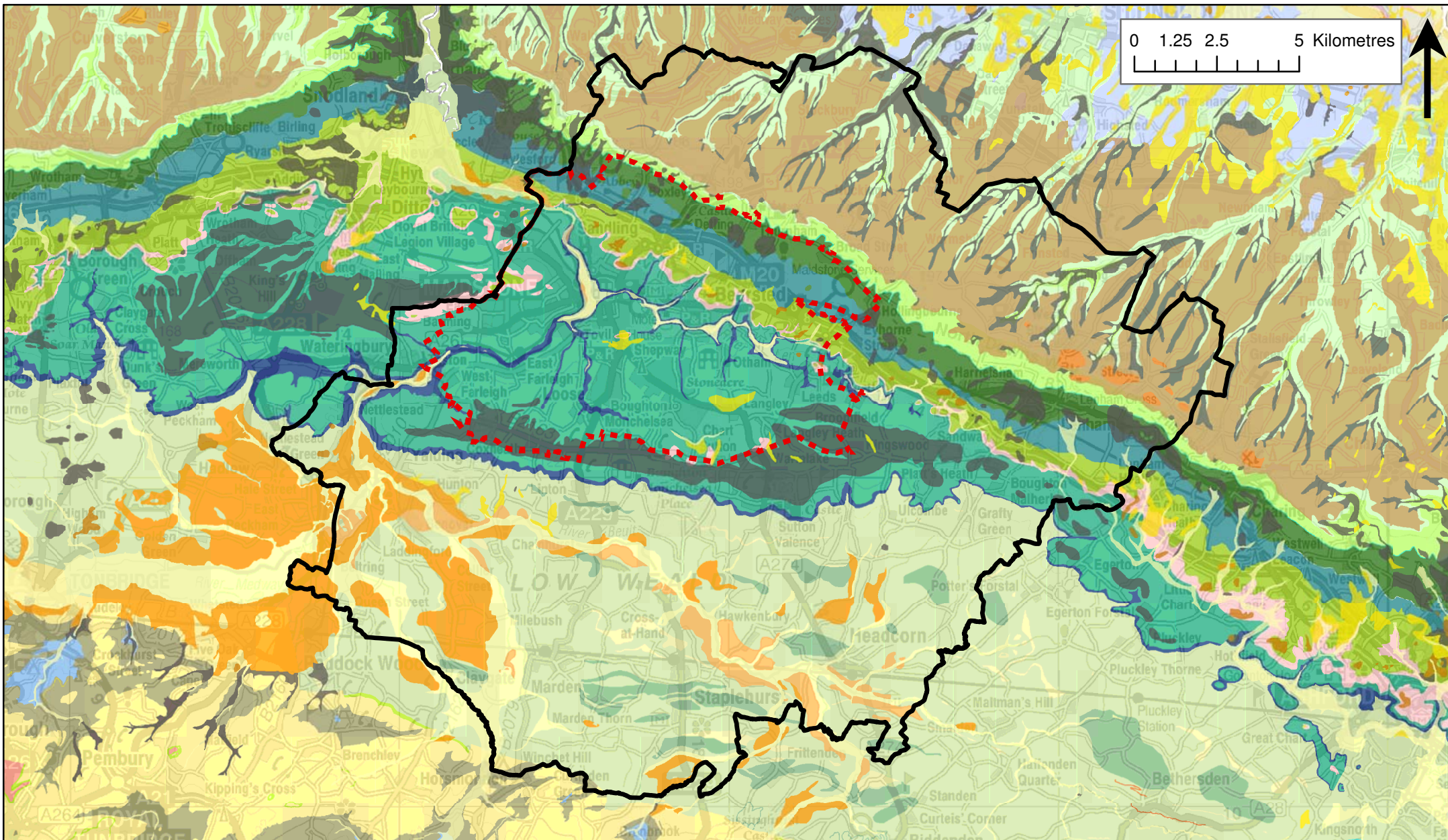
To the north of the study area bands of Upper, Middle and Lower Chalk run in a south east to north west direction forming the North Downs. The highest part of the Downs at the top of the scarp and the dip slope are formed by the Upper Chalk, with significant areas of higher ground capped with deposits of clay-with-flints. Shallow soils are found over the dry valleys of the dip slope especially on brows and steeper slopes, with head deposits in the valley bottoms and at the valley heads, with other areas supporting well drained calcareous fine silty soils over chalk or chalk rubble. Middle Chalk forms the scarp itself. Here the soils are especially thin on the steep chalk scarp and occasionally the chalk is visible where there are old quarries or in localised areas of erosion. In contrast to the steep scarp of the Middle Chalk, the Lower Chalk forms distinctive undulating foothills at the foot of the scarp supporting well drained calcareous silty soils.

The second distinct geological region is Gault Clay. Differential erosion on the softer clay has created a wide clay vale that extends the full breadth of the borough along the foot of the North Downs scarp. Soils range in the Gault Clay Vale from the calcareous chalk soils to the north, through to heavier clays and a mix of clay and sandy soils where they meet the Greensand to the south. Typically these soils are:

- **Deep loam to clay**
Some well drained and fine loamy over clayey soils, and some coarse and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable sub soils and slight seasonal water logging.
- **Seasonally wet deep clay**
Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils with similar fine loamy over clayey soils. Some fine loamy over clayey soils with only slight seasonal water logging and some slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils.

The Lower Greensand is found throughout the central belt of Maidstone Borough, including the area covered by the Maidstone town and its surrounding landscape. It predominantly constitutes Hythe Beds (sandy limestone and calcareous sand) punctuated by pockets of Sandgate Beds (silty clay and fullers earth) and Folkestone Beds (sand), the latter of which being particularly prominent to the north east of the town. The Greensand is overlain with soils of loam over limestone, constituting some deep well drained coarse and fine loamy soils (with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal water logging), and occasional shallower calcareous soils. Deep loam to clay is situated across the top of the ridge where the land plateaus. Pockets of Wealden Limestone and Atherfield Clay (clay and sand) are exposed along the tributaries of the River Medway, overlain with drifts of alluvium. Extensive drift deposits of head are situated on the highest section of the Greensand Ridge where the landform plateaus above the steep scarp face that falls south to the Low Weald.

South of the Greensand Ridge, Wealden Clay extends over most of the southern part of the borough across the Low Weald. Here, soils comprise seasonally wet loam to clay over shale, with deep loam to the east of Marden. The Upper Medway, Beult and Teise Rivers dissect this area and are associated with alluvial deposits and slowly permeable soils, and drifts of brickearth and First Terrace River Gravel.



Legend

- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Detailed Study Area

Drift

- Alluvium
- Brickearth

- First Terrace River Gravel
- Fourth Terrace River Gravel
- Head
- Head Brickearth
- Clay-with-Flints

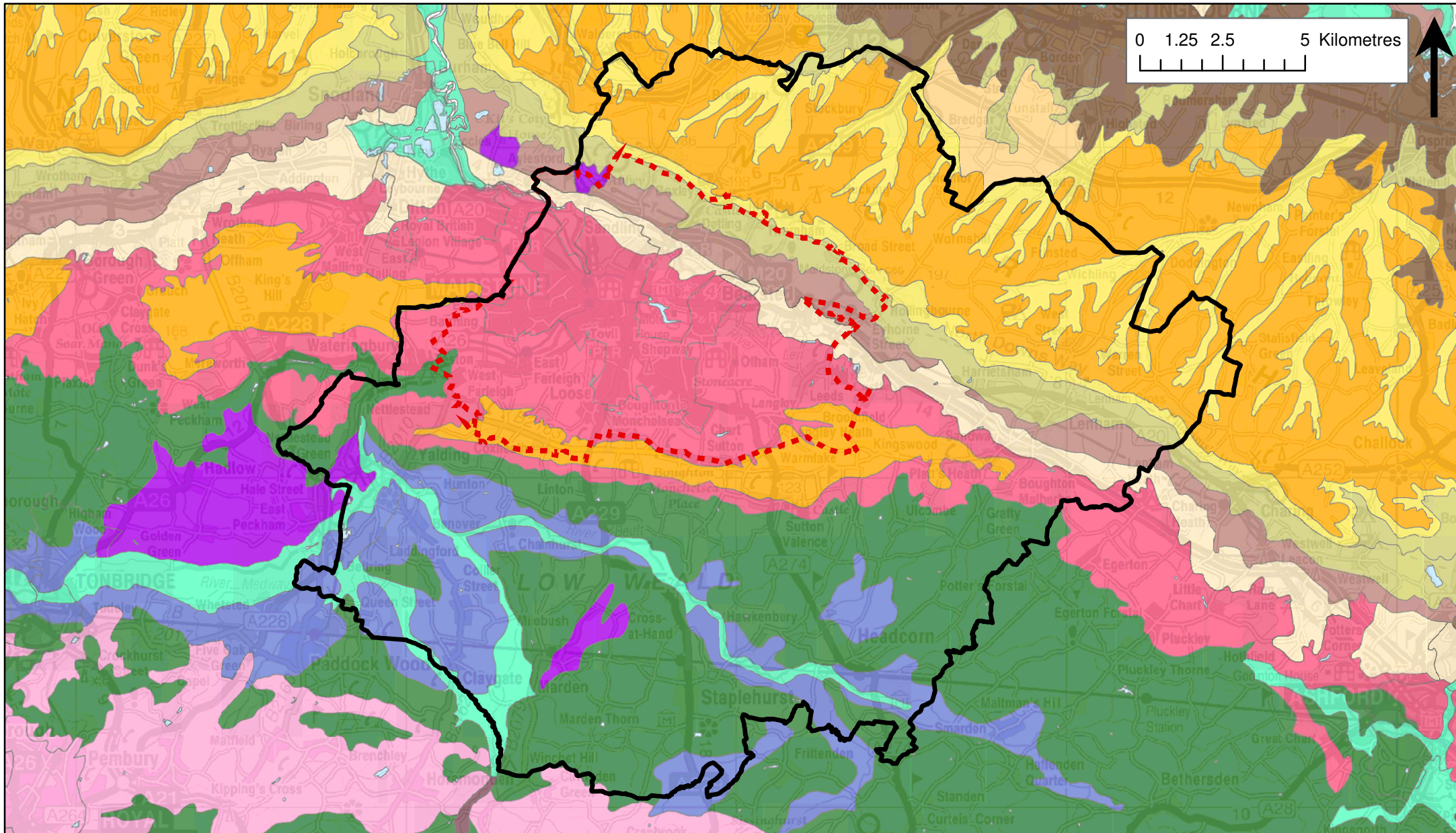
Solid

- Lenham Beds
- Thanet Beds
- Upper Chalk
- Middle Chalk
- Lower Chalk















- Melbourn Rock
- Upper Greensand
- Gault Clay
- LG Folkestone Beds
- LG Sandgate Beds
- LG - Lower Greensand; W - Wealden
- LG Hythe Beds
- LG Atherfield Clay
- W Weald Clay
- W Sand in Weald Clay (Sandstone)
- W Large 'Paludina' Limestone

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Figure 2 Geology



Legend

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Maidstone Borough Boundary |  Lake or water body |  Seasonally wet loam to clay over shale |
|  Detailed Study Area |  Deep loam to clay |  Seasonally wet deep clay |
|  Silt over chalk |  Loam over limestone |  Shallow silty over chalk |
|  Deep silty |  Loam over sandstone |  Seasonally wet deep loam |
|  Deep loam |  Seasonally wet deep clay | |

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Figure 3 Soil Types

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

Landform and drainage

Due to the distinctive geomorphology of the Maidstone area (refer to Geology and Soils), a clear landform division occurs between the North Downs and the Low Weald. In general, the harder Greensand and chalk stand out in the landscape as ridges, and the Gault Clay forms low ground in between, with the Low Weald forming much of the southern part of the borough. Thus, travelling in a north - south direction, Maidstone and its surrounding landscape begins as the dip slope then scarp of the North Downs and progresses into a Gault Clay Vale the rises again to the Greensand Ridge before dropping down to the Low Weald to the south.

Being high ground, the steep south facing chalk scarp of the North Downs (stretching north east of Maidstone) forms a dramatic topographical feature in the area that overlooks the Wealden Greensand (Figure 4). However, except in the numerous quarries, natural exposures of pure chalk are rare on the steeper slopes.

To the north of the Downs, dry valleys drain from the high ground northwards towards the Medway and Swale Marshes outside of the borough boundary. To the south of the North Downs scarp a series of springs emerge at the scarp foot where the porous chalk meets the Gault Clay – the spring line is marked by early settlements and farmsteads, notably at Boarley, Boxley, Thurnham and Hollingbourne. These small watercourses eventually feed into the River Len, which is characterised by numerous mill ponds, via a series of small streams and ditches.

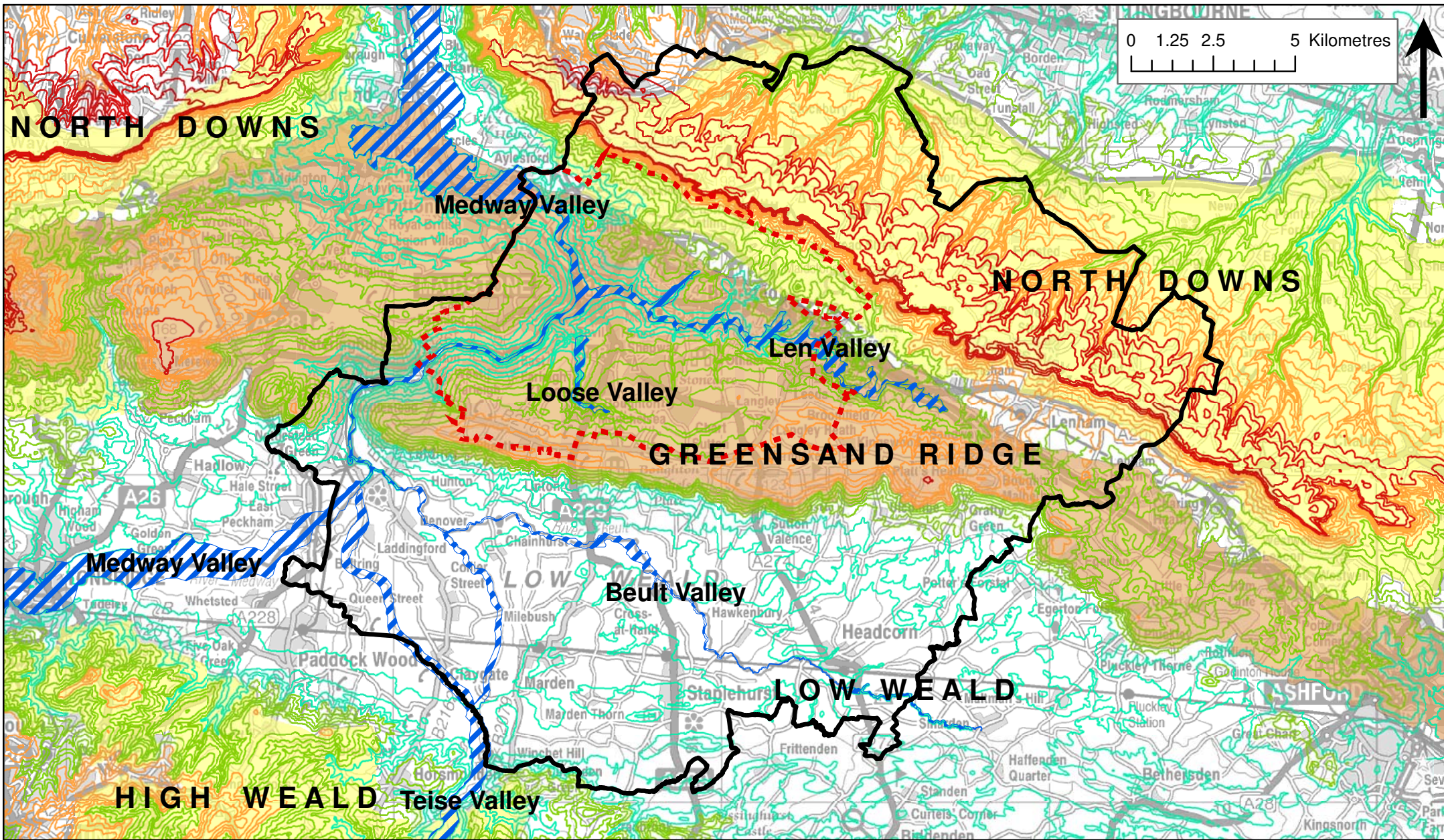
The Greensand Ridge provides yet another distinctive landscape. The Wealden Greensand is generally characterised by sunken lanes and hidden valleys. Within the Lower Greensand, the Hythe Beds form a prominent geomorphologic feature. Travelling in a southerly direction, a clear transition exists from the low lying Gault Clay to the undulating Greensand Ridge which provides panoramic views southwards to the Low Weald.

In terms of drainage, the Medway Valley is the largest catchment in the borough (and indeed the whole of Kent) and the River Medway is an example of a classic lowland river. The river cuts through the Greensand Ridge beyond Yalding and reaches its tidal limit at Allington Lock, before cutting through the chalk and flowing northwards to the Rochester estuary. Flooding has historically been a problem for settlements within the Medway floodplains. Today, Medway flows are controlled by sluice gates and flood storage areas. In addition, inland flood defences such as banks, structural walls and impounding reservoirs help to protect land within the floodplains.








The Rivers Beult and Teise rise from the east and south of the borough respectively merging and joining the Upper Medway near Yalding prior to continuing as the River Medway through Maidstone and on to the Medway Towns before issuing into the Thames Estuary.

All rivers and streams in the area are under increasing threat from the pressures of abstraction, river channel modifications and management, decreases in water quality, development, agriculture and climate change. Aquifer protection zones have been designated in the north and east of the study area.





Legend

-  Maidstone Borough Boundary
 -  Detailed Study Area
 -  River Valleys
- Contours (metres)**
- | | |
|--|---|
|  0 - 50 |  101 - 150 |
|  51 - 100 |  151 - 200 |

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Figure 4 Landform and Key Landmark Topography

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

Historic background

Physical underlying features have influenced the pattern of development and land use throughout the borough. It is likely that the North Downs and Wealden Greensand areas have been occupied since prehistory, with the majority of settlements occurring along the river valleys and only slow colonisation of the exposed areas of the upper Downs. The Low Weald was believed until recently to be unsettled in ancient times due to its heavy clay soils and wetland characteristics, although evidence has emerged of ancient settlement - thought to be either Iron-Age or Bronze-Age. Additionally the River Medway has long been an important means of transport and communication, and Maidstone itself is thought to have been established as a crossing point in Romano-British times.

The lighter chalk soils were among the first to be cultivated in prehistoric times. Pastoralism, which was essential to the Anglo-Saxon economy, shapes the borough's landscape even today. The once dense cover of deciduous woodland on the North Downs was cleared for stock grazing and drove roads were established. Evidence exists of transhumance since pre-Saxon times in the use of seasonal woodland pastures in the Low Weald. Sheep and pigs were driven from their downland pastures in the late summer to feed in the woodlands of the Weald, returning in winter to the areas of permanent settlement. This annual pattern of movement gave rise to the many north-south routes that are such a characteristic feature of the area. Pilgrim routes and trackways (often of prehistoric origin) also traverse the area along the contours - notably the Pilgrim's Way and North Downs Way.

Spring line villages and farmsteads, such as Boarley, Boxley, Thurnham, and Hollingbourne, were established along the foot of the North Downs scarp where the permeable chalk meets the Gault Clay, also taking advantage of the gently undulating fertile south facing slopes. However the stiff blue marine mud of the Gault Clay Vale was generally too heavy for cultivation in the past.

Further south the light soils of the Greensand areas were created from sea-deposited sands and clays. This fertile and productive area has long been attractive to settlers and is pivotal to the construction of Leeds and Allington Castles in the 12th and 11th centuries respectively. Particularly characteristic of the Greensand area are oast houses and hop gardens which are a quintessential Kentish feature. Hops were first imported (from Holland) in the early 15th century and by 1500 hopped beer was ubiquitous. They are a labour intensive crop at every stage of production and in the 19th century especially, great numbers of Londoners travelled to Kent each year for the hop picking season. The oast houses were developed to dry the hops prior to brewing, and consist of a kiln - round or square - and stowage, both on two floors. This form did not take shape until the 19th century but lasted through until the 1960's. Although the majority of remaining oast houses in the borough have been converted to domestic residences, their sheer number testifies to the importance of hops in the agrarian history of south and east England.



Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape



The hops supported several breweries which continued alongside the Medway in central Maidstone until the 1970's. The last to be demolished was the former Fremlins Brewery that was recently demolished to make way for Fremlins Walk Shopping Centre.

In the southern part of the borough the heavy clay soil and dense forest of the Low Weald were unwelcoming and, whilst there is some earlier evidence of small scale settlement, it only began to be opened up and occupied from about the 8th

century onwards. Even at Domesday few settlements were recorded here. The rich pastures were ideal for sheep grazing and in the 16th century Flemish Walloons fleeing persecution by Philip of Spain settled in Kent and introduced the manufacture of linen, silks and woollens and the art of dyeing. Gradually, cloth making spread out over the Low Weald. Fullers earth was essential to the industry (for removing grease from newly woven cloth) and was found in highly prized deposits between Boxley and Maidstone. World-wide exports of cloth continued until the close of the 17th century; linen thread was used in Kent for making hop bags well into the 18th century. The presence of numerous ponds in the Low Weald is likely to be due to the extraction of clay for marling (the process of spreading fertilizer made from clay mixed with carbonate or lime), and/or for watering of livestock.

There are numerous moated sites, which are typical of the Low Weald. The heyday for their construction was the 13th and 14th centuries, although they continued to be constructed into the 15th century. Moats were probably multi-functional – they served to alleviate drainage on the heavy clay soils, but also for “defensive” purposes (probably more as a safe refuge for livestock than in a military sense); they were also something of a status symbol, particularly with regard to the later examples. They are often found associated with other features such as fishponds (e.g. Coldbridge Castle, Lenham).

Paper making, as a water-dependent industry, was focused on the Rivers Len, Loose and Medway. Turkey Court in Maidstone is a fine example of a fulling cloth (cloth thickening) and later a paper mill, which only ceased production in 1976. Whilst technologies have changed the paper making tradition continues today at Aylesford, which is now one of the largest paper mills in Europe.

Quarrying has had a sizeable impact on land use from an early period. Ragstone and chalk/lime extraction (from the North Downs) began during the Roman period, and continued throughout the Medieval period and modern times. Fullers earth workings occur across the borough (particularly around Boxley and Bearsted), there are sandpits in several locations (including Bearsted and Hollingbourne) and local clay diggings for brick and tile manufacture on a small scale.

Religion has also influenced land use and settlement patterns, including the location of Maidstone itself. St. Mary's Church (on the site of All Saints) was a very early foundation, probably some time in the 7th century, and likely to have been on land gifted to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the Kentish king. The manor which later developed into the Palace is thought to have formed part of the same gift. It was a Minster church which is recorded in the 11th Century (pre-Conquest) as having been “mother church” to 17 daughter foundations – drawing a line around these subservient churches encompasses an area strikingly similar to that of the present Borough. So its position as a central place and its early importance as a religious centre was established early

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

on, and this would have had at least some impact on the development of radial routes. The radial nature of routes centred on Maidstone probably dates originally from the pre-Conquest period. It was later reinforced by the development of Maidstone as a service and market centre for the cloth trade and agriculture. It was a two way process – imported goods brought by barge down the Medway were off-loaded at Maidstone for distribution out into the Weald. It is thought that the road from Sutton Valence to Headcorn (now the A274) achieved its current straight route during the Napoleonic Wars. Others such as the A20, the A26 and the A249 were straightened/rerouted as turnpikes in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The location of Boxley Abbey, created extensive landholdings reaching up on to the North Downs, plus various impacts closer to it. The Cistercians were great sheep farmers and were probably instrumental in the clearance of woodland from the top of the North Downs above the abbey – one of their granges was situated on the hilltop above the village and its farmhouse still survives (Boxley Grange). However not all woodland may have been cleared, as Monkdown Wood still survives immediately north east of Boxley Grange. Another grange (Lower Grange Farm) was sited to the south of the abbey complex (now on the opposite side of the M20). The complex of mill ponds and the (recently burnt down) mill at Sandling are quite likely associated with the monastic landholdings.

Leeds Priory was another major religious establishment. It is thought to have been instrumental in the pattern of development of Leeds village (the separate groups of Upper and Lower Street), but wider landscape impacts are now difficult to discern. Within Lenham the manor was owned by St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, which was the reason for the two large 14th century barns at Court Lodge Farm (only one of which survives as a grade I listed building).

Fruit cultivation in Kent arguably began with the Romans, who are recorded as introducing apple and grapes to England and continued through the Middle Ages with advances being made as a result of the Norman invasion in 1066. However, it wasn't until the 16th century that the industry became significant when Richard Harris, fruiterer to Henry VIII was charged with developing orchards for the king's table. This, together with the expansion of the colonies across the world, sparked the development of many cultivars of apples, pears, cherries and plums during the 16th and 17th centuries. Wars and shifting economies saw the orchard industry rise and fall over the 18th and 19th centuries. Old orchards were traditionally undergrazed and mixed in terms of the number of different types of fruit grown. Traditional combinations included cherry, damson, plum and sheep; apple, blackcurrant and chickens. Wild and cultivated fruit trees such as damsons, bullaces, plums, cherry plums and crab apples were commonly grown in the hedgerows as linear orchards for additional crops and as wind breaks. Local preferences led to particular patterns developing such as damson hedges in Kent. Old orchards suffered serious decline from the 1960's when many were grubbed up and either replaced by modern dwarf rootstocks or converted to arable land or pasture.



Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

The 19th century saw fruit growing increase in importance as a more reliable alternative to hops, predominantly found on the Greensand but also on the lower dip-slope of the Downs in the north of the borough. This included top and soft fruit with the main varieties grown being apples, cherries, plums, damsons, pears, currants and gooseberries. Kentish cobnuts were also grown in combination with the fruit trees on the Greensand and a handful of nut platts remain today.

Cobnuts were cultivated locally from at least the 16th century but it became a significant local industry in the 19th century when many new cultivars were bred and coincided with the expansion of the railway network. Cobnut production increased greatly across the country but particularly in the Home Counties where the picked product could be taken to London by train and sold at markets. In Kent, cobnuts were traditionally grown on plantations (or 'platts') together with apples and blackberries.

Cobnut cultivation is a labour intensive activity but labour costs were cheap and by 1913 plantations across England extended to over 2830ha. Most of these lay in Kent, the prime location being in a triangle lying between Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Tonbridge on the Greensand Ridge. After the First World War, many growers changed to more profitable horticultural products (partly reflecting the increase in labour costs) and significant acres began to disappear. Today there are around 100ha left in England, most of which are centred around Plaxtol, with the rest in isolated pockets across the Greensand².

Viticulture was introduced to England by the Romans and continued until the beginning of the 16th century. The climate then was warmer and favoured the growth of grapes. From the second half of the 16th century though, temperatures dropped and viticulture retreated from northern and eastern Europe. Here it was replaced by the production of beer (from barley and hops), cider and perry (from pears). Viticulture began a resurgence in Kent in the 1960's and vineyards are becoming a more regular sight.

During the 19th century improvements in road and rail travel brought strong east-west transport links into the area, and Maidstone expanded considerably to become by far the largest settlement within the borough, as well as the county town and administrative centre of Kent. Elsewhere, however, the scattered small villages and hamlets remained linked only by wooded, deep-set lanes that defy modern transport requirements; they have retained their rural integrity and diversity of agricultural uses. Further development of transport infrastructure in the 20th century has had a considerable impact on the Gault Clay Vale through the construction of the M20 motorway and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.



² Ref: Kentish Cobnut Association

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

Settlement and land use

Within the borough there is a strong contrast between the conurbation of Maidstone itself, with its 19th and 20th century development around the historic core, and the rural hinterland with its scattering of small villages and hamlets. Only in the few larger settlements, on the fringes of Maidstone town and along the commuter 'rat runs' does the presence of modern development dominate. This is particularly noticeable in terms of the transport infrastructure. To the north of Maidstone the landscape is dominated by the motorway/railway corridor containing the M20, A20, Maidstone-Ashford railway and Channel Tunnel Rail Link, that links London to the south coast ports. This corridor gives way, almost immediately, to a network of narrow, often twisting lanes. The intermediate infrastructure is almost absent and occasions a loss of tranquillity where it does occur, as along the A249, A274 and B2163.



The North Downs is largely a rural landscape, with no large settlements within the borough despite the proximity of the transport corridor, and the urban-edge influence of Chatham to the north. Small villages are scattered through this area, with tree-lined, narrow, deep-set lanes running diagonally down the scarp, offering only restricted views. Chalk itself is rarely used for building due to its softness. However, flint from the dip slope and scarp summit is used as the dominant local vernacular material, and typically can be seen in combination with orange-red brick in buildings and boundary walls. Yellow stock bricks are commonly used towards Stockbury to the north of the borough, indicative to the proximity to the brickearth beds found in adjacent Swale Borough.

The use of ragstone is most dominant on the Greensand, often used within older structures and sometimes within village boundary walls. Ragstone is also occasionally found in some older buildings with Maidstone. Here timber-framed buildings and weatherboarding are frequently used, with the weatherboarding mostly painted white. Settlements are larger, frequently dominated by buildings dating from the 17th century, despite their earlier origins. Country houses set within parkland are a feature of the Greensand Ridge scarp, while closer to Maidstone there are many large 19th century houses set in extensive grounds, especially to the east. Ragstone is also commonly used in the Gault Clay Vale, often used with brick and occasionally with flint to the north nearer the scarp.

On the Weald, red brick and timber frame are typical traditional building materials for the isolated



Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape



farmhouses that dot the plain. The traditional Wealden Hall House is characteristic in this area, typically located within a hedged pasture and often associated with a pond. The few settlements, such as Staplehurst and Headcorn, have 20th century fringes around 15th to 19th century cores.

Due to the heavy soils, the Gault Clay area has been cultivated only where sands from the Greensand have been washed downwards to produce lighter soils. Thus, the Gault Clay area has predominantly become

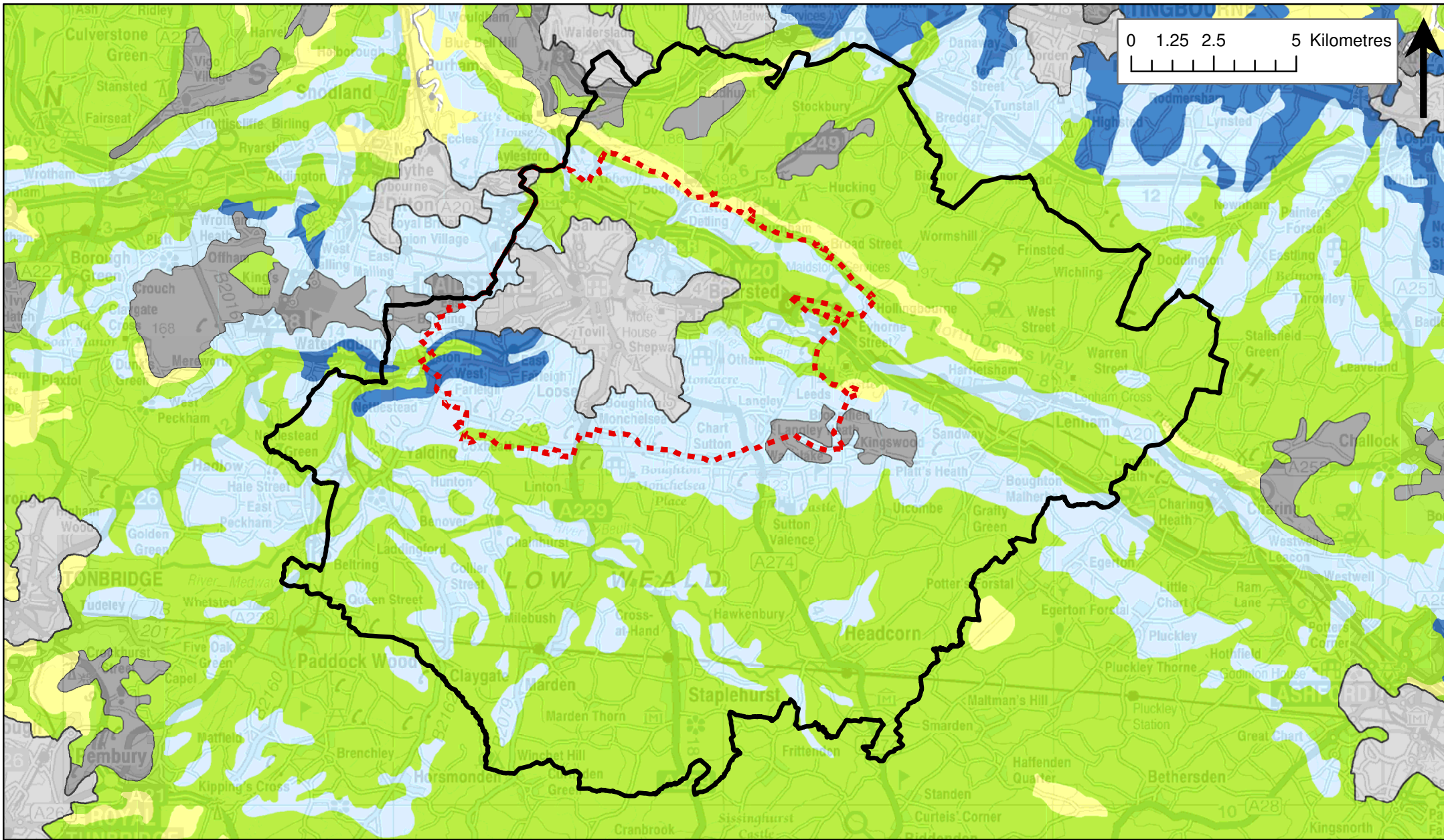
an area of pasture and, more recently, of arable farmland.

The Gault Clay area is unsuitable for development and so has dictated the location of the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link transport corridors on the acid sands and loams of the Greensand immediately to the south. Further south, each layer or 'bed' of the Greensand has distinct properties, leading to local variations in land use along the outcrop. For example, the Hythe beds produce the Kent ragstone that is widely used as a building material and has allowed ragstone built churches to become quintessential to Kent. Furthermore, ragstone erodes to produce fertile soils frequently allowing such areas to be planted as fruit orchards.

The Sandgate Beds are a further distinct layer within the Greensand that support more fertile soils with a higher lime content and gently rolling relief. In contrast other Greensand areas, such as the Folkestone Beds, contain nutrient-poor acid soils which have created free-draining level plateaux and sterile heaths. However, in locations where rivers have cut through the Greensand, surface deposits of silt have created fertile areas of alluvium, giving a wide variation of soil activity and fertility and a consequent diversity of agriculture. This is illustrated in Figure 5, which shows an Agricultural Land Classification³ of Grade 1 west of the study area and alongside the River Medway. Figure 5 also illustrates the relatively poorer quality soils, and hence lower agricultural land classification, provided in the Gault Clay soils to the north east of the study area.



³The Agricultural Land Classification system divides land into five grades, Grade 1 being excellent quality and Grade 5 being very poor quality.



Legend

- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Detailed Study Area
- Urban
- Non Agricultural
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5

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Figure 5 Agricultural Land Classification

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

Biodiversity

Where rivers have cut through the Greensand, surface deposits of silt have created fertile areas of alluvium, giving a wide variation of soil activity and fertility and a consequent diversity of semi-natural habitats. The tributaries, banks and marginal vegetation act as key habitats and corridors for a variety of wildlife in an area of high agricultural activity.

Natural Areas

In 2005, Natural England (assisted by English Heritage) updated the Joint Character Areas which were originally defined by The Countryside Agency in 1996, to produce National Character Areas which coincide with the Natural Areas identified by English Nature (now Natural England). Five Natural Areas fall across Maidstone Borough – the North Kent Plain, the North Downs, Wealden Greensand, the Low Weald and the High Weald (Figure 6).

North Kent Plain

The North Kent Plain is an open, low and gently undulating landscape characterised by high quality, fertile, loamy soils. The land use is therefore dominated by agricultural land uses although habitats include woodland, grassland, marshes and wetlands.

North Downs

The North Downs is a land of chalk soils, with a warm and dry climate that has been fashioned by its land use to produce an area of outstanding nature conservation interest. Chalk grassland is the most distinctive of downland habitats, along with scrub and woodland.

Wealden Greensand

To the south, the Wealden Greensand comprises mostly lowland heath. Many ancient woodlands have survived throughout the Natural Area, though often fragmented and on steeper slopes. The Wealden Greensand also includes several river valleys, which support a series of habitats with drainage ditches, marshy grassland, reedbeds and wet woodlands.

Low Weald

The Low Weald comprises a small scale and intimate landscape enclosed by an intricate mix of small woodlands and a patchwork of hedgerow enclosed fields. Ancient woodland and pasture, the historic network of hedgerows and shaws, unimproved grassland, grazing marsh, rivers, streams and ponds provide a rich habitat network.

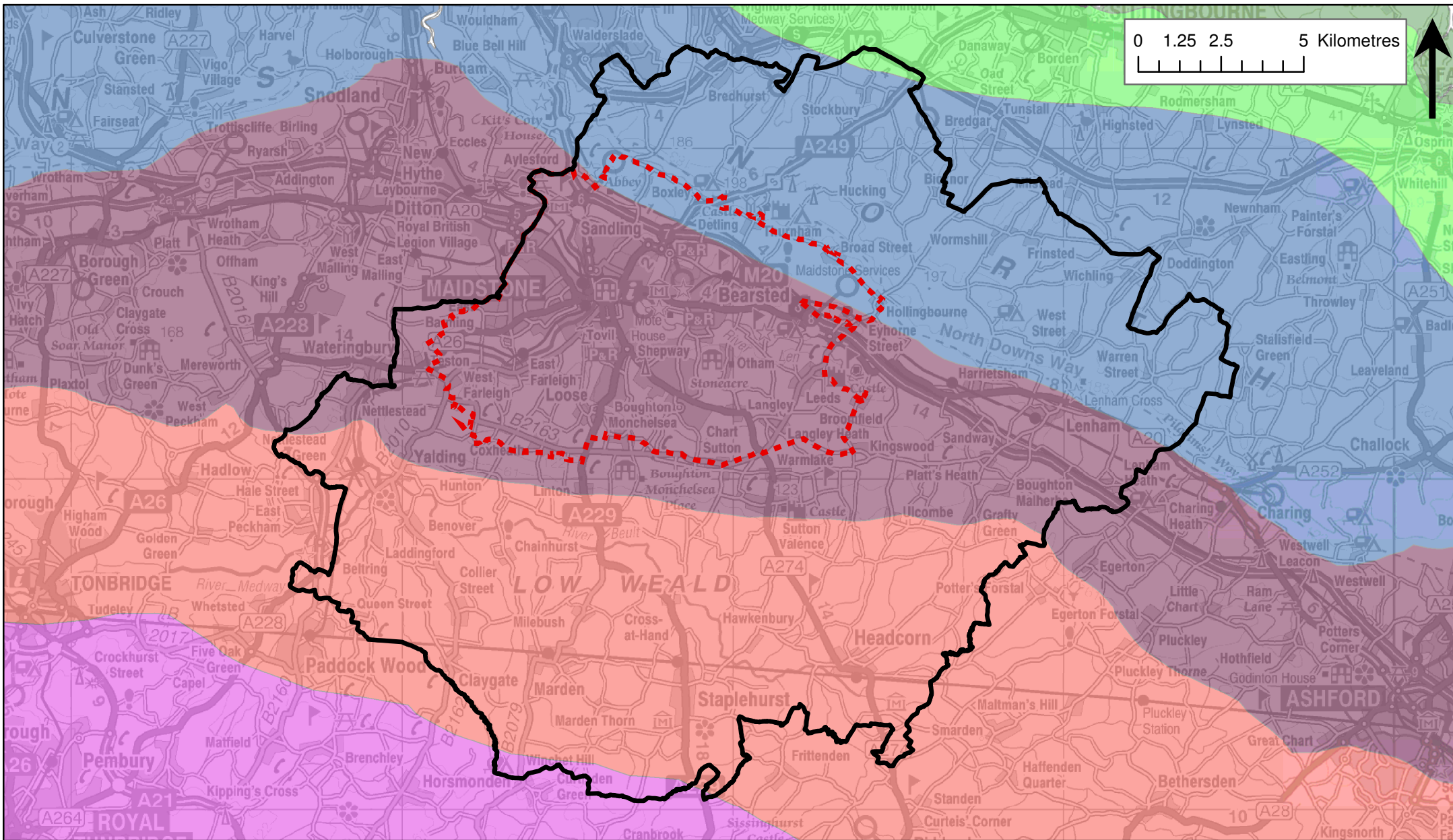
High Weald

The High Weald is a well wooded landscape that rises above the Low Weald and is deeply incised in places to give a complex pattern of ridges and steep stream valleys. Habitats are provided by woodland and shaws, gill woodlands and streams, hedgerows, heathlands, exposed sand rock faces, parklands and ponds.

Designated sites

Ecological designations are scattered throughout the study area and are illustrated on Figure 7. Such designations exist at international, national and local (county) level and include:

- **European Sites** – a collective term for sites designated under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 such as **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** and **Special Protection Areas (SPA)**. Often wetland sites designated under the international **Ramsar** Convention are also included with these in practice. These international sites are almost always covered by the Site of Special Scientific Interest designation as well (see



Legend

- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Detailed Study Area
- High Weald
- Low Weald
- Wealden Greensand
- North Downs
- North Kent Plain

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Figure 6 National Landscape Character Areas (Countryside Character, Countryside Agency 1999)

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

below). North of Boxley, the North Downs Woodlands are designated as a Special Area of Conservation. There are no Special Protection Areas or Ramsar sites within Maidstone Borough.

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** – a statutory UK designation under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Designated by Natural England, these represent the very best wildlife sites in the country. Within Maidstone Borough, sites designated as SSSI include some quarries, sections of downland, meadows, part of Oaken Wood and the River Beult.
- **National Nature Reserves (NNR)** - are almost always SSSI thus receiving statutory protection, but are also either owned or controlled specifically for wildlife conservation by Natural England or held by approved bodies such as Wildlife Trusts. There are no National Nature Reserves within Maidstone Borough.
- **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)** – formerly known as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), a non-statutory County designation, administered in Kent by the Kent Wildlife Trust and ratified by the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. Throughout Maidstone Borough there are numerous Local Wildlife Sites which are focused on areas of woodland, heathland, lengths of stream and other wetland habitats, meadows and pasture.
- **Local Nature Reserves (LNR)** - are designated by local authorities for both people and wildlife. They are semi-natural places that are of special interest locally and can be managed as such. They offer people opportunities for nature study or informal enjoyment. They may include sites that have one of the other designations listed above. Vinters Valley Park and Boxley Warren are designated as Local Nature Reserves.

The above sites are afforded protection in the planning process, either through legislation (for statutory sites such as SSSI and European Sites) or through planning policy (for local, non-statutory sites such as Local Wildlife Sites).

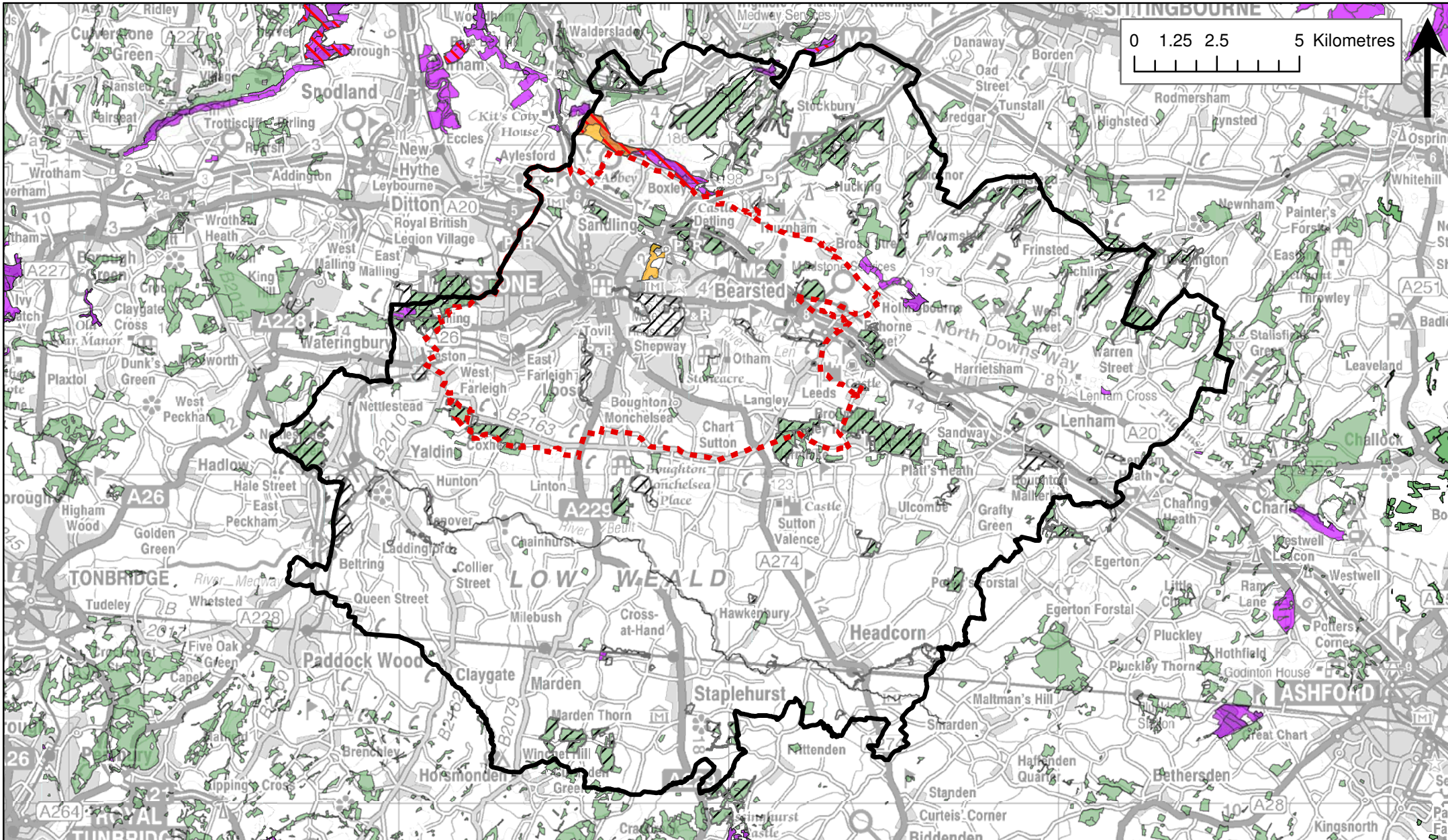
Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and habitat networks

Figure 8 provides a map of Maidstone Borough's existing habitats based on the Kent Habitat Survey (2003). This survey work is currently being updated by a new Kent-wide survey, the results of which are expected in 2012.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan identifies priority species and habitats that are most under threat and develops measures for their conservation. These measures are in addition and complimentary to the process of site designation and protection. The conservation of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats has a statutory basis under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and is also enshrined in Government Planning Policy. In addition to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Biodiversity Action Plans also exist at County and District level. The draft Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

(http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/parks_and_open_spaces.aspx) is informed by the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (<http://www.kentbap.org.uk/>) and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, with the objective of providing a local focus for action.

A key element of the Maidstone LBAP is the linking together of key habitats to form wider landscape-scale networks across the borough and beyond. This reflects the core approach of the Kent Living Landscape/Biodiversity Opportunity Area project developed by the Kent Biodiversity Partnership (see Appendix C). This project has identified a number of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) across the county, five of which occur in Maidstone namely Greensand Heaths and Commons, Medway Low Weald Grassland and Wetland, Medway Gap North Kent Downs, Mid Kent Downs woods and Scarp, and Mid Kent Greensand and Gault (see Appendix D). Targets for the Maidstone LBAP and BOA should be considered in conjunction with the summary of actions for each area and generic guidelines for each landscape type.

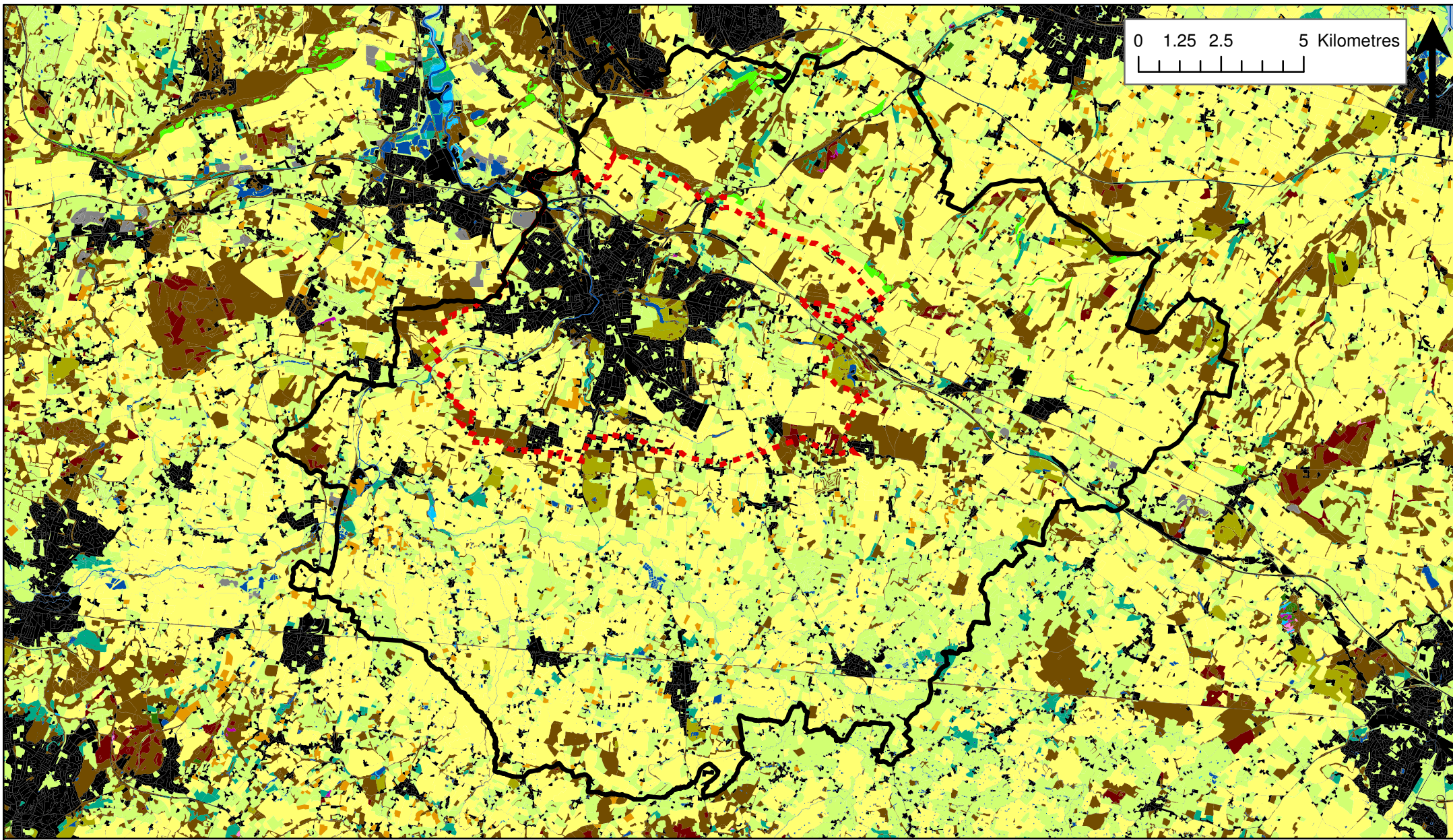


Legend

- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Detailed Study Area
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Statutory Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Ancient Woodland

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Figure 7 Ecological Designations



Legend	
	Maidstone Borough Boundary
	Detailed Study Area
	Built-up Areas
	Arable and Intensive Horticulture
	Grassland - Acid
	Grassland - Calcareous
	Grassland - Improved
	Grassland - Neutral
	Heathland
	Bracken
	Exposed Rock (Quarry/Spoil)
	Open Water
	Wetland
	Woodland - Coniferous
	Woodland - Broadleaf and Mixed
	Non-Intensive Orchards
	Wood Pasture/Parkland

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Information based on Kent Habitat Survey 2003 (Kent County Council)

Figure 8 Existing Habitats in Maidstone Borough (2003)

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

Landscape and heritage designations

A number of landscape and heritage designations (Figure 9) cover Maidstone Borough, and are detailed below.

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The northern extent of Maidstone Borough, north of the M20, lies within the Kent Downs AONB, which is a national landscape designation made under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The primary aim of the designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (First Revision April 2009) 2009 – 2014 should be used as a material consideration alongside the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment.



Scheduled Monuments

Scheduled Monuments are defined under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and are designated by English Heritage. There are several Scheduled Monuments within Maidstone Borough, such as remains of historic buildings, moated sites, earthworks and historic bridges. These are designated for their historic significance of national importance and it is an offence to carry out, without consent, any works resulting in the demolition, destruction, damage, alterations or repair to any Scheduled Monument.

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are a local designation, which aims to protect special architectural or historic interest, made by Local Planning Authorities under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are 41 Conservation Areas throughout Maidstone Borough, which are often focused around traditional settlement centres. As trees make a significant contribution to the character of an area, all trees with a trunk diameter exceeding 75mm at 1.5m above ground level are legally protected within Conservation Areas. In general, it is an offence to carry out any tree work within Conservation Areas without giving a formal six weeks notice to the Local Planning Authority in advance of carrying out the work.

Listed buildings

Listed buildings are traditional and/or architecturally significant buildings that are designated by



Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape



English Heritage under the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are three categories of listed buildings, with grade I being the most important followed by grade II* and lastly grade II. A listed building may not be demolished, extended or altered without Listed Building Consent from the Local Planning Authority. There are over 2000 listed buildings in Maidstone Borough, concentrated within traditional settlements and scattered in a more isolated fashion throughout the wider rural landscape.

In addition, in the Maidstone and Tovil areas there are currently 46 entries for locally listed buildings which cover a total of 133 properties. Locally listed buildings do not have any statutory protection but they have been notified to the local authority as being buildings possessing local architectural or historic interest which should be treated as an important planning consideration when dealing with any applications for planning permission made in respect of them. Locally listed buildings are now to be treated as non-designated heritage assets and as such are subject to the requirement for the inclusion of a statement of significance in any application affecting them in the same way as statutorily listed buildings are – this extends to impacts on their setting as well as direct impacts on the physical structure of the building. Up to date information about listed buildings in Maidstone Borough can be found at

http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/listed_buildings_register.aspx

Registered parks and gardens

A Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest has been maintained by English Heritage since the 1980's. Although not yet statutory, such sites form a material consideration within the planning process. Within Maidstone Borough there are several registered sites, comprising Mote Park, Leeds Castle Estate, Linton Park, Chilston Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place.

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens

A garden listed in the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens is an identified heritage asset recorded on a local list, which is defined and supported by PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment. A number of such historic parks and gardens are situated throughout Maidstone.

Ancient woodland

Ancient woodland in England is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD and may be ancient semi-natural woodland (ancient woodland sites that have retained the native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, although it may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate) or ancient replanted woodland (where the original native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, usually with conifers and usually this century)⁴. Fragments and swathes of ancient woodland are strewn across Maidstone Borough, with particularly large ancient woodland blocks at Oaken Wood to the west and at Kings Wood to the east.

Ancient woodlands have had a long time to acquire species and form stable flora and fauna communities. They are an important part of our natural heritage because such areas, as well as wood pastures and aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, are valuable

⁴ Provisional Ancient Woodland Inventory for England, 1991.

Section 3 Factors shaping the landscape

biodiversity resources. Ancient woodlands usually contain a diverse array of animal and plant species, a high proportion of which are rare and are unique to such sites as well as natural features which rarely survive in an agricultural setting such as streams in their natural watercourses. They also represent a link to the original 'wildwoods', which once covered most of England in pre-Neolithic times. Ancient woodlands provide important social, historical and cultural links and can be as important to the identity of a village community or parish as some older buildings. Once lost, ancient woodland cannot be recreated.

The variety of woodland structure can be diverse, and may incorporate pockets of species rich heathland, grassland and marsh within the overall area of woodland. This diversity of species and ecosystems means that ancient woodland does not constitute a habitat in its own right. Rather, areas of ancient woodland are to be found within other Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats, namely wet woodland, lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland mixed deciduous lowland, and wood pasture and parkland.

Ancient woodland is currently under represented in much of the south east. Our understanding of the habitat comes from surveys carried out from the end of the 1980's. One failing of this, and other previous surveys, is that many smaller woods under 2ha in size are not identified. To rectify this, work on revising the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Maidstone Borough, which will seek to identify woodlands under 2ha, is currently underway. Based on preliminary findings, it is anticipated that many small, ancient, linear shaws and ancient successional woods occupying former marl pits across the Low Weald will be identified, along with small interconnected fragments of ancient woodland across the North Downs.

Tree Preservation Orders

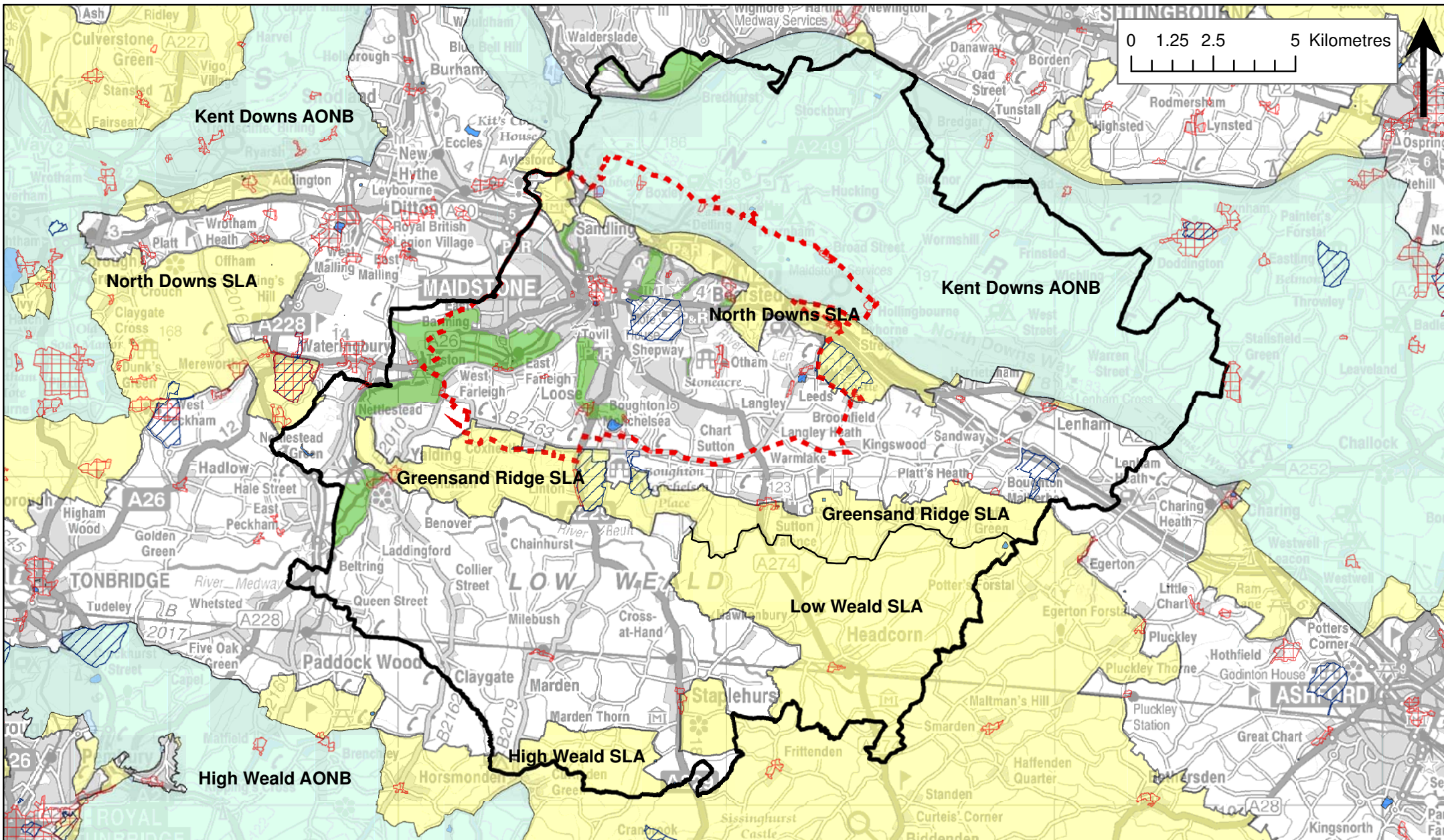
A Tree Preservation Order is an order made by the Local Planning Authority to protect trees which are considered to have a significant impact on their local surroundings. In general, it is an offence to carry out any work to a protected tree without the formal written consent of the authority. Up to date information about Tree Preservation Order in Maidstone Borough can be found on the council's web pages

(http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/parks_and_open_spaces/tree_preservation_orders.aspx).

Local landscape designations

Special Landscape Areas and Areas of Local Landscape Importance were designated by Maidstone Borough Council and formed part of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000. Four Special Landscape Areas are designated within Maidstone Borough - North Downs, Low Weald, High Weald and Greensand Ridge - and the designation aims to protect and conserve the scenic quality and distinctive character of the landscape. Areas of Local Landscape Importance are identified along river valleys and within areas of open space amidst urban development. The aim of this designation is to maintain open space and the character of the landscape. The regional South East Plan (adopted 2009) did not support local landscape designations, but supported a criteria based approach to protecting local areas of landscape in line with PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. However the South East Plan was revoked in July 2010, and Maidstone Borough Council are currently in the process of considering the future of local landscape designations.





Legend

- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Detailed Study Area
- Kent Downs AONB
- Special Landscape Areas*
- Areas of Local Landscape Importance*
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Monuments

*NB: Local landscape designations defined in the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 are saved policies.

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Figure 9 Landscape and Heritage Designations

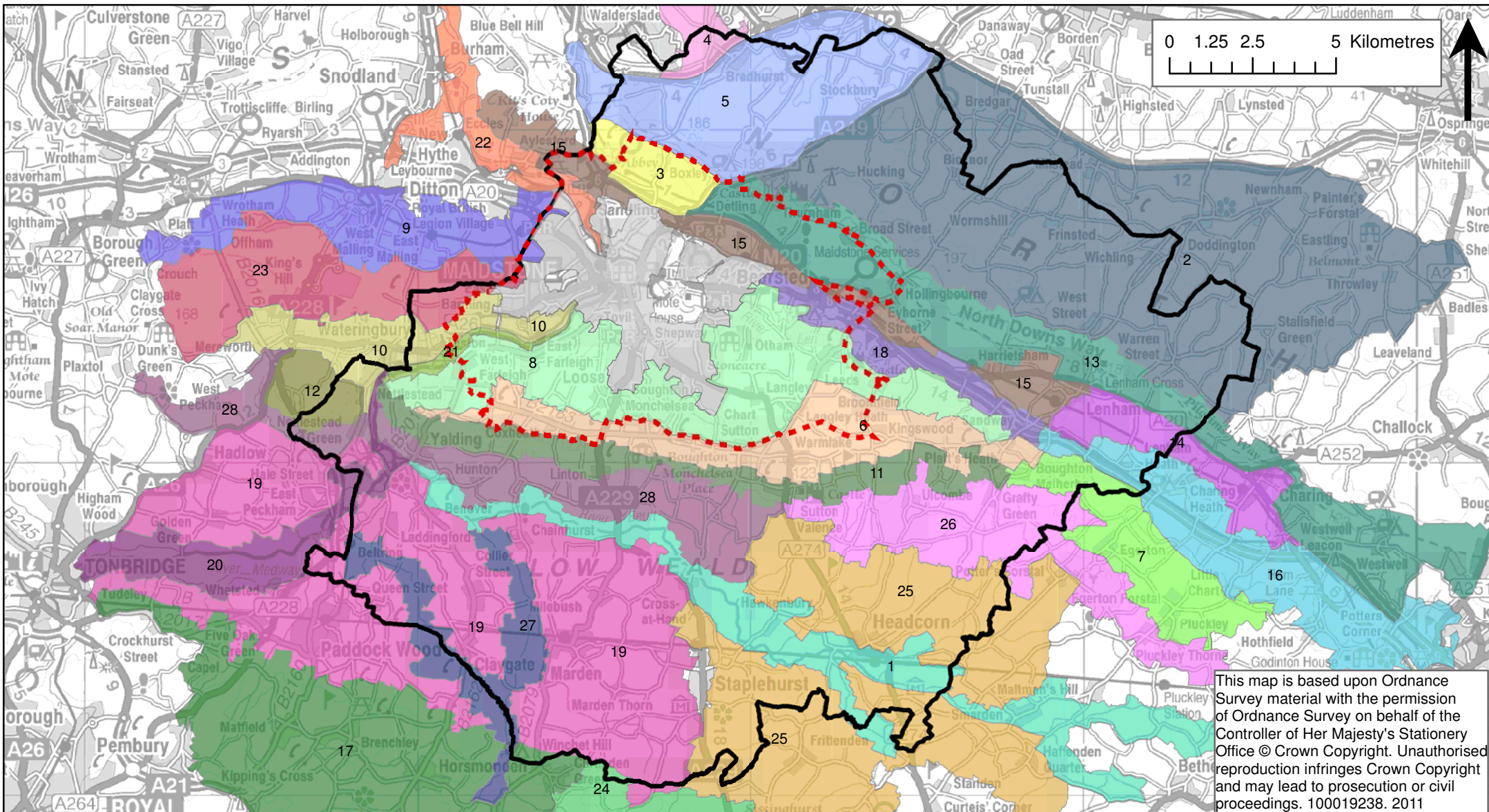
Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

General context

At the national level, Natural England (assisted by English Heritage) have mapped and described National Character Areas across the country. In Kent these areas are coincident with the Natural Areas described under Factors Shaping the Landscape: Biodiversity. Maidstone Borough falls within five of these areas (Figure 6). To the very north of the borough, the landscape falls within the North Kent Plain. To the north of Maidstone and the M20, the landscape falls within the North Downs. The urban area of Maidstone sits within the Wealden Greensand, and to the south the landscape falls within the Low Weald. To the very south, the landscape falls within the High Weald.

At the county level (Figure 10), Kent County Council have further refined and subdivided these character areas in the Landscape Assessment of Kent. It should be noted that the landscape areas defined within the Kent Downs AONB are taken from the Kent Downs Landscape (published by the Countryside Commission, 1995), and are at a slightly larger scale. The following character areas fall wholly or partly within the defined study area:

- Beult Valley
- Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs
- Boxley Vale: Medway
- Capstone Downs
- Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs
- Coxheath Plateau Farmlands
- Greensand Fruit Belt: Egerton
- Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone
- Greensand Fruit Belt – Malling
- Greensand Fruit Belt – Watlingtonbury
- Greensand Ridge – Maidstone
- Greensand Ridge – Plaxtol
- Hollingbourne Vale
- Hollingbourne Vale East
- Hollingbourne Vale West
- Hothfield Heathy Farmlands
- Kent Fruit Belt: Kentish High Weald
- Leeds – Lenham Farmlands
- Low Weald Fruit Belt
- Medway Valley
- Medway Valley Lower
- Medway Valley Upper
- Mereworth Woodlands
- Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands
- Staplehurst – Headcorn Pasturelands
- Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands
- Teise Valley
- Valeside Farms and Parklands



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Legend			
	Maidstone Borough Boundary		
	Detailed Study Area		
	Urban Area		
	1. Beult Valley		15. Hollingbourne Vale West
	2. Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs		16. Hothfield Heathy Farmlands
	3. Boxley Vale: Medway		22. Medway Valley Lower
	4. Capstone Downs		23. Mereworth Woodlands
	5. Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs		24. Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands
	6. Coxheath Plateau Farmlands		25. Staplehurst-Headcorn Pasturelands
	7. Greensand Fruit Belt - Egerton		26. Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands
	8. Greensand Fruit Belt - Maidstone		27. Teise Valley
	9. Greensand Fruit Belt - Malling		28. Valeside Farms and Parklands
	10. Greensand Fruit Belt - Watringbury		
	11. Greensand Ridge - Maidstone		
	12. Greensand Ridge - Plaxtol		
	13. Hollingbourne Vale		
	14. Hollingbourne Vale East		

Figure 10 Landscape Assessment of Kent Landscape Character Areas

Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

A summary of the key characteristics of each of these areas is given below:

Beult Valley

- Flat, low lying land around incised river channel with frequent small ponds in upper floodplain
- Slow flowing river of high ecological value and with many historic bridging points
- Rural open landscape of mixed farming
- Sparse but historic settlement

Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs

- Chalk ridge with wide arable fields contained by dense belts of woodland
- Small sunken lanes
- Scattered villages
- Historic parkland, hops and orchards

Boxley Vale: Medway

- Lower slopes of scarp surrounded by major roads
- Scarp woodlands with dark yew and box
- Large traditional fields with few hedges
- Small hedge lined fields and parkland around Boxley

Capstone Downs

- Steep ridges and valleys with open plateau to south under arable cultivation
- Woodland and pasture-scrub invasion
- Remnant chalk grassland
- Urban context and encroachment of urban edge

Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs

- Large arable plateau and steep, rolling valleys, scarp slopes
- Patchwork of small pastures, grass and scrub
- Derelict orchards and few hedges
- Urban-edge influence with long views to the industrial edge

Coxheath Plateau Farmlands

- Sloping landscape with poor quality soils
- Medium sized coppice woodlands with plantation
- Mixed farmlands including residual orchards
- Expanded 20th century villages



Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Greensand Fruit Belt: Egerton

- Gentle undulating landform and well-drained loams
- Mixed farmland including orchards and residual shelterbelts
- Steeply sloping Greensand scarp with expansive views over the Low Weald
- Vernacular buildings of ragstone and brick

Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone

- Mixed farmland deeply dissected by the Medway and its tributaries
- Residual orchards and shelterbelts
- Ragstone buildings and walls in villages, farmsteads and oasts

Greensand Fruit Belt – Malling

- Flat to gently undulating landscape on good quality loams
- Mixed farmlands including orchards
- Residual tall hedgerows and shelterbelts associated with the fruit. Long views to the Kent Downs

Greensand Fruit Belt – Watlingtonbury

- Gently undulating landscape deeply incised by the River Medway
- Good quality loam soils
- Shelterbelts and hops
- Ragstone buildings and large houses

Greensand Ridge: Maidstone

- Steep south-facing slopes
- Residual orchards and nut platts
- Scattered historic settlement and historic parklands
- Extensive views overlooking the Low Weald
- Narrow winding lanes

Greensand Ridge: Plaxtol

- Steep south-facing slopes
- Residual orchards and nut platts
- Scattered historic settlement and historic parklands
- Extensive views overlooking the Low Weald
- Narrow winding lanes

Hollingbourne Vale

- Rolling landscape of mixed farmland overlooked by yew-dominated scarp
- Thick hedges along Pilgrim's Way
- Large, scarp-foot arable fields
- Historic springline villages

Hollingbourne Vale East

- Gently undulating landscape on heavy clay soils
- Small streams draining east to Great Stour
- Mixed farmland of small sheep-grazed pasture and larger arable fields
- Locally extensive loss of hedgerows and woodland
- Scarp foot villages
- Chalk scarp dominating views to north

Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Hollingbourne Vale West

- Undulating landscape on wet clay soils
- Small broadleaf woodlands and irregular pastures
- Infrequent settlement
- Small streams (the head waters of the River Len) draining west to Maidstone
- Chalk scarp dominating views to north

Hothfield Heathy Farmlands

- Undulating landscape of mixed farmlands
- Heathland or heath characteristics on the Folkestone Beds
- Historic parkland

Kent Fruit Belt: Kentish High Weald

- Small-scale intimate enclosed valleys and ridges
- Small scale orchards and high hedges
- Mixed woodland, intensive cultivation and some hops
- Small lanes, many small villages and dense settlements

Leeds – Lenham Farmlands

- Undulating farmland development on well-drained sandy loams
- Small copses with heathy characteristics
- Historic parklands
- Mineral extraction and transport corridor

Low Weald Fruit Belt

- Flat or gently undulating mixed, farmed landscape of dwarf fruit trees, arable, hops and pasture
- Remnant alder or poplar windbreaks
- Broad-verged lanes with ditches
- Frequent groups of oasts

Medway Valley

- Flat, open, mainly arable landscape
- Few settlements or roads in floodplain due to seasonal flooding
- Historic bridging points



Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Medway Valley Lower

- Tidal river with well-developed meanders
- Residual unimproved grasslands and reedbeds forming important areas for nature conservation
- Well developed industrial mineral and urban sites particularly on the west bank

Medway Valley Upper

- Steep sided valley cut into the Greensand
- Picturesque rural landscape
- Historic bridges and locks

Mereworth Woodlands

- Plateau landscape with poor quality soils
- Extensive broadleaf coppice woodlands
- Narrow shady winding lanes and sparse settlement

Sissinghurst Wooded Farmlands

- Multicoloured enclosed patchwork of fields, well-wooded
- Long views to Greensand
- Small scale hops and orchards, oasts and weatherboarded barns
- Slopes to north from ridge, undulating into wooded ghylls and enclosed pastures

Staplehurst – Headcorn Pasturelands

- Flat, low lying and wet, small scale intimate landscape of pastoral farming with numerous field ponds
- Small to medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Winding historic lanes, broad verges and flowery ditches
- Dispersed settlement including historic farmsteads and villages

Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands

- Undulating or sloping landform
- Enclosed to north by Greensand Ridge with extensive views to the south
- Mixed farmland including sheep-grazing and remnant orchards, shelterbelts and hedgerows

Teise Valley

- Flat, low-lying land
- Open rural landscape of arable crops
- Sparse settlement or road access giving tranquil atmosphere

Valeside Farms and Parklands

- Undulating mixed farmlands, residual orchards, hop gardens and pasture
- Historic parklands straddling the Greensand boundary
- Strong enclosure from Greensand Ridge
- Views over the Beult Valley

Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Landscape character types and areas

Landscape types (Figure 11) have broadly similar patterns of key physical elements such as geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern. These common characteristics can be discerned both from looking at maps and during site surveys. Within Maidstone Borough, these are:

- Dry Valleys and Downs
- Chalk Scarp Landscapes
- Gault Clay Vale
- Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Greensand Ridge
- Valleys
- Low Weald



Borough wide landscape character areas

The landscape types have been subdivided into 58 smaller 'borough wide' landscape character areas (Figure 12), which are unique and individual geographical areas. Landscape character areas share generic characteristics with other areas within the same landscape type, but have subtle differences and their own particular identity.

It should be noted that whilst the current guidance suggests that smaller scale landscape character areas should nest within larger scale landscape character areas, the landscape character areas defined within Maidstone Borough do not nest within all of the county scale areas defined within the Landscape Assessment of Kent (Kent County Council, 2004). This is because some of the character areas in the Landscape Assessment of Kent that fall across Maidstone Borough are derived from earlier studies. These studies are The Kent Downs Landscape (Countryside Commission 1995), The Low Weald Landscape Assessment and Guidelines (Kent County Council 1997) and The Greensand Belt Landscape Assessment and Guidelines (Kent County Council 1998). These assessments predate the current Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) and, whilst judgements (condition, sensitivity and guidelines) made in Landscape Assessment of Kent accord with the current guidance, the character areas that they are based upon were defined by these earlier assessments rather than based on the true character area boundaries.

Landscape character areas do not necessarily stop along borough boundaries, and usually extend across them. The relationship between the landscape character areas within Maidstone Borough and landscape character areas within adjoining boroughs (where they have been published) has been considered in terms of boundary alignment to ensure consistency.



Detailed landscape character areas

Within the detailed study area (Figure 1), 12 of the borough wide landscape character areas have been subdivided into 51 detailed landscape character areas (Figure 13). These detailed landscape character areas have derived from a more refined, finer grained study of the borough wide landscape character areas and 'nest' within these broader character areas and landscape types.

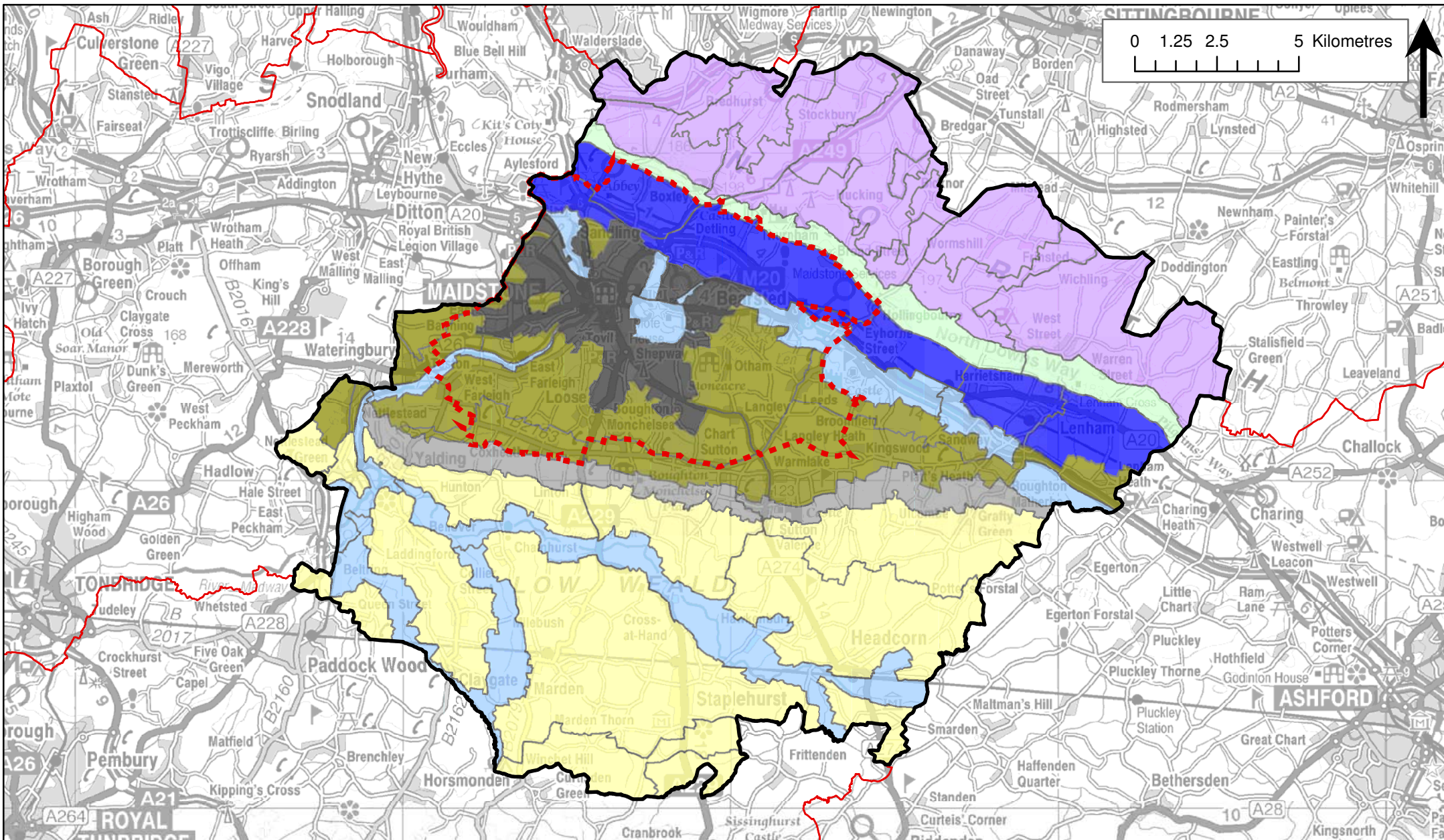
Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Considerations





There will always be some minor anomalies between different scales of landscape character assessment (in terms of the analysis of sensitivity, condition and guidelines) because the areas are not the same and landscape analysis takes an average across the area in question. The analysis for detailed landscape character areas will often therefore differ from the wider borough wide landscape character areas that they sit within. However as a general rule, where assessments are based on the same version of guidance, the more local assessment will provide the greatest level of detail and accuracy.

Changes in the natural landscape are often gradual, relating closely to changes in geology and soil type. It is therefore common to find some characteristics of one area overlapping into another. Not all parts within a landscape character area exhibit all the characteristics of that area, and it is usual to have some pockets with very few distinctive features. Often this is due to changes in land use that have resulted in the loss of landscape features, or the addition of features not typically associated with that area. The proximity of the built environment often affects the condition of the landscape, particularly on the boundaries where pressures are greatest. The landscape character areas therefore identify common characteristics across an area rather than grouping areas that are identical. Where there are marked changes across an area these are described and, where appropriate, different guidelines are provided.








Legend

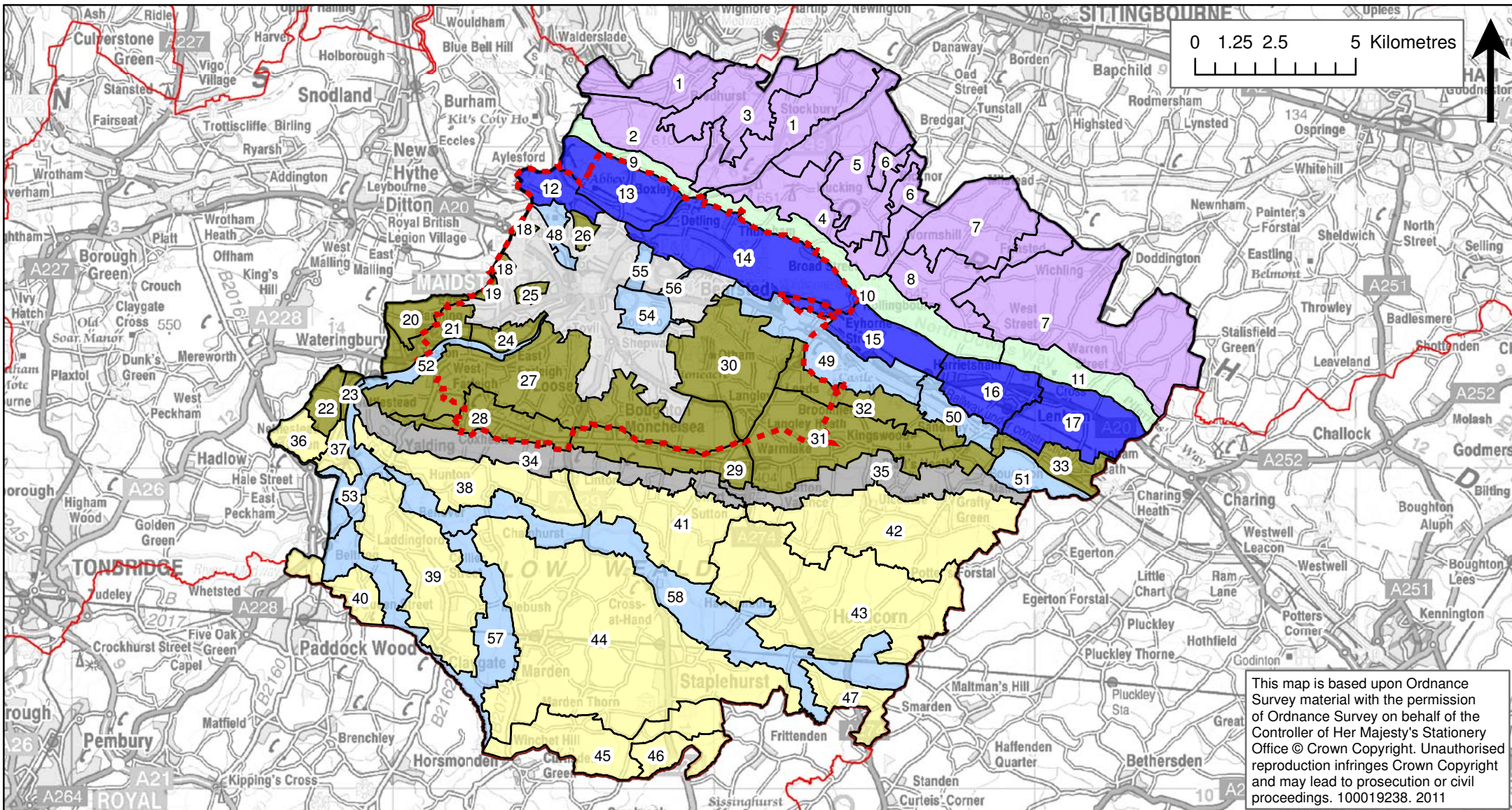
-  Maidstone Borough Boundary
-  District/Borough Boundaries
-  Detailed Study Area
-  Urban Area

-  Chalk Scarp Landscapes
-  Dry Valleys and Downs
-  Gault Clay Vale
-  Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands

-  Greensand Ridge
-  Low Weald
-  Valleys

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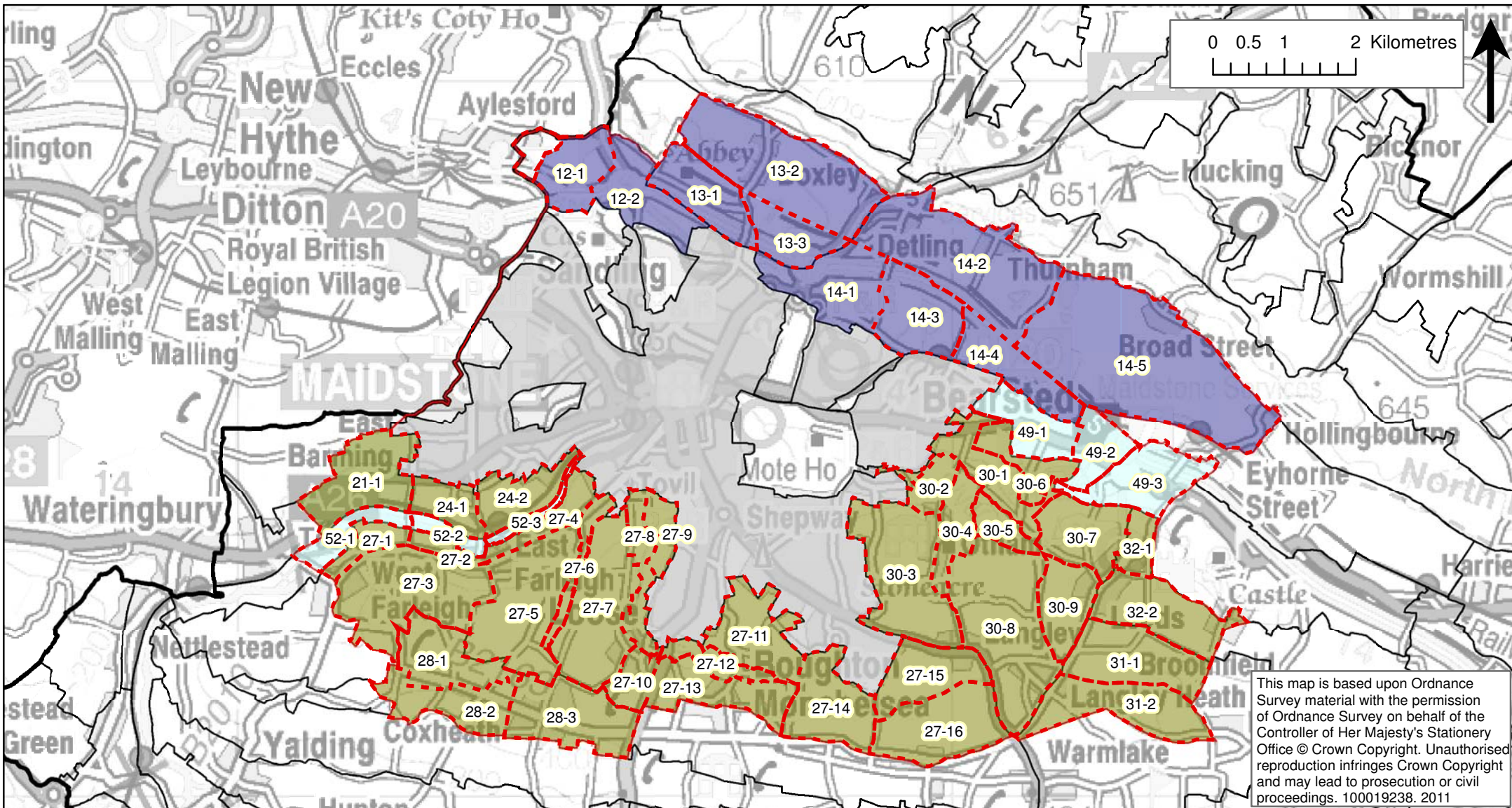
Figure 11 Borough Wide Landscape Character Types



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Legend		8. Ringlestone Downs		19. Barming Heath Arable Land		30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands		42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands		53. Medway Valley Yalding	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maidstone Borough Boundary District/Borough Boundaries Detailed Study Area Urban Area 		Chalk Scarp Landscapes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Boxley Scarp 10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp 11. Lenham Scarp 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Oaken Wood 21. Teston Valley Side 22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands 23. Nettlestead Valley Side 24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards) 25. Oakwood Park 26. Invicta Park 27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt 28. Coxheath Plateau 29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau 		Greensand Ridge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34. Linton Greensand Ridge 35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge 		Low Weald <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36. Nettlestead Woodlands 37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands 38. Yalding Farmlands 39. Laddingford Low Weald 40. Beltringe Grasslands 41. Linton Park and Farmlands 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 54. Mote Park 55. Vinters Park 56. Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow) 57. Teise Valley 58. Beult Valley 	
Dry Valleys and Downs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs 2. Westfield Sole Downs 3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys 4. Friningham Downs 5. Hucking Dry Valleys 6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards 7. Wormshill, Frinestead and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys 		Gault Clay Vale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Sandling Vale 13. Boxley Vale 14. Thurnham Vale 15. Eyhorne Vale 16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale 17. East Lenham Vale 		Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt 		Greensand Orchard and Dry Valleys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Ringlestone Downs 9. Boxley Scarp 10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp 11. Lenham Scarp 12. Sandling Vale 13. Boxley Vale 14. Thurnham Vale 15. Eyhorne Vale 16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale 17. East Lenham Vale 18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt 		Valleys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48. Medway Valley Allington 49. Leeds Castle Parklands 50. Harrietsham Vale 51. Chilston Parklands 52. Medway Valley - Maidstone to Wateringbury 			

Figure 12 Borough Wide Landscape Character Areas



0 0.5 1 2 Kilometres

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Legend

- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Borough Wide Landscape Character Areas
- Detailed Study Area
- Urban Area

Gault Clay Vale

- 12-1. Cobtree Manor Park
- 12-2. Sandling Woodland and Heath
- 13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields
- 13-2. Boxley Farmlands
- 13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland
- 14-1. Weaving Fringes
- 14-2. Thurnham Farmlands
- 14-3. Bearsted Golf Course
- 14-4. Water Lane Arable Land
- 14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land

Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farlands

- 21-1. Barming Slopes
- 24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards
- 24-2. Fant Orchards
- 27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side
- 27-2. East Farleigh Slopes
- 27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope
- 27-4. Bydews Slopes
- 27-5. Dean Farmlands
- 27-6. East of Dean Valley
- 27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture
- 27-8. Loose Valley
- 27-9. Hayle Estate
- 27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards
- 27-11. Boughton Farm
- 27-12. Boughton Quarries
- 27-13. Boughton Green Farmland
- 27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land
- 27-15. Langley Park Farm
- 27-16. Langley Loch Farmland
- 28-1. Gallants Flats
- 28-2. Quarry Woodlands
- 28-3. Coxheath Orchards

- 30-1. Len Valley
- 30-2. Otham Open Land
- 30-3. Gore Court Farm
- 30-4. Stoneacre Spring
- 30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes
- 30-6. Milgate Park
- 30-7. Upper Len
- 30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau
- 30-9. Leeds Farmlands
- 31-1. Leeds Fields
- 31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands

32-1. Ashbank

- 32-2. Leeds Slopes
- Valleys**
- 49-1. Caring Pastures
- 49-2. White Heath Farmlands
- 49-3. Ashbank Fields
- 52-1. Medway Pasture
- 52-2. Quarry Wood Valley
- 52-3. Medway Valley Walk

Figure 13 Detailed Landscape Character Areas

Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Table 1 Landscape character types and areas

Landscape Type	Borough wide landscape character areas	Detailed landscape character areas
Dry Valleys and Downs	1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs	
	2. Westfield Sole Downs	
	3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys	
	4. Friningham Downs	
	5. Hucking Dry Valleys	
	6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards	
	7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys	
	8. Ringlestone Downs	
Chalk Scarp Landscapes	9. Boxley Scarp	
	10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp	
	11. Lenham Scarp	
Gault Clay Vale	12. Sandling Vale	12-1. Cobtree Manor Park 12-2. Sandling Woodland and Heath
	13. Boxley Vale	13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields 13-2. Boxley Farmlands 13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland
	14. Thurnham Vale	14-1. Weaving Fringes 14-2. Thurnham Farmlands 14-3. Bearsted Golf Course 14-4. Water Lane Arable Land 14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land
	15. Eyhorne Vale	
	16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale	
	17. East Lenham Vale	
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt	
	19. Barming Heath Arable Land	
	20. Oaken Wood	
	21. Teston Valley Side	21-1. Barming Slopes
	22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands	
	23. Nettlestead Valley Side	
	24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards)	24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards

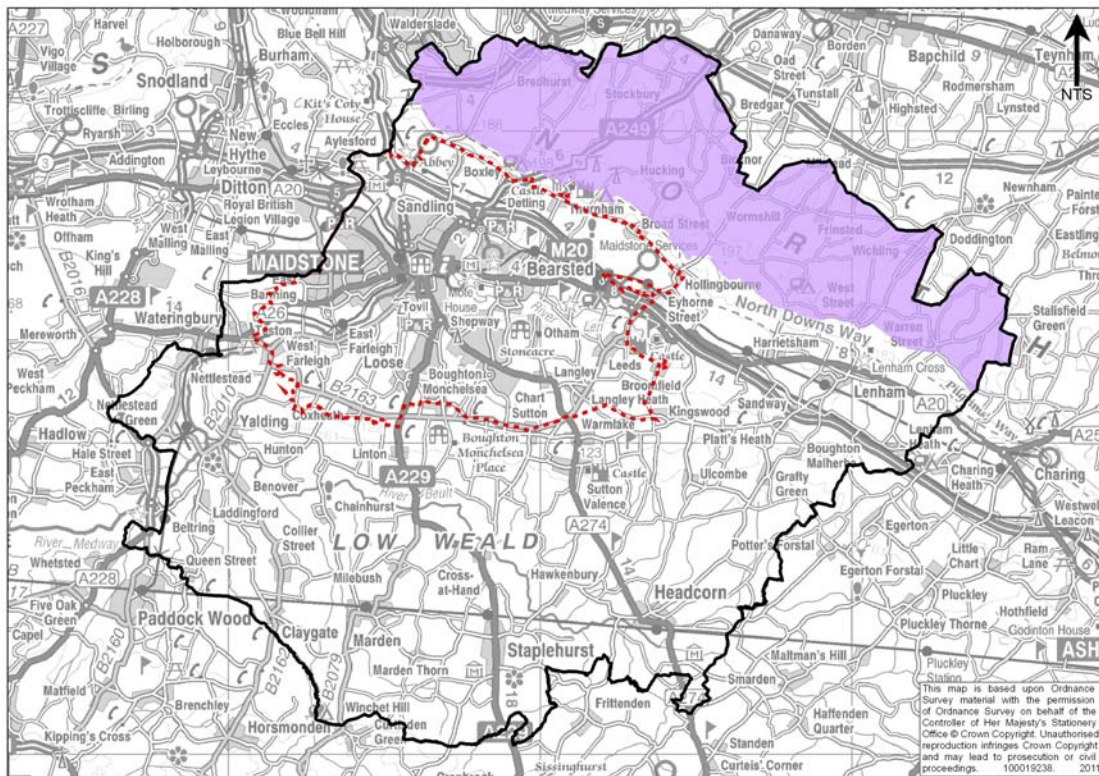
Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Landscape Type	Borough wide landscape character areas	Detailed landscape character areas
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands		24-2. Fant Orchards
	25. Oakwood Park	
	26. Invicta Park	
	27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt	27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side Slopes 27-2. East Farleigh 27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope 27-4. Bydews Slopes 27-5. Dean Farmlands 27-6. East of Dean Valley 27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and pasture 27-8. Loose Valley 27-9. Hayle Estate 27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards 27-11. Boughton Farm 27-12. Boughton Quarries 27-13. Boughton Green Farmland 27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land 27-15. Langley Park Farm 27-16. Langley Loch Farmland
	28. Coxheath Plateau	28-1. Gallants Flats 28-2. Quarry Woodlands 28-3. Coxheath Orchards
	29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau	
30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands	30-1. Len Valley 30-2. Otham Open Land 30-3. Gore Court Farm 30-4. Stoneacre Spring 30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes 30-6. Milgate Park 30-7. Upper Len	

Section 4 Landscape characterisation and evaluation

Landscape Type	Borough wide landscape character areas	Detailed landscape character areas
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands	30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau 30-9. Leeds Farmlands
	31. Kingswood Plateau	31-1. Leeds Fields 31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands
	32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands	32-1. Ashbank 32-2. Leeds Slopes
	33. Lenham Heath Farmlands	
Greensand Ridge	34. Linton Greensand Ridge	
	35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge	
Low Weald	36. Nettlestead Woodlands	
	37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands	
	38. Yalding Farmlands	
	39. Laddingford Low Weald	
	40. Beltring Grasslands	
	41. Linton Park and Farmlands	
	42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands	
	43. Headcorn Pasturelands	
	44. Staplehurst Low Weald	
	45. Sherenden Wooded Hills	
	46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands	
47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald		
Valleys	48. Medway Valley Allington	
	49. Leeds Castle Parklands	49-1. Caring Pastures 49-2. White Heath Farmlands 49-3. Ashbank Fields
	50. Harrietsham Vale	
	51. Chilston Parklands	
	52. Medway Valley – Maidstone to Wateringbury	52-1. Medway pasture 52-2. Quarry Wood Valley 52-3. Medway Valley Walk
	53. Medway Valley Yalding	
	54. Mote Park	
	55. Vinters Park	
	56. Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow)	
	57. Teise Valley	
	58. Beult Valley	

Dry Valleys and Downs: introduction

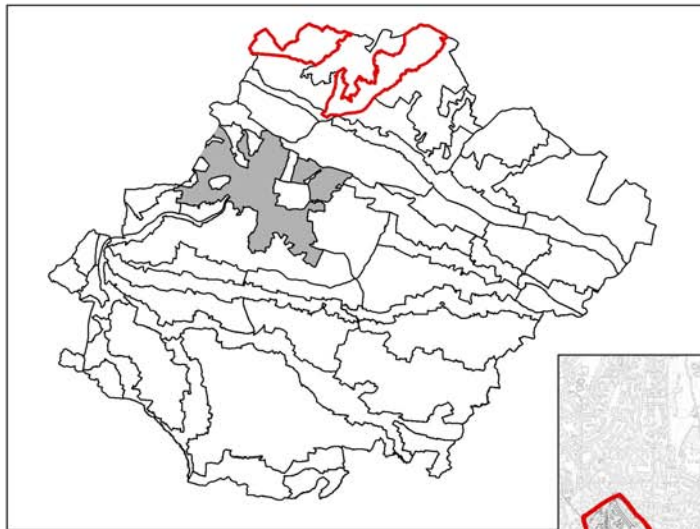


This landscape forms part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which offers a high level of development constraint. Policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. The dip slope of the North Downs is characterised by the typical open, expansive and rolling downland which gradually falls to the north. The strong landform is emphasised by ancient woodlands and shaws which cover the frequent pattern of dry valleys. Oak and ash are typical species across the upper part of the dip slope, and beech, ash and maple are found on the chalk soils of the dry valley sides. Much of the chalk grassland along the dry valley sides and bottoms is grazed, and in contrast the more level ridges are often covered with small scale cereal fields. Where the upper North Downs plateau levels off as it stretches towards the scarp, larger arable fields are more frequent. There are extensive drifts of clay with flints across the chalk geology, and subsequently flint is a common building material. The landscape is however largely isolated and undeveloped, with small villages and isolated farmsteads scattered widely. There are few roads, although narrow, winding lanes make their way along the valley bottoms and upper ridges.

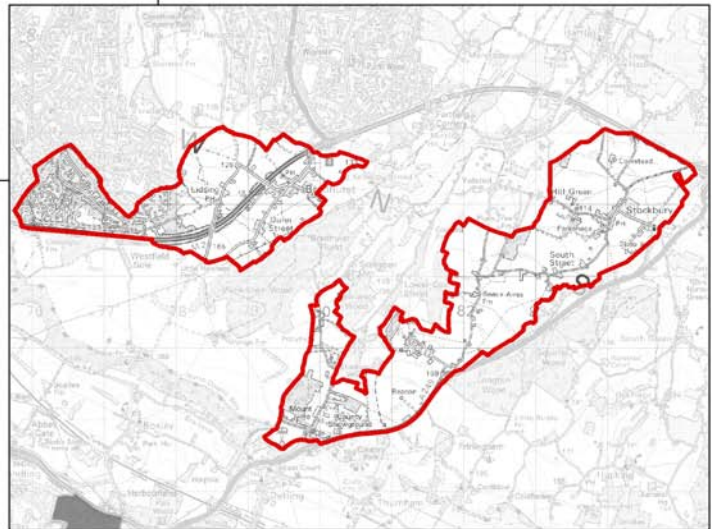
Dry Valleys and Downs: generic guidelines

- This landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009–2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Avoid the use of single species hedgerows and shelterbelts within this landscape, where species rich hedgerows are so prevalent
- Many of these landscapes contain a rich diversity of valuable habitats contributing to biodiversity, including, coppice and mixed native woodlands, orchards, chalk grassland, grazing meadows and parklands that should be conserved and enhanced
- Conserve and enhance, through appropriate management, existing pockets of lowland dry acid grassland and lowland heathland. Refer to Maidstone’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009–2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Encourage the extension of lowland dry acid grassland and lowland heathland within opportunity areas identified within the Kent Living Landscapes data (Kent Wildlife Trust) and illustrated in Figure 8
- Valleys are frequently tranquil and largely undeveloped. They are distinct features of the natural landscape that should be conserved
- Encourage extensive grazing regimes that are appropriate for the long term management of chalk grassland, and to restore grassland present to semi-improved and ultimately unimproved grassland
- Encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to increase invertebrates and farmland bird communities
- Encourage extensive grassland and crop management by use of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship grants
- Agricultural intensification has led to woodland and hedgerow fragmentation. Where possible, woodland habitats should be increased and the historic hedgerow network should be reinstated. Woodlands should be linked through replacing post and wire fences with species rich hedgerows. Similarly, existing developed areas within these valleys often create demands to expand or change the nature of management on the valley sides that is detrimental to landscape character and leads to loss of species-rich chalk grassland. This should be avoided and opportunities to restore/create chalk grassland sought

1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The majority of the landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB, while the remainder forms part of the setting to the AONB
- Level to gently sloping landform of the North Downs upper plateau
- Mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small to medium blocks of woodland
- Mixture of historic and recent buildings within the villages and farmsteads
- Traditional materials include yellow stock and red brick, Kent peg ties, flint and weatherboarding
- Predominantly very narrow lanes, in addition to the engineered roads within Bredhurst and the M2 motorway

Location

1.1 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is an area of downland located on the upper plateau of the North Downs. The majority of the area, with the exception of the north western fringe, sits within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The landscape comprises a mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small blocks of woodland and is split in two by the dry wooded valleys just south east of Bredhurst village. The boundary to the south west indicates a change in field size, from small to large, while the north eastern boundary indicates the upper edge of the dry wooded valleys surrounding Hucking. Finally, the northern and north western boundary is artificial, following the boundary between Maidstone Borough and Medway Unitary Authority and Tonbridge and Malling Borough, which marks the extent of the study area rather than a change in landscape character. However there is a distinct change to the north west from the rural landscape to urban settlements.

1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

1.2 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs comprise a mixture of arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and blocks of woodland. The fields form an irregular pattern, but are mostly small scale, with a few exceptions. There appears to be no dominant land use and the different types of fields are scattered throughout the area, with clusters of cereal fields next to remnant cherry orchards or collections of equestrian fields. The paddocks are often rectangular in shape and split up by boundaries incorporating electric fencing. Hedgerows are usually in association with lanes and are scarcer in the northern part of the area, while the eastern part also includes some hedgerows between fields. Hedgerow species include blackthorn, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, holly and sycamore. Other field boundaries are timber post and wire fencing, post and rail or barbed wire, but there are sections where there are no boundaries between the fields and lanes. The area also includes a few small to medium blocks of woodland incorporating predominantly hazel and beech. Cowstead Wood, West Wood, Four Oaks, Amber Wood and an area of woodland close to the Kent County Showground are all blocks of recorded ancient woodland.

1.3 The north-western corner of the character area includes part of Walderslade suburbs and is rather uncharacteristic of Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs, comprising relict wooded dry dip slope valleys with large blocks of suburban development in between the woodlands. Walderslade Woods include three large belts

of ancient woodland, which also forms part of a Local Wildlife Site notified in 2007. The woodlands include historical coppice, which is now unmanaged, and incorporates species such as ash, beech, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, sessile oak and sweet chestnut. The woodland understorey includes more than 30 woodland indicator plants such as early purple orchid, pignut and wood anemone. There are also areas of open clearings with grassland and scrub within the woodlands which are of value to wildlife such as dormice. Badgers and bats are also present within these woodlands.

1.4 Both Bredhurst and Stockbury Villages incorporate a mixture of both historical buildings and features, including a very distinctive village sign in Stockbury and flint and brick walls, as well as many recent buildings. In addition there are a number of farmsteads and recent buildings scattered across the area. Yellow stock brick is particularly distinctive of traditional buildings, but also red brick, Kent peg tiles and weatherboarding are characteristic building materials. The more recent buildings often feature render and red brick and there are also large scale farm-sheds built from concrete and metal. The suburban houses within Walderslade include bricks in shades of red to yellow, as well as weather boarding and hung tiles.

1.5 To the south of Lower Cox Street, Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate is a very uncharacteristic feature of the North Downs

1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs



comprising a variety of industrial sheds as well as parking areas for lorries. The small industrial estate is also the site of the historic Detling Aerodrome, which was bombed by the Luftwaffe during the Second World War. Close by, the Kent County Showground is a detracting feature when it is used for shows, when large marquees are erected within the otherwise open fields.

1.6 There are also two Scheduled Monuments within the area. The remains of Binbury Castle, located to the north west of Detling Aerodrome Industrial Estate, include a wide motte and parts of a gatehouse. Behind Stockbury Church, the earthwork of the motte and bailey of Stockbury Castle remain. Both castles would have formed a defence together with Thurnham Castle, which is situated on the North Downs scarp edge.

1.7 While the roads through Bredhurst Village are engineered roads, there are many narrow and winding lanes within the area, as well as a small number of footpaths and trackways. The A249 dual carriageway runs along part of the south eastern boundary and the M2 cuts through the area to the north west, both contrasting with the rural road patterns within the area. While the M2 is visible in parts, it is deeply set as it passes Bredhurst, reducing the impact the road has on the area.

Geology, soils and topography

1.8 Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs are

positioned on the high plateau at the top of the North Downs. The underlying geology is the Upper Chalk which mostly is overlaid by drifts of predominantly clay with flints, as well as some smaller deposits of head drift. The soils above the clay is generally fine silts and fine loams with subsoils which often are slowly permeable, causing problems of slight seasonal water logging. The geology forms a level to gently sloping plateau with an area of dry valleys in the north western corner, at Walderslade. It is within these dry valleys and other gentle undulations that the head drifts are found, and the soils in these areas tend to be shallow well drained calcareous and silty.

Views

1.9 Within Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs there are views across the fields, but these are limited where there are mature remnant orchard trees or blocks of woodland. Views are also limited along parts of the lanes, where the hedgerows are taller. Because the majority of trees and hedgerow species are broadleaved and the arable crops are seasonal, the area would appear more open in the winter. There are also longer views west of Stockbury, looking towards the Isle of Grain and the Medway Estuary. These views include large industrial features.



1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

1.10 The villages, farmsteads, recent settlements, industrial estate, County Show Ground and fragmented arable fields, paddocks, remnant orchards and small blocks of woodland create an incoherent pattern of elements within Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs. The condition of equestrian fields is variable, mainly due to the condition of boundaries, which sometimes feature barbed wire and scrubby hedges as well as post and rail and electric fences. The remnant orchards make the landscape look neglected. There are also some detractors within the area, though these mostly tend to be detracting locally, due to screening from vegetation. The detractors include dumped rubbish and caravans in fields, large scale farm and industrial sheds, the County Show Ground when in use, as well as a stretch of electricity pylons which cuts through the western part of the area. There is not a strong network of hedgerows and woodlands within the area and the intensity of land use is variable, with higher intensity areas where there are arable fields. The mature remnant orchards trees and woodlands are, however, of greater habitat value making the overall ecological integrity moderate. The cultural integrity of the area is variable. Tree cover is intermittent, comprising small to medium size blocks of woodland, with a good age structure, and mature specimens within the remnant cherry orchards. Field boundaries are formed by hedgerows and post and rail fencing, but there are gaps in the boundaries in places. The impact of recent built development within the area is moderate, since there are few recent buildings that are in keeping with the local vernacular tradition, which in combination with the tall electricity pylons slightly weakens the sense of place within the area.

Sensitivity

1.11 The sense of place within the area is moderate. This is due to the fragmented pattern of the landscape, which consists of several distinct features, such as the historic and ancient woodlands, the narrow and winding lanes, the historic settlements and buildings, and the tall and detracting electricity pylons, as well as some indistinct features such as the hedgerows, post and wire fences and more recent settlements and buildings. Despite the recent features found within the area, the overall continuity of the landscape is historic. Tree cover in Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is intermittent and while the landform within the area is generally not a distinctive feature, it becomes apparent that the area is positioned on high ground where there are longer views out of the area. Visibility is therefore overall moderate.



1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

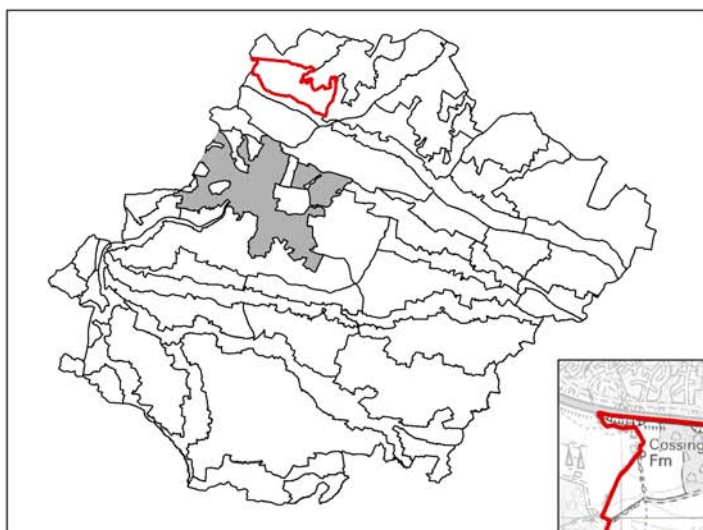
GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

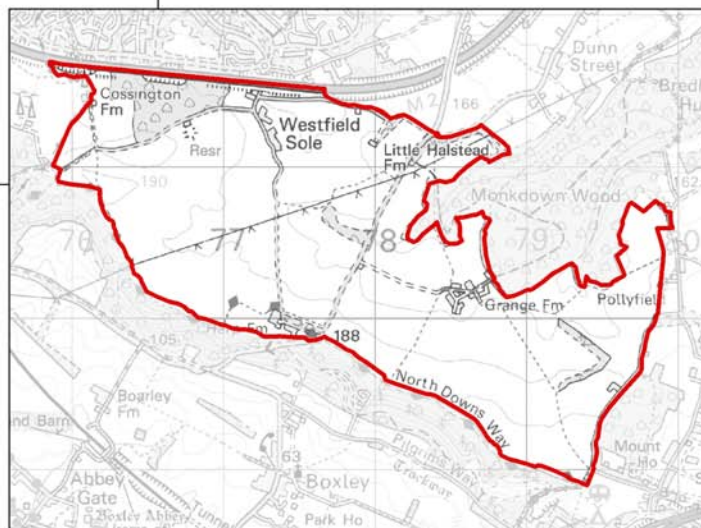
- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Improve the condition of field boundaries, avoiding the use of barbed wire
- Conserve the historical buildings and features that remain, including the two Scheduled Monuments
- Restore and improve the rural setting to historical settlements such as Bredhurst and Stockbury villages, by discouraging flytipping
- Avoid further built development which is out of context in terms of materials and design
- Conserve the blocks of ancient woodland
- Restore and improve the woodlands within the area by improving management within historical coppice
- Improve, manage and enhance the remnant orchards
- Improve the management of fields and land generally by removing rubbish and caravans and discouraging fly tipping
- Restore and improve the network of hedgerows, filling in gaps where there are no boundaries and improving the management generally



2. Westfield Sole Downs



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Level to very slightly sloping plateau of the North Downs
- Very large arable fields
- One medium size block of woodland and a few woodland belts
- Scattered farmsteads with large farm sheds
- A mixture of engineered roads, lanes and tracks
- A small section of the North Downs Way National Trail close to Harp Farm

Location

2.1 Westfield Sole Downs is located on the fairly level plateau at the top of the North Downs Scarp and forms part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is characterised by very large arable fields. The southern boundary is marked by the scarp edge and a thick belt of woodland on Boxley scarp, while the western boundary follows the Maidstone Borough boundary to Tonbridge and Malling Borough. This also marks the extent of the study area, rather than a change in landscape character. The landscape to the north of the sparsely settled Westfield Sole Downs, comprises denser suburban settlements and the boundary at this end follows the M2. The boundary to the north east indicates a change from the very large arable fields, to a smaller field pattern, a change in land use and woodland cover.

2. Westfield Sole Downs



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

2.2 Westfield Sole Downs is dominated by very large arable fields upon the level to slightly sloping plateau at the top of the North Downs. The field pattern is irregular and the fields are often just subdivided where there are roads, lanes, trackways or footpaths. Field boundaries are a mixture of low hedgerows and post and wire fences. The hedgerows include native species such as elder, field maple, hawthorn and hazel. To the north, Malling Wood forms a medium size block of ancient woodland. A stretch of electricity lines create a distinctive break in the tree canopies within this woodland and there is unfortunately a large area within the woodland which appears to be used for dumping rubbish, cars and lorries. In addition to Malling Wood there are a few other belts of woodland within the area, including three belts of ancient woodland. Species within these woodlands include ash, ivy, cherry, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, holly and oak.

2.3 A number of small farmsteads are scattered between the large arable fields. The farmsteads have generally not retained their historical character, particularly when compared to the farmsteads found to the south of the area, within Boxley Vale. There are many recent large metal and concrete farm sheds, as well as recently built houses in red brick. Leyland cypress is sometimes planted as screening in association with the farmsteads. There is, however, one surviving historical feature at Grange Farm, where the remains of an agricultural chalk mine, known as a denehole, is found. Grange Farm originated as

a monastic grange associated with Boxley Abbey, and is therefore Medieval in foundation. The existing 18th century farmhouse is grade II listed, but this is likely to be the refronting of an earlier building.

2.4 The vehicular routes within the area are a mixture of engineered roads and lanes which cut through the large arable fields. The roads are often defined by short native hedges. There are also a number of footpaths and a few trackways within the area, including the North Downs Way National Trail runs along the majority of the southern boundary to Boxley Scarp. By Harp Farm the trail briefly enters the area, before it continues its path along the scarp edge. To the north, the M2 marks the area boundary.

Geology, soils and topography

2.5 Westfield Sole Downs sits upon the high, level to slightly sloping upper plateau of the North Downs. The geology consists of Upper Chalk which mainly is overlaid by drifts of clay with flints. The soils within the area are generally fine silts and fine loams above clay and the subsoils are often slowly permeable, causing problems of slight seasonal water logging. There are also a few smaller deposits of head drift as well as areas where the chalk is not overlaid by drifts at the bottom of very gentle undulations, where the topography starts to form the dry valleys that are so distinctive of the area to the north east. In the areas where there is no drift, the chalk is in

2. Westfield Sole Downs

part overlaid by shallow well drained calcareous silty soils.

Views

2.6 There are wide views across the arable fields within the area, which are only interrupted by the woodland block and belts. The short hedges along the roads tend to allow views over the top to the surrounding fields. There are also longer views from the high plateau to the urban edges of Maidstone and Ditton in locations where there are no tree belts to block the views. A stretch of tall electricity pylons cuts through the area, forming a highly visible feature within the open landscape. The pylons are particularly visible because they are viewed against the sky. There is also little screening between the M2 and the area, with the exception of Malling Wood, and this leaves the motorway highly visible, particularly from Yelstead Lane.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

2.7 The farmsteads and woodland block and belts within the irregular pattern of very large arable cereal fields form a coherent pattern of elements. The main visual detractors within the area are the tall electricity pylons which create towering features within the largely level fields. Other visual detractors are the large and recent farm-sheds, collections of cars, lorries and rubbish within Malling Wood, as well as the M2 which is largely unscreened. The ecological integrity is weak overall, although Malling Wood and the belts of woodland and hedgerows, provide some valuable ecological habitat. The network across the intensively cultivated fields is, however, generally weak. While the age structure within the woodlands is good, tree cover is limited, which exposes the detracting electricity pylons. Field boundaries are in variable condition and are usually in association with roads, rather than between fields, and the scattered farmsteads with large metal and concrete sheds are not in keeping with local vernacular. Overall the cultural integrity is therefore variable.

Sensitivity

2.9 The large and fairly level arable fields with tall electricity pylons are a very distinctive and dominant feature of Westfield Sole Downs which, combined with the indistinct features, such as the engineered highways, recent buildings, field boundaries, hedgerows and woodlands, makes the area appear distinctive overall. Due to the largely recent continuity of the features within the area, with the exception of the woodlands, native hedgerows and the scattered nature of the settlements, the sense of place within Westfield Sole Downs is weak. Tree cover within the area is limited leaving the high plateau landscape open. Visibility is therefore high, with longer views out of the area from some locations.

2. Westfield Sole Downs

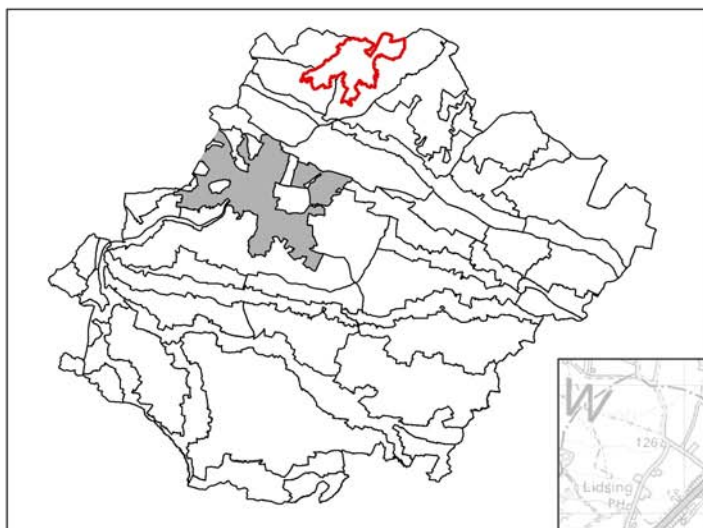
SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS			
Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Weak
Ecological integrity:	Weak	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Open
Functional integrity:	Weak	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE		SUMMARY OF ACTIONS		
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

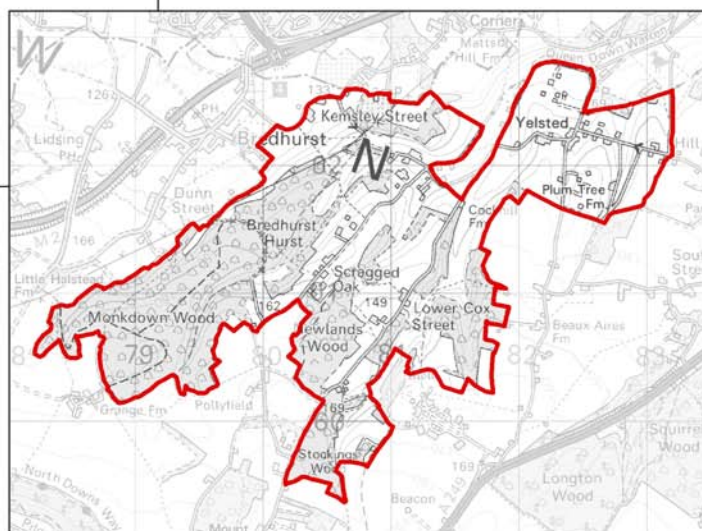
- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Westfield Sole Downs is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Restore and improve Malling Wood and the few other remaining woodlands, taking care to conserve areas where ancient woodland is present
- Conserve the denehole by Grange Farm
- Restore and improve the scattered farmsteads
- Restore and improve the network of hedgerows and fields boundaries
- Conserve the North Downs Way
- Screen the M2 in order to improve the sense of place within the rural landscape



3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating landform of the dry valley landscape
- Large woodland blocks
- Flint rubble above ground
- Chalk grassland pasture
- Yelsted village, scattered farmsteads and recent settlements, featuring a mixture of historic and recent buildings
- Distinctive historic yellow brick walls and traditional buildings featuring yellow and red brick, flint and exposed timber framing
- Narrow lanes lined by very tall unkempt and gappy hedges

Location

3.1 Bredhurst Dry Valleys are a collection of dry and mostly wooded valleys located to the north of Maidstone on the upper plateau of the North Downs within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The eastern, northern and western boundaries roughly follow the outer edges of the large woodland blocks within the area. These boundaries mark a change in woodland cover and land use as well as topography. The northern boundary is rather artificial, following the boundary of Maidstone Borough to Swale Borough and Medway Unitary Authority. This boundary marks the extent of the study area rather than a change in landscape character.



3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

3.2 The gentle undulations which form the dip slope dry valleys and ridges of Bredhurst are covered in either large blocks of woodland, chalk pasture or scrub. The woodlands are dark and dense and include large areas of historic coppice which often is unmanaged and includes species such as ash, beech, chestnut, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, hornbeam, oak standards and wych elm. The woodland understorey is rich and includes bluebells, wood anemone and many orchid species. There are also yew groves with whitebeam where the chalk is close to the surface. More or less all of the woodland within the area is recorded as ancient woodland and forms part of a group of Local Wildlife Sites, including Bredhurst Woods which was first notified in 1987. These Local Wildlife Sites also include areas of chalk grassland which is species rich in places and incorporates as many as 17 chalk indicator species, such as kidney vetch, rock rose and small scabious, as well as the rare Watling Street thistle. Both the chalk grassland within the Local Wildlife Sites, as well as the rest of the area, is often grazed by sheep, but also horses and cattle graze the pasture and there are scattered paddocks. Field boundaries tend to be timber post and wire fencing except along lanes which are lined by very tall and unkempt hedgerows, making them feel even narrower than they are. The hedgerows are sometimes gappy and species include elm, field maple, hawthorn and hazel.

3.3 Settlements within the area are small, scattered and located in valley bottoms or on ridges where it is not too steep and large woodlands are not present. Yelsted village is

the most notable settlement and includes a mixture of historical buildings as well as more recent buildings. Yellow brick walls are characteristic features of the area. There are also several farmsteads and small recent settlements within Bredhurst Dry Valleys. Traditional buildings often feature yellow stock brick, as well as some red brick and flint and some are timber framed. In contrast, these traditional properties are often gated by large ornate gates which are not a historical feature. More recent buildings are finished with render or built with brick and there are also large metal and concrete sheds within the area.

3.4 Most of Bredhurst Dry Valleys is accessible by vehicle along the narrow lanes or by foot along the many public footpaths which cross the chalk grasslands and wind through the woodlands. There are no engineered roads within the area, adding to the remote character of the valleys.



3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys

Geology, soils and topography

3.5 This is a characteristic dip slope valley landscape of the North Downs, consisting of gentle valleys and the ridges in between. The underlying solid geology consists of the Upper Chalk which is characterised by the chalk woodlands and grasslands. On the ridges the chalk is overlain by drifts of clay and flints and the soils in these areas tend to be deep fine silts and fine loams with subsoils which are slowly permeable. Within the bottom of the valleys there are frequently deposits of head drifts, while the chalk on the valley sides is seldom overlaid by drifts and is sometimes close to the surface, where chalk rubble can be seen. The soils in these areas tend to be shallower, well drained calcareous and silty.

due to the combination of tall unkempt hedges and large blocks of woodland, which sometimes create tunnels along the lanes. At the bottom of valleys, the valley sides create further enclosure, but there are open views through the valleys in areas of pasture. To the north and north west, views out of the area, into Swale, tend to be of a similar character and often includes tall electricity pylons, which stand out against the skyline. The pylons carry on through the north western corner of Bredhurst Dry Valleys, but are often positioned within the woodlands and are therefore not as apparent in views within the area. Longer views are found on the valley ridges to the north, from which the Isle of Grain may be seen where there are gaps in hedgerows.

Views

3.6 Bredhurst Dry Valleys often feels enclosed

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

3.7 The pattern of irregularly shaped chalk woodlands, chalk pasture, scattered paddocks, unmanaged fields, gappy hedgerows and the mixture of historic and recent settlements form an incoherent pattern. Visual detractors include the tall electricity pylons and large metal and concrete sheds. Where the fields are not managed as pasture, there are sometimes problems with scrub emerging, unmaintained gates and rubbish being dumped which makes these fields appear abandoned. While the intensity of land use is low and there are large blocks of ancient woodland within the area, the gappy network of hedgerows weakens the ecological network, making the overall ecological integrity moderate. Whilst the extensive woodlands have a good age structure, the hedgerows are tall, gappy and unkempt, and the detractors mentioned above also weaken the cultural integrity. Recent built development is generally not in keeping with local vernacular, featuring large ornate gates and large concrete and metal sheds. The overall cultural integrity of the landscape is therefore variable, and the overriding condition of the dip slope landscape is poor.

Sensitivity

3.9 Bredhurst Dry Valleys has a moderate sense of place. There is a mixture of historic and recent features within the area, but the overall continuity of the landscape is historic. The ancient woodlands are a very important and very distinctive feature of the dip slope landscape, as are the areas of species rich chalk grassland. The narrow lanes, historical buildings and settlements are also distinctive. There are, however, also some indistinct features within the area, including the recent settlements, unkempt and gappy hedgerows, post and wire fences and some of the chalk grassland, which in some areas is unmanaged. The apparent undulating dip slope valley landform combines with the intermittent pattern of large blocks of woodland and tall hedgerows to give moderate visibility within the area.

3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

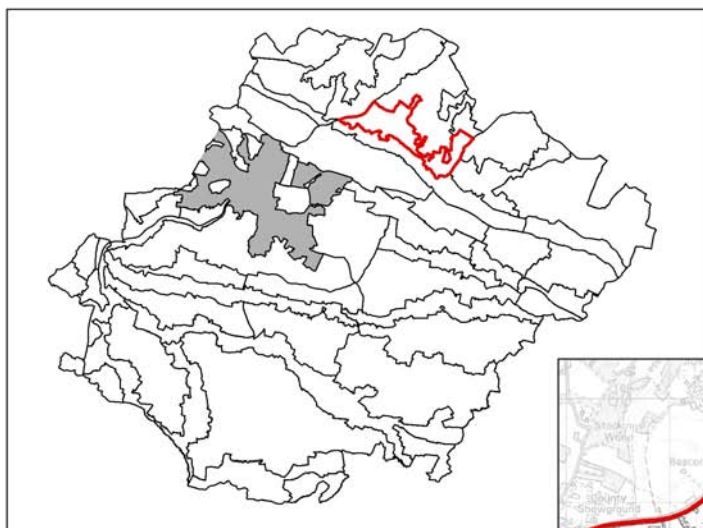
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

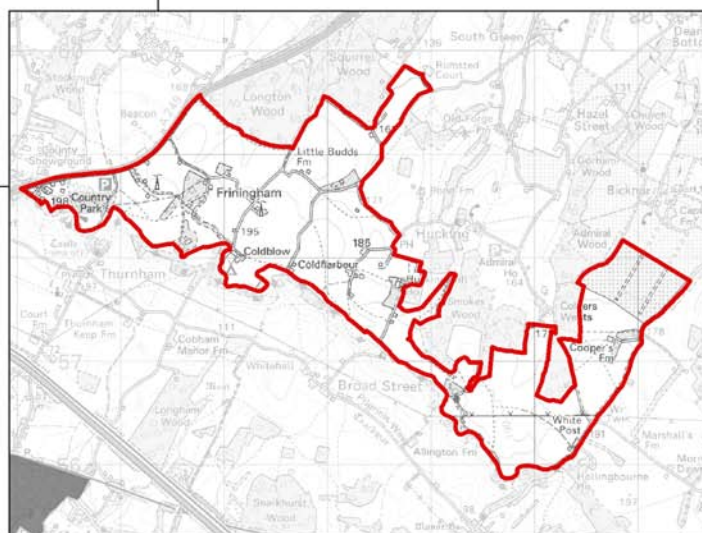
- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Bredhurst Dry Valleys is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve and enhance the large blocks of ancient woodland and improve the management in areas of historical coppice
- Conserve and enhance the areas of species rich chalk grassland
- Restore and improve the condition of chalk grassland which is not species rich
- Improve land management by encouraging grazing within fields which appear abandoned and removing dumped rubbish, tractors and caravans and discouraging fly tipping
- Restore and improve the network of hedgerows, filling in gaps and improving management generally, by trimming the hedgerows more regularly
- Conserve the historical buildings within the area and distinctive yellow brick walls
- Discourage further new settlements that are not in keeping with traditional settlements



4. Friningham Downs



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Level to very slightly sloping plateau of the North Downs
- Very large arable fields and a few smaller fields with pasture
- A few small woodland blocks and narrow belts of trees
- Hedgerows with plenty of hazel
- Scattered farmsteads
- Narrow lanes lined with hedges
- Open Access Land within the Hucking Estate

Location

4.1 Friningham Downs is located to the north east of Maidstone on the upper plateau of the North Downs, and forms part of the wider Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is characterised by large and level arable fields. The southern boundary follows the top of the North Downs scarp and marks a distinct change in the topography and land use. To the east the boundary follows the narrow B2163, indicating a change in field size and pattern, while the A249 dual carriageway marks the western edge, demarcating a gradual change in land use. A mixture of lanes, woodland and orchard edges mark the northern boundary, which indicates a change in both field pattern and topography, from level to dip slope.

4. Friningham Downs



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

4.2 Friningham Downs is a large scale landscape with large and level arable fields which often stretch as far as the eye can see. The fields form an irregular pattern and are particularly large to the east, where they have replaced grubbed-up orchards. The network of native hedges generally follows the route of local lanes, rather than boundaries between fields. Hazel is particularly distinctive within the hedgerows which are often tall, but other species such as elder, field maple, hawthorn, holly and honeysuckle are also present. To the west mature oaks stand proud in some of the hedgerows. Close to Stanhope Farm, within the central part of the character area, the field pattern is smaller, sometimes grid like and contains equestrian pasture rather than arable fields. The boundaries between these fields are at times marked with a mixture of mature belts of trees and native hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, but more commonly the boundaries are defined by post and wire or electric fencing.

4.3 Just above Hucking Hill House, there is an area of unimproved pasture over heavy clay with flints. This area is part of the larger Hucking Hill House Pasture and Woods designated Local Wildlife Site, which was first notified in 1986. The grasslands include species such as hay rattle and common spotted orchid. There are also a few small woodland blocks within the area, which are primarily designated ancient woodland. These woodlands contain native species such as ash, field maple, hawthorn, hazel and oak. The ancient

woodland block just east of Little Buds Farm unfortunately appears to have been partly cleared to accommodate private development. To the west, at White Horse Wood Country Park, Kent County Council created five hectares of grassland and planted more than 20,000 trees as a millennium project. The woodland contains species such as ash, crab apple, oak, silver birch and wild cherry.

4.4 Just off Coldblow Lane there is a wireless transmitting station with large industrial looking sheds that appear to be derelict and have been partly dismantled to leave a bare metal skeleton behind. At this station there are two tall masts, with a third located closer to the A249. This formed part of the 'ACE High' network in the late 1950s to link NATO heads of state together in a crisis, and is therefore of interest to Cold War heritage.



4. Friningham Downs



4.5 The area is sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads between the fields. Traditional buildings are scarce, but where present are built with materials such as red brick, black weatherboarding, hung clay tiles and Kent peg tiles. At White Post there is also a fine flint and red brick wall. More recent buildings pick up on some of the traditional materials, like the Kent peg tiles, but white render is also common.

4.6 The roads within Friningham Downs are narrow lanes which are usually lined by hedgerows, but much of the area is only accessible by vehicle along private tracks. Along the north western boundary the A249 dual carriageway stands in contrast to the lanes and tracks, but it is generally not visible from within the area, due to the large arable fields, woodland belts and blocks within the area, as well as some gappy screening along the road itself. Above Broad Street there is a stretch of Open Access Land across pasture, which is part of the larger Woodland Trust Hucking Estate. Close to Stanhope Farm there are many footpaths that run between the smaller fields, while the footpaths are further apart amongst the larger fields.

Geology, soils and topography

4.6 Friningham Downs is situated on the higher ground of the North Downs, where the underlying Upper Chalk forms a very flat to very slightly sloping plateau. The Upper Chalk is predominantly overlain by drifts of clay with

flints, which is characterised by the unimproved grassland near Hucking Hill House. The soils are generally fine silts and fine loams above the clay and the subsoils tend to be slowly permeable, which may cause problems of slight seasonal water logging from time to time. Where the topography starts to slope very gently towards the north, there are also deposits of head drift, which continue down into the nearby Hucking Dry Valleys. In association with one of these deposits, close to Rumstead Lane, the soil is shallow and well drained calcareous silt.

Views

4.7 The majority of views within the area are wide open views of the large arable fields. Due to the fairly flat topography and seasonally tall crops within the fields, areas beyond are often not visible. Where there are views out of the area, these are generally only to the many surrounding woodlands or tree belts. Within views to the west, the three tall wireless transmitter masts are highly visible, standing above the arable fields, with only the sky as a backdrop. A line of electricity pylons also cut through the fields to the east, with a similar effect to the masts on views. Views from the B2163, looking south, also feature the water tower within Ringlestone Downs, but the backdrop of tall trees reduces the impact of this.



4. Friningham Downs

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

4.8 The large arable fields dominate this large scale landscape. Together with the often tall hedgerows, equestrian fields, small woodland blocks and tree belts, they form a coherent pattern.

4.9 There are many metal and concrete farm sheds within the farmsteads, and at Friningham Farm and Manor these are particularly large and out of keeping with the traditional small scale buildings of the area. There is also a large garage with many cars parked within the yard at Friningham Manor. This is a feature which is out of keeping with the rural landscape, but the yard is fairly well screened by mature trees, making it less obvious. The derelict buildings, tall electricity pylons and transmitter masts are, however, particularly detracting and other detracting features include the garage yard and very large farm sheds, though these tend to be fairly well screened by trees.

4.10 The woodland blocks, tree belts, hedgerows and unimproved grassland near Hucking Hill House provide some semi-natural habitat within the area, but the ecological network is weak overall due to the very large and intensely farmed arable fields with a lack of intervening hedgerows. Tree cover within the area is sparse, but a good age structure is present within the woodlands, though, as mentioned, one of the ancient woodlands has been encroached upon by development. The hedgerows form a better network to the west than the east and the standard oaks are attractive heritage features within these. Other field boundaries are of variable condition, with many electric fences between the equestrian fields, as well as some post and wire fencing. The impact of recent built development is high, particularly in relation to the transmitter stations, and the lack of respect of the local vernacular style weakens the sense of place.

Sensitivity

4.11 Though there are some distinct and historic features within the area, such as the few traditional buildings, narrow lanes and native hedgerows with standard oaks, the majority of features are recent and, with the exception of the arable fields, indistinct. Indistinct features include the field boundaries around equestrian fields and recent farm sheds, as well as the woodlands. The sense of place within the area is therefore very weak. The landscape is generally open, with few trees to block views, though some hedgerows are quite tall in places. Combined with the apparent landform, which is very flat to very slightly sloping, the overall visibility is high.



4. Friningham Downs

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Weak	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Poor	Tree cover:	Open
Functional integrity:	Very Weak	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

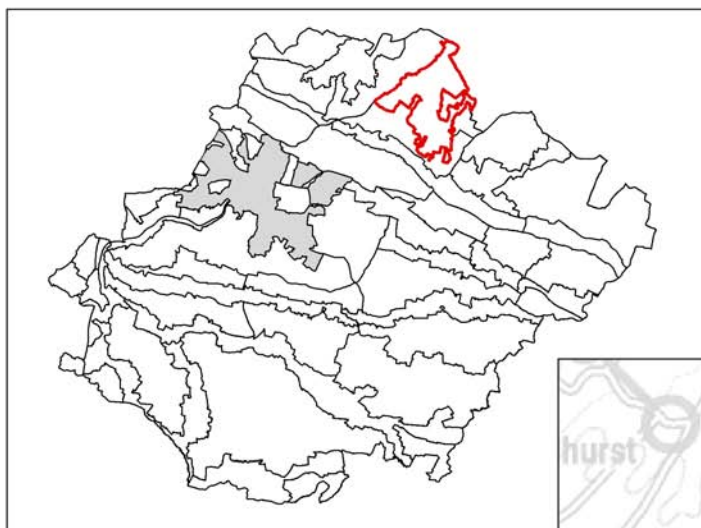
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Friningham Downs is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve and enhance the remaining unimproved grassland by Hucking Hill House
- Conserve and improve the few remaining ancient woodlands, by encouraging better management of these and preventing spread of development within the woodlands
- Conserve and improve the network of hedgerows, particularly by planting new hedges along field margins where there are no defined boundaries
- Improve the consistency and quality of field boundaries in areas of equestrian grazing
- Plant new oak standards within hedgerows to the west, to replace ageing specimens
- Improve the rural character of the landscape by removing derelict buildings and preventing semi-industrial development of the land
- Improve the scattered farmsteads by encouraging agricultural activity where this is lacking and preventing further large scale development within the landscape

5. Hucking Dry Valleys



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating landform of the a dry valley landscape
- Large woodland tracts and blocks, much of which is ancient
- Parkland trees
- Chalk grassland pasture
- Post and wire fencing which often follows ridges
- Narrow, winding and often deeply set lanes that are often lined with hedgerows or enclosed by taller vegetation
- Paddocks and remnant orchards close to Pett Farm
- Hucking village and scattered farmsteads with mostly very distinctive traditional buildings built with materials such as red brick, flint and Kent peg tiles

Location

5.1 Hucking Dry Valleys is a series of dip slope valleys located to the north east of Maidstone on the upper plateau of the North Downs, which is situated within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The eastern, southern and western boundaries follow the edges of woodlands, small lanes and fields, and indicate a change in topography and land use, from dip slopes with woodlands and pasture, to fairly level land with orchards to the east, arable fields to the south west and mixed land use to the northwest. To the north east, the edge of the character area also marks the edge of the study area and the boundary between Maidstone Borough and Swale Borough, rather than a change in landscape character. The area also surrounds part of Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards.

5. Hucking Dry Valleys



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

5.2 Hucking Dry Valleys are gently undulating, dry dip slope valleys which typically are either covered in chalk grassland pasture or chalk woodlands. The chalk grasslands are often grazed by sheep and give the area a distinctly rural and remote character. While the lanes that pass between the fields are often lined by hedgerows with field maple, hawthorn and an abundance of hazel, the hedges are sometimes gappy or scrubby and in combination with fencing. Post and wire fencing is also a common boundary between the fields and these fences are sometimes set along the ridges, making the fencing stand out distinctly against the skyline. Where there are hedgerows or tree belts between fields in the dip slope, the vegetation belts emphasise the undulating nature of the land. While the majority of the large woodland blocks and tracts within the area are recorded as ancient woodland, there are also 78 hectares of new broadleaved woodlands which have been planted by the Woodland Trust at the Hucking Estate. These new plantations are next to areas of managed ash, hornbeam and sweet chestnut coppice with beech and oak standards. There are also four Local Wildlife Sites within the area which were notified in the late 1980's. From west to east these are Steps Hill Wood, Squirrel Wood, Hucking Hill House Wood and Gorham Wood. These woodlands are dark and dense and contain both managed and unmanaged coppice, with especially old hazel stools in Squirrel Wood. Gorham Wood is particularly notable for the rich bryophyte and fungal flora and unusual damp woodlands at

the bottom of a dip slope. Yew is common on the slopes within Gorham Wood and there are also areas of relict chalk grassland with cowslip, hairy violet and wild marjoram, as well as areas where secondary woodland has emerged where the woods were badly damaged during the great storm in 1987. Coppice species within the character area are a mixture of predominantly ash, field maple, hazel, hornbeam and sweet chestnut with mature oak and beech standards in places. The ground flora is also rich, including species such as bluebell, wood anemone and many orchids, including early purple, lady and butterfly. Squirrel Wood also includes areas of heath and acid grassland which includes species typical of these soils, such as heather. The wildlife within the woodlands includes badger, hare, slow worm and numerous bird species. To the north there are also a few arable fields and parkland trees and in the vicinity of Pett Farm there are some relict orchards and equestrian fields with post and rail boundaries. These are not characteristic features of the area as a whole.

5.3 There are few settlements within the area and where they are present they tend to be very small. Hucking Village is the most notable settlement and includes the fine St Margaret's Church built with flint and Kent peg tile roof, and surrounded by a red brick and flint wall. The buildings within the area are largely traditional and include characteristic materials such as red brick, flint and Kent peg tiles. In addition there are some

5. Hucking Dry Valleys



metal and concrete farm sheds, but these are generally quite small compared to sheds in adjacent areas. Some recent and sometimes run down buildings are also found along the A249.

5.4 There are several narrow and winding lanes within the area and in places the lanes are deeply set, particularly within the woodland blocks or belts which often enclose the lanes entirely. Large parts of the area are, however, inaccessible by road, but there are many footpaths within the area and the whole of the Hucking Estate is classed as Open Access Land. The A249 dual carriageway cuts through the north-western fringe. While it is not in keeping with the narrow lanes and rural landscape of the area, the road is well positioned in the bottom of a valley and surrounded by woodland along much of its path. The A249 is therefore not a noticeable feature within most of the area.

Geology, soils and topography

5.5 The characteristic dip slope valley landscape of the character area is formed by the underlying Upper Chalk which comprises the higher ground of the North Downs. Within the dip slopes the Upper Chalk is overlain by large and distinctly finger-shaped deposits of head drift and the soils are shallow, well drained, calcareous and silty, characterised by the chalk pasture, relict grassland and chalk woodlands with yew. In areas where the head drifts are not present, the chalk is not far below ground and there are often areas with

chalk rubble above ground. On the ridges and small plateaus between the dip slopes, the Upper Chalk is overlain by drifts of clay with flints. The soils in these areas are deep fine silts and fine loams with subsoils which often are slowly permeable. It is in these areas with acidic silts and loams that heathland plants are occasionally found.

Views

5.6 Hucking Dry Valleys often feel enclosed due to the extensive amount of tree cover within the area. Views within the woodland blocks are limited, but some more open views are present within areas of pasture, looking up through the valleys where sheep graze. The landform of the dip slope does, however, limit the views to the area within the valleys. Views from the lanes are variable, depending on the height and presence of hedgerows and there are generally few views out of the area. The exceptions are views to the north, looking across to Deans Hill, which falls within Swale, as well as a long view to the Isle of Grain from a viewpoint close to Hucking Church.



5. Hucking Dry Valleys

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

5.7 The combination of the undulating dip slope valleys with pasture, woodlands, hedgerows, winding lanes and small farmsteads forms a unified pattern of elements, which is only slightly interrupted to the north where a few relict orchards, paddocks and arable fields are present. There are very few detracting features within the area. The noisy A249 dual carriageway is the main detractor, but due to the screening created both by the landform and surrounding vegetation, the effect is only local. There are also a few run down buildings, as well as metal and concrete farm sheds present, but these are few and far between and do not cause significant adverse impact. The overall visual unity is therefore very strong. The many woodland blocks and tracts, tree belts, hedgerows and grasslands create an extensive and strong ecological network within the area. In combination with the traditional low intensity of landuse, which is mainly coppicing and grazing, the overall ecological integrity is very strong. Tree cover within the area is extensive and of a good age structure and the field boundaries tend to be in good condition, though some hedges are gappy in places. While the cultural integrity generally is strong, a few features such as the uncharacteristic A249, paddocks and remnant orchards make the overall cultural integrity variable.

Sensitivity

5.8 There are many very distinctive and historic features within Hucking Dry Valleys, including the coppice woodlands, chalk pasture, parkland trees, winding lanes and traditional buildings. The hedgerows and post and wire boundaries are also distinctive, while the arable fields, remnant orchards and paddocks are relatively indistinct. Overall the sense of place within Hucking Dry Valleys is therefore strong. The undulating dip slope landform is an apparent feature which combines with the intermittent tree cover to allow moderate visibility within the area.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

5. Hucking Dry Valleys

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

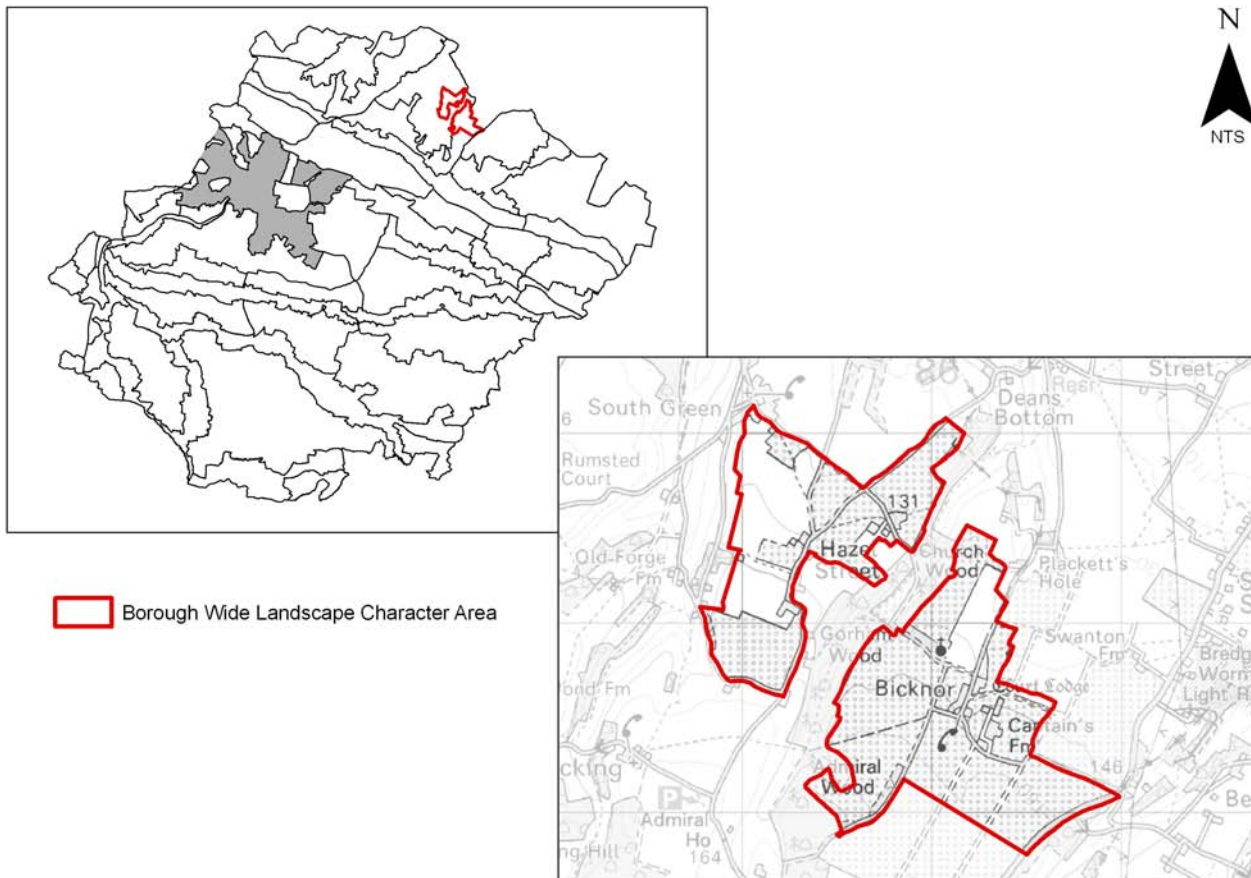


SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Hucking Dry Valleys is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the woodlands, particularly where ancient woodland is present
- Conserve and manage the more recently planted woodlands at the Hucking Estate
- Conserve and enhance the areas of chalk grassland pasture and relict chalk grassland by ensuring that an appropriate sheep grazing regime continues
- Conserve and appropriately manage pockets of dry acid grassland and lowland heathland at Squirrel Wood. Refer to Maidstone's local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Gap up the hedgerows in the few locations where this is needed
- Conserve the parkland trees and plant new specimens to succeed ageing examples
- Conserve and manage the remnant orchards
- Conserve the rural setting to scattered settlements
- Conserve the heritage buildings within the area
- Conserve the narrow and winding lanes



6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Very distinctive grid pattern of cherry and apple orchards
- Bicknor village with its distinctive flint church
- Small farmsteads
- Large fruit storage sheds
- Tall poplar shelterbelts
- Narrow lanes enclosed by tall shelterbelts

Location

6.1 Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards are situated to the north east of Maidstone on the upper plateau of the North Downs within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is split in two by a fairly steep and wooded dip slope valley. The boundaries to the west and east mark a change in the topography and land use from orchards to pasture and small to medium size arable fields, while the boundary to the south of Bicknor marks a change to large arable fields. The northern edge follows the boundary between Maidstone Borough and Swale Borough, which also marks the extent of the study area, but doesn't mark the extent of the orchards or the true character area boundary.

6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

6.2 Rigid lines of apple and cherry trees stand within a very distinctive pattern of orchards laid out in a grid at Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards. In winter the orchards stand bare before the warmer weather of spring comes and transforms the area to a sea of blossom. Tall shelterbelts of predominantly poplar stand between the orchards and along the lanes. Hazel, ivy and leyland cypress are other species found in shelterbelts in some locations. There are also a few arable fields and pasture grazed by sheep within the area, but these are not characteristic of Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards. Field boundaries in the few areas where there are no shelterbelts are post and wire fencing.

6.3 Bicknor village is the largest settlement within the orchards. Other settlements are small farmsteads and there is a mixture of traditional and recent buildings within the area. The traditional buildings include materials such as red and yellow brick, timber framing, weatherboarding, red hung clay tiles and Kent peg tiles. Whilst recent buildings are generally built with materials that are in keeping with this local vernacular style, the large concrete and metal fruit sheds stand in stark contrast to the small traditional buildings. On the outskirts of Bicknor village, St James' Church stands on its own. The church was built using local hard chalk, known as clunch, and is dressed with flint. Both of these building materials are characteristic of the underlying geology.

6.4 Public access within the area is mainly restricted to the narrow and often enclosed lanes. There are also a few public footpaths between the orchards, but the majority of tracks are private and leave large parts of the area inaccessible to the public. There are no engineered roads within the area, reinforcing the rural character of Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards.

Geology, soils and topography

6.5 The solid geology at Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards is the Upper Chalk, which forms a fairly level plateau in this area of the North Downs. This makes the area well suited to orchards. The Upper Chalk is predominantly overlaid by drifts of clay with flints. The soils above the clay are deep fine silts and fine loams with associated slowly permeable subsoils. In addition, there are a few very small pockets of head drift along the boundaries to the surrounding dip slope valleys. To the west of Bicknor, where such deposits are present, there is also a belt of shallow calcareous silty soil.

Views

6.6 The views within Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards are limited due to the many tall shelterbelts and rows of orchard trees. Views out of the area are found along the edges of the orchards, where there are views to adjacent open arable fields and pasture. The feeling of enclosure is particularly dominant during the summer months when the trees are in leaf.

6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

6.7 The pattern of shelterbelts and orchards at Bicknor and Hazel Street is only interrupted by a few arable fields and pasture, which together form a coherent pattern of elements. The only detracting features within the area are the very large concrete and metal fruit storage sheds. These are, however, in keeping with the land use and are only detracting locally since they are generally well screened by shelterbelts. The ecological integrity of the area is moderate, mainly due to the high intensity of land use within the orchards, which are well maintained. Between the orchards, the shelterbelts form a good network, but the species are not necessarily of high ecological value, particularly in places where leyland cypress occurs rather than poplar or hazel. The impact of recent built development within the area is low, since the buildings generally respect the local vernacular style, with the exception of the fruit storage sheds, as mentioned above. While the orchards are a historic feature of the area, the orchard trees are of a similar and fairly recent age. The pattern of orchards is fairly intact, though some orchards have been grubbed up at Bicknor and replaced by arable fields. This weakens the continuity of the orchards and makes the overall cultural integrity of the area variable.

Sensitivity

6.8 Overall the sense of place within Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards is strong, due to the very distinctive pattern of orchards and shelterbelts, although the few arable fields and pasture weaken the sense of place very slightly. The narrow lanes, Bicknor village, small farmsteads and the majority of buildings are also distinctive and the continuity of elements is largely historic. The shelterbelts and orchards make the area feel very enclosed and the landform appears insignificant making the visibility within the area generally very low.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Enclosed
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Very Low

6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

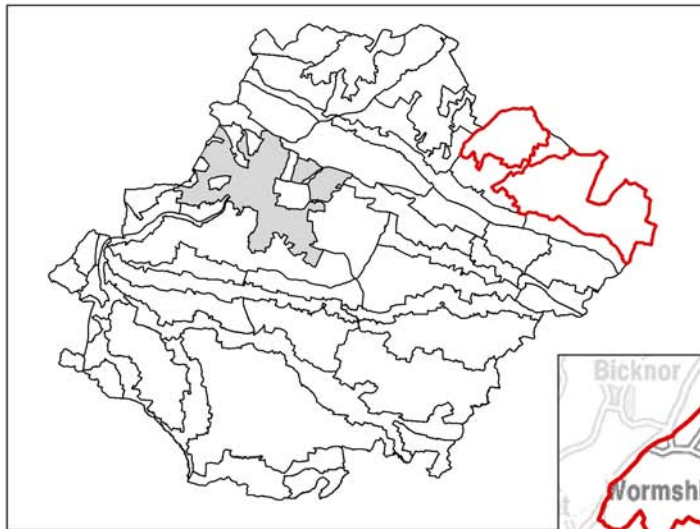
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve and reinforce the very distinctive grid pattern of orchards, by avoiding their permanent loss through grubbing up and ensuring they are managed and replanted as necessary
- Conserve and reinforce the poplar and hazel shelterbelts by ensuring they continue to be well managed and by replanting poplar or hazel where leyland cypress is present
- Conserve and reinforce the rural setting to the settlements
- Conserve the historic settlements and buildings within the area
- Conserve the narrow lanes and avoid road improvements that detract from their character



7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating landform of dry dip slope valleys and ridges
- Many large woodland tracts with oak and ash
- Historic parkland trees in the vicinity of Otterden Place
- Chalk grassland pasture in dip slope valleys
- Arable fields on ridges
- A strong network of species rich native hedgerows
- Estate fencing and flint and red brick walls
- Scattered villages and farmsteads with buildings featuring flint, chalk, red brick and chequered red and grey brick
- Narrow winding lanes which most often are lined by hedgerows

Location

7.1 Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys comprise a series of dry dip slope valleys and ridges to the north east of Maidstone, on the upper plateau of the North Downs within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is bisected by a wide and fairly level ridge between Frinsted and Wichling. Both the northern and far eastern boundaries follow the boundary between Maidstone and Swale Boroughs, creating an artificial division, cutting through woodlands and valleys. To the south the boundary follows a mixture of lanes, paths and field boundaries, which marks a change in topography and field pattern, from undulating and smaller scale, to fairly level and larger scale.

7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

7.2 This is a characteristic chalk dip slope valley landscape. The valley sides and bottoms are typically covered in chalk grassland pasture, which is grazed by predominantly sheep, but also some cows. Where unimproved chalk grassland is present, orchid species include bee, common spotted, fly and fragrant. Cowslip, gentian and wild thyme can also be found. In contrast, the more level ridges are covered with generally small arable cereal fields which extend across some shallower valleys to the east. To the south east there are also some larger arable fields where the upper North Downs plateau levels off as it stretches towards the scarp. The network of hedgerows within the area is generally good, both along lanes and field to field, though the hedges are sometimes a little scrubby in places. Hedgerow species include ash, blackthorn, brambles, dog rose, dogwood, elm, field maple, hazel, holly, sycamore and old man's beard. Other field boundaries tend to be post and rail or post and wire fencing and there are also areas of estate fencing. Significant dark and dense woodland tracts are found within the area, particularly on the steeper slopes. The majority of woodlands are designated ancient woodland, which include both unmanaged coppice stools as well as many areas of managed coppice. Coppiced species typically include ash, hazel, hornbeam and sweet chestnut with oak and beech standards in between. In addition there are also alder, field maple, holly, pines, sycamore and yew within the woodlands and the ground flora includes bluebells and wood anemones.

The great storm in 1987 caused much damage to these woodlands, uprooting many mature trees, including beech and yew. These have predominantly been replanted with beech, making the yews, which are so distinctive of the local calcareous soils, more rare. Near Wormshill, Frinsted, Wichling and Payden Street there are also several designated Local Wildlife Sites, comprising mosaics of chalk grasslands, chalk scrub and ancient woodlands, as described above. These sites were generally first notified in the mid eighties. At Endings Wood near Wichling there is also a long and narrow disused chalk pit with a habitat which supports many invertebrates. A few small apple orchards are scattered through the area, and the odd field has been fenced off for equestrian grazing, but these are not typical features of the area.

7.3 The villages and farmsteads that are scattered within the area are generally situated on the ridges or in the bottom of valleys, where the land is not too steep. Because the settlements are generally very small the landscape retains a remote character, despite the large number of settlements within the area. The settlements incorporate predominantly vernacular buildings with materials such as flint, red brick and chequered red and grey brick. Chalk is also a more unusual building material found within the area. At Wormshill, there is a small Conservation Area, which incorporates distinctive flint walls with red brick coping, estate fencing and a traditional red pillar box

7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys



and telephone box. Buildings of particular note include St. Giles Church, which is a Norman flint church, the Blacksmith's Arms public house and the grade II listed former post office building, which is believed to be one of the buildings in the country. White weatherboarding, red brick and Kent peg tiles are distinctive materials found within the village. Immediately to the south of the Wormshill Conservation Area there is a more recent cluster of buildings featuring some sympathetic materials, such as red brick and white weatherboarding, as well as uncharacteristic materials, such as concrete roof tiles and hung tiles. Overall the development looks out of place next to the Conservation Area. Beyond Wormshill there are also small pockets of recent development, including many red brick bungalows, but the majority of buildings are traditional. Farm sheds within the farmsteads are generally small scale and built from timber, but there are also some more recent larger, metal and concrete sheds which look out of keeping with the local vernacular style. Frinsted is another notable village, with a fine flint church surrounded by a flint and red brick wall. Traditional buildings within Frinsted feature a distinctive pattern of chequered red and grey brick, with painted white or yellow brick details around windows and doors and on corners. Many of these buildings of a similar design appear to be Victorian estate cottages. To the east the grade II* listed Otterden Place, a brick Tudor manor house, is a significant landmark, surrounded by fields with mature parkland trees including cedar, horse chestnut, larch and oak. As part of the group listing, a fine and unusual Georgian church sits within the grounds of Otterden Place.

7.4 The area is largely accessible with many public footpaths and bridleways crisscrossing the area, in addition to the narrow winding lanes which make their way along the valley bottoms or upper ridges. The lack of engineered roads within the area adds to the remote character of Wormshill to Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys.

Geology, soils and topography

7.5 This is a distinctive, undulating, dip slope valley landscape situated on the upper North Downs plateau, which predominantly is formed by the Upper Chalk. The ridges and more level areas towards the south tend to be overlaid by widespread drifts of clay with flints and the soils in these areas are deep fine silts and fine loams with subsoils which often are slowly permeable. On the lower ground of the valleys near Wichling, ribbons of Middle Chalk cut through the Upper Chalk. There are also significant drifts of head within the dip slope valleys and the soils in the valleys are shallow well drained calcareous silty soils characterised by the chalk grasslands and woodlands.

Views

7.6 The dip slope valleys tend to feel enclosed, both due to the nature of the topography, as well as the enclosure of the many mature woodlands within the valleys or on the ridges. Views within the valleys are sometimes dramatic, where the valley sides are steeper, and views up through the valleys tend to be of the chalk grasslands or arable fields, where these are present. Some views also include tall electricity pylons which look alien in the remote and rural landscape, although the backdrop of trees tends to reduce the impact of the pylons. The lanes are generally lined by hedges which add to the feeling of enclosure. On the ridges, there are slightly more open views across the arable fields, but due to the many hedgerows and surrounding trees, these views are generally not very long. There are, however, exceptions at high points to the north, where there are views to the Isle of Grain on clear days. Due to the significant amount of broadleaved trees, the area appears slightly less enclosed in winter due to leaf loss.

7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

7.7 The pattern of arable fields, chalk grassland pasture, woodland tracts and scattered settlements form a coherent pattern. There are few visual detractors, mainly being a line of tall electricity pylons which cut through the area. There are also a few run down farm sheds within the area, but these generally add to the remote feeling of the landscape. While the intensity of land use is variable, ranging from high intensity arable fields, to low intensity grazing, the ecological integrity is generally strong, due to the well-knit network of hedgerows and woodlands, as well as the valuable unimproved chalk grasslands. The woodlands and orchards create large blocks of tree cover with a generally good age structure within the woodlands, though many ancient trees were uprooted during the storm in 1987. Hedgerow boundaries are predominantly intact, but sometimes slightly scrubby, and there is a mixture of post and rail, post and wire and estate fencing. The fences are generally in good condition, although estate fencing in a few locations would benefit from some maintenance. While recently built developments sometimes are built with similar materials to the existing traditional buildings, there are several recent buildings, such as bungalows, that are not in keeping with the local vernacular style. These buildings are often well screened by vegetation and therefore cause only a moderate impact on the sense of place.

Sensitivity

7.8 There is a moderate sense of place arising from a range of very distinct to distinctive features and a largely historic continuity of the landscape. The woodlands, hedgerow network, winding lanes and traditional buildings are all very distinctive features, and the chalk grasslands pasture, arable fields, parkland trees and scattered nature of settlements are also distinct. The apparent dip slope valley landscape is gently undulating, creating areas where visibility is limited by the landform itself. Although there are many significant blocks of trees within the area, tree cover is overall intermittent. Together the landform and tree cover combine to allow moderate visibility within the area.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Good	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys

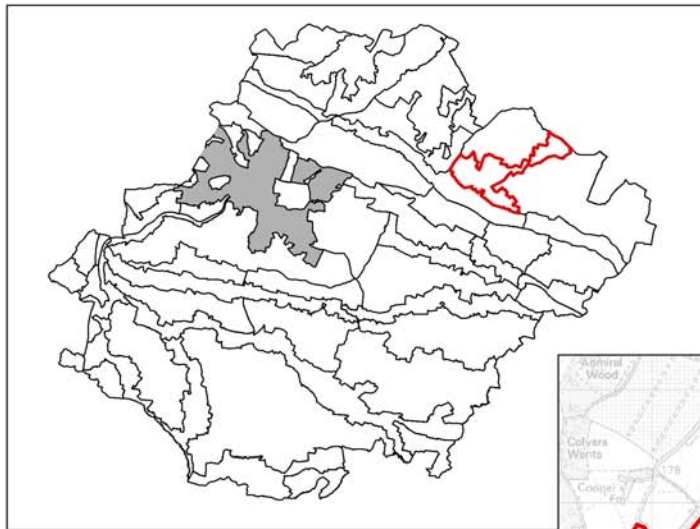
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

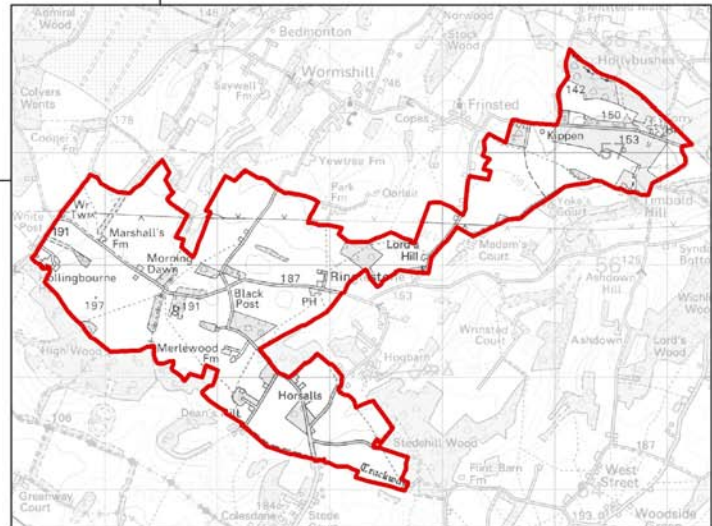


- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Wormshill to Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the historic parkland associated with Otterden Place
- Conserve and reinforce the large tracts of woodland, especially where ancient woodland is present
- Reinforce the management of historical coppice, by encouraging management of areas of unmanaged coppice stools
- Conserve the areas of unimproved chalk grassland and reinforce the management of chalk grassland generally, by ensuring that grazing is continued
- Conserve the good network of hedgerows and reinforce the management of hedgerows where they are particularly scrubby
- Conserve and improve the management of estate fencing
- Conserve and reinforce the rural and remote setting of scattered historical settlements
- Conserve the historical buildings and features within Wormshill Conservation Area, as well as the wider area, including the flint and red brick walls, the red pillar box and phone box
- Conserve the narrow winding lanes

8. Ringlestone Downs



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Medium size arable farmlands on fairly level landform
- Pasture for sheep with parkland trees near Torry Hill Park
- Small woodland belts and blocks
- Network of native hedgerows which sometimes feature hedgerow trees
- Narrow lanes that tend to be lined by tall hedges
- Ringlestone hamlet and small scattered farmsteads
- Vernacular buildings with flint, chequered red and grey brick, yellow brick detailing, red brick, white weatherboarding and Kent peg tiles
- Flint walls and estate fencing

Location

8.1 Ringlestone Downs are arable farmlands situated to the north east of Maidstone, on the upper plateau of the North Downs within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The fairly level farmlands are situated between two series of dip slope valleys to the north and south east. The south western boundary follows the top of the North Downs scarp, marking a change in the topography, while the north western boundary marks a change in tree cover and field pattern from medium to large scale fields. To the north west the boundary between Maidstone and Swale Borough marks the extent of the character area and study area, which creates an artificial boundary.

8. Ringlestone Downs



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

8.2 At Ringlestone Downs medium size arable cereal fields are subdivided by native hedgerows and belts of woodland. There are also several small woodland blocks within the area, including three blocks of ancient woodland close to Ringlestone hamlet. The woodlands are dark and dense and sometimes enclose the narrow lanes that wind through the area, creating vegetated tunnels. Woodland species include beech and chestnut. Coppicing is a traditional practice in the area, which is carried on within the woodlands close to the landscape of Torry Hill Park, where chestnut paling is produced. The hedgerows are often tall, sometimes scrubby and in parts mature oaks stand proud within the hedgerows. Native hedgerow species within the area include field maple, hazel and honeysuckle. In the far northern corner of the area, Torry Hill Park is surrounded by blocks of trees as well as pasture where sheep graze. The open parkland landscape is interspersed with many fine, mature and veteran trees, including oaks and pines as well as wellingtonia and cedar. Field boundaries within the area are generally hedgerows, but in the areas of pasture both post and rail or post and wire fencing is common.

8.3 Settlements within Ringlestone Downs are predominantly scattered small farmsteads. One of the most notable settlements, Ringlestone hamlet includes some fine vernacular buildings, including the Ringlestone Inn. Flint and red

brick walls are also found within the surrounding area. Traditional building materials include flint, chequered red and grey brick, red brick, white weatherboarding and Kent peg tiles. Close to Frinsted there is a distinctive row of terraced houses featuring chequered red and grey brick, with yellow brick detailing around windows and doors and on corners. There are generally few recent buildings within the area, but some historical properties have been sympathetically extended with materials similar to those originally used. Torry Hill is a particularly noteworthy farmstead hidden between tall trees, with large silos and a mixture of more recent metal farm sheds and historical red brick and black weather-boarded farm buildings side by side. A fine white clock-tower is a feature of one of these historical farm buildings and large formal gardens, very well maintained estate fencing and a distinctive round field for longbow archery shoots is also found on the estate which dates back to around 1840.



8. Ringlestone Downs



8.4 Much of Ringlestone Downs is only accessible by foot along the many footpaths and tracks that weave between the arable fields, but there are also some very distinctive narrow lanes within the area. The lanes tend to be lined by hedgerows or scrub and trees, which create vegetated tunnels in places. Ringlestone Road is also fairly deeply set along some stretches. There are no engineered roads within the area which ensures that the area retains a rural and remote character.

Geology, soils and topography

8.5 Ringlestone Downs sits upon the Upper Chalk, which forms a high and fairly level plateau in this part of the North Downs. The Upper Chalk is largely overlaid by drifts of clay with flints, which has given rise to the traditional buildings and walls that feature flint within the area. The soils above the clay are deep fine silts and fine loams with subsoils which often are slowly permeable. There are also some drifts of head within the area, in locations close to where the dip slope valleys to the east and west emerge. To the south a pocket of shallow calcareous silty soil is present above the head drift, but otherwise the deep fine silts and fine loams carry on throughout the area.

Views

8.6 Although Ringlestone Downs is situated on a high plateau, views are restricted to the farmlands within the area. This is due to the many tree belts and blocks, not only between the fields, but also within the dip slope valley landscape and scarp which surround the area. Views from the lanes are also in many cases

restricted due to the hedgerows being very high in places, but where there are views, these are often fairly wide. Although the views across the arable fields retain a rural character, there are stretches where tall electricity pylons are present. These are often set against the skyline and therefore highly visible. There is also a tall water-tower next to the junction where the B2163 and Ringlestone Road meet, which can be seen in views towards this south western corner. Although the tower is very tall, it is set against a backdrop of tall and mature trees, including fine pines, which makes the structure less conspicuous.



8. Ringlestone Downs

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

8.7 The arable fields are irregular in shape and form a recognisable pattern of slightly larger fields to the south west and medium size fields within the remainder of the area, except for the northernmost corner where the traditional pasture with parkland trees is still intact. Together with the hedgerows and woodland blocks and belts, the arable fields and pasture form a coherent pattern. There are very few visual detractors within the area, largely comprising the tall electricity pylons. A tall water tower is located to the south west which could be considered as slightly detracting, although conversely it could be considered as a distinctive landmark feature. At Torry Hill Park the metal silos are also a slightly detracting feature, but because the silos are well hidden amongst trees, the impact of these is low.

8.8 The intensity of land use is generally high within the area, with the exception of the pasture which is grazed by sheep. The small woodlands, many hedgerows and tree belts create a moderate ecological network between the arable fields, but tend to be missing in the vicinity of the pasture, where field boundaries are well maintained post and rail fencing or post and wire fencing. Overall the ecological integrity is therefore moderate. The cultural integrity of the landscape is particularly good in the northern area, where both coppicing and sheep grazing continues and there are features such as mature parkland trees and well maintained estate fencing. The age structure of trees within the area tends to be mixed, with the exception of the parkland trees. There is little recent built development within the area apart from the electricity pylons and a few metal farm sheds, which only cause moderate impact to the sense of place within the area.

Sensitivity

8.9 The continuity of the landscape is historic, and very distinctive features within the area include the pasture with parkland trees and historic buildings. These elements combine with the distinctive woodlands, hedgerows, field boundaries and settlements, to give Ringlestone Downs a moderate sense of place. The landform is apparent and fairly level to very gently sloping towards the north. Tree cover within the area is intermittent giving the area moderate visibility.



8. Ringlestone Downs

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

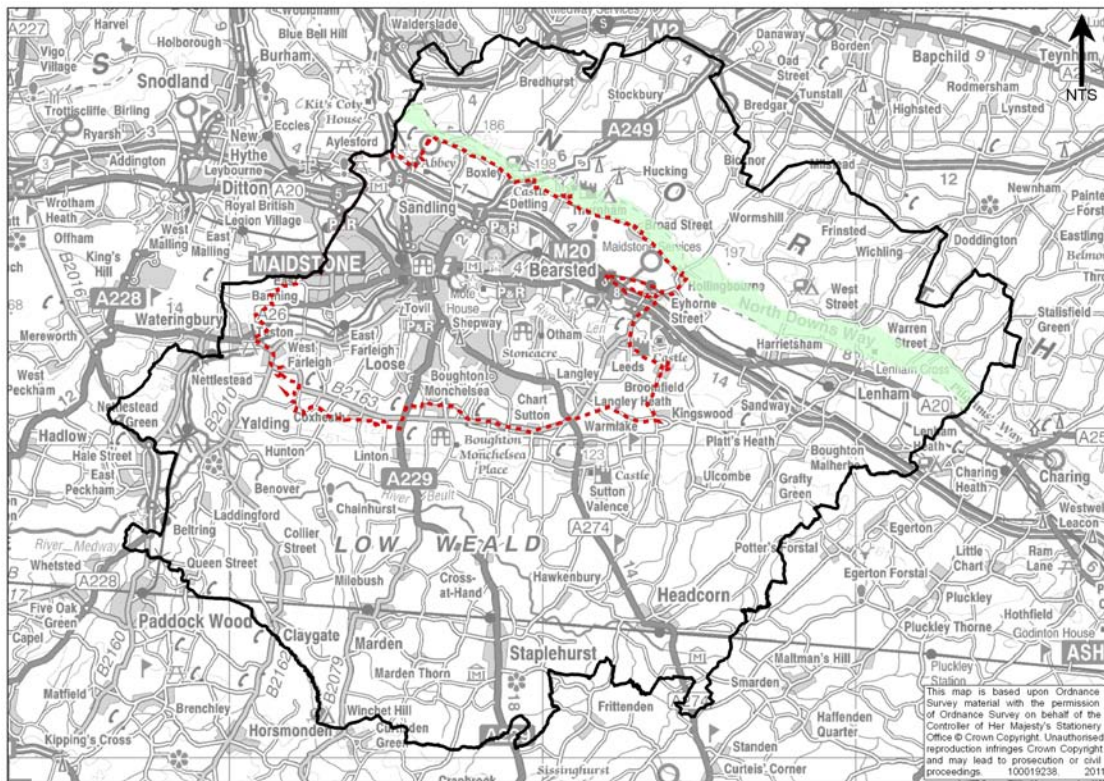
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Dry Valleys and Downs
- Ringlestone Downs is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve and reinforce the small woodland blocks and belts within the area, particularly where ancient woodland is present
- Conserve and reinforce management of historical coppice
- Conserve the pasture and parkland trees in the vicinity of Torry Hill Park and plant new parkland trees to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve and reinforce the pattern of hedgerows as well as hedgerow trees, by planting new oak standards to replace mature specimens
- Conserve the historical buildings and rural setting to the historical settlements within the area
- Conserve estate fencing and flint walls
- Conserve the narrow winding lanes and their enclosed nature where this is present



Chalk Scarp Landscapes: introduction



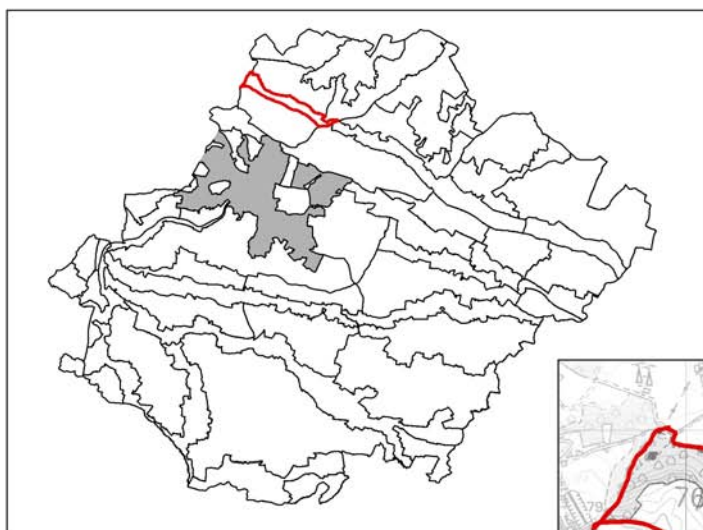
This landscape forms part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which offers a high level of development constraint. Policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. The steep chalk escarpment of the North Downs is a striking and dramatic landscape feature that is incised by a number of dry valleys. It is the strong topography and the open expanses of rolling downland that characterise this landscape. Much of the scarp landscape has remained undeveloped because of the steep topography, and it consequently has a remote and isolated character. There are few roads which comprise sunken, narrow, species rich hedge lined lanes that scale the scarp in a south west to north east direction, often following old drove roads and adding to the secluded and unspoilt character. The distinctive Pilgrim's Way follows the contours along the foot of the scarp, sheltered from the exposed ridge and above the heavy clay soils to the south. The elevated topography gives extensive views across the Gault Clay Vale and the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge to the south, and conversely the scarp is visually prominent in views from the south. The land use comprises a few pockets of traditional unimproved chalk grassland, but it is largely dominated by large arable fields. Woodland and shaws are often characteristic of the ridge top, and woodland contains a typical mix including much yew, oak and whitebeam.

Chalk Scarp Landscapes: generic guidelines

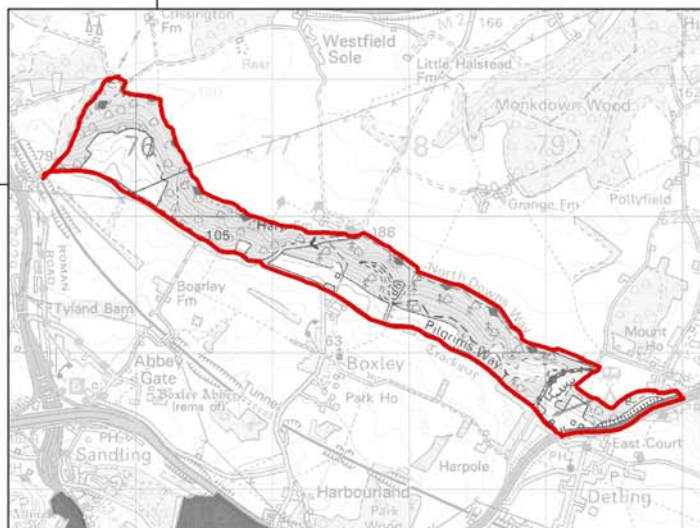
- This landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009–2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve and strengthen the vegetation belt along the Pilgrim's Way near the foot of the scarp
- Conserve and enhance the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Avoid the use of single species hedgerows and shelterbelts within this landscape, where species rich hedgerows are so prevalent
- Where possible, woodland habitats should be increased and the historic hedgerow network should be reinstated. Woodlands should be linked through replacing post and wire fences with species rich hedgerows
- Promote conversion of arable areas back to pasture or species rich chalk downland
- Encourage extensive grazing regimes that are appropriate for the long term management of chalk grassland, and to restore grassland present to semi-improved and ultimately unimproved grassland
- Conserve and enhance unimproved or semi-improved chalk grassland for its rare flora and habitat for a wide range of invertebrates and other fauna
- Encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to increase invertebrates and farmland bird communities
- Encourage extensive grassland and crop management by use of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship grants
- Conserve the largely undeveloped character of the scarp
- Consider views towards any proposals on the exposed and elevated scarp from the landscape to the south



9. Boxley Scarp



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Distinctly undulating upper North Downs scarp
- Long belt of chalk woodland (including many ancient yews) along the top of the scarp
- Deeply set lane with exposed chalk sides
- Species rich chalk grassland
- Small blocks of pasture close to Pilgrim's Way
- Lack of settlement
- The narrow and winding Pilgrim's Way, which is partly track to the west and lane to the east
- The North Downs Way National Trail

Location

9.1 Boxley Scarp is situated to the north of Maidstone within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The distinct undulations of the upper North Downs scarp, which is covered in dense chalk woodland at the scarp edge, characterise this largely unsettled area. The northern boundary marks the very top of the scarp and a change from dense woodland to large level arable fields, while the eastern boundary follows the A249, marking a change in the woodland cover of the scarp. The southern boundary follows the distinctive and historical Pilgrim's Way, which marks a change from the upper to lower scarp, and finally the district boundary to Tonbridge and Malling marks the extent of the area to the west.

9. Boxley Scarp



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

9.2 Boxley Wood is a dominating feature of Boxley Scarp and covers most of the distinctly undulating chalk landform in a large belt of dense woodland. The woodlands include key species such as beech and numerous mature yews, as well as ash, field maple, hawthorn, oak and whitebeam. All of Boxley Wood is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as well as a Special Area of Conservation and contains a large block of ancient woodland to the east of Lidsing Road. Lower down the scarp towards the Pilgrim's Way, there are blocks of chalk grassland. The Lynch, is a SSSI with species rich chalk grassland managed by grazing. Other grassland is used as paddocks and is not as rich in wildflowers. To the west of Lidsing Road is an area known as Boxley Warren, a Local Nature Reserve and partly SSSI, comprising both chalk woodland and grassland. Within this area there are rare plant species such as orchids, stinking hellebores and meadow clary. Initiatives to restore native box 'Buxus sempervirens' are currently being undertaken here and the Lynch bank at Detling to the east, utilising cuttings grown on 'wild' relic populations persisting at Boxley Wood. Adders bask on the south facing scarp and buzzards, kestrels and sparrowhawks, feed on the many rabbits in the area. Hedgerows are not typical of the area and field boundaries are indistinct, marked by post, wire and electric fencing. The propagation of small leaved lime from the few remaining trees at the foot of the scarp, and the reintroduction of native juniper from surviving plantations to the west of the area are in progress.

9.3 Due to the steep and distinctly undulating landform, the scarp has historically been unsettled. This is still the case today, with the exception of Boxley Timber and Fencing Suppliers, located close to Boxley village, as well as a few houses next to the A249, all of which are fairly recent additions featuring render and red brick.

9.4 The Pilgrim's Way runs along the top of the scarp foot. Between the A249 and Lidsing Road is a narrow winding lane with passing places, which turns into a trackway from Lidsing Road onwards. Lidsing Road itself is a deeply set engineered road which is enclosed by woodland as it winds its way up through the steep scarp. Exposed chalk on the high sides is a distinctive feature and there are many mature yews along the road, giving the road a strong sense of place. Chalk quarrying is evident, particularly towards the south east near Detling. At the top of the scarp, the North Downs Way National Trail predominantly follows the edge of Boxley Wood. There is also an area of Open Access Land at the Lynch, as well as a few other public rights of way which follow old drove routes and make their way up to the top of the scarp. The A249 dual carriageway, at the eastern boundary, starkly contrasts with all of these smaller roads, lanes, tracks and paths.

Geology, soils and topography

9.5 The geology of Boxley Scarp consists predominantly of the Upper Chalk at the top of the scarp and the Middle Chalk just below.

9. Boxley Scarp

The chalk forms distinct and often steep undulations and is characterised by distinctive chalk woodlands and grasslands. In some areas the chalk is exposed, including the pit by the Lynch as well as at the verges along Lidsing Road. The chalk is predominantly overlain by a band of shallow, but well drained calcareous silty soils. In the lower part of the scarp, close to the Pilgrim's Way, there are also areas where the Lower Chalk and a thin band of Melbourne Rock are found. The soils along the Pilgrim's Way are often calcareous fine silty soils and chalk rubble may also occur. At the top of the scarp, above the Upper Chalk, there are drifts of clay with flints and some occurrences of deeper fine silts or loams above clay with slowly permeable sub

soils, which cause slight seasonal water logging. Pockets of head drift appear throughout the area.

Views

9.6 From the lower parts of the upper scarp, where there is open grassland, there are wide views to Boxley, Maidstone and the opposite valley side, as well as views along the scarp and pasture to the woodlands. In the higher part of the scarp, within Boxley Wood, the views are, however, limited due to the dense tree cover. During the winter, when the predominantly broadleaved trees within the woodlands lose their leaves, views out of the area would be slightly more extensive.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition	Sensitivity
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9.7 The distinctly undulating topography of the scarp, which is covered in predominantly chalk woodlands as well as areas of pasture and species rich chalk grassland, forms a unified pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors within the area, including the A249 dual carriageway and associated barriers as well as the few recent buildings which are not in keeping with the local vernacular style, but these are well hidden within the vegetation and do not therefore cause any significant impact. The ecological integrity is strong, with both chalk woodland and grasslands which form a strong network. The intensity of land use within the area is very low, and is predominantly grazing and woodland. The cultural integrity is good, featuring a large block of ancient woodland within Boxley Wood which generally incorporates a mixed age structure. Field boundaries are not a distinctive feature of the area and are of variable condition.

9.8 The sense of place within Boxley Scarp is strong, due to the very distinctive combination of the undulating upper scarp, chalk woodland and grassland. The geology contributes significantly to these elements and is particularly distinctive along Lidsing Road and at the pit close to the Lynch, where the underlying chalk is exposed. The remaining network of winding lanes, tracks and paths are also very distinctive, including the North Downs National Trail which runs between Farnham and Canterbury. Visibility is moderate, due to the limited views within the dense woodlands, but there are wide open views along the pasture.



9. Boxley Scarp

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Enclosed
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

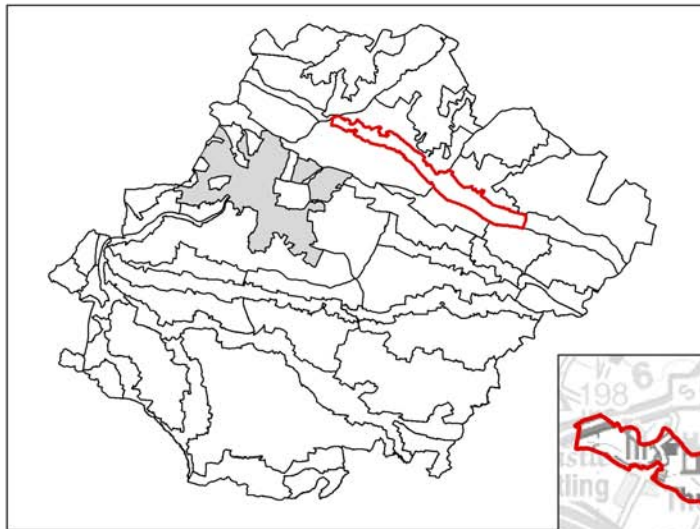
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider generic guidelines for Chalk Scarp Landscapes
- Boxley Scarp is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the distinctly undulating landform of the upper scarp
- Conserve and enhance the chalk woodlands, especially where ancient woodland occurs
- Conserve and enhance the areas of species rich grassland by ensuring that grazing continues and encourage species diversity in less rich areas of pasture
- Aim to restore semi natural corridors to adjacent areas of semi natural habitat, and prevent this area from becoming isolated by infrastructure and intensive arable farmland
- Conserve the largely unsettled landscape of the scarp
- Conserve the Pilgrim's Way, the North Downs Way and other winding tracks and roads

10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Distinctly gently undulating and steep upper North Downs scarp
- Narrow belts of chalk woodland follow most of the top of the scarp and widens to larger blocks of woodland north east of Hollingbourne village
- Chalk grassland pasture on the higher ground of the upper scarp, particularly at Thurnham
- Lack of settlement, particularly at the steepest part of the scarp
- Traditional chequered red and grey brick buildings as well as characteristic flint and red brick walls within Harrietsham scarp
- Deeply set lanes enclosed by vegetation
- The narrow and winding ancient lane and trackway, Pilgrim's Way

Location

10.1 Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp falls within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is situated to the northeast of Maidstone. The scarp is particularly steep and distinctly undulating within Thurnham and Hollingbourne, while the undulations become gentler towards Harrietsham. The northern boundary follows the very top of the scarp, which largely is marked by belts of woodland, and indicates a change in topography from steep to level. To the east, the character area boundary follows a lane to Hilltop, marking a change in the steepness and undulations of the scarp, while the southern boundary follows the ancient Pilgrim's Way, which broadly follows the top of the scarp foot, located between the Lower and Middle Chalk. The western boundary follows the A249 and indicates a change in the woodland cover of the scarp.

10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

10.2 The distinctly undulating upper North Downs scarp to the west of Hollingbourne Hill is generally dominated by chalk grassland pasture on the higher ground and arable fields closer to Pilgrim's Way. The top edge of the scarp in this part is marked by narrow belts of woodlands, while the field boundaries which mark the extent of the pasture often are marked by gappy and scrubby hedgerows with mature hawthorn and field maple standards in combination with post and wire fencing. To the east of Hollingbourne Hill, High Wood and Salisbury Wood form a large block of chalk woodland. From this point and moving east, the topography gradually becomes less undulating and this is apparent in the pattern of sweeping, open arable cereal fields which reach up much higher into the scarp than at Thurnham. These fields are divided by native hedgerows which run along and against the contours to form a distinctive and regular pattern. Mature ash, beech and oak stand proud within some of these hedgerows, which contain a noticeable amount of evergreen holly. Species within the woodland belts, which in many cases would have been coppiced historically, include ash, beech, field maple, hawthorn, hazel and sweet chestnut. A small Local Wildlife Site is located on Hollingbourne Hill. The site was first notified in 1986 and contains species diverse chalk grassland. Either side of the Local Wildlife Site, Eden's Hole and High Wood forms the large Hollingbourne Downs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which first was notified in 1968 for habitats characteristic of calcareous soils, including unimproved chalk grassland and beech woodland with oak and ash. To the west of Hollingbourne Hill, within the SSSI, there

is a disused chalk pit where yew and whitebeam have established. There are also several narrow disused chalk workings, known as deneholes, within the area. Rare plants within the SSSI include chalk milkwort, mat-grass fescue, musk and man orchids. Parts of High Wood, Salisbury Wood and Mile Hill woodlands are also recorded as ancient woodlands. The woodland is dark and dense, with thick groups of sweet chestnut coppice and evergreen pines intermingled with broadleaf species.

10.3 Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp is largely unsettled due to the very steep topography of the scarp, but incorporates a few small farmsteads in the less steep parts of the area. Of particular note, Stede Court and Coles Dane comprise impressive properties and grounds, with grand entrance gates. Chequered red and grey brick is particularly characteristic of these buildings and there is also a noticeable amount of flint within walls. To the north, Flint Lane is reflective of the underlying geology.

10.4 The only historical settlement along Thurnham Scarp is the remains of Thurnham Castle, a Norman motte and bailey fortification which is a designated Scheduled Monument. The castle is located at the top of the scarp. Today only the motte, ditches and flint walls from the keep and bailey remain. The castle and area surrounding it is also a designated Local Wildlife Site. The flora comprises chalk scrub with associated lichens, liverworts, mosses and ferns, chalk grassland including fragrant and common spotted orchids, historic ash coppice within a derelict

10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp



chalk quarry and lichens that are specific to Kent, found on the castle remains.

10.5 The landscape is largely inaccessible by road, although there are a few enclosed lanes which run characteristically against or along the contours of the scarp. The lanes are often deeply set with high banks covered in ivy and enclosed by trees which create vegetated tunnels. There are also numerous trackways and public footpaths, which like the lanes, make their way up to the top of the scarp, following old drove ways. The ancient Pilgrim's Way runs along the bottom of the upper scarp, partly used as a highway and partly as a non vehicular track. Its route is defined by a fragmented ribbon of vegetation, running along the contours of the lower slopes. To the west, the North Downs Way National Trail/Long Distance Route roughly follows the top of the scarp, offering walkers views across the chalk grasslands and the opposite valley side. At Hollingbourne, the trail makes its way down the scarp and joins the track of the Pilgrim's Way. There are also two areas of Open Access Land within the area, at Eden's Hole and Gorse Tor Farm.

Geology, soils and topography

10.6 The underlying solid geology at Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp is formed by bands of the Upper, Middle and Lower Chalk, with a thin strip of Melbourn Rock between the Middle and Lower Chalk. The

Lower Chalk forms the gentle undulations of the scarp foot close to the Pilgrim's Way. The soils above the Lower Chalk tend to be well drained calcareous fine silty soils. Higher up, the Middle Chalk forms the distinctly rolling undulations in the steepest part of the scarp. The Middle Chalk is generally overlain by shallow, but well drained calcareous silty soils which are characterised by chalk grassland and woodland belts. Finally, above the Middle Chalk, where the scarp curves off to form the North Downs upper plateau, the Upper Chalk is present. There are also small pockets of head drift and larger drifts of clay with flints on the higher ground where the scarp becomes less steep, particularly to the east. The soils in this area tend to be deep fine silts or loams with slowly permeable subsoils which cause slight seasonal water logging.

Views

10.7 Thurnham Castle is a historic vantage point which is highly valued locally and provides panoramic views of the valley below. While there are many wide open views within the character area, the views from the lanes are generally severely restricted, particularly in the summer, due to the surrounding dense enclosure of vegetation. Views within the woodland belts are also restricted in the summer, but due to the predominance of broadleaved trees, visibility is improved in the winter. From some sections of public rights of way which are unenclosed, such as the section of the Pilgrim's Way to the east of Hollingbourne Hill, dramatic views of the upper North Downs scarp unfold. There are also wide open views from the North Downs Way National Trail/Long Distance Route where it makes its way along the scarp, with spectacular views out of the area to Thurnham and Hollingbourne Vale, and beyond to the urban edge of Maidstone, where the landscape dips to accommodate the River Len and then rises again to form the Greensand Ridge. These longer views feature an irregular patchwork of arable fields and blocks of woodland.

10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

10.8 Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp is a simple landscape, comprising the distinctly gently undulating landform of the North Downs scarp, which is covered in woodland belts at the top of the scarp, followed by chalk grassland pasture on the steepest part of the scarp and, finally, arable fields where the gentler scarp foot unfolds. These elements combine to form a coherent pattern. The only visual detractors within the area are the masts at Lower Deans Farm, field segregation for equestrian grazing close to Stede Court and the tall electricity pylons which are positioned within the western part of the scarp. Because these electricity pylons are viewed against the scarp, rather than against the sky, they are not very detracting. The ecological integrity is strong, particularly within the SSSI. The chalk grassland pasture, woodlands, and hedgerows, which surround most of the arable fields, form a strong network throughout most of the area, particularly on the steeper scarp, where the intensity of land use is low. The cultural integrity is good with Thurnham Castle and the disused chalk workings at Hollingbourne contributing significantly to the cultural heritage of the area. The woodland belts at the top of the scarp and trees, along the lanes and in scrubby hedgerows, provide a good age structure. Field boundaries, other than hedges, are not a distinctive feature of the area, but where present are generally in good condition. The few scattered settlements generally respect local vernacular and contribute to the sense of place.

Sensitivity

10.9 Overall there is a strong sense of place within Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp, which is primarily provided by the dramatic downland topography. The very distinct pattern of woodlands, chalk grassland, arable fields, hedgerows with trees and winding lanes and trackways is dictated by the topography. Ancient features such as Pilgrim's Way, Thurnham Castle and the disused chalk pit and deneholes add a historic time depth to the landscape which enforces the strong sense of place. Tree cover within the area is intermittent, with dense cover along lanes and at the top of the scarp, but the often steep and dominating North Downs landform ensures that the visibility is high.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	High

10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp

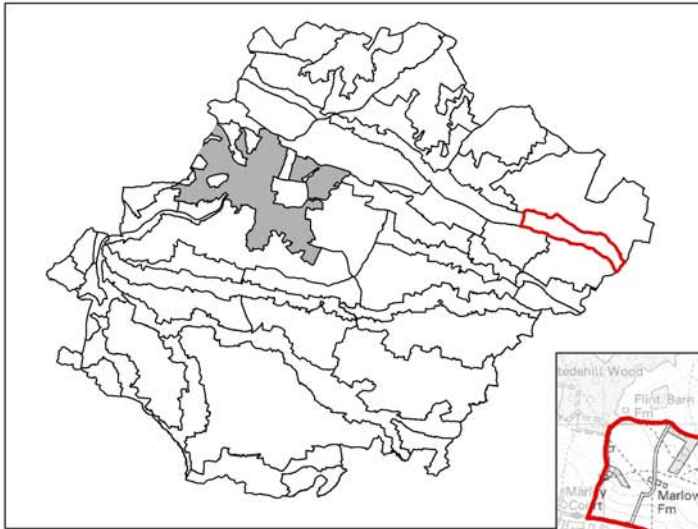
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

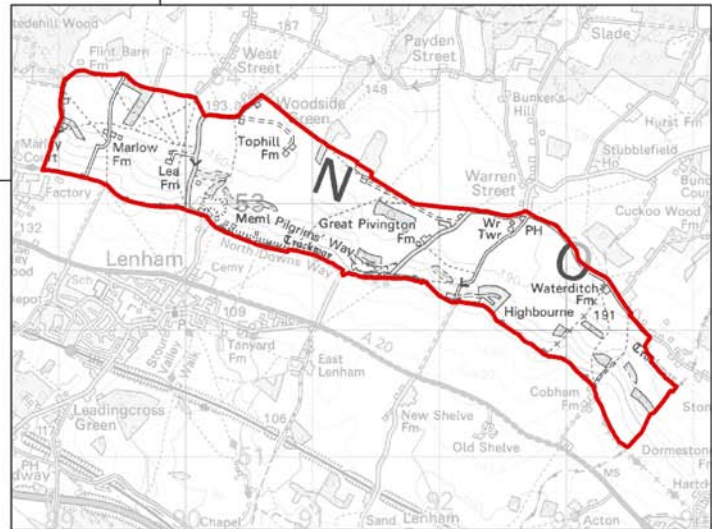
- Consider the generic guidelines for Chalk Scarp Landscapes
- Thurnham Scarp is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve and enhance the chalk woodland belts and blocks, particularly within the SSSI
- Conserve and enhance the chalk scrub which includes yew and whitebeam within the disused chalk pit in the SSSI
- Plant new oak, ash and beech standards in hedgerows, to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve and enhance the areas of species rich chalk grassland by ensuring appropriate and non intensive grazing regimes
- Conserve the largely unsettled landscape of the scarp
- Conserve the spectacular, open and rural views from the North Downs Way National Trail/Long Distance Route
- Conserve the few traditional buildings within the area
- Conserve the rural views from, and setting of, Thurnham Castle
- Conserve the narrow and enclosed lanes



11. Lenham Scarp



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of the steep scarp of the North Downs, and is situated within the Kent Downs AONB
- Open views across the landscape to the south
- Large, open arable fields and a strong sense of exposure
- Small fragments of broadleaved woodland
- Isolated farmsteads and clusters of properties
- Narrow lanes run across and along contours

Location

11.1 Lenham Scarp lies to the far east of Maidstone. The landscape comprises part of the scarp face of the North Downs, which is situated within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Pilgrim's Way forms the southern boundary, and the northern boundary follows field boundaries and narrow lanes across the top of the scarp. To the west, the scarp face becomes steeper and winds its way along the edge of the Downs forming a series of dry valleys. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the east may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

11. Lenham Scarp



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

11.2 Large and exposed arable fields rise steeply to the north across the scarp of the North Downs. To the north of Lenham, a distinctive chalk cross is carved into the scarp slopes of the North Downs. Constructed in 1922 to remember those who fell in the First World War, the cross now commemorates the dead of both World Wars. To prevent its use as a navigation aid by the Luftwaffe, the cross was infilled between 1939 and 1945.

11.3 Whilst this is largely an open arable landscape there are patches of more enclosed, grazed pasture around farmsteads and west of Hubbards Hill on a previous chalk quarry. This former chalk quarry and subsequent landfill site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological interest and its importance as a chalk wildlife habitat. There is very little tree cover, with clumps of trees providing shelter for clustered properties and isolated farmsteads. Minor pockets of broadleaf woodland are scattered widely, and some of this woodland is ancient. Native hedgerows sometimes divide the large fields, but these are sometimes sparse or lacking.

11.4 There is an insignificant amount of built development, enhancing the open character of the Downs. Several isolated farms are scattered across the landscape, often situated at the top of the scarp. West of Rayners Hill, some large modern semi

detached properties afford wide views across the landscape to the south. A further recent small residential development, comprising large detached properties, has occurred east of Rayners Hill. Here, the buildings reflect local materials and styles with the use of timber frame and flint, although the development is not widely visible because it is well screened by surrounding vegetation. Few narrow lanes scale the hillside, and the historic routes of Flint Lane and Waterditch Road run along the contours across the top of the scarp. The Pilgrim's Way is defined by a fragmented ribbon of vegetation, running along the contours of the lower slopes, and it is further emphasised because in this area it also forms the North Downs Way National Trail.



11. Lenham Scarp

Geology, soils and topography

11.5 The solid geology changes from Middle Chalk to the south, to Upper Chalk to the north. There are significant drifts of clay with flints, and a small amount of head which generally runs along dry valleys throughout much of the wider downland landscape. Soils are shallow and silty across the scarp, and deep loams to clay extend across the top of the slope. The landform rises steeply to the north across the scarp, and plateaus across the top of the slope.

Views

11.6 Dramatic, panoramic views are available from footpaths and roads across the Gault Clay Vale landscape to the south.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

11.7 This is a strongly unified landscape, with the rising landform, large arable fields and pattern of narrow lanes and small woodland blocks forming a simple pattern of elements. There are some pockets of strong habitat opportunity, such as chalk grassland west of Hubbards Hill, although the ecological integrity is moderate overall. The intensively farmed arable land, and the large scale fields with little woodland cover, limit habitat opportunities and restrict connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. There has been extensive hedgerow removal as a result of arable intensification and there are also occasionally some large gaps in the remaining hedges. Although there is limited built development some recent properties and agricultural buildings fail to respect the local vernacular, whilst others are very well considered and have been integrated successfully into the landscape.

Sensitivity

11.8 Overall there is a very strong sense of place, which is primarily provided by the dramatic scarp topography and the subsequent sense of openness. The regularity and consistency of field, hedgerow and road pattern, which has been dictated by the topography, is very distinct. The narrow, hedge lined lanes and the historic route of the Pilgrim's Way provide a strong sense of place. The open downland topography provides high visibility.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Open
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Very High

11. Lenham Scarp

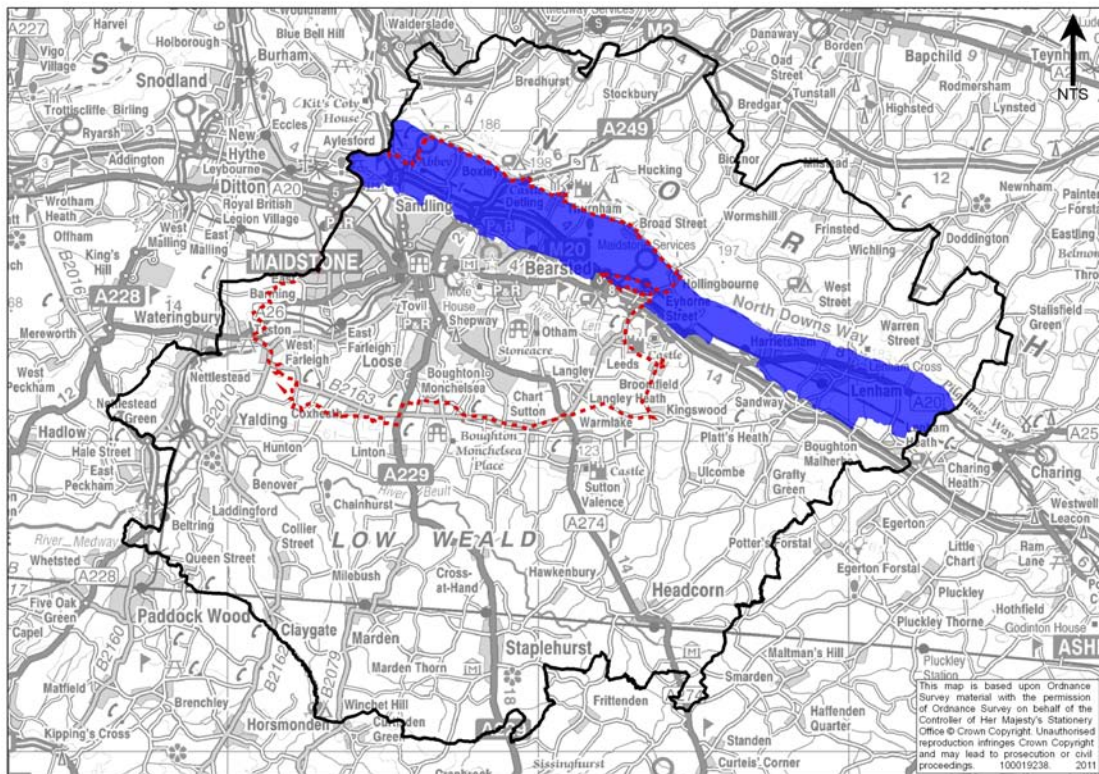
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Chalk Scarp Landscapes
- Lenham Scarp is partly situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the simple pattern and undeveloped character of the landscape
- Conserve and enhance hedgerows, infilling sections which are missing
- Conserve the narrow lanes and avoid road widening, minimise the scale of junction improvements and signage



Gault Clay Vale: introduction



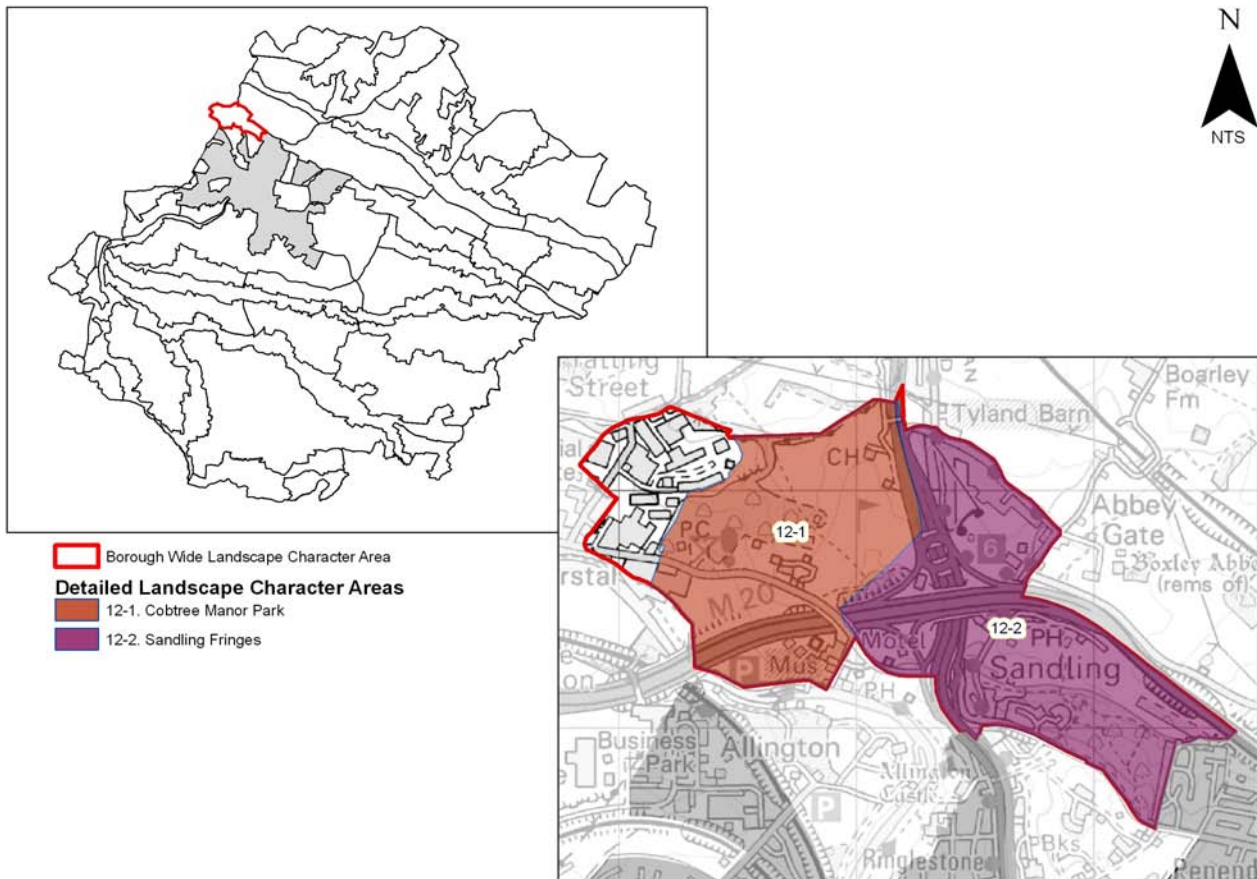
The Gault Clay Vale is situated at the foot of the chalk scarp of the North Downs. Some of the northern parts of this landscape are situated within the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs Clay AONB Management Plan 2009–2014. To the south of the Kent Downs AONB, the landscape forms the setting to the AONB designation. From the vale, panoramic views of the North Downs escarpment are often available. As the immediate foreground to, and the foothills of, the Downs, the landform is undulating, and numerous spring lined settlements and farmsteads are situated where the Gault Clay meets the Lower Chalk. Building materials often include much chequered red and grey brick, red clay hanging tiles, ragstone, flint, weatherboarding and Kent peg tiles. The land use is mixed, but predominantly comprises large arable fields interspersed by hedgerows and mixed ancient woodland blocks with much hazel and ash and areas of coppice. Hedgerows tend to be species rich, often with oak trees scattered along their lengths. The landscape is influenced by the urban edge of Maidstone and the major infrastructure corridor of the M20 and HS1 (formerly known as the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, or CTRL). The distinctive Pilgrim's Way follows the contours to the north along the foot of the scarp, sheltered from the exposed ridge and above the heavy clay soils to the south.

Gault Clay Vale: generic guidelines

- Part of this landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009–2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Avoid the use of single species hedgerows and shelterbelts within this landscape, where species rich hedgerows are so prevalent
- Where possible, woodland habitats should be increased and the historic hedgerow network should be reinstated. Woodlands should be linked through replacing post and wire fences with species rich hedgerows
- Encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to increase invertebrates and farmland bird communities
- Encourage extensive grassland and crop management by use of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship grants
- Encourage extensive grazing regimes to restore grassland present to semi improved and ultimately unimproved grassland
- Conserve and enhance, through appropriate management, existing lowland dry acid grassland. Refer to Maidstone's Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009–2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Encourage the extension of lowland dry acid grassland within opportunity areas identified within the Kent Living Landscapes data (Kent Wildlife Trust) and illustrated in Figure 8
- Conserve the undeveloped rural landscape, which forms an appropriate setting to the spring line settlements
- Consider views towards any proposals from the elevated North Downs scarp



12. Sandling Vale



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Chestnut coppice and mixed woodland blocks
- Parkland landscape
- Industrial estate
- Recent linear development along Chatham Road
- Mill ponds and weir along Boarley Road
- M20 and major highway infrastructure

Location

12.1 Sandling Vale is situated to the north of Maidstone, and comprises the settlement of Sandling and part of a wider industrial estate at Aylesford. This landscape forms part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The southern extent of the area is formed by the Medway Valley and the eastern extent of the area is formed by the edge of Maidstone's urban area. Outside the area to the north, the landscape forms the more rural lower slopes of the North Downs. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the west and partly to the north. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area in these areas may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

12. Sandling Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

12.2 There is a significant amount of tree cover provided by mixed woodland at Cobtree Manor Park (some of which is ancient), sweet chestnut coppice woodland at Cuckoo Wood, highway and other fragments of vegetation. Cuckoo Wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Formerly mixed broadleaved woodland, much of the woodland has been converted to actively managed sweet chestnut coppice. However, unmanaged hornbeam coppice with hazel occurs on the middle slopes, and ash and alder occur along the floodplain of a stream. Sparse standards of oak and beech are located to the west, and birch is found throughout. The woodland supports numerous bird species including green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, goldcrest and breeding hawfinch. This tree cover provides a reasonable amount of enclosure, although there are some more open swathes of landscape across the golf course at Cobtree Manor Park. Traditional field pattern has largely been removed by development and infrastructure, although a small pocket of traditional rectilinear hedgerow enclosed fields remain to the east at Lower Grange Farm. Areas of exposed sandstone along Sandling Lane and at the junction 6 of the M20 provide significant landscape features and biodiversity opportunities, and areas of heathland/lowland acid grassland support a number of red data book 1 invertebrates.

12.3 Development includes an extensive area of industrial development to the west of Cobtree Manor Park, where large warehouses and depots, parking areas and security fencing

characterise the style of development. South of the M20, traditional development has been fragmented by the slip roads of a major road junction. Stream Cottages and Abbey Court have been segregated into isolated parcels of land away from the wider original village settlement of Sandling. Sandling is situated within a valley, which contains a narrow stream that runs west towards the River Medway. A weir collects water at Boarley Lane in the form of distinctive mill ponds. Some traditional examples of ragstone properties and farmhouses can be found at Sandling, and there are some attractive views across the mill ponds along Boarley Lane. The Old Mill, which comprised a late 16th or early 17th century timber framed and weatherboarded grade II listed building, unfortunately burnt down. The built environment is generally compromised by more recent infill development and major adjacent infrastructure. North of the M20, recent and high density linear development has extended along the highways.

12.4 The landscape is heavily influenced by the major highway routes and junctions of the M20 and Chatham Road. Even where these busy roads are not visible their audibility impacts upon the tranquillity of the surrounding landscape. The roads cause a significant degree of physical severance and fragmentation to the surrounding landscape, leaving awkward plots and properties which are enclosed by roads.

12. Sandling Vale

Geology, soils and topography

12.3 The solid geology comprises Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds to the south, and Gault Clay across higher ground to the north. South of the M20, a ribbon of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds borders Lower Greensand Hythe Beds that extend across the landscape outside the area to the south. There are drifts of First Terrace River Gravel and alluvium close to the Medway Valley to the south, and some large drifts of head across the landscape. Soils are varied, with a large swathe of loam over sandstone running across Sandling, seasonally wet deep clay to the north west and deep loams to the north east. The landform generally rises to the north, although Sandling lies within a valley.

Views

12.4 Within the area views are often restricted

by intervening vegetation, and as such there are no clear views of the urban edge of Maidstone. There are some longer views out of the area along the Medway Valley to the south from higher points of the golf course at Cobtree Manor Park.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

12.5 The landscape is heavily influenced by major infrastructure routes and road junctions, which have fragmented the land use and the traditional settlement of Sandling. There are few unifying features within this landscape, and as such there is an incoherent pattern of elements. There are many visual detractors comprising the heavy road network, large scale industrial development at Aylesford and recent infill development. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst woodland cover, parkland, the frequent clusters of native vegetation, water bodies and streams at Sandling provide a strong habitat network, the extent of major infrastructure severs connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst woodland, parkland and traditional buildings appear to be in good condition, the setting and integrity of some of the historic features has been degraded by the proximity of the major infrastructure and more recent development. Built development has a low impact on the landscape. Although there are some examples of local vernacular, recent development which does not respect the sense of place is prevalent.

Sensitivity

12.6 This landscape is largely indistinct because it is so heavily influenced by major infrastructure and road junctions. There are some very distinctive elements, such as the ancient woodland, parkland, ragstone buildings and mill ponds at Sandling, and the remaining field pattern at Lower Grange Farm. However, the overall sense of place is weakened significantly by the major roads and recent development, which sever the landscape, detract from the traditional setting of buildings and degrade local distinctiveness. Visibility is moderate. Whilst many views are contained by intervening vegetation, there are some longer views across the golf course at Cobtree Manor Park.



12. Sandling Vale

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - IMPROVE

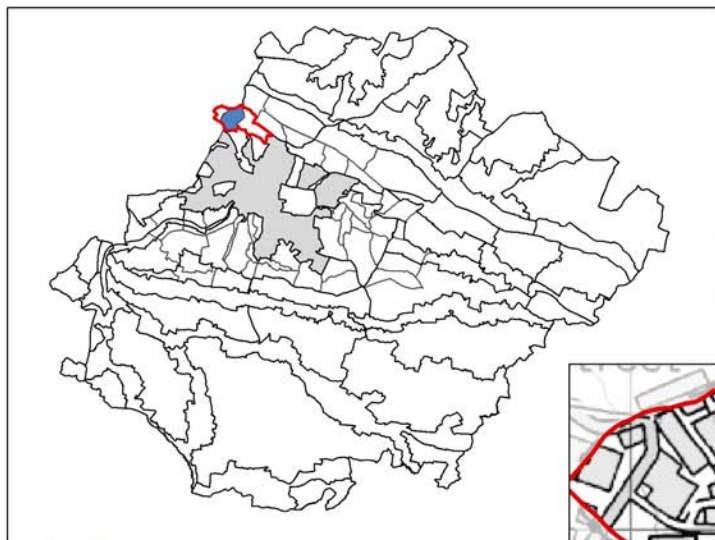
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



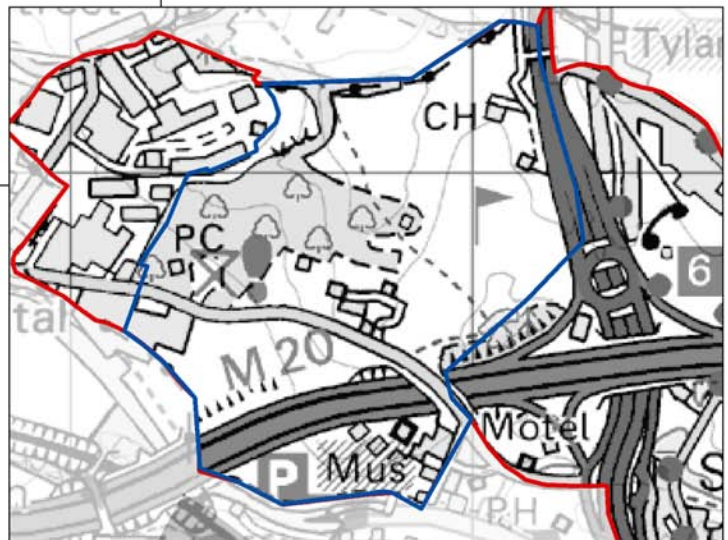
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Improve the rural character of Cobtree Manor park and consider the setting of the Kent Downs AONB by promoting subtle signage and features in association with the golf course
- Improve the distinctive and characteristic woodland and parkland through appropriate management
- Improve habitat diversity through restoration of exposed sandstone outcrops and open habitats such as heath and acid grassland
- Maintain the extent of vegetation cover which restricts views of the urban edge and softens views of the heavy infrastructure
- Improve the visual quality and habitat connectivity within the industrial area through creating a framework of native planting
- Avoid encroachment of industrial development into adjacent woodland and parkland
- This landscape adjoins the Valley of Visions project area which comprises a variety of projects (delivered by the Kent Downs AONB Unit) with communities, landowners and local groups to conserve the landscape, wildlife and rich heritage of the landscape. Refer to <http://www.valleyofvisions.org.uk/>

12-1. Cobtree Manor Park



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- M20 and major infrastructure
- Traditional buildings
- Golf course with artificial undulations, ponds and clumps of vegetation
- Woodland
- Parkland landscape with clumps, belts and avenues of trees

Location

12.7 Cobtree Manor Park area lies to the north west of Maidstone and comprises Cobtree Manor Park. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The River Medway flows along the southern boundary and a large industrial estate is located to the west. Major infrastructure provided by the M20 and the A229 are located along the eastern edge.



12-1. Cobtree Manor Park



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

12.8 The landscape is very much characterised by Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course which extends across much of the eastern side of the area, north of the M20. Typical golf course features, such as sand bunkers, flags and areas of water are scattered throughout the course. The course provides an undulating landform, with short mown grass, areas of rough grassland, and an abundance of scattered clumps and belts of mature native vegetation. Enclosure is evident throughout the landscape, mainly in the form of vegetation. Parkland is situated to the west of the area, north of the M20. A broad native vegetation belt separates the park from the golf course and encloses the park along Forstal Road. Tree avenues, clumps of vegetation and isolated trees are scattered across the parkland. To the west, a large block of mixed woodland defines the edge of the open parkland and screens the adjacent industrial estate.

12.9 The M20 and Forstal Road sever Cobtree Manor Park to the south of the golf course, creating odd parcels of land. A pocket of rough grassland with scattered clumps of native vegetation around the edges lies between Forstal Road and the M20. To the south of the M20, which is set within cutting, traditional buildings are used as part of the Museum of Kent Life and the landscape is more enclosed. Land surrounding the buildings is divided into small areas, used for growing small orchards and hop gardens as part of the museum.

Geology, soils and topography

12.10 The geology of the area is Gault Clay in

the north and Folkestone Beds in the south, with small areas of Sandgate Beds and Hythe Beds along the southern boundary. Substantial drifts of First and Third Terrace River Gravel occur in the south west and north and there is an additional large drift of head in the east of the area. The overlying soils are clay in the central and north western parts of the area and loam over sandstone in the remaining southern and eastern areas, with a belt of deep loam occurring in the eastern edge. The landform is gently undulating, with some artificial undulations within the golf course landscape and along major roads.

Views

12.11 Views within and out of the area are interrupted by large blocks of woodland, vegetation clumps and belts within the golf course and park. Glimpses of the M20 and Forstal Road are available from Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course through intervening vegetation. From the Museum of Kent Life, there are no views of the M20 because it runs within cutting and other views out are restricted because of enclosing vegetation belts surrounding the area.

Urban edge influence

12.12 The golf course provides a strong urban fringe influence. Although the urban edge is not visible from within the area, the M20 and surrounding roads and junctions encroach on the landscape and create odd parcels of land to the south.

12-1. Cobtree Manor Park

BIODIVERSITY

12.13 Towards the outskirts of the golf course there are areas of managed improved grassland, interspersed with younger trees. Adjacent to the western boundary of the site there is an area of mature broadleaved and coniferous woodland and a section of semi-improved grassland with low growing scrub and young deciduous trees. The block of mature coniferous and broadleaved woodland and tree lines which dominate the site have been identified as a locally important habitat in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and may have the potential to support protected species such as roosting, commuting or foraging bats and nesting birds. Furthermore, the young woodland glade along the western side of the site may support reptile species such as grass snake, slow worm and viviparous lizard. Located on the rural fringe, the site does not provide direct connectivity between central Maidstone and the surrounding countryside. However, in conjunction with Allington Valley and the adjacent River Medway this plot could constitute a link within a wildlife corridor.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

12.14 Although not widely visible from the surrounding landscape, the pattern of elements is severed by the M20. Sections of Clay Wood and Devil's Parlour are designated as ancient woodland, and a strip of vegetation along the A229 to the north is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The landscape is well managed and landscape elements are in generally in good condition.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

12.15 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. The golf course detracts from local distinctiveness, although the park is distinctive and historic. Overall, the landscape is of moderate sensitivity.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

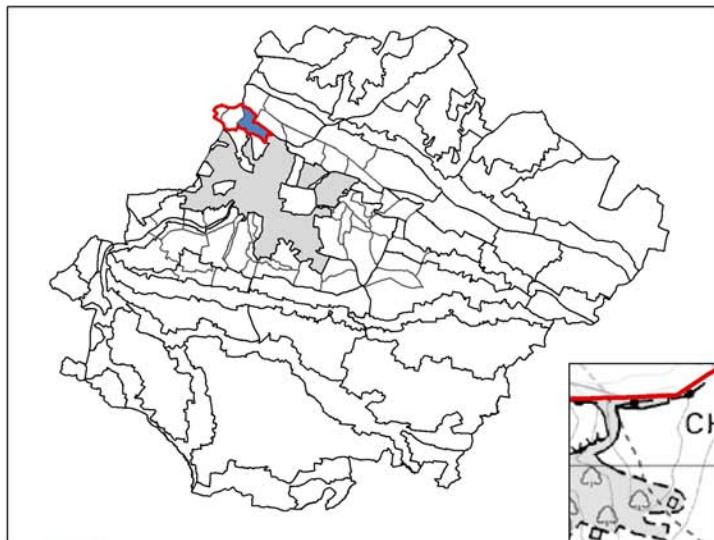
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

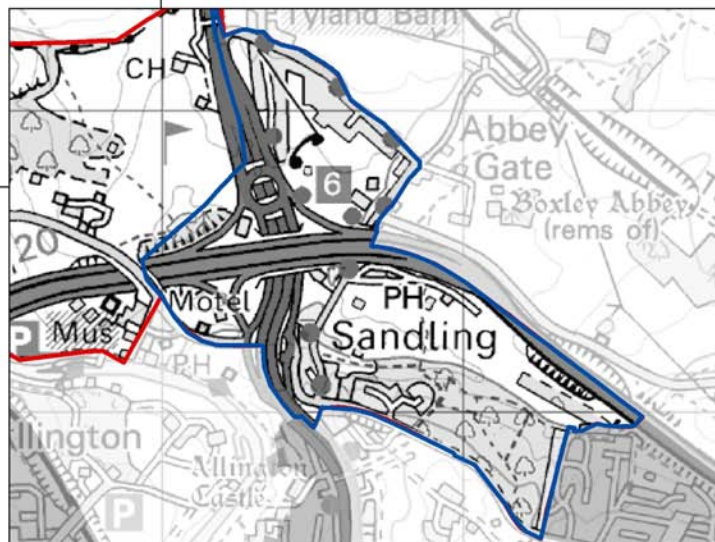
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Conserve and improve the rural, wooded parkland character of Cobtree Manor Park and the golf course, which strengthen the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Avoid encroachment of industrial estate to the west and other sub urban influences
- Avoid the use of ornamental/non-native species
- Reinforce ecological framework through maintaining and managing network of native planting across golf course

12-2. Sandling Woodland and Heath



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Major road infrastructure
- Mostly modern housing
- Pockets of vernacular style buildings
- Vegetation clumps and topography limit views
- Coppice woodland
- Mill ponds

Location

12.16 Sandling Woodland and Heath lies to the north west of Maidstone. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The southern boundary is formed by Sandling Lane and the western boundary is defined by Chatham Road and the major junctions with the M20. The eastern edge is defined by the boundary between Cuckoo Wood and the urban edge. To the north, the area is enclosed by the M20, Boarley Lane and Tyland Lane.



12-2. Sandling Woodland and Heath



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

12.17 The M20, A229 and associated slip roads and roundabout junctions dominate the landscape and enclose adjacent parcels of rough pasture with scattered scrub. The surrounding land use is varied and includes mixed farmland, woodland, low lying areas with ponds, pockets and strips of residential development and a hotel. There is a strong sense of enclosure provided by the road infrastructure, vegetation, built development and landform.

12.18 To the south of the M20, Lower Grange Farm is surrounded by small fields and linear strips of pasture enclosed by native hedgerows and significant vegetation belts. Situated on sloping land, Cuckoo Wood forms a significant block of mature and dense coppice woodland. East of the A229, areas of open water and a weir provide a low lying pocket of landscape and further complexity to the landscape. To the west of the A229, south of Forstal Road, a large hotel overlooks the River Medway.

12.19 Most residential areas form clustered modern housing estates and rows of housing, with typical garden planting including large evergreen conifers. A few vernacular style buildings are scattered throughout the area, such as Abbey Court and Lower Grange Farm. From properties along Chatham Road evidence of the A229 is strong. Although the road is not visible, the high audibility of traffic and views of environmental barriers dominate the character of the area.

Geology, soils and topography

12.20 The soils and geology are clearly defined with deep loam over Gault Clay in the north and loam over sandstone across Folkestone Beds in the south. Along the northern edge of Cuckoo Wood, a band of head occurs with a thinner band of alluvium just south at the river tributary. In the northeast, adjacent to the M20, is a pocket of deep clay soil. The landform is varied, with artificial, engineered land formations surrounding the major infrastructure to the west. To the north of the M20, the landform is gently undulating. South of the M20 the land is slightly more hilly, rising to the south.

Views

12.21 Views within and out of the area are restricted by landform, blocks, belts and clumps of vegetation and built development. However, there are open views out of the area from Tyland Lane to the north, across farmland to the North Downs.

Urban edge influence

12.22 The network of infrastructure provides a heavy urban influence on the landscape, and has caused physical fragmentation of the landscape pattern. The complexity of landform and vegetation network prevents views of the existing urban edge.

12-2. Sandling Woodland and Heath

BIODIVERSITY

12.23 To the east, the area is composed primarily of arable and improved grassland partitioned by hedge, linear tree lines and drainage ditches. To the west of the site the M20 intersects the A229 and these roads are surrounded by areas of semi-improved grassland, scrub and immature trees. There are rows of detached and semi-detached housing with managed gardens. There are two stands of ancient woodland; to the south and to the northeast of the site. Ancient woodland has the potential to support nesting birds and commuting, foraging and roosting bats. It may also provide habitat which is suitable for protected mammal species, including the hazel dormouse and badger. The woodland edge and field margins are potentially valuable for notable invertebrate species, and may support reptiles and ground nesting bird. The site is located to the north of Maidstone town centre and provides good connectivity between urban and rural habitats. The ancient woodland area is important as it is likely to provide quality habitat for a wide range of species on the urban edge.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

12.24 The network of major road infrastructure and varied land use fragments the landscape. Cuckoo Wood is ancient woodland and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, illustrating its importance for flora and fauna. Whilst the extent and condition of vegetation is varied, the major roads have posed a vulnerability to change.

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

12.25 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. However, the major infrastructure and pressure of development has caused a loss of local distinctiveness and continuity.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

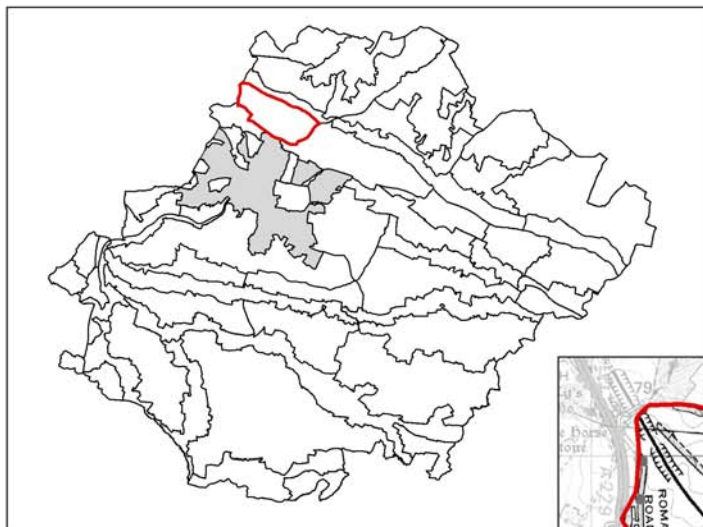
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

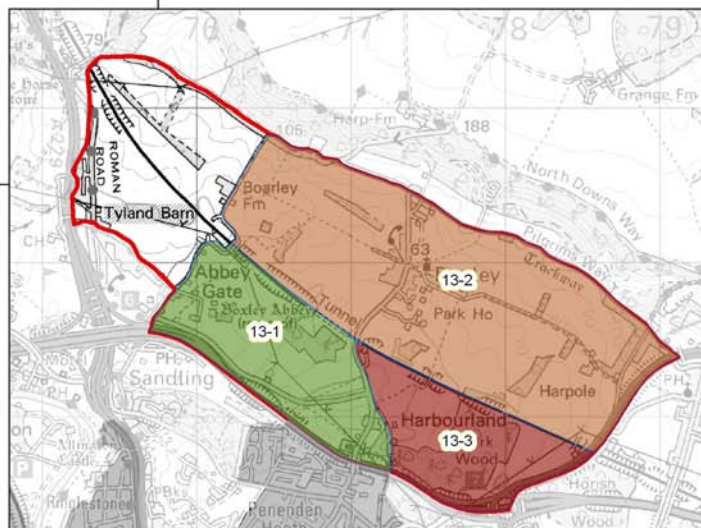
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Improve the more distinctive and characteristic elements, such as Cuckoo Wood, which strengthen the setting of the Kent Downs AONB and provide historic and ecological value
- Resist further inappropriate and out of scale development
- Improve field boundary pattern by planting native hedgerows at Grange Farm
- Improve treatment of boundaries between road corridors and housing

13. Boxley Vale



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Areas**
- 13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields
 - 13-2. Boxley Farmlands
 - 13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating lower North Downs scarp foot severed by Channel Tunnel Rail Link
- Blocks of woodland, parkland trees and linear tree belts, including beech avenues
- Arable cereal fields
- Spring line villages and farmsteads
- Distinctive ragstone walls
- Distinctive traditional buildings with chequered red and grey bricks, whitewashed bricks, Kent peg tiles, ragstone and exposed timber framing
- Small, winding lanes

Location

13.1 Boxley Vale is situated to the north of Maidstone within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is characterised by spring line villages and farmsteads situated within the gently undulating landscape of the lower North Downs scarp. The northern boundary is marked by the Pilgrim's Way, a historical winding lane, which is in complete contrast to the M20 which runs along the southern boundary, as well as the A299 and A249 which mark the western and eastern edges respectively. The eastern boundary marks a change in tree pattern as well as vernacular distinctiveness, whilst the northern edge marks the change from the lower to upper scarp.

13. Boxley Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

13.2 Large, rectangular and irregularly shaped arable fields with cereals dominate the gently undulating landscape of the North Downs scarp foot. Some smaller fields are also present to the east of Boxley village, where mature parkland trees, such as oak, beech and horse chestnut, are also prominent. Field boundaries and hedgerows are not a distinctive feature of the area, but where hedgerows are present they comprise predominantly hawthorn, field maple and ivy. There are, however, several linear belts of trees, including mature beech avenues and one strip of ancient woodland, which mark boundaries between fields within the character area. A few larger blocks of woodland are found in the southern part, including Park Wood, Kiln Wood and Donkey Shaws, all of which contain ancient woodland. Species within the woodlands include distinctive whitebeam as well as other native species such as alder, ash, birch, dog rose, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, oak, hornbeam, ivy, wayfaring tree and willow. Holm oak, sweet chestnut and sycamore occur. There are also several brooks, drains and ponds to the south of Boxley, including the ponds at Park House, which are particularly valued locally. The poet Alfred Lord Tennyson frequently visited Park House, and was inspired by this landscape when he wrote his poem 'The Brook'.

13.3 The settlements within the area are typically villages and scattered farmsteads located along the spring line where the chalk and Gault Clay meet. Designated as a

Conservation Area, Boxley village is the most distinctive settlement within the area. The place name 'Boxley' derived from the Anglo Saxon 'clearing in the box' because box was historically a dominant species in this area. Symbolically, box trees have formed the centrepiece of many commemorative plantings, such as either side of the First World War memorial erected at Boxley Green and within the churchyard. To the south west of Boxley lie the remains of Boxley Abbey (Cistercian Foundation), which is designated as a Scheduled Monument. Set within the wider parkland grounds of Boxley Abbey House, the late 13th century ragstone grade I listed barn at Boxley Abbey is a distinctive and prominent feature, visible in views from the M20. Ancient parkland has also been identified around Park House, east of Boxley village and north of the line of HS1. There are many mature trees within the wider village of Boxley, including beech, birch, holm oak and ancient yew, as well as younger trees such as ginkgo. Other heritage features include St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church, which is built from predominantly ragstone and some flint, with several ragstone walls, a cobbled path and locally excavated ragstone used as decorative elements at the approach to the church. There is also a traditional phone box and pillar box. Buildings are predominantly red brick or chequered red and grey brick with Kent peg tile roofs, but also whitewashed brick and exposed timber-framing are typical of the village. Along The Street within Boxley, the

13. Boxley Vale

grade II listed Malthouse Cottage and Maltings Adjoining are an unusual example of where ashlarred chalk has been used on the buildings exterior. The distinctive materials, many heritage features and lack of recent buildings give Boxley and the surrounding farmsteads a strong sense of place. The same materials are also found in buildings within the small farmsteads scattered across the area, which include distinctive oast houses.

13.4 Much of the area is only accessible by foot on the numerous public footpaths and tracks, but there are also a few narrow winding lanes, interrupted by engineered stretches where the roads cross HS1.

Geology, soils and topography

13.5 The geology of Boxley Vale consists of a narrow band of Lower Chalk, found in the upper parts of the scarp foot, overlying a larger band of Gault Clay lower down. In contrast to the harder Middle Chalk that forms the steepest part of the scarp, the Lower Chalk forms distinctive undulating foothills that support well drained calcareous silty soils. Beneath the Lower Chalk, the Gault Clay emerges and the undulations continue more softly to create a very gently undulating low lying vale. Soils on the Gault Clay are predominantly slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged clayey soils characterised by pasture and woodland blocks. In parts these soils are overlaid by fine loams, as well as smaller areas of only slight

waterlogging and some slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils. In addition, a small area in the vicinity of Park Wood sits upon the Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds and small deposits of head drift appear throughout the area. In the south western corner of the area moderately permeable calcareous loamy soils over chalky gravel are found that are variably affected by groundwater.

Views

13.6 The undulating valley landscape slopes down towards the River Medway and is generally open, giving rise to wide views of the arable fields and tree belts that are so distinctive of the area. The only detractor within these open views is found within the southern part of the site, where there are tall electricity pylons. More limited views are found when standing within the woodland blocks or within Boxley village, where buildings and trees create a sense of enclosure. HS1 cuts through the area from east to west, but due to its careful positioning in deep cuttings, it is only visible and detracting locally where the roads cross over the line. To the north there are rural views to the upper parts of the distinctive North Downs scarp, contrasting with the urban views to the south, across Maidstone and to the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge.



13. Boxley Vale

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition	Sensitivity
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13.7 The gently undulating arable farmlands, tree belts, woodlands and spring line villages and farmsteads form a unified pattern of elements. There are some visual detractors, including HS1, electricity pylons and the urban edge of Maidstone. The ecological integrity is moderate, with frequent and substantial belts and blocks of trees of habitat value. The lack of hedgerows between the large arable fields does, however, weaken the ecological network. The cultural integrity is good, featuring a strong pattern of parkland trees, tree belts and blocks, as well as the many vernacular heritage features that are in good condition. There are few recent buildings within the area but HS1, which is not in keeping with the local vernacular style, detracts from the sense of place locally. The M20, which is located at the edge of the southern boundary, is generally not visible from the area, but the high noise levels from the road detract from the tranquillity of the southern part of the character area.

13.8 Overall Boxley Vale is an area with a very strong sense of place, provided by the distinctive combination of the gently undulating landscape with arable fields, belts and blocks of trees as well as the consistent use of building materials such as ragstone, red and grey brick, whitewashed brick and exposed timber-framing. The traditional narrow and winding lanes are predominantly intact and distinct, while there are stretches of indistinct engineered roads in connection with crossing points above HS1. Visibility is intermittent, with wide open views across the large arable fields, limited by belts of trees and blocks of woodland in places.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

13. Boxley Vale

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

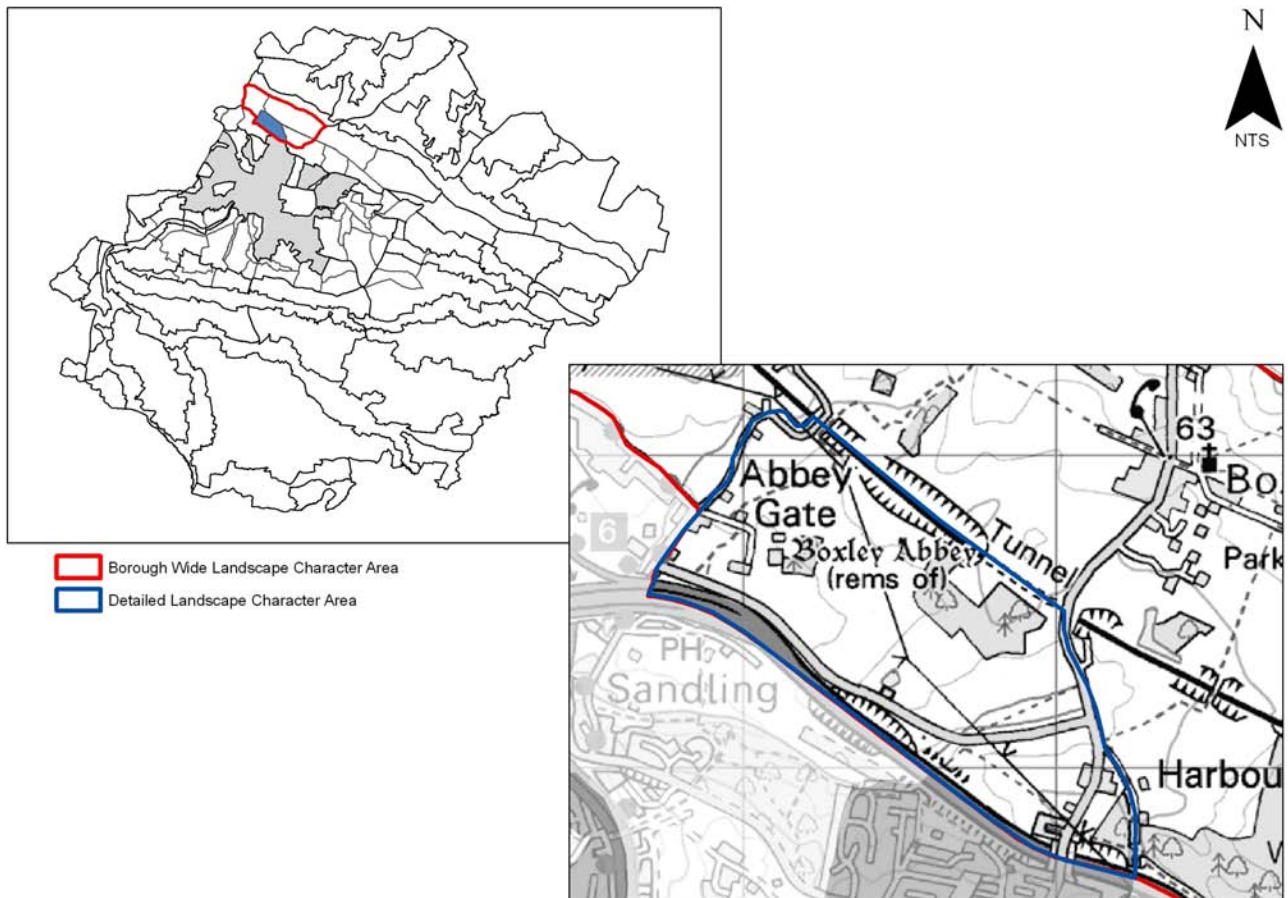
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Boxley Vale is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the distinctly undulating landform of the scarp foot
- Conserve the remaining pattern of tree belts, avenues and parkland trees and plant new beech, horse chestnut and oak standards to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve and enhance the blocks of woodland, in particular where ancient woodland is found
- Conserve, enhance and manage the many ponds within the area
- Conserve the undeveloped rural landscape, which forms an appropriate setting to the spring line settlements
- Conserve the local heritage buildings and features, such as ragstone walls within the Conservation Areas, but also elsewhere
- Conserve the narrow winding lanes



13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large arable fields
- Ditches and post and wire fencing
- Native woodland blocks to the north
- Boxley Abbey remains and associated traditional buildings
- Few roads

Location

13.9 Boxley Abbey Fields lies to the north of Maidstone with HS1 and the M20 providing the northern and southern boundaries respectively. The area forms part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The eastern boundary is defined by Boxley Road and Sandy Lane. The western boundary is defined by Boarley Lane.



13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

13.10 This area comprises a mixture of large arable fields, some pasture and small clusters and blocks of woodland. A deciduous block of native woodland, Park Wood, forms the largest woodland block within the area and is situated to the north. A significant linear vegetation belt forms an ecological link from Park Wood, stretching along HS1. There are a number of hedgerows throughout the area, some of which are supported by post and wire fences. There is limited enclosure throughout the area, with large arable fields segregated by post and wire fencing and ditches in places, marked by reeds and some mature trees. Hedgerow boundaries have been removed to accommodate modern farming methods, although a distinct and mature linear tree belt remains along Grange Lane which forms the only highway within the area.

13.11 The area is largely unsettled although there are a number of modern properties at Harbourland and some traditional cottages off Boarley Lane. Harbourland Farm comprises a traditional farmhouse with adjacent pasture. Boxley Abbey provides a strong focal point within the area. The Abbey was formerly a Cistercian monastery but is now a private house, and alongside it is a large distinctive 12th century barn with a Kent peg tiled roof. A historic stone wall, crumbling in places and covered in dense ivy, encloses the Abbey and limits views into the grounds.

13.12 The M20 forms a physical boundary to the south. Evidence of the acidic soils and

heathy landscape, more prominent within Penenden Heath (outside the area to the south), is visible on part of the northern embankment along a section of the M20. Scots pine, gorse, sheep's sorrel, common heather, bird's foot and water blinks are present here.

Geology, soils and topography

13.13 The geology of the area is predominantly Gault Clay with Folkestone Beds to the south east and two pockets of Lower Chalk to the north. Two small drifts of head occur one in the centre of the area and the other in the north eastern corner. Soil cover is predominantly clay with a small section of deep loam in the north west corner and a small belt of loam over sandstone in the south east corner of the area. There is a distinct pattern of gentle valleys forming an extension of the more prominent undulations across the Downs to the north.

Views

13.14 Views within the area are across open undulating farmland. Views out of the area to the north stretch to the North Downs, and views out of the area to the south reach the urban edge of Maidstone. Glimpses of the M20 are apparent from some locations within the area, particularly travelling south along Grange Road.

Urban edge influence

13.15 The urban edge is visible from Grange Road travelling south, and the M20 forms a prominent urban influence.

13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields

BIODIVERSITY

13.16 Boxley Abbey Fields is composed primarily of arable land partitioned by hedgerows, linear tree lines and drainage ditches. To the west of the site, Boxley Abbey is surrounded by grazed fields and a block of semi-natural woodland. There are a further two stands of broadleaf woodland to the east and a pond enclosed by mature trees to the south. Arable field margins may provide suitable habitat and commuting routes for reptiles while hedgerows and tree lines may support breeding birds and commuting/foraging bats. Drainage ditches, and the pond may potentially provide breeding habitat for great crested newts. The woodland areas may have the potential to support protected mammal species such as badger, dormouse, nesting birds and bats. Hedgerows, tree lines and drainage ditches provide connectivity throughout the site and may have good potential as wildlife corridors. The woodland blocks connect well with areas of similar habitat within Boxley Wooded Parkland and Boxley Farmland.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

13.17 The M20 and HS1 provide some distraction along the edges of the area. The area provides moderate wildlife opportunities with tree belts, clusters of trees and hedgerows with mature trees. Boxley Abbey is designated as a Conservation Area and a Scheduled Monument.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

13.18 Boxley Abbey and traditional brick and tiled cottages off Boarley Lane are distinctive characteristics. The designation of the area as part of the Kent Downs AONB highlights the sensitivity of the landscape. However the M20, HS1 and non-native garden planting detract from the local distinctiveness.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

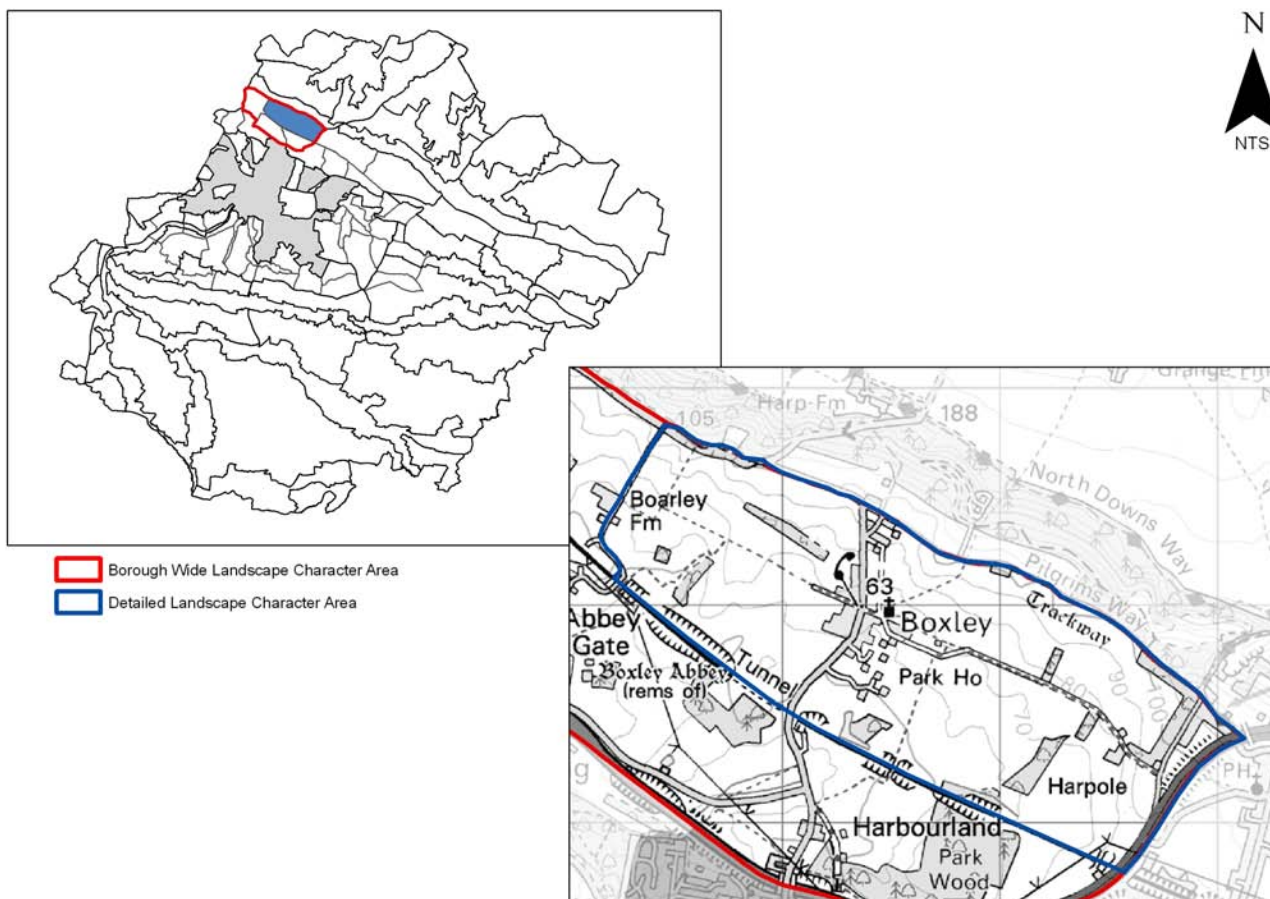
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Boxley Abbey Fields are situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014
- Conserve and manage ditches and encourage linear ecological links and vegetation belts
- Conserve and reinforce areas of heathland by encouraging appropriate management

13-2. Boxley Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating downland
- Historic field pattern around Boxley
- Mixed woodland blocks and tree avenues
- Historic settlement
- Oast houses, timber framed properties, converted barns and ragstone church

Location

13.19 Boxley Farmlands lies to the north of Maidstone, forming part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The northern boundary is formed by the Pilgrim's Way, which runs along the contours in a north west to south east direction. The southern boundary is defined by HS1. To the west Boarley Lane forms the edge of the area, and the eastern edge is defined by Sittingbourne Road.



13-2. Boxley Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

13.20 Mixed farmland sweeps across the undulating landform, interspersed with blocks of native and coppice woodland. The field pattern surrounding Boxley is historic, with small evenly sized, square shaped areas divided mostly by native hedgerows and used for grazing. To the east and west, intensive agricultural methods have given way to post and wire fencing and a lack of historic and hedgerow boundaries. Small pockets of overgrown fruit orchards provide reference to previous land use.

13.21 Central to the area, Boxley, designated as a Conservation Area, comprises a historic settlement with a variety of unique and historic buildings, including oast houses, converted timber barns, timber framed dwellings, ragstone church and ornate herringbone brickwork.

13.22 Sittingbourne Road forms a busy highway to the east, although the only other main highway within the area consists of a historic and minor route - The Street - running through Boxley. The Pilgrim's Way forms a historic route, based on an ancient track which runs across southern England from Winchester in the west to Canterbury in the east. In this location the route keeps to the lower part of the southern slopes and follows the contours away from the exposed ridge of the Downs. HS1 to the south provides a distinct linear corridor through the landscape, with associated engineered features appearing out of scale with the small scale historic

infrastructure to the north.

Geology, soils and topography

13.23 The geology of the area is clearly divided into Lower Chalk in the north eastern half of the area and Gault Clay in the south western half. In addition, there are small belts of Middle Chalk occurring in the north of the area and four small pockets of head located through the central and northern parts of the area. The soils of the area correspond with the pattern of solid geology in being distinctly divided between silt over chalk in the north, east and west, and seasonally wet deep clay in the south west of the area. The topography is distinctly undulating and rises to the north, along the very foot of the North Downs.

Views

13.24 Views within the area are across undulating farmland to woodland blocks. Clustered properties, clumps of vegetation and the church at Boxley stand out and provide focal points within the landscape. Views out of the area are to the North Downs to the north, and to the south the edge of Maidstone is visible from some locations east of Boxley.

Urban edge influence

13.25 Sittingbourne Road and HS1 provide an urban influence on the periphery of the area, encroaching slightly on the rural character. The urban edge of Maidstone, Penenden Heath, is visible from the area east of Boxley.

13-2. Boxley Farmlands

BIODIVERSITY

13.26 Boxley Farmlands consists mainly of arable land with hedgerows and bands of trees along field boundaries. HS1 runs along the southern boundary. Located to the centre of the site Boxley village is composed of private properties surrounded by managed gardens and scattered trees. There are water bodies in located in Park House. Field margins and areas of scrub along the railway embankment may have the potential to support species of reptile and ground nesting birds. Tree lines and hedgerows may also provide suitable habitat for nesting birds as well as commuting/foraging bats. The ponds and surrounding terrestrial habitat may support protected amphibian species. The hedgerows and strips of woodland link larger areas of woodland habitat in Boxley Wooded Park and the North Downs. Thus, there is good connectivity for commuting wildlife to and from Maidstone.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

13.27 HS1 and Sittingbourne Road cause some minor visual detracting from the rural character of the area. Some woodland blocks are defined as ancient woodland. Boxley is designated as a Conservation Area and it supports a number of traditional vernacular style buildings.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity

13.28 The sense of place is defined by the variety of vernacular style buildings, blocks and avenues of mature vegetation and hedgerows. Landscape elements are generally historic and locally significant.

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

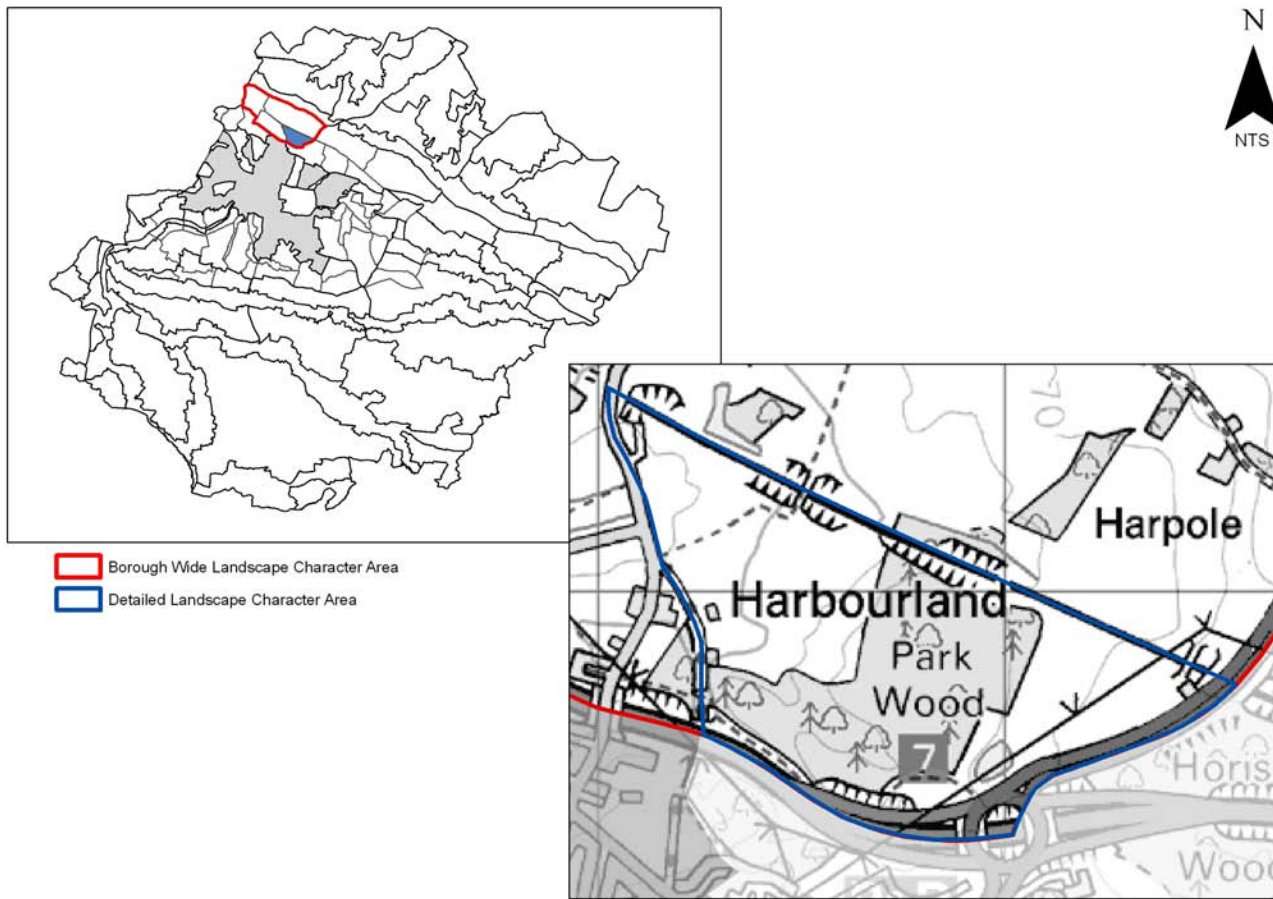
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Boxley Farmlands are situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014

13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland

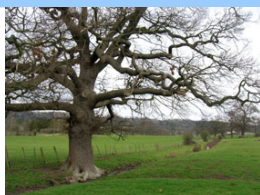


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Pasture with mature isolated trees to the west
- Large blocks of broadleaf and mixed woodland
- Some intensive agriculture
- Few but traditional buildings
- Major infrastructure surrounds and severs the area

Location

13.29 Boxley Wooded Parkland lies to the north east of Maidstone, south of Boxley and Detling, forming part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). HS1 forms the northern boundary and the M20 defines the southern edge. Boxley Road contains the area to the west, and the A249 Sittingbourne Road forms the eastern boundary.



13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

13.30 Much of the area is wooded, with mixed woodland forming Park Wood to the west. A grid like pattern of straight tracks runs through Park Wood, providing maintenance access. To the west the land use is pasture, with isolated mature native trees and an open parkland character. Fields are regular in terms of size and shape, and enclosure is provided by the strong edges of woodland blocks, ditches marking the edges of field boundaries and remnant lines of mature trees. Although there are some native hedgerows surrounding pasture to the west, some of which are thin and gappy where they support fencing, post and wire fencing has replaced natural boundaries in places. Some timber fencing forms small pens alongside Sandy Lane, probably in association with sheep farming.

13.31 West of the A249 Sittingbourne Road the land is intensively farmed, with a fragmented field pattern and a lack of vegetated boundaries. Some woodland has been removed to accommodate the intensively farmed area, and just a small woodland clump remains within the arable fields. A large pond, enclosed by mature vegetation, is situated at the southern edge of the arable land, adjacent to Sittingbourne Road.

13.32 There is very little built development within the area, and Stonehouse and Workhouse Cottage form the only buildings which are traditional. Although there are few roads running through the area, the busy

Sittingbourne Road severs the landscape to the east. Although not visible from within the area because of intervening vegetation and cutting slopes, the M20, running along the southern boundary, is an audible and busy route. Boxley Road, along the western boundary, forms a link between Boxley and Maidstone, and Thurnham Lane forms a link between Detling and Maidstone.

Geology, soils and topography

13.33 The geology of the area is predominantly Gault Clay with a belt of Folkestone Beds to the south west and a pocket of Lower Chalk at the eastern edge. Two small drifts of head occur one in the centre in the location of Park Wood and the other in the north western corner. Soils are predominantly clay with silty soil overlaying the Lower Chalk with loam over sandstone in the south west. The landform is gently undulating.

Views

13.34 Views within the area are varied because of differences in land use. To the east, views are across gently undulating grazed pasture scattered with huge mature trees, and are enclosed by significant blocks of mature woodland. To the west of the A249, views reach across an area of arable farmland, crossed by electricity pylons, to the edge of Park Wood. Views out of the area to the north stretch across farmland to the North Downs. Infrastructure in connection with HS1,

13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland

such as large concrete overbridges and the exterior of tunnel structures, form a dominant visual feature to the north. Views out of the area to the south east and west are restricted by the woodland blocks within the area, and vegetation belts along Boxley Road.

Urban edge influence

13.35 Major infrastructure provides a strong urban influence within the area, with the M20 to the south, HS1 to the north and the busy A249 and pylons severing the area. However, the wooded character of the landscape restricts the visibility and subsequent influence caused by the major infrastructure. There are views from Boxley Road of the urban edge of Maidstone but these do not detract from the strong rural character of the landscape, defined mainly by large woodland blocks and pasture with mature, isolated trees.



13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland

BIODIVERSITY

13.36 Boxley Wooded Parkland primarily consists of ancient woodland and improved grassland. HS1 runs along the northern boundary. In addition, there are some scattered trees along field boundaries and several small ponds. Ancient woodland may potentially provide suitable habitat for protected mammal species including nesting birds, bats, badger and hazel dormouse. The grassland areas and particularly field margins may provide suitable habitat for reptiles such as slow worm and viviparous lizard. The ponds may potentially provide suitable habitat for breeding amphibians including great crested newts. The woodland itself is recognized as a valuable ancient habitat but due to its close proximity to Maidstone town centre is especially important as it provides connectivity between town and countryside. In particular, hedgerows and tree lines connect this site to a large band of woodland to the north.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

13.37 Although the major infrastructure which encloses the area is slightly detracting, the large woodland blocks and consistent topography provide a unified landscape. Ancient woodland blocks, isolated mature trees and ditches provide habitat links and wooded vegetation is in good condition.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

13.38 The large isolated mature trees within pasture to the west promote a parkland character. The trees and the woodland blocks also provide continuity throughout the landscape and a distinctive pattern. The designation of the area as part of the Kent Downs AONB highlights the sensitivity of the landscape.

Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

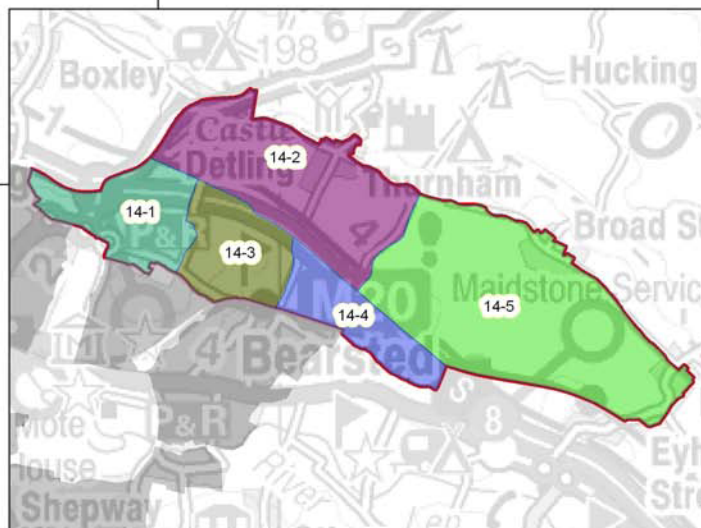
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Boxley Wooded Parkland is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014
- Conserve ancient mature parkland trees

14. Thurnham Vale



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Areas**
-  14-1. Weaving Fringes
 -  14-2. Thurnham Farmlands
 -  14-3. Bearsted Golf Course
 -  14-4. Water Lane Arable Land
 -  14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The landscape either forms part of, or the setting to, the Kent Downs AONB
- Gently undulating North Downs scarp foot severed by the M20 and HS1
- Large blocks of woodland and belts of trees, including ancient woodland
- Large arable, irregularly shaped fields
- Ponds in association with Hollingbourne Village and Bearsted Golf Club
- Villages, farmsteads and spring line settlements between the chalk and Gault Clay
- Conservation Areas featuring strong use of local materials
- Narrow, winding lanes, including the ancient Pilgrim's Way which is defined by high native hedgerows

Location

14.1 Thurnham Vale is situated to the northeast of Maidstone and is severed by the M20 and HS1. The area north of the M20 and HS1 falls within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), while the southern part forms an important setting to the AONB. The landscape forms the scarp foot to the North Downs and is gently undulating. The northern boundary follows the ancient Pilgrim's Way which marks the change from the scarp foot to the upper scarp as well as a gradual change in land use, while the eastern and western boundaries, marked by Hollingbourne Hill and the A249 respectively, indicate a change in field, woodland and tree patterns. Maidstone and Bearsted urban areas mark the southern extent in combination with the Ashford to Maidstone railway line.

14. Thurnham Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

14.2 The gently undulating landscape comprises a patchwork of large, irregular, arable fields with large woodland blocks and belts of trees in between the fields. The woodland blocks are highly valued locally and include (west to east) Heath Wood, Horish Wood, Pope's Wood, Honeyhills Wood, Gore Wood, Longham Wood, Howe Court Wood and Snarkhurst Wood, all of which contain recorded ancient woodland. Heath Wood is a small wood with historical chestnut coppice and sits in the vicinity of a small field which displays heathy characteristics. Howe Court Wood, Snarkhurst Wood, Pope's Wood, Honeyhills Wood and Horish Wood are also designated Local Wildlife Sites, but the latter two are severed by the M20 and HS1. The woodlands are predominantly located above the Gault Clay and are damp in places. Typical species within the Local Wildlife Sites include unmanaged ash coppice, field maple, downy birch, hawthorn, hazel, holly and hornbeam as well as some oak, willow and chestnut coppice with an under-story incorporating amongst others bluebell, herb paris, butchers broom, green hellebore and lily-of-the-valley. There are also areas of meadow and pasture within the woodlands, as well as ponds. The woodland wildlife includes badger, butterflies, grass hoppers, moths, dragonflies and many bird species. Two areas of more recently planted semi-mature parkland trees are also found close to Thurnham and Whitehall, which include birch, maple and oak. Orchards are not a characteristic feature of the area, but there is a cherry-orchard located next to Whitehall and another orchard close to Detling. Hedgerows are predominantly located along lanes, but some are also found between fields and include native species such as dog rose, hawthorn

and ivy.

14.3 There are several springs within the area, where the Lower Chalk and Gault Clay meet. To the southwest of Hollingbourne the Snagbrook forms a series of mill ponds used to power the waterwheel and millstones at Manor Mill until 1925. A dense woodland belt follows the Snagbrook and the ponds. The Link is another stream within the area which emerges close to Thurnham Keep Farm. Next to Longham Wood there is also an historical moat in conjunction with a stream and there are several ponds within Bearsted Golf Course.

14.4 There are many villages and farmsteads within the area, mostly located at crossroads between the Pilgrim's Way and other winding lanes. The northern part of Detling is a designated Conservation Area and features historical buildings, mostly dating to the 15th, 16th and 19th centuries, as well as St. Martin of Tours Detling Church. A distinctive long wall with a striking Tudor Archway lines part of the Pilgrims Way. The wall is constructed from typical local materials of ragstone and flint to the west, followed by an area of red brick and ragstone, and finally red brick, ragstone and flint at the eastern end. Within the southern part of Detling there are, however, predominantly recent buildings that are out of keeping with the historical part, including many bungalows. Materials used for these recent buildings are white weatherboarding, red and yellow brick, and concrete roof tiles, while the historic buildings feature chequered red and grey brick, yellow stock brick, painted brick, red clay hanging tiles, exposed timber-framing, ragstone, flint,

14. Thurnham Vale



render, weatherboarding and Kent peg tiles. Moving east, to Thurnham Village, there are historical buildings that are half timbered or built with red hung clay tiles, whitewashed or red brick. Further along, Broad Street hamlet and Hollingbourne Village are two other Conservation Areas which incorporate many listed buildings. Distinctive materials here include exposed timber-framing, black or white weatherboarding, chequered red and grey brick, as well as flint. Both Thurnham and Hollingbourne have village churches built from ragstone and flint. The other farmsteads within the area are generally less distinctive with historical buildings that date closer to the 19th century, but they also include several distinctive oast houses.

14.5 South of the M20, at Junction 7, is a pocket of development which is particularly out of character with the rest of the area. This includes the Park and Ride, a large garden centre, as well as many large scale recent buildings. These include metal sheds and buildings with timber or metal cladding and yellow and red brick. However, this complex does also include an original grade II listed farmhouse (which is now a pub) and converted traditional oast houses.

14.6 The ancient Pilgrim's Way winds along the upper part of the scarp foot and is crossed by lanes and track ways following old drove routes leading to the top of the scarp. There are also many public footpaths within the area, with large areas that only are accessible by foot. As mentioned, the M20 and HS1 sever the area in two, creating a transport corridor which is out of keeping with the narrow lanes within the area. At Junction 7, where the M20 meets the

A249, the engineered roads are particularly obtrusive. The Ashford to Maidstone railway line, which follows part of the southern boundary, is on the other hand a historical feature which sits well within the landscape. The railway crosses some of the lanes and paths within the area and at these points there are historic bridges.

Geology, soils and topography

14.7 The geology within the northern part of Thurnham Vale is predominantly Lower Chalk with some drifts of head overlain by well drained calcareous fine silty soils. A thin band of Melbourn Rock subdivides the Lower Chalk from the Middle Chalk at Detling and Thurnham, and in this area the soils are shallow and silty. To the south there is mostly Gault Clay overlain by slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils or fine loams over clayey soils. This area is characterised by Gault Clay woodland. Together the chalk and Gault Clay geology form the North Downs scarp foot, with gentle undulations binding the landscape together. The only major impact on the topography is the M20 and HS1 corridor, which has bisected the landform. The Folkestone Beds are also present along much of the southern boundary, particularly close to Junction 7 of the M20, with some local drifts of head brickearth and alluvium by Gidds Pond Farm and two small areas with Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds close to Bearsted Village. Soils in this part of the area are predominantly well drained coarse loams and sands.

Views

14.8 Views within Thurnham Vale are limited by the large blocks of woodland, but there are many open views across the arable fields and rolling landform. The upper scarp of the North Downs is also visible from much of the area and there are longer views to the urban edge of Bearsted. The longer views incorporate electricity pylons set against part of the scarp and to the south of Thurnham and Detling. Views from the Pilgrim's Way are generally limited to areas where there are gaps in the tall hedges that line the lane.

14. Thurnham Vale

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

14.9 Thurnham Vale consist of a coherent pattern of arable fields, large blocks of woodland, villages and farmsteads, with a small corner of recent development, close to the M20 Junction 7, which is out of keeping with the rest of the area. The M20 is the main detractor within the area, but also HS1, electricity pylons and recent buildings, particularly in Detling, are detracting to some degree. The large blocks of woodland are of ecological value, but due to the lack of hedgerows between the intensely cultivated large arable fields the habitat network within the area is weakened and the overall ecological integrity is moderate. The cultural integrity is variable despite the many large blocks of woodland, with a mixed age structure, mainly due to the variable field boundaries and the impact of built development which does not respect the local character. The M20 and HS1 are particularly out of keeping with the local narrow winding lanes and the plot sizes of the metal sheds close to Junction 7 are very large.

Sensitivity

14.10 While there are many distinctive features within Thurnham Vale, including the woodland blocks and belts, hedgerows, settlements, lanes, ponds and local railway bridges, the sense of place is weakened by recent buildings, developments and roads, and is therefore moderate. The gently undulating landform is an apparent feature; particularly in views across the arable fields, but the many intermittent woodland blocks and belts make the visibility moderate.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate



14. Thurnham Vale

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

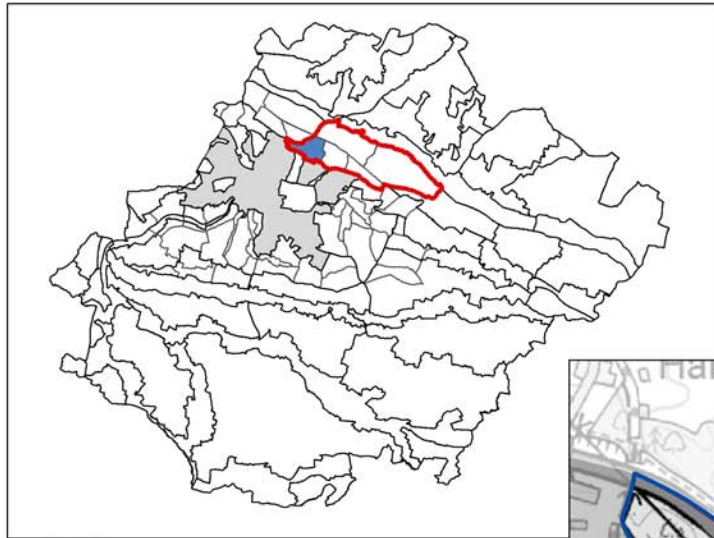
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



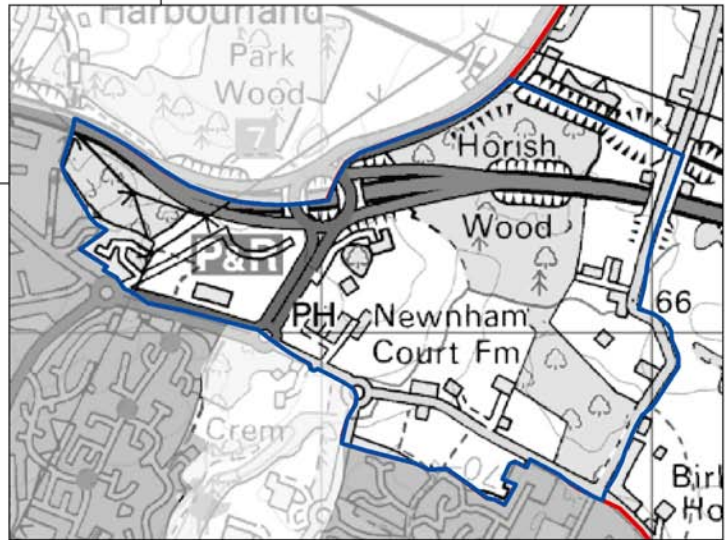
- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale
- Thurnham Vale is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the gently undulating landform of the scarp foot and rural setting of the AONB
- Conserve the rural views to the North Downs scarp
- Conserve and improve the woodland blocks and belts, particularly where ancient woodland is present
- Conserve and improve the Gault Clay scrub and woodland under-storey
- Conserve and improve the network of hedgerows
- Conserve and improve the orchards
- Conserve and improve the ponds and streams
- Conserve and improve the few areas of pasture and meadow within the area
- Improve recent development, particularly within Detling, to be more in keeping with local vernacular
- Conserve the rural setting of Conservation Areas and listed buildings
- Conserve the narrow and winding lanes



14-1. Weaving Fringes



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large buildings and building complexes
- Blocks of mixed and coppiced woodland
- Busy roads
- Pasture
- Shelterbelts and clumps of woodland
- Low lying ground with a series of small ponds to the north east

Location

14.11 Weaving Fringes lies to the north east of Maidstone, and forms part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Sandy Lane and the urban edge of Maidstone form the western boundary and Hockers Lane encloses the area to the east. The southern boundary is defined by Bearsted Road and the urban edge of Maidstone. The northern boundary is defined by HS1.



14-1. Weaving Fringes



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

14.12 Large woodland blocks provide an enclosed character and restrict views. To the east, Pope's Wood comprises active chestnut coppice with wood anemones, dogs mercury and blue bells forming a carpet around the broad coppice stools. Horish Wood lies within a slight dip and supports a network of narrow water channels, linking small pockets of water and wet woodland. Heath Wood, to the west, is deciduous with some overgrown coppice, and a channel has been cleared through the woodland where electricity pylons have been installed. To the east, an area of pasture used for horse grazing is enclosed by woodland and clumps of mature native vegetation. Paddocks are small and segregated by a variety of fencing, and a series of small ponds run through the area. A rectangular exercise arena and timber stabling blocks create a slightly cluttered character, and add to the complexity of the landscape. Land east of Newnham Court Farm comprises undulating pasture, enclosed by woodland edges, tall poplar tree belts and native hedgerows and some post and wire fencing. To the west, little landscape remains around recent built development and the Park and Ride. Small pockets of rough pasture are located west of Sittingbourne Road and between Bearsted Road and Grove Green.

14.13 Buildings are mostly modern, with a significant amount of large scale recent development in the parcel of land west of the A249. Newnham Court Farm comprises some large scale agricultural barns and a collection of older, vernacular buildings including oast houses.

West of Newnham Court, a garden nursery with extensive glass houses and out buildings dominate the landscape. A traditional farmhouse is set within dense vegetation to the north of the Newnham Court complex. Along Bearsted Road to the south, a row of traditional style cottages at Gidd's Pond line the road. Gidd's Pond Farm comprises a traditional farmhouse which is screened from the road by a dense block of enclosing vegetation. Large scale agricultural barns with corrugated iron roofs are located within pasture to the south. Properties off Hockers Lane are mostly modern, and an industrial works area comprises a complex of small modern buildings enclosed by high metal security fencing. The M20 runs through Horish Wood to the north, fragmenting the landscape pattern.

Geology, soils and topography

14.14 The geology of the area is predominantly Folkestone Beds with Gault Clay in the north eastern section. Two small drifts of head brickearth occur in the south east one of which is edged with a small drift of alluvium. Soils are clay in the north and loams in the south. The landform is gently undulating.

Views

14.15 Views within and out of the area are interrupted by large blocks of woodland, vegetation clumps and belts, as well as built development. Within the area, east of Newnham Court, views are of undulating pasture divided by native hedgerow

14-1. Weaving Fringes

boundaries and tall poplar shelterbelts. Newnham Court provides a focal point within the landscape, widely visible with large agricultural barns and a cluster of traditional style buildings. Views to the west are dominated by the large hotel along Bearsted Road, busy roads and the Park and Ride. Where vegetation allows, there are some views out of the area to the south of housing along the urban edge of Maidstone.

Urban edge influence

14.16 Although the M20 is largely within cutting, other sections of major infrastructure, the park and ride and built development are strong urban edge influences which are encroaching on the landscape. The large hotel and adjoining buildings along Bearsted Road and industrial buildings off Hockers Lane encroach on the pocket of remaining undulating pasture east of Newnham Court. The urban edge of Maidstone is visible from some areas, such as from Sittingbourne Road as it exits the Park and Ride and from Newnham Court car parking area facing south east.



14-1. Weaving Fringes

BIODIVERSITY

14.17 To the west and to the northeast of the site are stands of ancient woodland. Additionally, the woodland to the east is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Centrally there is a garden centre surrounded by an area of fallow/improved grassland. Ancient woodland may potentially provide suitable habitat for nesting birds and commuting, foraging and roosting bats. In addition it may be inhabited by small mammal species such as shrew, hedgehog, vole and hazel dormouse which is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. The improved grassland fields and particularly the margins may provide suitable habitat for invertebrates and reptiles such as slow worm and viviparous lizard. The site is located on the urban edge and so links the inner town region with the wider countryside by providing a woodland wildlife corridor.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

14.18 The varied land use and urban fringe influence interrupts the consistency of elements within the landscape. The woodland, much of which is ancient woodland and designated as a Local Wildlife Site, is in good condition and has a varied age structure.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity

14.19 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. However, Oast houses and some traditional buildings at Newnham Court provide few traditional elements within an area where many buildings are out of scale or do not relate to the surrounding, more traditional landscape.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

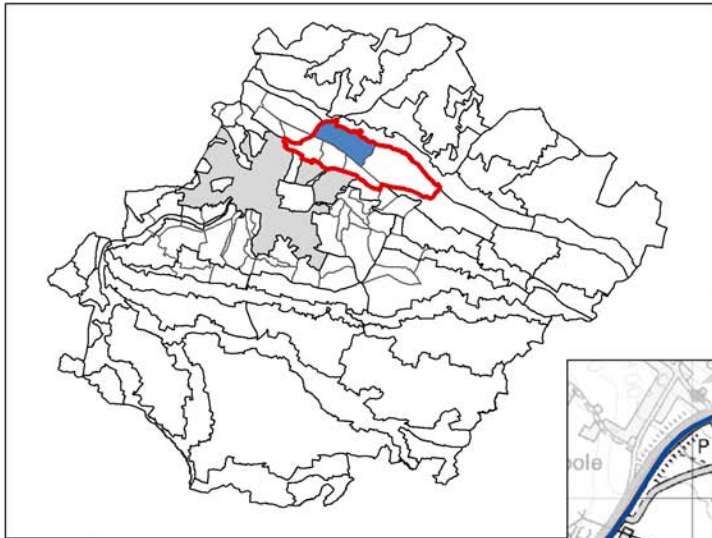
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

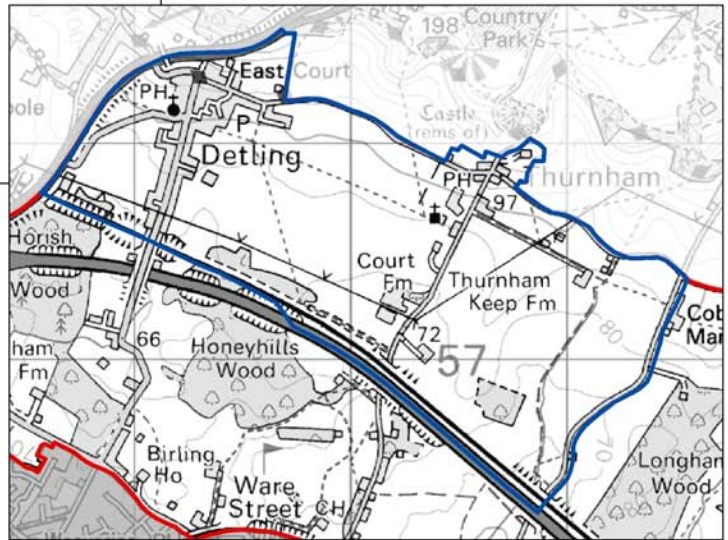
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale
- Improve and reinforce the more distinctive and characteristic elements, e.g. ancient woodland, streams, traditional buildings and open landscape at Newnham Court Farm, which strengthen the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Avoid significant encroachment of the urban edge where it would detract from the open foreground to the Kent Downs AONB

14-2. Thurnham Farmlands



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large arable fields across undulating land
- Pockets of smaller fields and paddocks around settlements
- Mixed woodland blocks
- Historic settlements recognised as Conservation Areas
- Large isolated farmsteads and estates
- Narrow lanes with hedgerow boundaries

Location

14.20 Thurnham Farmlands lies to the north of Maidstone, forming part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The northern boundary is formed by the Pilgrim's way, which runs along the contours in a north west to south east direction, and the extents of Detling and Thurnham. The southern boundary is defined by HS1. To the west Sittingbourne Road forms the edge of the area, and the eastern edge is defined by Water Lane.



14-2. Thurnham Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION



14.21 Large arable fields sweep across the undulating landform, interspersed with blocks of native and coppice woodland. Traditional field pattern and woodland blocks have been lost to intensive agriculture. Fields around the linear settlements of Detling and Thurnham are often smaller and more enclosed, comprising pasture and paddocks for livestock and horses. Paddocks grazed by horses often contain a mixture of electric, post and wire and timber post and rail fencing. Although usually well situated within natural dips and not widely visible, several equestrian arenas are scattered throughout the landscape, which detract slightly from the basic pattern of fields and woodland.

14.22 Detling and Thurnham comprise traditional settlements with a variety of unique and historic buildings. Extending from the traditional central core of Detling, areas of more modern housing detract from the historic

core. Isolated farmsteads and large country estates are scattered throughout the landscape, often set within grounds comprising mature trees including pine. Remnants of former red brick boundary walls and high gate posts surround Thurnham Friars, which comprises a vernacular style building, and provide distinct historic features and reflect the historic nature of the grounds. The Pilgrim's Way forms a historic route, based on an ancient track. In this location the route keeps to the lower part of the southern slopes and follows the contours away from the exposed ridge of the Downs. HS1 to the south provides a distinct linear corridor through the landscape, with associated engineered features appearing out of scale with the small scale historic infrastructure to the north.



14-2. Thurnham Farmlands

14.23 Sittingbourne Road forms a busy highway west of Detling, but all other roads within the area are narrow and often hedge lined.



Geology, soils and topography

14.24 The geology of the area is clearly divided into Lower Chalk located centrally in the majority of the area (where the railway line intersects the area) and belts of Gault Clay and Middle Chalk located in the south west and north east of the area respectively. In addition, there are four pockets of head evenly distributed through the central parts of the area. The soils of the area correspond with the pattern of solid geology in being distinctly divided between silt over chalk in the majority of the central regions of the area, and shallow silt over chalk and seasonally wet deep clay located in bands in the north east and south west of the area respectively. There is a distinct pattern of gentle valleys forming an extension of the more prominent undulations across the Downs to the north.

Views

14.25 Views within the area are across undulating farmland to woodland blocks. Vegetation clumps surround settlements, giving the impression of a much unsettled area. Views out of the area are to the North Downs to the north, and to the south the edge of Maidstone is visible from some locations along the Pilgrim's Way where vegetation and the landform allow.

Urban edge influence

14.26 Sittingbourne Road and recent housing around Detling provides an urban influence within the area spreading out from the urban edge of Maidstone. The HS1 infrastructure along the southern boundary also encroaches on the rural character and is visible, along with the adjacent M20, from points along the Pilgrim's Way to the north.



14-2. Thurnham Farlands

BIODIVERSITY

14.27 Thurnham Farlands is dominated by arable land with some livestock grazed fields. The village of Detling is located to the west of the site and the railway track runs along the southern boundary. Field boundaries are demarked by hedgerows and tree lines and there are scattered mature trees around properties. A stand of semi-natural woodland is located to the south while to the east of the site there is a block of ancient woodland. The woodland blocks may potentially provide suitable habitat for protected mammals including badger, nesting birds, dormouse and species of bat. The woodland edge, field margins and embankment habitats may all have potential to support notable invertebrates, reptiles and ground nesting birds. These linear connecting features may also potentially act as wildlife corridors for commuting/foraging species. This site connects areas of woodland habitat in Bearsted golf course and the North Downs via tree lines and hedgerows. Also, the section of embankment and associated scrub habitat continues to the west and east providing a potential wildlife corridor for reptiles.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Good
<p>14.28 To the south, HS1 and associated engineered features visually detract from the rural character. Post and wire fencing, agricultural barns and overgrazed equestrian land are also visual detractors. Detling is designated as a Conservation Area, illustrating the heritage significance of the settlement. Two Scheduled Monuments reflect the historic importance of the landscape.</p>	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Some
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Good
	Functional integrity:	Strong

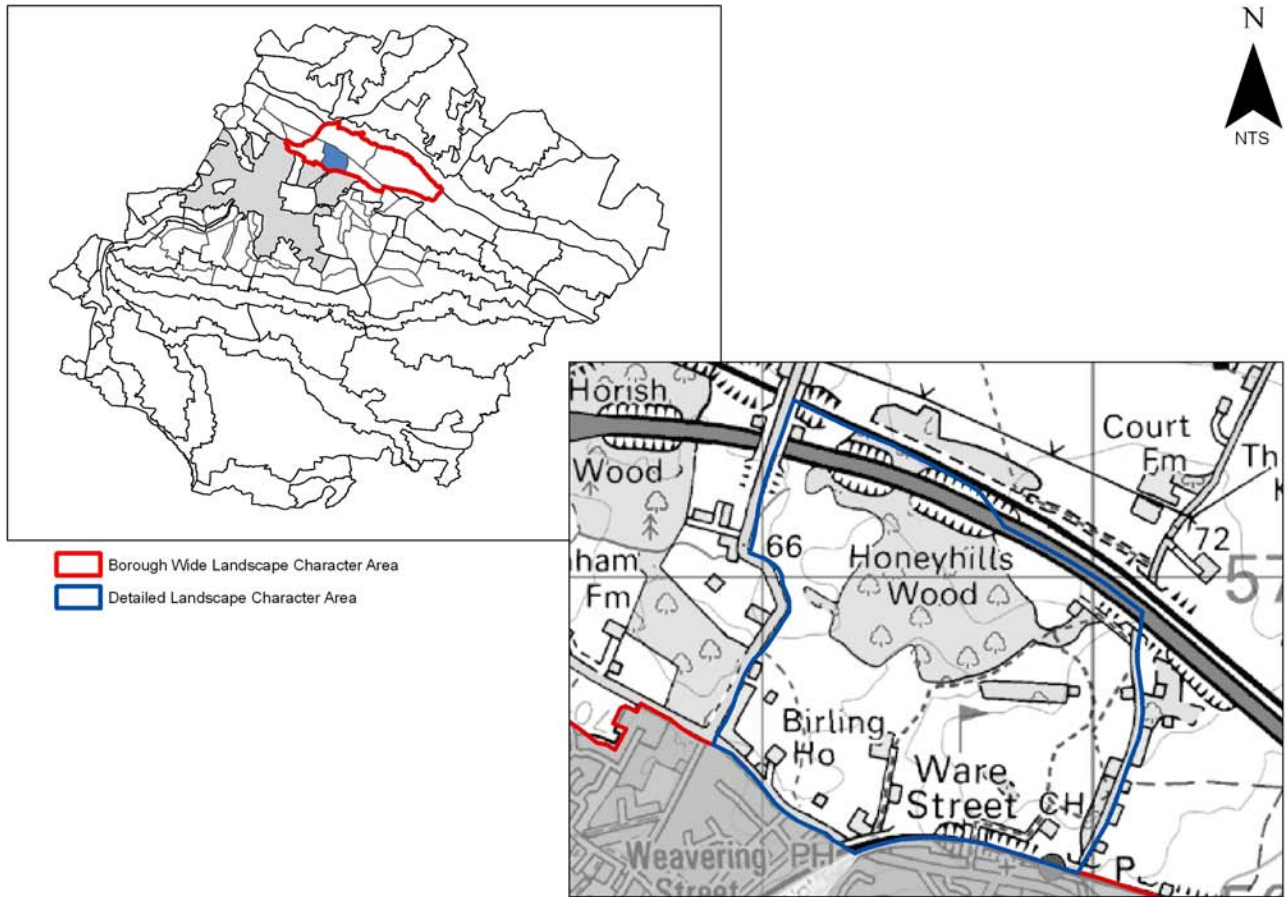
Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	High
<p>14.29 There is a distinct sense of place, defined by the variety of vernacular style buildings and blocks of mature woodland. Landscape elements are generally historic and locally significant.</p>	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES – CONSERVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale
- Thurnham Farlands are situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014

14-3. Bearsted Golf Course



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Golf course
- Large block of mature broadleaf and coppice woodland
- Garden boundary and field hedgerows
- Vegetation belts and streams
- Little development with mostly modern housing along surrounding lanes
- Traditional buildings along Chapel Lane

Location

14.30 Bearsted Golf Course lies to the north east of Maidstone, just north of Bearsted. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). HS1 forms the northern boundary and the railway line and Ware Street form the southern edge. Hockers Lane encloses the area to the west and Thurnham Lane runs along the eastern boundary.



14-3. Bearsted Golf Course



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

14.31 The landscape is very much characterised by Bearsted Golf Course, which extends across much of the area from east to west. Typical golf course features, such as sand bunkers, flags and areas of water are scattered throughout the course. The course provides an undulating landform, with short mown grass and an abundance of scattered clumps and belts of mature native vegetation. Enclosure is evident throughout the landscape, mainly in the form of vegetation. Honeyhills Wood forms a large broadleaf and coppice woodland to the north of the area, and provides a definite boundary edge to the north of the golf course. A stream runs along the southern boundary of the wood, with narrow timber footbridges crossing into the woodland and leading to footpaths which wind through the woodland. East of Honeyhills Wood, an area of rough grassland and scrub with mature trees is divided by native hedgerows. Smaller plots of land, interspersed with native woodland clumps and bordered by hedgerow boundaries, form garden plots for housing along surrounding roads. Vegetation belts line the surrounding lanes, increasing the network of vegetation and providing links between larger vegetation clumps.

14.32 Housing off Ware Street, Thurnham Lane and Hockers Lane is mostly modern. Housing along Chapel Lane, running in a north easterly direction off Ware Street, is more traditional and distinct. Forming a narrow and characteristic access to properties, Chapel Lane

forms a minor road which runs within the area. Both Chapel Lane and Thurnham Lane run beneath the railway line to the south through distinctive brickwork archways. To the north, the M20 runs through Horish Wood, making the major infrastructure subtle in views from the surrounding landscape.

Geology, soils and topography

14.33 The geology of the area is predominantly Gault Clay with a belt of Folkestone Beds to the south. There is a small section of Sandgate Beds with a small drift of alluvium at the central southern edge. Soils are mainly deep clay with a band of loam over the sandstone in the south. The landform is gently undulating, with some artificial undulations within Bearsted Golf Course.

Views

14.34 Views within the area stretch across the manicured landscape belonging to the golf course, but are not far reaching because of the extent of mature vegetation throughout the course and surrounding landscape. Views out of the area are restricted by woodland clumps and hedgerows.

Urban edge influence

14.35 The golf course provides a slight urban edge influence on the landscape. However, the urban edge is not visible from within the area.

14-3. Bearsted Golf Course

BIODIVERSITY

14.36 Towards the outer margins there are areas of managed improved grassland, interspersed with younger deciduous and coniferous trees. Adjacent to the northern boundary of the site is an area of ancient woodland. This habitat is included in the eastern half of the site as a Local Wildlife Site. The block of ancient woodland and tree lines may have the potential to support protected species such as roosting, commuting or foraging bats and nesting birds. Small mammals such as shrew, hazel dormouse, stoat and weasel may also favour this mature woodland block. The scrub and rough grassland areas may support invertebrate communities as well as reptile species such as grass snake, slow worm and viviparous lizard.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

14.37 Honeyhills Wood is ancient woodland and a Local Wildlife Site, highlighting ecological importance. The condition of elements is generally good, owing to the maintenance provided within Bearsted Golf Course.

Condition Assessment

Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

14.38 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. However, the key elements which compose the landscape are mostly indistinct and recent.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

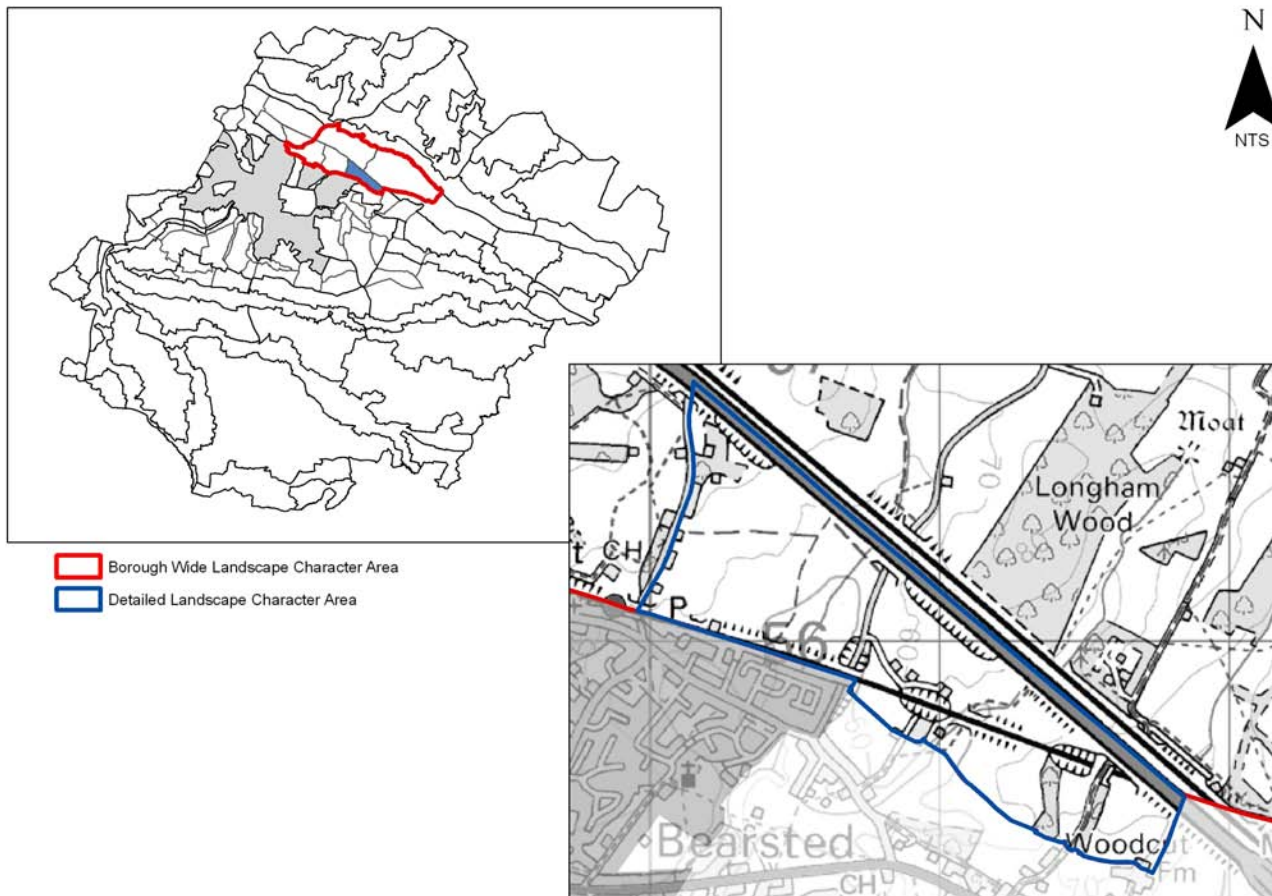
GUIDELINES – REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale
- Reinforce the more distinctive and characteristic elements, eg native woodland, which strengthen the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Avoid suburban influences and maintain the rural, undeveloped and well vegetated character of the landscape
- Reinforce the ecological framework through maintaining and enhancing network of native planting across the golf course
- Resist using ornamental/non-native species and encourage sensitive design and use of materials across the golf course

14-4. Water Lane Arable Land

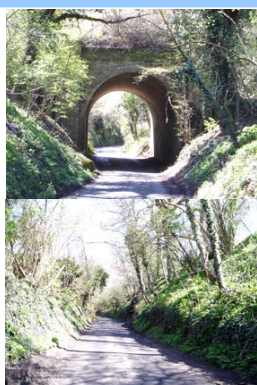


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large arable fields
- Little woodland
- Brick railway arches
- Remnant tree lines and vegetation belts along road edges
- Isolated trees within open agricultural land
- Undulating pattern of topography

Location

14.39 Water Lane Arable Land lies to the north east of Maidstone, north east of Bearsted. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). To the north the boundary is defined by the M20 and to the south partly by the railway line. Field boundaries define the remainder of the southern boundary and contain the eastern extent, and Thurnham Lane forms the western boundary.



14-4. Water Lane Arable Land



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

14.40 The landscape is predominately used for intensive arable cultivation, with large open fields and a loss of former hedgerow boundary pattern. There is a small amount of pasture to the east, with large isolated mature trees giving a parkland character. A few gappy, thin, hedgerows remain, but most have been removed and replaced by post and wire fencing. There is, however, a recent hedgerow along Water Lane, which would restore a fraction of the historic boundary pattern once established. A belt of mature native vegetation defines the railway line to the south, and clusters of trees surround scattered properties. Most woodland has been removed to accommodate further and more extensive arable fields, although a small area of unmanaged woodland remains to the north west and east of Crismill Road.

14.41 The landscape is largely unsettled although a row of semi detached vernacular style traditional cottages (Fancy Row) and other larger houses are located along Thurnham Lane. Bridge Farm and Lodge, accessed off a private drive, are surrounded by vegetation clumps and a distinct vegetation belt which runs alongside the railway line. A number of distinctive narrow brick railway arches provide distinct features in the area. The highways within the area all run in a north south direction, forming a regular pattern perpendicular to the contours and mimicking the line of streams which cross the area.

Geology, soils and topography

14.42 The geology of the area is predominantly Gault Clay overlaid with deep clay soils with fragments of Folkestone Beds overlaid with loamy soils in the south. The landform is undulating, with a pattern of gentle valleys forming an extension of the more prominent undulations across the Downs to the north.

Views

14.43 Views within the area are across open arable land. Views out of the area are restricted in part by planting along infrastructure lines, but there are views of the North Downs to the north and to the prominent church at Bearsted to the south.

Urban edge influence

14.44 The urban edge is not visible and does not influence this area.

14-4. Water Lane Arable Land

BIODIVERSITY

14.45 The scarcity of tree lines and hedges transecting the fields limit the sites connective value for terrestrial species. The block of ancient woodland and tree lines may have the potential to support protected species such as roosting, commuting or foraging bats and nesting birds. Small mammals such as shrew, hazel dormouse, stoat and weasel may also favour this mature woodland. The arable and rough grassland areas may support invertebrate communities as well as reptile species such as grass snake, slow worm and viviparous lizard. Arable land may provide a source of food and a nesting habitat for protected species of bird and mammal such as harvest mice, shrews, bats and field vole. This site is located to the north of Maidstone and does not provide direct connectivity between rural and central inner-town areas. However, the woodland blocks, hedges and tree lines may potentially be of value as wildlife corridors.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

14.46 The area is generally covered by large arable fields, forming a reasonably simplistic landscape with a coherent pattern of elements. Although a small woodland block to the north west is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, the ecological integrity is weak because of the intensity of agricultural land use.

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity

14.47 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. However, there is little local distinctiveness in the area, which has few features of cultural interest, although the railway arches form distinctive elements.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Open
Visibility:	High

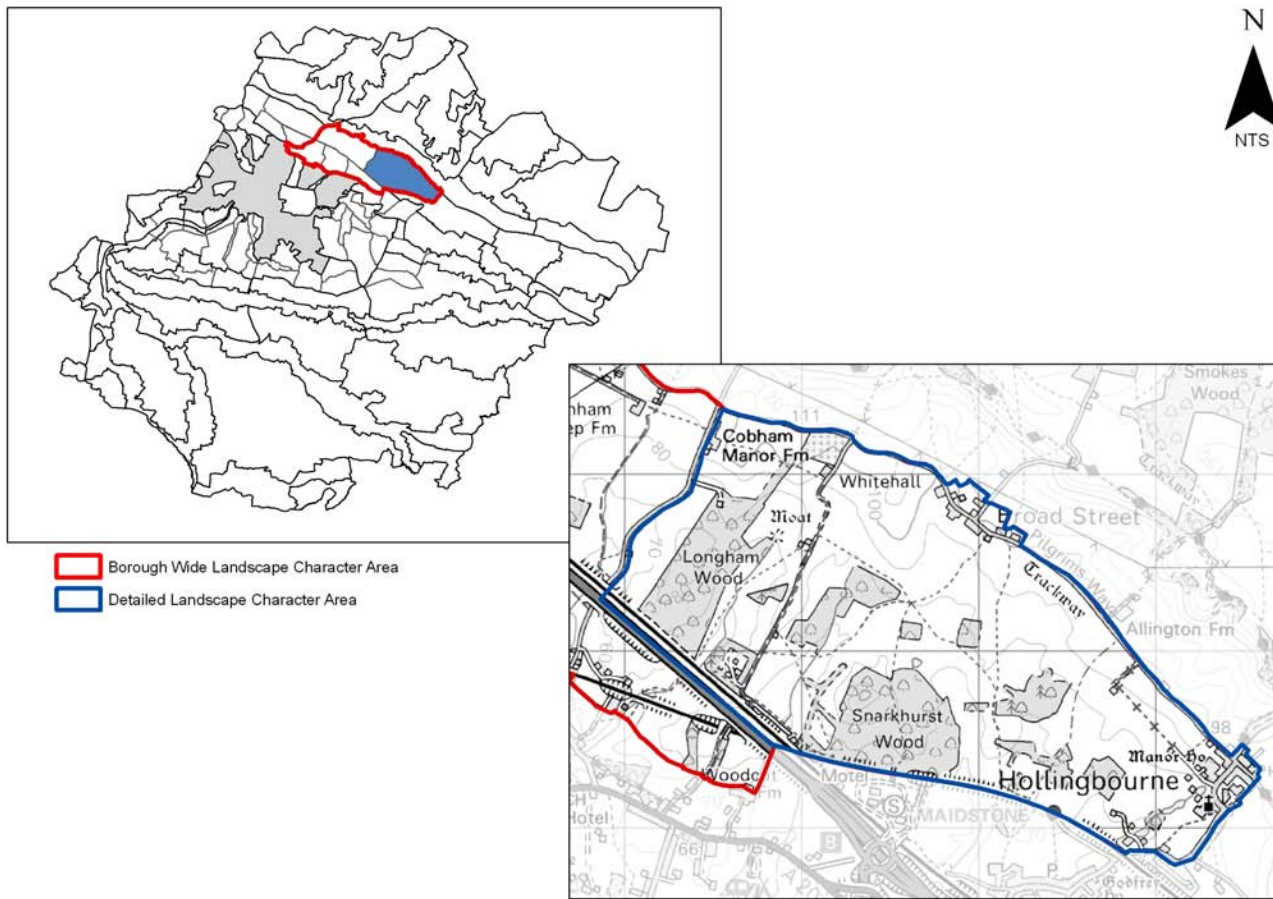
GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale
- Restore and improve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the AONB, through maintaining key characteristics such as isolated trees within arable farmland. Continue this key characteristic through further planting
- Restore and improve remnant tree lines and vegetation belts along roads
- Restore former hedgerow boundaries throughout the arable landscape
- Conserve distinctive brick railway arches

14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large arable fields across undulating land
- Pockets of smaller fields and paddocks around settlements
- Mixed woodland blocks
- Historic settlements recognised as Conservation Areas
- Scattered isolated properties

Location

14.48 Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land lies to the north east of Maidstone, forming part of the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The northern boundary is largely formed by the Pilgrim's Way, which runs along the contours in a north west to south east direction, although the character area encapsulates the settlements of Hollingbourne and Broad Street. The southern boundary is defined by the M20 and HS1. To the west Sittingbourne Road forms the edge of the area, and the eastern edge is defined by Upper Street.



14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

14.49 Large open arable fields sweep across the undulating landform, interspersed with large blocks of native and coppice woodland. Field pattern has been lost to intensive agriculture and boundaries have been removed extensively. Enclosure is provided by post and rail fencing, woodland boundaries and narrow ditches and drains in places. Fields around clustered properties are often smaller and more enclosed, comprising pasture and paddocks for livestock and horses. Paddocks grazed by horses often contain a mixture of fencing types. Although usually well situated within natural dips and not widely visible, several equestrian arenas are scattered throughout the landscape, which detract slightly from the basic pattern of fields and woodland. Small pockets of overgrown fruit orchards provide reference to previous land use.

14.50 Settlement is scattered throughout the area, with clusters of traditional properties and isolated estates. Broad Street and Hollingbourne host a range of unique vernacular building styles. Only minor access lanes and tracks to properties run through the area, although the Pilgrim's Way along the northern boundary forms a historic route. In this location the route keeps to the lower part of the southern slopes and follows the contours away from the exposed ridge of the Downs. HS1 to the south provides a distinct linear corridor through the landscape, with associated engineered features appearing out of scale with the small scale historic infrastructure to the north.

Geology, soils and topography

14.51 The geology of the area is clearly divided into two distinct halves; Lower Chalk in the northern half and Gault Clay in the southern half (with one small pocket of Lower Chalk occurring in Snarkhurst Wood). Drift geology is scarce in this area, with only two small pockets of head in the south east and south west edges of the area. Soil type distribution corresponds with this trend, with silt over chalk and seasonally wet deep clay found in the northern and southern halves of the area respectively. This corresponds with the relative abundance of orchards found in the clay soils of the area. There is a distinct pattern of gentle valleys forming an extension of the more prominent undulations across the downs to the north.

Views

14.52 Views within the area are across open undulating farmland to woodland blocks. Views out of the area are to the North Downs to the north, and to the south the edge of Maidstone is visible from some locations where intervening vegetation and landform allow.

Urban edge influence

14.53 HS1 infrastructure along the southern boundary encroaches on the rural character and is visible, along with the adjacent M20, from points along the Pilgrim's Way to the north. The urban edge of Maidstone is visible from higher ground.

14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land

BIODIVERSITY

14.54 The ancient woodland block to the east has been identified as a Local Wildlife Site. Ancient woodland has the potential to support a wide variety of wildlife including dormice (which are UK/Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species) and badger. Also, woodland habitat and connecting tree lines and hedgerows may have the potential to support roosting, commuting or foraging bats and nesting birds. The woodland edges, scrub and rough grassland areas may support notable invertebrates and reptile species such as grass snake, slow worm and viviparous lizard. Field margins may potentially provide suitable habitat for ground nesting birds. This site is located to the north of Maidstone and provides connectivity between the urban edge and the wider Kent Downs countryside. Wildlife movement is potentially possible along corridors of habitat which include woodland blocks, and the railway embankment adjacent to the southern boundary.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Poor
14.55 HS1 visually detracts from the rural character of the area. Large mixed woodland blocks, some of which are ancient woodland, and mature tree belts form ecological clusters and Snarkhurst Wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. However, connectivity has been lost through hedgerow removal.	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Some
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	High
14.56 Historic field pattern and boundaries have been lost to intensive agricultural practices. However Broad Street and Hollingbourne are designated as Conservation Areas, illustrating the heritage significance of settlement, and a moat at Moat Wood is designated as a Scheduled Monument.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	High

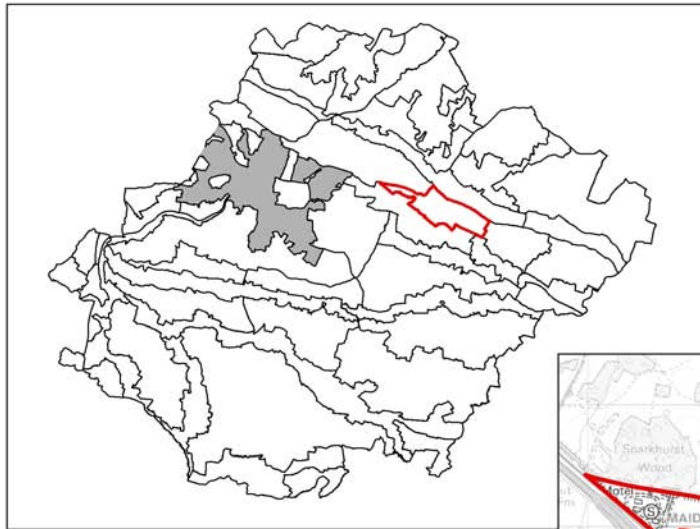
GUIDELINES – RESTORE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

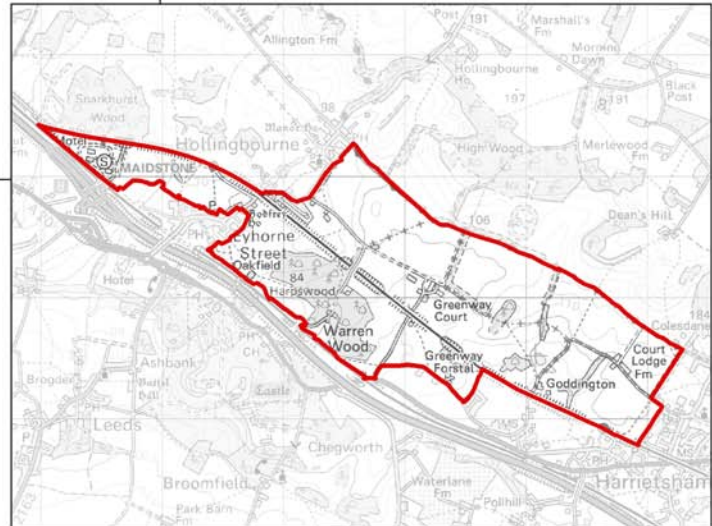
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Gault Clay Vale
- Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014

15. Eyhorne Vale



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape to north of the railway line is situated within the Kent Downs AONB
- Mixed woodland belts and blocks
- Willow trees mark the location of drains and ditches
- Narrow lanes which generally run against the contours south west to north east
- Distinctive brick railway bridges
- Major infrastructure routes along the south western periphery

Location

15.1 Eyhorne Vale lies to the north east of Maidstone, and is partly situated within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The northern boundary is defined by the Pilgrim's Way, and the southern boundary largely follows the boundary between the Gault Clay and the Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds. Harrietsham forms the eastern boundary and Hollingbourne and Eyhorne Street are situated to the west.

15. Eyhorne Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

15.2 There is a significant amount of tree cover, provided by mixed native planting along infrastructure routes, strong vegetation belts and a collection of individual woods which form one large mixed ancient woodland tract to the south east of Eyhorne Street. Named Warren Wood, this is thought to have been a Medieval rabbit warren associated with Leeds Castle. The woodland comprises broadleaf species, scrub, sweet chestnut coppice and some evergreen pine, and is also designated as part of the wider Leeds Castle Estate Meadow and Woodland Local Wildlife Site for its large number of mosses and liverworts.

15.3 The field pattern is irregular, with pockets of small fields interspersed between swathes of larger scale and more regularly shaped fields. North of Eyhorne Street the intimate hedged field pattern forms a patchwork mosaic, divided by a series of vegetation lined drains which cross the landscape. Mature oaks and limes are dotted throughout the fields, often adjacent to dense vegetation belts and hedgerows. To the north and east, arable intensification has led to the removal of some traditional hedgerow boundaries creating a larger field pattern. Isolated oak trees often mark the former lines of enclosure, as well as standing proud within the remaining hedgerows. Occasional linear poplar belts suggest there were once orchards, but there is no other remaining evidence to suggest that this was so. Springs emerge from the chalk across the lower slopes to the south forming a series of small ponds and Goddington Lake, part of which is designated

as a Local Wildlife Site.

15.4 There is little concentrated development although a recent housing extension is situated north of the railway line and Eyhorne Street. A series of traditional isolated farmsteads are scattered across these lower slopes of the Downs, sheltered at the foot of the steep scarp face. Of particular note, north of Eyhorne Street, the late 16th century grade II* listed Godfrey House comprises a very distinctive timber framed building with ornate chimneys and diamond leaded windows. Converted oast houses and timber barns at Goddington, to the south, suggest that the landscape here was once used for hop production. Roads are narrow and enclosed by woodland or hedgerows, and generally run against the contours in a south west to north east pattern. To the north, the route of the Pilgrim's Way is defined by a fragmented ribbon of vegetation, running along the contours of the lower slopes.

15.5 The railway line to the north is not widely visible from the adjoining landscape, because it is set mostly within cutting and is enclosed by a mature vegetation belt. The narrow roads generally pass beneath the railway line through a series of distinct brick railway arches. Five Arch Bridge, visible from the immediately adjoining landscape, forms an impressive and distinctive landmark feature. As suggested by its name, five individual brick arches span the cutting, and brick parapets channel vehicles across the

15. Eyhorne Vale

bridge above. Along the south western boundary, HS1 and the M20 run broadly in parallel. Whilst together they form a major and widely audible transport corridor, they are set mostly within cutting and are not widely visible from the adjoining landscape. Whereas in other areas the landform is evidently artificial with prominent bunds, here the route is more subtly integrated within the landscape. Mitigation planting and well established woodland at Ash Shaw and Warren Wood further soften the degree of severance. Although motorway traffic is widely audible from the landscape to the north, degrading the sense of remoteness and tranquillity, it is only from the very periphery of the area that the scale of this infrastructure becomes visually evident.

Geology, soils and topography

15.6 To the south the solid geology is Gault Clay, which is overlain with seasonally wet

deep clay soils. To the north of the railway line, Lower Chalk is overlain with well drained siltier soils and drifts of head are scattered across the area. The landscape is undulating, forming the foothills of the North Downs scarp.

Views

15.7 Where woodland and other intervening vegetation allow, there are long panoramic views across the foothills of the elevated North Downs, which are well wooded in this part. From some unenclosed sections of the Pilgrim's Way along the northern boundary, dramatic views of the open downland landscape and across the Len Valley to the Greensand Ridge unfold. There is a deceptive amount of tree cover throughout Harrietsham, which only allows glimpses of roofs during summer and gives the impression that there is very little development to the south at all.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

15.8 This is a landscape with a simple pattern and relatively few components, although the major infrastructure corridor along the south western periphery provides a degree of disruption. Although this corridor, and the service station to the north west, are generally well integrated into the topography and are not widely visible from the adjoining landscape, the audibility of traffic on the M20 has a major impact on the tranquillity of the immediate landscape. The ecological integrity is moderate because it is weakened by arable intensification with some large scale fields. Pockets of traditional small fields of pasture are enclosed by hedgerows and vegetation lined ditches, and these provide good habitat connectivity with the significant tract of mixed ancient woodland. The cultural integrity is variable. Hedgerows are generally intact where they remain, although some mature hedgerow oaks appear to be in poor condition with some evidently dead branches. There is little built development, although some is in a poor state of repair. The infrastructure route of the M20 and HS1 locally degrades the adjoining landscape character and sense of place.

Sensitivity

15.9 The key characteristics within this landscape are often very distinct, and provide consistency throughout the area. Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks, remnant oaks along former boundary lines, the pattern of vegetation lined ditches with localised pockets of willow and the series of brick railway arches all provide local distinctiveness. Visibility is high. Although immediate views are sometimes enclosed by woodland and hedgerows, the landform evidently forms parts of the rising foreground of the Downs and there are extensive panoramic views of the higher downland landscape to the north.



15. Eyhorne Vale

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vales
- North of the railway line, the landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve distinctive brick railway arches and maintain using like for like materials
- Avoid screening with coniferous planting
- Conserve characteristic oak, ash and beech hedgerow trees and isolated oaks within arable land, and plant new hedgerow trees and isolated specimens to replace ageing examples
- Conserve distinctive willow trees along ditches, and avoid planting new species of willow that are not considered to be locally appropriate species
- Conserve the traditional setting of listed buildings and soften the impact of recent farm buildings through native planting
- Avoid infill development and expansion across the downland at Harrietsham and Hollingbourne

16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape to the north forms part of the Kent Downs AONB
- Topography slopes upwards to the north across the foothills and lower slopes of the North Downs
- Mosaic of mixed farmland divided by non rectilinear hedgerow boundaries
- Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
- Small field pattern and equestrian grazing north of Harrietsham
- Series of drains running south, often defined by ribbons of native vegetation
- Blocks of native woodland
- Large scale industrial and commercial development

Location

16.1 Harrietsham to Lenham Vale lies to the east of Maidstone, and part of the landscape to the north falls within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) where the topography begins to incline across the Lower Chalk slopes. The western boundary of the area encompasses much of Harrietsham, and the eastern boundary is defined by the extent of Lenham. The Pilgrim's Way, which runs along the foot of the steep scarp of the North Downs and generally marks the divide between the Lower and Middle Chalks, forms the northern boundary. Sandway Road, and the approximate divide between the Gault Clay and Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds, which run to the south, marks the southern extent of the area.

16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

16.2 The landscape forms the lower slopes of the North Downs, gradually inclining and becoming steeper to the north. Blocks of broadleaf and sweet chestnut coppice woodland are scattered across the landscape, often linked by native hedgerow boundaries. Dickley Wood and Kiln Wood form the largest woodland blocks, which comprise ancient woodland. Kiln Wood, comprising six acres of mixed woodland, is designated as Kiln Wood and Oxley Wood Local Wildlife Site for its diversity and stream and pond to the north, which are good for birdlife. South west of Kiln Wood a pocket of lowland dry acid grassland is situated.

16.3 Ribbons of vegetation define the location of drains which emerge from the chalk and run southwards towards the River Len. Fields are variable in size and shape, and boundaries are often curved and distinctly non – rectilinear. In contrast the railway line cuts across the landscape, providing a harsh straight edge in comparison to some of the more organic, curved boundaries, and severing the traditional field pattern. Larger fields are under intensive arable cultivation, whereas some of the smaller fields are grazed, and the mix of field shapes and sizes provides a mosaic like pattern between the settlements of Harrietsham and Lenham. Much of the landscape immediately to the north of Marley Road has been subdivided by post and rail fencing for equestrian grazing.

16.4 There are many examples of traditional listed buildings along East Street, which is recognised as a Conservation Area. Here, tile hung terraced cottages, brick terraced Almshouses, ragstone houses and walling, chequered red and grey brickwork and weatherboarding gives a central and traditional

feel. Of particular note is The Old House, which is a grade I listed, close studded and jettied, timber framed Wealden Hall House. In contrast, there has been much infill development within Harrietsham to the north of the A20, generally comprising recent housing development situated within cul-de-sacs. However the grade I listed ragstone Church of St John the Baptist, Harrietsham, is of particular note. Isolated in its position, the church is particularly attractive against the backdrop of the North Downs escarpment. To the east, Lenham was developed at the foot of the North Downs as a traditional market town around the sources of the Great Stour and the River Len. Designated as a Conservation Area and situated around a picturesque central square, the village centre comprises numerous vernacular style listed buildings, including timber framed properties, weatherboarding, chequered red and grey brick and Flemish bond brickwork. The church is very distinctive because it is constructed from ragstone and flint, reflecting the underlying local geology. However, the outskirts of Lenham have expanded with 20th century housing development and Lenham Storage Depot forms a large commercial development to the west of the village.

16.5 There are few roads throughout the rural landscape between the settlements of Harrietsham and Lenham, although the busy A20 links the two. Roads from the settlements generally lead towards other surrounding villages, which is sometimes evident from the road names, such as Headcorn Road. To the north, the Pilgrim’s Way characteristically follows the contours along the foot of the steep scarp.

16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale

Geology, soils and topography

16.6 The solid geology of the area is predominantly Lower Chalk with fringes of Middle Chalk to the north. A ribbon of Gault Clay runs to the south of the railway line, and south of this the underlying geology of the Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds begins. Deposits of head are scattered across the area, with extensive drifts around Lenham. Soils are generally well drained and silty, although heavier seasonally wet deep clay overlays the Gault Clay to the south. The topography is undulating, and inclines northwards across the foothills of the North Downs. North of the A20, the landscape begins to incline more steeply at the very foot of the scarp.

Views

16.7 To the south of the A20, views within the area are generally restricted by vegetation and built development. Despite its size and elevated location, industrial development at Marley Works is not widely visible from the surrounding area because it is well screened by surrounding vegetation. Where intervening vegetation and development allows, there are extensive panoramic views of the higher downland outside the area to the north. A 60m chalk cross carved into the scarp slope of the Downs, which was first constructed in 1922 to commemorate soldiers who fell in the First World War, stands out as a distinctive landmark feature. From higher ground along the Pilgrim's Way, views are more open across the landscape to the south.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

16.8 The rural landscape between Harrietsham and Lenham is reasonably intact, and there is a consistency in the underlying geology and landform. Although some fragmentation is caused by the railway line and the busy A20, the pattern of landscape elements is generally coherent. However there are some significantly sized visual detractors, comprising the extensive industrial site at Marley Works and Lenham Storage Depot. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst development and intensive arable production weaken opportunities for wildlife, woodland blocks and interlinking hedgerows provide good connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. Heritage features generally appear to be in very good condition, although 20th century infill development and other detached recent housing along peripheral roads, does not respect the local vernacular which is so prevalent throughout parts of Harrietsham and Lenham.

Sensitivity

16.9 The pattern of woodlands, hedgerows and the mosaic like field pattern between Harrietsham and Lenham is very distinctive, as is the location of Harrietsham and Lenham, situated at the foot of the Downs and at the sources of rivers and springs. Traditional buildings within Harrietsham and Lenham are also very distinctive, although extensive infill development and expansion weakens the sense of place slightly. Visibility is high, with some long views of the Downs to the north and open views across the landscape to the south of the Pilgrim's Way.



16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND RESTORE

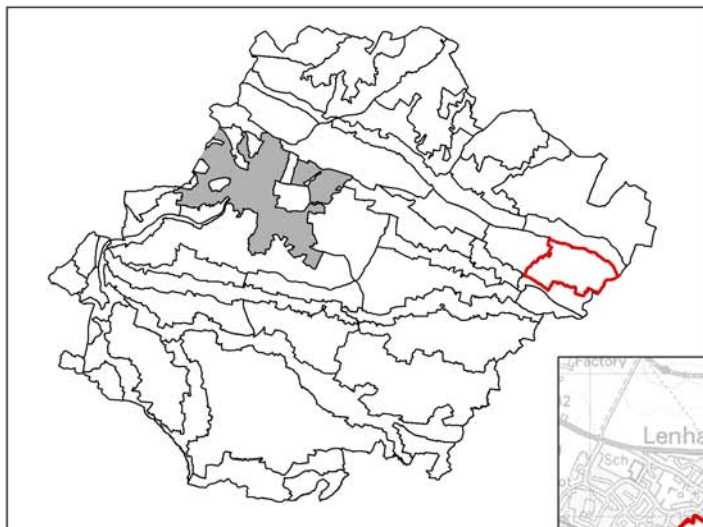
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

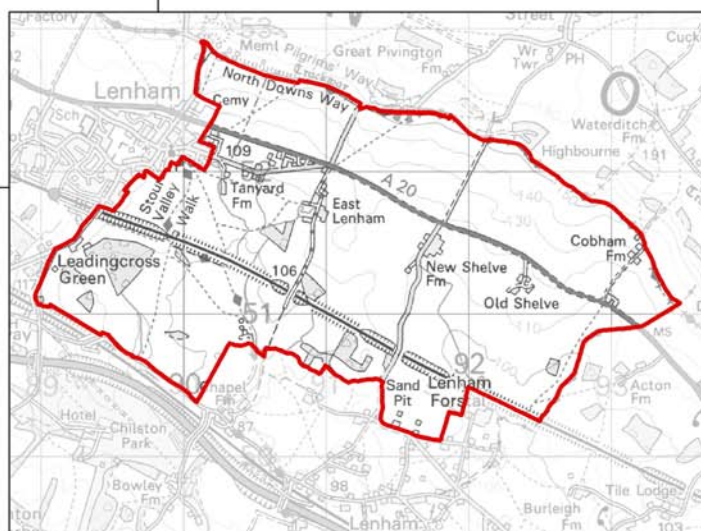
- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- Harrietsham to Lenham Vale is partly situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and appropriately manage the pocket of lowland dry acid grassland south west of Kiln Wood. Refer to Maidstone’s local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Conserve the mosaic field pattern and hedgerow boundaries, and restore further traditional boundaries where practicable
- Resist further agricultural intensification and maintain the separation between Lenham and Harrietsham
- Conserve the setting of traditional listed buildings and Conservation Areas
- Resist further development along the A20 corridor
- Resist further expansion of, or any new, industrial/commercial developments



17. East Lenham Vale



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape to north of A20 is situated within the Kent Downs AONB
- Series of springs and drains run south towards the Great Stour
- Medium to large sized fields of arable and pasture
- Field boundaries and roads run against and along the contours
- Isolated farmsteads
- Railway line cuts through landscape with arched brick underpasses

Location

17.1 East Lenham Vale lies to the far east of Maidstone, and the landscape to the north of the A20 forms part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Pilgrim's Way forms the northern boundary, along the bottom of the steepest section of the scarp face of the Downs. To the south, the area is broadly defined by the extent of the Gault Clay. The periphery of Lenham forms the western boundary, and the Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area, to the east, may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

17. East Lenham Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

17.2 Here at the foot of the steepest section of the scarp face of the North Downs, the landscape is slightly more enclosed than the exposed downland landscape to the north. The field and vegetation patterns are varied. To the north and east there is a simple pattern of large open arable fields, divided by native hedgerows which run against and along the contours in a distinct and regular pattern. There is a strong consistency in species, which mostly comprise hawthorn, hazel, field maple and dogwood, entangled with old man's beard. Immediately to the east of Lenham and to the south, fields are medium sized and there is a greater sense of enclosure, with scattered mixed blocks of ancient woodland and frequent native hedgerows, often with standard oak trees. Taller tree belts run against and along the gentle contour pattern to enclose a patchwork of fields containing arable crops and some pasture. The field pattern becomes smaller immediately surrounding farms and at Leadingcross Green, where horses graze within fenced paddocks.

17.3 A railway line is defined by a mature vegetation belt where it crosses the landscape, and distinctive brick archways allow access beneath the tracks and frame the view of the rural landscape on either side. Again, following the contours, the railway line does not generally detract from the surrounding field pattern. Springs emerge in this location at the foot of the Downs, with a series of vegetation lined ditches and drains running southwards towards the Great Stour. Willow trees often differentiate

these water courses from other hedgerow boundaries.

17.4 There is limited development with 20th century housing at Leadingcross Green, to the south of Lenham, warehouses and recent commercial development along the A20 at Ashmill Business Park, and scattered farmsteads which are often located at the sources of springs. Of particular note, New Shelve Farm and Old Shelve Farm provide distinctive collections of vernacular style buildings, including oast houses and ragstone and timber weatherboarded barns. Many of the farmhouses throughout the area comprise mid 17th to late 18th century grade II listed farmhouses of chequered red and grey brick with plain tiled roofs. An adjacent dovecote to New Shelve Farm is also grade II listed, constructed in 1711 of red brick with occasional sections of Flemish bond. Very few roads cross the landscape, which is largely accessed via private tracks which link farmsteads and a network of public footpaths, which cross the landscape and include the Stour Valley Walk promoted Long Distance Path. However the busy A20 follows the contours along the foot of the Downs, marked by scattered ash trees, and with minor hedgerow lined lanes running against the contours as the land rises northwards. Traffic on the A20 to the north and the M20 to the south is audible and detracts from the remoteness and tranquillity of some parts of this landscape.

17. East Lenham Vale

Geology, soils and topography

17.5 The solid geology of the area is predominantly Gault Clay, with Lower Chalk across the slightly higher foothills of the Downs to the north. There are extensive drifts of head, and alluvium deposits follow the course of streams. Soils are seasonally wet deep clay across the Gault Clay, although they become shallower and silty across the chalk. The landform is undulating, and begins to rise most evidently north of the A20 at the foot of the scarp.

Views

17.6 As the ground rises to the north there are some longer views across the lower landscape to the south and traffic on the A20 is evident. From the A20 there is a sense of

being at the foot of the Downs, with immediate views of the inclining landscape to the north. A large silo at Marlow Farm provides a prominent elevated feature within the landscape to the west, clearly visible from parts of the A20. The developed extent of Lenham is noticeable in views from fields immediately to the east of the village, where the distinctive flint and ragstone Lenham Church and the facade of a timber barn at Court Lodge stand out within other more recent residential development. Facing north, there are long, extensive, panoramic views of the elevated North Downs. The chalk memorial cross to the north of Lenham and the A20 stands out as a key landmark feature that draws the eye in many views across the undulating rural foreground.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

17.7 This is a unified landscape where the consistently undulating topography, frequent woodland blocks and hedgerow enclosed fields provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, comprising sewerage works to the south (although this is not widely visible), and warehouses and a business park along the A20. There is a good hedgerow network, frequent woodland blocks and also a network of drainage ditches. Oxley Wood and pasture and ponds at Lenham Forstal are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. However, the significant amount of arable intensification means that the ecological integrity is moderate. The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst some trees are over mature and there are some gaps in hedgerows, the overriding condition of remaining hedgerows, woodland and the built environment is good. However, the setting of some historic farm buildings has been degraded slightly with the location of more recent and large scale agricultural barns.

Sensitivity

17.8 The location at the foot of the Downs, evidenced by the sweeping views of the elevated downland to the north, is a distinctive feature. The field pattern, hedgerow network, woodland blocks and vernacular style farmhouses are very distinctive key characteristics which contribute both to local distinctiveness and continuity. Overall, visibility is high in this location at the foot of the Downs. Whilst immediate views are often enclosed by intervening vegetation, there are striking long distance views of North Downs.



17. East Lenham Vale

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Open
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Very High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

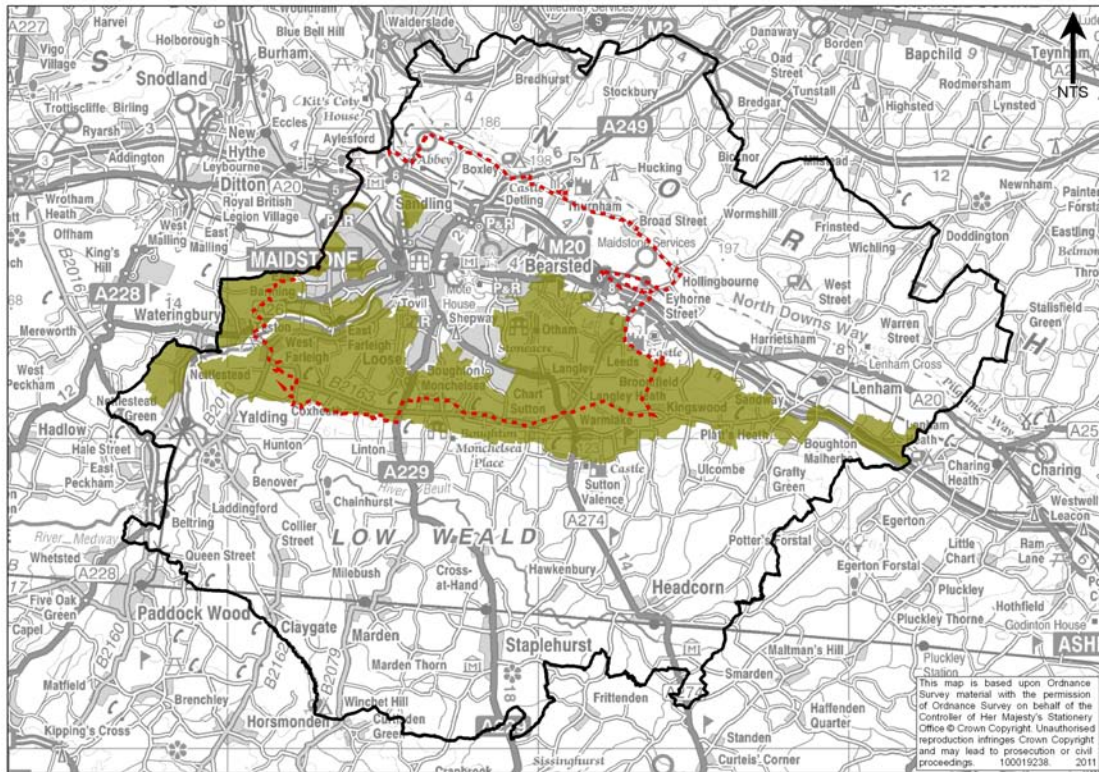
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vale
- North of the A20, the landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and enhance hedgerows and tree belts and restore hedgerow boundaries where practicable
- Plant new oak standards in hedgerows to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the traditional setting of historic buildings and Conservation Areas, and soften the impact of recent farm buildings through native planting
- Conserve the crisp boundary between Lenham's compact settlement and the surrounding rural area



Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands: introduction



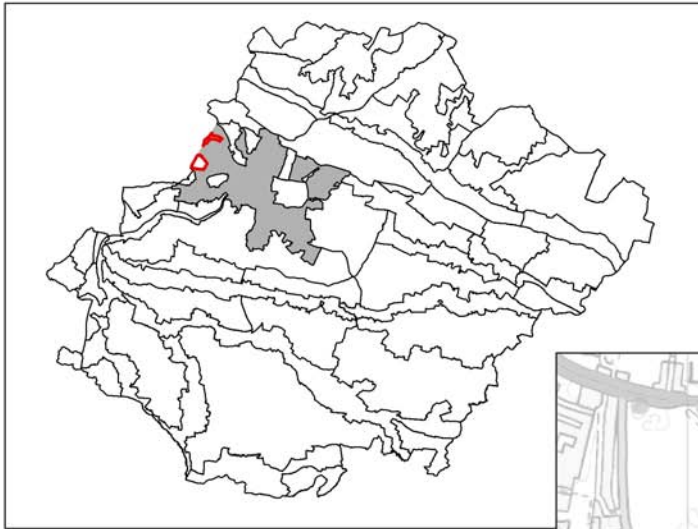
This landscape comprises a large belt of Greensand which forms the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge. The land cover comprises extensive belts of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch and a significant amount of fruit production. Elsewhere the land is used for mixed farming, with a strong contrast between large open arable fields and more enclosed pockets of pasture. The landscape is marked by development within Maidstone and the major infrastructure routes of the M20 and HS1. To the north the landscape becomes heathier, evidenced by typical heathland vegetation across the acidic soils, few hedgerow species and areas of sand extraction. Ragstone has been quarried throughout the Greensand landscape, and this distinctive material provides strong continuity throughout the built environment. Other frequent building styles include weatherboarding, timber framed and tile hung properties. Surface water is an important feature of the Greensand, and springs emerge along the dip slope and streams run towards the subtle Len Valley and the Loose Valley. In contrast, the River Medway incises the Greensand within a deep and steep sided clay based valley. Estate parkland is common, often utilising woodland as a backdrop to the layout. Leeds Castle forms a good example of this design which is typical throughout the wider Greensand landscape.

Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands: generic guidelines

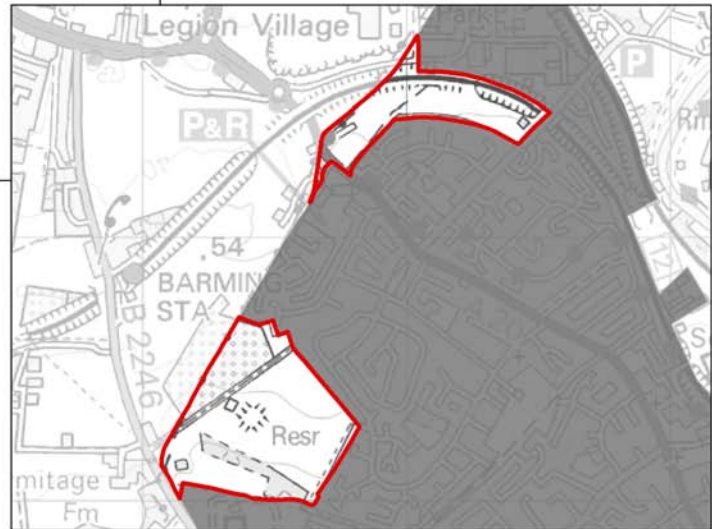
- Appropriate proposals that would enable fruit and hop production to continue should be promoted
- The conservation of the strong pattern of existing woodlands, hedgerows and shelterbelts and remaining hop gardens and orchards is important in maintaining the traditional landscape pattern and habitat connectivity
- Reinstate the historic hedgerow network, particularly in-between woodland areas, to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Conserve, and enhance through appropriate management, old orchards as a distinctive landscape feature, and for their nature conservation interest
- Conserve, restore, enhance and extend areas of relict heathland
- Encourage the planting of new community orchards around settlements, within large housing development schemes and on land of currently low biodiversity value to form part of the green infrastructure provision for strategic development schemes in the fruit belt. Such orchard planting would provide landscape, biodiversity and cultural benefits in addition to recreation and access opportunities, which would constitute locally relevant examples of the multi-functional green infrastructure that is advised by the South East Green Infrastructure Framework
- Enhance rivers and associated tributaries, ditch and pond networks by promoting a 30m natural corridor along the length of a watercourse and large water bodies (extending 15m away from either side of the watercourse). For smaller streams, ditches and ponds the natural corridor should be 20m (extending 10m landward from each water margin)
- Improve, enhance and manage disused quarry sites for increased biodiversity, whilst respecting the surrounding landscape character



18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Arable land
- Orchards
- Sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Regenerating scrub
- Sports ground
- Reservoir

Location

18.1 Barming Greensand Fruit Belt lies to the west of Maidstone, and comprises two small parcels of landscape which abut Maidstone Borough boundary. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. These landscapes share intrinsic landscape characteristics, and form part of a wider landscape character area which extends to the west of the borough boundary. Their boundaries are provided by the urban edges of Maidstone and the borough boundary.



18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

18.2 Tree cover is provided by mature boundary vegetation, which follows much of the urban edge. A band of sweet chestnut coppice, to the north of The Old Hermitage, encloses arable land and screens views of Maidstone Hospital and the residential edge of Maidstone to the east. To the west, a small orchard block reflects the land use which is prevalent outside the borough boundary to the west. Numerous specimen trees, including cherry, apple, horse chestnut and copper beech, are scattered around a sports ground to the north and boundary vegetation, comprising native and coniferous species, buffers views to the railway line to the north and to the surrounding urban edge. To the west of the sports ground, regenerating scrub includes much ash and hawthorn which emerge from tall grasses and weeds.

18.3 The extent of tree cover restricts views to the urban edge and encloses the landscape, although there is no distinct field pattern. Fencing adds to the physical enclosure throughout this landscape, including tall security type fencing where it contains a covered reservoir to the south and close boarded fencing where it encloses private residential gardens.

18.4 There is very little built development within the landscape, which comprises a recent red brick and weather boarded hall at the sports ground to the north, and a covered reservoir to the south. To the very south, The Old Hermitage and adjoining site of Lawrence's Chapel comprise historic development. The

development is visually secluded, but it contributes towards the sense of place because 'Hermitage' has been used to name the adjacent road and later development outside the borough boundary to the west. A very small section of the busy A20 London Road runs through part of the area and although it is well screened by buffer vegetation, traffic is clearly audible from the adjoining landscape. Pedestrian tracks and paths, many of which are informal, have developed throughout this landscape which is so readily accessible from Maidstone's urban area.

Geology, soils and topography

18.5 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with bands of Sandgate Beds and Folkestone Beds to the far south. Soils are loam over limestone, and the topography is very gently undulating.



18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt

Views

18.6 Within the area, views are contained by mature boundary vegetation along the urban edge and railway line, and a belt of sweet chestnut coppice woodland. Given the close proximity to Maidstone's urban area, views of the urban edge are generally well screened by mature vegetation. However some taller elements of the urban area are visible where they protrude above vegetation, such as lighting columns and the tops of commercial development along the A20 London Road. Glimpses of recent housing on the urban edge, and close boarded fencing which contains private residential gardens, are sometimes available. There are, however, some long views of sections of the North Downs from parts of this landscape.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

18.7 This is a fragmented landscape where the proximity to the urban edge has led to the landscape being influenced by recreational land uses. However there are few visual detractors comprising security fencing and glimpses of the residential urban edge where these are available. The ecological integrity is moderate. Although there is some intensively farmed arable land, there is a significant amount of regenerating scrub vegetation, a woodland belt and mature boundary vegetation, which together provide a good habitat network. The cultural heritage is poor because the recreational land uses and the encroachment of the urban edge have led to a general demise in traditional land use and field pattern. Whilst The Old Hermitage comprises a traditional building, the overriding style of development is recent and contributes little to the sense of place.

Sensitivity

18.8 This landscape is largely indistinct because of its proximity to the urban area of Maidstone which has impacted on the land use and fragmented the traditional landscape characteristics. There are, however, some fragments of very distinctive character, such as the orchards and The Old Hermitage. Visibility is generally low because immediate views are often interrupted by intervening vegetation, although there are some longer views of the North Downs.



18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Very Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Poor	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Weak	Visibility:	Low

GUIDELINES - IMPROVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

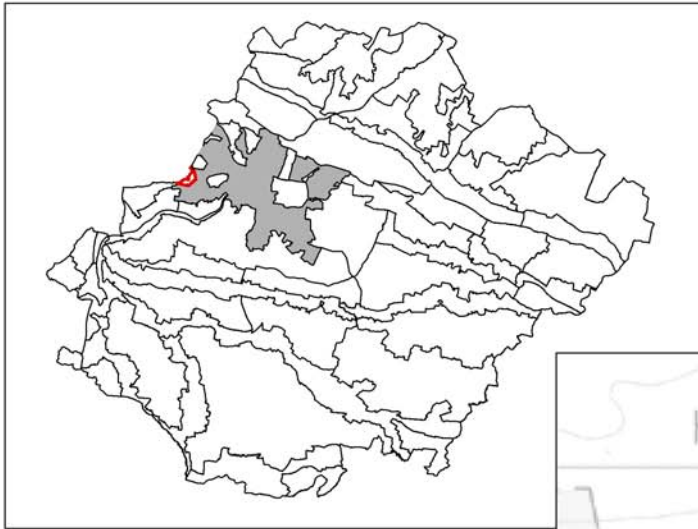


SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

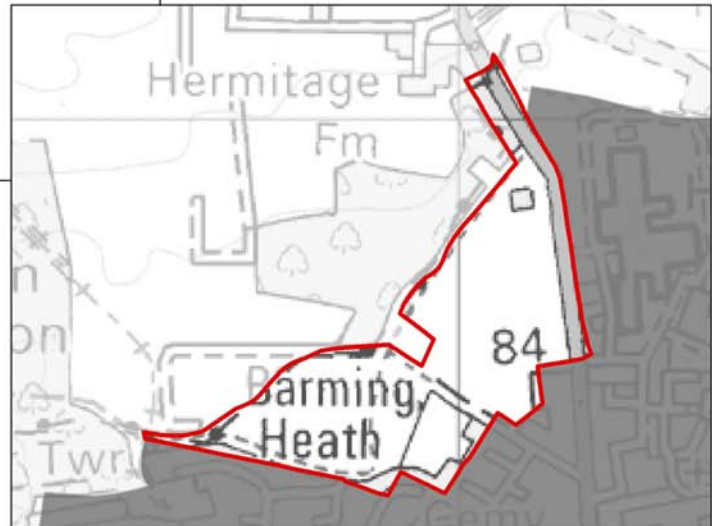
- Consider the generic guidelines for the Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Soften views of security fencing with native vegetation
- Maintain and improve the extent of vegetation cover which restricts views of the urban edge
- Maintain key views of the elevated North Downs
- Maintain the integrity of the settlements of Barming and Allington, by retaining remaining open space between the two settlements
- Maintain the linear vegetation belt along the railway line and improve with further native planting to improve ecological connectivity
- Improve the sense of place by creating positive land uses within unmanaged areas whilst retaining the habitat opportunities for small mammals, invertebrates and birds of prey



19. Barming Heath Arable Land



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Apparently unmanaged arable land
- Cemetery with place of worship
- Small paddocks of equestrian grazing
- Sweet chestnut coppice and broadleaf woodland
- Reservoir

Location

19.1 Barming Heath Arable Land lies adjacent to the west of Maidstone's urban area, and comprises a small parcel of landscape which abuts Maidstone Borough boundary. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape forms part of a wider landscape character area which extends to the west of the borough boundary.



19. Barming Heath Arable Land



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

19.2 This landscape mostly comprises large arable fields, although tree cover is provided by Fullingpits Wood which supports a mix of sweet chestnut coppice and broadleaf woodland. Although only a small part of this woodland is situated within Maidstone Borough, mature native vegetation runs along Hermitage Lane and is scattered around small grazing paddocks. A cemetery also contains numerous mature firs and cedars. There are few hedgerow boundaries, although a gappy hedgerow which comprises much bramble and scrub vegetation aligns the public footpath that runs off Oakapple Lane.

19.3 Traditional field pattern has been lost because urban edge influences have begun to encroach on the landscape. There is a strong sense of enclosure, provided by the heavy backdrop of Fullingpits Wood and by the security fencing that contains a covered reservoir and a large commercial building on the periphery of the urban area. Small fields used for equestrian grazing, and enclosed by post and wire fencing, further fragment the landscape pattern to the south.

19.4 There is very little development except for recent stabling and a tiny dilapidated ragstone place of worship within the cemetery, which is contained by low ragstone walling. The cemetery was formerly associated with the County Lunatic Asylum at Oakwood Hospital. There are no roads within this area, although the landscape is accessible via public rights of

way that link the urban area to Fullingpits Wood.

Geology, soils and topography

19.5 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with bands of Sandgate Beds and Folkestone Beds to the north east. Soils consist of loam over limestone. The topography is generally flat.

Views

19.6 Within the area views to the north are across open and apparently disused arable land to the heavy and enclosing backdrop of Fullingpits Wood. Views are well contained by mature vegetation within the cemetery and adjoining pasture. The urban edge of Maidstone is clearly visible from much of the area, with views of the residential edge to the south and Maidstone Hospital buildings dominating and restricting views to the east. There are some long views of sections of the North Downs.



19. Barming Heath Arable Land

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

19.7 This is a fragmented landscape where the proximity to the urban edge has perhaps led to a decline in actively managed agricultural land, and some varied and disjointed land uses. There are many visual detractors including views to Maidstone Hospital, a large commercial warehouse on the urban edge and security fencing. The ecological integrity is strong. Arable land appears to have been left unmanaged, and Fullingpits Wood and mature native vegetation throughout the area provide good bases for wildlife. The cultural integrity is poor. Traditional field pattern appears to have been compromised by other fragmented land uses, and the ragstone place of worship and walling around the cemetery are in a poor state of repair. There are some fine examples of mature firs and cedars within the cemetery, but there is no evidence of new planting and some of these trees may be over mature.

Sensitivity

19.8 This landscape is largely indistinct because of its proximity to the urban area of Maidstone, which has impacted on the land use and fragmented the traditional landscape characteristics. Although the ragstone place of worship and walling around the cemetery are historic, they fail to contribute significantly to the sense of place because they are in a poor state of repair. Visibility is low because immediate views are generally interrupted by intervening vegetation and the urban edge of Maidstone. However it should be noted that parts of this landscape are visible from the residential edge of Maidstone, and there are also some longer views of the North Downs.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Very Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Poor	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Low

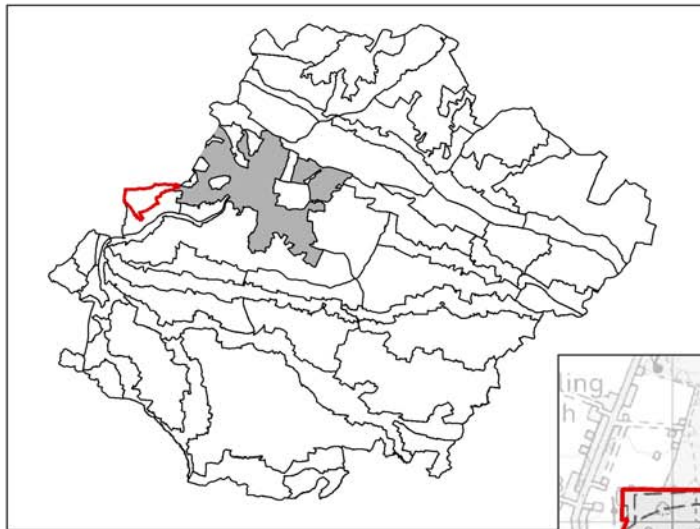
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Soften views of security fencing with native vegetation
- Improve the localised sense of place within the cemetery by planting new specimen firs and cedars to replace those that are declining
- Improve the built heritage through sensitive renovation
- Improve boundaries by gapping up native hedgerows

20. Oaken Wood



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area

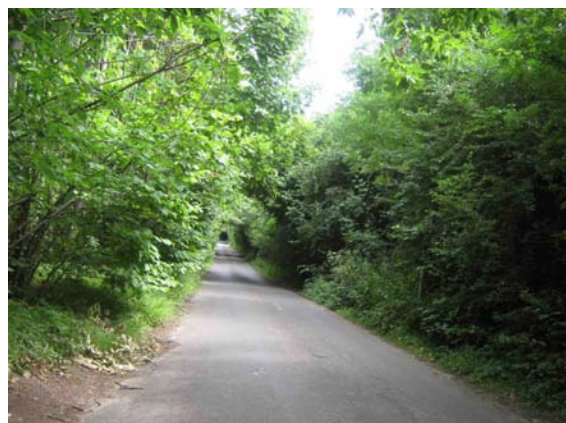


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Sweet chestnut coppice with native standards
- Coppice rotation provides various heights of coppice, and some clearings with isolated native standards and woodland ground flora
- Access points and tracks through woodland
- Narrow, enclosed, dark and winding road through woodland
- Few recent properties within woodland with extensive security fencing
- Disused mineral extraction site
- Minimal woodland clearance for crop production

Location

20.1 Oaken Wood is situated immediately to the west of Maidstone, and is characterised by extensive sweet chestnut coppice woodland. The character area covers extensive chestnut coppice woodland, and is bordered to the west by Malling Road. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the north. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the north forms a continuation of this character area.



20. Oaken Wood



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

20.2 The landscape is dominated by ancient woodland, comprising mostly actively managed sweet chestnut coppice within Oaken Wood, the adjoining Parkhurst Wood and The Grove to the south. To the east, there are patches of original mixed coppice of hawthorn, hazel and birch. A small pocket of fruit orchard is located to the south, enclosed by the surrounding sweet chestnut coppice. North Pole Road, which forms the main highway through the area, comprises a narrow and winding route. The adjacent woodland encloses the road on either side, providing a dark tunnel which opens up and becomes lighter occasionally where the coppice has recently been harvested. Native trees are scattered throughout the sweet chestnut, including oak, hazel, hornbeam, elder and yew. These standards are most noticeable where they remain isolated within recent clearings. Colourful woodland flora, such as foxglove and bluebell, occur within clearings and throughout younger sections of coppice where more sunlight has been allowed to reach the ground. Sections of native hedgerow, comprising hazel and hawthorn entangled with old man's beard, line parts of North Pole Road. Very occasionally, larger areas of woodland have been cleared and converted to intensive arable land use, which are heavily enclosed by the surrounding woodland. Tracks form a regular grid like network throughout the woodland for access and management, and these are often straddled with restriction barriers or large logs to prevent vehicular access off North Pole Road. The woodland is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site because the large block of ancient woodland is important for a range of taxa. It is also noted that the woodland supports a large population of breeding

nightjars. To the west, a section of Oaken Wood was designated in 1985 as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because it is a key geomorphological site which provides the best example in Britain of ridge and trough topography produced by intense cambering and gulling during the Pleistocene (tilting and cracking of surface rock outcrops by periglacial processes or deformation of underlying weaker strata).

20.4 There is very little development throughout the woodland, although isolated properties are scattered along, and set back from, North Pole Road. These comprise both older, traditional properties and large, modern houses, sometimes enclosed by tall security fencing. Former mineral extraction has been carried out to the south of the area, but this is now covered by woodland and there is no clear visual evidence.

Geology, soils and topography

20.5 The geology is mostly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, although an area of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds spreads across the higher contours to the north. To the west, drifts of head brickearth extend into the area. Soils are loam over limestone, with some fringes of deep loam to clay to the north. The landform rises to the north, although a narrow valley runs from around Livesey Street south east towards the River Medway Valley.

Views

20.6 Views are very heavily restricted because of the wooded character of the landscape. Even where coppice has been harvested, the clearings are small and well enclosed by further woodland.

20. Oaken Wood

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

20.7 This is a visually unified landscape because the sweet chestnut coppice woodland provides strong continuity throughout the area. There are very few visual detractors, and these are made less evident by the wooded character of the landscape. Although large pylons run across the area, these are largely screened by the woodland. Vehicle access barriers and tyres set within large concrete blocks are slightly detracting where they are located across access tracks into the woodland. The ecological integrity of the landscape is strong, hence it's designated status. The few scattered buildings throughout the woodland are generally in good condition. Although some may not respect local vernacular, they do not cause a significant impact because of the low visibility.

Sensitivity

20.8 The continuity of sweet chestnut coppice woodland, the lack of development and the sheer uniformity of the woodland provides a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness. However, because of the low visibility afforded by the woodland, minor change can be well screened and the overall sensitivity of the landscape is therefore moderate.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

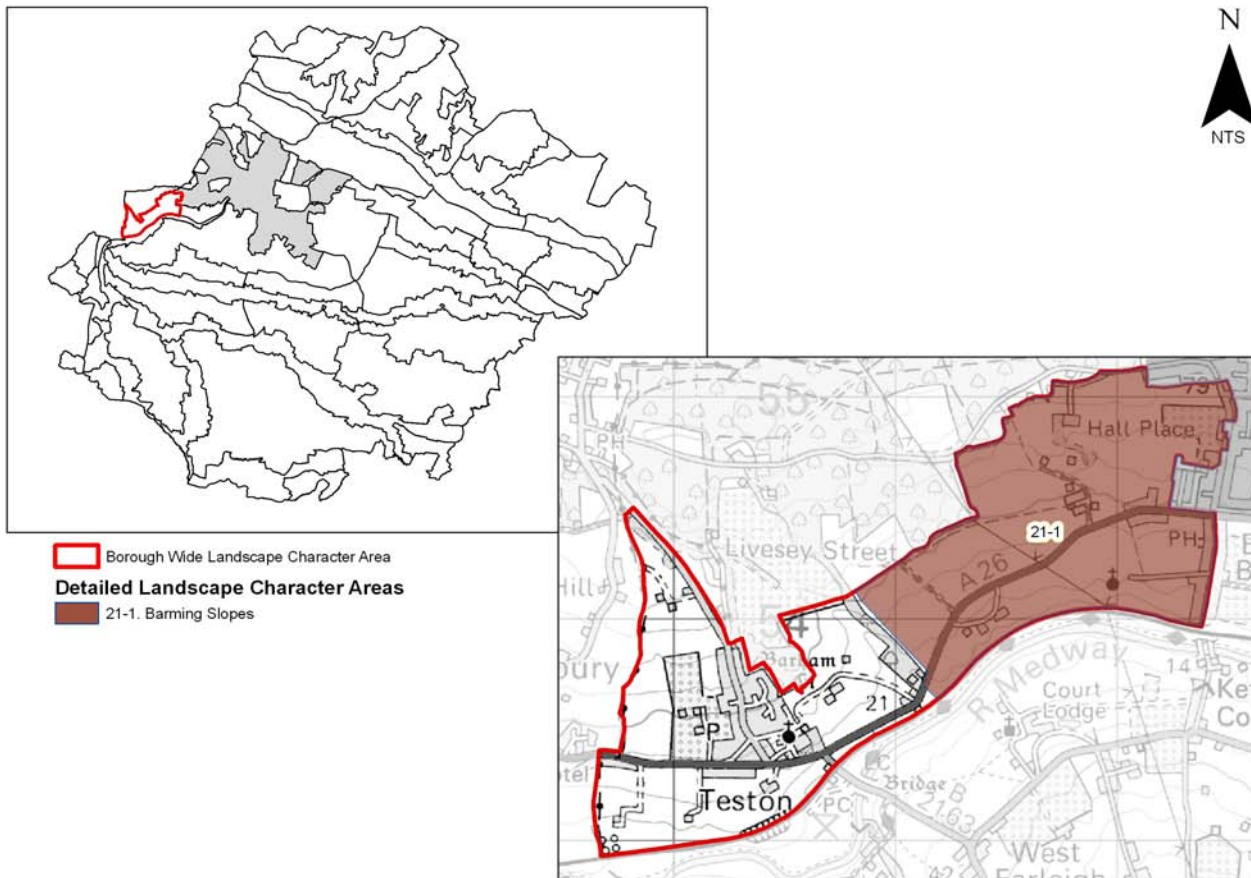
Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Enclosed
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Very Low

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the extent of this large tract of ancient woodland and continue management through rotational coppice
- Conserve the ecological diversity throughout the woodland
- Conserve the uniformity of the landscape and the limited palette of elements, and avoid fragmentation
- Use subtle timber vehicle obstruction methods where necessary to help reinforce the simplicity of the landscape

21. Teston Valley Side



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landform comprises the valley side of the River Medway, inclining gently in a northward direction
- Large arable fields
- Busy A26 Tonbridge Road cuts through the area
- Woodland to the north provides strong enclosure
- Dramatic and distinctive spire of an ancient church lies isolated within fields
- Long views across the Medway Valley to the opposite valley side

Location

21.1 Teston Valley Side lies to the south west of Maidstone, comprising the valley sides above the River Medway. To the east lies mostly residential development at East Barming, while the northern boundary is formed by the strongly defined woodland edges of Oaken Wood. The southern boundary is defined by the railway line which runs parallel with the River Medway. The character area extends west to Maidstone Borough Boundary. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

21. Teston Valley Side



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION



21.2 The landscape is generally under arable cultivation and fields are often large, owing to extensive hedgerow removal and a loss of traditional field pattern. Where traditional field patterns do survive, there is a general loss of former fruit orchards. Some former orchards have been grubbed up and the land left unmanaged. Although strong enclosure is provided by Oaken Wood to the north, and The Grove forms a distinctive backdrop to some housing within Teston, the landscape has an open and expansive character. There are some woodland blocks, often stretching southward from Oaken Wood, which provide visual continuity as well as habitat connectivity.

21.3 Pylons and overhead lines bisect the area and detract from the rural character, as does the busy A26 Tonbridge Road. From the A26, the large and distinctive Barham Court stands out on raised ground as an impressive landmark building. Now a business centre, the grade II* listed building comprises a grand country house set within parkland. Barham Court stands on the site of the house of Reginald Fitz Urse, one of the knights who murdered Thomas Beckett in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. The 12th century ragstone St. Margaret of Antioch Church, to the south of the A26, is isolated from other developments to create a dramatic focal point, and the church occupies an important archaeological site because a Roman villa and Norman manor house were located nearby. Oast houses at Hall Place Farm are also prominent and reflect the areas tradition of hop growing. Along North Street and South Street at East Barming there are numerous traditional buildings, although much patchy infill development tends to create a suburban character in places.

21.4 A stretch of recent, large, semi detached properties with long rear gardens line the A26 south of Teston. Teston itself comprises much recent development, mostly densely populated around cul-de-sacs and along Malling Road. The style of properties varies from small, traditional terraced cottages to rendered bungalows. Church Street provides the traditional core of Teston and is designated as part of a wider Conservation Area that encompasses Barham Court and its parkland, and Livesey Street.

21. Teston Valley Side



Church Street is based around The Green and Teston's ragstone church, which lies adjacent to Court Lodge Farm. A small thatched gatehouse to Barham Court adds to the distinctive character and variety of traditional buildings along Church Street.

Geology, soils and topography

21.5 The solid geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, which is incised by a narrow valley, to the east of Teston, of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. Soils are mostly loam over limestone, although there are fringes of seasonally wet loam to clay over shale across the lower contours immediately adjacent to the River Medway Valley. The landscape forms part of the northern valley side of the River Medway and, as such, it rises to the north.



Views

21.6 Views are wide and expansive, although they are contained to the north by the strong boundary of Oaken Wood. To the east, there are some views to the urban edge, although these are frequently intercepted by intervening vegetation. There are attractive long views to the south across the Medway Valley, over woodland belts alongside the railway, of the opposite rural valley side.



21. Teston Valley Side

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

21.7 There is a coherency throughout the landscape, provided by the consistent landform which inclines northwards and the open, arable land use. However, recent peripheral housing development on the edge of Maidstone, pylons and the A26 Tonbridge Road form significant visual detractors. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the land is intensively farmed and there has been an extensive loss of hedgerows, blocks of woodland provide connectivity with Oaken Wood to the north. Vegetation along the railway to the south also provides a long habitat corridor. Traditional landmark buildings and trees and vegetation generally appear to be in good condition, and there is some new planting within Teston. However, there is extensive loss of historic field boundaries, infilling around traditional buildings and loss of orchards.

Sensitivity

21.8 The sense of place is largely indistinct. Although historic aspects include the 12th century isolated church, long views to the opposite valley side and the traditional, distinct core of Teston, these aspects are largely compromised by insensitive infill development and the severance caused by the A26. Visibility is high, owing to the sloping valley side and intermittent tree cover.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

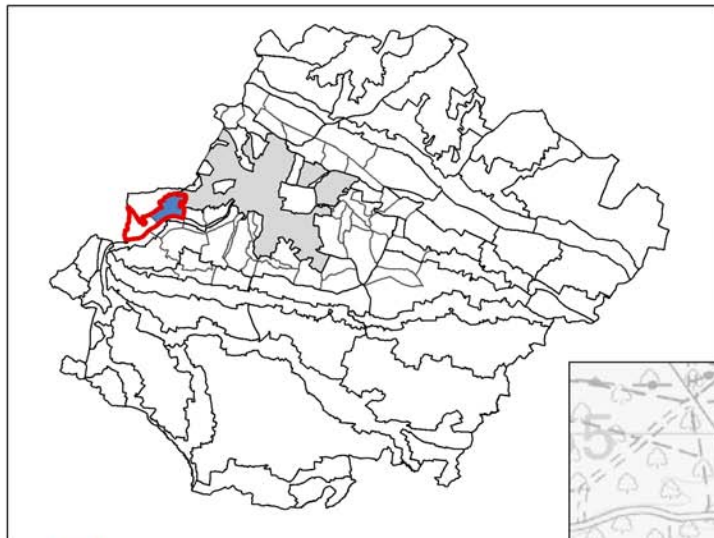
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

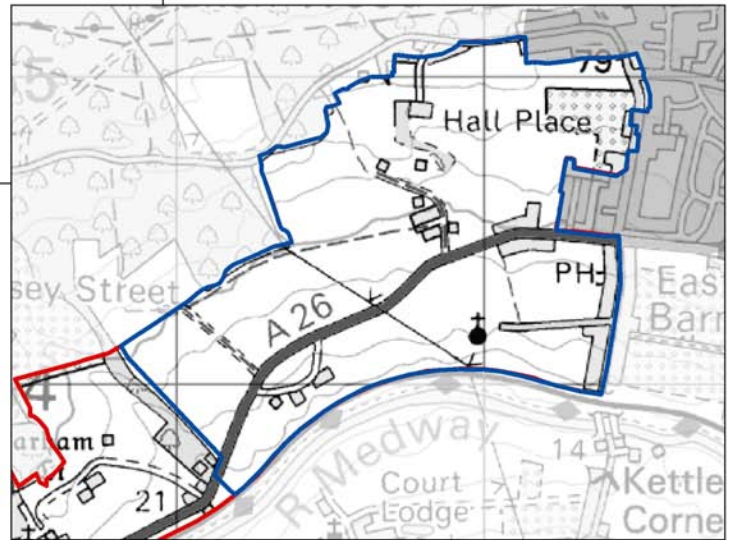
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve traditional buildings and the isolated setting of the 12th century St. Margaret of Antioch Church
- Conserve and respect the setting of the characteristic traditional central core of Teston
- Conserve the connectivity between Oaken Wood and woodland belts throughout this landscape, and improve by adding further woodland belts where practicable
- Conserve and improve the quality of existing boundaries by reinstating/gapping up hedgerows where practicable

21-1. Barming Slopes



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Strong enclosure by extensive woodlands to the north
- Dramatically isolated church building
- Large arable fields to the west
- Small area of orchards in the north east
- Long views out across the Medway to West Farleigh Medway Valley Side

Location

21.9 Barming Slopes lies to the south west of Maidstone, and comprises the valley sides above the River Medway. To the east lies mostly residential development at East Barming whilst the northern and western boundary is formed by the strong woodland edges of Oaken Wood. The southern boundary is defined by the railway line which runs parallel with the river. The busy highway of Tonbridge Road cuts through the area, and the distinctive spire of an ancient church lies isolated in fields closer to the Medway.



21-1. Barming Slopes



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

21.10 The area is predominantly in arable cultivation and fields are often large. In the north eastern corner there is a woodland belt including more ornamental species in the grounds of Hall Place. Fruit production with dwarf stock orchards and pasture are also more common in the north east, and the smaller field sizes combined with the taller and thicker hedgerow network create a more enclosed and intimate local landscape. The 12th Century church is isolated from other developments to create a dramatic focal point south of Tonbridge Road. Other notable buildings include distinctive oast houses, reflecting the areas tradition of hop growing, though no hop gardens survive. At Barnjet House and Cottage where there are remains of an historic chapel, there is a parkland feel to the landscape. There has been much patchy infill development along roads on the eastern and northern edges of the area such as at South Street leading down to Barming Bridge, at North Street and North Pole Road, although boundary vegetation generally helps to soften its impact. However the development tends to conceal the original village centres and the setting of traditional buildings. This creates a piecemeal suburban character in places. More modern housing at Priorsdean Close is less well related to the urban edges and sits obtrusively. Pylons and overhead lines bisect the area and detract from the rural character, as does the busy Tonbridge Road. Away from the main road however, highways are characteristically narrow and enclosed.

Geology, soils and topography

21.11 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with three very small patches of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay in the south adjacent to the River Medway. There is a very small section of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds in the northern tip at Oaken Wood. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone with a small patch of seasonally wet loam to clayey over shale in the south west corner adjacent to the River Medway. The topography is a gently undulating valley side on the northern flank of the Medway.

Views

21.12 Views to the north and west are visually strongly enclosed by the adjoining woodland, generally higher up the valley side. To the east views extend to the urban edge, although this is frequently intercepted by orchards, planting in gardens and the woodland belt running down from Hall Place to Hall Place Farm (east). There are attractive long views south across the Medway Valley, over woodland belts alongside the railway to West Farleigh Medway Valley Side. In many views the isolated ragstone Church forms an important element in the view.

Urban edge influence

21.13 The urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area, although urban influences include the busy Tonbridge Road, modern development along Tonbridge Road and pockets of unused rough pasture where former orchards have been removed.

21-1. Barming Slopes

BIODIVERSITY

21.14 This area comprises mainly arable land, with scattered trees around farm properties; there are few hedgerows, although there is marginal scrub vegetation at field boundaries. There is some rough grassland with a small stand of mature broad-leaved trees bordering the railway corridor to the south, and new plantation woodland to the north. The areas of scrub and rough grassland have the potential to support protected species which may include reptiles, roosting, foraging and commuting bats, and breeding birds. The woodland, as well as scattered trees around the properties, also provides nesting habitat for breeding birds, while woodland edges provide good reptile habitat. The rough grassland and broad-leaved trees connect well with riverside habitat to the south, and east and west along the river corridor; the railway also provides a valuable corridor of habitat suitable for reptiles and breeding birds.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

21.15 Peripheral housing development, pylons and the Tonbridge Road are detractors. Woodland belts and orchard hedgerow networks form habitats, although the arable areas weaken ecological value. There is a loss of historic field boundaries, infilling around historic buildings and a loss of traditional orchards, hedgerow boundaries and hop gardens.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

21.16 The sense of place is largely indistinct, although the striking location of the church and long views to the other side of the valley are the most positive aspects. Overall the sense of place is weak. Visibility is moderate with intermittent tree cover and an apparent landform.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

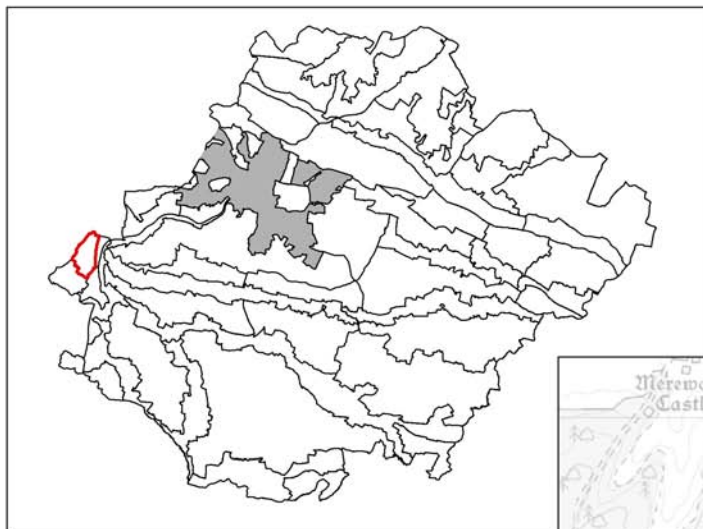
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

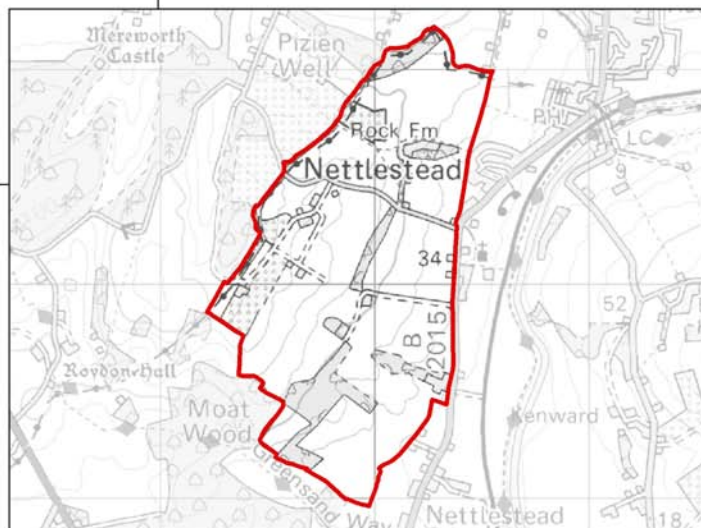
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve traditional buildings and the striking isolated location of the church
- Improve the definition of, and strengthen the boundary with, the urban edge
- Improve the quality of existing boundaries

22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landform comprises the upper valley side of the River Medway, inclining gently in a westward direction
- Arable landscape with medium to large sized fields, enclosed by hedgerows and tree belts
- Views out across the Medway Valley to the east
- Blocks of sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Some traditional orchards and poplar shelterbelts remain

Location

22.1 Nettlestead Greensand Ridge lies to the south west of Maidstone on the inclining valley side of the River Medway. It is the higher topography, and the subsequent change to freer draining soils of loam over limestone, that marks the difference between this landscape and the lower valley side to the east. The landscape to the south becomes more heavily wooded over the deep loam soils. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the north and west. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the north and west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

22.2 Clumps of sweet chestnut coppice woodland are scattered across the rural landscape, and a belt of native woodland vegetation, runs between the edge of Nettlestead and Rock Farm. These areas of woodland, along with part of the wider Moat Wood to the south, provide a heavy backdrop and a strong sense of enclosure to some of the extensive fields. Moat Wood comprises ancient woodland, which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. To the west, orchards form the periphery of a wider block of orchards which extend further across the landscape to the west, and remnant poplar shelterbelts suggest that orchards once provided a wider former land use. Where it is open, the land is intensively farmed for arable crop production and has been subject to extensive hedgerow loss, leaving fields that are large to medium in size. A series of springs emerge from the hillside, with drains running against the contours in a westward direction towards the River Medway.

22.3 There is little development throughout the area, comprising scattered isolated farmsteads which are sometimes set back from and even inaccessible from the public highways. West of Nettlestead and accessed off the distinctive narrow hedge lined Gibbs Hill, the isolated Rock Farm comprises a collection of traditional buildings and oast houses. There are few roads throughout the area, although Maidstone Road affords open views across the inclining arable landscape to the west. Gibbs Hill comprises a very distinctive, narrow and

hedgerow enclosed lane, which runs against the contours off Maidstone Road.

Geology, soils and topography

22.4 As part of the wider Greensand Ridge, the solid geology mostly comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, with fringes of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay and Wealden Clay across the lower slopes to the east. There is little drift, although there is a small patch of head around Diamond Place Farm. Soils are predominantly well drained loams over limestone, although they become wetter and loamier across the lower slopes to the east. The landscape forms part of the western valley side of the River Medway, and as such the landform rise in a westward direction.

Views

22.5 Where intervening vegetation allows, views are available across the extensive arable fields to enclosing boundary vegetation. However, the higher ground affords open panoramic views eastwards across Nettlestead and the Medway Valley to the opposite rural valley side.



22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

22.6 Generally, there is a sense of visual unity throughout this landscape. The inclining landform and consistency in terms of field size and land use provide an element of continuity and therefore coherency throughout the landscape. There are few visual detractors, although traffic along the busy Maidstone Road detracts from the rural character. The ecological integrity of the area is moderate. Whilst the arable land use is intensive, retained hedgerows, tree belts and woodland clumps provide habitat corridors and clusters and east of Rock Farm a deciduous tree belt, including a notable amount of willow, surrounds a series of small ponds. The cultural integrity of the area is variable. Although some post and wire fencing replaces former hedgerow boundaries in places and the traditional field pattern has largely been lost, where hedgerows have been retained they generally appear to be intact and in good condition. The built environment generally comprises traditional buildings, which are in good condition.

Sensitivity

22.7 Hedgerows provide continuity throughout the arable landscape, and contribute towards the character and distinctiveness of the narrow Gibbs Hill. The sloping landform and intermittency of tree cover provides high visibility, which makes this a sensitive landscape in terms of views in from the opposite valley side.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High



22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

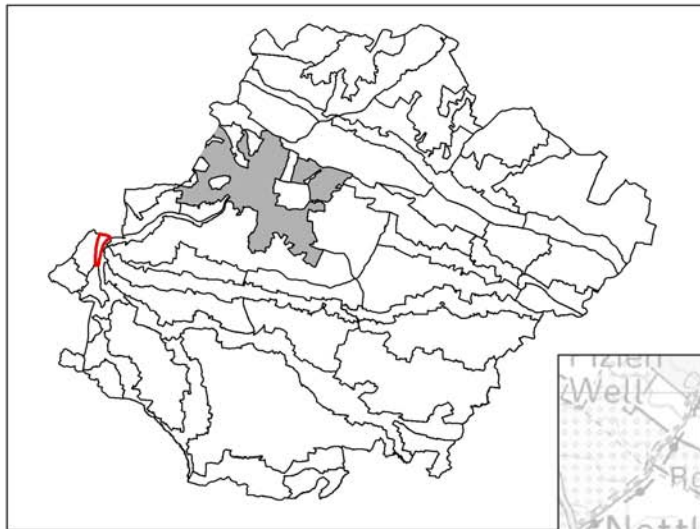
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the rural character of the landscape in views from the opposite valley side, and avoid further extension of Nettlestead across this landscape as the ground rises and becomes more visible
- Conserve and reinforce the setting of traditional buildings. Avoid proposals which would be detrimental to the setting of traditional buildings
- Conserve and enhance retained hedgerows, and reinforce the field pattern through hedgerow reinstatement where practicable



23. Nettlestead Valley Side



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landform comprises the valley side of the River Medway, inclining gently in a westward direction
- Arable landscape with medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows and tree belts
- Recent housing and caravan parks within Nettlestead, concentrated to the west of Maidstone Road
- Distinctive Saxon ragstone church and Medieval Nettlestead House

Location

23.1 Nettlestead Valley Side is situated to the south west of Maidstone, comprising the small settlement of Nettlestead and located on the valley side of the River Medway. A railway line, which runs broadly parallel with the River Medway, forms the eastern boundary, and part of Maidstone Road and field boundaries form the western boundary. The soils become loamier to the south of the area, which defines the change in character. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the north. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the north may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

23. Nettlestead Valley Side



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

23.2 The landscape forms the western valley side of the River Medway, and inclines accordingly in a westward direction. The land surrounding Nettlestead is mostly intensively farmed for crop production, which has been subject to extensive hedgerow loss. Whilst there are no significant woodland blocks, clusters of mature vegetation, a derelict orchard and some woodland planting are scattered around Nettlestead Place to the south, and a line of mature horse chestnut trees stands out along Maidstone Road.

23.3 The settlement of Nettlestead comprises predominantly 20th century brick terraced housing and caravan parks clustered within cul-de-sacs, which extend west of the busy Maidstone Road across the rising ground. Despite the largely very recent styles of housing, ragstone provides a thread of continuity where it has been used for some buildings and walling in particular. The northern extent of Nettlestead is designated as Watringbury Station Conservation Area, comprising the 19th century neo - Tudor buildings of the railway station (mostly situated within Tonbridge and Malling Borough) and traditional rows of 19th century terraced cottages which contrast with some of the more recent architectural styles. The traditional hand operated level crossing gates are a relatively rare survival.

23.4 To the south of the most densely developed part of Nettlestead, the grade I listed Nettlestead Place is situated within ten acres of gardens, which afford panoramic views

overlooking the River Medway and surrounding farmland. This large property comprises a manor which is listed in the Domesday Book (1086), but was largely rebuilt in the 1920's having been abandoned since the mid 17th century. The site borders a prehistoric trackway which followed the south side of the crest of the Greensand Ridge and crossed the river by a ford. A distinctive gatehouse is situated to the west of Nettlestead Place, which is visible from Maidstone Road. This grade I listed structure, built in the early 14th century, comprises a timber framed first floor with rendered filling and the west side (facing Maidstone Road) is jettied. A mid-to-late 15th century barn of eight timber-framed bays originally adjoined the south end of gatehouse, until it unfortunately burnt down in 1962.



23. Nettlestead Valley Side

The small, distinctive ragstone St. Mary's Church lies immediately to the north of Nettlestead Place, accessed from Maidstone Road via a path lined with a ragstone wall which encloses Nettlestead Place to the south. Although of Saxon origin, the existing church dates from the 13th – 15th century.

Geology, soils and topography

23.5 Along the immediate edge of the River Medway the solid geology of the area is Wealden Clay, with Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay across the higher slopes to the west. Soils are seasonally wet loam to clay over shale, with a small patch of loam over limestone across higher ground to the north west. As part of the immediate valley side of the River Medway, the landform rises to the west.

Views

23.6 Views across the immediate landscape are restricted by built development in Nettlestead, the rising landform and intervening vegetation. However, immediately west of Nettlestead, the higher ground affords open panoramic views eastwards across Nettlestead and the Medway Valley to the opposite rural valley side. The gardens of Nettlestead Place also afford similar views across the valley where they slope downwards towards the River Medway. The River Medway itself is not visible from this landscape, because it is concealed by vegetation along the railway line and on the lower slopes.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

23.7 Generally there is a sense of visual unity throughout this landscape, largely provided by the inclining landform which provides an element of continuity and therefore coherency. There are few visual detractors, comprising traffic along the busy Maidstone Road, large agricultural barns south of Nettlestead Place and metal fencing between Maidstone Road and the railway line. The ecological integrity of the area is moderate. Whilst the arable land use is intensive, vegetation along the railway line and around Nettlestead Place, and allotments to the north of The Old Rectory, provide a reasonable habitat network. The cultural integrity of the area is variable. Although some post and wire fencing largely replaces former hedgerow boundaries, and a traditional orchard lies derelict, mature vegetation around Nettlestead Place appears to be in good condition. Traditional buildings at Nettlestead Place and within the Nettlestead Conservation Area are in good condition, however the setting of some of these buildings has been compromised in places by inappropriate renovations and the poor siting of further recent development.

Sensitivity

23.8 Nettlestead Place and the adjoining ragstone church provide strong local distinctiveness and are very sensitive elements within the landscape. However far more extensive recent development within Nettlestead dominates the overriding character of built development, and this does not generally demonstrate or respect the local vernacular and therefore lessens the overall sense of place. The sloping landform and intermittency of tree cover provides high visibility, which makes this a sensitive landscape visually.



23. Nettlestead Valley Side

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

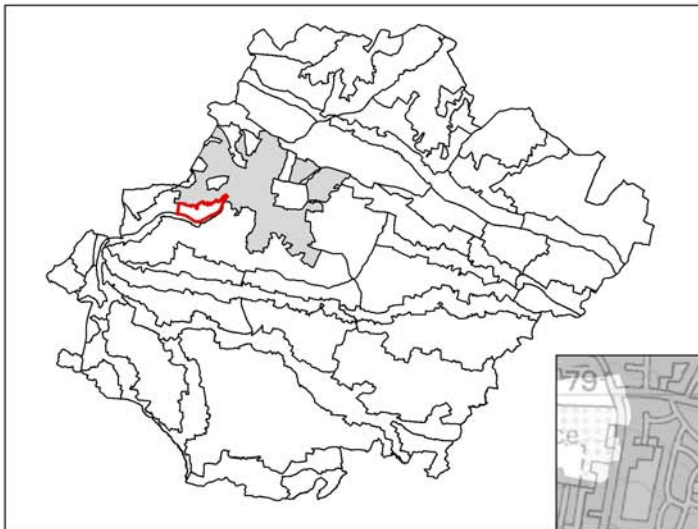
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

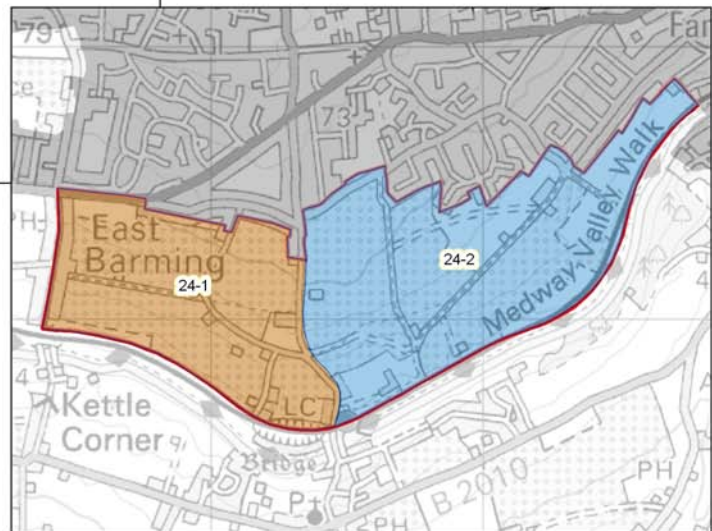
- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce the setting of traditional buildings. Avoid proposals which would be detrimental to the setting of traditional buildings and encourage sensitive renovations
- Consider views from the opposite valley side and avoid further encroachment of caravan parks across the landscape
- Conserve the rural skyline in views from within the valley
- Conserve and enhance retained hedgerows, and reinforce the field pattern through hedgerow reinstatement where practicable
- Conserve and reinforce the habitat network through gapping up linear vegetation along the railway line
- Avoid the use of coniferous species



24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards)



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Areas**
-  24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards
-  24-2. Fant Orchards



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landform slopes southward towards the River Medway
- Orchards
- Conversion to arable farmland to the east
- Strong use of ragstone in buildings and walls
- Southern edge of Maidstone forms a strong, crisp boundary

Location

24.1 Characterised by orchards, East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards) is situated to the immediate south west of Maidstone's urban area, forming the sloping valley side of the River Medway. The residential edge of Maidstone forms the northern and eastern boundary, and the periphery of East Barming, along South Street, forms the western edge. A railway line, running parallel with the River Medway forms the southern extent of the area.



24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards)



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

24.2 Orchards dominate the land use, creating a distinctive and regular field pattern of small orchard blocks divided by poplar shelterbelts, hedgerows and access tracks. Hedgerows comprise mostly hawthorn, with some hazel and dogwood, entwined with wild hops and old man's beard. East of Farleigh Lane, the orchard pattern is less regular and some of the orchards have been grubbed up and the land converted to arable land use. Some orchards here lay derelict, with scrub vegetation generating around the trees and overgrown poplar shelterbelts around their edges.

24.3 To the north, the urban extent of Maidstone generally provides a strong, crisp transition between the urban and rural areas, although the proximity to the urban edge is made evident with allotment gardens to the north east of Unicomes Lane. Some recent development has extended along Farleigh Lane, and infill development along South Street, at East Barming, gives a slightly localised suburban character in these places. In contrast the periphery of East Farleigh, to the south, provides a stronger sense of arrival with ragstone retaining walls lining Farleigh Lane, and chequered red and grey brick found frequently within buildings.

24.4 Away from the urban edge of Maidstone, scattered properties are set amidst the orchards, and Fane Farm, Wood Cottage and Prospect Place are accessed via an informal track which gives these properties a secluded

and remote character, given their proximity to the urban area. Rectory Lane also has a rural and traditional character, lined by a low ragstone wall beyond which there are panoramic views across orchards and the Medway Valley. The built environment comprises a noticeable amount of ragstone, chequered red and grey brick and numerous oast houses, which create a traditional character and a strong sense of place.

Geology, soils and topography

24.5 The solid geology comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, with fringes of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay to the south along the periphery of the Medway Valley. Soils are loam over limestone throughout the area. As part of the northern valley side of the River Medway, the landform rises to the north.

Views

24.6 Views within the area are restricted in places by intervening hedgerows and shelterbelts. However, the sloping landform gives rise to clear views across the orchards and out across the Medway Valley to the opposite valley side from some points within the landscape, such as from Rectory Lane. The fruit belt characteristics of orchards, tall poplar shelterbelts and the white cowls of oast houses stand out in these longer distance views. Nearer Maidstone, the periphery of the urban edge forms a strong boundary to the adjoining rural area.

24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards)

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

24.7 The sloping topography, orchards, use of ragstone and chequered red and grey brick form a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors including the harsh urban edge of Maidstone and fencing along the top of the traditional ragstone wall along Rectory Lane. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the orchards, shelterbelts and hedgerows provide a reasonable habitat network, there has been a significant conversion to arable land to the east. The cultural integrity is variable. The condition of heritage features is generally better in the west than the east, where the traditional pattern of orchards is fragmented and diminishing and hedgerow boundaries are gappy. Built development generally demonstrates local vernacular and contributes significantly to the sense of place, although this is compromised by recent infill development in places.

Sensitivity

24.8 The dominating land use of fruit orchards and the consistent use of ragstone and chequered red and grey brick are distinctive elements, which give a degree of continuity throughout the landscape and provide a sense of place. However, traditional land use patterns are diminishing slightly to the east where orchards have been grubbed up and the traditional field pattern is weaker. Visibility is high in this location along the valley side and, subsequently, there are open views across the orchards and the River Medway Valley to the south.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	High

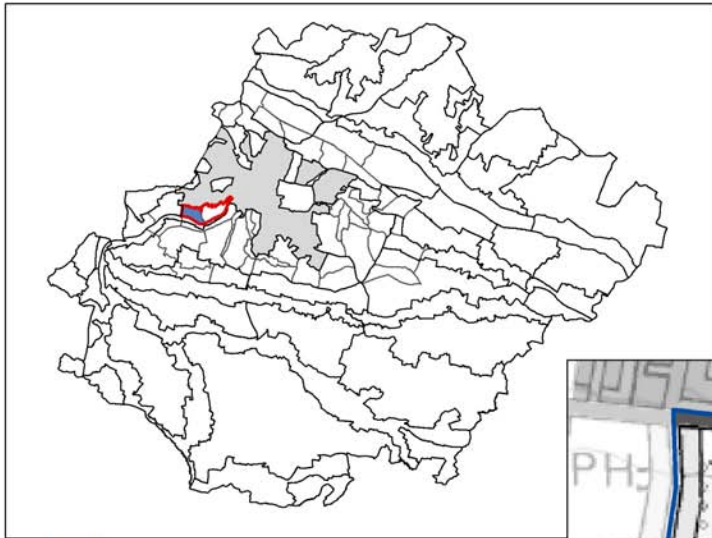
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

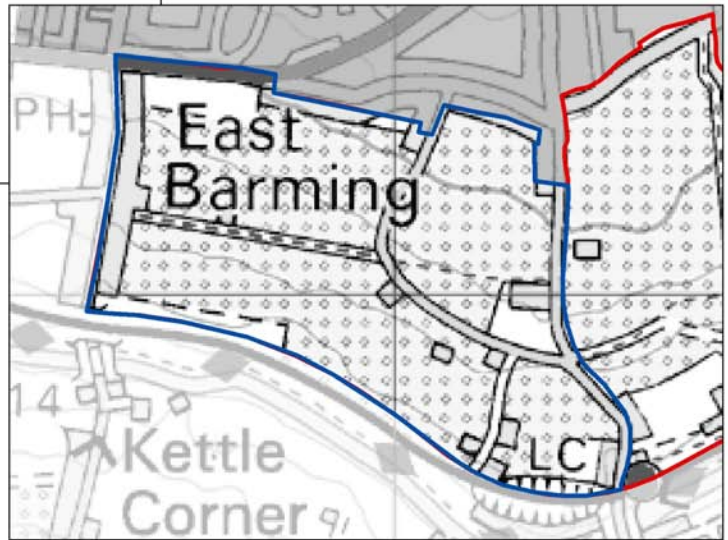
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the remaining pattern of orchards
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings
- Conserve the undeveloped rural landscape between the edge of Maidstone and East Farleigh
- Conserve the use of ragstone in walling and buildings
- Conserve the crisp transition between the urban and rural areas

24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Fruit orchards
- Poplar shelterbelts
- Narrow informal tracks
- Narrow enclosed lane
- Few, traditional buildings

Location

24.9 Rectory Land Orchards lie to the south west of Maidstone, north west of East Farleigh. The well defined urban edge of Maidstone forms the northern boundary of the area. The western boundary is formed by housing along South Street, which runs south from East Barming. The southern boundary is defined by the railway line which runs north of the River Medway. Farleigh Lane forms the eastern boundary of the area, running in a north south direction between the urban edge of Maidstone and East Farleigh.



24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

24.10 Orchards cover the vast majority of the area, although some small pockets have been removed. The orchards provide a strong, geometric, regular pattern and sense of enclosure, segregated by poplar shelterbelts and straight tracks. Open, rough pasture occupies such areas and there are also pockets of rough pasture with a corridor of native vegetation along the railway line to the south. Garden boundaries of properties along South Street and Glebe Lane include hedgerows, containing the urban surrounds. Development within the area is sparse, with few isolated traditional properties such as cottages and oast houses. Clusters of properties at Backett's Place and along Farleigh Lane are set within smaller land parcels and paddocks, which contain clumps of garden vegetation. Rectory Lane is the only highway within the area, which is narrow, winding and enclosed by ragstone walling in places.

Geology, soils and topography

24.11 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a small area of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay running along the southern perimeter adjacent to the River Medway. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is gently undulating, sloping gradually in a southerly direction towards the River Medway.

Views

24.12 Views within the area are restricted by orchards, ragstone walling and poplar shelterbelts. There are some views out of the area, across the Medway River Valley to the south, although these views are restricted by orchards.

Urban edge influence

24.13 Although there are some glimpses of the urban edge (along Glebe Lane) from within the area, there are few urban edge influences within the area itself.

24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards

BIODIVERSITY

24.14 This area consists mainly of commercial orchards, with a small amount of rough grassland and a small stand of broad leaved woodland around the Old Rectory health and fitness club, as well as a number of suburban gardens. There are some hedgerows and belts of semi-improved grassland around field boundaries, which may provide commuting and foraging routes for protected species such as reptiles and bats. The woodland stand and gardens provide a potential habitat for breeding birds, and the orchards also provide potential foraging habitat for birds. This area connects well with adjacent areas of scrub/hedgerow to the west (Barming Slopes), east (Fant Orchards) and south (Quarry Wood Valley).

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

24.15 The dominance of orchards and lack of development provides a simplistic landscape and a unified pattern of elements. Although there are few visual detractors, wire fencing has been placed along the top of walling in some areas and there is some close boarded timber fencing near properties. Large agricultural buildings also appear out of scale within the landscape.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Strongly unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity

24.16 The main components of this landscape are orchards and traditional isolated buildings, which are locally distinct and provide a strong sense of place. Use of local ragstone for walling and enclosure by poplar shelterbelts also contribute towards the distinctiveness of the area.

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Distinctiveness:	Very distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Strong
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Moderate

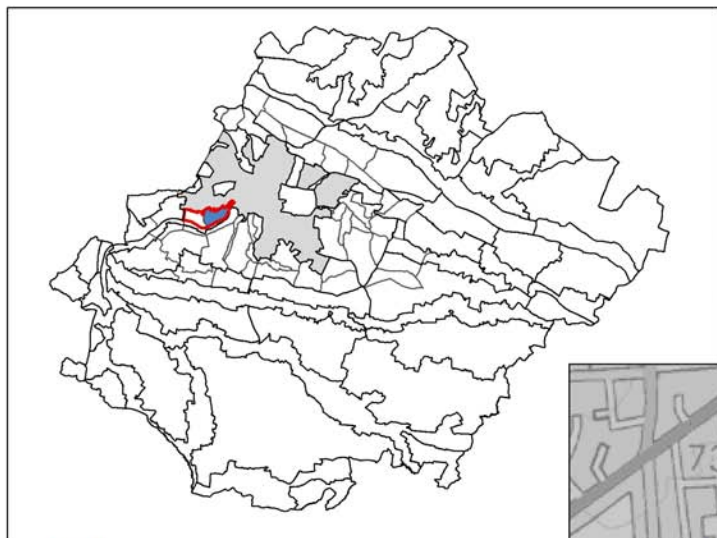
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

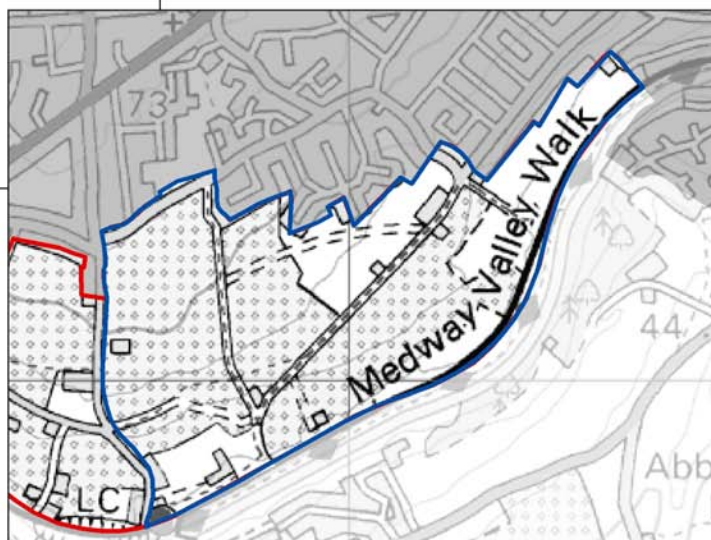
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the crisp urban edge and avoid urban influences extending into the landscape

24-2. Fant Orchards



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Tall hedges and shelterbelts
- Fruit orchards, some derelict, with informal tracks
- Some rough pasture adjacent to Maidstone's urban edge
- Traditional isolated properties and farmsteads
- No highways, only a historic track accessing properties

Location

24.17 Fant Orchards are situated to the south west of Maidstone, north east of East Farleigh. The well defined urban edge of Maidstone forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the area. A railway line, immediately north of the River Medway, forms the southern boundary of the area. Farleigh Lane forms the western boundary of the area, running in a north south direction between the urban edge of Maidstone and East Farleigh.



24-2. Fant Orchards



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

24.18 Orchards cover much of the area providing continuity of land use and seasonal variety, although the field pattern and shapes are varied. There appears to have been some loss of boundaries, leaving large orchard plots in places. Some orchards have been grubbed up north of Orchard Cottage and Fant Farm, leaving open rough pasture crossed by some informal paths and clear views to the urban edge of Maidstone. Some areas of orchard have become overgrown and trees have become surrounded by long grasses, brambles and scrub. Much of the area is well enclosed by native hedgerows, tracks between orchards, some walling and chestnut fencing, providing limited views out. A small parcel of land north east of Unicomes Lane, between Upper Fant Road and the railway, contains allotment gardens, which provide a very enclosed character with strong urban fringe influences. Towards the south of the area, there are pockets of rough pasture along the railway line and a linear belt of native trees and shrubs line the route. To the south west, pockets of pasture and some vegetation clumps surround housing off Farleigh Lane, on the periphery of East Farleigh. Settlement within the area is sparse, comprising mostly traditional buildings including oast houses and small cottages. Some large agricultural buildings form visual detractors within the landscape, appearing dominant and out of scale within the surrounding context. The access to properties within the area is made up of a private and informal narrow track,

which is lined by native hedgerows dominated by ivy. There are no formal roads within the area, although minor tracks run between the blocks of fruit trees.

Geology, soils and topography

24.19 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a small area of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay running along the eastern perimeter adjacent to the River Medway. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is gently undulating, sloping gradually in a southerly direction towards the River Medway.

Views

24.20 Views within the area are restricted by dense vegetation belts and orchards. Although views out of the area to the north are restricted by landform, there are views across the Medway River Valley to the south.

Urban edge influence

24.21 The urban edge of Maidstone is well defined to the north of the area and clearly visible from some parts, particularly where orchards have been grubbed up leaving large areas of open rough pasture.

24-2. Fant Orchards

BIODIVERSITY

24.22 This area consists of commercial orchards (some of which are now derelict), allotments and large areas of arable land. The rough grassland within the orchards and around the boundaries of the arable land has the potential to support reptiles, particularly the scrubby area to the south of the allotments where it connects well with similar habitat in the Medway Valley. This also has the potential to support breeding birds. A number of hedgerows with mature trees provide potential commuting corridors for wildlife, including protected species such as reptiles and bats. There is also a pill box which may provide a potential roosting site for bats. Together with Bydews Slopes and the Medway Valley Walk, this area provides an important link connecting the urban area with more rural areas to the west.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Poor
24.23 The landscape is strongly defined by orchard plantations, although there are some visual detractors, including unkempt stone walling and private gardens and some large agricultural buildings. Whilst the buildings are mostly traditional and fruit orchards provide a traditional heritage feature, many orchards are overgrown and disused. In other areas, orchards have been grubbed up, leaving large areas of rough pasture with post and wire fencing, stone walling and hedgerows in poor condition.	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Some
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
24.25 Defined by its fruit orchards and lack of built development and highways, there is a moderate sense of place. Whilst some orchards and field boundaries have been removed, the intrinsic elements of the landscape are traditional and historic.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Respect the setting of Rectory Lane Orchards to the west and the Medway Valley to the south in any development proposals
- Maintain a buffer of open space and vegetation adjacent to the railway line to promote a robust landscape and ecological framework

25. Oakwood Park



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Mature trees and woodland
- Victorian mansion
- Parkland with isolated trees
- Modern buildings, security fencing and car parking
- Sports courts/pitches

Location

25.1 Oakwood Park lies to the west of Maidstone town centre and comprises a significant area of open green space as the setting for a complex of schools and colleges and Oakwood House hotel/conference centre. The area is enclosed by housing off surrounding residential Streets, including Bower Mount Road, Queens Road, Oakwood Road and Cherry Orchard Way.



25. Oakwood Park



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

25.2 There are a number of mature trees and woodland clumps throughout the park. In some areas, car parking has been designed to retain a woodland character, with mature trees providing screening and shade. Large isolated mature trees throughout open landscape, particularly horse chestnuts, provide a strong parkland character. Open swathes of parkland are framed by mature woodland clumps, whilst the large isolated trees provide landmark features. Both the large buildings and woodland areas limit views and provide a sense of enclosure throughout the park.

25.3 A complex of school and college buildings dissect the park. Many of the buildings comprise large, purpose built structures, with an abundance of windows. Hard surfaced sports pitches with high mesh fencing, areas of car parking and security fencing slightly complicate the landscape. In contrast, Oakwood House comprises a brick Victorian mansion with an adjoining converted stable block. The large doors and windows, and the detailed roofscape, promote the mansion as a local landmark building within the park. The gardens are well maintained and add to the historic character of Oakwood House. Some vernacular style buildings and local ragstone walls are scattered throughout the complex of large modern buildings. A network of narrow roads runs through the complex of large school and college buildings.

Geology, soils and topography

25.4 Solid geology is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. There are two small areas of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds to the north. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is generally flat, but sloping in some locations.

Views

25.5 Views out of the area are enclosed by mature boundary woodland blocks and the large buildings throughout the park. Glimpses of surrounding residential areas are possible from some areas. Within the area, there are some open views across the parkland landscape.



25. Oakwood Park

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

25.6 There is a lack of consistency with the arrangement of large, modern, purpose built buildings, although Oakwood House and the parkland character provide a contrasting historic character. Security fencing, signage and car parking are visually detracting. Habitat opportunities are provided by the network of mature woodland.

Sensitivity

25.6 Oakwood House and the open parkland character are distinctive elements within the dominating complex of large modern school and college buildings.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – IMPROVE AND REINFORCE

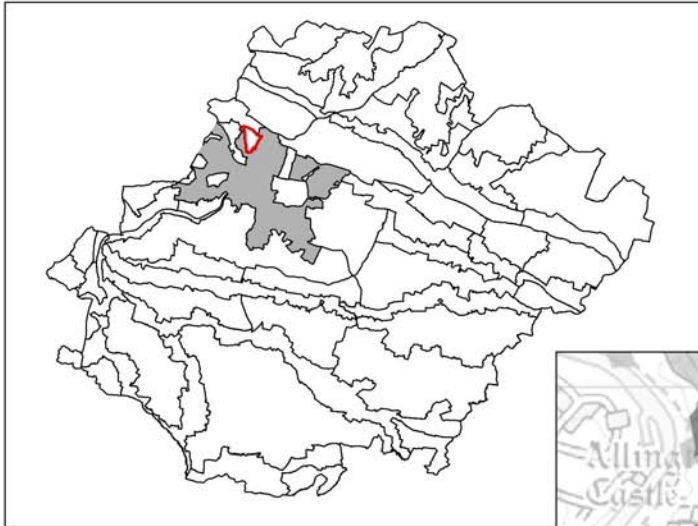
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Promote a limited palette of materials for fencing, walls, planting and hard surfacing
- Maintain existing, and encourage further, tree planting within car parking where feasible
- Resist further car parking, which would further degrade the remaining area of historic parkland
- Resist visually detracting security fencing and signage, or support with native hedgerow planting where practicable
- Conserve the remaining traditional setting of the historic Oakwood House, including the extent and character of the historic parkland with its mature woodland and isolated trees
- Improve and reinforce ecological value referenced within Maidstone's Urban Green Space Action Plan 2009 – 2014 (Local Biodiversity Action Plan)
- The landscape management of the park should reflect the historic parkland heritage
- Improve connectivity between the various buildings on site, and the legibility of the site, through a clear landscape framework



26. Invicta Park



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Mature tree clumps
- Grassed sports pitches and playing fields
- Allotment gardens
- Modern apartments
- Recent buildings in connection with the barracks

Location

26.1 Invicta Park lies to the north of Maidstone town centre and comprises a series of open green spaces between fragmented land uses. Sandling Lane and Cuckoo Wood make up the northern boundary, and Chatham Road forms the western edge. The south and east of the area are bordered by the dense residential areas of Maidstone.



26. Invicta Park



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

26.2 Much of this landscape belongs to the Ministry of Defence, and no longer reflects its former cultural associations. At the beginning of the 16th century, Henry VII bought a wooded estate known as 'Le Parc'. Park House was formerly the centrepiece of the Ringlestone Estate. Owned by the Lushington family from 1826 to 1936, the poet Tennyson's sister, Cecilia, married Edmund Lew Lushington, the Greek scholar and Egyptologist. Park House is described in the Prologue of Tennyson's poem 'The Princess'. Tennyson himself used to frequently stay there, as well as other well known figures of the day. The government took over the estate on the outbreak of the Second World War and a camp was built, known as Invicta Lines. When this was demolished, the name was changed to Invicta Park. The Royal Engineers were first stationed at Park House in Maidstone in 1949. Park House, now the officers' mess, is a grade II* listed building with stone galleting and a mansard slate roof. Also of note is Sandling Place, a large historic ragstone house with detailed roofscape and bowed windows to the north, which has been partially converted into individual apartments. Other recent multi-storey blocks of flats have been developed around Sandling Place, although development is dominated by a multitude of Ministry of Defence buildings and hard standing.

26.3 Elsewhere the land use is varied, with allotment gardens, Invicta Park playing fields and sports grounds. Historic field pattern has been compromised by pressure for development, although clumps of native trees

and shrubs and isolated mature trees are scattered across the parkland owned by the Ministry of Defence, segregating other land uses and providing enclosure. Middle Quarry Wood and another woodland block to the east provide interconnecting woodland blocks. To the north, the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve (TAVR) land, which incorporates the grounds of Sandling Place and the land fringing Sandling Lane (locally known as 'The Chestnuts') is noted for its high biodiversity value. The area supports lowland acid grassland and woodland flora, and populations of invertebrates and protected reptile species and has the potential to be designated as a Local Nature Reserve. This area supports lowland acid grassland and woodland flora, and populations of invertebrates and protected reptile species. The playing fields to the east comprise flat amenity grassland with ground markings emphasising their purpose as sports pitches. A pavilion is located within the sports ground to the east, providing a localised character and definitive land use. To the south, allotment gardens provide contrast with the more open parkland segments of landscape to the north. Tool sheds, water containers and boundary fencing provide a complex and fragmented landscape.

26.4 Access is limited throughout the area because of the barracks and is restricted to public areas provided by the playing fields and allotments, and a single public footpath which runs just south of Sandling Place linking Sandling Lane with Chatham Road.

26. Invicta Park

Geology, soils and topography

26.5 Solid geology is Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds to the north. A narrow ribbon of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds flows through the centre of the area and Lower Greensand Hythe Beds make up the southern area. In terms of drift geology, a small area of Fourth Terrace River Gravel is located to the south. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography slopes down to the west, with higher land to the north east.

Views

26.6 Invicta Park is visible from Blue Bell Hill and high points within the park afford views across the Medway Valley. From higher parts of Invicta Park to the north east, views from upper storey windows of apartments at Sandling Place are extensive across the

parkland landscape and Ministry of Defence land to the south. However, views within and out of the area are limited in places because of intervening landform, vegetation and buildings. Within playing fields and sports grounds, views are enclosed by clumps of boundary vegetation.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

26.7 Security fencing and recent buildings in association with the Ministry of Defence Land are particularly visually detracting and create a fragmented pattern of elements. The ecological integrity is moderate. A network of habitats is provided by clumps of mature vegetation across the site and within the parkland surrounding Park House. However development at the barracks, including areas of hard standing and mown sports pitches, restrict habitat opportunities and connectivity in places. Whilst Park House and the remaining parkland are significant cultural features, many features of this landscape are recent and the overall cultural integrity is variable.

Sensitivity

26.8 Whilst Park House and the remaining parkland are distinctive features, much of the historic landscape pattern has unfortunately been compromised and fragmented by the current barrack development, encroachment of the urban edge and surrounding infrastructure. Therefore the landscape is generally indistinct and many of its components are recent. Development and vegetation restrict visibility in places, but there are some more open views from high points across the area and visibility is moderate overall.



26. Invicta Park

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

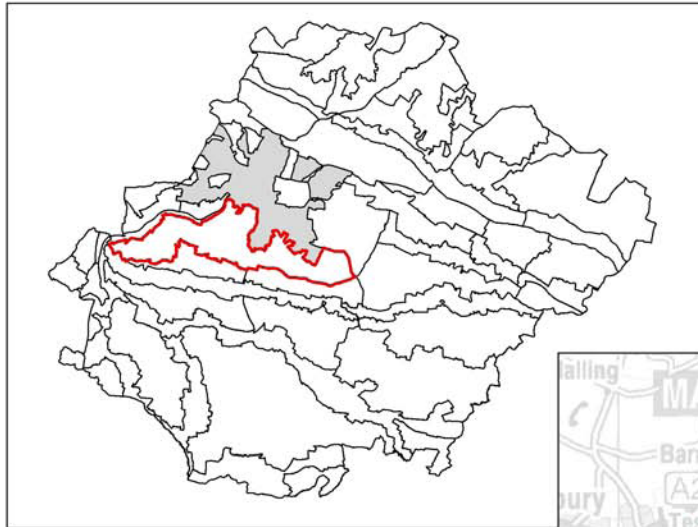
GUIDELINES - IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Improve and reinforce ecological value referenced within Maidstone’s Urban Green Space Action Plan 2009 – 2014 (Local Biodiversity Action Plan)
- Enhance biodiversity through conservation and appropriate management of land at Sandling Park (the TAVR site)
- Improve habitat connectivity throughout the area by enhancing wildlife links between recognised habitats and avoiding isolation of these areas
- Improve the sense of place through promoting a palette of materials and plant species to provide some continuity
- Retain and improve the traditional parkland setting of Park House by avoiding further fragmentation and encroachment of recent development



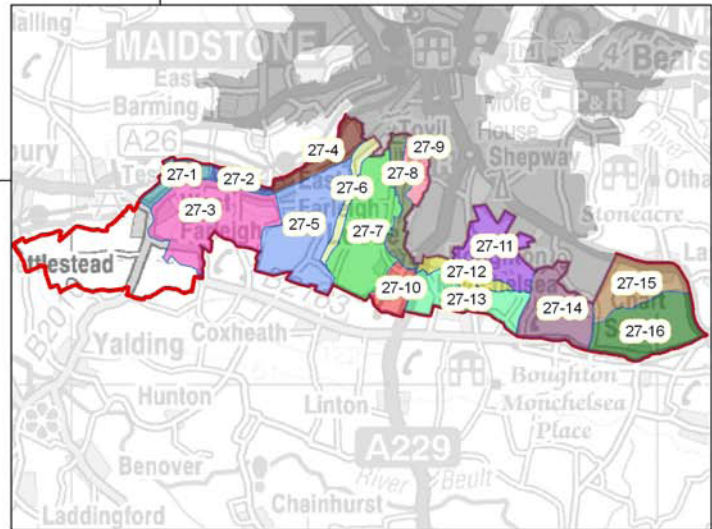
27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Areas**
- 27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side
 - 27-2. East Farleigh Slopes
 - 27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope
 - 27-4. Bydews Slopes
 - 27-5. Dean Farmlands
 - 27-6. East of Dean Valley
 - 27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture
 - 27-8. Loose Valley
 - 27-9. Hayle Estate

Detailed Landscape Character Areas

- 27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards
- 27-11. Boughton Farm
- 27-12. Boughton Quarries
- 27-13. Boughton Green Farmland
- 27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land
- 27-15. Langley Park Farm
- 27-16. Langley Loch Farmland



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Dip slope of the Greensand Ridge
- Hythe Beds incised with Atherfield Clay river valleys
- Orchards dominate the land use
- Frequent broadleaf and coppice woodland blocks
- Frequent settlements

Location

27.1 Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt comprises a large area to the south of Maidstone, which extends across the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge. The Medway Valley and part of the urban extent of Maidstone (eastwards from Tovil) form the northern boundary. To the south, the boundary is marked by drifts of head deposits and the plateau across the top of the Greensand Ridge.



27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.2 This landscape is characterised by its undulating landform and the prominence of orchards, which are scattered across much of the area. Combined with frequent broadleaf and coppice woodland blocks, there is a significant amount of tree cover. Belts of woodland vegetation define narrow valleys, which comprise the Loose Valley to the east, the Ewell to the west and a dry valley running east of Dean Street. Much of the woodland is ancient, with Quarry Wood to the south of Farleigh Green forming one of the larger tracts. This broadleaf woodland, which is managed by rotational coppice, is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Its botanical interest includes over 50 ancient woodland indicator species recorded in 2006, over 300 species of fungi and 60 bird species which include kingfisher, gold crest and nightingale.

27.3 Throughout the orchard areas there is a strong and regular pattern of small to medium sized fields, and within these areas there is a strong sense of enclosure. Within narrow valleys there is an even stronger sense of enclosure, provided by the steep and often wooded valley sides. To the east and west, however, the traditional small scale field pattern provided by orchards has been removed to accommodate intensive arable land. Here, the large fields give way to a greater sense of exposure and longer views across the landscape. Within these more open stretches however, the landform often creates pockets of more enclosed and secluded landscapes such as the remote and tranquil

Langley Loch and vegetated islands to the east.

27.4 There is strong evidence of past ragstone quarrying activity throughout this area, provided by the names of woodland and settlements and the deeply cut undulations in some areas. As such, ragstone is a primary building material within walling and buildings, particularly where ragstone has been extracted such as at The Quarries. Throughout the landscape, frequent ragstone walls form a strong characteristic where they align the roads, with pillar boxes and gateways often set within the stonework.

27.5 Settlement is scattered throughout the area, with isolated farmsteads, small settlements and linear development along some roads. Designated as a Scheduled Monument, some of the earliest human occupation is thought to be the Iron Age settlement at Boughton Quarry Camp to the north west of Boughton Green. Much of the built environment is recognised for its historic and architectural interest through Conservation Area status, namely settlements at East Farleigh, West Farleigh, Dean Street, Boughton Monchelsea Green, Boughton Monchelsea Quarries, Cock Street and Loose Valley. Loose, thought to have originated in Saxon times, is of particular note with its wide section of river that forms a centrepiece to the village. Mill ponds built along the Loose Stream within the steep sided Loose Valley originally served fulling mills which were associated with the

27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt



Medieval cloth industry, although some may have served even older corn mills. Later adapted or rebuilt for paper making from the 18th century, mills now remain a prominent feature within the landscape. The proximity to running water and springs was pivotal to the land use within Loose, and now provides added strength to the character of the village. There are numerous listed buildings within Loose, many constructed from ragstone and some timber framed. The 13th century ragstone All Saints Church, and 17th century timber framed Wool House and Garden Wall are grade II* listed, illustrating the exceptional nature of these structures. The Loose Valley is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The habitat comprises a mosaic of rough unmanaged grassland, semi improved grazed pasture and damp marshy grassland along the valley floor.

27.6 Although there are some long views to the urban extent of Maidstone, the landscape generally has a remote character and there is limited evidence of being in such close proximity to the urban edge. The small scale roads and visual enclosure provided by the topography, orchards and poplar shelterbelts often give little impression of how close Maidstone's urban area is situated.

Geology, soils and topography

27.7 The solid geology comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, which is incised with valleys of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. There are deposits of head towards the top of the dip slope to the south, where the land

begins to plateau, and some small deposits of brickearth. Soils are mostly loam over limestone, with some seasonally wet loam to clay over shale where the land is low lying near to the River Medway Valley. The landscape forms part of the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge, and subsequently the landform slopes down northwards towards the Medway Valley and the edge of Maidstone. Narrow valleys are incised into the Greensand.

Views

27.8 Views within the area are across undulating mixed farmland, which is often contained by the edges of orchards, native woodland, hedgerows and tree belts. From the northern edge of the area, there are long views out across the Medway Valley to the north, to the settlement of Teston and the prominent large white bulk of Barham Court. The periphery of Maidstone is not visible from much of the landscape due to the topography and intervening vegetation, but there are some long and very clear views of Maidstone from some vantage points such as from Forge Lane and Small Prophets. The land rises across Maidstone to the north, so extensive views of the urban area are available from these locations. Beyond Maidstone, the scarp of the North Downs can be seen in the distance.



27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

27.9 This is a coherent landscape, with the regular landform, dominance of orchards and strong use of ragstone forming a degree of visual unity. An element of fragmentation is, however, caused by some visually detracting commercial businesses, large agricultural barns, a golf course north of Langley Park Farm, recreational areas, polytunnels, recent development on the periphery of Maidstone, pylons and equestrian grazing. The ecological integrity is strong. Although intensively farmed agricultural land is more prevalent to the east and west, the orchards, frequent woodland vegetation, watercourses, hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a strong habitat network. Overall the cultural integrity is variable. Whilst tree cover is reasonably extensive, there is little evidence of new planting and some orchards appear to be unmanaged on the periphery of Maidstone which indicates a vulnerability to change. The condition of field boundaries is varied, with some gappy hedgerows and post and wire fencing in some locations. As a strong heritage feature, ragstone walling is in good condition. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape because whilst some traditional development demonstrates strong local vernacular, recent linear development along some roads does not.

Sensitivity

27.10 The key characteristics which combine to create this landscape contribute towards strong local distinctiveness. The network of woodland planting defines valleys, and hedgerows and shelterbelts provide the strong field pattern of orchards. Although there is a significant amount of recent development on the periphery of Maidstone, settlements are often historic and there are numerous examples of traditional buildings. There is a strong degree of continuity throughout the built environment, provided by the frequency of ragstone as a building material. Overall, visibility is high, because the undulating topography and intermittency of tree cover allow some long views to the opposite valley side of the River Medway and to Maidstone's urban extent. However, visibility is contained within valleys and where there is a strong field pattern of traditional orchards.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	High

27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

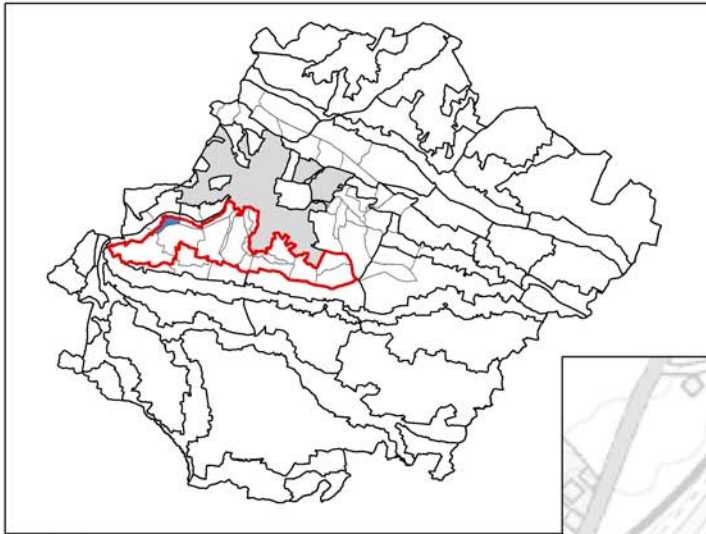
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Conserve the rural setting of historic buildings and settlements
- Encourage the planting of isolated mature trees to conserve the parkland character
- Promote the use of local materials in boundary treatment and access points, and design gates and stiles in simple clean styles
- Resist the introduction of contrasting visual elements in association with the railway



27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Sloping valley side
- Mature parkland trees
- Traditional orchards
- Parkland pasture
- Native tree and shrub belts
- Traditional buildings and materials
- Few visual detractors except pylons

Location

27.11 West Farleigh Medway Valley Side lies to the south west of Maidstone, south of the River Medway. The area is bordered by Lower Road to the south, St Helens Lane to the east and Teston Lane to the west. The boundary to the north follows field boundaries, bordering lower lying land adjacent to the river.



27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.12 The land use is predominantly pasture, with traditional fruit orchards to the east and a small amount of arable land to the west. Vegetation belts and orchards provide a definite rural perception. A cricket ground is located west of Court Lodge, providing a localised change in character. The area is strongly defined by its parkland character, with mature parkland trees within pasture around Court Lodge and Court Lodge Farm. Fields vary in shape and size, with smaller fields containing the orchards to the east and larger fields to the west. Enclosure is provided by vegetation belts, native hedgerows, ragstone walling and a variety of chestnut fencing types.

27.13 The area is largely unsettled, other than housing along St Helens Lane and the Court Lodge site. Housing along St Helens Lane is mainly modern with some scattered traditional buildings, such as Riverdale Farm. Court Lodge, Court Lodge Farm and the ragstone church comprise distinct, traditional style buildings. Church Lane, leading to the church and two properties only, provides the only road within the area. The lane is surrounded by a parkland character and bordered by chestnut pale fencing. St Helens Lane, bordering the eastern edge of the area, provides a quiet and narrow access only for properties along the lane with no bridge crossing the river for vehicles. Although not largely visible from within the character area, Lower Road and Teston Road form busier routes by comparison. The area is not influenced by the urban edge

of Maidstone, although there are views of the busy A26 Tonbridge Road. The existing urban edge is not visible from the area because of intervening vegetation belts and landform.

Geology, soils and topography

27.14 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with one small patch of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay in the south and another in the north where the River Medway approaches the area. There is no drift. Soils are predominantly loam over limestone with a small patch of seasonally wet loam to clay over shale in the south. The area lies on sloping ground, as part of the River Medway's valley side, declining in a northerly direction towards the river. The slope is steeper to the east, adjacent to St Helens Lane, becoming gentler to the west.

Views

27.15 There are views to the north across the River Medway Valley and of the northern valley side. Views out of the character area to the south, west and east are restricted by significant belts of native trees and shrubs and orchards.

Urban edge influence

27.16 Although development is apparent from within the area, the urban edge of Maidstone is not visible because of restrictions caused by landform. There are no urban edge influences within the area.

27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side

BIODIVERSITY

27.17 This area comprises a mixture of arable fields, commercial orchards and houses with gardens in the east, adjacent to several horse pastures, with some stands of mature broad-leaved trees and hedgerows. Further west it is dominated by arable farmland and improved grassland; there is an area of parkland with scattered trees, surrounded by tree lines and scrub, around the church and buildings at Court Lodge Farm. Scrub provides potential habitat for protected species including reptiles and breeding birds. Hedgerows and tree lines provide potential commuting and foraging routes for reptiles and bats, and they also provide reasonable connectivity with valuable habitat to the north (Medway Pasture). The parkland and gardens provide suitable habitat for breeding birds.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Very Good
<p>27.18 Although electricity pylons cross the area to the east, these are not widely visible from most of the area because of intervening vegetation. Ecological integrity is strong with mature tree belts and parkland trees, as well as orchards and some hedgerows. The cultural integrity is also good, with large traditional style buildings such as Court Lodge.</p>	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Unified
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Good
	Functional integrity:	Very Strong

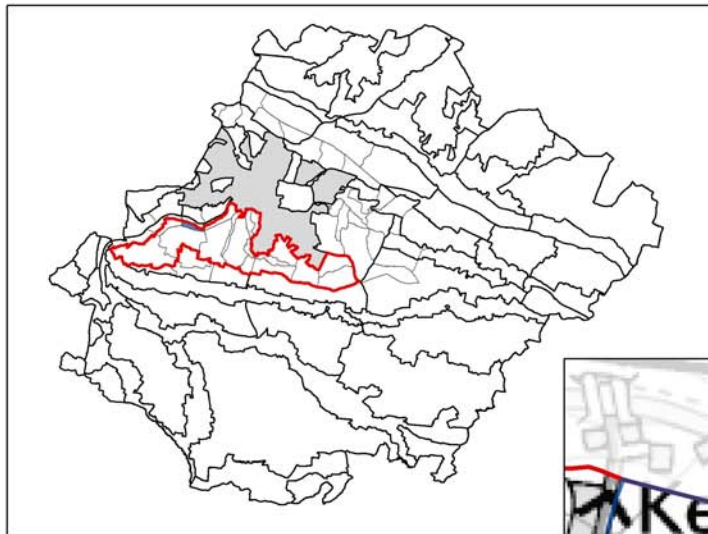
Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	High
<p>27.19 The parkland character, with large mature trees, and traditional orchards are very distinct and historic features. The traditional style of buildings and use of ragstone within walling and buildings also contribute towards the unique and traditional quality of the area. There is a lack of built development and urban influence.</p>	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Strong
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

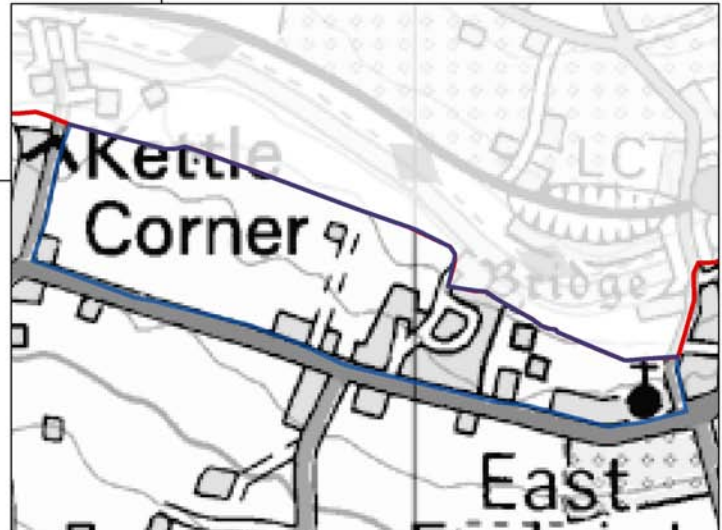
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the rural character
- Resist pressure to convert to intensive arable production
- Conserve mature isolated trees and parkland character. Maintain this characteristic through planting new isolated trees
- Conserve and enhance native tree and shrub belts, and maintain as a strong landscape and ecological framework
- Promote the use of ragstone in buildings and walls

27-2. East Farleigh Slopes



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Tall hedges and shelterbelts
- Orchards and hops
- Pasture/grazing
- Mostly traditional buildings
- Views across the River Medway to the north

Location

27.20 East Farleigh Slopes lies to the south of Maidstone, west of East Farleigh. The southern boundary is defined by Lower Road. St Helens Lane forms the western boundary and Station Road in East Farleigh provides the eastern edge. The northern boundary is defined by field boundaries, slightly above the immediate Medway Valley Side.



27-2. East Farleigh Slopes



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.21 Dense native vegetation belts surround the south, east and western borders of the area, creating a well vegetated and enclosing boundary. North of Gallants Farm there is an area of traditional orchards, segregated by straight tracks running against the contours. To the west of the area, the land is used for equestrian grazing and the fields are broken down into small and regularly shaped paddocks. These are segregated by a variety of fencing types including timber post and rail and some post and wire. Former hedgerow boundaries are missing in this area, which is therefore slightly more open in comparison to the landscape to the east. A small pocket of former hop production is located in the north western corner of the site along St Helens Road, which appears to be unmanaged but still retains the traditional hop poles which were once common in the area.

27.22 The eastern section of the area forms part of East Farleigh, which is designated as a Conservation Area. East Farleigh comprises a small and historic settlement, with some significant distinct and traditional buildings. The church and Court Lodge Oast provide distinct focal points within the landscape and a significant length of locally distinct ragstone wall runs along Lower Road. A caravan site, central to the area, visually detracts from the significance of the surrounding traditional buildings. Lower Gallants Farm, west of Lower Road, supports some large agricultural buildings which are out of scale within the landscape and visually detracting.

27.23 The overall variety in vegetation across the area provides seasonal variation, with

orchard blossom, clumps of garden vegetation, and deciduous vegetation belts alongside the surrounding roads. Although well screened from within the area, Lower Road provides a busy link between East and West Farleigh. Station Road, to the east, is narrow and characteristic, and slopes down steeply towards East Farleigh Bridge. St Helens Lane, to the east, is narrow and historic, running downhill off Lower Road.

Geology, soils and topography

27.24 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a very small area of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay on the northern perimeter either side of the bridge. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform declines in a northerly direction towards the River Medway. The topography is steeper to the east, becoming gentler to the west.

Views

27.25 Views within the area are restricted by dense vegetation belts and orchards. Although views out of the area to the south are restricted by landform, there are views across the River Medway Valley to the north.

Urban edge influence

27.26 Although development at East Farleigh is apparent within the area, the urban edge of Maidstone is not visible because of intervening landform. There are no urban edge influences.

27-2. East Farleigh Slopes

BIODIVERSITY

27.27 This area comprises a number of improved stock grazed grassland fields with hedgerows and some rough grassland and scrub. Farm buildings and houses with gardens are scattered between the fields. The rough grassland and scrub may have the potential to support protected species including reptiles and nesting birds. Hedgerows provide potential commuting routes for these species as well as bats. There is relatively good connectivity with similar habitat in surrounding areas, particularly Quarry Wood Valley to the north.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.28 The pattern of elements is generally coherent, although there is some variation in terms of land use. Whilst the use of fencing slightly weakens cultural and ecological integrity, the variety in habitat opportunities is reasonably extensive in this area with tree belts, hedgerow, vegetation clumps and orchards.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.29 The settlement of East Farleigh and most buildings throughout the area are very distinct, as recognised by East Farleigh's designation as a Conservation Area. Traditional orchards and a small area of hop growing also reflect the local character of the area, although there are some indistinct elements such as fence boundaries.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

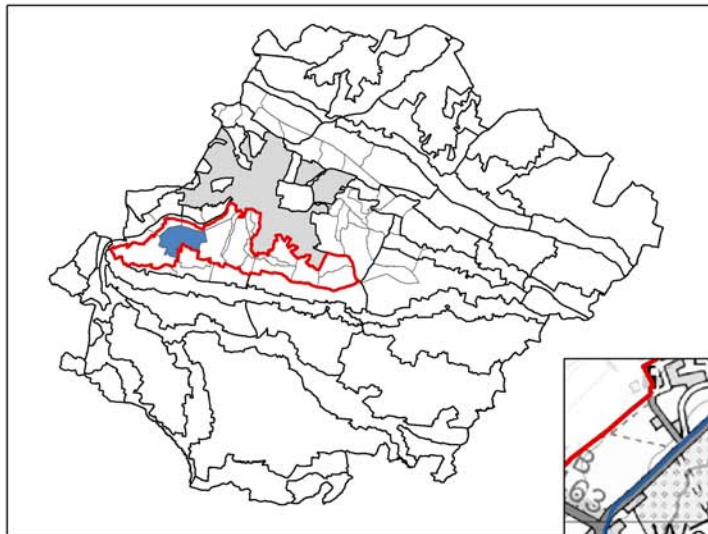
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

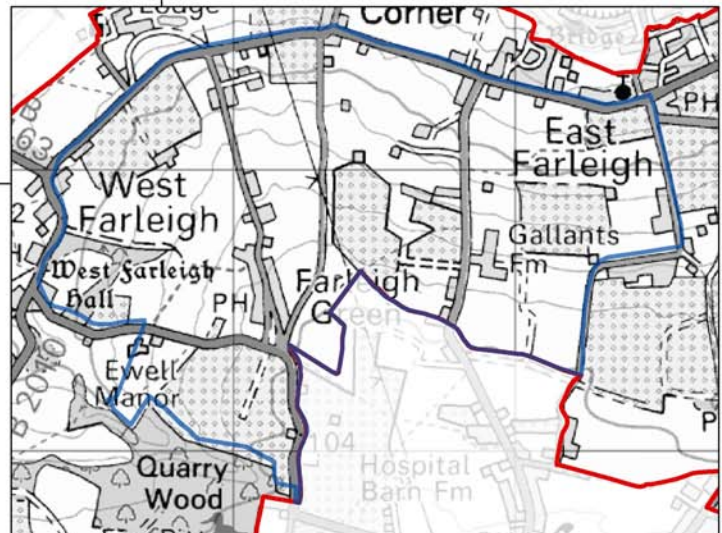
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Retain views across the River Medway Valley to the north
- Conserve the rural setting of East Farleigh Conservation Area
- Encourage building styles and materials which are sensitive to, and do not detract from, the historic core of East Farleigh
- Improve boundary methods through promoting shelterbelts and ragstone walling

27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope



- ▭ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- ▭ Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Orchards
- Open pasture
- Village green and pub
- Ragstone walls and buildings
- Thatched house
- Farleigh Hall
- Sunken lanes

Location

27.30 Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope lies south west of Maidstone and comprises mainly orchards and farmland. The southern boundary follows part of Ewell Road, the northern edge of Quarry Wood, then runs along Heath Road and then follows field boundaries to the east. Lower Road forms the western and northern boundaries and Vicarage Lane defines the east.



27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.31 Orchards and large areas of pasture and arable land dominate the land use across the area, with pockets of pasture used for equestrian grazing. Tall, mature, dense hedgerows line the roads and traditional ragstone walls are common, forming field edges. Other field boundaries vary between hedgerows and a variety of fencing types, including chestnut paling. These elements form a mixed, although apparent, enclosure pattern. The field pattern is generally regular, with hedgerows and tracks enclosing the fields and orchards within small square parcels. There is a small area of woodland to the north east that is largely unmanaged, and other vegetation includes mature oaks along roads and ornamental garden plants and trees.

27.32 Isolated farmsteads, traditional courts, halls and manors are scattered throughout the landscape. The small settlement of Farleigh Green in the south east comprises a mix of modern and traditional buildings, including small characteristic cottages. Associated gardens are mature and well tended. Farleigh village green, with local public house, adds to the village character. To the west lies West Farleigh Hall, which is set within a Conservation Area, and comprises a country house, dating from approximately 1719, and associated formal garden. The old garden features a series of garden areas enclosed by walls and ancient yew hedges. Contrasting with the traditional style of buildings, a modern commercial warehouse building is surrounded by tall green heavy duty metal fencing. Three

roads cross the area, running against the contours. Most are narrow and winding and sunken in places, and Kettle Lane is very narrow and rutted. A network of tracks connect the orchards and fields.

Geology, soils and topography

27.33 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a very small patch of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay in the south western corner. There is a very small area of head in the south at Farleigh Green. Soils are deep loam to clay. The landform slopes down in a general northerly direction, as part of the River Medway valley side. The topography is distinctly undulating, becoming steeper towards the north.

Views

27.34 Far reaching views to the west are over open countryside, and to the north the edge of Maidstone is visible. Views within the area are across hedgerows, orchards and pasture.

Urban edge influence

27.35 Although there are distant views to Maidstone's urban edge, there are no significant urban influences within the area.

27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope

BIODIVERSITY

27.36 This is a large area dominated by arable land with interconnecting hedgerows and scattered farm buildings. The farm buildings are bordered in places by small stands of broad-leaved trees and hedgerows. Commercial orchards dominate the fields towards the east of the area which extend into Dean Farmlands, and there is an area of improved grassland to the north west. The connectivity along hedgerows provides good potential commuting routes for protected species which may include reptiles, bats, great crested newts and dormice. This habitat should be considered to be important to biodiversity due to its lack of urban development, large size and that it exhibits features of typical Kentish farmland which are unlikely to have changed in recent history.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.37 Fields and orchards dissected by lanes form a coherent pattern of elements, although some agricultural barns and a row of pylons form visual detractors. Intensive equestrian grazing fragments the strength of ecological value in places. Generally the built environment respects the local character and part of the Conservation Area at West Farleigh Hall lies within the area.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity

27.38 Sense of place is provided by the traditional buildings, tall mature hedgerows, ragstone walls and sunken lanes which form distinct and, in some cases, very distinct characteristics.

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

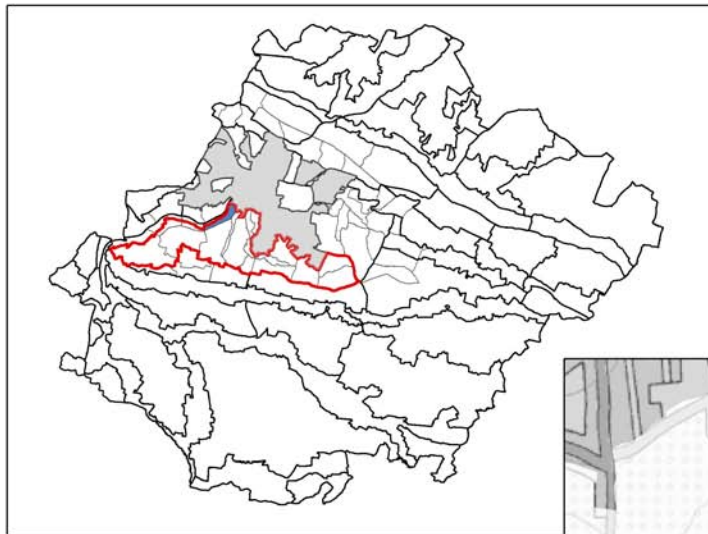
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

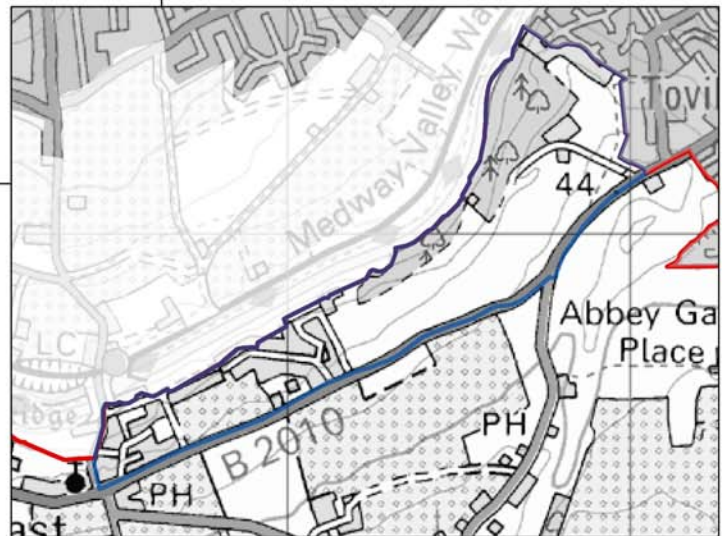
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Encourage a more uniform range of enclosure methods and promote softening of essential security fencing through native planting
- Conserve open and far reaching views to the west
- Conserve mature oaks along roads and maintain this characteristic through planting new oaks where appropriate
- Conserve the rural setting of West Farleigh Conservation Area

27-4. Bydews Slopes



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Arable fields
- Orchards
- Bydews ancient woodland
- River Medway upper valley sides

Location

27.39 Bydews Slopes are situated south west of Maidstone and form the upper valley sides of the River Medway. The urban edge at Tovil forms the eastern boundary with Dean Street and Lower Road forming the southern boundary. Farleigh Lane is at the western boundary before it crosses the river and the northern boundary runs parallel to, and just south of, the river.



27-4. Bydews Slopes



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.40 There is a mosaic like pattern comprising a section of large open arable fields, with little sense of enclosure, and a series of smaller pastoral fields divided by native hedgerows cover much of the land to the east. A significant block of ancient woodland - Bydews Wood – covers the north eastern section, with mature vegetation extending south west along the river. A continuous stretch of hedgerow lines Dean Street and Lower Road, sparse and gappy to the north but more intact to the south west. A high degree of seasonal variation is provided by the woodland, trees and hedgerows, orchards and arable crop rotations.

27.41 Bydews Place and Bydews Farm to the east comprise traditional buildings set within clumps of mature vegetation and with Bydews Wood forming an ancient backdrop. The western section of the area is more settled. Priory Close leads into a small mixed settlement of large and modern housing with scattered traditional properties with large well maintained gardens, some of which run directly down to the River Medway. Many of these gardens contain mature native trees and other more ornamental garden vegetation. This development includes Priory House, a country house now divided into private apartments, giving cultural significance and a sense of local distinctiveness to the estate. A further settlement in the south western corner is a similar mix of traditional and modern houses.

Geology, soils and topography

27.42 Lower Greensand dominates the geology, with Hythe Beds found throughout most of the area, and Atherfield Clay found along the Medway Valley by the north western boundary. There is no drift geology in the area and the soil type is loam over limestone. The topography is gently undulating, sloping gradually in a northerly direction towards the River Medway.

Views

27.43 The River Medway is not visible from the north of the area but there are clear and prominent views to Maidstone. Within the area views are across the arable fields and orchards.

Urban edge influence

27.44 There are views of Maidstone in the near distance, which have a dominant influence on the open and higher areas.

27-4. Bydews Slopes

BIODIVERSITY

27.45 This area comprises a stand of mature semi-natural broad-leaved woodland at its north eastern end, which has been classified as ancient woodland. This is surrounded by improved and semi-improved grassland. Further south west is a small commercial orchard surrounded by the urban area of East Farleigh. Ancient woodland has been identified as a locally important habitat in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and has the potential to support a wide variety of wildlife; this may include protected species such as the hazel dormouse, as well as bats and many breeding birds. The woodland is of particular value as there is a scarcity of similar woodland in the area, and it also connects well with valuable riverside habitat to the north. The semi-improved grassland also has the potential to support protected species; these may include reptiles such as the grass snake, slow-worm and viviparous lizard. The grassland and orchard have the potential to support a range of invertebrate species, while the latter also provides a food source for breeding birds.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.46 The fields, orchards and small settlements form a coherent pattern and the only significant visual detractors are the views of Maidstone. Whilst woodland provides a strong habitat for wildlife, the large arable fields reduce ecological integrity. The woodland is also a strong cultural heritage feature, with Bydews Wood recorded as ancient woodland.

Condition Assessment

Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.47 The woodland, orchards and hedgerows, in places where they are in better condition, are distinct characteristics. Along the banks of the river there is a sense of tranquillity and continuity with the surrounding landscape. However, the close proximity and dominant views of Maidstone detract from the local distinctiveness.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

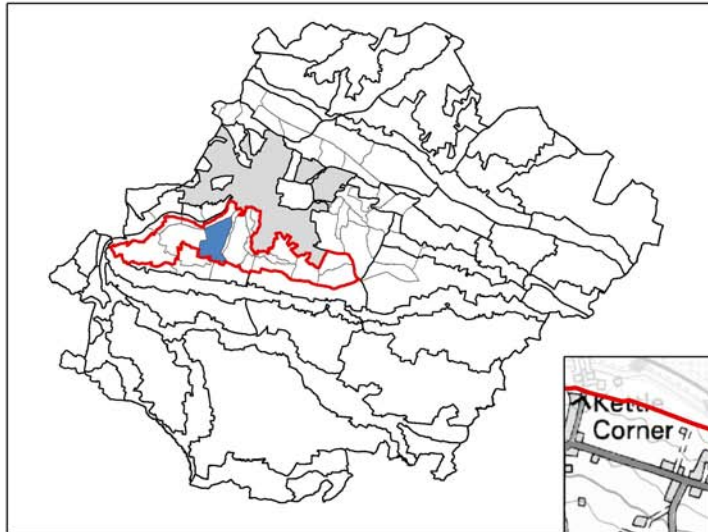
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

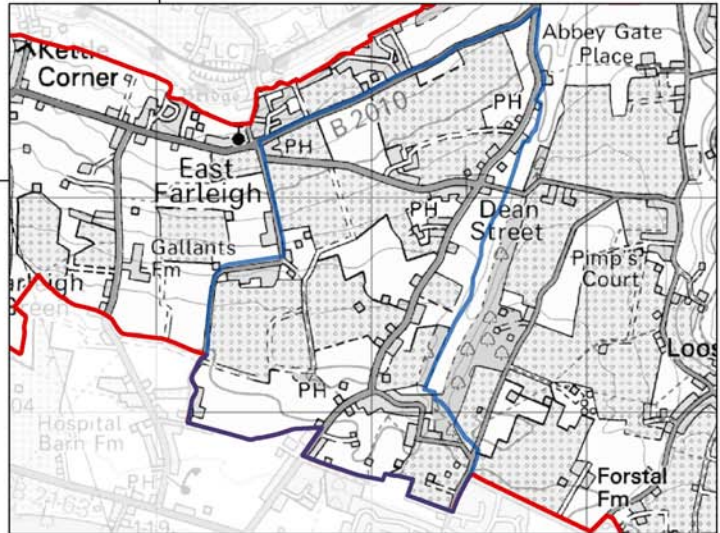
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Resist development of further large industrial units
- Conserve Bydews Wood and ensure the urban edge does not encroach on its setting
- Conserve the small pastoral field pattern where it remains and resist further arable intensification
- Conserve the open character along the edge of the River Medway by resisting the introduction of new boundaries

27-5. Dean Farmlands



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Orchards and pasture
- Well maintained hedgerows
- Traditional buildings including oast houses
- Modern housing built to traditional design
- Few roads
- Grid like pattern of tracks between orchards

Location

27.48 Dean Farmlands lies south west of Maidstone. The northern boundary runs along Lower Road and the western boundary along Vicarage Lane. The southern boundary is defined by field boundaries in the west then along Pleasant Valley Lane and field boundaries to the east. The eastern boundary follows Stockett Lane in the south and goes north along the top of East of Dean Valley.



27-5. Dean Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.49 Orchards and pasture cover much of the area, with a segment of open arable land to the north. Neat, well managed hedgerows provide a sense of continuity and pattern throughout the landscape. Although not heavily wooded, a belt of woodland runs along the eastern boundary. Gardens provide a variety of other vegetation including coniferous and ornamental garden species. Significant seasonal variation is provided by the orchards, hedgerows and deciduous trees and garden plants. Traditional and characteristic ragstone walls form field boundaries, and a sense of enclosure, together with timber fencing which is visually subtle and sits well within the landscape.

27.50 East Farleigh, Dean Street, is designated as a Conservation Area, where traditional properties are clustered around a crossroads. A group of houses surrounding Workhouse Lane, to the south east, comprises some cottages and large properties with well maintained and well established gardens. Isolated farms are scattered throughout the area and there are many traditional buildings including oast houses. Modern housing within the area is designed to appear traditional, and does not detract from the character of the area. There are few roads within the area and those which do cross it comprise single tracks, which are sunken in places and therefore provide an ancient character. A network of tracks connects the orchards and fields, providing a comprehensive grid like pattern and enhancing enclosure.

Geology, soils and topography

27.51 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. There is a small area of head in the centre of the area and three small patches of head distributed along the southern perimeter of the area. Soils are predominantly loam over limestone with three small patches of loam over sandstone distributed along the southern perimeter of the area. The landform is mostly flat, with a few undulating sections towards the north.

Views

27.52 To the north, particularly in the central part of the area, there are clear and distinct views of Maidstone. Within the area views are open across the orchards, and far reaching in between hedges.

Urban edge influence

27.53 Although there are views to Maidstone, there are no significant urban influences.

27-5. Dean Farmlands

BIODIVERSITY

27.54 This area is dominated by commercial orchards and arable fields. There is a strip of woodland along the eastern boundary of the area adjacent to the East of Dean Valley. There are also scattered mature broad-leaved trees, especially along field boundaries (within hedgerows in places) and in lines along roads. The woodland provides potential habitat for protected species which may include breeding birds, bats, badgers and dormice. It connects well with a larger area of similar habitat in Loose Orchards, and with the suburban area which could also provide potential habitat for breeding birds. Hedgerows and tree lines along roads also provide potential commuting routes for protected species which may include reptiles. The area also provides potential habitat for roosting bats in the form of old buildings and the eaves of houses. This area should be considered to be important for biodiversity due to its size, lack of urban development and connectivity to wider areas of woodland along hedgerows and tree lines.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

Condition Assessment

Very Good

27.55 Large fields, ragstone walls and hedgerows form a coherent pattern of elements. Cultural heritage features include ragstone walls and oast houses, and Dean Street is designated as a Conservation Area. Buildings are mostly traditional and have a positive impact on the area.

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity

Sensitivity Assessment

High

27.56 Orchards, characteristic buildings, ragstone walls, hedgerows and sunken lanes are locally distinctive and these historic features provide a strong sense of continuity.

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Ancient
Sense of Place:	Strong
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

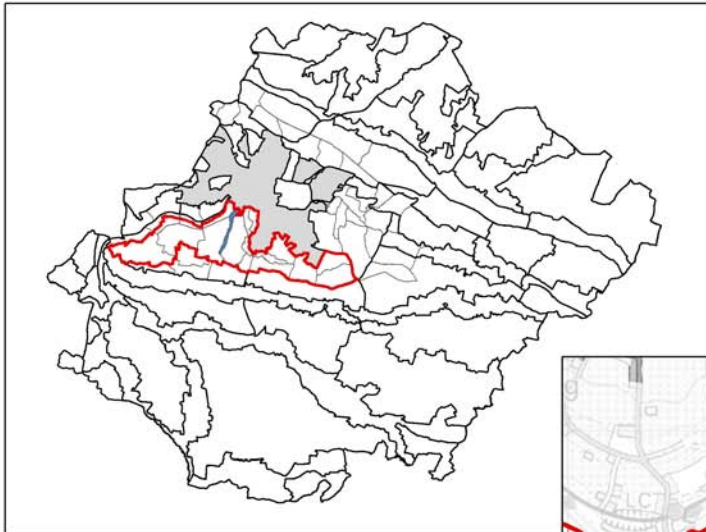
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

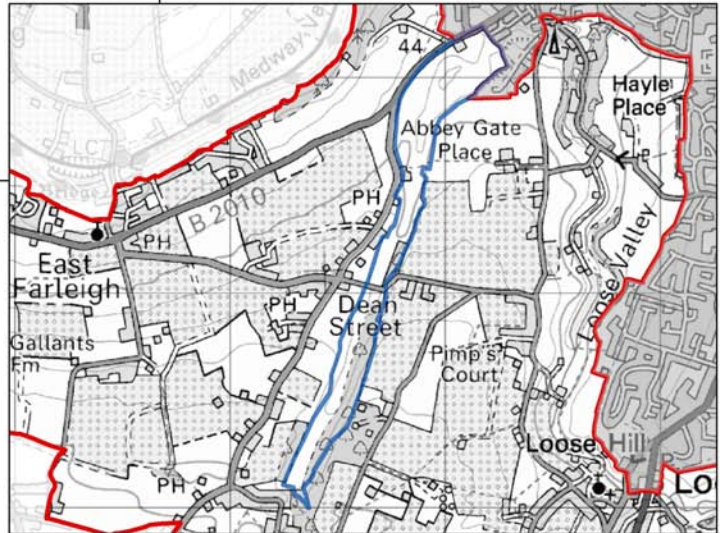
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Resist the introduction of contrasting visual elements such as pylons and telecommunications masts
- Conserve the sense of enclosure provided by ragstone walling and timber fencing
- Conserve the orchard setting of East Farleigh, and Dean Street Conservation Area, and avoid expansion which would detract from its rural character

27-6. East of Dean Valley



- ▭ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- ▭ Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Linear dry valley, more defined by topography to the south
- Open rough pasture to the north, some post and wire fencing
- Some ragstone walling along Dean Street
- Enclosed pasture with wooded valley sides
- Ancient woodland extending from Hamlet Wood to the south east
- Few traditional buildings

Location

27.57 East of Dean Valley lies to the south west of Maidstone, forming a dry valley between Tovil and Coxheath, running north east to south west. The eastern boundary is defined by field edges, running along the contours at the top of the valley side. The western boundary also follows field edges to the south, before joining Dean Street and meeting Maidstone's urban edge.



27-6. East of Dean Valley



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.58 The land use at the northern end of the area is very much influenced by the urban edge of Maidstone. A disused area of quarry workings is situated in the north, with high security fencing and derelict buildings visible from the B2010. Enclosure is defined by the valley sides to the south and vegetation belts along them, creating a distinctly linear parcel of land which is generally open along its length. Some post and wire fencing, gappy hedgerows and ragstone walling along Dean Street also define edges. South of the disused quarry workings, a large area of open rough pasture is bordered by native vegetation belts along Dean Street and the eastern area boundary. A small area of fragmented orchard planting extends into the area boundary from plots along Dean Street, just north of New Cut Road. Native woodland belts are situated around Dean Farm, and a block of mature woodland runs along the eastern valley edge. A section of this forms an extension of Hamlet Wood, which is ancient woodland. Dean Farm, along the western boundary, and a small row of cottages along Dean Street comprise traditional buildings and form the only residential development within the area. New Cut Road forms the only highway within the area, crossing the narrow valley just west of East Farleigh. The road is narrow with sharp bends and dips down into the valley before climbing the steep and wooded valley side to the east. Dean Street defines the western boundary, lined by a tall but gappy vegetation belt and some ragstone walling.

Geology, soils and topography

27.59 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds on the western side and predominantly Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay on the eastern side of the area. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The area is very much defined by its topography, which comprises a low lying dry valley with valley sides becoming more evident and steeper to the south.

Views

27.60 Views within the area are distinctly linear, particularly to the south, much defined by the valley topography and enclosure provided by woodland along the valley sides. Views out of the area are generally restricted by the vegetated boundaries, although from New Cut Road looking south views along the narrow valley are far reaching across pasture, and housing outside the area along Workhouse Lane is visible.

Urban edge influence

27.61 The northern end of the valley is influenced by the urban edge, with disused quarry workings and an area of open rough grassland, where traditional field pattern appears to have been lost. The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not clearly visible from within the area because of intervening vegetation.

27-6. East of Dean Valley

BIODIVERSITY

27.62 This area consists of a strip of semi-improved grassland, grading into a grassland and scrub mosaic at the northern end. This has the potential to support protected species which may include reptiles, and nesting birds in the north. In the far north of the site is a vegetated pit with earth mounds, which may also provide potential habitat for ground-nesting birds. The area is well connected with woodland areas to the west in Dean Farmlands and to the east in Loose Orchards, and as such it provides potential foraging habitat for protected species occupying these areas, such as badgers.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.63 There is slight variance in the condition of elements and the extent of urban edge influence. To the north, the disused quarry workings and associated security fencing are visual detractors. There is a contrast between the good condition of mature woodland, some of which is ancient, along valley sides to the south of the area, and the poor condition of fencing and hedgerows to the north.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.64 The valley topography and wooded valley sides, more strongly defined to the south, form distinct features and a level of continuity through the landscape. Buildings are traditional and historic, and ragstone walling along Dean Street provides local distinction.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Weak
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

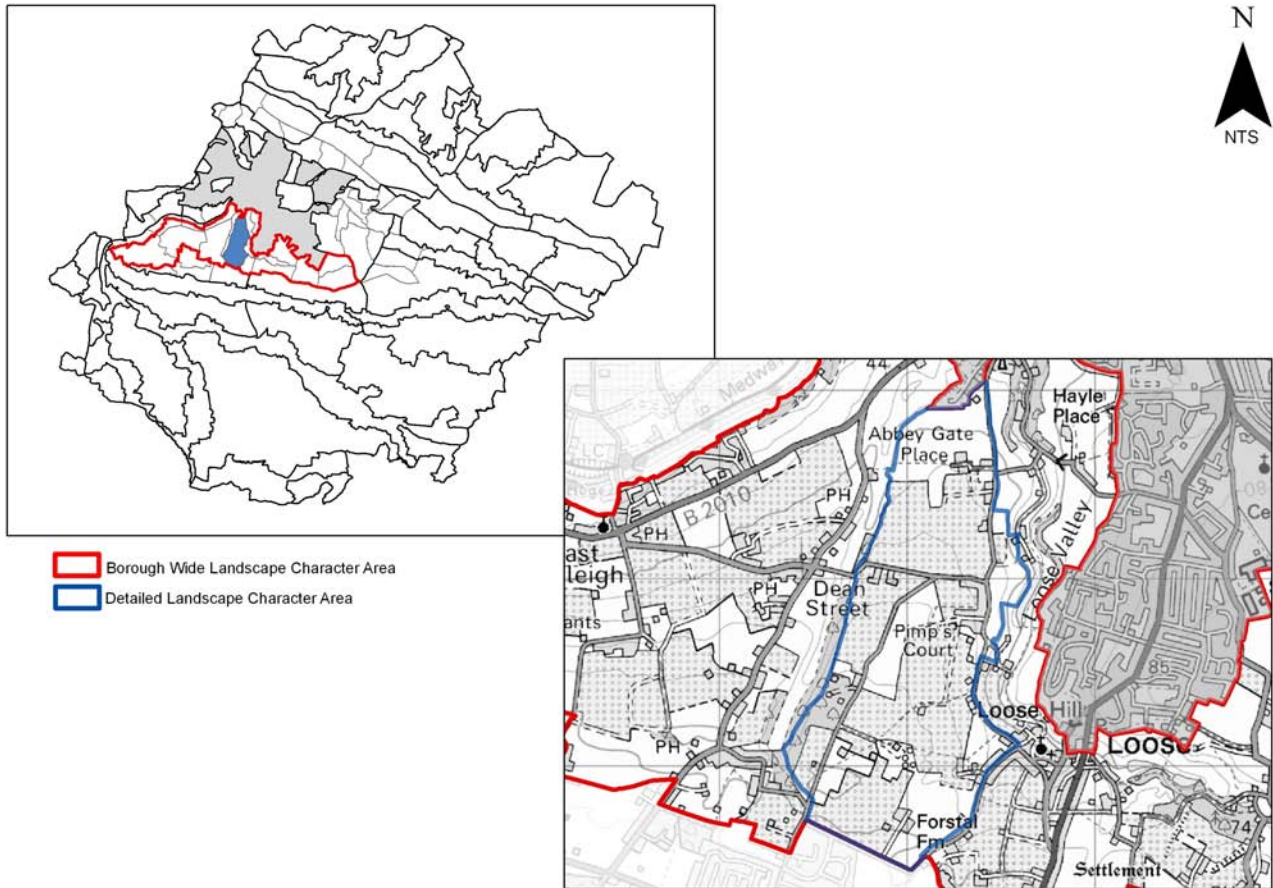
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Reinstate hedgerow boundaries to the north and improve existing hedgerow boundaries
- Conserve long views along valley to south
- Encourage appropriate and sensitive development of disused quarry workings to the north
- Conserve ancient woodland and improve through appropriate/continued management

27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large areas of traditional orchards
- Farm buildings (modern and traditional)
- Native hedgerows and tree lines, Hamlet Wood coppice
- Pimp's Court Farm Centre and dwellings
- Network of farm tracks
- Sunken lanes with earth banks
- Undulating landform

Location

27.65 Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture lies to the south west of Maidstone, south of Tovil and north of Coxheath. The northern boundary leads directly into a small industrial area and then into the Tovil area of Maidstone. To the east is the Loose Valley, and the western boundary is formed by a woodland edge. The southern boundary is defined by Forstal Lane with Well Street to the south east.



27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.66 The area is dominated by orchards and pasture, with native hedgerows and mature trees forming field boundaries. Field boundaries of native hedgerows, some of which have been recently laid, are generally well maintained. Some areas of pasture are grazed by horses and sheep. Hamlet Wood to the south west comprises 27 acres of coppiced woodland consisting mainly of chestnut and birch, which contains a scout campsite providing outdoor activities and training facilities.

27.67 A number of farmsteads are scattered across the area consisting of a mix of modern and traditional buildings. A small settlement within the area is at the edge of Loose. Pimps Court Farm Centre (also known as Pymps Court) off Busbridge Road, comprises a mix of retail, livestock and charitable outlets. Pympe Court Farm itself is an historic site with some ancient buildings, today producing top fruit and sheep across 300 acres. The site includes ancient woodland, streams with reed beds, a nature reserve, wildflower meadow and a fully equipped education centre in a Medieval barn. There are two rows of prominent terraced houses adjacent to the farm centre, which are of a consistent modern style and all painted white. These stand out from the surrounding landscape.

27.68 A network of rural lanes cross and border the area, some of which are particularly narrow and appear to be historic sunken lanes with earth banks on either side topped with

native hedgerows and rows of trees. In addition the whole area is punctuated with farm tracks and paths, which enforce the field pattern and sense of enclosure.

Geology, soils and topography

27.69 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with some very small patches of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay around the perimeter. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is undulating, forming a dominant feature.

Views

27.70 In some locations, particularly looking north from New Cut Road, the edge of Maidstone is clearly visible, although due to the undulating landform in other areas there are only restricted views. There are also some views to the Coxheath residential area to the south. Views within the area are across orchards and pasture with a linear pattern provided by the field boundaries and shelterbelts.

Urban edge influence

27.71 The residential area of Coxheath and the urban edge of Maidstone are visible in some views, but there are few other urban edge influences.

27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture

BIODIVERSITY

27.72 This area comprises a mixture of ancient semi-natural broad-leaved woodland, commercial orchards, arable fields, farms and their associated buildings. There are a number of belts of mature broad-leaved trees, with a larger area of ancient semi-natural broad-leaved woodland (Hamlet Wood) to the west bordering the East of Dean Valley. Ancient woodland has been identified as a locally important habitat in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and has the potential to support protected species which may include breeding birds, bats, badgers and dormice. Arable fields surrounding the woodland also provide potential foraging habitat for badgers.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.73 Electricity pylons and some temporary construction works are minor visual detractors. Hedgerows and mature trees are well maintained, and some of the hedgerows have been recently laid which will preserve and enhance their condition. The built development has a positive impact on the landscape character and sense of place.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Unified
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity

27.74 Orchards, chestnut coppice, hedgerows and sunken lanes form very locally distinct characteristics, providing historic continuity throughout the area. The area is considered to have a strong sense of place and there is moderate visibility due to the combination of dominant landform and enclosed orchards.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Moderate

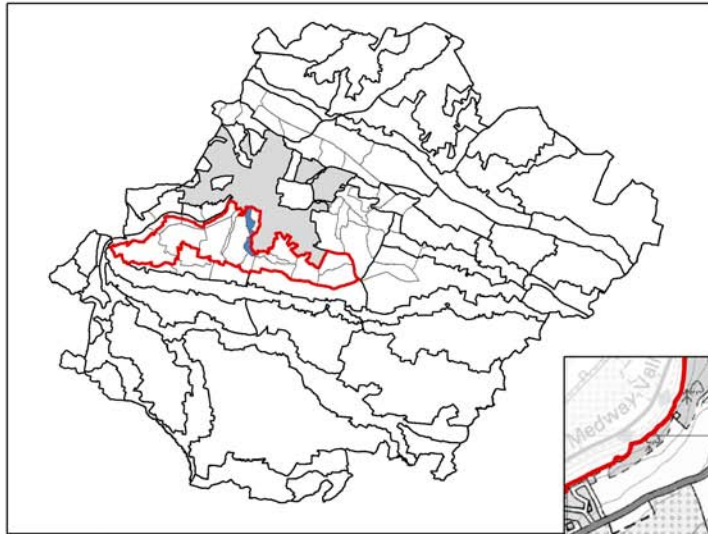
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

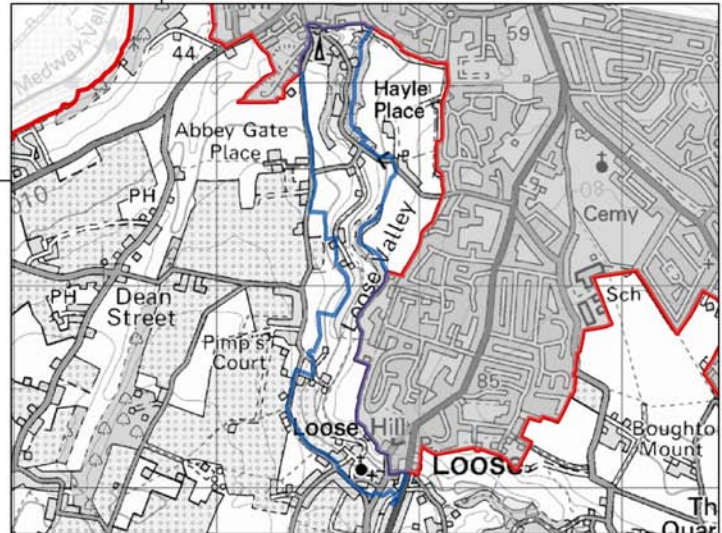
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce hedgerow boundaries by encouraging traditional management methods such as hedge laying
- Coppice woodland is an important landscape feature at Hamlet Wood and should be reinforced through appropriate management
- Conserve the characteristic narrow and enclosed lanes and reinforce through continued management of hedgerows

27-8. Loose Valley



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Water comprising the Loose Stream, mill ponds and springs
- Steep wooded valley sides
- Traditional mill buildings and cottages – stone built or weather boarded with slate roofs
- Mature native woodland

Location

27.75 Loose Valley lies to the south west of Maidstone and comprises a valley through which flows a tributary of the River Medway known as the Loose Stream. To the north lies Tovil and to the north east is an area of pasture (Hayle Estate) leading to the edge of Maidstone. To the south east the area adjoins the urban edge of Maidstone. To the south is Loose Village and to the west the land is dominated by orchards and pasture (Loose Orchards).



27-8. Loose Valley



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.76 The area is dominated by water in the form of the Loose Stream, mill ponds and springs, and is in strong contrast with the nearby urban extent of Maidstone. The Loose Stream trickles through the valley, entering a series of pools and mill ponds of varying sizes. Riparian vegetation lines the waterways and provides a corridor of wildlife interest. The area is quite well wooded, particularly along the valley sides and to the north. Field boundaries comprise a variety of hedgerows, walls and wrought iron fencing; mill ponds also form boundaries. Other land use comprises areas of enclosed pasture and some small paddocks, with boundaries running along the contours. There are a number of traditional mills with associated buildings along the valley road, and other clusters of traditional housing. Most of the buildings are old stone cottages and weather boarded cottages with slate roofs. An old mill development has been converted but retains the original chimney. A development of new residential apartments overlooking a mill pond mimic the traditional style of weather boarded properties with slate roofs. Loose Village to the south east of the area is designated as a Conservation Area, with large and unique buildings and a strong sense of place. Narrow winding lanes follow the contours along sections of the valley bottom, passing through dense woodland blocks. Few lanes cross the valley, and these are extremely steep.

27.77 Geology, soils and topography

The geology of the perimeter of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. The central portion of the area (surrounding the Loose Stream) consists of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. A small patch of alluvium exists in the centre of the area. Soils are loam over limestone. The area is undulating with the steep sided river valley forming a dominant feature.

27.78 Views

Views out of the area are restricted by the steep valley sides and undulating topography. There are no views to the urban edge at the north or east.

27.79 Urban edge influence

There are no significant urban influences within the area, although recent expansion of Maidstone's urban edge to the north is apparent, and the valley landform allows more open, elevated views of parts of the Loose Valley in places.

27-8. Loose Valley

BIODIVERSITY

27.80 This area comprises mainly improved and semi-improved grassland, and belts of mature broad-leaved woodland around a small stream. There is some residential development in the form of Hayle Mill to the north. The riverside habitat provides potential habitat for protected species which may include water voles, otters, breeding birds such as kingfishers, and roosting and foraging bats, as well as crayfish in the river itself as water quality is good. The semi-improved grassland also provides potential habitat for protected species which may include reptiles. The steep slopes of the valley sides could provide potential habitat for badger setts. This area provides a valuable potential habitat corridor for wildlife between the urban area of Maidstone and the surrounding countryside to the south.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Very Good
27.81 The valley is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, reflecting the excellent biodiversity. Cultural integrity is good, with the designation of Loose Village and Loose Valley as Conservation Areas, and the mill ponds traditionally associated with working mills. Original buildings respect the character and provide strong local distinctiveness, although these are interrupted occasionally by new build properties.	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Unified
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Good
	Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
27.82 The valley topography and wooded valley sides, more strongly defined to the south, form distinct features and a level of continuity throughout the landscape. Buildings are traditional and historic, and ragstone walling along Dean Street provides further local distinction.	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Strong
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	High

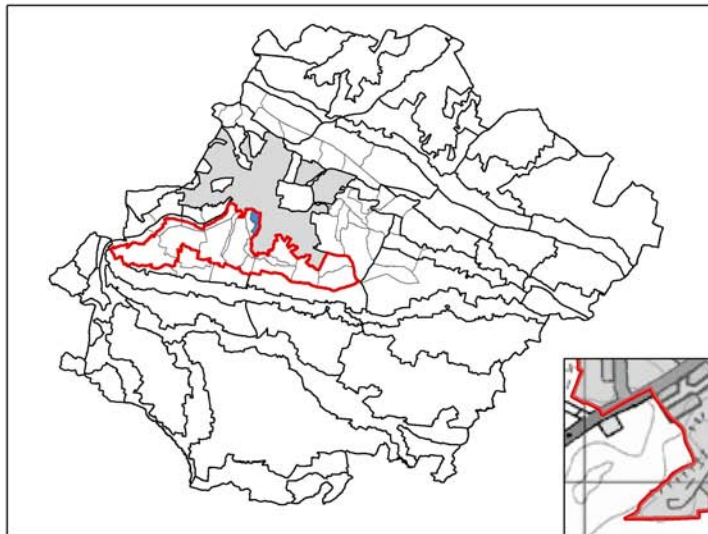
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

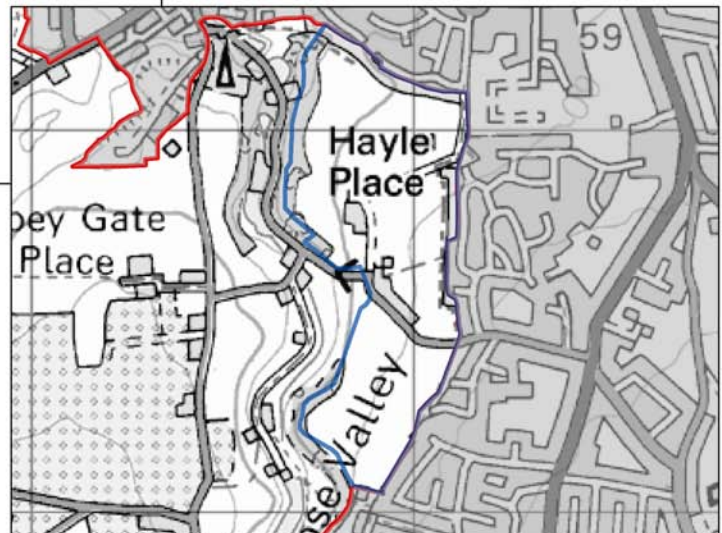
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the dominance of water in the form of a river, mill ponds and springs
- Conserve and appropriately manage the mill ponds for landscape and biodiversity value
- Have regard to the Loose Valley Conservation Partnership and their management plan, together with individual organisations of significance such as the Valley Conservation Society
- Conserve and appropriately manage wooded valley sides
- Avoid further new development to maintain the rural, tranquil character

27-9. Hayle Estate



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rough pasture
- Scrub vegetation
- Views of Maidstone's urban edge
- Hayle Place Estate

Location

27.83 Hayle Estate lies to the south west of Maidstone, east of the Loose Valley and directly west of the southern edge of Maidstone. The urban edge of Maidstone forms the northern and eastern boundaries, the Loose Valley, comprising the River Medway tributary, mill ponds and springs, forms the western boundary.



27-9. Hayle Estate



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.84 This is a small, flat area comprising pasture which is predominantly grazed by horses and is interrupted by overgrown areas of scrub and gappy hedgerows. There are scattered remnant orchards, but no remaining traditional field pattern. There is little mature vegetation within the area, apart from a few isolated mature pine trees and garden vegetation around properties. To the south, rough pasture is enclosed by hedgerows, although these have been replaced with post and wire fencing in places. Hayle Place forms a large historic estate with associated outbuildings and stabling, which has all been converted to individual dwellings. The historic driveway is lined with a tall ragstone wall, covered in mosses. Dense conifers surround the buildings and line the driveway. There are a number of modern residential properties off Cripple Street which crosses the area. The names of roads are evocative of their character, and form a perception of former uses.

Geology, soils and topography

27.85 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with some very small patches of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay distributed along the western edge adjacent to the stream. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is flat with clear views out to urban areas.

Views

27.86 Views to the south are across fields and to the east a new white weather boarded development in the Loose Valley is clearly visible. To the east and north views are across the urban edge to central Maidstone.

Urban edge influence

27.87 The area is heavily influenced by the urban edge of Maidstone which is clearly visible.

27-9. Hayle Estate

BIODIVERSITY

27.88 This area consists mainly of improved and semi-improved grassland used for grazing, with hedgerows containing mature broad-leaved trees to the north, and more scattered broad-leaved trees to the south, with a small area of broad-leaved woodland bordering the riverside habitat found in the Loose Valley, which contains a number of water bodies. The semi-improved grassland provides potential habitat for protected species which may include reptiles, while the woodland and scattered trees provide potential habitat for breeding birds, bats and badgers. The water bodies within the wood may have the potential to support great crested newts. As with Loose Valley, the area provides a habitat link for wildlife between urban Maidstone and the surrounding countryside.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Poor
27.89 The strong influence of the urban edge, coupled with poorly managed pasture and evidence of old orchards, form an incoherent pattern of elements. Tree cover is limited and, whilst some field boundaries comprise hedgerows, boundaries are mostly defined by post and wire fencing. The sparse settlements have a low impact on the landscape due to the proximity of the urban edge.	Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
27.90 The narrow roads and Hayle Place form distinct characteristics, but otherwise the rough, unmanaged grazing and poor fencing form an indistinct sense of place.	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
	Continuity:	Recent
	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

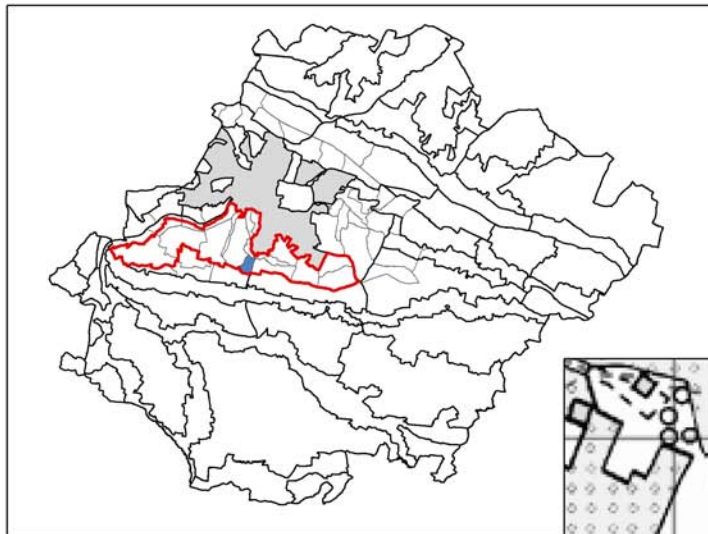
GUIDELINES - IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

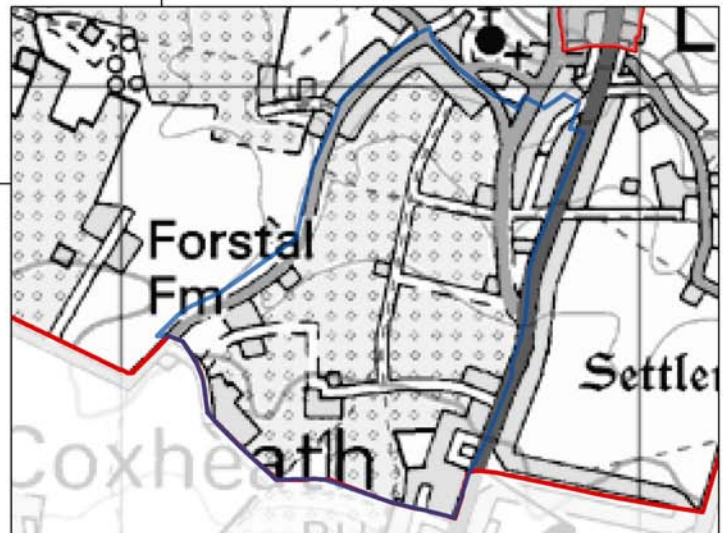
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Encourage the restoration of historic parkland planting around Hayle Place and respect the setting of Hayle Place itself
- Maintain Hayle Place historic walled driveway
- Enhance and respect the built and natural environment through the sensitive integration of any further development
- Respect views from, and the setting of, the adjacent Loose Valley in any development proposals

27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large areas of traditional orchards
- Large agricultural buildings
- Native hedgerows and tree lines
- Traditional dwellings within Loose Village Conservation Area
- Farm tracks throughout the area

Location

27.91 Loose Greensand Orchards lies to the south west of Maidstone. To the north the area is bordered by Loose Village Conservation Area and to the east by Linton Road (A229), which contains a line of residential properties along its eastern side; there is a small residential area in the south east corner of the area. Well Street and Forstal Lane form the westerly boundary which is bordered by fields, and to the south the boundary is defined by a path and field boundaries.



27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.92 The area is dominated by orchards, with some areas in agricultural use. Orchards are of varied maturity, with some newly planted. Hop poles remain within some areas, reflecting former land use and adding historic context to the landscape. Field boundaries comprise mainly native hedgerows, many of which are historic and most of which are in good condition and well maintained. However, post and wire fencing has replaced vegetation boundaries in places. These, together with a network of mature trees and poplar shelterbelts, form distinct linear corridors of vegetation and a strong enclosure pattern. The area is not heavily wooded, although two small clusters of broadleaf woodland occur in the north west and south.

27.93 Several large agricultural buildings and farm materials fragment the landscape and these, together with some high barbed wire fencing around some orchard blocks, break up the general unity of the area and add a discordant aspect. To the north of the area a small number of dwellings, forming the southern edge of Loose Village, comprise a mix of modern and traditional buildings including some timber framed and stone houses. Loose Wool Hall, a small National Trust property (not open to the public), is situated just within the area. In the south east corner of the area, a modern housing estate encroaches on the rural character of the area with a number of conifer hedgerows enclosing the gardens in some parts of the residential area.

27.94 Loose Hill Road, which is a distinct and historic lane, crosses the north east of the area. There are no other roads through the area but a number of tracks run between orchard blocks and connect farm buildings.

Geology, soils and topography

27.95 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with two very small patches of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay in the north of the area. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The area is flat to very slightly sloping, with intermittent views out to the edges of housing.

Views

27.96 There are intermittent views out of the area to the edges of housing and some urban views towards Maidstone. Within the area there are mainly linear views along orchard lines.

Urban edge influence

27.97 The extension of Maidstone's urban fringe to the east forms a noticeable urban influence on the area.

27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards

BIODIVERSITY

27.98 This area is dominated by commercial orchards. There is a small copse of mature broad-leaved woodland to the south, a number of mature broad-leaved trees surrounding properties to the west and north, a small amount of improved and semi-improved grassland within arable fields, and a few residential properties with gardens to the south east. The woodland copse, mature trees and residential plots have the potential to support protected breeding birds and badgers. Hedgerows around the field boundaries are defunct and absent in many places and as such are unlikely to be of benefit to connectivity across the area.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Good
27.99 There is a generally unified pattern of elements, although there are some minor detractors comprising large agricultural buildings, high barbed wire fencing around some orchard blocks and peripheral housing at the northern and south eastern edges. There is a contrast between traditional orchards, hedgerows and tracks and the edge of Loose Village Conservation Area, with the more modern farm buildings and fences.	Pattern of elements:	Unified
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Variable
	Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
27.100 The sense of place is largely distinct with the orchards and hedges providing key characteristics and historic elements. Overall the sense of place is moderate. However, the low visibility provides a low sensitivity overall.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Enclosed
	Visibility:	Low

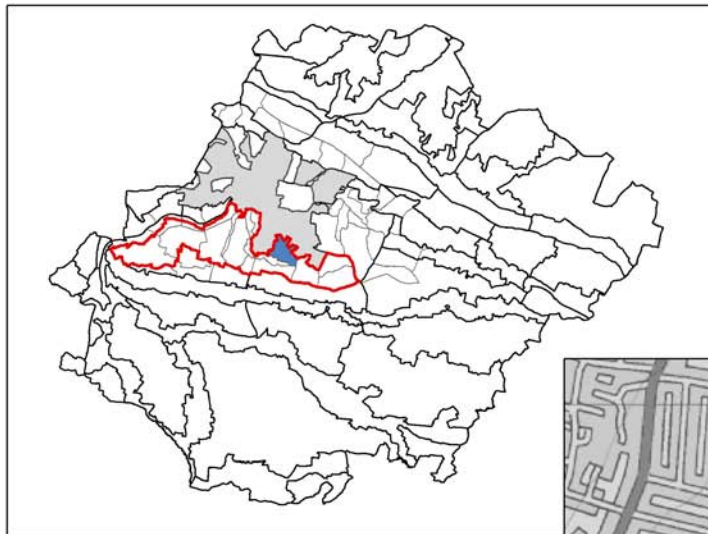
GUIDELINES - REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Reinforce traditional orchard enclosure methods and avoid replacement with post and wire fencing
- Reinforce hedgerows where they have become defunct
- Protect the rural setting of Loose Village Conservation Area and traditional buildings within the landscape

27-11. Boughton Farm



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Orchards
- Large intensive arable fields
- Narrow hedge lined lanes
- Large agricultural barns
- Modern buildings with security railings
- Traditional vernacular style buildings at Boughton Mount

Location

27.101 Boughton Farm lies to the south of Maidstone, within a pocket defined by the urban edge. The southern boundary is formed by field boundaries along the top of Boughton Quarries (which encompass the south eastern extent of the Loose Valley).



27-11. Boughton Farm



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.102 Managed fruit orchards form a grid like pattern across some of the landscape around Boughton Farm, although many previous orchards have been removed and replaced with large intensive arable fields. The field pattern is irregular, lost in places to intensive agricultural methods. Some recreational grounds are situated along the north and west boundaries, and pockets of pasture are scattered to the south, adding to the mosaic like pattern of land use. Hedgerows and shelterbelts mark some field boundaries, although there is little wooded vegetation other than a small clump of deciduous woodland south of Boughton Mount. Development consists of isolated clusters of farm buildings, with no settlements. Boughton Mount comprises a cluster of traditional style properties, including oast houses. Large agricultural barns at Boughton Mount Farm are dominant features and appear out of scale with the surrounding landscape. Buildings to the east, in association with the police, are modern, brick developments, enclosed by tall metal railings for security purposes. Pested Bars Cross Road and Cliff Hill Road form the only two roads within the area. Both are narrow lanes with sharp bends, and are lined with well managed dense native hedgerows.

Geology, soils and topography

27.103 The geology of the area is Hythe Beds with a small pocket of Sandgate Beds where the land rises at Iden Farm. Drifts of head brickearth and alluvium occur along the stream cutting. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform is generally flat with some very gentle slopes.

Views

27.104 Views within the area stretch across open arable land in some places, and are restricted in other areas by hedgerows and orchard plantations. Views out of the area are again restricted by intervening hedgerows but reach across open arable land to the south, across the valley containing The Quarries, to the landscape surrounding Boughton Green.

Urban edge influence

27.105 Urban edge influences include recreation grounds and playing fields around the periphery of the area, and modern buildings with security fencing in association with the police. Although not widely visible from within the area, the urban edge is visible from some locations near the residential fringe, and a recent extension of modern high density housing has been recently implemented east of Pested Bars Road.

27-11. Boughton Farm

BIODIVERSITY

27.106 This area consists of large areas of improved amenity grassland to the west and arable fields across the rest of the area. There is also some rough grassland and scrub to the south where it borders a small stream, and to the west. There is a small area of woodland around buildings on Boughton Lane, and a residential area to the east with gardens and amenity grassland. Tree lines along roads and hedgerows containing mature broadleaved trees are also present, as are scattered mature trees in the amenity grassland to the west. The scrub, hedgerows and woodland provide potential habitat for nesting birds and dormice, and habitat corridors for bats. This connects well with woodland to the west in Boughton Quarries and Loose Valley. The scrub and semi-improved grassland provide potential habitat for protected species which could include reptiles. The stream-side habitat in this area connects well with that in Boughton Quarries, Boughton Green Farmland and Park Wood Horticultural Land.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.107 Urban influences encroaching on the landscape from the urban surrounds, such as modern buildings and security fencing, detract from the inherent character of the landscape. The general condition of landscape features is good, although there is an evident vulnerability to change with recent loss of fruit orchards and the historic landscape pattern.

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.108 The narrow hedge lined lanes, orchard blocks and scattered farms provide local distinctiveness within the landscape. However, the loss of orchards to intensive farmland, and encroachment of recent urban influences are weakening the continuity of the landscape and its key characteristics.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

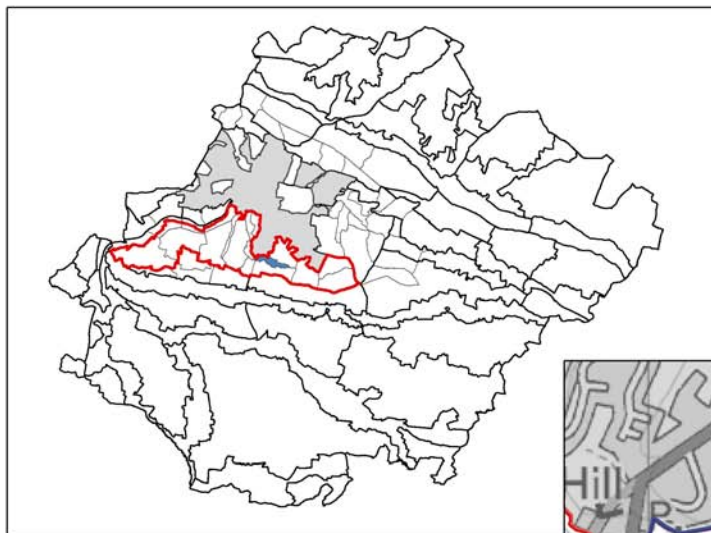
GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

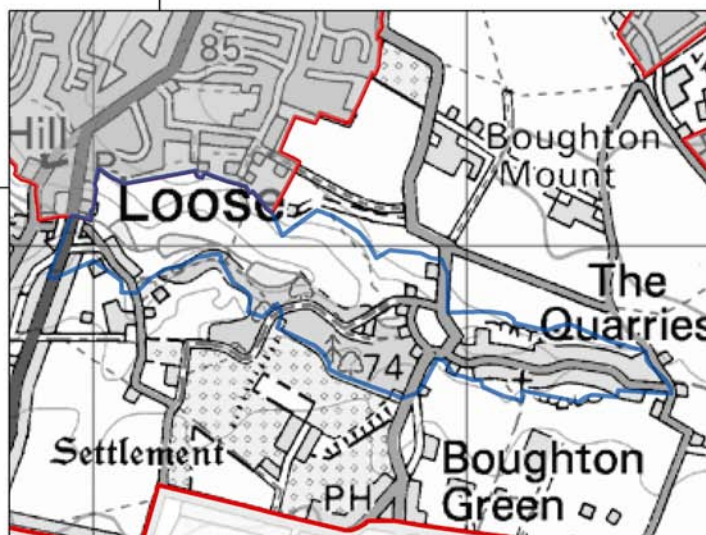
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Avoid developments which conflict with the rural, farmed landscape
- Ensure the urban edge does not impinge on the small scale, isolated character of Boughton Quarries to the south
- Encourage sensitive boundary treatment and avoid urban sprawl
- Aim to retain some characteristic features of the existing landscape in any new development
- Encourage softening of security fencing through native planting.

27-12. Boughton Quarries



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Steep valley sides
- Mill ponds and weir
- Native and coppice woodland
- Pasture
- Traditional timber framed buildings within former quarries and as mill cottages within valley
- Modern housing along The Quarries

Location

27.109 Boughton Quarries lies to the south of Maidstone and forms an extension of the Loose Valley, running east from Loose village and Linton Road. The boundaries are defined by field and property boundaries to the north and south, and Cliff Hill to the east.



27-12. Boughton Quarries



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.110 A distinct pattern of pasture and woodland follows the contour pattern. The area is well wooded, particularly to the south, with a mixture of deciduous and chestnut coppice woodland and some evergreen trees. Swathes of wild garlic cover the woodland floor, and ferns and mosses are scattered across remnants of ragstone walling. A network of narrow paths runs through the woodland, along a stony terrain. The mill ponds and mill race are edged with ragstone setts, reflecting the underlying geology. Weeping willows, lines of poplar and isolated mature trees surround the water, which is set within pasture. Native hedgerows, woodland edges and the valley sides provide a strong sense of enclosure throughout the area.

27.111 To the west, the area is largely unsettled, although clusters of timber framed houses are scattered in low lying pockets which have previously been excavated, and ragstone clad mill cottages lay along Salts Lane. An area with traditional style timber framed houses and narrow lanes lined with ragstone walls is situated around Beresford Hill. Development along The Quarries, to the east, is mostly modern style high density housing and bungalows with the odd, once isolated, traditional style house. Roads within the area are narrow and are concentrated to the east. Bottlescrew Hill is steep and characteristically lined with ragstone walls. Hedgerows grow from the tops of some retained walls and ivy covers some of the stonework.

Geology, soils and topography

27.112 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a large central band of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay surrounding the stream. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. As an area which has been formerly quarried for ragstone, as well as this area being set within a valley, the landform is distinct. Previously quarried pockets have not been filled in, leaving sudden changes in level, and the valley sides are steep.

Views

27.113 Views within the area are varied because of the steep undulations, wooded areas and dense settlement along The Quarries to the east, but primarily extend along the valley across mill ponds set in pasture. Views out of the area are limited because of the topography and woodland, but some intermittent views of housing along Walnut Tree Lane to the north are possible.

Urban edge influence

27.114 The urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences, except for the modern housing along The Quarries.

27-12. Boughton Quarries

BIODIVERSITY

27.115 This area consists mainly of areas of improved grazed grassland with woodland blocks marking the boundaries. A stream corridor runs across the site east to west which forms ponds in places along its length. The ponds and mature semi-natural broadleaved trees and the stream corridor represent the greatest benefit for wildlife in the area. The corridor may support protected species such as bats, badgers, nesting birds, reptiles and great crested newts. It connects well with similar stream corridor habitat further west into Loose Valley, and east into Park Wood Horticultural Land.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.116 The valley sides and low lying mill ponds create a strong pattern and there is a strong corridor throughout the valley for wildlife. Woodland is mature, with some new planting giving way to a varied age structure. The mill ponds, weir and mill race are intact in terms of associated stone work. A central part of the area off Bottlescrew Hill is designated as a Conservation Area.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity

27.117 The valley topography, reminders of previous quarrying activity in the use of ragstone for walls and buildings within the area, and the series of low lying mill ponds and race are very distinct and historic landscape features. Local distinctiveness is strengthened by the designation of an area of traditional housing as a Conservation Area.

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Strong
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Moderate

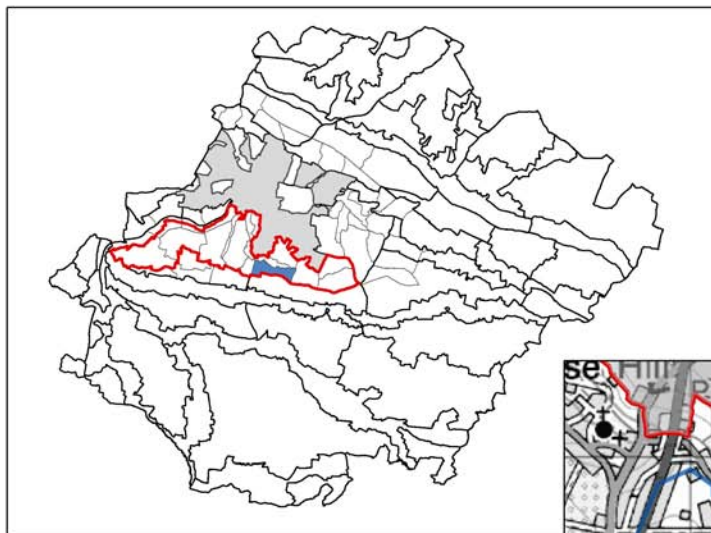
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

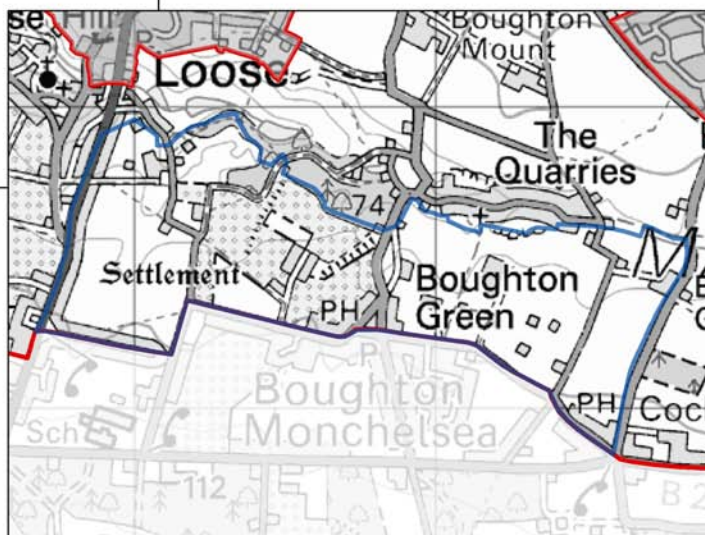
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the dominance of water within the river, mill ponds and mill race, the frequency of willow and the frequent use of ragstone in walls and building
- Conserve the rural and tranquil character
- Conserve and maintain characteristic narrow lanes and ragstone walls
- Resist pressure to over develop public access

27-13. Boughton Green Farmland



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Orchards
- Native hedgerows
- Pasture grazed by horses
- Past quarrying activity and exposed ragstone faces
- Oast houses and vernacular style buildings
- Modern housing along the periphery
- Large agricultural barns

Location

27.118 Boughton Green Farmland lies to the south of Maidstone. The northern boundary is defined by field boundaries along the top of a linear valley. Green Lane, Haste Hill Road and Salts Avenue define the southern boundary. Brishing Lane encloses the area to the east, and Linton Road lies along the western boundary.



27-13. Boughton Green Farmland



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.119 The land use is varied, with a mixture of fruit orchards, small pockets of arable land, a large poultry farm and grazed pasture. A previously quarried area to the north lies beneath an area of dense woodland, and orchards and dense native hedgerows provide seasonal variation, a sense of enclosure and consistency. Some orchards appear to have been removed and small pockets of arable land lie within their former boundaries. There is a varied field pattern, with smaller more regular shaped fields to the east and larger more open fields, owing to intensive agricultural practices, to the west. Areas of pasture, enclosed by timber post and rail fencing, are grazed by horses throughout the area. Although no longer active, Boughton Quarry is situated to the north, with remnant pockets of exposed ragstone faces draped in climbing vegetation revealed in places.

27.120 Past quarrying activity is evident in building materials and ragstone walls, topped with red brick, running alongside the narrow lanes. The Green, Boughton Monchelsea, is designated as a Conservation Area, highlighting its cultural significance. Buildings within the core of the settlement are traditional and unique in style. Modern housing infills the more traditional properties, extending out from the traditional core of The Green and along Haste Hill Road, Salts Avenue and Linton Road. Scattered farmsteads and large isolated properties lie throughout the area, with oast houses, timber facing and Kent peg tiles providing local significance. Mature trees and vegetation, including pines, cluster around

traditional properties, providing them with a mature landscape setting. Large agricultural barns are contrasting in style and scale, and a particular cluster of them form a significant feature within the area. Roads are narrow, lined with hedgerows and run in a general north south direction against the contours.

Geology, soils and topography

27.121 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a very small patch of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay at the northern tip of the area adjacent to the water body. There are two small patches of head in the south western corner. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is varied, with flatter land to the south and more undulations defined by the valley edge and past quarrying to the north.

Views

27.122 Views within the area are primarily across orchards and grazed pasture, although far reaching views are prevented by boundary hedgerows. Views out of the area are limited because of intervening vegetation and landform.

Urban edge influence

27.123 There are few urban edge influences within the area, although modern housing extends along the periphery of the area as a ribbon like extension of Maidstone's urban area. The true urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area because of intervening vegetation and landform.

27-13. Boughton Green Farmland

BIODIVERSITY

27.124 This area comprises improved grassland, orchards and some arable fields. There is a small area of broad-leaved woodland and scattered mature broad-leaved trees, a small number of residential properties with gardens, and a number of hedgerows, most of which are managed. The woodland and scattered trees provide potential for breeding birds, bats, badgers and dormice. Hedgerows provide potential commuting routes for protected species which may include reptiles and bats. The woodland in this area is well connected with that in the stream corridor in Boughton Quarries and Boughton Farm to the south.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Good
27.125 The varied land use, pockets of undulation derived from quarrying and the change in field pattern from east to west provides a slightly incoherent pattern of elements. A Scheduled Monument covers much of the area, historically associated with earthworks, and there is a mix of vernacular buildings. The Green is designated as a Conservation Area.	Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Good
	Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
27.126 The key characteristics of the landscape are distinct and historic. In particular, the unique mixture of vernacular style buildings, pockets of exposed ragstone from past quarrying and the quarried materials reflected in buildings and walls evoke local distinctiveness.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

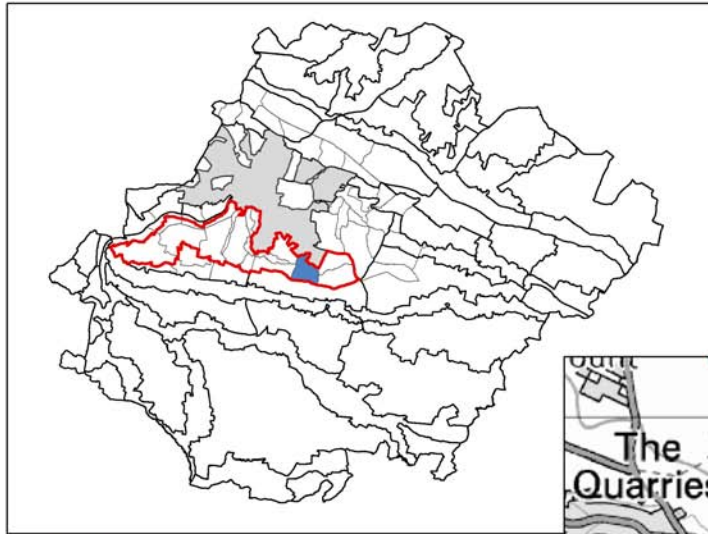
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

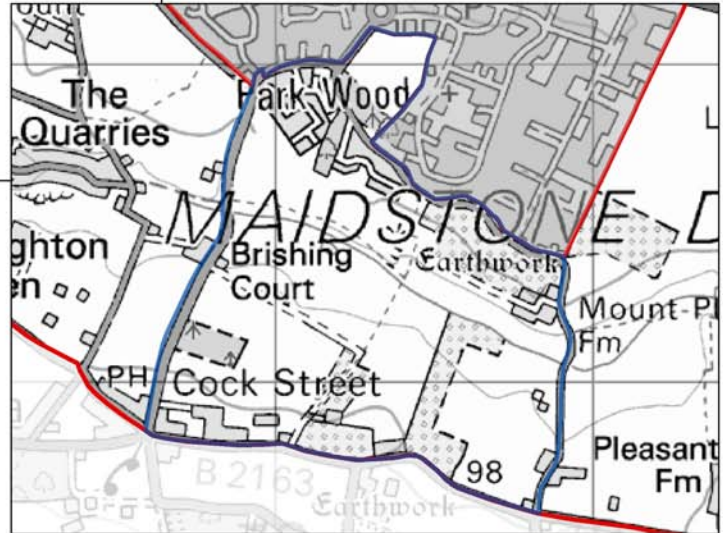
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve exposed ragstone faces
- Conserve ribbon pattern of development
- Avoid changes which would be highly visible from Boughton Quarries
- Conserve the rural setting of development at Boughton Green

27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area

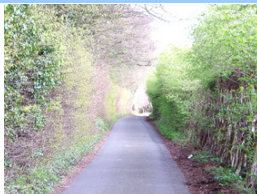


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Stream
- Orchards and poplar shelterbelts
- Horticultural area
- Mosaic field pattern
- Traditional and historic buildings and settlements

Location

27.127 Park Wood Horticultural Land lies to the south east of Maidstone. The southern boundary is formed by Heath Road, and Brishing Lane encloses the area to the north, east and west.



27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.128 Orchards, divided by poplar shelterbelts, cover much of the area with some land used for horticultural production. Crop patterns are distinctly linear, with large areas of white polythene covering some of the horticultural areas. Fields are generally small and form a patchwork mosaic pattern across the landscape, strengthened in places with native hedgerows. There is a small amount of intensive agriculture to the east, where field pattern and enclosure has been lost.

27.129 A stream flows through the area from east to west which runs within a deep cutting to the east, but forms a narrow and shallow ribbon of water to the west. Pools of water are scattered along the length of the stream, which is set within a belt of native woodland vegetation. A narrow woodland path runs between the trees along a section of the northern side of the stream. To the north of the path, a pocket of previously quarried land supports a clump of native vegetation, and segments of land along the stream contain rough pasture. A distinctly rectangular block of mixed woodland is situated along Brishing Road to the west.

27.130 To the north of the stream, adjacent to the western extent of Brishing Lane, previous landfill now comprises rough grassland. A new housing estate is being constructed as an extension to Maidstone's southern urban area. Housing is dense and lacks local distinctiveness or relevance to the local vernacular within development to the south.

27.131 Buildings along Heath Road are mainly traditional and Boughton Monchelsea promotes a distinct and historic sense of place. Farm houses, oast houses and the 'Cock Inn' are clustered around the village core which is designated as a Conservation Area. Large, modern agricultural buildings slightly detract from the traditional vernacular, and are out of scale with the historic buildings. Paths and tracks run along some field boundaries throughout the area, mostly for accessing and cultivating orchards and horticultural areas. Although there are no roads within the area, the enclosing Brishing Lane is narrow, winding and characteristic of the area.

Geology, soils and topography

27.132 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a small patch of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds on the southern perimeter of the area. A thin central band of alluvium surrounds the stream. A small patch of head brickearth exists on the eastern edge of the site. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform gently slopes down from the northern and southern boundaries to a stream which flows across the area from east to west.

27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land



Views

27.133 Views within the area stretch across a patchwork pattern of orchards and hedgerows, shelterbelts and the mature vegetation belt along the stream. Large areas of polythene, used to protect the horticultural areas, are visually prominent within the landscape. Views of the new housing development at Park Wood are possible from the public footpath running along the northern extent of the stream. Views out of the area are restricted by native hedgerows which run alongside the enclosing roads.

Urban edge influence

27.134 The residential edge of Maidstone to the north, and large buildings at Orchard Industrial Estate, are visible from the area through intervening orchard and hedgerow vegetation. The close proximity of Orchard Industrial Estate and associated security fencing encroaches on the northern boundary of the area. The recent development of housing, extending south from Park Wood, provides additional physical encroachment on the area.



27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land

BIODIVERSITY

27.135 This area is dominated by orchards, arable land and some improved grazed grassland in the north. There is an area with scrub, semi-improved grassland and belts of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland, some of which borders a small stream. There are several ponds present. Hedgerows with mature trees are present between fields in the orchards and improved grassland areas. The scrub and semi-improved grassland provides potential habitat for protected species which may include reptiles; hedgerows also provide potential commuting routes for these species. The scrub, broad-leaved woodland and hedgerows provide potential nesting habitat for breeding birds. The ponds may have the potential to provide breeding habitat for great crested newts, and the stream may provide potential habitat for water voles. The woodland belts connect relatively well with the scrub at Boughton Farm. The stream-side habitat connects well with similar habitat further west in Boughton Green Farmland, Boughton Farm and Boughton Quarries.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.136 Park Wood comprises ancient woodland, but much of this has been removed for modern housing development as an extension of Maidstone's urban edge and some field boundaries have been lost to intensive agriculture. Although not accessible or visible because of surrounding vegetation the site of a Roman Building is situated to the south of the stream along Brishing Lane.

Condition Assessment

Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.137 The mosaic field pattern and traditional orchard plantations are locally distinct and form part of the wider landscape character to the south. Traditional buildings within Boughton Monchelsea Conservation Area provide local distinctiveness. However, the urban edge to the south encroaches on the area and there has been a loss of key characteristics.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

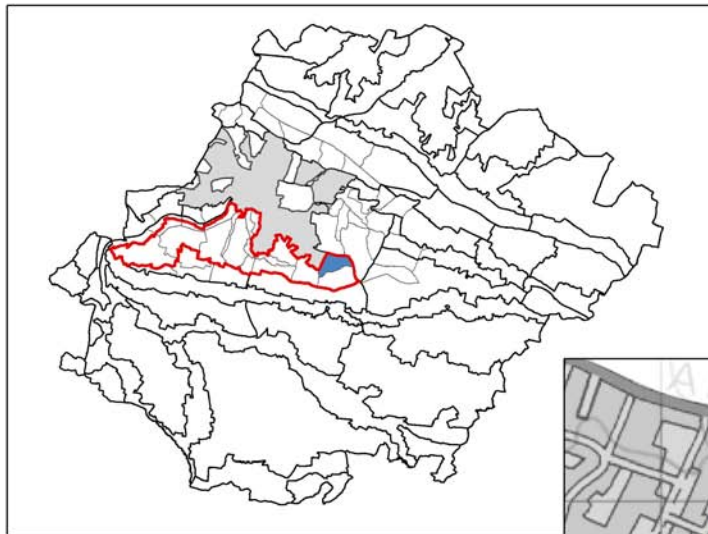
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

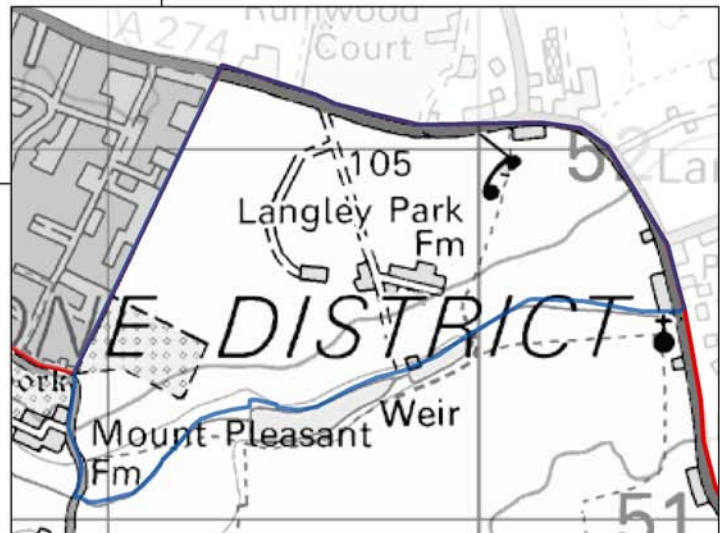
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce the wooded stream channel
- Encourage sensitive boundary treatment along the interface between new built development at Park Wood and open landscape to the south
- Encourage native planting along security fencing around Orchard Industrial Estate
- Resist further horticultural land use where large extents of polythene become visually detracting

27-15. Langley Park Farm



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open arable fields with areas of rough pasture and scrub
- Nursery planting and agricultural buildings
- Hedgerows along Sutton Road and nursery boundaries
- Oast and Georgian house
- Golf driving range
- Pocket of unmanaged orchard with poplar shelterbelts

Location

27.138 Langley Park Farm lies to the south east of Maidstone's urban area. The western boundary is formed by Park Wood trading estate and Brishing Road; the southern boundary is marked by a ditch and the distinctive Langley Loch. The northern and eastern boundaries are defined by Sutton Road.



27-15. Langley Park Farm



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.139 The landscape supports a variety of land uses, which provides a varied character. Located within the eastern side of the area, there is a large plant nursery enclosed by a dense beech hedge along Sutton Road. Large areas of planting are set within linear rows and segregated by sheltering hedgerows. Along the eastern boundary an area of open arable fields slope down to a ditch, which runs along the low lying valley to the south. Arable fields extend to the west, forming linear strips along the landform.

27.140 To the west of the area, a golf driving range is enclosed by a dense barrier of conifer trees. An area of rough pasture and scrub lies along the western boundary, adjoining Orchard Industrial Estate, where all field pattern has been lost. A section of this to the south supports an orchard, which appears to be overgrown and unmanaged, surrounded by poplar shelterbelts. A series of mature poplars run in a north south direction, relating to the former orchard plantations which have since been removed.

27.141 Settlement throughout the area is sparse, with few properties along Sutton Road and a cluster of buildings, including a traditional oast and a large Georgian house, at Langley Park Farm to the south. The properties are situated within a parkland character, now consisting of unmanaged rough pasture with clusters of dense laurel and several pine trees. Large agricultural buildings and caravans at the nursery contrast with the vernacular style buildings and appear out of scale within the

landscape. Although there are no roads within the area, Sutton Road, along the north and east boundaries, forms a busy route with fast moving traffic.

Geology, soils and topography

27.142 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. A small portion of head brickearth exists on the northern perimeter of the area. A very small portion of alluvium exists on the perimeter of the south western corner. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is generally flat but the land slopes gently down towards Langley Loch to the south.

Views

27.143 Views out of the area to the east are to Langley, with the church and clustered surrounding properties focussing the eye. To the west, the large commercial buildings at Orchard Industrial Estate are visible. To the south the stream and Langley Loch are visible, providing a very rural perception. Views within the area are mainly across open fields. The driving range is heavily screened with dense laurel and conifer hedging.

Urban edge influence

27.144 The golf driving range, Orchard Industrial Estate and busy surrounding roads are significant urban influences within the area, although this landscape generally has a rural character.

27-15. Langley Park Farm

BIODIVERSITY

27.145 This area consists of land used for nursery plantings, improved grassland and arable land, with scattered mature broad-leaved trees and belts of broad-leaved woodland (particularly in the south) bordering a small stream. The woodland and stream-side habitat to the south provides potential habitat for protected species which may include breeding birds, bats and water voles. This stream-side habitat also connects relatively well with similar habitat in Park Wood Horticultural Land to the west.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.146 The area is predominately covered with arable fields and pasture and this forms a coherent pattern of elements. Visual detractors include agricultural buildings, caravans and fly tipping, chainlink boundary fence and light spill from Orchard Industrial Estate. Scrub, brambles, hedgerows and water filled ditches provide habitat opportunities. Buildings are often recent and do not respect local character, although the driving range has a low impact because it is well screened.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.147 Sense of place is provided by hedgerows, shelterbelts and traditional buildings at Langley Park Farm. However, the driving range and other recent urban edge influences do not promote a sense of place or local distinctiveness.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

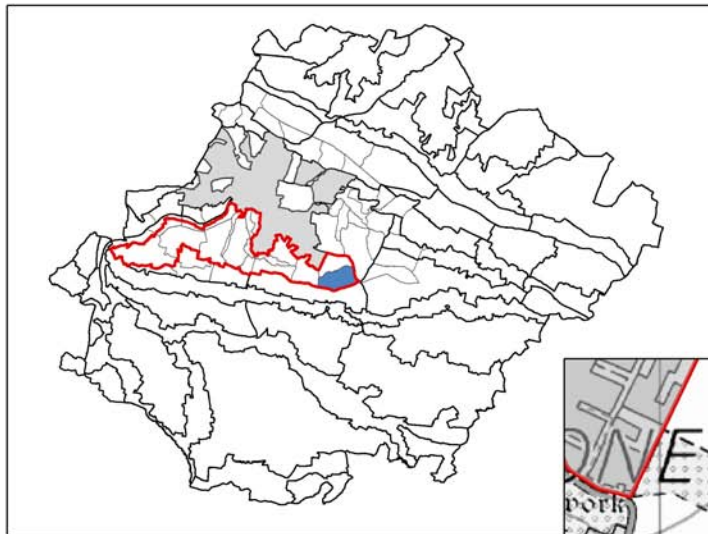
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

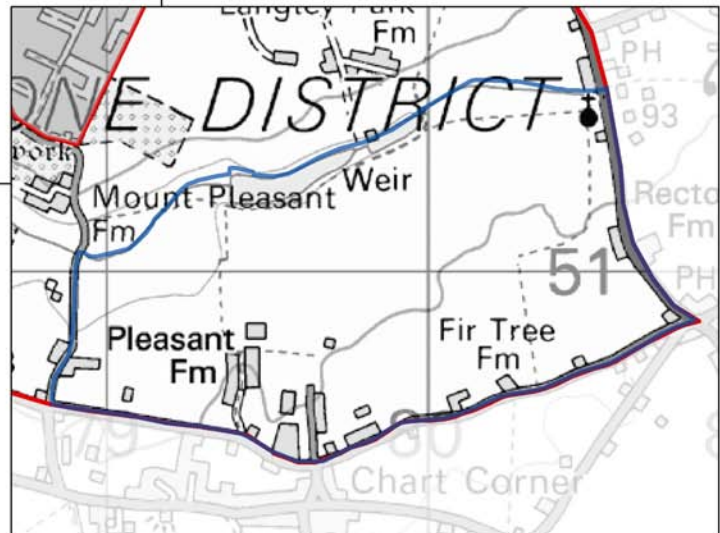
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Encourage removal of fly tipping
- Encourage active management of parkland
- Improve the boundary with the urban edge by encouraging native planting along the periphery of the adjacent industrial estate

27-16. Langley Loch Farmland



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open arable and pasture fields
- Langley Loch, ditch and stream
- Mostly traditional buildings including oasts
- Native hedgerows with mature trees in places
- Reeds and scrub vegetation along the loch edge

Location

27.148 Langley Loch Farmland lies south east of Maidstone. Three boundaries are formed by highways; Sutton Road to the east, Plough Wents Road to the south and Brishing Road to the west. The northern boundary is defined by a ditch and distinctive loch.



27-16. Langley Loch Farmland



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

27.149 This area is farmland, with a prominent ditch with a stream and loch to the north. Minor footbridges cross the loch which forms a pool of water surrounded by reeds and scrubby vegetation, attracting a variety of birdlife. Despite a quantity of litter within the Loch, there is a strong rural perception. Native hedgerows form boundaries in the southern central section but many have been removed to accommodate intensive agricultural practices. Those remaining are often thin and gappy and a number have been replaced by post and wire fencing, weakening the enclosure pattern in the north and eastern sections of the area. There are belts of mature trees along the ditch and along some field boundaries, but there are no significant plots of woodland.

27.150 Land use is predominantly arable farming with some pasture grazed by sheep in the south around Pleasant and Lested Farms. A small settlement along the edge of Chart Sutton comprises mostly traditional buildings including oasts. There are other scattered farms along Plough Wents Road and at Four Wents on the south west corner of the area. There are no highways crossing the area, but the narrow Lested Lane accesses the traditional Orchard Farm Cottages to the south. Brishing Lane along the western boundary is a narrow sunken lane enclosed by embankments.

Geology, soils and topography

27.151 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a small patch of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds in the western half of the area and a very small patch in the south western corner. Soils are predominantly loam over limestone with two small patches of loam over sandstone on the southern perimeter. Landform slopes north towards the low lying ditch and Langley Loch.

Views

27.152 Views out of the area extend beyond Langley Loch to the farmed slope of Langley Park Farm to the north, and across to Chart Sutton in the south. Views within the area are across a valley of open arable fields and pasture.

Urban edge influence

27.153 There are few urban edge influences, except areas of fly tipping and litter within Langley Loch. The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from any part of the area.

27-16. Langley Loch Farmland

BIODIVERSITY

27.154 This area consists mainly of arable land and improved grassland. Hedgerows and belts of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland are present, particularly along the line of a small stream to the north, where there are also several ponds. The woodland and stream-side habitat to the north provides potential habitat for protected species which may include breeding birds, water voles and bats. The pond may have the potential to provide breeding habitat for great crested newts. The hedgerows may provide potential commuting routes for reptiles. The stream-side habitat connects relatively well with similar habitat in Park Wood Horticultural Land to the west.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

27.155 A coherent pattern of elements is formed by the fields and traditional buildings although these are fragmented by electricity pylons, agricultural buildings and some modern housing. Cultural heritage features include the loch, although this is marred slightly by litter, and traditional buildings.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

27.156 Reeds and other vegetation along the loch, traditional settlement at the edge of Chart Sutton, lack of highways through the area and the narrow hedge lined road to the west all contribute to local distinctiveness and continuity, and promote a sense of place.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

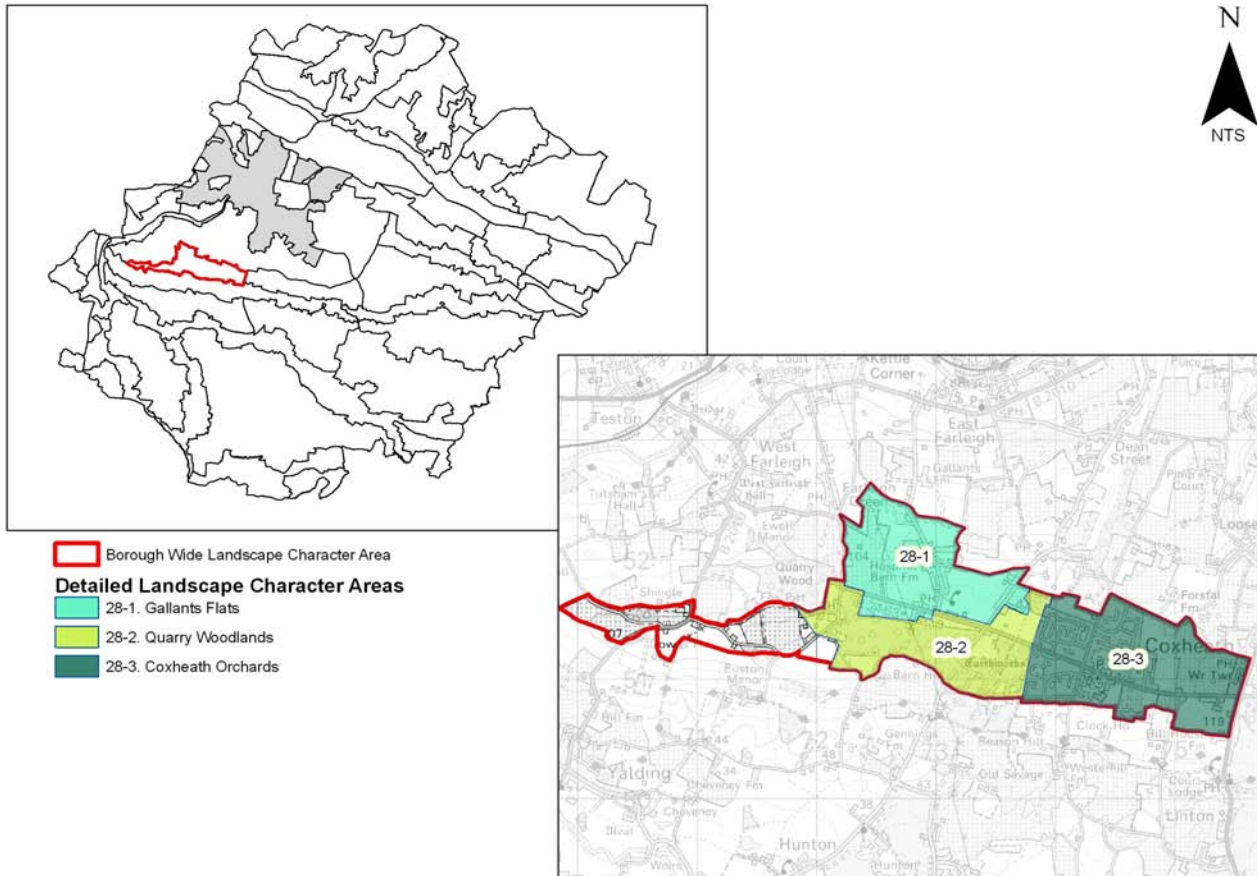
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and manage the low lying ditch and Langley Loch to improve water quality and manage riparian vegetation sensitively to balance nature conservation
- Improve the setting of Langley Loch through the promotion of historic parkland characteristics and the removal of intensive agriculture where possible
- Improve the enclosure pattern by reinstating hedgerow boundaries where possible
- Conserve tree belts along Langley Loch and improve through appropriate management

28. Coxheath Plateau



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Plateau above Greensand Ridge
- Orchards and soft fruit production
- Broadleaf woodland with sweet chestnut coppice
- Extensive recent development at Coxheath
- Long distance views across the Medway Valley to the North Downs

Location

28.1 This area is located south west of Maidstone across the plateau of the Greensand Ridge, and it is the landform and corresponding geology which defines this area. To the south, the landform declines across the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge, and to the north the dip slope declines across the valley side of the River Medway. Linton Hill forms the eastern boundary, and the extent of the plateau defines the edge of the area to the west.



28. Coxheath Plateau



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

28.2 Orchard blocks and the production of soft fruits cover much of the rural landscape. Regular poplar shelterbelts provide a distinctive and traditional small scale enclosure pattern. Occasionally the regular pattern of orchards have been removed and replaced with arable fields and equestrian grazing, particularly around clusters of development.

28.3 There is a significant amount of woodland cover, much of which is ancient, with frequent blocks of broadleaf woodland mixed with sweet chestnut coppice. In some areas the chestnut is actively coppiced, leaving light clearings within the otherwise dense woodland. West of Coxheath, woodland is designated as part of Quarry Wood Local Wildlife Site. Here on the plateau the ancient woodland has mostly been converted to pure sweet chestnut coppice, although there are fringes of original hazel, ash and field maple coppice and there are occasional oak and beech standards. The woodland provides a habitat for numerous mammals including badger, fox, weasel, mole, wood mouse, yellow necked mouse and field and bank voles. It is also noted for providing excellent bird habitat.

28.4 To the east, Coxheath comprises a significantly sized settlement which is centred along Heath Road which links the villages of Yalding to the west and Boughton Monchelsea to the east. The village was a major army camp in the 18th century, although there is little remaining evidence of this except the straight alignment of the roads. During the late

19th and early 20th century, the village included a large workhouse that served part of mid Kent. Although the workhouse is gone, the grade II listed ragstone Holy Trinity now serves as the village church. Much of the development throughout Coxheath is recent, with densely situated semi detached, detached, and terraced houses and bungalows situated around closes. Linear development is clustered along roads to the east and west of Coxheath, and farms which may once have been remote have been absorbed in much of this infill development.

28.5 There are some examples of traditional buildings, including the use of ragstone and chequered red and grey brick properties and farms, set within the more prevalent recent development within Coxheath and to the west along Dean Street and Gallants Lane, but it is the latter which dominates the character of the built environment.



28. Coxheath Plateau

Geology, soils and topography



28.6 The solid geology comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, overlain with extensive drifts of head. Soils are well drained deep loams to clay. This landscape comprises part of a wider plateau across the Greensand Ridge, and is therefore largely flat and elevated above the scarp to the south and the dip slope to the north.

Views

28.7 Many views are restricted by areas of woodland, shelterbelts and extensive development at Coxheath. From parts of the landscape to the north of the area however, there are spectacular views across the Medway Valley to the North Downs beyond. The settlement of Teston stands out within these elevated, sweeping, rural views, and the urban area of Maidstone is visible to the north east. Similarly, from the southern periphery of the area, there are long views across the Low Weald.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

28.8 The consistent pattern of orchards and woodlands provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors comprising pylons west of Gallants Lane, some polytunnels, scattered minor commercial development and unnecessary fencing along some roads and woodland edges. The ecological integrity is moderate. The extensive ancient woodland cover west of Coxheath, orchards and areas of soft fruit production, poplar shelterbelts and hedgerows provide a reasonable habitat network which is weakened by some conversion to arable land. The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst tree cover and hedgerow boundaries are reasonably extensive and generally appear to be well managed and in good condition, some orchards have been removed and replaced with intensive crop production. Whilst there are some examples of local vernacular, the settlement of Coxheath largely comprises extensive recent development which detracts from the sense of place.

Sensitivity

28.9 Traditional fruit production is scattered throughout this area, providing a consistent landscape pattern. The regular field pattern within the fruit production areas, together with poplar shelterbelts, provides local distinctiveness. Hedgerows also form a regular pattern across the landscape, enclosing the roads. However, buildings and the larger extent of settlements are mostly recent and indistinct. Visibility is moderate because whilst there are some extensive views from the northern periphery of the area, intervening vegetation restricts visibility throughout much of the landscape.



28. Coxheath Plateau

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

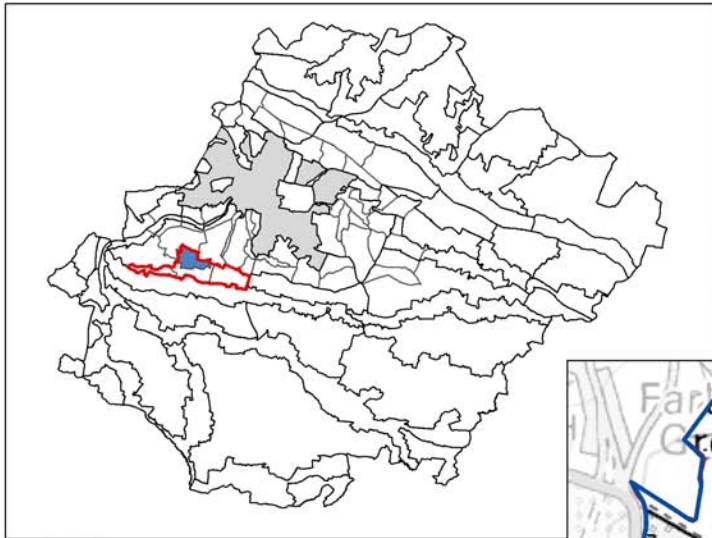
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

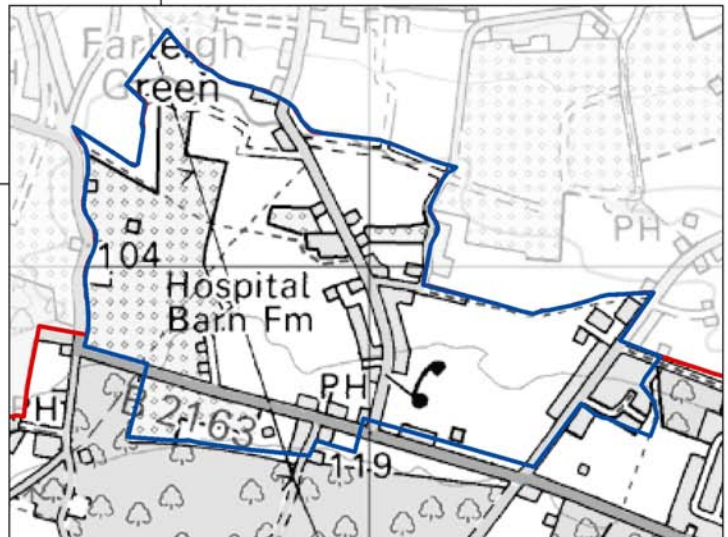
- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the remaining pattern of orchards and resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve and reinforce woodland blocks
- Remove unnecessary fencing along woodland edges where possible
- Conserve and reinforce enclosing roadside vegetation



28-1. Gallants Flats



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Orchards
- Tree lines and hedgerows
- Shelterbelts
- Arable fields

Location

28.10 Gallants Flats lies south west of Maidstone, with Heath Road forming the southern and western boundaries. The eastern boundary is defined by Dean Street and field boundaries define the northern edge.



28-1. Gallants Flats



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

28.11 The area comprises mainly orchards and arable land with small settlements in the centre and off Dean Street in the east, and other scattered, isolated farms. To the west, large orchards dominate the landscape, forming neat lines interspersed with hedgerows with mature trees and tall poplar shelterbelts. These orchards form a localised sense of enclosure in the west, contrasting with the more open character of the arable land to the east where historic field pattern has been lost. A network of tracks runs through the orchards, strengthening the pattern of small, evenly sized fields. Mature tree lines and hedgerows are very apparent, with tall trees lining Gallants Lane. There are few roads within the area. Heath Road to the south forms a distinctive straight route, which continues for quite some distance to the east. Gallants Lane runs north to south and is lined with residential properties.

Geology, soils and topography

28.12 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. The area is dominated by head. Drift is absent from the northern sector, the south western corner and a small portion of the south eastern corner. Soils are deep loam to clay. The land is gently undulating across the area.

Views

28.13 Views out are far reaching to the north including glimpses of Maidstone's edge. Views to the south east are interrupted by pylons. Views within the area are across orchards and arable fields with hedgerows and shelterbelts.

Urban edge influence

28.14 The urban edge of Maidstone is not widely visible from within the area, although there are intermittent glimpses of it from higher areas. The area is not significantly influenced by the urban edge.

28-1. Gallants Flats

BIODIVERSITY

28.15 This area consists mainly of commercial orchards in the west and arable fields in the east. There are farm buildings and several villages scattered throughout the area. Hedgerows are frequent; many of these have mature broad-leaved trees. There is also a small copse of broad-leaved woodland. The hedgerows provide good potential commuting routes for reptiles and bats, and also potential nesting habitat for breeding birds. The small broadleaved copse also has the potential to provide roosting and nesting habitats for bats and birds. Gallants Flats should be considered to be important for biodiversity due to the connective hedgerows throughout which link to well connected areas such as Elmscroft slopes and Dean Farmlands to the north.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Moderate
<p>28.16 The orchards form a distinct pattern of elements in the west although the rest of the area is less distinct and a row of pylons crossing the west of the area are visually detracting. Wildlife corridors are formed by hedgerows and tree lines, although the intensity of land use weakens ecological integrity.</p>	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Some
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Variable
	Functional integrity:	Moderate

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
<p>28.17 Sense of place is provided by the orchards, hedgerows and tree lines which form key, historic characteristics. Visibility is moderate due to the undulating landform and intermittent tree cover.</p>	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

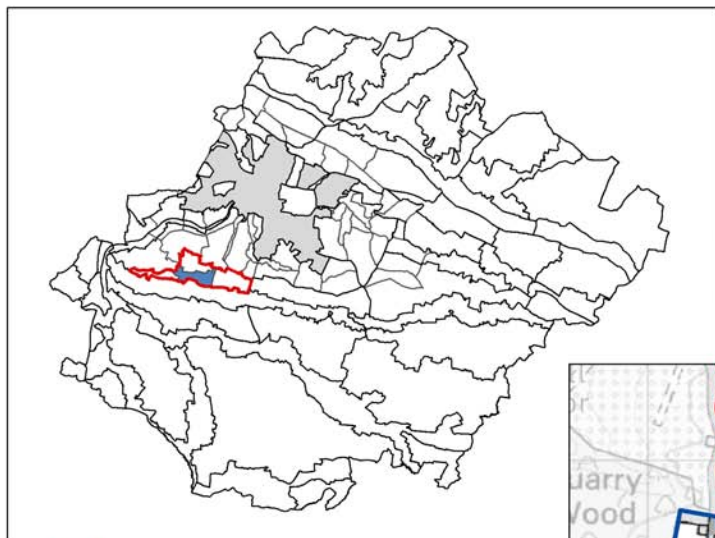
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE


SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

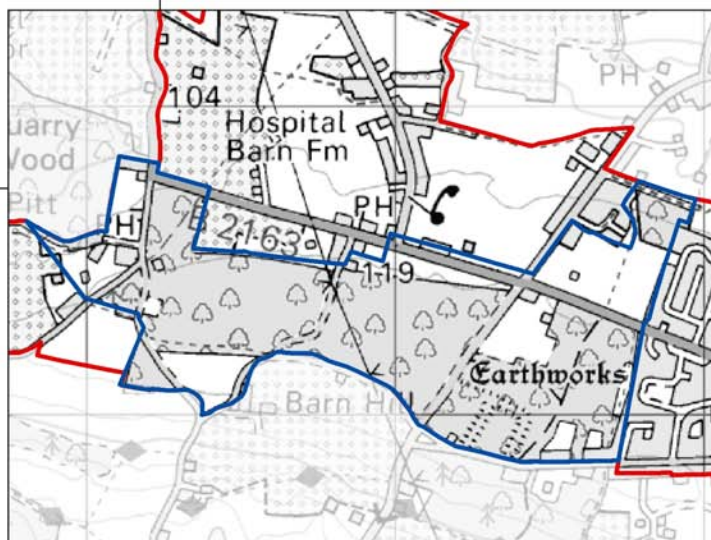
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve traditional orchard pattern where remaining and resist further loss of traditional field pattern
- Conserve trees along Gallants Lane and enhance this characteristic through planting new native trees where appropriate

28-2. Quarry Woodlands



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area

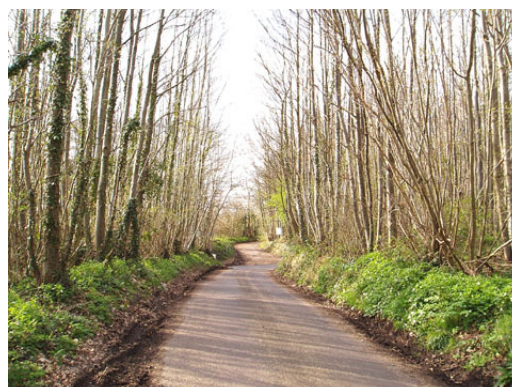


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Chestnut coppice woodland with lush ground flora
- Mature native standards throughout coppice
- Rural winding lanes
- Small areas of pasture and scrub

Location

28.18 Quarry Woodlands is a distinct area, comprising mainly coppice woodland which lies south west of Maidstone. Northern and eastern boundaries are formed by Heath Road and Coxheath Village. Amsbury Road leading into Foremans Barn Road going west marks the southern boundary with the western boundary defined by field boundaries and woodland edge.



28-2. Quarry Woodlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

28.19 This area is dominated by dense chestnut coppice woodlands, covering approximately 80% of the area. The chestnut coppice extends right up to road edge in places, creating dark and enclosed routes through the woodland. The coppice is actively managed, with recently coppiced areas providing lighter clearings within the woodland. Standard native species, including mature oaks and silver birch are scattered throughout the coppice stools. Swathes of ground flora, including wood anemone and dogs mercury, cover the woodland floor. Hedgerows line the roads where they pass through open land, with tall trees along the eastern roads often heavily covered in ivy. There are some small pockets of pasture within an area to the east, grazing pasture to the south at Barns Hill Farm and some patches of scrub land to the north.

28.20 Settlements are sparse with scattered farms and a paddock. Other buildings include glasshouses within a nursery, and traditional farm buildings with associated agricultural machinery. To the west, a council depot is situated within the coppice, with an enclosing boundary chainlink fence appearing out of place. Other field boundaries comprise wooden post and barbed wire fences which are in a state of disrepair in places. Apart from the main road along the north boundary, other roads, including three which cross the area in a north south direction, are rural, winding lanes, often single track. A line of pylons crosses the centre of the area within the coppice in a south

east to north west direction.

Geology, soils and topography

28.21 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. Head is found throughout the area. Soils are deep loam to clay. The topography is gently undulating, sloping gradually to the south.

Views

28.22 Views within the area are into the dense woodland which restricts views out, except from the south west corner of the area where the outlook is across a wide valley to the south.

Urban edge influence

28.23 There are no urban fringe influences, and the urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from this area.

28-2. Quarry Woodlands

BIODIVERSITY

28.24 This area is dominated by large blocks of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, some of which is classified as ancient woodland, surrounded by arable fields bordered by hedgerows. Farms and associated buildings scatter the area. The woodland shows signs of management in the form of recently planted blocks, rides and glades. Ancient woodland habitat is rare in the UK and impossible to recreate to benefit existing animal populations. It has been identified as a locally important habitat in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan. It is likely to support dormouse, roosting bats, nesting birds, badgers and the edge habitats may support notable invertebrates as well as reptiles. The connectivity of the woodlands to hedgerows and other woodland blocks in the surrounding area however is poor. The hedgerows in the area may provide corridors for commuting/foraging bats and reptiles.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

28.25 The extensive coppice intersected by winding lanes forms a coherent landscape, with pylons and agricultural machinery providing the only visual detractors. The coppice woodland, ancient and designated as a Local Wildlife Site, also provides a strong habitat for wildlife. Characteristic rural farm buildings contribute towards the sense of place and a good cultural integrity.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity

28.26 The coppice and winding lanes are very distinct and historic, and the hedgerows and traditional farm buildings contribute towards the sense of place.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Strong
Landform:	Insignificant
Tree cover:	Enclosed
Visibility:	Very Low

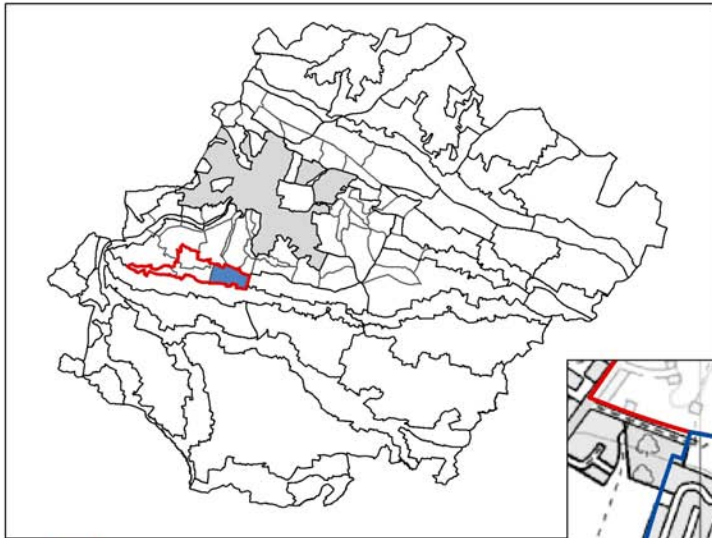
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

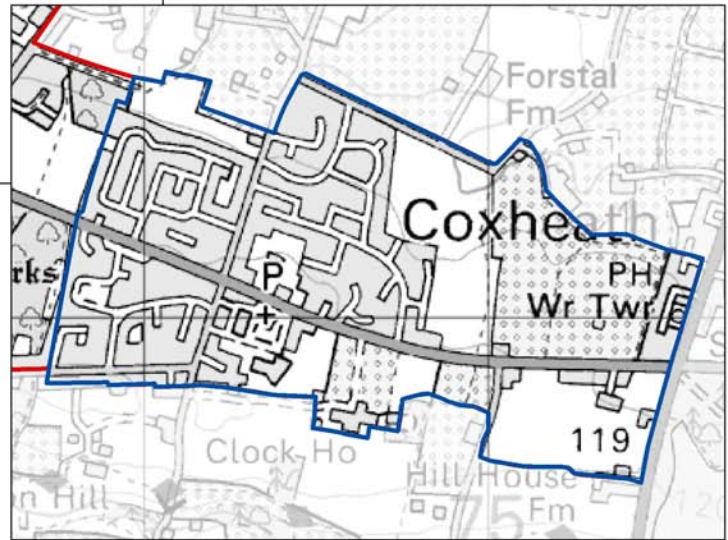
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce the woodland, which is characteristic of the wider Greensand Ridge, by maintaining chestnut coppice and mature standard native trees
- Reinforce characteristic standard trees in coppice through planting new standards
- Resist land use change pressures and respect the character of nearby settlements
- Conserve narrow lanes and reinforce roadside trees and verges
- Reinforce hedgerows around pasture/scrub

28-3. Coxheath Orchards



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Orchards and poplar shelterbelts
- High, mature, well maintained native hedgerows
- New housing development, the style of which is inconsistent with the surrounding housing
- Holy Trinity Church

Location

28.27 Coxheath Orchards lie south west of Maidstone. The northern and southern boundaries are defined by the extent of Coxheath village, field boundaries and additionally to the north by Forstal Lane. The extent of Coxheath village also forms the western boundary and the eastern boundary is formed by Linton Hill (A229). To the east of Linton Hill, Linton Park extends to the south. Linton Park is on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest.



28-3. Coxheath Orchards



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

28.28 Coxheath village covers the western half of the area, and open fields and hedgerows form a rural landscape in the east. The rural land is used mostly for top fruit production, although there are some pockets of arable land where former orchards have been removed for intensive arable farmland. A small amount of land is under horticultural use, hosting polytunnels. Orchards, both north and south of Heath Road, are mostly mature, although some have been recently planted. Mature, well maintained native hedgerows line Heath Road and also form field boundaries. In contrast, some evergreen coniferous planting is located around settled areas. Other prominent vegetation comprises mature oaks along Heath Road and some poplar shelterbelts surrounding orchards.

28.29 Coxheath comprises a variety of housing mostly built within the 1930s and 40s and later. There is a new housing development on the south of Heath Road, comprising a mix of houses and apartments of an unusual style not in keeping with the surrounding housing. The Holy Trinity Church is visually prominent when travelling from west to east but views from the west are now masked by the new development. In addition to Coxheath, there are small clusters of houses to the east, along Linton Road and on the south side of Heath Road, which are mainly traditional and characteristic of the area. Heath Road runs through the centre of the area and forms a busy route which has necessitated traffic calming measures.

Geology, soils and topography

28.30 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. The southern portion is engulfed by a large area of head which encroaches in an uneven fashion into the northern section of the area. Soils in the southern sector consist of deep loam to clay. Soils in the northern sector consist of loam over limestone. The topography is flat and insignificant, although built development and hedgerows prevent clear views in most places.

Views

28.31 Views northwards are to Maidstone's urban area and the North Downs in the distance. The topography and high hedgerows preclude views to the south. Views within the area are across orchards, fields and the housing developments.

Urban edge influence

28.32 Urban influence is fairly strong, with views of Maidstone's urban area and with the main road (B2163) through Coxheath and its associated signage and traffic calming measures.

28-3. Coxheath Orchards

BIODIVERSITY

28.33 This area consists mainly of commercial orchards in the east and residential housing forming the village of Coxheath in the west. There is a small amount of arable farmland which has been allowed to become fallow in places. This has the potential to support protected species which may include reptiles. Suburban gardens have the potential to support breeding birds, and also occasionally reptiles. Hedgerows around the field boundaries are defunct and absent in many places and as such are unlikely to be of benefit to connectivity across the area.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

28.34 The unity of the area is broken by the distinct transition from rural landscape into the residential area of Coxheath. Poly tunnels and new housing are visually detracting. Whilst there are some hedgerows, these are gappy in places, weakening the ecological integrity.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

28.35 The orchards, church and mostly consistent style of housing provide a distinct sense of place, although new development slightly detracts from this.

Sensitivity Assessment

Very Low

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Weak
Landform:	Insignificant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

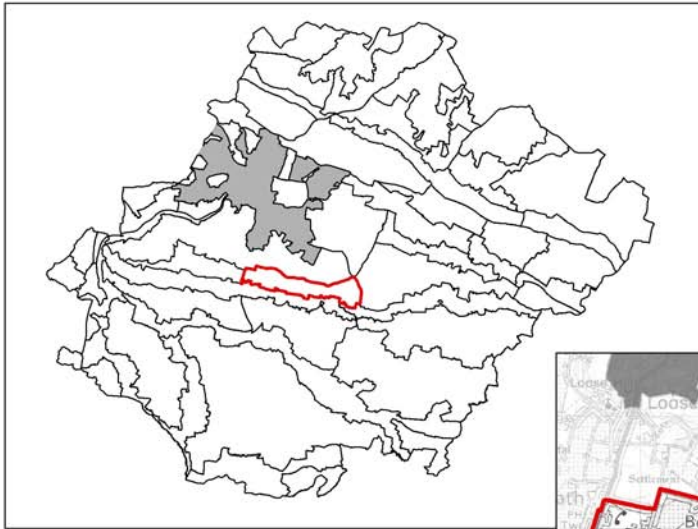
GUIDELINES - IMPROVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

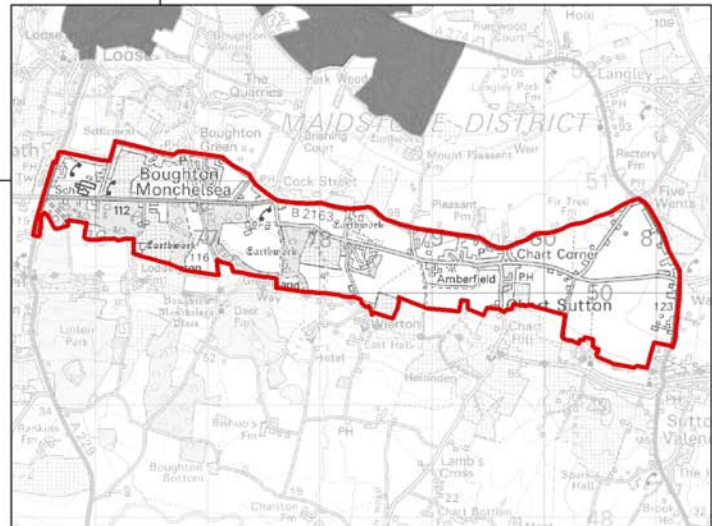
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- The mature oak trees along Heath Road are important landscape characteristics. Reinforce this landscape characteristic through planting new oaks
- Improve and reinforce the locally important agricultural landscape through restricting urban influences along the B2163

29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Plateau above the Greensand Ridge
- Sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Orchards
- Arable land
- Recent infill development
- Grid like road pattern

Location

29.1 This area lies to the south of Maidstone and comprises the periphery of Loose, and much of Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton. The southern boundary is defined by the top of the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge. Linton Road forms the western boundary and Maidstone Road/North Street defines the eastern extent of the area. The northern boundary broadly marks the start of the dip slope which falls to the north.



29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

29.2 There is a significant amount of woodland cover to the west, which mostly comprises sweet chestnut coppice. To the very west of the area the northern extent of the wider 18th century Linton Park, which is recorded on the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, meets Heath Road. This section of the park contains mixed woodland, with evergreen pine giving it a dark and dense character. Similarly the northern extent of wooded parkland, belonging to the 16th century Boughton Monchelsea Place, extends to Heath Road. Woodland within the grounds of this parkland, and Tilt's Wood, are ancient. Along Heath Road, clearings have been made within the woodland to accommodate recent development and there is little to suggest that the landscape to the south of the woodland is more typical of a parkland landscape.

29.3 Orchards are scattered across the area, although these have been left derelict in some places and have been cleared to accommodate arable farmland to the east. Parts of the landscape are used for equestrian grazing, and the varied land use gives rise to a fragmented landscape character. Whilst the woodland to the west provides strong boundaries to some grazing land and orchards, the field pattern is irregular because of the mixed land use. There is evidence of historic earthworks south of Marlpit Farm and Parsonage Farm, associated with the complex of defences connected with the Iron Age oppidum at Quarry Wood.

29.4 Much recent linear development has

extended along Linton Road as a southern extension of Loose. Similarly, recent development has encroached along Heath Road and within the settlements of Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton. The extent and density of recent development gives a suburban character which detracts from the sense of place. There are some examples of traditional buildings (many of which are listed) throughout the landscape, but these don't often stand out within the context of the extensive recent development. Boughton Monchelsea Cock Street is designated as a Conservation Area, which comprises a small former hamlet around a crossroads where most of the 15th century buildings originated as farmhouses and agricultural buildings.

Geology, soils and topography

29.5 The solid geology comprises predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, although there are small patches of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds. There are extensive drifts of head across the plateau. Soils are predominantly deep loam to clay, with fringes of loam over limestone to the north at the top of the dip slope. The topography is largely flat across the plateau of the Greensand Ridge.

Views

29.6 Views both within and out of the landscape are very much restricted by intervening woodland and orchards, and by development.

29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

29.7 The pattern of elements is much fragmented by recent development, which creates a suburban character. The varied condition of orchards, and scattered equestrian grazing further interrupts the landscape. There are numerous visual detractors, comprising much recent development, equestrian grazing and associated facilities and polytunnels. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the orchards, particularly where they have been left unmanaged, woodland and hedgerows create a good habitat framework, the extent of recent development and intensively farmed arable land to the east weaken the extent of, and connectivity between, habitats. The cultural integrity is poor. Whilst some orchards remain well managed and some have been replanted with new stock, a certain vulnerability to change is evident where many have been left unmanaged and are now overgrown. The traditional field pattern and hedgerow boundaries have been lost to the east where the land has been opened up for arable production. Where traditional hedgerow boundaries remain, they are often gappy and in poor condition. Although there are some scattered examples of traditional buildings, recent and extensive infill development detracts from their prominence and original setting and it is this recent development which dominates the built environment.

Sensitivity

29.8 Overall this landscape is indistinct. There are a number of very distinct elements throughout this landscape, including the dense woodland and the regular pattern of orchards where they remain intact. However, the settlements and buildings are largely indistinct and both fragment the continuity of the landscape and weaken the local distinctiveness. Visibility is low because views are often obscured by intervening vegetation and development.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Very Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Poor	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Weak	Visibility:	Low

29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau

GUIDELINES - IMPROVE

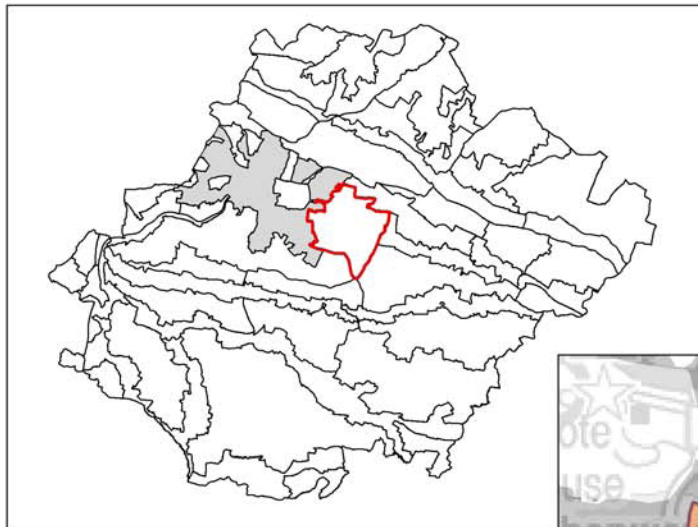
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

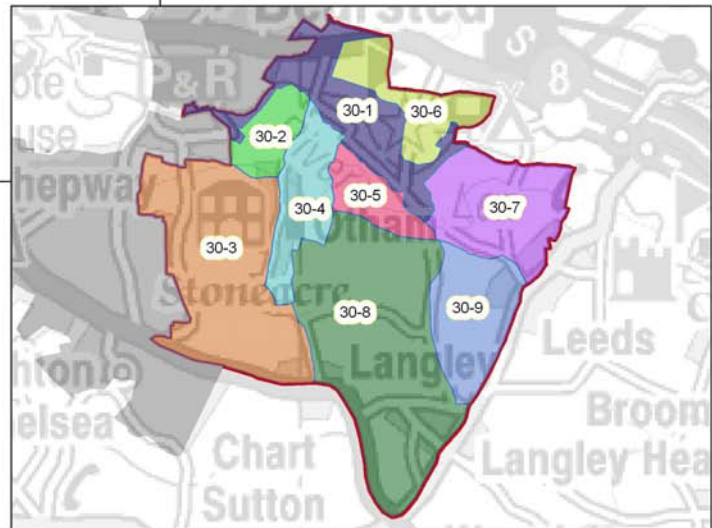
- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and improve the extent of woodland cover
- Improve hedgerows and therefore habitat connectivity by gapping up where practicable
- Improve the sense of place by maintaining remaining open space between swathes of development



30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Areas**
- 30-1. Len Valley
 - 30-2. Otham Open Land
 - 30-3. Gore Court Farm
 - 30-4. Stoneacre Spring
 - 30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes
 - 30-6. Milgate Park
 - 30-7. Upper Len
 - 30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau
 - 30-9. Leeds Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Small scale field pattern for orchard and soft fruit production
- Grazed pasture
- Species rich native hedgerows
- Small mixed woodland blocks
- River Len situated in shallow valley to the north
- Numerous vernacular style buildings and use of local materials
- Pockets of high density, recent development

Location

30.1 Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands are situated to the immediate south east of Maidstone's urban area. The landscape is characterised by the loamy soils over limestone across an undulating landform, and the small scale field pattern used to enclose orchards and soft fruit. The urban edge of Maidstone forms the western boundary, and the change in soils to loam over sandstone dictates the northern boundary. The field pattern generally becomes larger and less enclosed to the south and east of the area, and woodland at Kingswood provides a clear boundary to the south east adjacent to Langley Heath.



30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.2 There is a reasonable amount of tree cover, with frequent mixed and often ancient woodland blocks, native hedgerows, poplar shelterbelts and traditional orchard blocks. Native hedgerows segregate fields of pasture and line the narrow lanes. Hedgerows are species rich comprising holly, elder, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, beech, old man's beard, dogwood and dog rose. The field pattern is particularly small, regular and well enclosed to the east of Otham, where the traditional fruit and horticultural belt is prevalent. Some of these small fields contain polytunnels used for the production of soft fruits. Whilst this traditional field and land use pattern has been replaced in some areas by pasture and some arable land to the west, the landform and built environment forms a strong degree of continuity. Mature vegetation belts and clusters of vegetation are retained along some boundaries within areas of pasture, leaving a mature looking landscape, and north of Sutton Road the landscape has some parkland qualities, with lime avenues amidst grassland.

30.3 To the north, the River Len is set within a shallow valley and it is very narrow along this section of its course. However, frequent willow trees and mills define its course and part of the Len Valley within this area is designated as a Local Wildlife Site for its wet woodland (which is a Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priority woodland type) with ancient coppice stools, the varied marginal vegetation and the adjacent semi – improved damp pastures. Wet alder woodland is unmanaged, but contains some ancient coppice stools of some 600 years of age and this part of the valley is thought to support a range of birds and invertebrates.

30.4 A long valley runs from Otham Hole northwards to the River Len, incorporating exploratory ragstone working, springs, sink holes, surface streams and a sequence of ponds and lakes. Trackways, thought to be ancient, cross the valley. To the south, the metalled and partially tarpaved Stoneacre Lane continues along the highland round to Otham Hole. Along this route, Stoneacre comprises a very distinctive timber-framed yeoman's house dating from approximately 1480. By the end of the First World War it had become uncared for and was bought by Aymer Vallance (antiquarian, art historian and friend and biographer of William Morris). He restored the house and greatly extended it by the addition of a further timber-framed wing brought from a demolished house near Chiddingstone in west Kent. It is now owned by the National Trust and listed Grade II*. A second trackway runs between Caring and Otham Church, and west of Greenhill the route is characteristically sunken into the Greensand.



30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands

30.5 The built environment is predominantly traditional and characteristic, with numerous vernacular style listed buildings including oast houses, converted timber barns and timber framed buildings. The use of local materials and styles is very strong, with an abundance of ragstone in walls, bridges and buildings, flint, weatherboarding and herringbone brickwork. Hosting a particularly notable number of listed buildings, Otham and Leeds are designated as Conservation Areas. In contrast, there are pockets of high density 20th century development at Three Tees to the south of Otham, around the periphery of Leeds and at Langley Heath.

Geology, soils and topography

30.6 The solid geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. Wealden Clay defines the Len Valley to the north, which is buffered by Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. Drifts of alluvium follow the Len Valley, and a swathe of head brickearth is situated to the south of Otham Hole. Soils are loam over limestone, with fringes of loam over sandstone to the north. The topography is undulating, particularly where the Len Valley incises the Greensand to the north.

Views

30.7 Where the field pattern is very small and enclosed, poplar shelterbelts often restrict the view. However, there are wide and attractive views across parts of the undulating landscape, often where the land is grazed around the River Len to the north. Where views are more open, there are some longer distance views of the elevated North Downs.



30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

30.8 The consistency in undulating topography, hedgerow lined lanes, vernacular style buildings and the small scale field pattern of orchards provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are very few visual detractors comprising polytunnels and large agricultural barns. The ecological integrity is strong, with very little intensively farmed arable land and a comprehensive habitat network provided by the frequent woodland blocks, hedgerows and the River Len. The cultural integrity is good. Much of the woodland is ancient, hedgerows are generally intact and the built environment mostly respects local vernacular and promotes a very strong sense of place.

Sensitivity

30.9 The species rich native hedgerows, traditional orchards and small scale field pattern, winding narrow lanes and vernacular style buildings are all very distinctive key characteristics and combine to provide a very strong continuity and strength of character. Whilst some recent development does not respect local vernacular, it is the frequent vernacular style architecture which prevails. Visibility is high owing to the frequent undulations and intermittent nature of tree cover.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	High

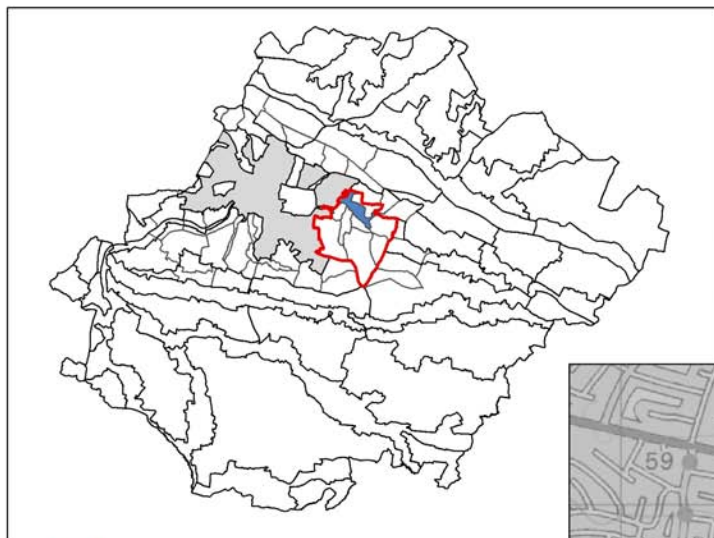
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

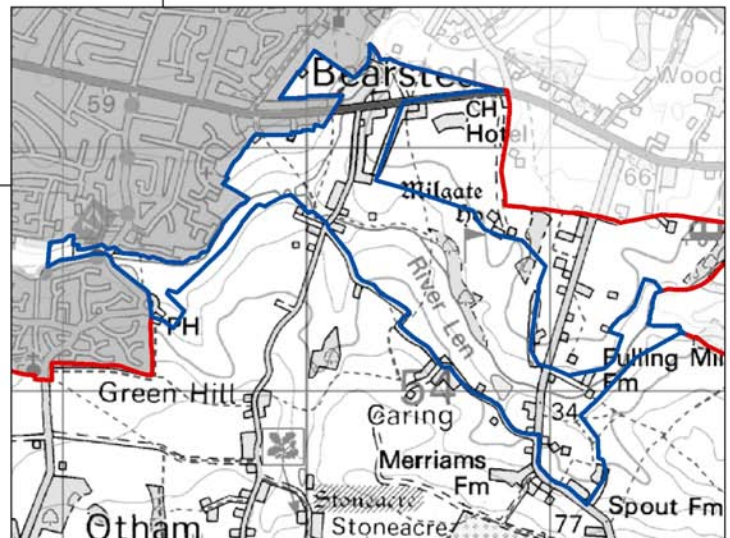
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and enhance the species rich hedgerows
- Conserve the small scale, historic, enclosed field pattern and areas of fruit production
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve the traditional, rural setting of vernacular style buildings and Conservation Areas
- Resist further conversion to intensive arable land
- Conserve and enhance poplar shelterbelts and other vegetation which softens polytunnels and large agricultural barns
- Avoid junction improvements which detract from the distinctive narrow country lanes

30-1. Len Valley



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area

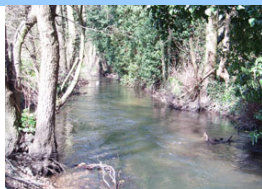


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- River Len
- Historic mills and a network of pools
- Historic settlements at crossing points of the river
- Remnant orchards
- Some recent settlement around the outskirts of Bearsted

Location

30.10 Len Valley lies to the east of Maidstone and is bordered by Bearsted to the west. The area encapsulates the River Len Valley, and boundaries of the area follow field edges.



30-1. Len Valley



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.11 This area has historic mills and evidence of water management in the lower valley fields. The occasional historic settlement is located on crossing points of the river where mills and farmsteads appear together, and in the flatter reaches of the stream where there are small-scale farming patterns. There are some remnant orchards. More recent settlement clusters occur to the edge of Bearsted where the urban edge is generally softened by the influence of vernacular building and rural features such as hedgerows. Some unique features such as mill-races and rock faces enhance this valley, but there are also detracting features in the form of sewerage works in the south east, unmanaged land between the urban edge and the stream, and some abrupt urban edges.

30.12 Enclosure pattern is made up of irregular parcels of fields where the valley bottom is wider. Scattered pockets of woodland are evident, mostly along the river valley where it is dominant in narrow stretches on the valley sides. Other vegetation consists of riparian vegetation, remnant and old orchards and reed beds. Three small roads cross the area and the river in a north south direction. Seasonal variation is provided by trees and water vegetation.

Geology, soils and topography

30.13 The geology of the area is a backdrop of Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a strip of Wealden Clay underlying the path of the River Len and bordered by Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. Lower Greensand Sandgate and Folkestone Beds are also found in the north of the area. The soils are predominantly loam over limestone with small areas of loam over sandstone located in the north of the area corresponding with the underlying Sandgate and Folkestone Beds. This area is a river valley with strong local undulations.

Views

30.14 Views out of the area are limited by intervening vegetation and landform. Occasional views within the area are across or along the valley.

Urban edge influence

30.15 The A20 and suburban gardens near Bearsted are urban edge features to the west, but the vernacular buildings soften the edge and lessen the influence.

30-1. Len Valley

BIODIVERSITY

30.16 To the north, the site is predominantly improved grassland, comprising stock grazing and a highly manicured golf course. Adjacent to Bearsted, 'The People's Wood' comprises indigenous trees. Deciduous trees and hedges border field boundaries. The River Len flows throughout the length of the site and in the east forms an open pond. Along the length of the River Len there is a central band of mature broadleaved woodland and an area of ancient woodland to the east; both designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Rough grassland and field margins may have the potential to support protected reptiles, such as grass snake and viviparous lizard. Stands of broadleaved woodland, tree lines and defunct hedgerow may have the potential to support badger, hazel dormouse, roosting, commuting, foraging bats and nesting birds. The River Len may have the potential to support otters, water vole, reptiles, and amphibians. This strip of habitat connects well with more open sections to the east and, in conjunction with Mote Park, provides a potential corridor for wildlife movement between the town centre and the rural areas to the east.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Very Good
30.17 Although there are some visual detractors in the form of the sewage works and residential development, historic settlements remain an important part of the landscape pattern. The strong riparian corridor and associated wetlands are designated as a Local Wildlife Site and the mills provide good cultural heritage features.	Pattern of elements:	Unified
	Detracting features:	Some
	Visual Unity:	Unified
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Good
	Functional integrity:	Very Strong

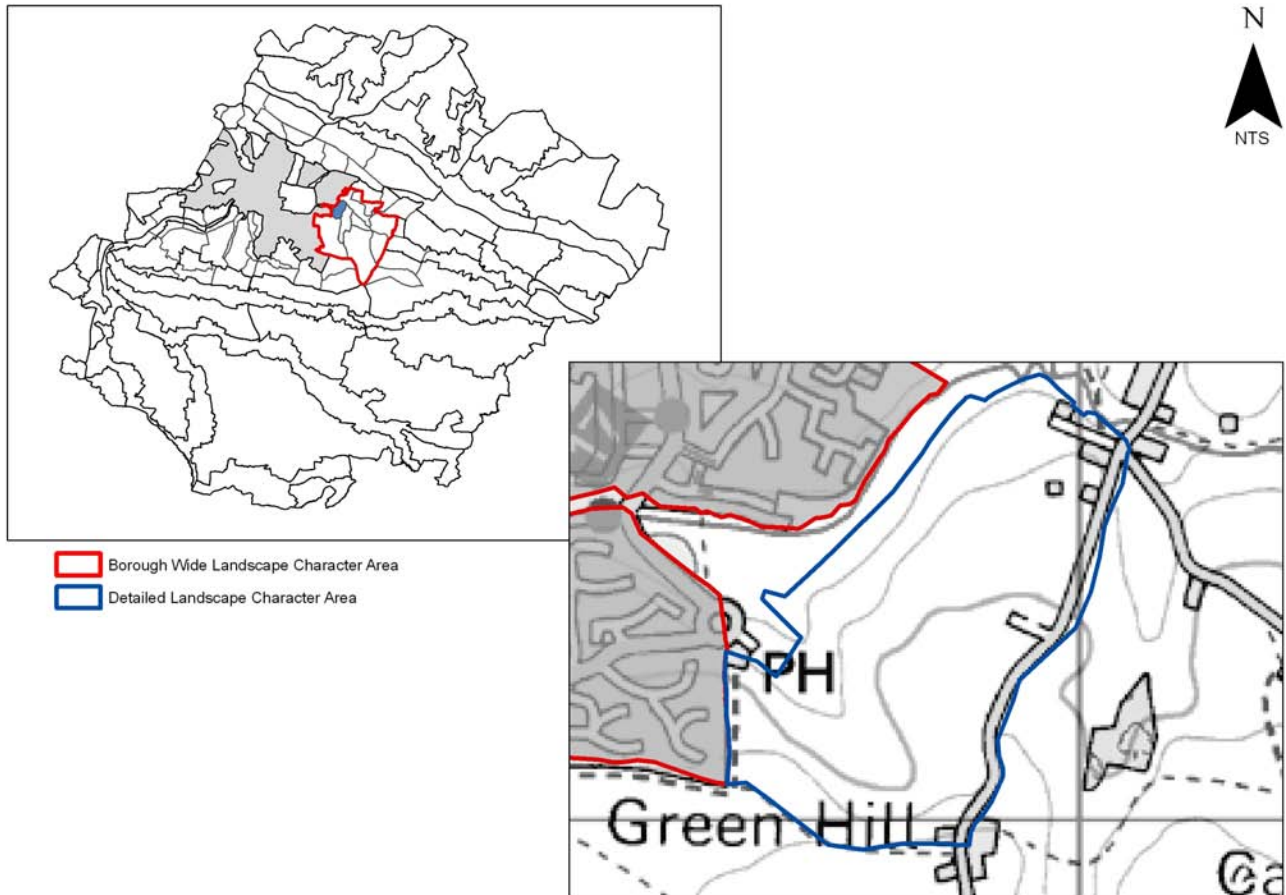
Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	High
30.18 The mills and river crossings are very distinct characteristics and, together with the riparian vegetation and vernacular buildings, provide a strong sense of place.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the landscape as an important part of Maidstone's rural setting
- Avoid further urban influences along the A20
- Conserve the locally important agricultural landscape
- Conserve and enhance remnant orchards which connect this landscape with its surrounding landscape context
- Conserve mill races and rock faces

30-2. Otham Open Land



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open arable land
- Largely unsettled
- Narrow road enclosed by hedgerow

Location

30.19 This area lies east of Maidstone bordered by Bearsted and the Len valley to the western and northern edges. The eastern boundary is defined by Otham Street which runs south into Green Hill Lane. A tree line forms the southern boundary.



30-2. Otham Open Land



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.20 This is a very open area of arable cultivation and the openness accentuates the view of the gently sloping landform. The 1st edition OS map shows that this area was formerly well-enclosed with a medium-scale field pattern and frequent small copses, some orchards on the upper slope and one large block of woodland linking into the woodland network along the valley slopes and ancient woodland along Willington St. There are now few internal field boundaries but a few peripheral hedgerows. The narrow road follows the higher edge of the domed landform down to the River Len Valley and remains tightly enclosed by short clipped hedgerows. Tree cover is insignificant except for a belt of woodland in the south and scattered trees and an area of scrub to the north. It is a tranquil area with no settlement apart from two large farmhouses to the north. Spot Lane Quarry, located adjacent to a public footpath on the edge of the urban area of Maidstone at Downswood, is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its geological interest.

Geology, soils and topography

30.21 The geology of this area is a mixture of Lower Greensand (Hythe Beds and Atherfield Clay) to the south and south east, and Wealden Clay in the north east and in a strip to the south. In addition, there is a thin strip of alluvium drift on the north westerly border of the area. The soil type is loam over limestone. The landform consists of open slopes, rolling down to the Len Valley.

Views

30.22 There is high visibility in places due to the lack of tree cover on domed landform and the openness accentuates the view of the gently sloping landform. There are also very long views to the North Downs from the west to the east. It is an elevated area with clear views of the recent residential housing to the north east, but limited views to the south where the land continues to rise and where there is some tree cover outside the area of study.

Urban edge influence

30.23 The current visibility of the urban edge is high, with no existing characteristic settlement. However there is a potential for addressing the current urban edge interface with major landscape works in conjunction with development, and enhancement of the line of the River Len which flows between this landscape and the urban edge.



30-2. Otham Open Land

BIODIVERSITY

30.24 The site is predominantly arable farmland surrounded by improved grassland margins and scrub with broadleaved deciduous trees to the south. The mature broadleaved trees together with the arable fields may provide foraging/commuting and nesting sites for protected species of bat and birds. The areas of rough grassland and scrub may be suitable for protected reptile species such as slow worm and viviparous lizard. Located on the western boundary of Maidstone’s urban development the field boundary and scrub vegetation may allow the movement wildlife between town and countryside. Also, the stand of broadleaved trees may allow the establishment of a woodland community within a larger meta-population.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Poor
<p>30.25 This is a fragmented landscape in which internal field boundaries and woodland cover has been lost. However this provides views to the wider countryside, with the urban view to the north west being the only visual detractor. Intensive arable cultivation and limited vegetation cover leave the ecological integrity weak and there are no heritage features to note.</p>	Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Weak
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Very Weak

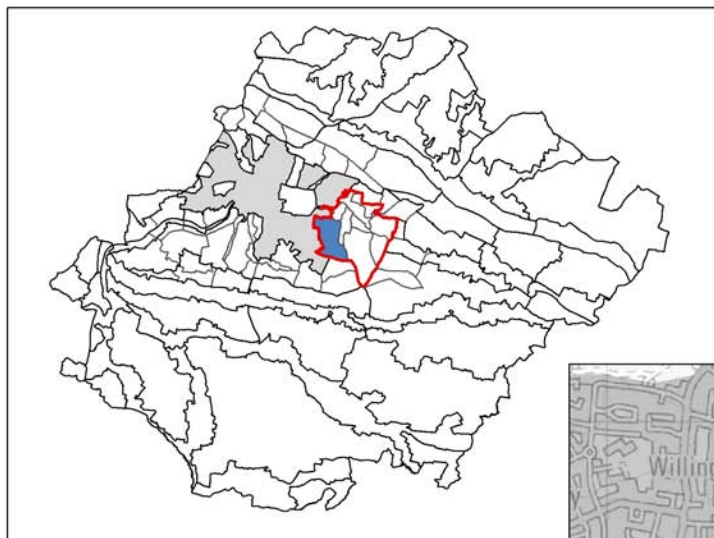
Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
<p>30.26 There is little to contribute to a sense of place although the settlements and road are historic. The domed landform and intermittent tree cover provide moderate visibility.</p>	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
	Continuity:	Recent
	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

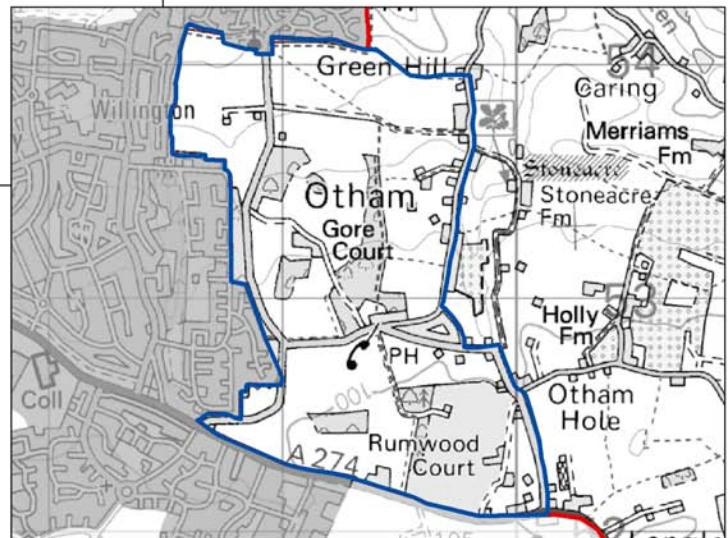
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Respect the settings of the Len valley and Stoneacre Springs in any further development proposals
- Improve the landscape and ecological framework through reinstating field boundaries with hedgerow planting
- Improve the current urban edge interface through major landscape works in conjunction with development, and enhancement of the line of the River Len which flows between this landscape and the urban edge

30-3. Gore Court Farm



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat topography
- Arable land
- Medium sized, irregular shaped fields
- Remnant woodland blocks including ancient woodland
- Parkland landscape of Gore Court
- Traditional buildings
- Some sub urban influence on land use and vegetation

Location

30.27 This area is bordered by Otham Street and New Road to the east, Sutton Road to the south and by Bearsted to the west and north.



30-3. Gore Court Farm



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.28 This is a small-medium scale landscape, with medium scale irregular arable fields on a reasonably flat topography. It is rural and tranquil with a well-settled atmosphere. There are many heritage buildings in the landscape and some infill of new residential build. A church surrounded by a ragstone wall is a significant feature. There is some influence from suburban planting and suburban land use but in general the influence of the urban edge is limited to filtered views of adjacent new build. Hedges are in moderate condition and form an important network including lines of standard trees. Remnant blocks of woodland, some of which are ancient, form an important although declining element of the landscape. Historically, the land cover was slightly more diverse and included plantation woodlands and the parkland edge of Gore Court. The woodland to the urban edge on the western boundary is defined as ancient woodland. There are several large arable fields some of which are enclosed, but hedgerows have been removed from the larger fields.

30.29 Gore Court is a small area within the Gore Court Farmland landscape, containing an estate house and park listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The historic outline of the estate house and small park with ancient woodland forms a dominant feature within the wider landscape. Native hedgerows line parts of the roads which enclose the estate, although there are some sections of metal post and link fencing which are in disrepair.

30.30 Further south, the imposing grade II listed Elizabethan manor house of Rumwood Court offers a wealth of period features including panelling, leaded light windows and exposed timbers. Now segregated into individual units, the property is set within 11 acres of historic parkland. Signature landscape features include a very prominent avenue of common lime flanking Sutton Road, and large parkland oaks. This remaining parkland provides significant grassland habitats.

Geology, soils and topography

30.31 Lower Greensand Hythe Beds are the dominant geology of this area with a relatively large drift of head brickearth found in the south of the area. Soil cover is all loam over limestone. The landform is flat but elevated.

Views

30.32 Views out are limited by the woodland and the elevated topography (the horizon is near), but views within the area are intermittently medium-range through gaps in the woodland and hedges.

Urban edge influence

30.33 The edge of the existing urban edge is visible to the west.

30-3. Gore Court Farm

BIODIVERSITY

30.34 The area consists mainly of arable farmland. In the south west there are improved livestock grazed fields with semi-improved grassland margins. There are small blocks of broadleaved woodland throughout the site, tree lines along field boundaries and scattered trees around properties. The grassland areas and field boundaries may have the potential to support reptile species including slow worm and viviparous lizard. Broad-leaved and ancient woodland blocks may provide suitable habitat for protected mammals such as, badgers, dormice, bats and nesting birds. Woodland edge habitats may also support notable invertebrates as well as reptiles. Woodland has been identified as a locally important habitat in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and has the potential to support a wide diversity of wildlife. Arable habitat with marginal vegetation and bordering trees may support reptiles, nesting birds, foraging and commuting bats. Marginal scrub and trees may function as wildlife corridors, forming a network of linear habitats radiating out from Maidstone town centre.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

30.35 Enclosed fields with some woodlands and strong hedgerows form a unified pattern of elements, although the edge of the urban area and suburban land use are visual detractors. Field boundaries, vernacular style buildings and Otham Conservation Area provide cultural interest but the ancient woodland is near the urban edge and is vulnerable.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity

30.36 A strong network of hedgerows and remnant ancient woodland, together with historic and vernacular buildings provide a distinct sense of place.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

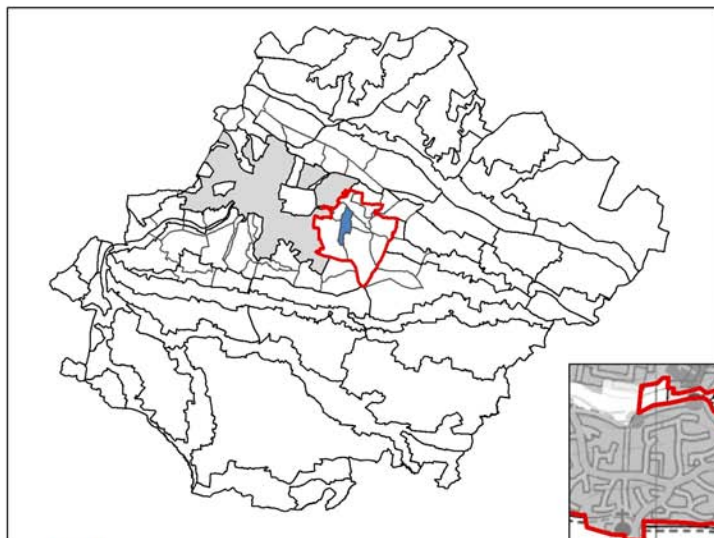
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

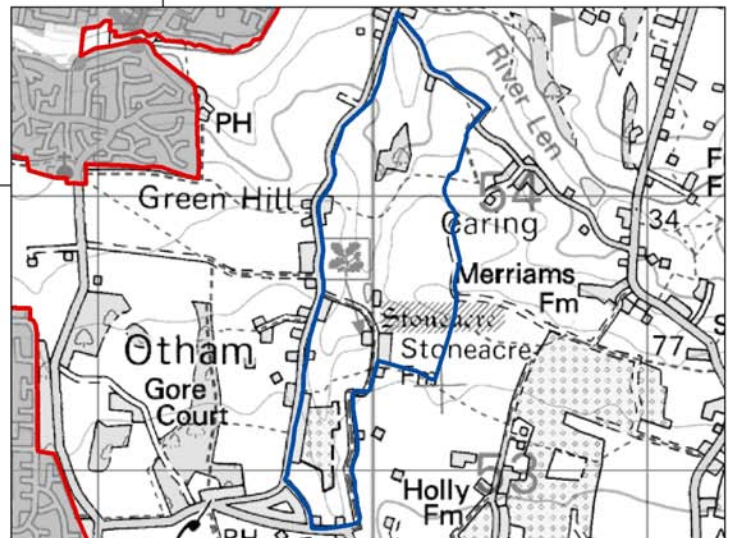
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce the woodland, by providing vegetation links to areas of ancient woodland and parkland
- Conserve parkland characteristics, including tree avenues and isolated oaks set within pasture, and reinforce through further planting
- Conserve the rural, parkland setting of Gore Court and Rumwood Court
- Conserve parkland and grazing land and resist further intensively farmed arable land

30-4. Stoneacre Spring



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Steep valley sides
- Small fields and gardens
- Small copses and woodland within valley
- Yew trees around residential buildings

Location

30.37 Stoneacre Spring lies east of Maidstone. The boundaries are formed by roads; Otham Street to the west, Caring Road to the north, Honey Lane to the south and Stoneacre Lane and field boundaries to the east.



30-4. Stoneacre Spring



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.38 This area is characterised by the steep slopes of a small valley and the tightly knit group of historic buildings and small farms which follow the line of the road at the edge of the valley - and Stoneacre which is located on the site of springs. Stoneacre is a 15th-century half-timbered yeoman's house and harmonious garden owned by the National Trust. The land use pattern is very small scale. Small fields and gardens are located on the tops of the slopes, associated closely with the buildings. There are some residential land uses such as paddocks and gardens. Former orchards and shaws have largely been cleared, and some fields appear to have been straightened and/or sub-divided. Small copses and woodland characterise the lower and sharper contours of the valley. Yew is an occasional but significant species associated with the residential buildings.

30.39 Historic farms and buildings and tightly grouped settlement exist on the edge of the valley. Buildings are a mix of half timbered ragstone and recent farm buildings. Field boundaries are mostly post and wire and paddock fencing.

Geology, soils and topography

30.40 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a thin line of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay running centrally from the northern tip to the southern end of the site. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is rolling fields and a small steep valley.

Views

30.41 There is high visibility due to the dominant landform and the intermittent tree cover. Views are long and relatively uninterrupted towards the north where they are contained by the near horizon of the north Downs. Within the area itself, views are mainly enclosed by the small-scale of the landscape.

Urban edge influence

30.42 The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.

30-4. Stoneacre Spring

BIODIVERSITY

30.43 The area contains primarily improved livestock grassland and arable fields delineated by fences, defunct hedgerows and tree lines. The central valley has mainly broadleaved trees growing along its banks. To the south there are arable fields and two small artificial ponds. The site also contains several private properties surrounded by gardens. The linear stands of mature trees and sections of hedgerow may provide suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats and nesting birds. Arable land, rough grassland and scrub vegetation may also support nesting birds as well as protected reptiles. Hedgerows and particularly the central strip of trees provide connectivity between woodland habitats within the countryside to the east of Maidstone town centre. These linear features may provide corridors for commuting/foraging bats and reptiles.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

30.44 Small scale fields and linear settlement form a coherent pattern of elements, although some paddocks and residential land use are visual detractors. Small shaws on steeper contours, natural wetland and gardens and corridors of woodland and wetland between pastures and paddock provide ecological strength. Stoneacre is included within the Otham Conservation Area.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity

30.45 Woodland and other vegetation associated with buildings are key characteristics. Stoneacre and some ragstone and half timbered buildings are very distinct.

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	High
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the general linear settlement pattern
- Conserve the rural and tranquil setting of Stoneacre
- Conserve the pattern of small copses and woodland along the sharper contours of the valley
- Conserve the frequency of yew trees, planting new yew trees where appropriate
- Conserve the small scale field pattern

30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Ragstone walls
- Banks and hedgerows
- Settlement clustered along road
- Winding, narrow road running along the contours

Location

30.46 Caring Fruit Slopes lie east of Maidstone. This small area is bordered by Caring Road to the north and by Caring Lane to the east. The western and southern boundaries are defined by field boundaries.



30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.47 This is an area of large farms at the top of steep valley sides with arable cultivation prevalent in former fruit tree areas. There are small regular field divisions, shelterbelts and hedgerows. Land use is mainly intense arable. Frequent farmsteads occur along the road with the occasional new-build properties and farmhouse conversions. Settlement is characteristically located along this road, with the advantage of near views over the valley. The road is narrow and edged tightly with walls - many ragstone - or banks and hedges, and follows the upper contours of the valley sides.

Geology, soils and topography

30.48 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. A small area of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay is situated to the east, and Wealden Clay exists on the eastern border of the area. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. Topography comprises traditional slopes between plateau and the River Len to the north.

Views

30.49 Views are potentially very busy as the area is elevated and looks over the near and far sides of the valley itself. There are occasional longer views to the North Downs. However, many views are limited by vegetation, buildings, and the winding nature of the contour-led road.

Urban edge influence

30.50 The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.



30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes

BIODIVERSITY

30.51 The area consists mainly of improved grassland which has been left fallow. Fields are delineated by hedgerows and lines of mature broadleaf trees. There are traditional properties with managed gardens along the eastern boundary of the site. The rough grassland may provide suitable habitat for reptile species such as grass snake, slow worm and viviparous lizard. This habitat type may also provide valuable foraging and nesting sites for birds. Mature trees may also support breeding birds as well as commuting, foraging and roosting bats. This site is located to the east of Maidstone. It does not directly connect inner-town areas and wildlife to the wider countryside but in conjunction with adjacent areas of habitat it extends the network of corridors for commuting species.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

30.52 Small scale straight orchard enclosures with frequent farms along a contour-based road form a coherent pattern of elements although fruit trees are no longer an integral part of the landscape. There are residual shelterbelts and hedgerows, but the ecological network is weakened by intensive arable land use.

Condition Assessment

Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

30.53 Shelterbelts, and hedgerows, some historic farmsteads and ragstone farms and walling all form distinct characteristics that contribute to a sense of place.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Insignificant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

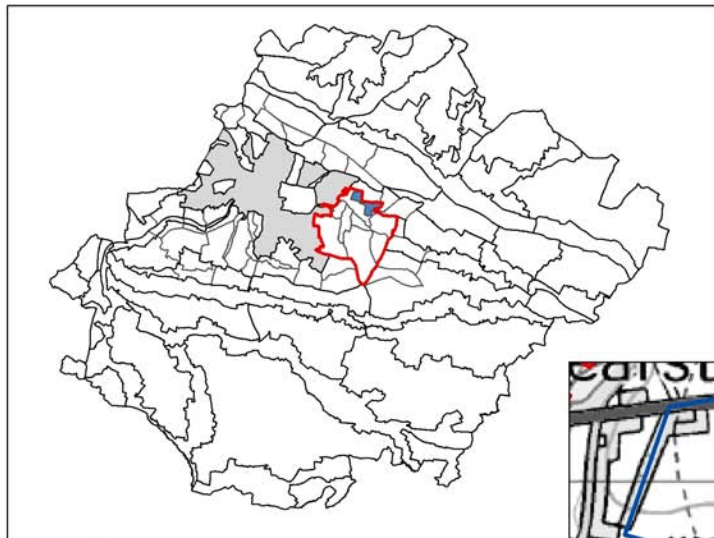
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

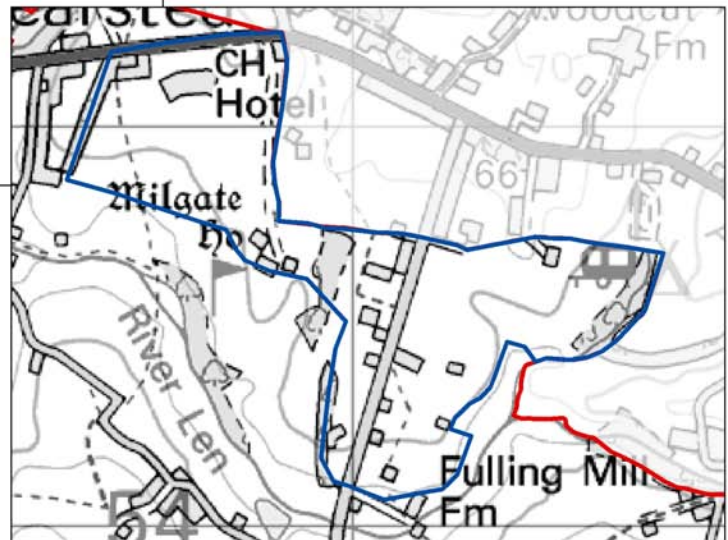
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Ensure settlement does not extend below the line of the road
- Conserve the pattern of existing settlement and tree cover
- Conserve and reinforce ragstone walling
- Built development would only be acceptable if it reinforces the existing local character through sensitive building conversions which utilise local materials

30-6. Milgate Park



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Manicured golf course landscape
- Urban edge influences and suburban land uses
- Linear residential development along Caring Lane

Location

30.54 Milgate Park lies east of Maidstone. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The northern and western boundaries are defined by field boundaries. To the south the boundary follows a line parallel to the northern edge of the River Len.



30-6. Milgate Park



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.55 This area comprises a manicured landscape to the west, forming part of Tudor Park Hotel and Country Club, with housing along the straight Caring Road providing further sub-division of plots as part of residential gardens. Part of an historic estate, Milgate Park Golf Course forms part of the manicured hotel grounds, with typical artificial undulations, bunkers and swathes of mown grass between rough grassland areas. Significant woodland clumps provide enclosure and a pattern throughout the landscape. To the east, residential houses and garden plots line Caring Lane, which is noticeably straight. The overall character is much influenced by the urban edge, with few remaining historic features.

Geology, soils and topography

30.56 The geology of the area is a combination of Lower Greensand and clay. Lower Greensand is located centrally in the form of Folkestone Beds with southern edges of Sandgate Beds, Hythe Beds and Atherfield Clay, and clay beds are located on the northern edges of the area as Gault Clay. There are two predominant soil types in the area: loam over sandstone in the majority of the area, and seasonally wet deep clay in the two northerly locations coinciding with the Gault Clay beds. The landform is gently sloping in a southward direction.

Views

30.57 Long views are intermittent due to the landform and occasional tree cover, but from the higher areas, long views of the North Downs, which are punctuated by the M20 and HS1, are frequent. There is moderate visibility due to tree cover, although if tree cover were compromised the domed landform would increase visibility.

Urban edge influence

30.58 The area is very much influenced by the urban edge, with the commercial use of the golf course.

30-6. Milgate Park

BIODIVERSITY

30.59 Centrally there are buildings and private homes with gardens. These buildings are surrounded by small blocks of broadleaved woodland and scattered trees. In the south, there is improved golf course grassland, intersected by lines of deciduous and coniferous trees. Arable land, small woodland blocks and mature scattered trees may have the potential to support protected species of bat and nesting birds. However, the lack of established hedgerows in the field boundaries hinders a good connectivity between the various habitats. The site is located on the suburban/rural fringe but the linear block of mature trees could potentially provide an effective wildlife corridor to link the west of Maidstone town centre and the wider countryside.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

30.60 There is a contrast between the manicured golf course landscape to the west and linear strip of residential development to the east. Golf course planting provides a network of habitat opportunities. Heritage features are poor, with little remaining evidence of the historic estate.

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity

30.61 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. However, whilst part of the landscape forms an historic estate, although few traditional features remain.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

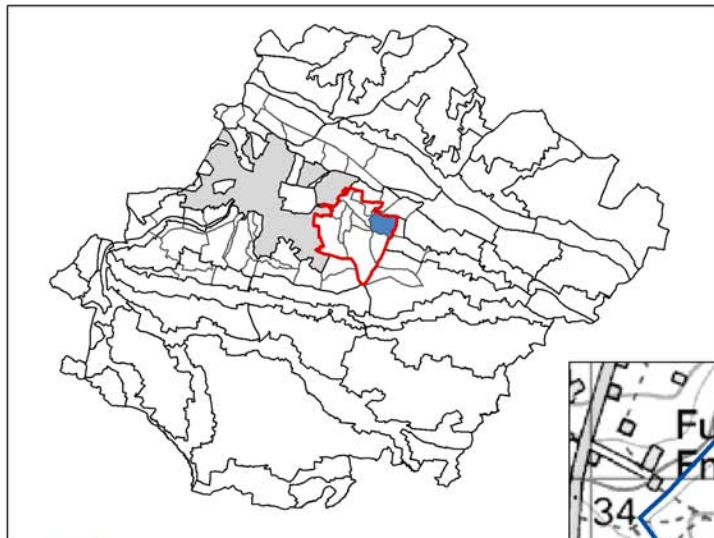
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

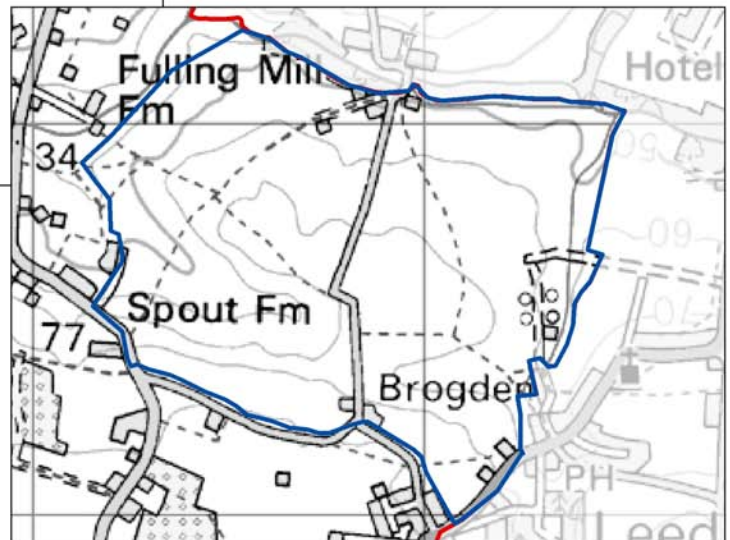
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Create a new functional integrity in which the use of the land is reflected in clear landscape features
- Reinstate historic parkland features, such as isolated native trees
- Conserve the locally important agricultural landscape
- Conserve the open and rural landscape, characteristic of the broad setting of the Kent Downs AONB and the rural periphery around Maidstone

30-7. Upper Len



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Medium scale fields
- Field boundaries follow contours
- Occasional isolated mature trees
- Much post and wire fencing

Location

30.62 This area lies east of Maidstone bordered to the north by the Len River Valley with Caring and Forge Lanes defining the southern boundary.



30-7. Upper Len



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.63 This is a rural and tranquil area with medium scale fields forming a strong internal pattern which follows contours and accentuates the ridgeline at the top of the dished landform. There are remnants of a more mixed land use in which nut platts, pasture, arable and fruit farming were frequent elements but now found only in remnant corners of the farmland. The predominant land use is now arable with some pastureland. There are occasional mature trees, many over-mature. Hedgerows enclose some fields and are present along road edges although some are gappy and in decline and there is much post and wire fencing. Settlement (mainly farmsteads) is located characteristically on the edge of the dished landform with long views to the North Downs. Buildings include scattered oasts and converted barns and ragstone is a key material. Old Mill Road runs through the centre in a north-south direction.

Geology, soils and topography

30.64 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. A large area of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay exists as a central band across the area with a spike running from the centre point to the northern edge of the area. A small area of Wealden Clay exists on the eastern side of the area. A small circular patch of Fourth Terrace River Gravel exists in the north eastern section of the area. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform is gently undulating, with steeply dished valley sides.

Views

30.65 There are long views from the top of the slopes towards the North Downs, with views of the M20/A20 corridor, including traffic movement and roadside buildings, and long views of the tranquil, settled Len Valley.

Urban edge influence

30.66 The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.

30-7. Upper Len

BIODIVERSITY

30.67 This area comprises arable fields to the north and improved grassland, with small patches of semi-improved grassland to the south. There are trees along field boundaries and around properties. Trees and defunct hedgerows may potentially provide nesting opportunities for birds. Arable land and particularly field margins may provide foraging opportunities for birds and support species of reptile and commuting/foraging bats. This site is located to the east of Maidstone and does not provide direct connectivity between rural and central inner-town areas. However, the tree lines provide potential commuting routes for protected species of reptile and mammal.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Moderate
30.68 Field pattern, based around contours and riparian area towards the base of the dished landform with settlement at the edges, forms a coherent pattern. Views of the M20 in the distance are the only real visual detractor. Ecological integrity is weak due to the scarcity of tree and hedge cover and the intensity of land use and occasional mature, but vulnerable trees provide little cultural interest.	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Unified
	Ecological integrity:	Weak
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Very Weak

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
30.69 Although the intensively farmed arable land and declining heritage features give a weak sense of place overall, the central road and some buildings are distinct. Visibility is high, with long views of the North Downs and of the Len Valley.	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
	Continuity:	Recent
	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	High

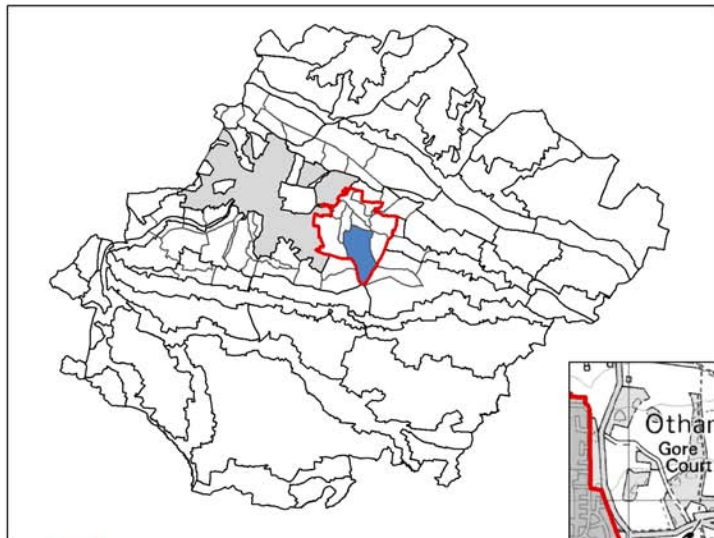
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

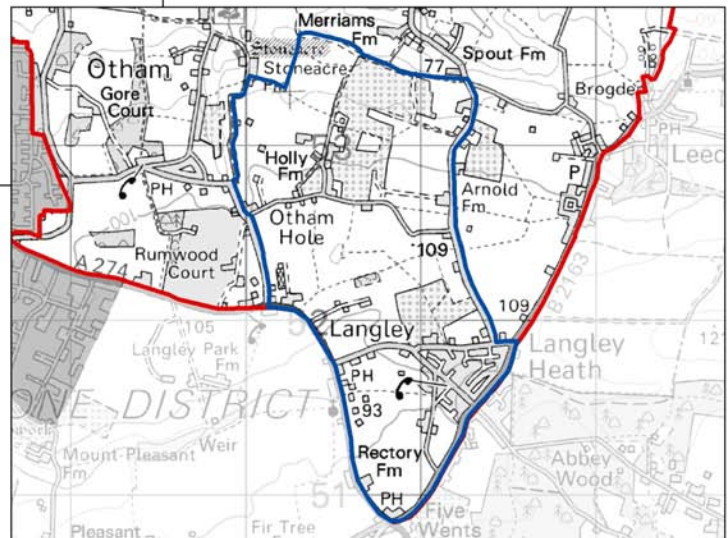
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Improve ecological interest in the area through restoration of defunct hedgerows
- Conserve isolated mature trees
- Conserve the rural character of the landscape and consider the high visibility of the area in any development proposals

30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau



- ▭ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- ▭ Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Small scale field pattern
- Shelterbelts and tall hedgerows
- Small farms and cottages throughout the area
- Recent residential area at Langley Heath
- Narrow roads

Location

30.70 This area lies east of Maidstone. It is bordered in the west by Stoneacre Lane, New Road and field boundaries to the west of Sutton Road in the south. The eastern boundary is defined by Leeds Road and Back Street. Field boundaries form the northern border.



30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.71 This area is covered by a small-scale field system of former orchards with regular internal boundaries between more irregular larger enclosures. Historic field patterns indicate fewer internal enclosures, a more mixed land use and more woodland blocks. A compact recent residential area covers the former Langley Heath. A few meandering tracks and narrow roads cross the area mainly from east to west and link the north - south peripheral roads. There are small farms and cottages scattered throughout the area. Current land use is farmland which has mostly changed from orchard to arable use, although some orchards remain. There are several large areas covered with horticultural polythene.

30.72 Some shelterbelts and tall hedgerows line field boundaries and edge the narrow roads. There are very few listed or historic buildings within the area.

Geology, soils and topography

30.73 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with one small patch of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds on the southern perimeter. There is a small area of head brickearth on the east of the area and another very small patch on the southern border. Two small patches of head exist in the southern area of the site. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform is relatively flat, falling very gently in a northwards direction.

Views

30.74 Visibility is limited by the residual shelterbelts and by some small areas of tree cover.

Urban edge influence

30.75 The urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area, and there are few urban influences. There is some potential for small scale settlement using existing landscape pattern and enhanced vegetative enclosure.

30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau

BIODIVERSITY

30.76 A large site divided into small fields bordered by hedgerows. Some fields contain improved grassland; others are used for arable production and fruit crops which may have poly-tunnel protection. There are some areas of unmanaged grassland and deciduous trees along the field margins and near to properties. The areas of grassland, agricultural land and especially field margins may provide suitable habitat for reptile species. Hedgerow boundaries may support breeding birds and commuting/foraging bats and reptiles. Continuous hedgerows provide good wildlife corridors for commuting reptile and mammal species. Although this site does not have direct connectivity to Maidstone town centre its multitude of linear features may facilitate population dispersal and allow individuals to move between countryside and urban areas. This habitat is considered important to biodiversity due to its lack of urban development, large size and that it exhibits features typical of Kentish farmland.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Good
30.77 Ecological integrity is strong with the hedgerows forming a network with small areas of tree cover, although the network is broken in places of intensive arable and horticultural land use. The limited tree cover does not contribute to cultural integrity, although the roads and peripheral field boundaries are good.	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Variable
	Functional integrity:	Strong

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
30.78 The narrow contour-led roads, hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a moderate sense of place, and the visibility is low.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Insignificant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Low

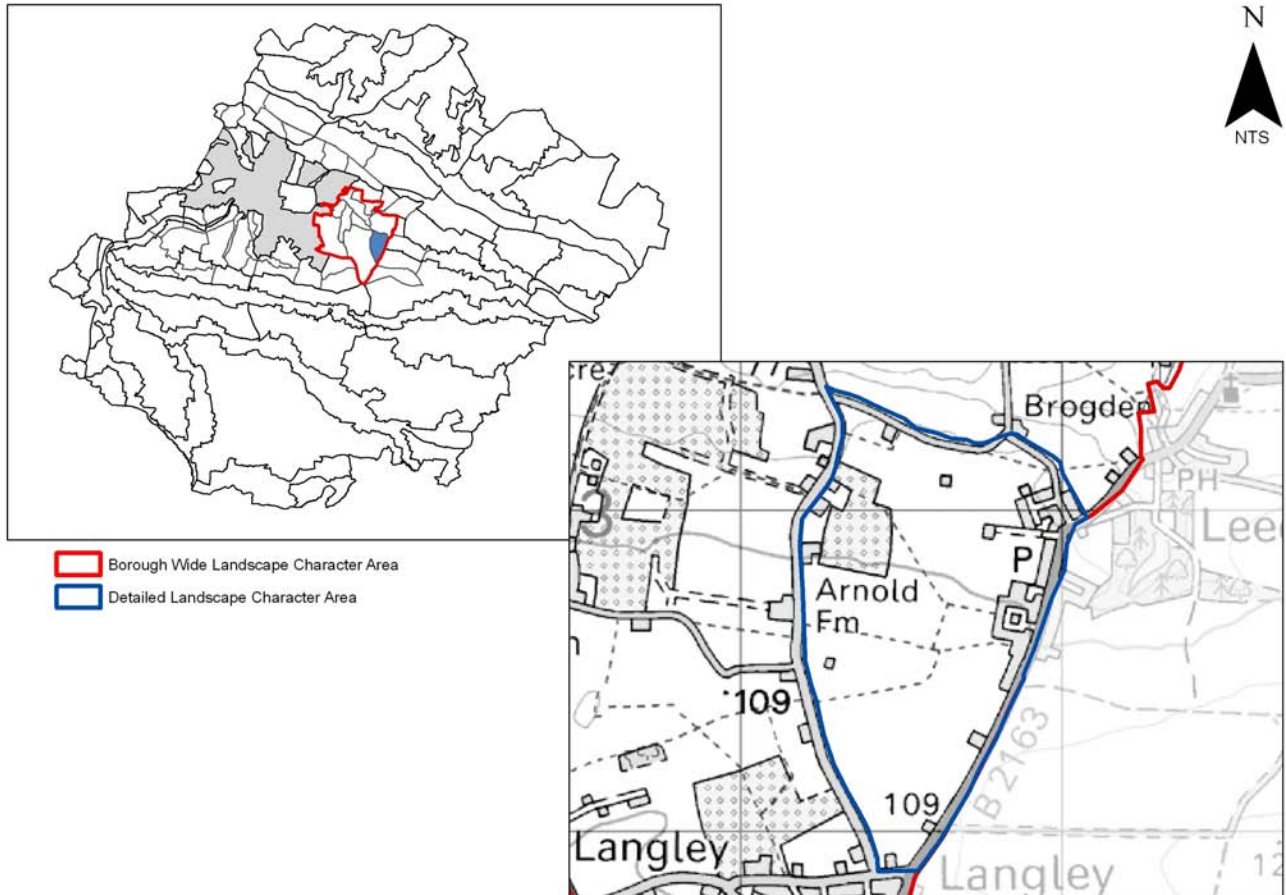
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce the external boundaries of the larger irregular field areas
- Conserve tall hedgerows, poplar shelterbelts and reinforce small copses
- Conserve and respect the small scale settlement pattern
- Conserve and reinforce vegetative enclosure through further boundary planting

30-9. Leeds Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open rural farmland
- Some terracing along field edges
- Tightly hedged roads
- Tracks crossing the landscape
- Vernacular style building along Leeds/Langley Road

Location

30.79 Leeds Farmlands are situated to the east of Maidstone. The area is bordered by roads: Forge Lane to the north, Upper Street to the east and Back Street to the west.



30-9. Leeds Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

30.80 This area is mainly open, rural farmland with close views of the North Downs. The area has an appearance of estate-farming with an area of linked ladder-type fields which are occasionally terraced down the gentle slope. Built development often has an abrupt edge with the rural land-use and there is much recently introduced residential use of peripheral land parcels. There is local landmark building (Tower House and Ledian Farm) with associated conifers and ragstone wall around Ledian Farm. Ledian Farm itself consists of an industrial estate with commercial units. Vernacular building still has a significant influence on the Leeds/Langley Road. The internal hedgerow is in decline and has little function in the present land use. The pattern of the area is small but open, with many cross tracks and peripheral tightly hedged roads. To the north and south the main land use is large arable with fields. In the centre of the area the fields are smaller and have a variety of crops with a number of the fields covered with horticultural polythene.

Geology, soils and topography

30.81 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. There is a very small area of head in the southern tip of the area. Soils are loam over limestone with a small area of loam over sandstone in the southern tip of the area. The landform is gently sloping to the north.

Views

30.82 This area is considered to have a moderate level of visibility as it has very little internal tree cover and is relatively elevated with open fields.

Urban edge influence

30.83 The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not clearly visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.

30-9. Leeds Farlands

BIODIVERSITY

30.84 This site is divided into small fields bordered mainly by hedgerows. Some fields contain improved grassland; others are used for arable production and fruit crops which may have poly-tunnel protection. There are some deciduous trees which are located along field margins and around properties to the east of the site. The areas of grassland, agricultural land and especially field margins may provide suitable habitat for ground nesting birds and reptiles. Hedgerows may also provide suitable habitat for nesting birds as well as commuting/foraging routes for species of bat and reptile. This site is located to the east of Maidstone and does not provide direct connectivity between rural and central inner-town areas. However, it is valuable habitat as it provides numerous wildlife corridors.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Poor
30.85 The ladder fields edged with occasional residential parcels form an incoherent pattern with the suburban land use and there are few visual detractors. Ecological integrity is weak and cultural features are poor, although the edge of a Conservation Area at Leeds does lie along the eastern boundary of the area.	Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Weak
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
30.86 Tower House forms a distinct characteristic, but there are few other elements which contribute significantly to the sense of place.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

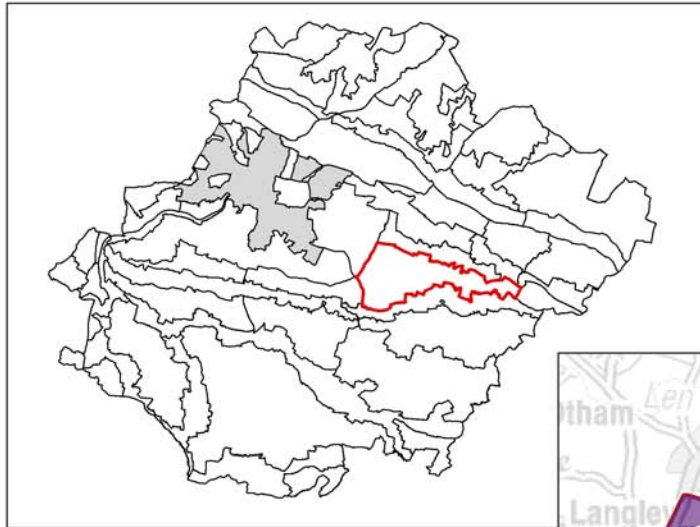
GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

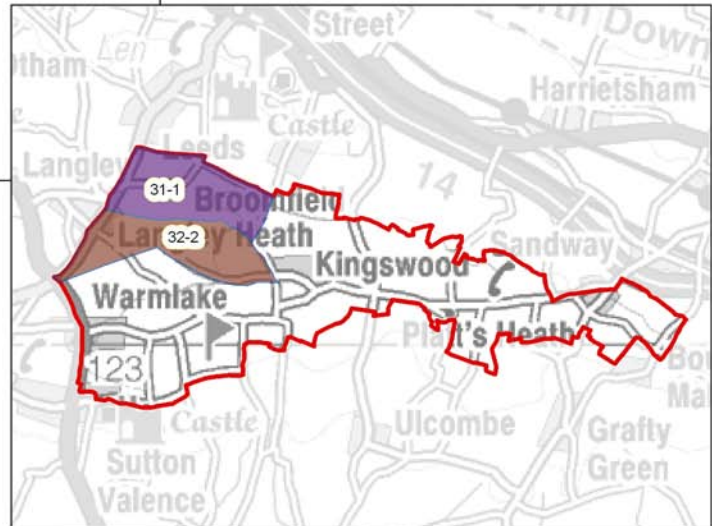
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farlands
- Soften the urban/rural interface with native planting and restore a landscape framework
- Encourage the use of local materials including ragstone
- Enhance the biodiversity and functional integrity of this landscape area

31. Kingswood Plateau



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area**
- Detailed Landscape Character Areas**
- 31-1. Leeds Fields
 - 31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Extensive tracts of mixed and sweet chestnut coppice woodland
- Plateau of Greensand Ridge and dip slope to east
- Deep loam to clay soils with extensive deposits of head
- Strong sense of enclosure
- Extensive recent development

Location

31.1 Kingswood Plateau lies to the south east of Maidstone, and is largely characterised by extensive mixed woodland. To the west, development at Langley Heath marks the limit of the area, and to the north the boundary of the area is defined by the change in soils from deep loam to clay to loam over limestone. Boughton Road marks the eastern boundary, which broadly defines the extent of head deposits across the plateau landscape. The top of the scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge defines the southern boundary.



31. Kingswood Plateau



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

31.2 The name Kingswood is ancient, and this landscape once formed part of a forest owned by the kings of Kent. Ancient woodland is dominant throughout this enclosed landscape, comprising mostly sweet chestnut coppice, with some stands of pollarded sessile oak woodland and mixed conifer. A network of regular public rights of way and tracks for access and maintenance form a grid like pattern throughout the woodland, and relict broadleaved woodland of hornbeam, ash and hazel coppice fringe some of the rides. There is a significant amount of honeysuckle, downy birch and silver birch, and aspen, alder buckthorn and willow occur where soils are wetter. Following rotational coppice, the woodland develops heathland characteristics, with common heather and a habitat for green tiger beetles and reptiles. Much of this woodland is designated as a Local Wildlife Site for its bird fauna which include nightjar, nightingale, redstart, flycatcher and wood warbler, and the extensive habitat it provides for deer, fox and rabbit.

31.3 To the east of Fairbourne Road, small fields contain pockets of orchards and pasture. Here the landscape slopes downwards more steeply to the north, allowing open views from Lenham Road. This more exposed pocket of landscape contrasts with the generally wooded character, although it is enclosed on either side by the heavy backdrop of Kingswood and Runham Wood.

31.4 A small amount of the landscape has been opened up for intensive arable land use, where the woodland edges form strong

boundaries and vegetation belts remain between fields. Much of the landscape set behind housing to the north of Chartway Street is used as equestrian grazing, and is often subdivided into small paddocks with recent fencing. Here, the enclosing backdrop of woodland again provides a strong, consistent character throughout the landscape. South of Chartway Street the landscape is less wooded, and a sports ground on the periphery of Sutton Valence and The Ridge Golf Course give a slightly suburban character to the area.

31.5 The woodland has also become eroded with much recent development, which has established within regular clearings with no clear pattern. Kingswood and Platts Heath comprise high density recent developments set on the edges of the woodland. Houses are usually 20th century, modern and detached, and there are frequent bungalows. Elsewhere recent linear development is scattered along the roads, and there are a number of static caravans and caravan parks, often with clearly defined gateways. The style of development does not often reflect local styles and



31. Kingswood Plateau

materials, although there are some scattered locally distinct farmhouses and properties particularly along Chartway Street. Many of these are listed such as the grade II Street Farmhouse to the east, which comprises a distinctive late 15th/early 16th century timber framed building with hung tiles on the first floor and part of the ground floor faced with chequered red and grey brickwork. Roads are often enclosed by the woodland, which creates dark tunnel like routes with few views out and a strong sense of enclosure.

Geology, soils and topography

31.6 The solid geology largely comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, overlain with extensive drifts of head. Soils are deep loam to clay, with fringes of loam over limestone, which extends across the lower surrounding landscape outside the area and within valleys running eastwards from Langley Heath. This landscape forms part of a reasonably flat plateau across the Greensand Ridge. To the east, the landscape declines northwards as part of the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge.

Views

31.7 Views within the area are extremely restricted by the wooded character of the landscape, although there are glimpses of housing set within clearings. There is a limited amount of arable land, where the woodland provides a strong boundary and a heavy backdrop. Views are more open along a valley from a section of Lenham Road between Kings Wood and Runham Wood, and the North Downs are visible in the distance.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

31.8 The woodland, in particular the sweet chestnut coppice, provides strong continuity throughout the area. Although arable land, equestrian grazing and recent development interrupts the landscape, the poor visibility caused by the woodland reduces the fragmentation caused by these elements. There are few visual detractors, which comprise field segregation for equestrian grazing and recent development which does not respect the local vernacular. The ecological integrity is strong because the woodland provides extensive habitat opportunities, and vegetation belts across arable land provide corridors for wildlife. The woodland is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, demonstrating its strong ecological value. The cultural integrity is moderate. Whilst the extensive woodland cover appears to be in good condition, with a good age structure, the built environment does not respect local vernacular and weakens the sense of place.

Sensitivity

31.9 Despite the indistinct character of the built environment, the ancient woodland provides strong local distinctiveness and a distinct sense of place. The woodland also provides a strong sense of enclosure both as a boundary in cleared areas, and along roads where it creates tunnel like routes. Visibility is low as a result of the strong enclosure provided by the woodland.



31. Kingswood Plateau

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS			
Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Enclosed
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Low

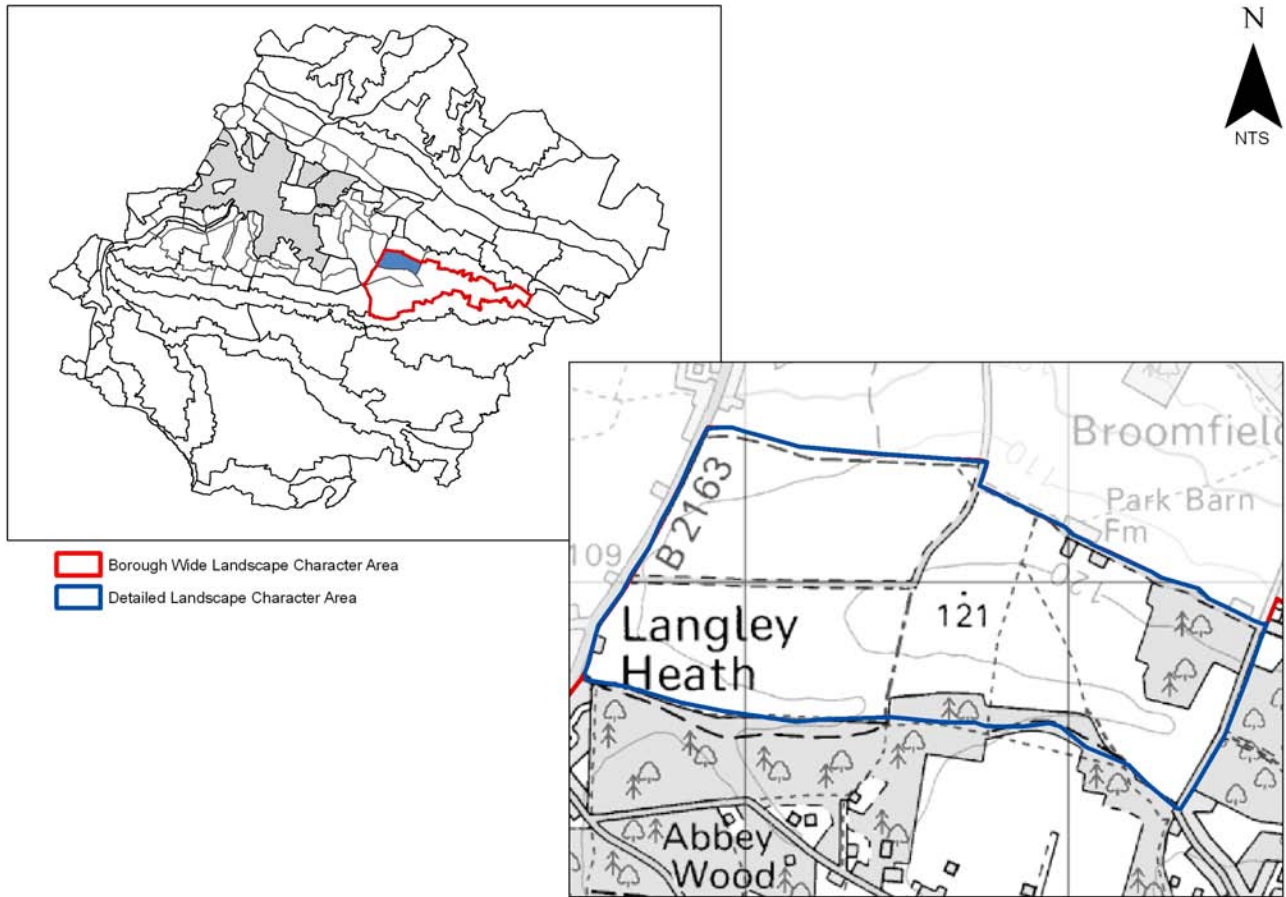
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the ancient woodland and resist significant erosion for development, arable land and equestrian grazing
- Conserve and reinforce the ecological integrity through promoting vegetation corridors within cleared areas
- Conserve and reinforce the range of ecological habitats provided, through continued rotational coppice
- Reinforce the sense of place through encouraging use of local styles and materials



31-1. Leeds Fields



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Arable land use
- Large open fields
- Little tree cover
- Few isolated farms
- Sunken road

Location

31.10 Leeds Fields lies east of Maidstone. Two boundaries are defined by roads – Upper Street in the west and Broomfield Road in the east. The northern and southern boundaries are defined by field boundaries.



31-1. Leeds Fields



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

31.11 The area has a remote feel with very long views to the north, east and west and shorter views to the horizon. There is very little woodland as much of the land is under intensive arable cultivation. There is a block of ancient woodland to the south of Park Barn Road, although this appears to have been replanted with pine. There is little development, although Park Barn Farm sits within a minor hamlet along Park Barn Road. Here, traditional ragstone barns, tile hung and weather boarded properties cluster together and contrast with recent large scale agricultural barns and silos. Occasional mature oak and ash standards occur in the declining, overgrown mixed hedgerow along the road. The land-use is arable with very little enclosure; the crops provide strong seasonal variation. Park Barn Road, narrow and reasonably straight, is lined with numerous tall pine trees to the west. A number of informal tracks also cross the area.



Geology, soils and topography

31.12 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. A large central band of head spans the area from west to east with a smaller area of head found in the south western corner. Soils in the northern sector are loam over limestone. Soils in the southern sector are predominantly loam over sandstone with a small section of loam over limestone found on the southern perimeter. The landform comprises an open plateau, with an elevated character.

Views

31.13 Visibility is very high with long views to the North Downs. Wide views within the area are curtailed by the horizon to the south.

Urban edge influence

31.14 The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.



31-1. Leeds Fields

BIODIVERSITY

31.15 The land is predominantly arable with small areas of scrub and trees along field boundaries. There is a block of broadleaved woodland to the north of the area and a woodland belt along the southern boundary connecting to Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands. Field margins and small pockets of semi-improved grassland and scrub may provide suitable habitat for protected reptiles including slow worm, viviparous lizard and grass snake. This site is located to the east of Maidstone and does not provide direct connectivity between rural and central inner-town areas. However, the woodland blocks and hedgerow with trees may potentially be of value as wildlife corridors.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

31.16 The open fields with few interrupting elements form a coherent pattern, although the gappy hedgerows and unsympathetic farm buildings cause a few visual detractions. Apart from the small areas of tree cover there is little ecological habitat; hedgerows are of variable quality.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

31.17 Isolated farms, occasional isolated trees and tracks form distinct characteristics. Visibility is moderate overall. Whilst there are long views to the North Downs, views to the south are less expansive.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

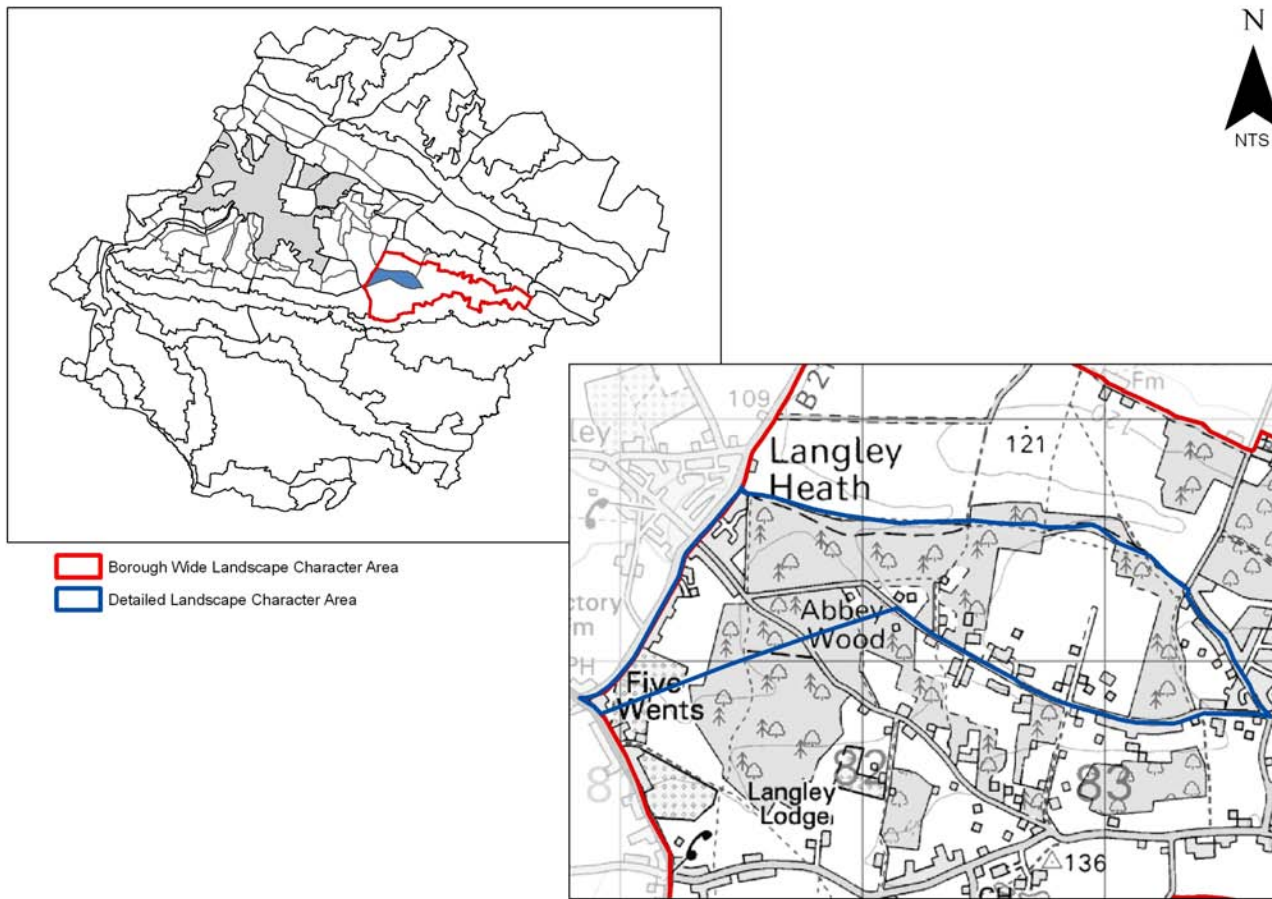
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the characteristic central cross contour road and the peripheral pattern of small tree blocks and tree lines
- Conserve and restore hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees
- Conserve characteristic blocks of remnant ancient woodland

31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Ancient woodland
- Coppice plantation and broadleaf woodland
- Minor tracks and paths throughout woodland

Location

31.18 Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands are located to the east of Maidstone. The northern boundary is mainly formed by edge of woodland, and the south by Gravelly Bottom Road. Broomfield Road defines the eastern boundary and to the west is Leeds Road.



31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

31.19 This is an area of ancient woodland, historically unsettled except at the edges of the adjacent heathland to the west. Woodland cover is mixed with coppice, plantation and broadleaf in evidence. This woodland is criss-crossed by minor tracks with acute angle junctions - which is characteristic of the Greensand Ridge. There are still large areas of woodland to the west but it is now eroded from the eastern section and recent settlement has established regular clearings of no clear pattern. There is a residential cluster to the west at Langley Heath and to the east at Kingswood. There are some large farmsteads along the road to the south. Gravelly Bottom Road and Pitt Road cross the area to the west.

Geology, soils and topography

31.20 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds with a small patch of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds existing in the south western corner. Two large areas of head dominate the area and one small area of head brickearth exists in the south west section of the area. Two large areas of deep loam to clay dominate the area. Loam over limestone exists along the northern perimeter and spreads down through

the central portion of the area. A second small area of loam over limestone exists in the south western portion of the area. The south western corner contains a small area of deep loam to clay. The topography is flat to very gently undulating.

Views

31.21 The low visibility of this local area is based on the strong woodland cover. However, visibility from the edge of this area is high due to the elevated nature of the landform, with far-reaching views towards the North Downs from the edges of the area.

Urban edge influence

31.22 The sensitivity of the area is high due to the ancient time-depth of the woodland. In addition, any clearance of the woodland would heighten visibility and therefore the sensitivity of the area. Traditionally, it is not a settled area. The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.



31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands

BIODIVERSITY

31.23 To the west of the site there is a large block of ancient woodland, with a central coniferous plantation. Crop fields dominate the eastern half of the site but there is also a section of ancient woodland which connects to hedges and tree lines around improved grassland fields. Adjacent to the eastern boundary there are warehouse buildings and garden properties. This habitat has the potential to support a high biodiversity; this may include protected and UK/Biodiversity Action Plan species such as the hazel dormouse, badger, nesting birds and bats. The woodland edge may provide suitable habitat for notable invertebrates and reptiles such as slow-worm and viviparous lizard. Agricultural areas may potentially support feeding/ground nesting birds while mature trees may provide potential foraging/commuting routes for bats. Although this site is not located adjacent to Maidstone’s centre it contains one of the largest ancient woodland blocks within the countryside surrounding the town. This habitat, in connection with surrounding hedgerows and tree lines may provide a network of corridors for commuting, foraging and dispersing wildlife.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Good
31.24 Woodland cover remains the dominant element although density and enclosure has been fragmented by residential and commercial development. The extent of remaining woodland is ancient and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.	Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Variable
	Functional integrity:	Strong

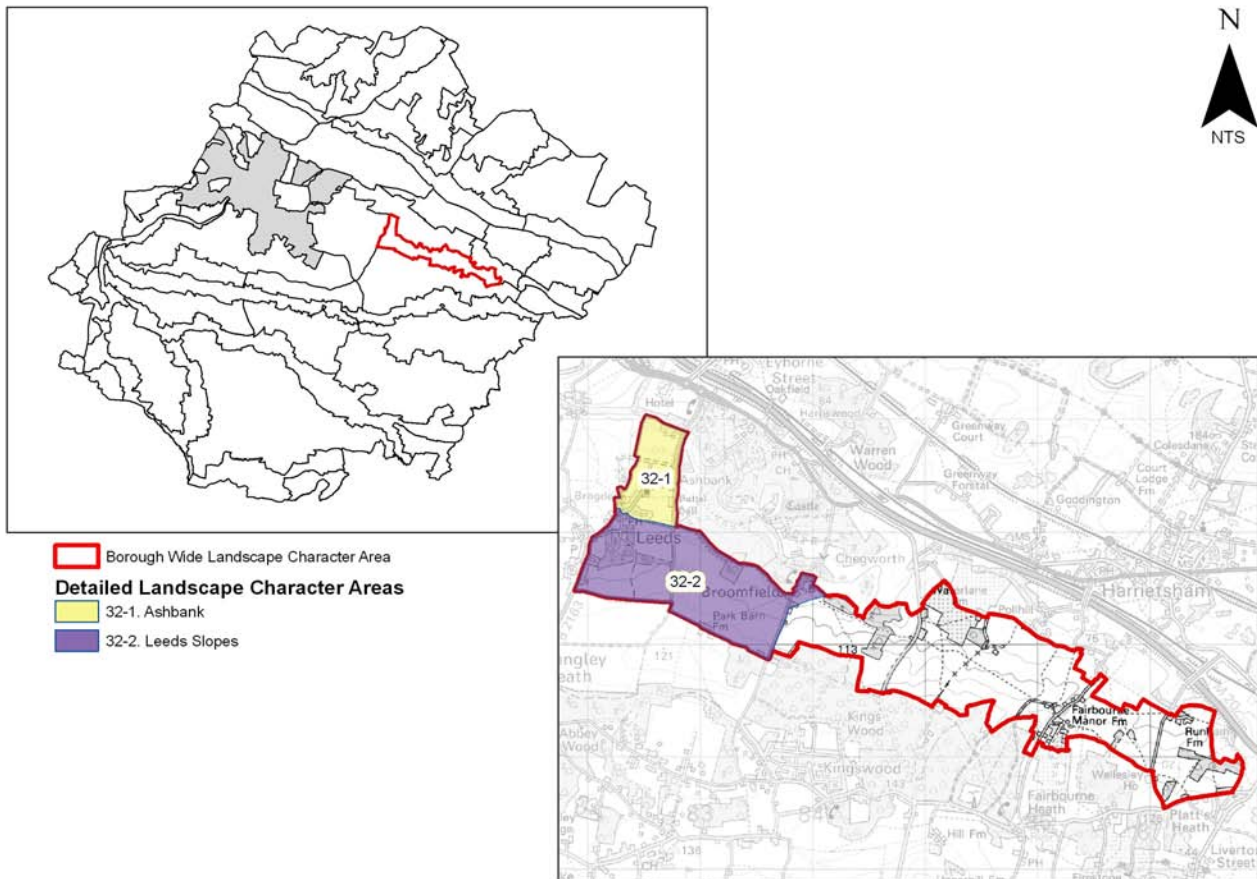
Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
31.25 The ancient woodland provides a very distinct sense of place and very low visibility.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Ancient
	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
	Landform:	Insignificant
	Tree cover:	Enclosed
	Visibility:	Very Low

GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and reinforce the woodland and woodland edge through continued management
- Conserve the sense of enclosure and wooded character

32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of the wider foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Undulating landform, rising to the south away from the Len Valley
- Scattered mixed woodland blocks
- Series of springs and streams running north towards the River Len
- Isolated farmsteads and manor houses
- Traditional vernacular style buildings
- Narrow, sunken, tree lined lanes

Location

32.1 Broomfield Undulating Farmlands are situated to the east of Maidstone and the landscape forms part of the wider foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which rises to the north. It is the edge of the Len Valley, and the periphery of Leeds Castle parkland, that broadly defines the northern boundary. Lower Street, Leeds forms the western boundary and marks a change in field size and pattern. West of Lower Street, there is generally a smaller field pattern in the form of traditional ladder fields. The enclosing boundary of King's Wood forms the southern extent of the area.



32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

32.2 There is a significant amount of tree cover across the landscape, with large mixed woodland blocks, tree belts and hedgerows providing enclosure to arable fields. Traditional fruit orchards at Water Lane Farm are remnant of what would once have been a more widespread land use throughout the landscape. Field size and pattern is mixed, with larger fields under intensive arable production and a smaller network of fields and paddocks around settlements and isolated farmsteads. Even where the fields are large, the heavy enclosure provided by woodland blocks and the extensive stretch of King's Wood to the south provide a strong sense of enclosure.

32.3 The traditional core of Leeds, along Lower Street and Upper Street, and Broomfield are recognised as Conservation Areas. Although not widely visible from the surrounding landscape, Leeds Priory, the site of a Medieval Augustinian Priory and an 18th century mansion and its grounds (where it is recorded that Capability Brown worked), are designated as a Scheduled Monument. The rural hamlet of Broomfield is of particular note, where a traditional collection of listed converted farm buildings and detached vernacular houses line the characteristically narrow Broomfield Road. Throughout the wider landscape, there is a distinct pattern of isolated, large scale vernacular style farmsteads and manor houses, which give the landscape a unique and traditional character. Buildings include a mix of timber framed properties, ragstone houses and churches, traditional converted timber barns and oast houses. To the east traditional

properties along Fairbourne Lane are particularly distinctive and attractive, with Fairbourne Court overlooking a pond which abuts the lane.

32.4 Roads comprise enclosed, narrow, sunken lanes which generally run against the topography in a north east to south west direction. Often lined by hedgerows and tree belts, with gnarled roots binding the earth banks together, the lanes are dark and almost tunnel like.

Geology, soils and topography

32.5 The solid geology is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, and soils are well drained loams over limestone. As part of the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge, the topography is undulating and becomes lower to the north where it declines towards the Len Valley.

Views

32.6 Traffic moving along the M20 is visible in the foreground to the extensive, panoramic views out of the area of the elevated North Downs. Glimpses of Leeds Castle are visible from the landscape between Ashbank and Broomfield, nestled within the Len Valley to the immediate north. Its scale and grandeur is not recognised because views are elevated and slightly obscured by trees. Views within the area are restricted because of the undulating landform and the abundance of trees and woodland blocks. However the parkland surrounding Leeds Castle is visible where it abuts this landscape, where mature isolated oak, pine and horse chestnut standards are scattered across grassland.

32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

32.7 This is a coherent landscape, with a strong consistency throughout the area provided by the undulating topography, frequent woodland blocks, the distinctive pattern of narrow sunken lanes, springs and streams, and the unique collection of vernacular style buildings. There are few visual detractors, although recent infill development and modern farming barns and silos slightly detract from the traditional setting of some vernacular style buildings. The ecological integrity is moderate. Although there is a significant amount of arable land, there is a considerable amount of woodland, some of which is ancient, and field boundaries tend to comprise hedgerows rather than fencing. St Nicolas's Churchyard, Leeds, is designated as a Local Wildlife Site for its extensive range of lichens and habitat for little owl and whiskered bat. The condition of heritage features is generally good overall. Although the Scheduled Monument of Leeds Priory is listed as being 'at risk' by English Heritage because of the poor state of repair of its few upstanding remains, buildings throughout the area are generally well maintained and in excellent condition. Built development respects local vernacular and provides a very strong sense of place.

Sensitivity

32.8 The key features of this landscape provide very strong local distinctiveness. The numerous scattered vernacular style buildings, use of ragstone, frequent and enclosing woodland blocks, and the narrow sunken lanes in particular, are very distinctive elements which provide a very strong sense of place. Visibility is moderate because whilst there are some long views out to the North Downs, woodland cover and the undulating landform restrict views throughout the immediate landscape.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

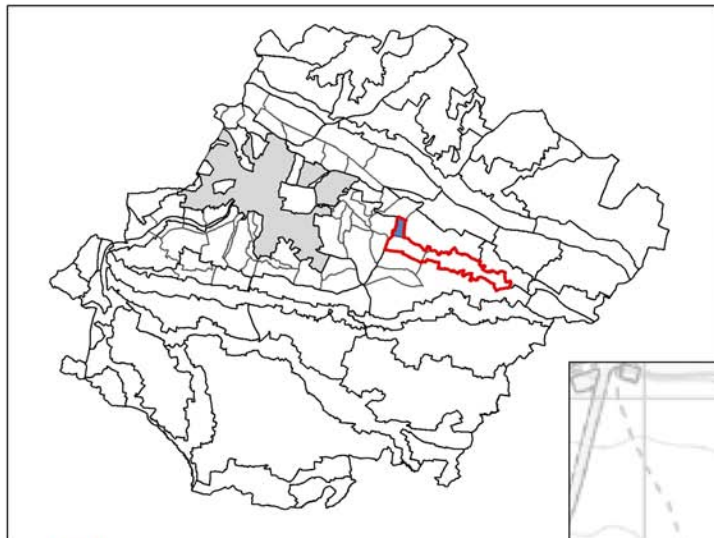
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

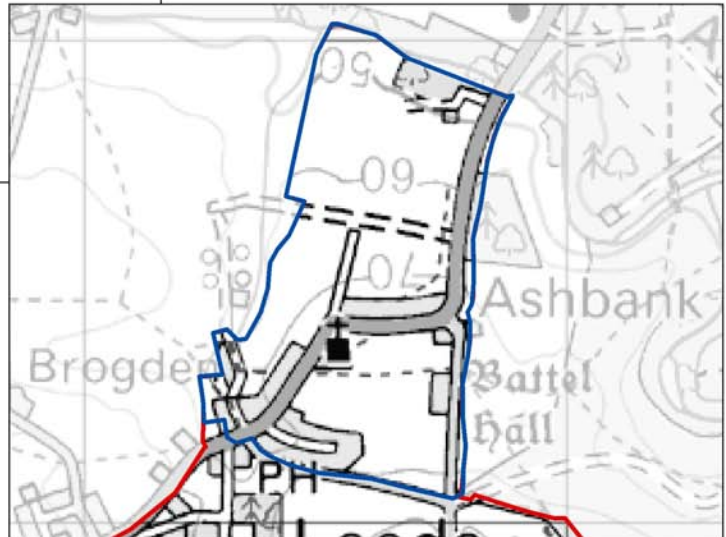
- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the wooded enclosure provided by woodland blocks and hedgerows
- Conserve the rural and traditional setting of vernacular style buildings
- Resist infill development within the distinctive rural hamlet of Broomfield
- Resist widening of distinctive narrow sunken lanes



32-1. Ashbank



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large scale field pattern
- Historic settlements and farmsteads
- Smaller enclosures around historic settlements
- Views into Leeds Castle Estate
- Some recent development

Location

32.9 Ashbank lies east of Maidstone. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is predominantly under arable land use. George Lane forms the boundary to the south.



32-1. Ashbank



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

32.10 This is an area of open landscape with historic settlement and a farmstead located at the higher point to the south at Leeds. It has an inherently large-scale field pattern with a few smaller enclosures immediately around the historic settlement. More recent settlement has been introduced between the nearby village centre and the historic settlement, and suburban land-uses have a significant impact on the area. There is limited tree cover except for a small pocket of dense woodland to the north east. Hedgerows have largely been removed from the large open arable fields, although there are some well managed hedgerows along wider field boundaries and along Penfold Hill. Other vegetation consists of a few tree lines, small woodland blocks and garden planting. Penfold Hill runs north to south along the eastern boundary and Lower Street crosses the southern section west to east. A number of public rights of way cross the area.

Geology, soils and topography

32.11 The Ashbank area is underlain entirely with Lower Greensand. This is sub-divided into Hythe Beds with a northerly strip of Atherfield Clay and two areas of Sandgate Beds, the most southerly of which encompasses a pocket of Folkestone Beds. A small drift of Fourth Terrace River Gravel is located at the Ashbank village road junction. The area has exclusively loam over limestone soils. This is a small domed area gently sloping down to the Len Valley.

Views

32.12 There are views towards the north Downs from the higher contours due to the open nature of the field pattern and the domed landform.

Urban edge influence

32.13 New settlement may be appropriate for limited areas on the lower contours where it can be implemented with new riparian planting and smaller land parcels.

32-1. Ashbank

BIODIVERSITY

32.14 This area is predominantly cultivated arable land surrounded by improved grassland. There are blocks of mature broadleaved woodland to the north and scattered deciduous trees surrounding properties to the south of the site. The arable areas and marginal ruderal vegetation may provide suitable habitat for protected reptiles and nesting birds. Mature trees and woodland areas may also support nesting birds as well as foraging, commuting and roosting bat species. Woodland may also have the potential to support dormice and badger. This site is located to the east of Maidstone and does not provide direct connectivity between rural and central inner-town areas. However, the woodland blocks are of particular value as there is a scarcity of similar woodland in the area.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

32.15 The open landscape forms a coherent pattern of elements, although some suburban land uses are visual detractors. Ecological integrity is weak with limited tree cover and intensive land use. The Site of Battel Hall and Church are good heritage features. Lower Street – Leeds to the south is designated as a Conservation Area.

Condition Assessment

Moderate

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Coherent
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

32.16 The landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. Visibility is moderate due to the domed landform and intermittent tree cover. Historic buildings are distinct, and the setting of Leeds Castle Estate is sensitive.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

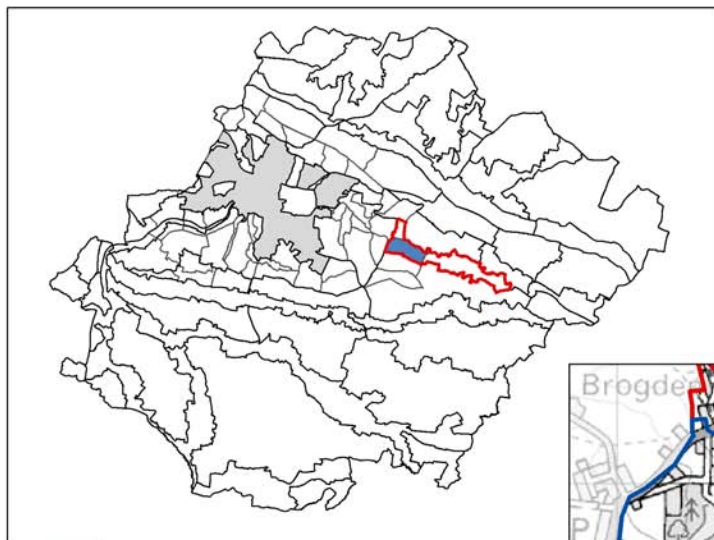
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

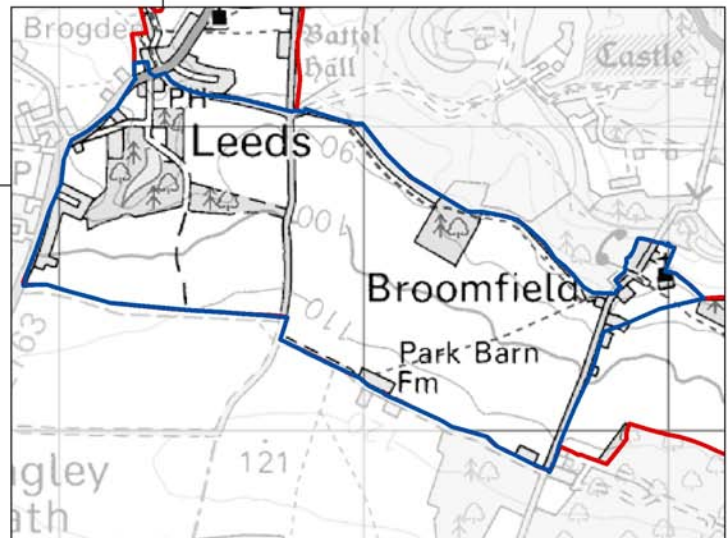
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve and improve the characteristically open and uncluttered landscape which forms part of the foreground to the Kent Downs AONB and, on the domed higher contours, a setting for historic sites and buildings
- Conserve the traditional characteristics and setting of Lower St. Leeds Conservation Area
- Tree cover is a characteristic feature at the edge of the valley, which should be conserved and improved to augment the ecological interest of the area

32-2. Leeds Slopes



- Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Stream
- Settlement clustered around stream
- Traditional, vernacular style buildings
- Recent residential and sub-urban land use

Location

32.17 Leeds Slopes lies to the east of Maidstone. The area forms part of the wider setting to Leeds Castle Estate, as well as part of the wider foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The domed landform is highly visible, and there is increased sensitivity due to the immediately adjacent Leeds Castle Estate which forms the northern boundary. To the south the boundary is defined by Park Barn Road and to the west by Upper Street.



32-2. Leeds Slopes



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

32.18 This is the head of a small stream where historic settlement has clustered. The surrounding farms have large open fields on the higher slopes. Historically, the steeper slopes around the village had small-scale irregular orchards and small fields. This pattern has been replaced by large scale arable fields. Small blocks of woodland, regenerative woodland and tree cover are associated with the historic Leeds Priory, the site of a Medieval Augustinian priory, and an 18th century mansion and its grounds. Other vegetation is mainly garden planting. Buildings are generally mixed vernacular styles, such as weatherboard and half timbered. To the east, Broomfield comprises a distinctive mix of vernacular style buildings. Two small roads cross the area in a north-south direction: Burberry Lane to the west and Broomfield Road at the eastern edge.



Geology, soils and topography

32.19 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. Two patches of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay exist in the eastern end of the area and one small patch exists in the western end of the area. There is a small area of alluvium on the eastern perimeter of the site. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform is steeply sloping and forms the head of a small valley.

Views

32.20 There is moderate visibility overall. Long views to the North Downs contrast with more intimate views caused by the landform and the enclosing effect of regenerative vegetation.

Urban edge influence

32.21 The existing urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area and there are few urban influences.



32-2. Leeds Slopes

BIODIVERSITY

32.22 Adjacent to the western boundary there are property gardens and an area of amenity grassland/sports pitch. There is a pond enclosed by semi-natural mature woodland. Woodland blocks are located at the centre of the area and adjacent to the south eastern boundary. The arable areas have the potential to support nesting birds. Field margins and small pockets of semi-improved grassland and scrub may provide suitable habitat for protected reptiles. Mature trees and woodland areas, of particular value as there is a scarcity of similar woodland in the area, provide suitable habitat for nesting birds and bats and may have the potential to support mammals such as badger and dormice. The combination of terrestrial woodland and open ponds provide suitable habitat for newts and watervole. There is no direct connectivity between rural and central inner-town areas. However, woodland has been identified as a locally important habitat in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and has the potential to support a wide variety of wildlife, which may include protected UK/Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Moderate
<p>32.23 Leeds village is coherent, but interrupted by residential development and land uses. The historic settlement boundary around Leeds Conservation Area is indistinct and ill-defined, although the site of the abbey is a Scheduled Monument and the adjacent Leeds Castle Estate is on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest.</p>	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Variable
	Functional integrity:	Coherent

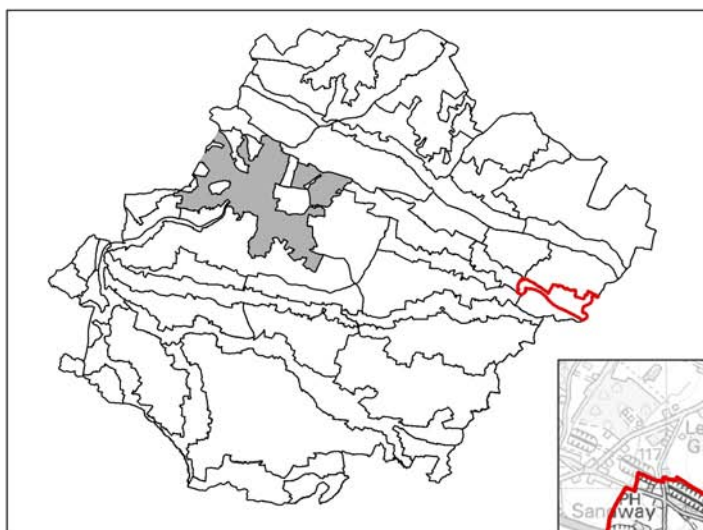
Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
<p>32.24 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to Leeds Castle Estate and the Kent Downs AONB to the north. Tree cover around Leeds Village and the vernacular buildings are distinctive characteristics. However, residential and sub urban land uses have detracted from the historic landscape pattern in places.</p>	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

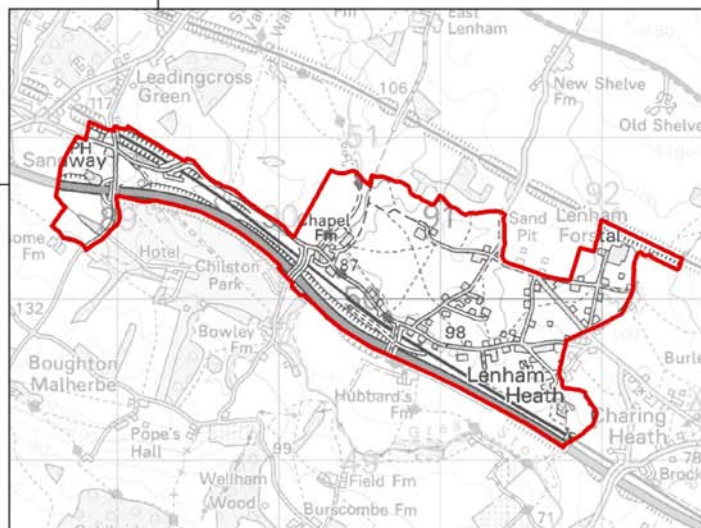
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Conserve the rural character and the historic and cultural significance of Leeds Castle Estate as the setting of Leeds Castle and as part of the foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve and improve woodland cover to maintain a strong ecological and landscape framework

33. Lenham Heath Farmlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of the wider foreground to the Kent Downs AONB
- Poor acidic soils
- Severance caused by HS1 and the M20
- Sand extraction
- Artificial landform resulting from infrastructure mitigation
- Headwaters of the Great Stour
- Loss of traditional hedgerow boundaries
- Equestrian grazing with temporary electric fencing

Location

33.1 This area lies to the far east of Maidstone, encapsulating the settlements of Lenham Forstal and Lenham Heath, and is characterised by the sandy, acid soils and the heathy character. The M20 forms the southern boundary, and the northern extent of the area follows field boundaries where the soils become less sandy. Whilst the landscape is very similar to the west of the area, it is the headwaters of the Great Stour that cut into the landscape rather than those of the River Len. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the east may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

33. Lenham Heath Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

33.2 Tree cover is provided by some small fragments of broadleaf woodland, a few scattered remaining orchards, and linear native mitigation planting along HS1 to the south. The sandy soils are evidenced by the heathy character of the landscape, with a noticeable amount of bracken and silver birch and an area of sand extraction to the north of Lenham Forstal Road. Previous sand extraction at Bull Heath Pit along Lenham Heath Road is recognised as a Local Wildlife Site for the range of habitats it provides, including habitats for birds and invertebrate fauna.

33.3 There is a fragmented field pattern, with some intensive arable land but mostly small land parcels which have been recently subdivided into private plots. Equestrian grazing dominates the land use, with poor quality grassland often dominated by ragwort. Overgrazed paddocks are subdivided by a mixture of temporary electric, post and wire and post and rail fencing. Although some hedgerows remain, these are often gappy and in poor condition. To the west a section of the landscape forms part of the grounds belonging to Chilston Park, which is recorded on the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens and predominantly lies to the south of the M20. This small section of the park is dissected by the M20 and HS1, leaving little evidence of the original parkland. However it is recognised as part of the wider Lenham Heath and Chilston Parkland Local Wildlife Site. North of the M20, the parkland is designated for the acid grassland and ponds with good marginal and aquatic flora, and further east it is the wet woodland habitat to the east of Marshall Farm

that is recognised.

33.4 Lenham Heath is peppered with recent housing, which does not generally respect local vernacular. Some properties are difficult to see from the roads, where they are located behind dense coniferous planting. In comparison, there are some examples of traditional development which demonstrate strong local distinctiveness. Lenham Forstal has a strong sense of place with some traditional buildings and grade II timber framed listed cottages clustered around a triangular road junction. Similarly to the west, the isolated Mount Castle Farm and Chapel Farm provide strong contrast with the recent development styles to the east. The early 17th century weather boarded Chapel Mill, alongside the Great Stour, and the late 15th century timber framed Mount Castle Farm are both grade II listed.



33. Lenham Heath Farmlands

Geology, soils and topography

33.5 The solid geology largely comprises Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds, with a band of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds to the south. Fringes of Lower Greensand Hythe Beds to the south, and Gault Clay to the north define the periphery of the area. This is overlain with drifts of alluvium and patches of head and head brickearth. Soils are generally loam over sandstone, with fringes of seasonally wet deep clay to the north and loam over limestone to the south. This generally provides well drained soils due to the permeable and absorbent characteristics. The topography is very gently undulating, with high points east of Mount Castle Farm and along Bull Hill.

Views

33.6 Infrastructure routes have generally been well integrated into the topography and there are few extensive views of the M20/HS1 from the immediately surrounding landscape. Although the undulating landform and intervening vegetation restrict views throughout the immediate landscape, there are some open views of the North Downs.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

33.7 This area is significantly fragmented by recent subdivision into small land parcels, and the major infrastructure corridor to the south. There are a number of visual detractors within this fragmented landscape including major infrastructure, agricultural buildings, factory buildings, sand extraction, poor boundary treatment and the use of temporary electric fencing and recent development which does not respect local vernacular. The ecological integrity is moderate. This is largely a grazed landscape, with some limited arable land. Some scattered woodland and orchards, mitigation planting along HS1 and hedgerows/tree belts where they remain create a framework for wildlife. As well as Bull Heath Pit, woodland to the east of Marshall Farm is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The cultural integrity is poor. Traditional field boundaries are diminished and few orchards remain.

Sensitivity

33.8 Overall there is a very weak sense of place, largely because many traditional elements have been removed or diminished. Whilst there are some very distinctive examples of local vernacular styles, with some scattered listed buildings, the dominating style throughout the built environment is recent and indistinct. Lenham Heath has a fragmented character and no definitive central core or sense of arrival. Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some longer views across larger and more open arable fields, intervening garden vegetation generally restricts views within and around Lenham Heath.



33. Lenham Heath Farmlands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Significantly interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Poor	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Weak	Visibility:	Moderate

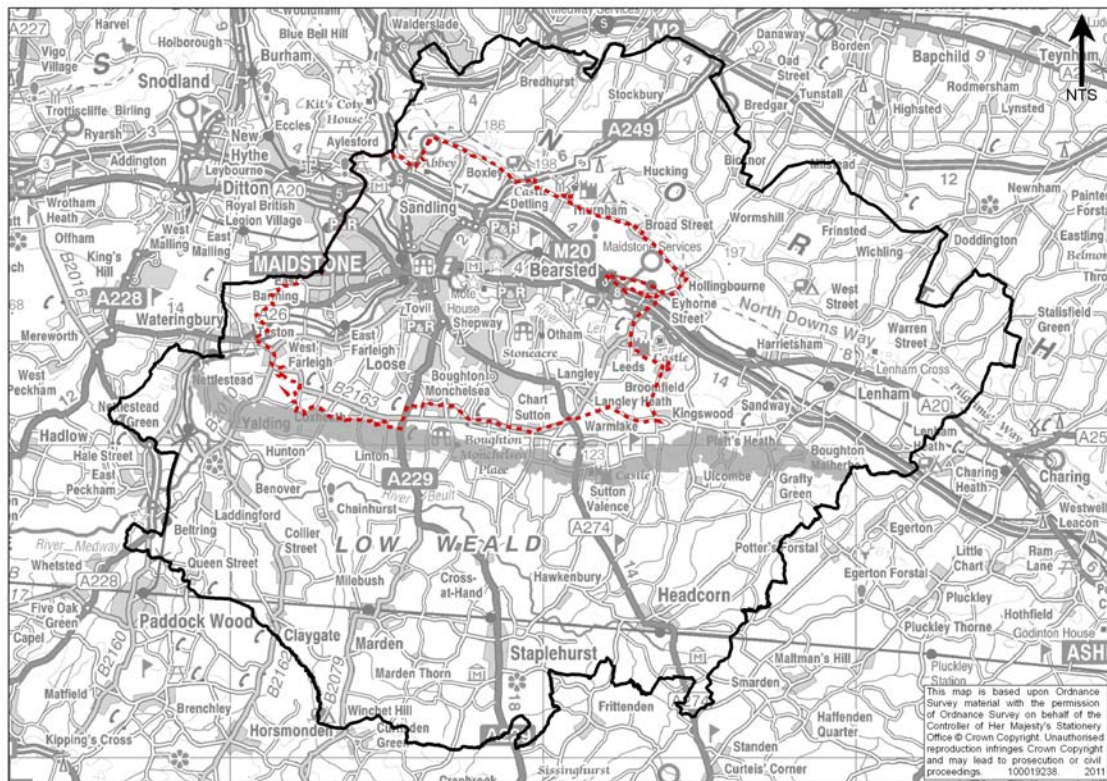
GUIDELINES - IMPROVE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands
- Improve boundary treatment by reinstating native hedgerows where practicable
- Avoid the use of coniferous species
- Encourage sympathetic redesign of former quarry sites, with organically shaped water bodies and integrated vegetation
- Where development is permitted, buildings and structures should be sensitively designed
- Where transport infrastructure is required, associated fencing should be sympathetically designed
- Soften large agricultural barns and other buildings with native planting
- Improve the sense of arrival within settlements by creating definitive central areas
- Protect and improve the ecological integrity of the headwaters of the Great Stour through promotion of wildlife 'buffer' zones



Greensand Ridge: introduction



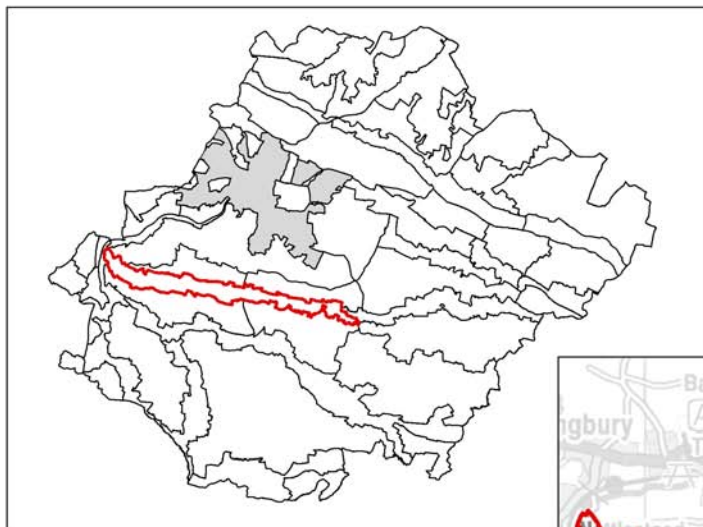
The Greensand Ridge comprises the scarp face of a long and curved belt of Wealden Greensand that runs across Kent parallel to the North Downs. Along this section of the Greensand Ridge, the steep landform is dramatic, affording spectacular panoramic views across the Low Weald landscape to the south. Narrow, winding and woodland enclosed lanes run against the contours, often sunken into the Greensand with tree roots binding the earth banks together. Loamy soils support much fruit production with associated poplar shelterbelts, and some traditional hop gardens with chestnut coppice for hop poles. Deer parks and more recent 18th century parklands form a distinctive feature of the Wealden Greensand, with large manor houses often raised above the parkland along the elevated ridge. The Greensand Way promoted Long Distance Path runs along the contours of the ridge and although this is not a historic route, it forms a distinctive path because of the raised topography and the long open views across the Low Weald landscape to the south. The scarp is incised by regular secluded Wealden Clay valleys, and a series of springs emerge across the slope.

Greensand Ridge: generic guidelines

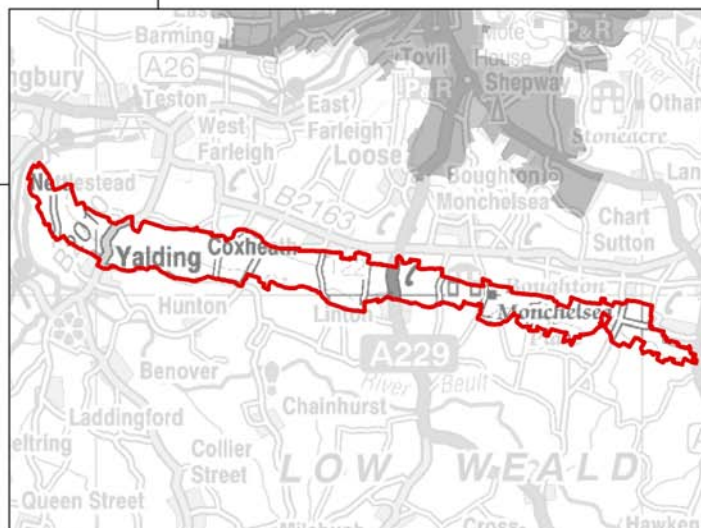
- Conserve and appropriately manage woodlands and traditional areas of coppice
- Conserve and appropriately manage orchards and hop gardens and the traditional small scale field pattern within which they are set
- Conserve characteristic parkland landscapes and plant new parkland trees to maintain this characteristic landscape feature, whilst managing ageing specimens for ecological benefit
- Avoid agricultural intensification and conserve the sense of enclosure and the field pattern provided by native hedgerows
- Conserve the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and small settlements
- Conserve the narrow, enclosed lanes and avoid highway improvements which may weaken this characteristic
- Conserve and strongly promote the use of ragstone as a key material
- Consider the views towards any proposals across this exposed and elevated landform from the Low Weald to the south



34. Linton Greensand Ridge



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Scarp face of the Greensand Ridge
- Extensive views across the Low Weald to the south
- Orchards set within small scale field pattern
- Historic parkland
- Very distinctive and historic built environment
- Series of narrow lanes that run against the contours

Location

34.1 Linton Greensand Ridge lies to the south of Maidstone, and forms part of the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge. It is, therefore, the topography that most clearly defines the extent of this area. The lower, flatter landscape of the Low Weald defines the southern boundary and the more level landscape at the top of the Ridge forms the northern boundary. The periphery of Sutton Valence defines the eastern extent, and east of this valleys become more prominent where they cut into the scarp. To the west the foot of the scarp meets the River Medway Valley, which defines the western extent of the area.

34. Linton Greensand Ridge



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

34.2 Throughout this area the land use is dominated by orchards, and occasionally soft fruit is produced in polytunnels. There has been widespread replacement of old stock and the orchards, enclosed by native hedgerows and poplar shelterbelts, provide an extensive amount of tree cover. Bands of native broadleaf woodland define the narrow drains, small mixed woodland blocks are scattered across the scarp and there is a significant amount of tree cover within the upper section of Linton Park. Although extensive views across the Low Weald to the south give a certain sense of exposure in wider views, the traditional, small scale field pattern provides a strong sense of enclosure locally. This enclosed field pattern gives regularity to much of the landscape, although areas of parkland landscape contrast with this. Towards the lower slopes of the Greensand Ridge, springs emerge from the ground and a number of reservoirs are peppered along the lower slopes. A series of characteristically steep, narrow lanes, often sunken into the Greensand and enclosed, are located across the scarp.

34.3 The built environment is unique and steeped in history. There are numerous very attractive listed buildings along this section of the Greensand Ridge, often affording exceptional views across the Low Weald to the south. Development mostly comprises scattered large farmhouses and there is a strong use of ragstone within buildings and also within walling which is found throughout the area. Other frequent materials comprise weather boarding and chequered red and grey

brick.

34.4 Thought to have originated in the 1200's, the tiny village of Linton provided labour to the quarry at Boughton Monchelsea to the east. Designated as a Conservation Area, this section of the village comprises a collection of historic buildings that climb the steep Linton Hill in a striking and characteristic fashion.

34.5 Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place, both grade I listed buildings and recorded on the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, are situated along the scarp. Whilst much of the parkland at Linton Park extends across the Low Weald landscape to the south, the 18th century mansion and formal gardens are situated along the higher Greensand Ridge. Built in 1730 for Robert



34. Linton Greensand Ridge

Mann, Linton Park served as headquarters to the army encampment at the neighbouring Coxheath during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The mansion is accessed from the north off Heath Road, along an avenue of beech, sycamore and recent lime. The immediate grounds are very ornamental, with mown grassland and cedars and redwoods, and to the south are the remains of an elaborate Victorian terraced garden with panoramic views of a lake set within parkland that extends across the Low Weald. The site is now under mixed corporate and private ownership, and a school and modern place of worship have been built within the grounds to the north along Heath Road. Similarly, east of Linton Park, the 16th century grade I listed ragstone manor house of Boughton Monchelsea Place stands on the higher Greensand Ridge, allowing panoramic views across its deer park to the south. Fallow deer graze the semi improved parkland, which is scattered with mature trees and native woodland and is noted for its value for wildlife through its designation as a Local Wildlife Site. A pond and boat house are also situated within these grounds, further typifying the parkland landscape.

Geology, soils and topography

34.6 The solid geology across the scarp comprises a wide band of Lower Greensand Hythe Beds along the higher slopes. A narrow belt of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay buffers the Hythe Beds, and fringes of Wealden Clay are situated around the lower contours to the south. There is little drift, although the

periphery of head is located to the north of the area where the higher contours form the top of the scarp. Deep loam to clay soils are situated across the highest contours at the top of the scarp, although the steepest part of the slope comprises loam over limestone. To the south, across the lower contours, soils are seasonally wet loam to clay over shale. The topography is defined by the distinctive steep scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge, which rises to the north.

Views

34.7 There are extensive, panoramic views across the Low Weald to the south from this elevated landscape along the Greensand Ridge. Frequent large oak trees are dotted across the rural landscape, and a series of reservoirs across the lower ground stand out in these views. Views within the area are restricted at times by intervening vegetation, although there are some views within the area across orchards with the backdrop of the Low Weald beyond.



34. Linton Greensand Ridge

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

34.8 There is a unified pattern of elements, mostly provided by the continuity of the scarp face landform, the subsequent panoramic views across the Low Weald, the scattered vernacular style properties and the widespread orchards. There are few visual detractors comprising agricultural barns and storage boxes in association with fruit production, heavy traffic on Linton Hill, pylons and polytunnels. The ecological integrity is strong, owing to the lack of intensively farmed arable land and the coherent habitat network and strong connectivity provided by the orchards, shelterbelts, woodland blocks (some of which are ancient) and hedgerows, springs and ditches. The cultural integrity is good. Orchards are well maintained and there has been widespread replanting of new stock. Hedgerows, shelterbelts and ragstone walling are intact and in good condition. Built development has a positive impact on the landscape. The numerous striking examples of traditional buildings respect local vernacular, and the sense of place is epitomised by the situation on the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge and the subsequent panoramic views across the Low Weald to the south.

Sensitivity

34.9 It is the situation along the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge, and the subsequent availability of panoramic views across the Low Weald, which gives this area such a strong sense of place. Adding to this, the historic parkland of Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place, the traditional and regular small scale field pattern containing orchards, the exceptionally striking selection of locally distinct and historic buildings, and the abundance of ragstone walling provide continuity throughout the landscape and very strong local distinctiveness. Visibility is high, owing to the scarp topography and subsequent availability of views to and from this landscape.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	High

34. Linton Greensand Ridge

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

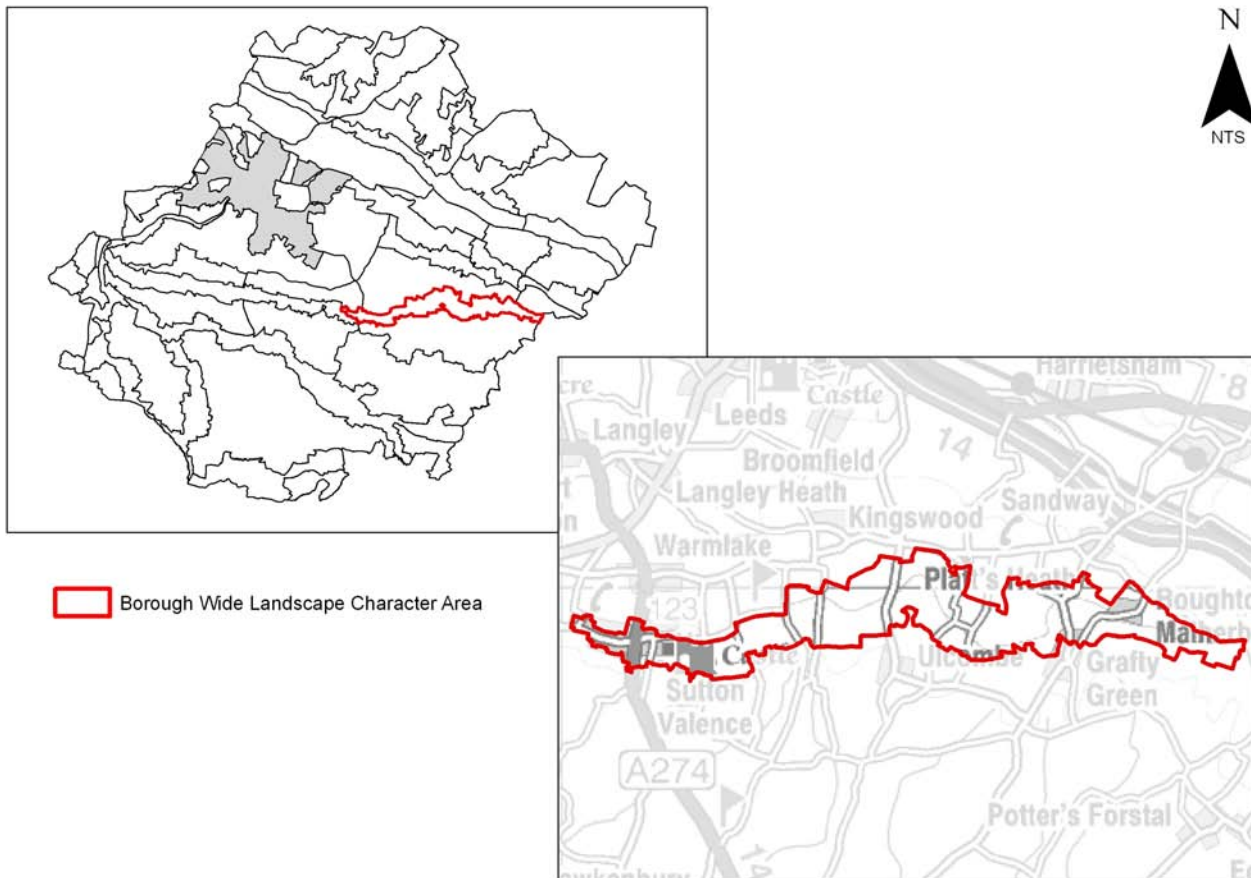
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Greensand Ridge
- Conserve orchards and the traditional small scale field pattern
- Conserve the historic parkland of Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings
- Conserve distinctive ragstone walling
- Conserve the undeveloped character of the landscape
- Avoid linear infill development along roads
- Soften the impact of agricultural buildings and fruit equipment storage areas with native planting



35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Scarp face of the Greensand Ridge
- Extensive views across the Low Weald to the south
- Frequent small blocks of coppice and deciduous woodland
- Extensive orchards and some remaining hop gardens
- Very distinctive built environment with frequent oasts and timber framed houses
- Strong use of ragstone in walls and buildings

Location

35.1 Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge lies to the south east of Maidstone, comprising a section of the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge. It is the topography that defines this area, with the southern boundary broadly indicating the bottom of the scarp and the periphery of the Low Weald landscape. The northern boundary broadly defines the top of the scarp, and the change to a generally more wooded landscape. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the east may therefore form a continuation of this character area. The western boundary is defined by the edge of Sutton Valence, from where the Greensand Ridge hosts a number of large manor houses and associated parklands which often extend across the Low Weald landscape.

35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION



35.2 There is a reasonable amount of tree cover throughout this landscape, with frequent small woodland blocks, often comprising coppice, and orchards. Poplar shelterbelts enclose these orchards which are scattered across the landscape, and there is a significant amount of new orchard planting on the site of traditional orchards at Liverton Hill Farm to the east. Some fine examples of traditional fruit trees reside in this area, with some Bramley stock of 100 years in age. Along Morry Lane, west of Ulcombe, some hop gardens remain. Once a frequent crop within Kent, this pocket of historic land use contributes to the time depth of the landscape. Even where fruit production has declined the landscape pattern is often reflective of this former land use, with a regular pattern of small scale fields. Modern farming practice has opened up parts of the landscape for intensive crop production, which is particularly evident around Ulcombe Hill, and much of the traditional small scale field pattern

has been lost in this area. The Greensand Way, which is a promoted Long Distance Path, follows the contours along the ridge and although this is a relatively recent route, it is distinctive because it follows the contours and affords wide views across the Low Weald. Narrow lanes are often sunken within the Greensand, with the twisted roots of beech and ash binding the earthy banks together and their overarching branches forming a secluded, dark and tunnel like character to the lanes.

35.3 Farmsteads and small hamlets are scattered sparsely throughout the landscape, often affording views across the Low Weald to the south. There is much historic development throughout this area, and Sutton Valence to the west and Elmstone Hole, Liverton Street and Boughton Malherbe to the east are designated as Conservation Areas. Numerous examples of traditional and unique buildings, many of which are listed, are situated within



35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge



these Conservation Areas and throughout the wider landscape. Within the attractive hamlet of Boughton Malherbe, there is a very strong sense of place, provided by the ragstone church, walling and buildings, as well as tile hung properties. The elevated situation and the open and dramatic views across the Weald to the south give a particularly unique and special character to this settlement. Elsewhere of particular note is the grade II Elizabethan brick country mansion which comprises East Sutton Park Prison. Set within East Sutton Park, to the east of Sutton Valence, the distinctive red brick house with its tall brick chimneys affords exceptional views across the Low Weald to the south. Within the park, a Medieval moated site is designated as a Scheduled Monument. There is a very strong use of local ragstone with buildings and walls throughout the area. The 13th century grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul in East Sutton, with its enclosing rustic ragstone wall in particular forms a landmark feature along with the adjacent Elizabethan mansion in views from the Low Weald landscape to the south.

35.4 Sutton Valence comprises an ancient settlement which is noted in the Domesday Book and was first recorded by the Saxons in 814 A.D, although evidence dating from the Iron Age and Roman times has been found. A Roman road between Rochester and Lympne passed through the site of the village. Designated as a Conservation Area, a selection of fine and often terraced buildings climb the scarp.

33.5 It is the cluttered piecemeal mix of building styles and materials which give the settlement such a strong and attractive character, and there are examples of ragstone, chequered red and grey brick, tile hung and timber framed buildings. The remains of a 12th/13th century ragstone castle, which was abandoned in the 14th century, are located to the east of the village off Rectory Lane. Designated as a Scheduled Monument, the castle adds to the historic richness and visual interest of Sutton Valence.

Geology, soils and topography

35.6 The solid geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. A ribbon of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay follows the lower contours of the ridge, with valleys of Wealden Clay. There are well drained non – calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone, with seasonally wet loam to clay over shale along the lower contours to the south. The scarp slope rises steeply to the north, and a series of valleys cut into the slope.

Views

35.7 Within the area, views across orchards and pasture are often reasonably enclosed by intervening vegetation which provides a framework for the small scale field pattern. From various vantage points across the ridge, however, there are extensive rural views across the Low Weald to the south.



35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

35.8 This is a coherent landscape where the undulating landform, frequent orchards, distinctive built environment and strong use of local materials, such as ragstone, provide a consistent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, which are mostly large agricultural buildings. The ecological integrity is moderate. The frequent woodland blocks, hedgerows and scattered orchard blocks provide a reasonable extent of habitat connectivity which is unfortunately weakened by some conversion to arable land and resulting loss of hedgerows both sides of Ulcombe Hill. There are fragments of ancient woodland and to the east, at Green Hill, the woodland and surroundings are designated as a Local Wildlife Site in recognition of the various habitats and species. The cultural integrity is good. Extensive orchard planting remains, with both historic examples of traditional orchards and widespread new orchards. Built development has a positive impact on the landscape, because it generally respects local vernacular and contributes much to the overall sense of place.



Sensitivity

35.9 Overall there is a very strong sense of place, provided mostly by the very distinctive built environment. There are numerous unique examples of traditional buildings, and it is the style of development in conjunction with the steep landform which imposes the extreme strength of character at Sutton Valence in particular. Other scattered development, and the hamlet of Boughton Malherbe in particular, also gain strength of place from the situation along the ridge and the subsequent setting and views across the Low Weald. The frequent orchards and remaining hop gardens give a very distinctive setting to development, and the enclosed, sunken, tunnel like roads exude a distinctively secluded character. The location across the scarp of the Greensand Ridge with the resulting extensive views across the Low Weald contributes significantly to the sense of place in this area. Visibility is very high owing to the location of this landscape across the steep scarp face of the Greensand Ridge and the subsequent openness of views both to and from this landscape.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Very High

35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

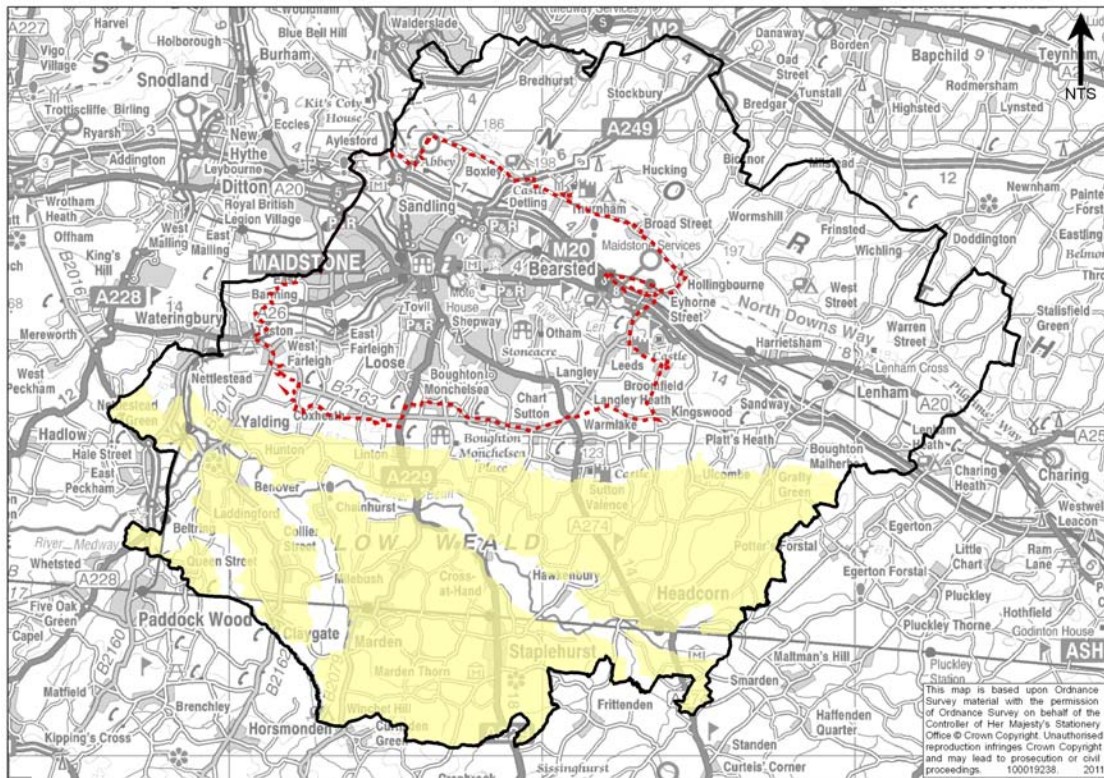
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Greensand Ridge
- Conserve orchards and hop gardens and the traditional small scale field pattern
- Resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve the scattered pattern of development and the rural character of this landscape
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and settlements
- Conserve the narrow, enclosed lanes and design any necessary highway improvements to reflect this characteristic
- Conserve the tiny scale of Boughton Malherbe
- Consider this exposed landscape in views from the Low Weald to the south



Low Weald: introduction



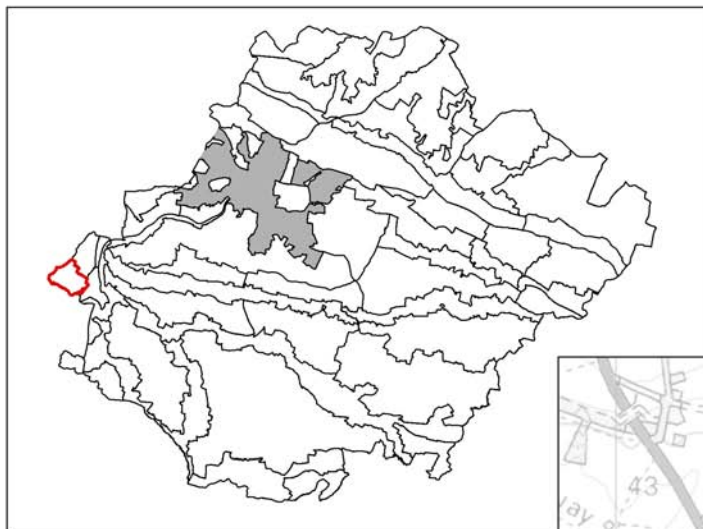
This is a well wooded landscape where small, enclosed fields have been created through woodland clearance. Chestnut and hornbeam coppice is frequent, and often reflects the Low Weald's industrial history of charcoal burning for iron and glass production. A Medieval field pattern has been maintained across much of the landscape, and the species rich hedgerows are often tall with numerous hedgerow trees and a significant amount of oak. The heavy clay soils provide a landscape which is largely pastoral or used to produce hay. The landscape is low lying and therefore rich in small ponds and streams, often defined by riparian willows and alders. Many of the ponds are marl pits, which were excavated to provide marl to spread on the fields to improve the soil. Dating back to Medieval times, the ponds served as convenient watering holes for livestock. Marl pits are common throughout both the Low and High Weald landscape, and 'marl' is often used in place names. Similarly, hammer ponds are also found throughout the landscape and these are remnant features from ancient iron workings. Other ponds could also be from extraction of brick and tile making and from the iron industry, and a series of large reservoirs are scattered along the foot of the steep scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge that rises to the north. Where the major river valleys of the Medway and Beult cross the Low Weald, the wet character is accentuated by wet grazing lands and much willow and scrub. The Low Weald is essentially rural in character, and settlements are mostly small villages and hamlets.

Low Weald: generic guidelines

- Conserve the intimate small scale Medieval field pattern, and the species rich hedgerow boundaries
- Promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened
- Avoid the use of single species hedgerows and shelterbelts within this landscape, where species rich hedgerows are so prevalent
- Conserve and promote pastoral land use and avoid agricultural intensification
- Promote the conversion of intensively managed grassland to species rich neutral grassland where there is potential
- Conserve and enhance the frequent pattern of small ponds and encourage good water quality within these and the larger water bodies at the foot of the Greensand Ridge through the promotion of sensitive management
- Conserve, enhance and extend the riparian habitat contained within the Rivers Medway, Beult, Teise and Sherway and their associated tributaries, streams, canals, ditches and drains
- Conserve and promote the extension of areas of floodplain and wetland
- Conserve the abundance of oak trees within the landscape, which are frequent as hedgerow trees and as isolated specimens across farmland. Ensure continuity of this key feature by planting new oak trees to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the narrow lanes and avoid highway improvements that detract from this key characteristic
- Conserve the largely undeveloped landscape with its scattered development pattern and isolated farmsteads
- Conserve the many examples of Medieval moated sites
- Conserve and promote the use of local materials including chequered red and grey brickwork, weatherboarding, timber framed buildings and ragstone
- Consider views towards any proposals across the Low Weald from the elevated Greensand Ridge which rises to the north and the High Weald which rises to the south west



36. Nettlestead Woodlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating landscape
- Large arable fields enclosed by strong woodland edges
- Large mixed woodland blocks
- Little development
- Extensive views across the Medway Valley to the opposite horticultural valley side

Location

36.1 This area lies to the south west of Maidstone, and is characterised by large mixed woodland blocks which provide a dense backdrop and strong sense of enclosure to the undulating arable land. To the north of this area, the landscape becomes less wooded and the fields larger where the soils become freer draining. The landscape to the east of this area has a significantly smaller field pattern and is fragmented by recent development. The study area boundary lies to the south west, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the south west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



36. Nettlestead Woodlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

36.2 The undulating, intensively farmed, arable fields are large and their boundaries are often clearly defined by heavy woodland edges. The field pattern is very much defined by the strong and enclosing woodland edges, which are irregular, and hedgerow boundaries provide some segregation across the open arable land, linking woodland blocks. The large tracts of ancient woodland comprise an amalgamation of Moat Wood, Hale Park Wood, Hook Wood, Beech Wood, Sights, Cold Banks and Milbay's Wood. The woodland is mixed, with species including oak, beech, pine, ash, sycamore, cherry, elder, hazel, silver birch and some sweet chestnut coppice. Strong seasonal variation is provided by the crop cycles, and the contrast between autumnal, winter and summer colours of the woodland. The woodland is recognised for its ecological value through its designation as a Local Wildlife Site, and is accessible via public footpaths and private tracks which have been cleared for maintenance. The seasonally wet loam to clay over shale soils give rise to a number of drains running through the woodland, and across the arable land where their routes are marked by native hedgerows. Earthworks that may have historically been engineered to create a pond ('Pond Bay'), in Milbay's Wood are designated as a Scheduled Monument.

36.4 There is little development throughout the area, generally comprising a few isolated red and grey chequered brick cottages to the west. At Nightingale Cottages, the land is used for private equestrian grazing with associated recent stabling and facilities. There are few

roads which provides a significantly remote and tranquil visual quality, although Maidstone Road to the east and Seven Mile Lane to the west are very busy and therefore audible routes.

Geology, soils and topography

36.5 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, with bands of Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay and Lower Greensand Hythe Beds at the foot of the Greensand Ridge to the north. There is little drift, with a small patch of Fourth Terrace River Gravel west of Nettlestead Green and fringes of brickearth to the south, which becomes more extensive south and east of the area across lower ground. Soils are mostly seasonally wet loams to clay over shale, although well drained loam over limestone is located across higher ground to the north. The topography is undulating, and it begins to rise to the north at the foot of the Greensand Ridge.

Views

36.6 Views across the undulating arable land are generally enclosed by woodland edges, which provide strong boundaries and an attractive backdrop. Facing east, there are long and spectacular views across the Medway Valley to the edge of the Greensand Ridge. Here the horticultural land use stands out, with polytunnels, orchard blocks, plastic sheeting and fields of vibrant lavender creating a patchwork mosaic. The white cowls of oast houses stand out as prominent landmark features throughout the wider views, creating a very traditional Kentish scene.

36. Nettlestead Woodlands

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

36.7 This is a unified landscape, with the undulating landform, large arable fields, strong wooded field boundaries and large woodland blocks providing a simplistic and consistent pattern of elements. There are very few visual detractors. Whilst traffic along the major highways of Maidstone Road and Seven Mile Lane is audible from the surrounding areas, the well wooded character of the landscape does not allow many views of these roads. The ecological integrity of the area is strong. Whilst there are large, intensively farmed fields, woodland cover is dominant and its value is recognised through its designation as a Local Wildlife Site. The cultural heritage is variable. Woodland is well managed and appears to be in good condition, although some hedgerow boundaries have been removed or are gappy. The built environment generally respects local vernacular, although some later extensions and recent land use changes slightly detract from the traditional setting.

Sensitivity

36.8 The simplicity of this landscape, with its few very distinctive key characteristics, provides continuity and strong local distinctiveness. The woodland is the key feature which characterises this landscape, providing strong enclosure to the arable farmland and a consistent backdrop within views. Visibility is generally low because of the enclosing nature of the woodland, although it should be noted that there are long views towards this landscape from east of the River Medway.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

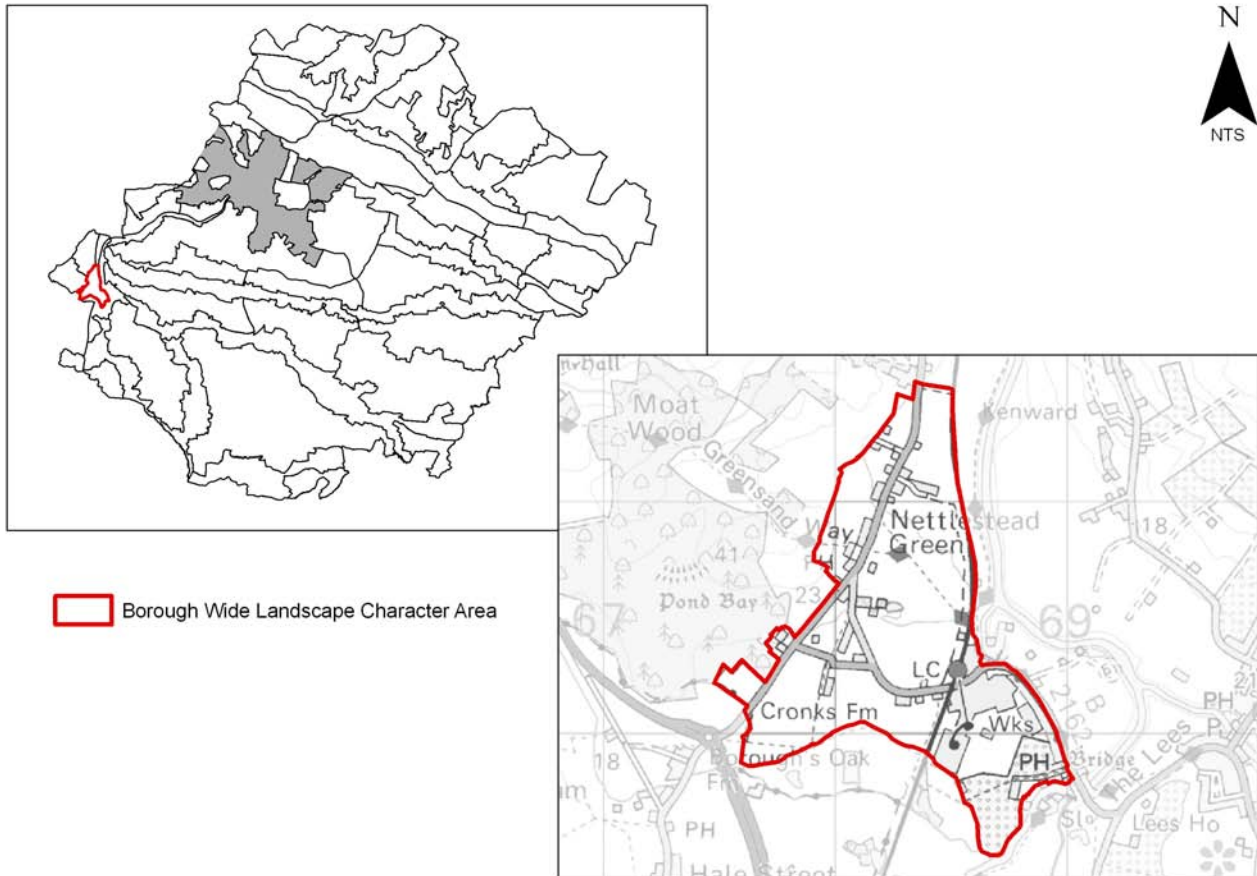
Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Enclosed
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Low

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the extent of ancient woodland and reinforce through continued appropriate management
- Conserve hedgerow boundaries and reinforce through gapping up
- Conserve the Scheduled Monument in Milbay's Wood
- Conserve the rural undeveloped character of the landscape, with limited development

37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Reasonably flat and low lying landscape
- Native hedgerows of beech and hawthorn
- Fruit orchards
- Caravan park
- Extensive former chemical works
- Small field pattern comprising private plots

Location

37.1 This area lies to the south west of Maidstone, comprising the settlement of Nettlestead Green. A railway line runs through the area, with Yalding Station located along Hampstead Lane. Maidstone Road broadly forms the divide along the western boundary, between this landscape and the more wooded landscape across seasonally wet loam to clay over shale beyond. The Medway Valley defines the extent of the landscape to the south and east. The study area boundary lies to the south west, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the south west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

37.2 There is a reasonably strong sense of enclosure throughout this landscape, provided by the small but irregular field pattern, small woodland blocks and hedgerow lined lanes. Hedgerows mostly comprise beech and hawthorn. However some land segregation appears to be recent, with chestnut pale fencing marking the boundaries between private plots. This landscape has been much influenced by recent development along Hampstead Lane, and a static caravan park (Stately Park) along Station Road. There are numerous traditional houses and farmsteads, including Nettlestead House, oast houses at Cronks Farm and Green Farm, although it is the more extensive recent development to the south which dominates the built environment.

37.3 To the south east, Parsonage Farmhouse comprises a particularly noteworthy property which dates from the mid 17th century with later alterations. The grade II listed building is timber framed with some red and grey chequered brickwork and hung tiles. Enclosed by a walled garden and set within traditional fruit orchards at the end of a narrow dead end lane, this traditional landscape pocket has a secluded, remote character in comparison with the otherwise largely fragmented surroundings. To the east, the distinctively thatched Anchor Inn overlooks the River Medway, Twyford Bridge Marina, boatyard and canal.

37.4 The roads throughout the area are busy and give the impression of providing through

routes. Maidstone Road is well screened by adjoining planting, some of which is coniferous, and some of which is recent native highway planting. The railway line is reasonably well integrated into the surrounding landscape and does not cause significant visual severance. East of the railway line, an extensive former chemical works site, which appears to be awaiting regeneration, removes all physical landscape attributes and sense of place.

Geology, soils and topography

37.5 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, overlain with extensive drifts of alluvium. Soils are predominantly deep loam with patches of loam to clay on the north west boundary and small areas of seasonally wet deep clay to the east. Although the landscape forms part of the valley side of the River Medway, the land is low lying and flat to very gently undulating.

Views

37.6 Views throughout the area are generally restricted by intervening hedgerow vegetation and development. However to the east, the distinctively thatched Anchor Inn overlooks the River Medway, the distinctive Medieval ragstone Twyford Bridge, Twyford Bridge Marina, boatyard and canal. Beyond the canal, views of the opposite horticultural valley side are available through some thin vegetation along Hampstead Lane.

37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands

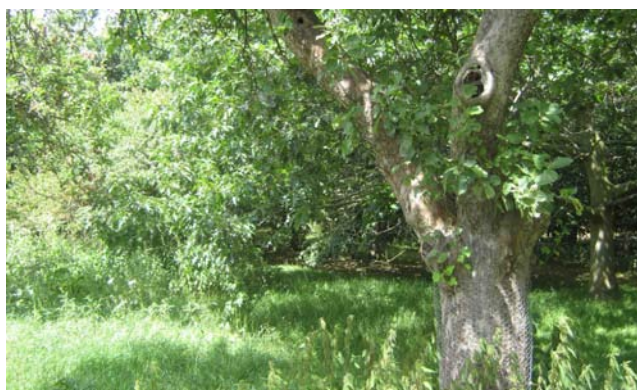
LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

37.7 This is an incoherent landscape, where the few traditional elements are fragmented by much recent infill development and other visual detractors. In particular, east of the railway line, the industrial site is very extensive and removes all attributes of the physical landscape. The ecological integrity is moderate. Habitat opportunities are provided by the small pocket of remaining orchards to the south east, hedgerows, ditches and small woodland blocks. There is not much intensively farmed land, although the extensive former chemical works site provides a large void in terms of habitat connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst a small orchard still survives, many trees are dead and it does not appear to be well managed. Although many hedgerows remain intact, some have been replaced by fence line boundaries as a result of recent field segregation into private plots. Recent development does not respect the local vernacular and detracts from the setting and sense of place provided by other traditional properties.

Sensitivity

37.8 There are a number of distinctive traditional properties, particularly Parsonage Farmhouse and its orchard setting and converted oast houses at Cronks Farm and Green Farm. However, many of the key characteristics throughout this landscape are indistinct and recent. Modern housing and caravans do not contribute to the sense of place. Visibility is moderate because whilst the landscape is mostly enclosed, there are some longer views across the canal and from Hampstead Lane to the opposite valley side.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Continuity:	Recent
Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands

GUIDELINES - IMPROVE

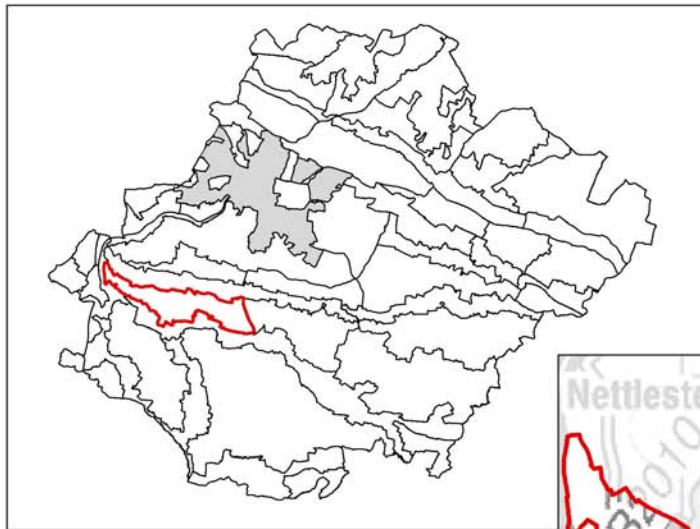
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Improve strength of character through promoting the use of local materials and style of development
- Replace coniferous species with native planting where possible
- Improve the condition of orchards around Parsonage Farmhouse
- Improve habitat connectivity through replacing fencing with native hedgerows where possible
- Protect the remaining traditional setting of vernacular style farmhouses and buildings



38. Yalding Farmlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald
- Reservoirs and water bodies along the foot of the Greensand Ridge
- Drains running southwards towards the River Beult
- Enclosed pasture
- Frequent orchards
- Parkland landscape surrounding Hunton Court
- Historic settlement of Yalding

Location

38.1 Yalding Farmland lies to the south of Maidstone, and is part of the wider Low Weald landscape. The northern boundary is defined by the foot of the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge, and the southern boundary marks the periphery of the River Beult Valley. The western boundary is defined by the River Medway Valley. To the east of the area, the landscape becomes more wooded with less orchards and this gradual transition is marked by Linton Hill.



38. Yalding Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

38.2 Small broadleaf woodland blocks are scattered frequently across the landscape, vegetation belts define a network of ditches, and further tree cover is provided by extensive orchards. Elsewhere the landscape is generally grazed, and the field pattern comprises a regular pattern of medium sized fields. Enclosure is provided by native hedgerows and strong boundaries are created by orchards. A series of large reservoirs and water bodies are dotted across the landscape at the foot of the steep scarp face of the Greensand Ridge, providing good habitat for birds in particular.

38.3 Between East Street and West Street, Hunton Court sits within early 17th century parkland of approximately 40 hectares. Although much of the original parkland has been converted to arable land, a significant swathe of open parkland still exists. Mature parkland trees including traditional lime, horse chestnut and oak, and also exotic cedars and wellingtonias, are scattered across the grazed landscape. Many of these trees are some 200 years of age. The grade II listed 13th century Hunton Court itself is set within a Victorian garden layout, with two lakes, croquet lawn, kitchen garden and many specimen trees including ginkgo, chestnuts and redwoods. The main area of the lake is surrounded by shrubberies of yew, holly and bright hydrangeas and azaleas.

38.4 Farmsteads are scattered across the rural landscape, and development is clustered at the historic settlement of Hunton, and the more significantly sized Medieval village of Yalding, which is designated as a Conservation Area.

Situated near the confluence of the Rivers Medway, Beult and Teise, the built environment comprises an attractive mix of building styles and materials, including converted oast houses and timber barns, weatherboarding, ragstone, thatched roofs, red and grey chequered and herringbone brickwork. The iron industry was important to the area because Yalding was important as a main shipment point to the naval base at Chatham for cannons that were manufactured locally. Following the iron industry, the surrounding landscape resumed its original farming industries of fruit production and hops. Whilst hop production declined in the early 1990's, orchards continue to be one of the main land uses of the surrounding landscape. To the east, the southern extent of Linton is strewn along Linton Hill. Also designated as part of a wider Conservation Area, this lower section of Linton forms linear, tightly arranged development in relation to Linton Park. 19th century estate cottages are strung out in a long line along the western side of the A229.



38. Yalding Farmlands

Geology, soils and topography

38.5 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, and there are strong drifts of brickearth to the south of the area along the lowest contours with some smaller fringes of head brickearth. To the south soils are seasonally wet deep loams. Where the land begins to rise to the north at the foot of the scarp, soils are seasonally wet loam to clay over shale. The topography is undulating, becoming lower to the south near the River Beult Valley.



Views

38.6 There are views of the steep scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge, which rises immediately to the north of this area. There are extensive views to the south across the Low Weald where intervening vegetation allows, and from Linton there are some views east across Linton Park. Within the area there are long views across the parkland landscape of Hunton Court, and from Linton across orchards, although many intermediate views are restricted by hedgerows and boundary vegetation.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

38.7 There is a coherent pattern of elements, provided by the consistency of the Low Weald landform, frequent orchards and reservoirs along the foot of the scarp. There are few visual detractors comprising fruit packing equipment and farms, pylons and polytunnels. The ecological integrity is strong. The frequent orchards, hedgerows, woodland blocks, ditches and water bodies provide a coherent habitat network, and there is very little arable land. The cultural integrity is good. Orchards appear to be well maintained and in good condition, illustrating low vulnerability to change. The parkland around Hunton Court appears to be in good condition and although there has been some removal, hedgerows are mostly intact. Built development has a positive impact on the landscape. There is a strong sense of place, provided by the characteristic use of local materials and local vernacular within settlements and throughout the rural landscape.

Sensitivity

38.8 There are numerous very distinctive characteristics which together provide a strong sense of place. Water bodies are often defined by clusters of vegetation and hedgerows line the lanes and enclose orchards to provide a strong sense of enclosure. The narrow, winding lanes are also characteristic because they broadly follow the contours along the foot of the Greensand Ridge and along the periphery of the Beult Valley. The situation of Yalding, positioned along the River Beult with its characteristic mixture of traditional style buildings demonstrates strong local distinctiveness. The wider pattern of isolated farmsteads and the historic Hunton Park provide a very rural character which has not been significantly altered by recent development or land use changes. Visibility is moderate because although there are some longer views, immediate views are often contained by vegetation.

38. Yalding Farmlands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

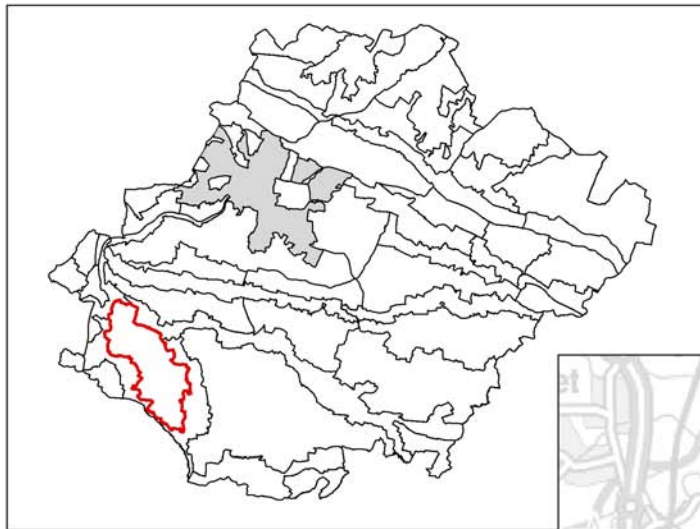
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve orchards and the traditional small scale field pattern
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of existing development
- Conserve the historic parkland landscape around Hunton Park
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and farmhouses
- Conserve distinctive ragstone walling
- Conserve the undeveloped character of the landscape
- Resist conversion to arable land
- Avoid linear infill development along roads
- Soften the impact of agricultural buildings and fruit equipment storage areas with native planting
- Increase habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting



39. Laddingford Low Weald



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape forms part of the wider Low Weald landscape
- Low lying landform
- Intricate network of ditches, ponds and reservoirs
- Small and mostly broadleaf woodland blocks
- Orchards, hops and pasture surround settlements
- More expansive arable land within surrounding landscape
- Much linear settlement with clusters of development at road junctions

Location

37.1 Laddingford Low Weald forms part of the wider Low Weald landscape between the valleys containing the River Teise, the Lesser Teise, the River Beult and the River Medway. Maidstone Borough boundary forms part of the western edge, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



39. Laddingford Low Weald



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

39.2 Tree cover is provided by tree belts and poplar shelterbelts, which contain small orchard blocks, hops and grazed paddocks around linear development. There is little woodland, comprising small and sparsely scattered fragments of broadleaf woodland and a very small amount of coppice. Only a small amount of woodland, situated west of Claygate, is ancient. The land use provides a strong field pattern, with smaller and more enclosed orchards and paddocks around the linear development and larger and more exposed arable fields extending out towards the adjoining river valleys.

39.3 The low lying landform gives way to a strong network of ditches, frequent field ponds and reservoirs that are evidenced by much willow. There are numerous pockets of landscape which are recognised as being of value to wildlife, including Local Wildlife Sites to the east and an extensive suite of farm ponds at Benover. These comprise farm and garden ponds, dykes and willow holts across the low lying Wealden Clay between the Rivers Medway and Beult. Hosting a range of aquatic and marginal species, the ponds are used by bats, great crested newts and kingfisher.

39.4 There is much linear development along the roads, which detracts from the sense of place within individual settlements. There is little sense of arrival within settlements, often with a lack of strongly defined central cores. Development tends to comprise farmhouses and cottages, many of which are listed, with frequent use of chequered red and grey brickwork, weatherboarding and thatch.

Geology, soils and topography

39.5 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, overlain with extensive drifts of brickearth, and some First Terrace River Gravel and alluvium. Soils are predominantly seasonally wet deep loams, although there is some seasonally wet loam to clay south east of Laddingford. The landscape is low lying, evidenced by the numerous field ponds, and the landform is flat to very gently undulating.



Views

39.6 Along many of the roads and within the settlements, views are contained by the small scale field pattern with hedgerows and tall shelterbelts often enclosing orchards. However views from the wider landscape are more extensive across large scale arable fields. Vegetation belts across the flat landscape largely restrict longer views, although there are some long distance views of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north.

39. Laddingford Low Weald

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

39.7 This is a coherent landscape where continuity is provided by linear development along the roads and the regularity of field pattern, which becomes larger scale away from the settled areas. Visual detractors comprise large agricultural barns and silos, polytunnels, pylons and fencing. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the network of ditches and frequent ponds, hedgerows and shelterbelts provide a coherent habitat network, this is weakened by extensive arable fields and hedgerow boundary removal. The cultural heritage is variable. Whilst there is evidence of some new orchard planting, some orchards are derelict which suggests a vulnerability to change. Traditional hedgerow boundaries have been removed in some places to accommodate extensive arable fields, and where hedgerows do remain they are often gappy or partly replaced by fencing. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape, with a strong contrast between traditional properties and more recent development.



Sensitivity

39.8 The orchards and hops provide continuity throughout the landscape, as well as strength of character. The network of ditches and frequency of water bodies gives way to a consistent character across the landscape, and provides a strong sense of place within the wider Low Weald landscape. Although linear development provides continuity throughout the landscape, the individuality of separate settlements has been lost and the sense of place therefore slightly weakened. Similarly whilst there are some striking examples of local vernacular, recent development often degrades the setting of traditional buildings.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

39. Laddingford Low Weald

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND IMPROVE

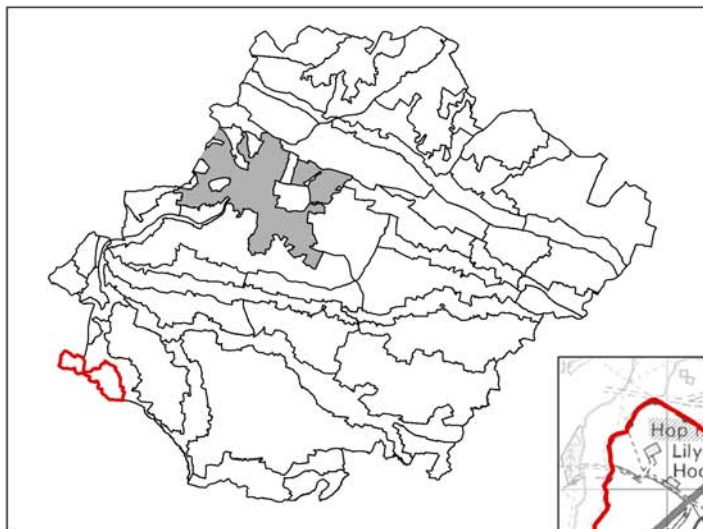
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

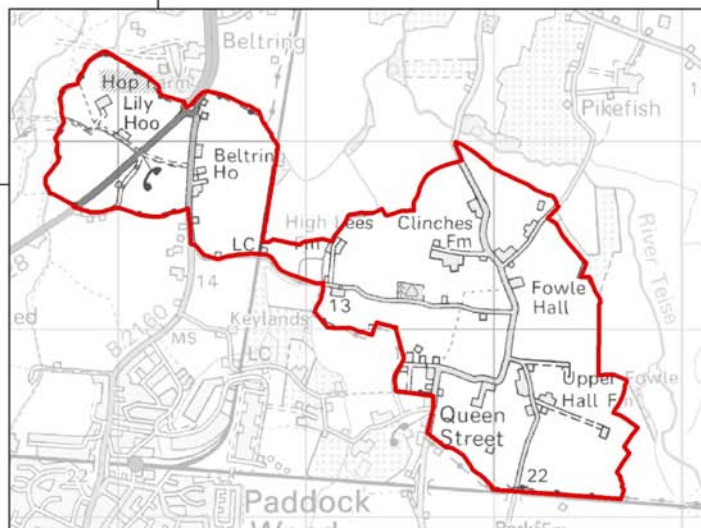
- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the frequency of willow
- Conserve the network of ponds and improve habitat connectivity with native vegetation corridors
- Reinststate traditional hedgerow boundaries and gap up existing hedgerows where they are in poor condition
- Improve the sense of arrival and individuality of separate settlements by avoiding further infill development
- Soften the visual impact of large agricultural barns and silos with native planting



40. Beltring Grasslands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat, low lying landform
- Narrow ditches and ponds
- Grassland and pasture
- Tree belts with much willow
- Orchards
- Clusters of farmsteads along narrow, ditch lined roads
- Frequent oast houses

Location

40.1 Beltring Grasslands are situated to the south west of Maidstone, within part of the wider Low Weald landscape. The northern extent of the area is defined by the dominant drifts of alluvium which extend around the course of the River Teise to the north of this area. The study area boundary lies to the south, west, and partly to the north, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area in these locations may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

40. Beltring Grasslands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

40.2 There is very little woodland although there is a significant amount of tree cover provided by native hedgerows and tree belts, which line the narrow lanes and enclose the patchwork of fields. Within the hedgerows and tree belts, there is a significant amount of willow within the broader mix of hawthorn, hazel, holly, oak, elder and ash. There are some remaining orchards, mostly to the west of Darman Lane, which are enclosed by tall poplar shelterbelts. Elsewhere throughout the landscape orchards have sometimes been removed, leaving remnant tall poplar shelterbelts. Fields are generally medium sized although a smaller patchwork of fields often occurs around farmhouses, which creates a regular field pattern. The network of hedgerows and tree belts which enclose the fields provide a strong sense of enclosure throughout much of the landscape. The land use is dominated by grassland and equestrian grazed pasture, with much of the grassland harvested for the production of hay.

40.3 The low lying landscape is drained by frequent ditches which run between the fields, and these are often lined with wild flowers, hedgerows and native tree belts. Many small field ponds, characteristic of the Low Weald landscape, are scattered throughout the landscape.

40.4 There are numerous farms throughout this landscape, which cluster together to form the small hamlets of Fowle Hall and Queen Street. Many of the farmhouses are listed and although there has been some recent infill development, the traditional vernacular styles prevail. There are a high number of oast houses, and the distinctive white cowls are

prominent within many views. Building materials are consistent throughout this area, with frequent chequered red and grey brick and weatherboarding. Roads are generally minor, and are often lined by ditches and tree belts. To the west, however, the more major routes of Maidstone Road and Old Whetsted Road create a slightly more suburban character to this part of the landscape.

Geology, soils and topography

40.5 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, which is overlain with drifts of brickearth and alluvium. Soils are seasonally wet deep loams, separated by a strip of seasonally wet deep clay and loam to clay over shale around High Lees Farm. The landform is flat and low lying.

Views

40.6 Where intervening vegetation allows, there are some glimpses of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north. The numerous oast houses at Beltring Hop Farm, situated within Tonbridge and Malling Borough, provide a prominent and distinctive landmark to the north from the adjacent landscape. Within the area, views across grassland and pasture are contained by strong tree belts which cross the landscape.



40. Beltring Grasslands

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

40.7 There is a coherent pattern of elements, provided by the consistent network of ditches, the dominance of grassland and pasture and the frequency of willow within tree belts. There are few visual detractors, although an element of fragmentation is caused by the sporadic nature of development across the area, and the major roads that dissect the landscape to the west. The ecological integrity is strong. The landscape comprises much grassland and pasture and the ditches, hedgerows and tree belts provide good connectivity for wildlife. The cultural integrity is variable. There are few remaining orchards and no evidence of new orchard planting, which could suggest that this traditional land use is in decline in this area. Whilst there is a good network of hedgerows and tree belts, there has been some removal of traditional field boundaries in various locations, such as alongside the airfield at Clinches Farm. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape. There are numerous converted farm buildings, with a particularly high number of oast houses throughout the landscape. However, recent development and large agricultural barns sometimes degrade the setting of these buildings.

Sensitivity

40.8 The dominant grassland and pasture, tree belts and network of ditches are very distinctive key characteristics which create a strong sense of place. The narrow lanes form a particularly distinctive element because they are ditch lined, with tree belts that often contain a significant amount of willow. Where they remain, traditional orchards contribute to the local distinctiveness, and the abundance of oast houses evokes a strong sense of place. Visibility is moderate because tree belts often contain long views across the landscape.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

40. Beltring Grasslands

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

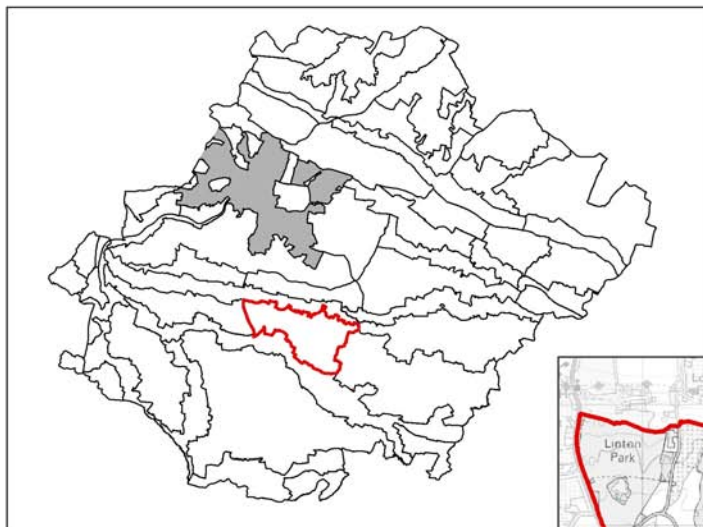
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

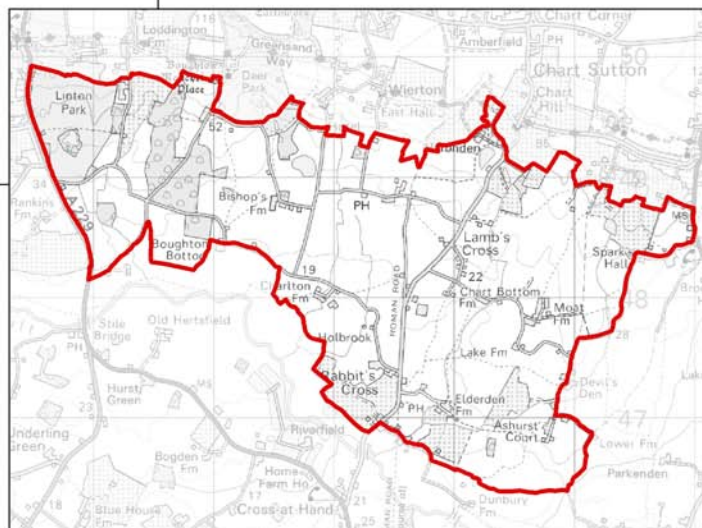
- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve and enhance grassland and pasture and avoid further arabalisation
- Conserve and enhance the tree belts and hedgerows which provide a sense of enclosure and define the field pattern
- Avoid commercialisation along the main roads to the west
- Soften the prominence of large agricultural buildings with native planting
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional farmhouses



41. Linton Park and Farmlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald
- Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge
- Drains running southwards towards the River Beult
- Enclosed pasture
- Parkland landscape of Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place
- Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets
- Dominance of oak trees within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees

Location

41.1 Linton Park and Farmlands lies to the south of Maidstone, comprising part of the wider Low Weald landscape. The northern boundary is defined by the foot of the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge, and the southern boundary marks the periphery of the River Beult Valley. Linton Hill defines the western boundary where orchards become the more dominant land use. To the east of this area, pasture becomes more dominant.



41. Linton Park and Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

41.2 There is not a wide extent of tree cover, although broadleaf and coppice woodland is more dominant in the west within and around the parkland landscapes. Around Church Hill, Darnold Wood, Brick Kiln Wood and River Wood comprise ancient woodland. A large section of this woodland is recognised for its wildlife value through its designation as a Local Wildlife Site. With 17 ancient woodland indicator plant species, the woodland provides a good habitat for birds. Elsewhere, scattered orchards enclosed by poplar shelterbelts add to the extent of tree cover. However the landscape is well contained by a network of thick native hedgerows and shaws, with mature oak hedgerow trees, which are typical of the traditionally managed Low Weald landscape. It is this hedgerow cover, as well as frequent isolated mature trees set within pasture, that give the impression that there is a stronger woodland coverage than there really is. The hedgerows provide a strong sense of enclosure to the landscape, and fields are generally medium sized. However the field pattern is varied, with some smaller orchard blocks contrasting with larger fields that have been opened up to accommodate modern intensive farming practices.



41.3 The setting beneath the Greensand Ridge gives the impression of being on low lying ground, and this is evidenced by a series of springs that emerge from the bottom of the Greensand Ridge and numerous large lakes and reservoirs which form a distinct and regular pattern along the foot of the slope. Ditches drain southwards towards the River Beult, and are often defined by ribbons of vegetation and a noticeable amount of willow. As well as native hedgerows, drains also align the narrow lanes which dissect the landscape. Forge Lane comprises a historic Roman road, and is distinctly straight in contrast to the other more sinuous, narrow lanes.

41.4 Linton Park, which is recorded on the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, is situated to the west of the area along Linton Hill. Whilst the mansion and formal grounds are situated to the north along the higher Greensand Ridge, the wider 18th century parkland extends across the Low Weald. Here, there are clumps of native woodland comprising mostly beech, chestnut and oak with an ornamental under-storey of rhododendron, laurel and magnolias. Across the open stretches of parkland, scattered large solitary trees include cedar, copper beech, oak, pine, cypress, larch and holm oak. A large lake with a boat house in the centre of the park contributes to the typical parkland character. Similarly, east of Linton Park, the 16th century Elizabethan manor house of Boughton Monchelsea Place stands on the higher Greensand Ridge but the lowest reaches of its deer park and its reservoir extend across the Low Weald. This parkland

41. Linton Park and Farmlands

and reservoir are designated as a Local Wildlife Site for its good wildlife value and habitat for birds in particular. Overall, this landscape has a remote quality, with very sparsely scattered traditional farmhouses and other properties often clustered into small hamlets. There are many distinctive properties, many of which are listed, including large timber framed farmhouses and converted farm buildings.

Geology, soils and topography

41.5 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, and there are some drifts of brickearth to the south where the land is lower close to the River Beult Valley. Soils are almost extensively seasonally wet loam to clay over shale, although there is a small swathe of seasonally wet deep loam across the lower contours near the River Beult to the south east. The topography is gently undulating

throughout, but becomes steeper along the foot of the Greensand Ridge and to the west across Linton Park.

Views

41.6 Within the area views are often across parkland like pasture, which is dotted with mature oaks and enclosed by native hedgerows and woodland edges. To the west, views across Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place deer park are typical of true parkland, with numerous enormous oak, beech, lime and pine trees standing within grazed pasture. There are clear panoramic views of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north, although views to the south are limited by intervening vegetation across the flatter valley landscape surrounding the River Beult. Linton House stands out clearly as a prominent landmark feature within views to the Greensand Ridge.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

41.7 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the frequency of oak notably binds the landscape together and the low lying landscape, with its reservoirs and ditches along the foot of the Greensand Ridge, provides a consistent pattern. There are few visual detractors, comprising large scale agricultural barns. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the parkland, reservoirs and series of drains, hedgerows and woodland provide a strong habitat network, some areas have been opened up to accommodate intensive arable farmland. The cultural integrity is good. There has been some removal, but hedgerows are generally intact and in good condition. The historic parkland landscape also appears to be in good condition, and woodland to the east of Linton Park is ancient. Built development has a positive impact on the landscape. Whilst there has been some recent development which does not generally respect local vernacular, the numerous examples of traditional farmhouses and converted farm buildings are very distinctive.

Sensitivity

41.8 Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a strong sense of place. Very distinct elements include the frequency of oak trees within hedgerows and pasture, the hedgerow and ditch lined lanes, the lack of development comprising small scattered hamlets and the numerous examples of local vernacular. The location at the foot of the Greensand Ridge is made evident by panoramic views of the elevated landform to the north, contributing heavily to the sense of place. Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some long views across the Low Weald to the Greensand Ridge to the north, and open views of this landscape from the ridge, intervening vegetation encloses some views across the very gently undulating landform.

41. Linton Park and Farmlands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

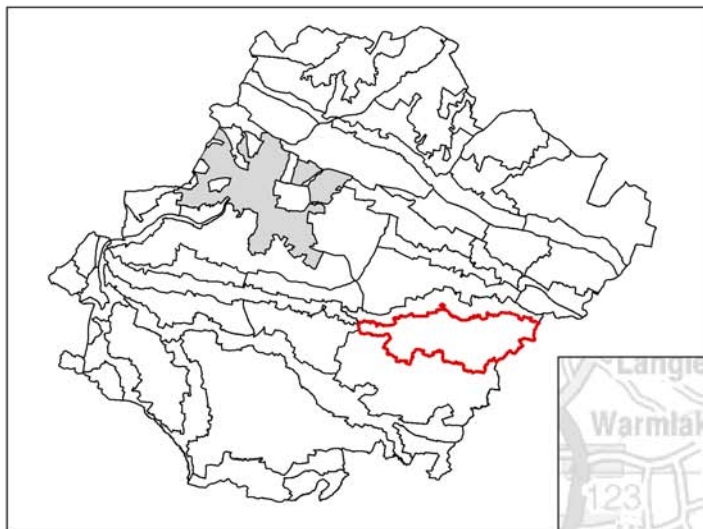
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the historic parkland landscape
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing specimens
- Resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of existing development
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional farmhouses
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas



42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating landscape with wide views
- Scattered orchards and mixed woodland blocks
- Isolated oak trees within pasture and mature oak hedgerow trees
- Limited arable land
- Field ponds
- Linear settlements and strong local vernacular

Location

42.1 This area lies to the south east of Maidstone's urban area, and forms part of the wider Low Weald landscape, just south of the steep scarp of the Greensand Ridge which defines the northern boundary. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the east may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

42.2 The Weald was once a vast forest, which has gradually been removed for farming. Extensive tree cover remains a strong feature throughout this landscape, with frequent mixed woodland blocks with some coppice, orchards, tree belts and native hedgerows. Woodland blocks are often ancient, and Southpark Wood and Kingsnorth Wood are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Southpark Wood has 19 ancient woodland indicator species, and is noted for its mature hornbeam and oak trees which provide potential habitat for bats. The woodland has been found to provide good habitat for birds including nightingale, cuckoo, breeding spotted woodpecker, willow warbler and black cap. Oak is a dominant species throughout the area, and isolated mature oaks set within grazed pasture give a strong parkland character. Oak hedgerow trees often stand proud within hedgerows, and regular belts of oak trees are sometimes set back from hedgerows, creating substantial boundary lines.

42.3 The Medieval field boundaries create a mosaic like field pattern, with many small enclosed fields of pasture and orchards. Some post and rail fencing has replaced hedgerow boundaries in places, although the wooded character often provides a sheltered, enclosed character. Despite this there are some extensive views across the Weald, owing to the gently undulating landscape. To the east, traditional field pattern has diminished where hedgerows have been removed to accommodate intensive arable production.

42.4 A series of springs emerge from the bottom of the Greensand Ridge, and narrow

drains filter southward across the landscape. Numerous characteristic field ponds are scattered across the seasonally wet loam to clay. Willow defines ribbons and pockets of wetter ground throughout the landscape.

42.5 Scattered farms and villages betray the Weald's past, often in their names. Ulcombe evolved from 'Owl-coomb' meaning 'a deep little wooded valley; a hollow in a hill side' in Old English. Both Ulcombe and Grafty Green, to the east, comprise linear settlements with many examples of local vernacular, although there has been some recent extension. In contrast, The Harbour forms a recent extension of the historic settlement of Sutton Valence. Despite some local ragstone walling, this development is recent and largely indistinct. Throughout the wider landscape, there are numerous scattered farmsteads. Farmhouses are often very distinctive, and they are frequently listed. There is a strong use of ragstone, and many timber framed properties, oast houses and the characteristic use of chequered red and grey brick and white



42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands

weatherboarding. Of particular note, Coldbridge Farm to the east comprises a Medieval fortified manor house with a fishpond. The grade II listed house is double moated, and the site is designated as a Scheduled Monument.

Geology, soils and topography

40.6 The solid geology is predominantly Wealden Clay, with areas of Large 'Paludina' Limestone along the southern boundary. Drifts of alluvium and brickearth cut in from the south while Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay features in the north. Soils are seasonally wet loam to clay across much of the area, with some seasonally wet loam to the south of the area. As part of the wider Low Weald landscape, the landscape is low lying and gently undulating. The undulations become stronger to the north at the very foot of the Greensand Ridge.



Views

40.7 There are long views across the Low Weald to the elevated Greensand Ridge. Orchards are a noticeable feature within these views, and the ragstone church and distinctive tall brick chimneys of the prison at East Sutton form distinctive landmark features. There are long views within the area across orchards and grazed pasture, often dotted with scattered oak trees which promote a parkland character.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

40.8 This is a unified landscape, where the undulating topography, regular mature oak trees within pasture and scattered orchards and woodland blocks provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, comprising large farm buildings and equipment and large glass houses at Broadstone. The ecological integrity is strong. Regular ditches and field ponds, frequent mature oak trees, hedgerows and woodland blocks and the limited amount of intensively farmed arable land provide a coherent habitat network. The cultural integrity is good. Tree cover is extensive, and there are some remaining blocks and fragments of ancient woodland. Although there are some dead trees in ageing orchards, there is some evidence of new orchard planting. Although some hedgerows are gappy, most are intact and in good condition. Built development generally respects local vernacular and provides a strong and consistent sense of place.

Sensitivity

40.9 There is a very strong sense of place across this Wealden landscape, with the frequency of woodland blocks, isolated and hedgerow oaks, field ponds and grazed pasture providing strong continuity. Buildings and settlements are very distinctive, with frequent use of ragstone, chequered red and grey brick and hung tiles. Large, timber framed properties and converted oast houses add to the sense of place and historic character of the landscape. Visibility is high, with long views reaching across parts of the Weald and of the higher Greensand Ridge to the north.



42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

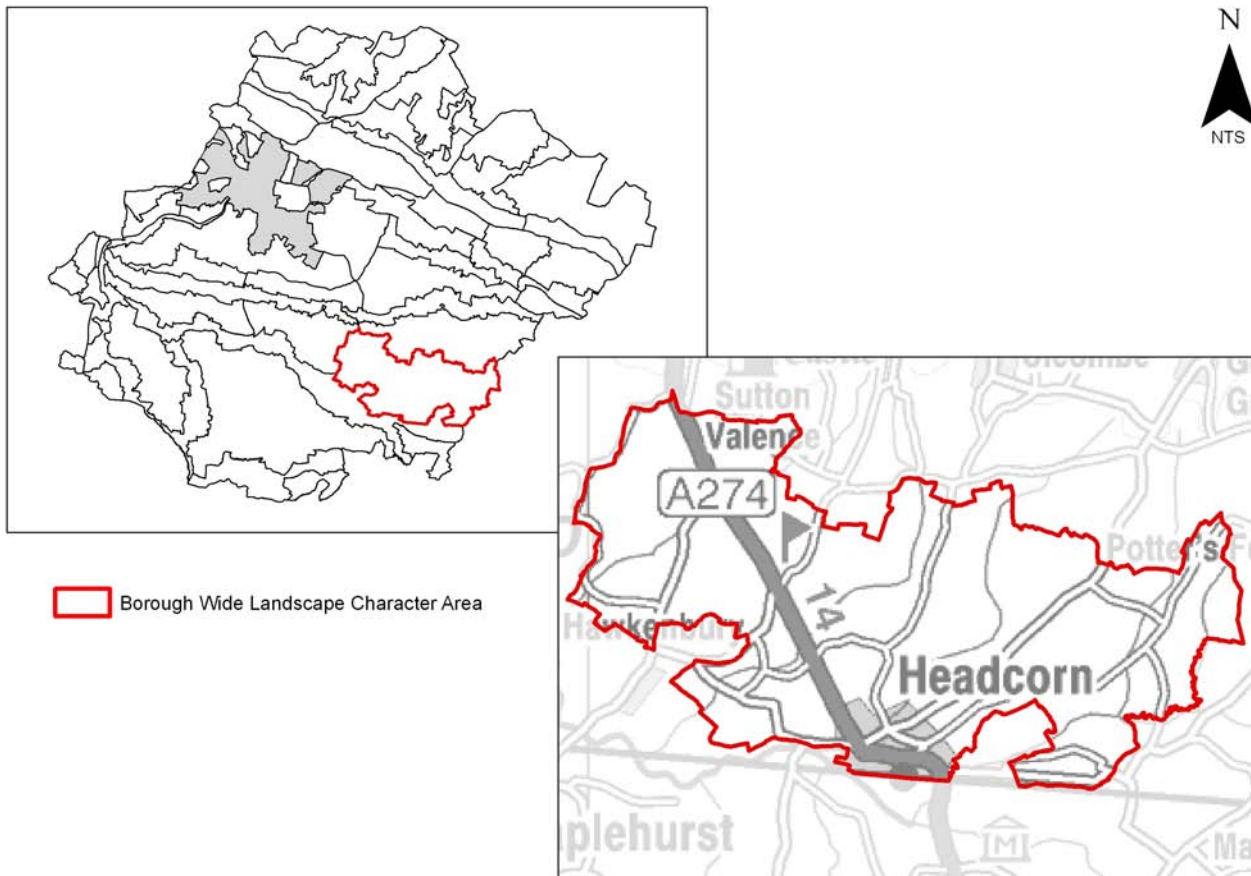
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the extensive tree cover provided by frequent woodland blocks, orchards and oak trees
- Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve the parkland at East Sutton Park
- Conserve and enhance the small scale, mosaic like field pattern
- Avoid further field segregation using post and wire fencing and encourage the reinstatement of native hedgerow boundaries where these have been removed
- Conserve the distinctive amount of oak trees within the landscape, and plant new isolated specimens and hedgerow standards to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the distinctive linear pattern of settlements
- Conserve the rural setting of traditional buildings and settlements
- Soften the visual impact of large scale agricultural buildings with native planting



43. Headcorn Pasturelands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald
- Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge
- Drainage ditches running southwards towards the River Beult
- Enclosed pasture
- Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets
- Dominance of mature oaks within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees

Location

43.1 Headcorn Pasturelands are situated to the south east of Maidstone, comprising part of the wider Low Weald landscape. The southern boundary is defined by the periphery of the Beult Valley. To the north of this area the landscape is slightly higher and more wooded, with fewer water bodies and less alluvial drifts. To the west of the area, the landscape has been slightly more influenced by modern agricultural farming practices, and supports a number of reservoirs along the foot of the scarp. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the east may therefore form a continuation of this character area.

43. Headcorn Pasturelands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

43.2 There is not a wide extent of woodland cover, although small blocks and fragments of mixed woodland are scattered across the landscape. Ribbons of vegetation often line ditches and streams, and clusters of vegetation often define the frequent small field ponds which punctuate the landscape. There is a small scale field pattern and a strong sense of enclosure, where the pastoral landscape is well contained by an irregular Medieval network of native hedgerows and shaws, with frequent mature oak hedgerow trees, that are typical of the traditionally managed Low Weald landscape. Oak trees also stand isolated within the pasture, sometimes in lines that indicate former hedgerow boundaries. The traditionally managed Viney Farm to the west is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, where the small unimproved fields have never been treated with modern chemicals. The meadowland, which is enclosed by thick native hedgerows, supports a wide range of butterfly, invertebrate and bird species.

43.3 Although not widespread there are some minor pockets of fruit production east of Maidstone Road, which are enclosed with poplar shelterbelts. At Viney Farm, to the west, a traditional hop garden remains. However it is the pastoral land use that dominates this Wealden landscape rather than fruit production, which is more dominant across the Greensand to the north.

43.4 A network of narrow streams and ditches cross the landscape and to the south east, the River Sherway meanders south west towards

the River Beult. The River Sherway and adjoining ponds and pasture are designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The river supports flora typical of clay rivers, including yellow water lily, hornwort, arrowhead and pondweeds. Alder, crack willow, white willow and sallow occur along the river and within the dampest parts. Numerous bird species (including green woodpecker, grey heron, chiffchaff, green warbler and blackcap) and a variety of dragonflies and damselflies populate this habitat.

43.5 Development is scattered across the landscape in the form of isolated farmsteads and clustered collections of farmsteads that form small hamlets including Farthing Green, Plumtree Green and Southernden. Many of the farmhouses are listed, and there are numerous examples of traditional oast houses converted to residential use, timber framed buildings and hung tiled properties. To the south development is concentrated within Headcorn, although this largely comprises recent high density red brick housing and bungalows. The original and historic core of Headcorn is designated as a Conservation Area where many listed buildings, including timber framed, chequered red and grey brick and white weatherboarded properties, surround the High Street. To the west, the late 13th century Church of St Peter and St Paul stands back from the High Street which turns at 90 degrees into North Road. Constructed from local Bethersden Marble, the church is grade 1 listed. Also of note, west of this church, stands Headcorn Manor, which is

43. Headcorn Pasturelands

grade II* listed. This 16th century timber framed building, historically a parsonage, is a typical Wealden property with two equal length hall bays. There are few roads across this rural landscape, and these comprise narrow, winding and hedge lined lanes. In contrast, the A274 Maidstone/Headcorn Road forms a very straight and busy route that bisects the landscape. Recent linear development has occurred along this road, which often detracts from the surrounding small scale and rural landscape character. The Weald of Kent Golf Course, for instance gives a slightly suburban and manicured appearance to the landscape.

Geology, soils and topography

43.6 The solid geology predominantly comprises Wealden Clay, with swathes of

Large 'Paludina' Limestone. There are drifts of brickearth throughout, and ribbons of alluvium follow some water courses. Soils are largely seasonally wet loam to clay over shale with a large swathe of seasonally wet deep loam across the lowest and flattest ground around Tattlebury. The land is low lying and generally flat to the south, becoming gently undulating to the north.

Views

43.7 Within the area views are often contained by the hedgerow boundaries which enclose the small fields. There are, however, some longer views of the Greensand Ridge to the north, where the clustered settlement of Sutton Valence stands out on the higher ground. The ragstone church of St Mary the Virgin forms a particularly noticeable landmark feature.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

43.8 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the frequency of oak notably binds the landscape together and the low lying landscape, with its ditches and field ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are some visual detractors, comprising large scale agricultural barns that often detract from the traditional setting of listed farmhouses, the busy Maidstone Road and linear recent development along its route. The ecological integrity is strong because there is very little intensively farmed land, and the small scale field pattern provides a strong network of native hedgerows. Ditches and water bodies add to the habitat network and connectivity across the landscape. The cultural integrity is variable. The traditional field pattern and hedgerow boundaries are generally intact, the land use is predominantly pastoral and there has been little conversion to arable land. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape. Although many isolated farmhouses and buildings within the central core of Headcorn respect the local vernacular and provide a strong sense of place, there is a significant amount of recent and indistinct development along Maidstone Road and surrounding the traditional centre of Headcorn.

Sensitivity

43.9 Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a strong sense of place. Very distinct elements include the frequency of oak trees within hedgerows and pasture, the hedgerow and ditch lined lanes, field ponds and isolated farmsteads. Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some long views across the Low Weald to the Greensand Ridge to the north, and open views of this landscape from the Ridge, intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the flat to very gently undulating landform.



43. Headcorn Pasturelands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

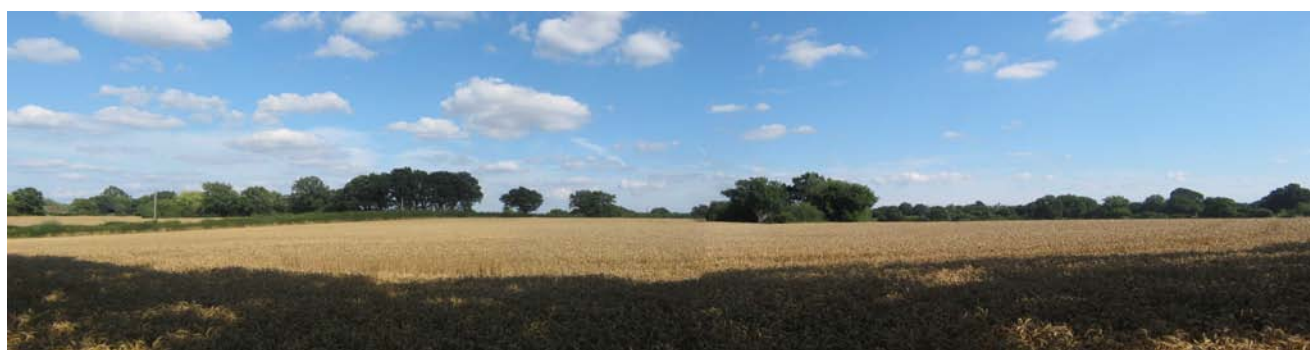
Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

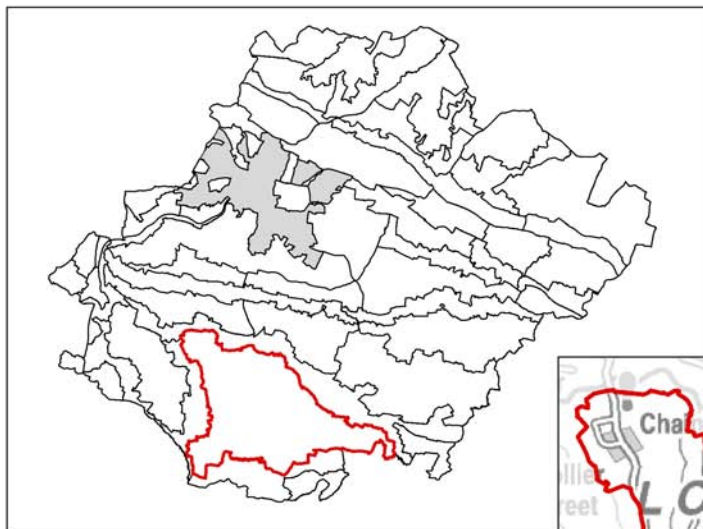
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and hedgerows to replace ageing population
- Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads
- Resist infill linear development along Maidstone Road
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas



44. Staplehurst Low Weald



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying gently undulating clay landscape of the Low Weald
- Small fields with orchards, pasture, ponds and watercourses enclosed by thick native hedgerows creating an intimate atmosphere
- Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where hedgerows have been lost
- Large scale open fields where hedgerows have been removed for intensive arable cultivation
- Sparse scattered small woodlands
- Winding roads with wide verges bounded by ditches and mixed native hedgerows
- Historic buildings scattered through the landscape and in the historic cores of Staplehurst and Marden

Location

44.1 Staplehurst Low Weald is situated to the south of Maidstone, comprising part of the wider Low Weald landscape centred around the large village of Staplehurst. Its western extent is defined by the periphery of the Teise Valley, with the village of Marden on its flanks, whereas its northern and eastern extent is marked by the Beult Valley. In contrast its southern extent is defined by the rising ground and large woodland blocks of Sherenden Wooded Hills which fringe the edge of the High Weald on the southern boundary of the borough.

44.2 The low lying topography is very gently undulating but with slightly more relief in the south, with, for example, the old village centre and church at Staplehurst perched on a shallow ridge.

44.3 The borough boundary cuts across the south eastern edge of the character area and it is likely that, in reality, this Low Weald landscape character area continues towards Frittenden within the borough of Tunbridge Wells.

44. Staplehurst Low Weald



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

44.4 This is an historic landscape of small gently undulating grazed hedged fields with distinctive frequent mature and ancient English oak standard trees creating a strong sense of enclosure. Gently winding narrow roads with wide lushly vegetated verges and ditches, colourful with cow parsley, meadowsweet, marsh willowherb, common fleabane and purple loosestrife reinforce an intimate atmosphere. Field boundaries often appear broadly rectilinear but closer examination reveals that many have slightly wavy boundaries characteristic of assarted boundaries where the hedge was originally cut from cleared woodland, probably in Medieval times. Shrubby willows within the hedgelines indicate the wettest land. Orchards with modern dwarf fruit trees, sometimes contained by shelterbelts of alder, poplar and occasionally conifers, are spread throughout the area, with more rarely hop gardens, vineyards and traditional orchards with large trees. Intensive orchard production is found on the fertile and often better drained loamy soils north east of Marden but also on heavier and wetter soils around Marden Beech and Marden Thorn and other pockets scattered throughout the area.

44.5 Ditches and watercourses drain the heavy Wealden clay soils and ponds are common, often surrounded by clusters of distinctive silver leaved willows which stand out in the landscape. There are many small hamlets and farmsteads spread throughout the area giving the impression of a historic settled and productive landscape. Distinctive historic buildings indicating its agrarian past include

oast houses and ancient timber barns, many of which are listed. Buildings are often timber frame, weatherboarded or tile hung with steep peg tile roofs. Although substantial woodlands are not common, there are small woodland blocks widely scattered throughout the area, some of which are of ancient origin. All of these elements combine to create an intimate scale and an intricate and historic pattern.

44.6 However where arable cultivation has expanded, the distinctive small scale enclosed landscape has been eroded. Hedges have been uprooted to create vast but often irregularly shaped fields of monoculture crops, principally cereals, such as at Pagehurst Farm and at Chickenden Farm. Here the visual character of the landscape has a much simpler and bolder pattern with the irregular edge of standard oaks, remaining hedgerows, woodland blocks and tree belts helping to contain the landscape.

44.7 Some areas of traditional meadow remain notably at Marden Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), owned and managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust. This site is one of the best examples of unimproved neutral grassland remaining in Kent. The ponds and old hedgerows are also of interest. The three meadows are cut annually for hay and then grazed. Several scarce species are present which indicate that the meadows have not been ploughed for many years. These plants include adder's tongue, greenwinged orchid and meadow saxifrage. Oxeye daisy, yellow rattle, meadow buttercup, bulbous

44. Staplehurst Low Weald

buttercup, bugle and common sorrel are among the typical meadow plants found on the site. The ponds are diverse with two scarce pond plants; water violet and bladder sedge. The hedgerows are thought to be of ancient origin with hawthorn, hazel and the less common midland hawthorn and wild service-tree, which is an ancient woodland indicator species. Away from the intensive arable and modern top fruit production the network of pasture, meadows, old and traditionally managed orchards, ponds, tree belts, veteran oak trees, ditches, streams and hedgerows with occasional woodland form an important ecological resource.

44.8 Whilst hamlets and farmsteads are dispersed throughout the area there are two substantial villages, Staplehurst and Marden, both of which have designated Conservation Areas. The historic centre of Staplehurst sits clustered on a shallow hilltop around the grade I listed Church of All Saints, with ancient timber frame buildings many with jettied upper storeys with Kent peg tile roofs. Large overhanging pub signs at the top of the hill are also a distinctive landmark, although one of the pubs is now a private house. The village's location on a low ridge of limestone above the risk of flooding is typical of the Low Weald. Great expansion of the village followed the development of the main line railway line with typical brick built bay windowed Victorian villas lining Station Road and the High Street, followed by even more extensive 20th Century brick built suburban housing development, much of it undistinguished. Further development includes the industrial units on the northern edge of the village. Marden's development is similar with an attractive historic village core located on Wealden Clay, but on slightly higher ground than the floodplain of the River Teise. At its heart, the Church of St Michael and All Angels is grade I listed, The oldest part of the ragstone and sandstone building, the Chancel, dates from around 1200. Early buildings include White Lyon House (grade II* listed) which is timber framed with tile hanging and Flemish bond brickwork, Bridge House, The Cottage,

Turnpike House and Church Green Farmhouse, which are all Wealden houses built in the 1400s during the height of the cloth trade. Victorian housing is associated with the coming of the railway and undistinguished modern housing estates are located on the periphery. North of the railway line is an extensive industrial estate with large system built units.

Geology, soils and topography

44.9 The area is low lying and gently undulating between 20m AOD and 30m AOD with more pronounced shallow ridges running east west at elevations of up to 40m AOD in the northern section of the area. The most common geology throughout the area is Wealden Clay, but there are narrow 'Paludina' Limestone outcrops around Staplehurst resulting in the shallow ridges running east-west. Soils are generally heavy, deep, fertile loams, silts and clays but they are often seasonally waterlogged with ponds, watercourses and ditches being common throughout the area. Freer draining acidic soils occur north east of Marden over a mixed geology of Wealden Clay and sandstones.

Views

44.10 Typically views are intimate and contained by the tall thick hedgerows, orchards and shelterbelts, narrow tree belts and majestic hedgerow oak trees, especially on the flatter ground and where the grazed fields are small. Where there has been amalgamation of fields for arable cultivation views are longer and more open, stretching over large flat irregular fields to woodlands and hedgerows on the horizon and giving a simpler and bolder landscape. From the tops of undulations towards the north, there are occasional longer views towards the scarp of the Greensand Ridge, with its woods and orchards rising above the hedge tops. Similarly to the south there are views towards the rising land and wooded hilltops of the Sherenden Wooded Hills and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) from some more elevated locations.

44. Staplehurst Low Weald

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

44.11 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the frequency of oak and native hedgerows binds the landscape together and the low lying landscape, with its ditches and field ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are few visual detractors, but some large scale agricultural barns can detract from the traditional setting of farmhouses. The loss of hedgerows and the creation of large arable fields detracts in some areas, especially west of Marden. Some horse grazing paddocks and stables can also detract as can static caravan developments. At times the busy A229 Staplehurst Road – Cranbrook Road can be visually and aurally intrusive, although it is generally well screened by trees and hedgerows. Some scattered recent developments strung out along this road detract from the rural character. Inappropriate boundary treatments such as tall close boarded fences, ornamental gates and conifer hedges can detract from the continuity of thick native hedgerows along this road and also occasionally elsewhere.

44.12 Although there has been some loss of ecological connectivity as a result of arable intensification, the ecological integrity is relatively strong because hedgerows, verges, ditches and watercourses still provide a strong and well connected network. The cultural integrity is relatively good. The traditional small field pattern and hedgerow boundaries are generally intact, but the land use has changed from predominantly pastoral and top fruit to a mix of fruit, pasture and arable. Traditional grazed orchards with tall fruit trees have been largely replaced by dwarf trees and hop gardens are now extremely rare. In some areas large prairie fields have been created. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape. Although many scattered farmhouses and hamlets respect the local vernacular and provide a strong sense of place, there is a significant amount of recent and indistinct development at Staplehurst and Marden.

Sensitivity

44.13 Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a strong sense of place. Very distinct elements include the frequency of mature oak trees within hedgerows and pasture, the verges, infrequent small woodland blocks, hedgerow and ditch lined lanes, field ponds, and scattered farmsteads and hamlets. Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are occasionally some long views to the Greensand Ridge to the north and the High Weald to the south, intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the gently undulating landform, except where arabalisation and hedgerow removal has created a more open landscape.



44. Staplehurst Low Weald

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

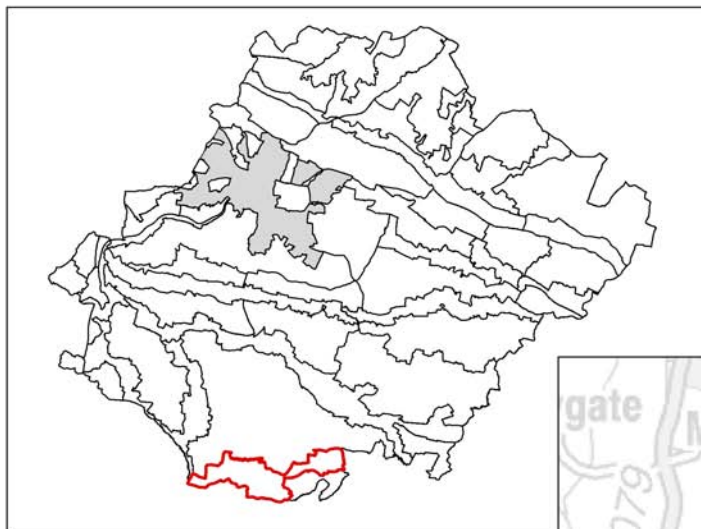
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve and enhance the hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Conserve the pastoral land and orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging restoration and management of historic field boundaries
- Conserve the landscape setting of historic settlements
- Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads and hamlets
- Resist further linear development and intrusive elements along the A229
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around commercial and housing developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation in these areas



45. Sherenden Wooded Hills



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying and gently undulating clay Low Weald landscape with many ponds, ditches and watercourses
- Large irregular blocks of ecologically important ancient woodland interspersed with pasture, orchards and arable fields
- Species rich native hedgerow field boundaries with mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where boundaries have been removed
- Historic buildings scattered throughout the landscape

Location

45.1 On the southern boundary of the borough, just south of Staplehurst, this area marks the southern edge of the Low Weald before it rises up to the more elevated topography of the High Weald. This landscape provides part of the wider foreground and setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which rises to the south. It is characterised by the presence of large blocks of woodland, mostly of ancient origin set amongst a mixed pastoral, orchard and arable landscape. The land is undulating and ponds, watercourses and ditches are common throughout the area. Soils are generally seasonally waterlogged heavy loam to clay soils derived from Wealden Clay. The area contains a number of scattered farmsteads and small hamlets.

45. Sherenden Wooded Hills



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

45.2 This part of the Low Weald is characterised by the presence of large blocks of woodland, mostly of ancient origin set amongst a mixed pastoral, orchard and arable landscape. The land is undulating and ponds, watercourses and ditches are common throughout the area. The area contains a number of scattered farmsteads and small hamlets. In places the lanes are sunken, indicating their great age. Traditional pastoral land uses are generally confined to smaller fields, whilst larger fields support arable cultivation such as cereal and bean production. There are occasional orchards scattered throughout the area, with a substantial area south of Staplehurst at Chittenden Farm. There is also, rarely, some hop growing. Field boundaries are species rich native hedgerows with irregular boundaries (thought to be originally cut from the Wealden forest), with frequent mature standard oaks in the hedgeline. Field size tends to be smaller close to the southern border with larger arable fields elsewhere.

45.3 There are many scattered farmsteads and hamlets with a large number of listed buildings. Typical details include timber frame construction with weatherboarding or tile hanging, red and blue brick, and steeply pitched and often hipped Kent peg tile roofs. An example of a listed 19th century hop pickers kitchen or cook-house in red brick and grey headers in Flemish bond on Pristling Lane hints at the area's former importance as a major hop production centre, as do the several oast houses now converted to residential use.

45.4 The widespread ancient woodland is of high ecological value. In the west of the area much of the woodland is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. This includes Widehurst Wood, Sherenden Wood, Wilden Wood, Hobbs Wood, Cockle Wood, Tank Wood and Snoad Wood. The woods were probably originally one large complex. They are generally of ancient origin on low-lying, damp, usually acidic Wealden Clay. Most have been managed in the past as mixed coppice with standards of pedunculate and, less often, sessile oak. Where the canopy is closed some areas have developed into high forest, such as at Widehurst Wood. Coppice species include hazel and hornbeam, together with downy birch and midland hawthorn. Alder and ash coppice are more frequent along the stream sides. Alder buckthorn, aspen, holly and wild service tree (an unusual tree characteristic of ancient woodland) are also present, and there are often old external and internal woodbanks. Under the closed canopy many of the rides are shady and very damp and mossy. These areas support lesser skullcap, betony, bugle, cuckooflower and pendulous sedge. Where soils are drier, bracken, heather, wood sage, bitter-vetch and common cow-wheat occur. Bluebell, bramble, yellow archangel and wood anemone are common but where soils are more base-rich, species such as early-purple orchid, common twayblade, greater butterfly-orchid and moschatel occur. Large bitter-cress is found along stream banks.

45.5 Many woods have been managed for shooting, and in some parts the shrub layer

45. Sherenden Wooded Hills

has been removed in order to establish high oak forest. Elsewhere, the woodland has been opened up to form large, open, grassy and bracken filled glades. Cow-wheat is often common in the ground flora here, together with compact rush.

45.6 The woodland fauna includes a rich woodland bird population, with nuthatch, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, lesser spotted woodpecker, woodland tits and common warblers. Butterflies recorded include white admiral, purple hairstreak, ringlet, gatekeeper, meadow brown, comma and holly blue. Pearl-bordered fritillary has been recorded in the past in Wilden Wood and a number of moth species have been recorded in Snoad Wood.

45.7 At the Local Wildlife Site at Maplehurst near Staplehurst, pasture supports a number of herbs, including meadow buttercup and creeping buttercup, bird's-foot-trefoil, lesser stitchwort, meadow vetchling, oval sedge and hairy sedge. Dyer's greenweed is a notable species. A large colony of adder's tongue has also been recorded. Marshy areas support ragged-robin, bugle, cuckooflower and greater bird's foot-trefoil. Quaking-grass, an indicator of prime neutral grassland, is also present.

45.8 Nine Acre Wood is unmanaged, damp, mixed coppice with oak standards, hazel, ash, birch and midland hawthorn. Pendulous sedge, wood anemone and bugle occur in the ground flora. Maplehurst Wood and Park Wood are large and varied ancient mixed broadleaved woodland which were previously managed as coppice with standards. The soils vary from fairly base-rich to quite acidic. Unmanaged ash, hazel, field maple and hornbeam coppice occurs in parts, together with aspen, willow and alder in the dampest areas. Wild service tree and large wild cherry trees are also frequent. The rich ground flora includes wood anemone, dog's mercury, goldilocks buttercup, primrose and common woodland orchids such as early-purple orchid.

45.9 A large colony of greater butterfly-orchid

also occurs in this part of the wood. An area of fairly dry alder coppice has an understorey of broad buckler-fern, pendulous sedge, remote sedge, yellow archangel, hemlock water-dropwort and opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage. Medieval woodbanks and ditches occur along some margins of the wood. The whole area supports a variety of woodland and scrub birds. Blackcap, whitethroat, garden warbler, green woodpecker, turtle dove, yellowhammer, willow warbler and cuckoo were recorded in the area of scrubby orchard. Woodland birds including great spotted woodpecker, woodland tits and finches frequent the wooded areas.

Geology, soils and topography

45.10 Solid geology is mostly Wealden Clay with outcrops of 'Paludina' Limestone in the east, giving rise to the low hill at Iden Manor Farm. Wadhurst Clay occurs on the southern fringes in the west as the land rises up to the High Weald such as at the lower slopes of Winchett Hill. Most of the area is low lying at around 30m AOD but locally rises up steeply to 70m on the High Weald boundary. Heavy, deep soils are slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine silty, loamy or clayey soils derived from the Wealden Clay.

Views

45.11 Typically views are intimate and contained by the tall thick hedgerows, woodlands and majestic hedgerow oak trees, especially on the lower ground and where grazed fields are small, although the higher land of the High Weald to the south is often visible on the horizon. Thus, the area is visually important as it forms the setting to the High Weald AONB. Also from the more elevated viewpoints in the south of the area there are longer views out over the Low Weald to the north with the wooded backdrop of the High Weald to the south.

45. Sherenden Wooded Hills

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

45.12 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the frequency of ancient woodland, standard oaks, orchards and thick native hedgerows over the undulating topography binds the landscape together. There are generally few visual detractors, although the loss of hedgerows to allow more intensive arable cultivation has caused some loss of pattern in the landscape. Although there has been some loss of ecological connectivity as a result of this arable intensification, the ecological integrity is still very strong because of the large areas of ancient woodland together with pasture, hedgerows, verges, ditches and watercourses which provide an extensive and well connected network. The cultural integrity is relatively good, but is declining with changed agricultural practices towards intensive arable cultivation. The traditional small field pattern and hedgerow boundaries are reasonably intact in most areas, but the land use has changed from predominantly woodland, pastoral and top fruit to a mix of arable, fruit, pasture and woodland. Traditional grazed orchards with tall fruit trees have been largely replaced by dwarf trees. Hop gardens are now extremely rare. Built development has a generally positive impact on the landscape because many scattered farmhouses, oasts and cottages are listed and provide a strong sense of place.

Sensitivity

45.13 Overall, the typical characteristics of the landscape provide a very strong sense of place. Very distinct elements include the frequency of ancient and species rich deciduous woodland blocks, the undulating topography rising up to the edge of the High Weald, historic buildings, mature oak trees within hedgerows and pasture, sunken lanes, orchards and ponds. The wooded backdrop of the High Weald is an important element in many views and from the more elevated areas there are occasionally some long views over the Low Weald to the north, but in general intervening vegetation often encloses many immediate views across the lower lying areas with a gently undulating landform. Overall visibility is moderate.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

45. Sherenden Wooded Hills

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

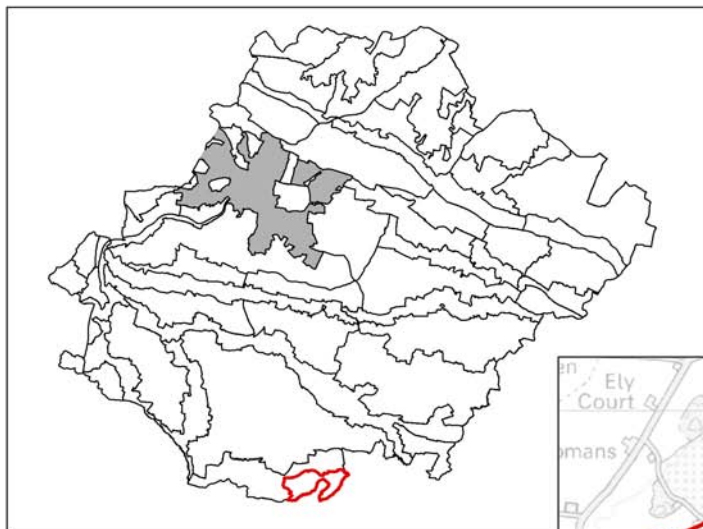
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

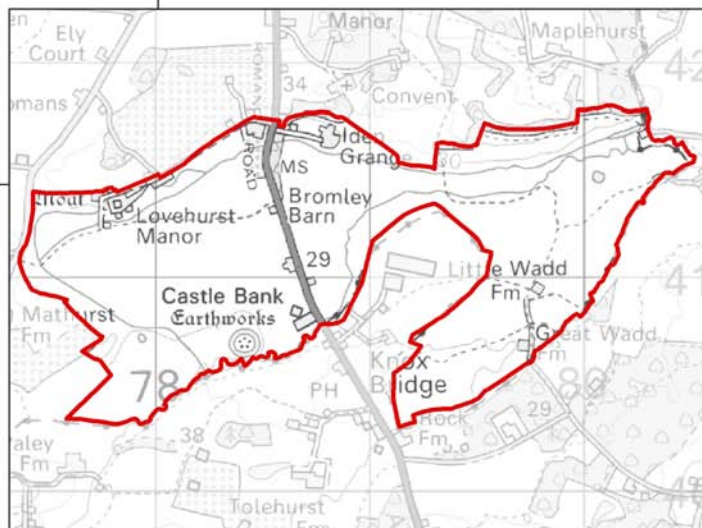
- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the setting of the High Weald AONB
- Conserve the abundance of ancient woodland blocks and enhance through sensitive management for nature conservation and woodland products
- Conserve oak as a dominant hedgerow tree species, and plant new oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve and enhance the species rich hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Encourage the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries
- Conserve the pastoral land, hop gardens and orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve the wealth of historic buildings
- Conserve and enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation in these areas



46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying flat landscape of the Low Weald
- Large fields with arable cultivation, ponds and watercourses enclosed by thick native hedgerows
- Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where hedgerows have been lost

Location

46.1 This is a small extension of the Low Weald south of Staplehurst on the southern edge of the borough. Cranbrook Road A229 bisects the area. The borough boundary cuts across the southern edge of the character area and it is likely that, in reality, this Low Weald landscape character area continues beyond the borough boundary.



46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

46.2 This is a low lying flat area of the Low Weald. Relatively easily worked deep soils of loams and loams over sand have resulted in large fields with intensive cultivation of arable crops, although there is a strong network of streams running west to east across the area. There are often species rich hedgerows and old standard oaks along these features, together with some narrow strips of woodland. Some smaller fields support livestock.

46.3 There are isolated houses strung out along the western side of the A229, mostly Victorian or later but some of earlier origins. At Knoxbridge Farm, south of the area and within Tunbridge Wells Borough, is an extensive egg production facility which presents a rather industrialised appearance. Nearby, at Great Wadd Farm is a listed early 17th century farmhouse with later alterations. It is timber framed, with rendered infilling, some painted brick and weatherboarding and with a Kent peg tile roof. A nearby early 16th century or earlier barn is also listed. It is of traditional oak timber frame construction, weatherboarded, and with a hipped peg tile roof. On the borough boundary is Maplehurst, a listed house dating to the early 19th century with possibly an earlier core. The ground floor is in red brick in Flemish bond with tile hanging to the first floor.

46.4 Moot Mount is a Scheduled Monument near Knoxbridge. It comprises a mound and its surrounding quarry ditch. Moots were open-air meeting places set aside for use by courts and other bodies who were responsible for the

administration and organisation of the countryside in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval England. They were located at convenient, conspicuous or well-known sites, often centrally placed within the area under jurisdiction, usually a hundred, wapentake, or shire. The most characteristic feature of the moot mound is the deep, bowl-shaped depression in the interior which served as the arena for debate and decision-making. This depression is 2m deep and 27m in diameter. The moot mound lies near the present boundaries between the parishes of Frittenden, Staplehurst and Cranbrook which formed the Hundred of Cranbrooke and over which the moot court had jurisdiction. The monument survives extremely well and is of high archaeological potential. It is associated with the moated site of the head manor of Lovehurst, and is well-documented both archaeologically and historically. The moat of Lovehurst Manor, north of Moot Mount is also a Scheduled Monument which comprises a sub-circular moat and which encloses an island. On the west side a stream enters the moat via a rectangular extension to the moat which was probably a former fishpond. An 18th century house (grade II listed in red brick with tile hangings) and a twin oast and drying floor occupies the centre of the moat island but these post date the moat.

46.5 Moats are generally seen as prestigious residences of the Lords of the Manor. The moat not only marked the high status of the occupier but also served to deter casual

46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands

raiders and wild animals. Most moated sites were constructed between 1250 and 1350, and it is to this period that the moat at Lovehurst is likely to date although an earlier date is also possible. No evidence of the original buildings presumed to have occupied the site survives above ground. Lovehurst moated site is of particular importance because the moat survives to a greater extent than most examples. The moat, although partially scoured, remains of high archaeological potential because it has remained water-filled throughout its history and therefore provides excellent conditions for the survival of perishable artefacts and of evidence of the economy and environment of the manor during its lifetime.

Geology, soils and topography

46.6 The area is low lying and relatively flat at around 20-30m AOD. The solid geology throughout the area is Wealden Clay overlain with substantial areas of alluvium and brickearth. The resultant soils are generally, deep, fine loams, and loams over sandy soils but they are often seasonally affected by ground water with ponds, watercourses and ditches being common throughout the area.

Views

46.7 Typically views on this flat landscape are contained by the tall thick hedgerows, narrow tree belts and majestic hedgerow oak trees, especially where the grazed fields are small. There are also some longer views towards the High Weald to the south with its wooded hills, rising above the hedge tops.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

46.8 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the frequency of oak and native hedgerows binds the landscape together and the low lying clay landscape, with its ditches and field ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are few visual detractors, but the large scale industrialised egg production unit intrudes. Scattered developments strung out along the A229, including residential development, static caravans and a plant nursery also slightly detract from the rural character. There has been some loss of ecological connectivity as a result of arable intensification but tree belts, hedgerows, pasture and watercourses still provide a reasonably robust habitat network. The cultural integrity is declining with intensive arable production. Land use has changed from a predominantly pastoral river valley setting to intensive mechanised arable production supported by land drainage systems. In some areas very large fields have been created. Built development has a moderate impact on the landscape. Although there are some traditional farmhouses, monuments and other buildings which respect the local vernacular there is some indistinct development along the A229.

Sensitivity

46.10 Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a reasonably strong sense of place. Very distinct elements include the frequency of mature oak trees within species rich assorted hedgerows, watercourses, field ponds and scattered farmsteads and hamlets. Visibility is generally high. Whilst intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the gently undulating landform, there are occasionally some long views to the Greensand Ridge to the north and the High Weald to the south. Arabalisation and hedgerow removal have also created a more open landscape.



46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

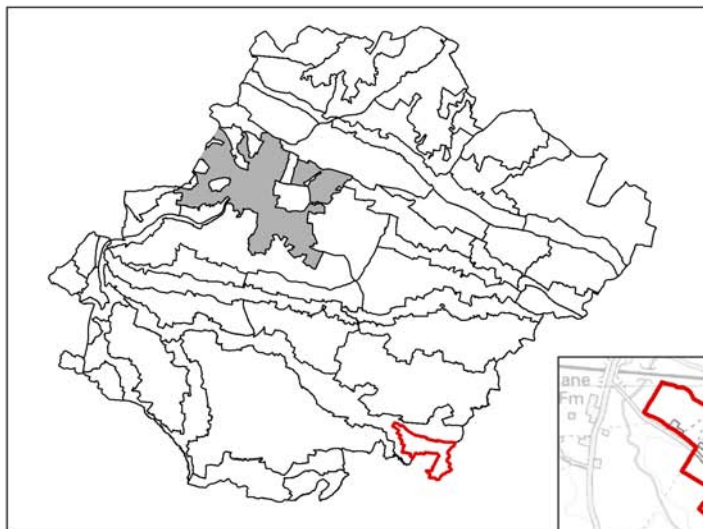
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



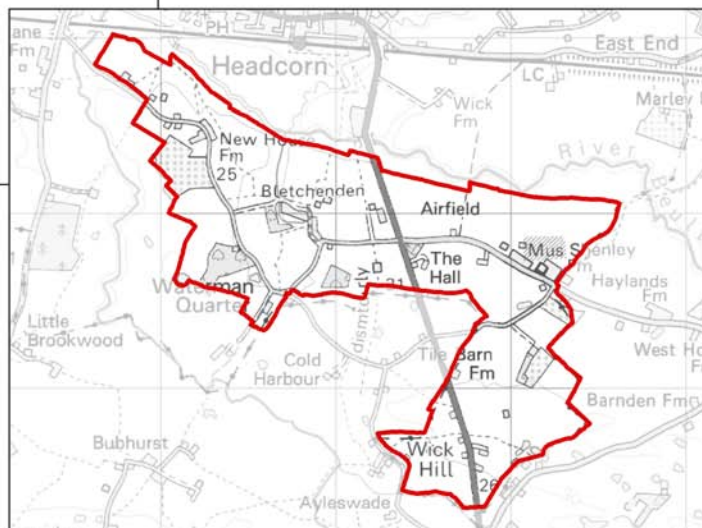
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Low Weald
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new oaks within hedgerows to replace ageing specimens
- Conserve the pastoral land and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging restoration of historic field boundaries with new plantings
- Conserve the archaeological features throughout this landscape, and their rural setting
- Resist further linear development along the A229
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural buildings through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around commercial and housing developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by creating and managing a linked framework of vegetation in these areas

47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying gently undulating clay landscape of the Low Weald with many ponds and watercourses
- Small to medium sized fields but predominantly pasture, with some arable cultivation and occasional orchards
- Thick native hedgerows create an intimate atmosphere
- Dominance of mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees
- Winding roads with wide verges bounded by ditches and mixed native hedgerows

Location

47.1 This is a small extension of the Low Weald south of Headcorn. The Beult Valley defines its northern edge and the valley of the Hammer Stream, a tributary of the River Beult, defines the western edge of the area. The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by the borough boundary. It contains a number of scattered small hamlets including Shenley, Bletchenden and Waterman Quarter in the north and Wick Hill in the south.

47.2 The borough boundary cuts across the southern edge of the character area and it is likely that, in reality, this Low Weald landscape character area continues beyond the borough boundary.

47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

47.3 This is an historic landscape of small gently undulating grazed hedged fields with distinctive frequent ancient English oaks creating a strong sense of enclosure. Gently winding narrow roads with wide leafy verges and vegetated ditches wind through the countryside. Many field boundaries are characteristically slightly wavy boundaries where the hedge line was originally cut from cleared woodland, probably in Medieval times. Shrubby willows within the hedgelines often indicate the wettest land.

47.4 Ditches and watercourses drain the heavy Wealden Clay soils and ponds are very common, often surrounded by clusters of distinctive silver leaved willows which stand out in the landscape. Most land is grazed but in the west arable cultivation of mostly cereals is more common. There are also occasional orchards and scattered woodland. All of these elements combine to create an intimate scale and an intricate and historic pattern.

47.5 Hamlets and farmsteads are dispersed throughout the area, and there are no substantial villages. Listed buildings include a group around Bletchenden, typically dating back to around the 17th Century where there are traditional Wealden details such as exposed studding, decorative fish scale tiling, jettied upper floors, weatherboarding, and chequered red and grey brick and hipped Kent peg tile roofs. A traditional sheep grazed orchard with tall widely spaced trees and an oast house indicates the areas history of fruit

and hop production.

47.6 A Local Wildlife Site at Waterman Quarter comprises a few small, semi-improved and unimproved fields managed for grazing and a series of excellent ponds surrounded by marshy grassland and scrubby vegetation, together with adjacent unmanaged, damp, mixed broadleaved woodland and shaws. The ponds are varied, some being well-lit and open, others open but silted, and the remainder shaded and silted. They support a rich plant life, particularly around the margins, with true fox sedge, elongated sedge, frogbit, water-dropworts, yellow iris, water violet, bladder sedge and flowering-rush. Yellow loosestrife and meadowsweet are common, particularly along the swampy edges of the silted ponds. The area is rich in damselflies and dragonflies and birdlife includes kingfisher moorhen and coot. The thick hedges, shaws and woodland support species characteristic of the Low Weald, including hornbeam, midland hawthorn and wild service tree. The ground flora is dominated by bluebell, with occasional bramble, dog's mercury and early-purple orchid. Primrose and wood anemone are also common.

47.7 The network of pasture, meadows, frequent ponds, tree belts, veteran oak trees, ditches streams and hedgerows with occasional woodland form an important ecological resource.

47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald

Geology, soils and topography

47.8 The low lying topography is very gently undulating to flat. Solid geology is generally Wealden Clay although at Wick Hill there is a small outcrop of 'Paludina' Limestone. Soils are generally heavy, deep loams, silts and clays which are seasonally waterlogged, with ponds watercourses and ditches being very common throughout the area. Loamy over sandy soils occur in the north, reflecting the alluvial and river gravel deposits associated with the River Beult.

Views

47.9 In this flat landscape, typical views are intimate and contained by the tall thick hedgerows, tree belts and majestic hedgerow oak trees, especially where the grazed fields are small. Rarely there are views of the Greensand Ridge.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

47.10 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the frequency of oak and native hedgerows binds the landscape together and the low lying landscape, with its ditches and distinctive field ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are few visual detractors, but some large scale agricultural buildings, more recent residential buildings, horse grazing paddocks and stables, and the mobile home park at Shenley Corner can appear incongruous. Headcorn Airfield, in the north, despite its large extent is relatively low key in appearance.

47.11 Although there has been some minor loss of hedgerow connectivity in areas of arable cultivation, elsewhere the ecological integrity is relatively strong because hedgerows, verges, ditches and watercourses still provide a strong network. Many water bodies add to the habitat network as do the occasional blocks of woodland. The cultural integrity is good, reflected in the traditional land use of pasture. The strong pattern of small fields and strong hedgerow boundaries is intact in most areas. Built development has a slight adverse impact on the landscape. Although many scattered farmhouses and hamlets respect the local vernacular and provide a strong sense of place, there is some scattered indistinct development and a large mobile home park which is less attractive.

Sensitivity

47.12 Overall, the typical characteristics of the Low Weald landscape provide a strong sense of place. Very distinct elements include the frequency of mature oak trees within hedgerows and pasture, the verges, infrequent small woodland blocks, hedgerow and ditch lined lanes, field ponds, and scattered farmsteads and hamlets. Visibility is generally low. Whilst there are rarely some long views to the Greensand Ridge, intervening vegetation encloses most views across the very gently undulating landform.



47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Low

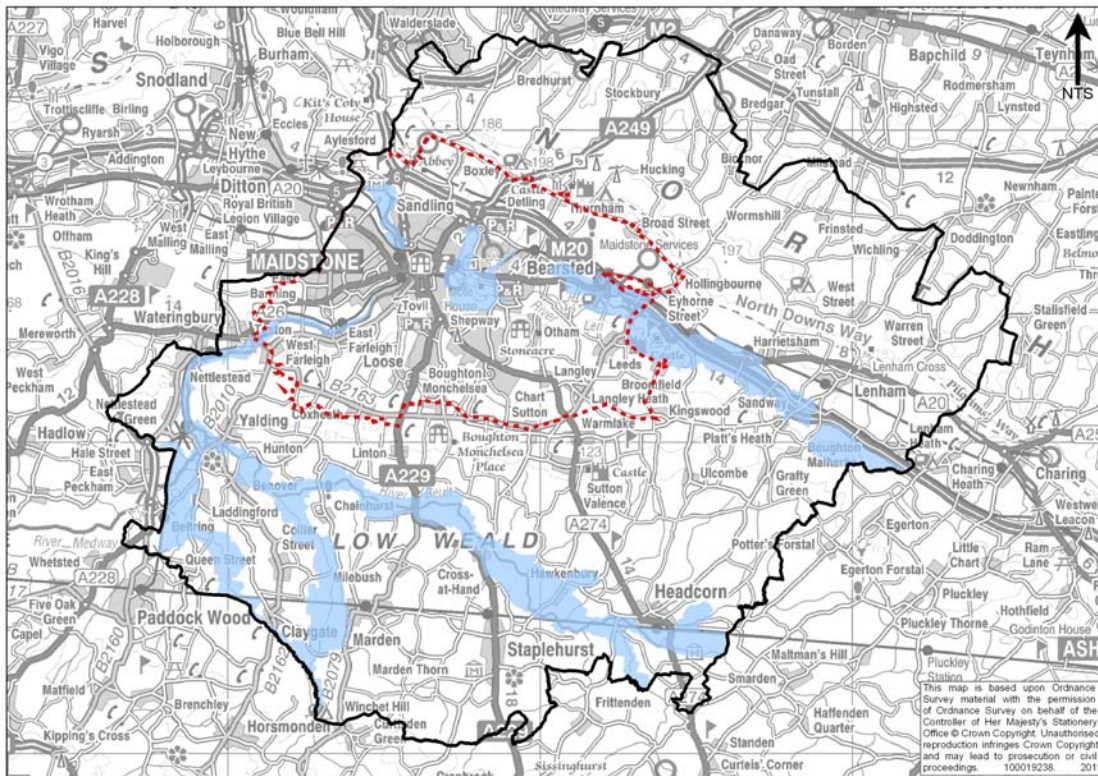
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald
- Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant replacement oaks within pasture and hedgerows to reinforce the network
- Conserve and reinforce the pastoral land and orchards and resist further conversion to arable land
- Conserve the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure, encouraging reinforcement of gappy field boundaries, and woodland belts especially in arable areas
- Conserve and reinforce the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads and hamlets
- Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural buildings through native planting and encourage native hedgerows around other developments
- Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting, reinforcing and managing the network of vegetation in these areas



Valleys: introduction



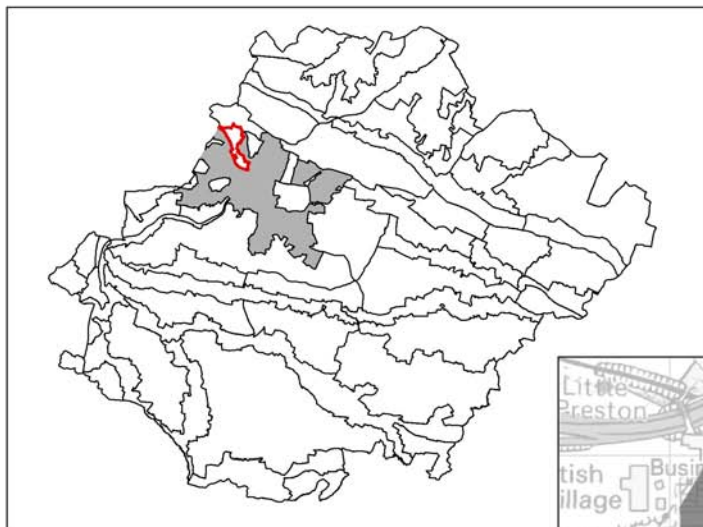
There are numerous valleys throughout the landscape, although only where they characterise the landscape are they included within the Valley landscape type and described as individual character areas. The Medway Valley is defined by the wide river and steep valley sides where the valley incises the Greensand. Here the landscape lends itself to much recreational land use, with evidence of boating and fishing along its route. Weirs and jetties are scattered along its route and static caravan parks have developed at marinas and near small settlements, although some sections are more wooded and remote in character. Gravel extraction has occurred in places, leaving remnant pools of water and areas of scrub regeneration. The River Teise and River Beult are more subtle in contrast because they are not situated within steep valley sides, and the surrounding landscape is also wet and low lying with much willow. The valley landscape is evidenced here by limited development and few roads, the expansive size of fields and the remote and tranquil character. Whilst there are some pockets of fruit orchards and grazing land much of the landscape is under intensive arable cultivation, and consequently ditches are often filled with algae.

Valleys: generic guidelines

- Encourage good water quality and flow through the promotion of sensitive management and avoiding further intensive arable farming
- Enhance rivers and associated tributaries, ditch and pond networks by promoting a 30m natural corridor along the length of a watercourse and large water bodies (extending 15m away from either side of the watercourse). For smaller streams, ditches and ponds the natural corridor should be 20m (extending 10m landward from each water margin)
- Conserve the unfenced interface between the land and river
- Increase habitat connectivity by promoting vegetation links between key wildlife sites, including alongside sections of railway line
- Conserve and enhance, through appropriate management, existing pockets of lowland dry acid grassland. Refer to Maidstone's Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009–2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Encourage the extension of lowland dry acid grassland within opportunity areas identified within the Kent Living Landscapes data (Kent Wildlife Trust)
- Promote the use of extensive grazing as a conservation tool to restore grassland present alongside rivers to semi-improved and ultimately unimproved neutral grassland where possible
- Encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to increase invertebrates and farmland bird communities
- Encourage extensive grassland and crop management by use of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship grants
- Conserve, and manage as appropriate, the dominance of willow as a key species along the river, and avoid planting new species of willow that are not considered to be locally appropriate species
- Conserve the rural skyline in views out of valleys
- Resist the use of varied styles and materials at marina developments, weirs, jetties and locks and promote the use of a limited design palette comprising local materials
- Conserve traditional ragstone bridges and respect the setting of these key landmark features



48. Medway Valley Allington



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Valley landscape containing the River Medway
- Boats and associated features, such as Allington Lock, boatyards and mooring facilities
- Medway Valley Walk Recreational Route follows the river
- Low lying rough pasture with scrub
- Recreational land
- Allington Castle

Location

48.1 This section of the Medway Valley is located to the north of Maidstone, within the urban area. The area is largely enclosed by the urban extent of Maidstone, although to the north the extent of the area is defined by the transition between the Lower Greensand Hythe Beds and the Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds.



48. Medway Valley Allington



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

48.2 The area is characterised by the River Medway and associated boating activities. Although Allington Marina and car park are set back from the river, and are well screened by enclosing mature vegetation, to the west of the river there is a large boating yard and several large buildings with timber jetties and mooring areas. Moored vessels extend along a significant length of the western side. Foot bridges cross the river at several locations along its length, which are varied in style but often constructed from metal. East of the river a towing path, known as the Medway Valley Walk (promoted Long Distance Path), mimics the meanders of the water. A narrow and gappy belt of native vegetation extends along the length of the path, reinforced by metal fencing in places. Some of this is security fencing with barbed wire on top, such as adjacent to a mill just north of Whatman Park. There is a significant area of open and disused rough grassland between the path and the edge of housing at Ringlestone. This is low lying with patches of scrub and some pockets of surface water which drain into the river. Some trees line the edge of housing at Ringlestone.

48.3 There is a strong emphasis on recreational activity, with Whatman Park to the south and the towing path running alongside the river. Whatman Park hosts a variety of large sculptures and an amphitheatre, and a network of paths which wind between significant areas of planting, creating small pockets of enclosure. Some timber walkways cross sections of water

which feed the Medway, overlooking reeds and other aquatic plant species, and mature pine trees mark the park boundary in places. West of Allington Castle, another recreation ground with car parking adds to the extent of public open space. To the north, east of the river, a large modern hotel and public house lie east of Lock Lane, increasing the diversity of land use.

48.4 The 13th century grade I listed Allington Castle and associated grounds lie to the north of the area. The castle was badly damaged by fire in the 16th century, although it was restored in 1905 and much of the intricate herringbone stonework remains evident. The estate is private and not easily visible from outside the grounds because it is surrounded by dense mature vegetation. The castle grounds comprise pasture with some mature trees and an area of ornate gardens. Lock Wood is ancient woodland and provides a significant backdrop to Allington Lock and Lock Cottages. Castle Road winds through Lock Wood, accessing properties along it and meeting the lock at the river. At the lock there is an attractive cluster of cottages, some of which are listed.

Geology, soils and topography

48.5 The River Medway flows over a base of Wealden Clay to the south and Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay and Lower

48. Medway Valley Allington

Greensand Hythe Beds to the north. There are drifts of alluvium and First Terrace River Gravel along the course of the river. Soils are well drained non calcareous loams over limestone. The valley landform is not as strong within this section of the Medway Valley as within other sections which have steeper valley sides. The perception of the landform is also softened by adjoining urban development and steel piled revetments along the course of the river.

Views

48.6 There are linear views along the River Medway, which is significantly influenced by the adjoining urban area in this section. Industrial buildings, mostly associated with boating, and mooring facilities, and vessels are dominant

features within views along the extent of the area. Within secluded parts of Whatman Park, no development is visible and there is a tranquil and simple view of the river and dense surrounding vegetation. Vegetation screens views of Allington Castle and its grounds, allowing only subtle glimpses of the castle walls through the trees. Views out of the area to the west are enclosed by the railway embankment and dense vegetation, and there are views out of the area to the residential edge of Ringlestone to the east. Long views of the elevated Cobtree Manor Park and golf course are available to the north from the recreational area to the west of Allington Castle.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

48.7 Although the River Medway provides a consistent feature throughout the landscape there are a many visual detractors along this section of the river, including boating facilities, a large range of construction styles and materials and security fencing. Jetties, vessels, boatyards, steel piled revetments, fencing types and buildings along the river combine to give a significantly interrupted landscape. The ecological integrity is strong. Despite this section of the river being heavily influenced by its proximity to the urban area, the river and adjoining vegetation provide good wildlife connectivity. The cultural integrity is variable. Much of the landscape has been influenced by recent development, although Allington Castle and associated grounds comprise historic elements which are in good condition.

Sensitivity

48.8 This is a distinct landscape, largely because of its location along the River Medway. The waterside location and the accessibility to the river along the Medway Valley Walk are distinctive features. However whilst Allington Castle and woodland comprise distinctive and historic features, development within the valley is largely recent. Whilst this is clearly a valley landscape, the perception of the landform is softened by development along the valley and intervening vegetation and the overall visibility is moderate.



48. Medway Valley Allington

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	Low
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Weak
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

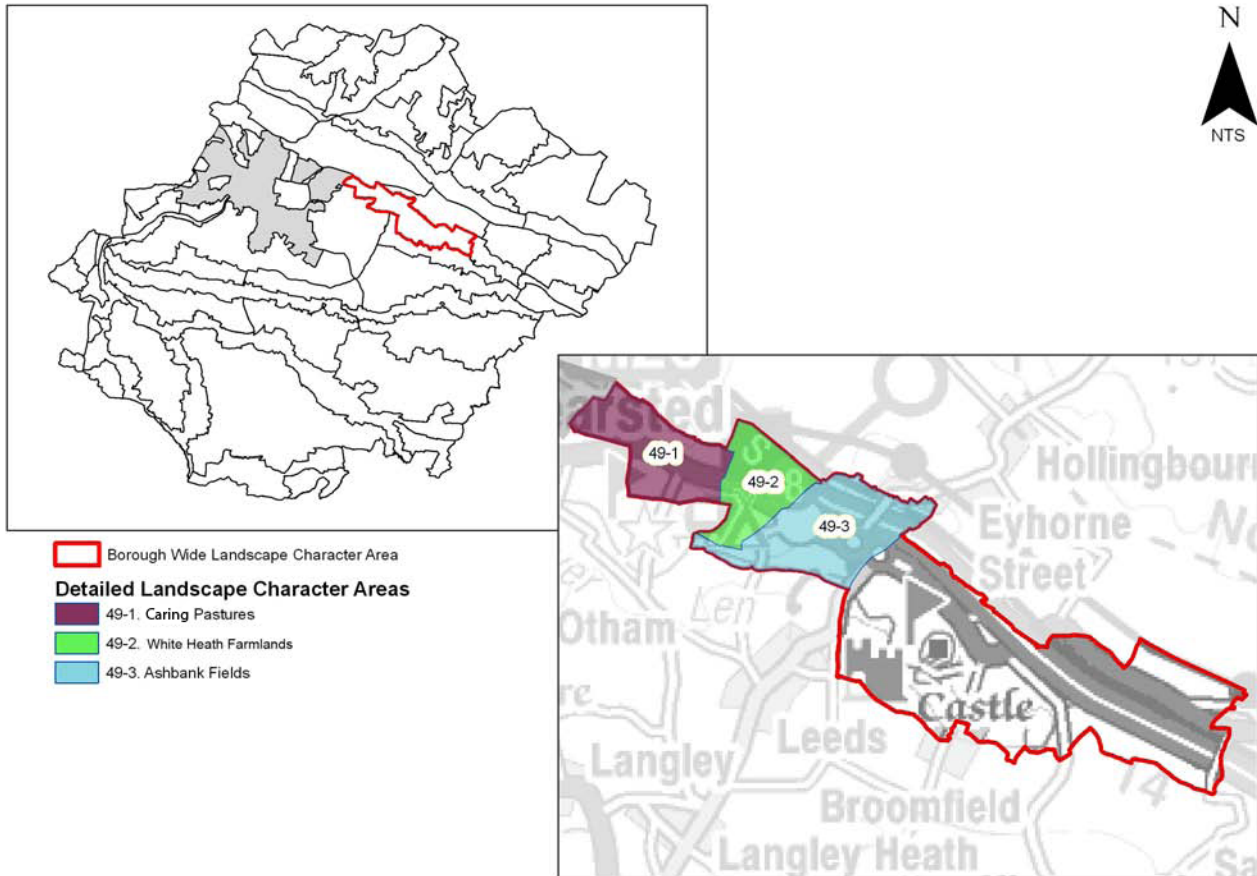
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the open area of high landscape quality around Allington Castle
- Create a palette of appropriate materials and finishes for development along the valley and for the interface between the river and solid ground
- Resist the introduction of further detracting construction features and building styles
- Improve linear native planting belts along the towing path and reinforce the habitat network by introducing further planting where appropriate



49. Leeds Castle Parklands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Artificial landform as part of golf course at Leeds Castle
- Historic Leeds Castle and surrounding parkland
- Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
- Mature parkland trees including oak, horse chestnut and pine
- River Len to the south
- Severance caused by the M20, HS1 and A20

Location

49.1 Leeds Castle Parklands are situated to the east of Maidstone, and encompass a section of the Len Valley. The major infrastructure corridor comprising the M20 and HS1 lies to the north, but it is the transition between loam and clay soils which broadly defines this boundary. The western boundary is formed by the eastern extent of Maidstone's urban area, and the eastern boundary is defined by the edge of Harrietsham.



49. Leeds Castle Parklands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.2 Tree cover is scattered across the landscape, in the form of small blocks of mixed woodland, mitigation planting along transport corridors and ribbons of vegetation along the River Len to the south and other minor water courses. More significant woodland cover is concentrated around Leeds Castle and its surrounding grounds. Isolated oak, ash and pine trees feature in open grassland and define the route along Broomfield Road, and blocks of mixed woodland give a mature parkland character to the landscape. A pocket of lowland dry acid grassland occurs to the north west of Leeds Castle grounds.

49.3 To the south, the narrow and subtle River Len is less well defined than the deeper valley landscape which contains the River Medway to the west of Maidstone. Sections of the River Len are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Much of the valley comprises a narrow floodplain covered in dense alder carr with willow, elder, hazel and ash along the drier perimeter. A small amount of woodland is situated on the slopes above the floodplain on the northern side, where oak standards, hazel, alder and chestnut coppice form the canopy above bramble, bluebell, wood anemone and red campion. The river corridor provides a wildlife habitat, and is especially rich in birdlife. Meadows and ancient woodland between the A20 and the M20 are also designated as a Local Wildlife Site, which include a disused sand quarry with an exposed sand cliff that is used by a colony of sand martins.

49.4 The field pattern is very irregular because the landscape comprises a significant amount of open parkland, little arable land and is severed by major infrastructure routes. However the grounds at Leeds Castle are

notably open in comparison with other areas, such as the smaller field pattern to the west where the land has been subdivided into private parcels around the periphery of Maidstone. Although tree cover provides a sense of enclosure and restricts views, the major infrastructure corridor of the M20, HS1 and the A20 are clearly audible from the surrounding landscape and reduce the sense of remoteness. Where minor routes pass over or under the M20 and HS1, the size and dominance of the infrastructure becomes most apparent.

49.5 Built development is sparsely scattered along the A20 and adjoining roads and to the east near Harrietsham. A notable amount of commercial development is situated along the A20, with a large hotel, caravan park, garden centre and car cleaning facilities. North of the M20, Eyhorne Street comprises a particularly distinctive settlement with exceptionally strong local vernacular, which is recognised as a Conservation Area. Timber framed houses, cottages of red and grey chequered brick, ragstone and weatherboarding line the southern traditional section of Eyhorne Street. To the south the grand, moated Leeds Castle is recorded on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Set in 500 acres of parkland, some of which is now used as a golf course, the grade I listed ragstone castle was built in 1119 on the site of a Saxon Manor by Robert de Crevecoeur for one of William the Conqueror's Lords. In later years, Leeds Castle was held by numerous Medieval queens and in Tudor times, Henry VIII visited frequently. From approximately the 16th century it has been in private ownership, and has been used as a garrison, prison and has also been home to several affluent families.

49. Leeds Castle Parklands

Geology, soils and topography

49.6 The solid geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds. Within the Len Valley to the south, the solid geology comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds and Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay forms the base of the river. There are minor drifts of head and Fourth Terrace River Gravel. Soils are mostly well drained loams over sandstone, although heavier seasonally wet deep clay and fringes of loam over limestone are found to the south around the River Len.

The topography is undulating, and generally rises northwards away from the Len Valley.

Views

49.7 Views are generally restricted by intervening vegetation throughout this landscape, although there are some longer views across the open parkland landscape surrounding Leeds Castle. Wider panoramic views of the North Downs are available from higher vantage points, such as along Old Mill Lane.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

49.8 The major infrastructure routes of HS1, the M20 and A20 cause a significant degree of fragmentation to this landscape, and create an incoherent pattern of elements. Despite these routes being reasonably well integrated into the landscape in visual terms, the audibility of traffic degrades the remote and rural character. In addition to infrastructure, there are many other visual detractors including caravan parks, equestrian grazing and associated facilities, and numerous commercial developments along the A20. The ecological integrity is strong. Woodland and other native vegetation is scattered across the landscape, particularly around Leeds Castle and its golf course, and isolated mature trees and vegetation belts along roads provide a reasonable habitat network. There is limited arable land, and although major infrastructure routes sever connectivity, many parts of the landscape are recognised for their ecological diversity. The cultural integrity is variable. Tree cover is reasonably extensive and is well managed and varied in age structure, with newer planting across the golf course. Traditional field boundaries comprising woodland blocks and tree belts, are generally in good condition, although infrastructure routes have caused significant severance to the original field pattern. The built environment is also generally in good condition and there are many examples of local vernacular, which brings an element of consistency to the landscape.

Sensitivity

49.9 Infrastructure routes, recent development and the recent golf course landscape slightly weaken local distinctiveness and fragment the continuity. However overall, Leeds Castle and the surrounding parkland landscape, with frequent isolated mature trees, are very distinctive and create a very strong sense of place. There is a regularity in vernacular styles and materials throughout many of the traditional buildings, which provides continuity across much of the built environment. Visibility is moderate, with much screening provided by intervening vegetation.



49. Leeds Castle Parklands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND RESTORE

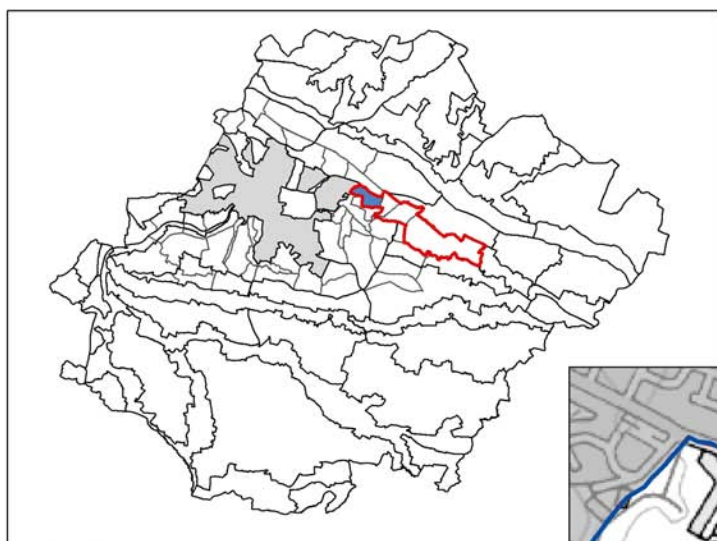
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

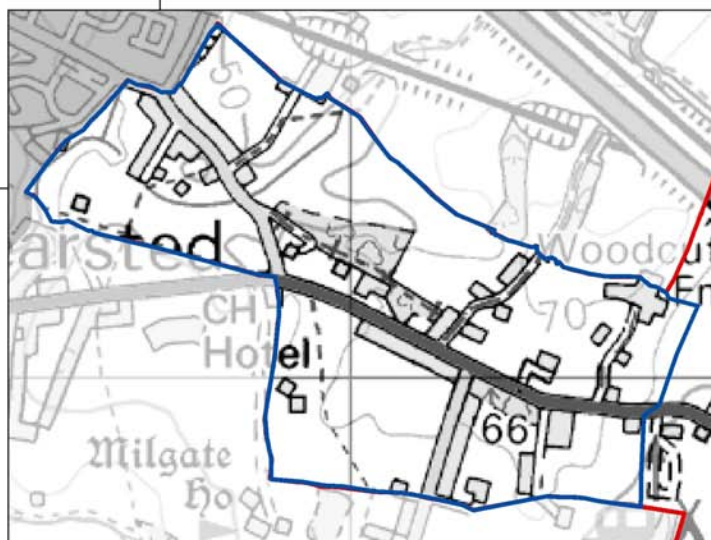
- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the traditional parkland character of the landscape
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve and appropriately manage the pocket of lowland dry acid grassland to the northwest. Refer to Maidstone's local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Conserve and restore tree cover, which helps to screen views of major infrastructure routes
- Ensure continuity of mature isolated trees through planting new stock
- Restore hedgerow boundaries where they have been removed
- Resist field segregation, avoiding fenceline boundaries



49-1. Caring Pastures



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area

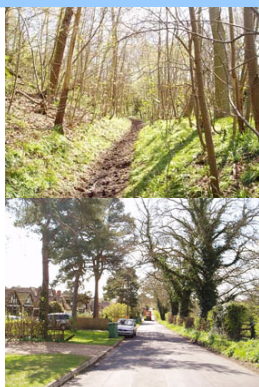


KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Urban edge influences and suburban land uses
- Frequent small woodland clumps
- Pasture
- Medium sized fields
- Undulating topography
- Dominance of road infrastructure

Location

49.10 Caring Pastures lies east of Maidstone. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The boundaries of large fields enclose the area which is characterised by a fragmented pattern of pasture and urban fringe uses.



49-1. Caring Pastures



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.11 This area comprises pockets of pasture, clumps of woodland, and fragmented urban fringe uses which include a plant nursery and part of Tudor Park and Hotel Golf Course. A linear belt of residential development along Caring Lane, and the busy A20 Ashford Road, segment the landscape. Field boundaries include post and rail fencing, gappy hedgerows and single species hedges along ditches. There are frequent small woodland blocks, particularly towards the north of this area and there are some remaining native hedgerows with a few standard oaks in the fields. Other vegetation consists of conifer and yew around farms and that associated with suburban gardens.

49.12 Historic records indicate that large fields were interspersed with blocks of woodland and irregular shaws. The historic settlement pattern was based on occasional farmsteads on the high ground. The area is now influenced by residential and suburban land-uses. Original farmsteads are associated with recent residential cottages. The narrow Crismill Road runs from the north of the area to join the A20 which, with its associated development, dominates the area.

Geology, soils and topography

49.13 The geology of the area is a combination of Lower Greensand and clay. Lower Greensand is located centrally in the form of Folkestone Beds with southern edges of Sandgate Beds, Hythe Beds and Atherfield Clay, and clay beds

are located on the northern edges of the area as Gault Clay. A small pocket of Fourth Terrace River Gravel drift is located at Woodcut Farm in the east of the area. There are two predominant soil types in the area: loam over sandstone in the majority of the area, and seasonally wet deep clay in the two northerly locations coinciding with the Gault Clay beds. Informed by drainage patterns, the landform is rolling.

Views

49.14 Long views are intermittent due to the landform and occasional tree cover, but from the higher areas, long views of the North Downs, which are punctuated by the M20 and HS1, are frequent. Visibility is moderate due to tree cover; however the domed landform would increase the extent of visibility if tree cover were compromised.

Urban edge influence

49.15 Existing urban edge influences include the busy A20 and the nursery, golf course and fragmented land use with scattered paddocks and residential development.

49-1. Caring Pastures

BIODIVERSITY

49.16 To the north there are grazing pastures and arable land bordered by scrub. Centrally there are buildings including the Marriott Hotel and a garden centre as well as private homes with gardens. These buildings are surrounded by small blocks of broadleaved woodland and scattered trees. Arable land, small woodland blocks and mature scattered trees may have the potential to support protected species of bat and nesting birds. However, the lack of established hedgerows in the field boundaries hinders a good connectivity between the various habitats. A stream to the west may have the potential to support otters, water vole, reptiles, and amphibians. The area is located on the suburban/rural fringe but the linear block of mature trees could potentially provide an effective wildlife corridor to link the west of Maidstone town centre and the wider countryside.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

49.17 Large fields and woodland blocks are fragmented with internal roads and linear development. Development associated with the A20 and views of the M20 are visually detracting. There are some woodland blocks and hedgerows but the connectivity of ecological bases is weak. Woodland blocks are vulnerable to removal and development and new residential small-scale boundaries are prevalent.

Condition Assessment

Poor

Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
Detracting features:	Some
Visual Unity:	Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Coherent

Sensitivity

49.18 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. However whilst woodland contributes to the sense of place, generally the settlements and buildings form indistinct characteristics. Overall the landscape is of low sensitivity.

Sensitivity Assessment

Low

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Insignificant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Low

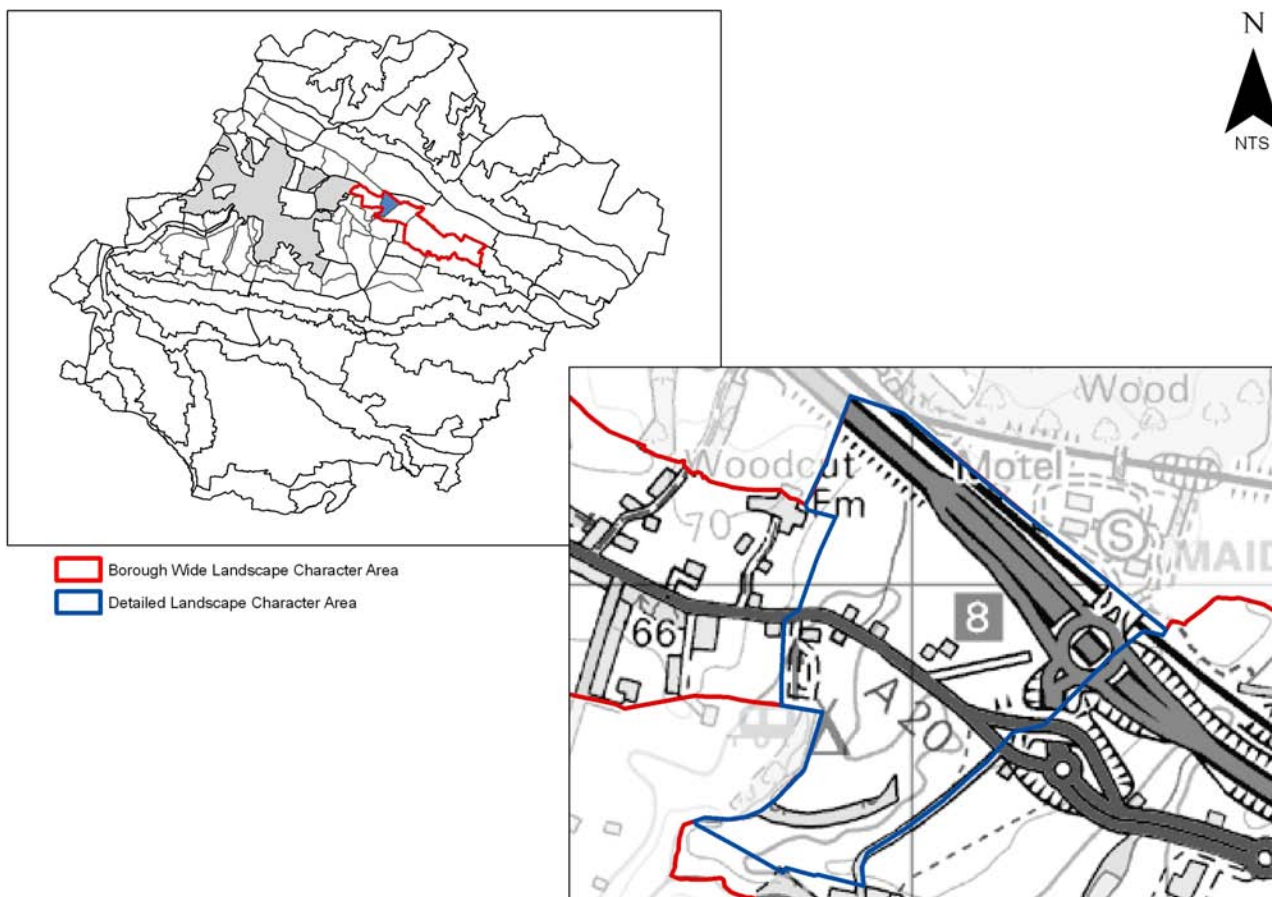
GUIDELINES – IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Create a new functional integrity in which the use of the land is reflected in clear landscape features
- Improve historic parkland features
- Improve the more distinctive and characteristic elements, e.g. native woodland, which strengthen the setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Avoid urban fringe influences extending along the A20

49-2. White Heath Farmlands



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Major infrastructure
- Vegetation belts along the head of the Len valley
- Urban influences including car dealership
- Modern development

Location

49.19 White Heath Farmlands are situated to the east of Maidstone. This area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Old Mill Road lies to the east and the M20/HS1 corridor borders the area to the north. Field boundaries border the area to the south and west, enclosing the large parcels of arable land.



49-2. White Heath Farmlands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.20 Fields are large and are used for a mixture of arable and pasture land. There is little woodland vegetation throughout the area, although significant swathes of vegetation line the drains which form the head of the Len Valley and sections of gappy hedgerow and vegetation belts remain in places. To the north the landscape is heavily influenced by the M20/HS1 corridor, and traffic is both visible and audible. The busy A20, Ashford Road, also dissects the area in an east west direction, increasing the impact of major infrastructure and fragmenting the landscape. There is little development within the landscape, although a few modern properties and a car dealership are situated along the A20 which give a slightly sub urban character.

Geology, soils and topography

49.21 The geology of the area is largely Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds with bands of Gault Clay located north of the M20 motorway and Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds underlying the tree-lined drainage channels in the south. There is no drift geology in the area. The soils are predominantly loam over sandstone with deep clay soils found in the north. The

landform is flat to gently undulating towards the head of the Len Valley. Artificial undulations line the transport corridor of the M20 and HS1.

Views

49.22 Views within the area are relatively open across the farmland, with the major infrastructure standing out. Views out of the area are limited, with the significant woodland block of Snarkhurst Wood to the north and dense vegetation along the River Len to the south. There are open views across slightly larger arable fields to the east, and glimpses of housing along Caring Lane to the east across subdivided fields and paddocks. There are wide views of the North Downs to the north.

Urban edge influence

49.23 The area is much influenced by the urban features, especially heavy road and rail infrastructure. The urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area, although recent development along the A20 gives a slightly sub urban character.

49-2. White Heath Farmlands

BIODIVERSITY

49.24 This area comprises improved and arable farmland with broadleaved trees occurring around the periphery of fields and properties. To the south there is a block of ancient woodland and a band of mature broad leaved trees. The arable and improved grassland areas may support breeding birds whilst field margins may potentially support species of reptile including slow worm and common lizard. The ancient woodland and mature trees may potentially provide suitable habitat for badger and hazel dormouse, as well as roosting, commuting or foraging bats and nesting birds. The lines of trees and hedgerow present throughout the site link with adjacent rural plots but do not directly connect to Maidstone town centre. Therefore the features of this area are primarily important in providing wildlife corridors in the countryside surrounding Maidstone.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Poor
49.25 Fragmentation is caused by the heavy transport infrastructure. There are habitat opportunities to the south at the head of the Len Valley, although hedgerow boundaries have been removed in part. Although some of the woodland is designated as ancient woodland, there are few other heritage features.	Pattern of elements:	Incoherent
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Moderate
	Cultural integrity:	Poor
	Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
49.26 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. Whilst the transport corridors and service area provide little in the way of local distinctiveness, the dense vegetation belts along the drains which form the head of the Len Valley form localised distinctive features.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Apparent
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	Moderate

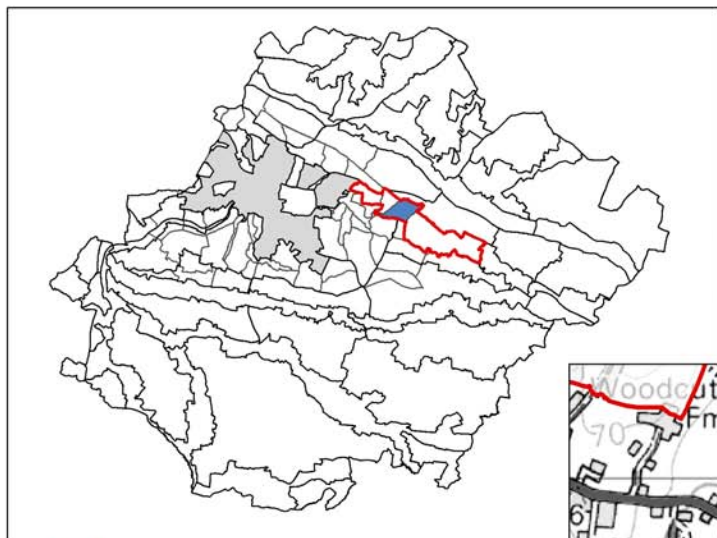
GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

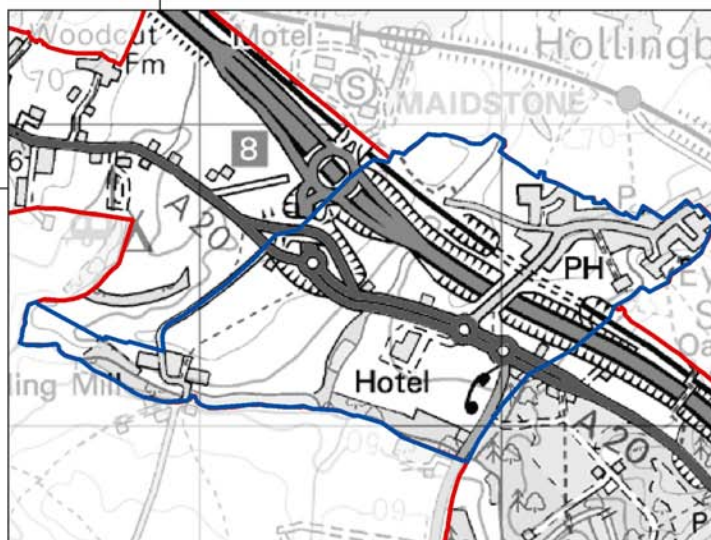
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Improve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB through avoiding further urban edge influences and expansion of motorway services to the north of the M20
- Improve ecological connectivity between existing woodland blocks
- Restore, improve and appropriately manage ancient woodland and dense vegetation belts along drains

49-3. Ashbank Fields



- ▭ Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
- ▭ Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open views across arable fields and pasture
- Streams and ditches
- Lines of riparian woodland along streams
- Field boundaries marked by contours and watercourses

Location

49.27 This area lies to the east of Maidstone with HS1 at the northern boundary and the River Len to the south. The area lies within part of the foreground of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Leeds Castle land forms the eastern boundary and Old Mill Road defines the western boundary.



49-3. Ashbank Fields



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

49.28 This small area is dominated by the Rail Link and the M20 to the north and by the A20, with its associated infrastructure, which runs through the centre. Between the two roads is pasture, surrounded by a continuous belt of trees with a block of woodland through the centre. The southern section comprises a large arable field to the west and a hotel with extensive grounds to the east. There are a few scattered farmsteads and houses. A watercourse with small linear woodland crosses the centre from north to south.

49.29 Woodlands were formerly strong features of this area, marking the lines of the streams - some lines of riparian woodland are still evident on these lines. Internal field boundaries and enclosure are not characteristic of the low-lying areas: the field divisions directly relating to the contours and watercourses. Enclosure pattern is open and there is little seasonal variation.

Geology, soils and topography

49.30 The geology of the area is entirely Lower Greensand which is predominantly distributed as Folkestone Beds with small bands of Sandgate Beds and Hythe Beds occurring along the southern boundary. In

addition, there are three types of drift geology: a pocket of head on the site of the hotel, a central strip of alluvium underlying the watercourses, and two areas of Fourth Terrace River Gravel on the easterly side of the area. A loam soil type is found throughout the area. Topography is associated with a dished and rolling landform with watercourses at the base of the contours

Views

49.31 Views to the North Downs are very close but are interrupted by the transport corridor. Within the area itself, views are relatively open and uncluttered across arable fields and pasture, with the line of the streams or ditches marked weakly by landform and occasionally by vegetation.

49.32 There is high visibility across the area - this is an open rolling landscape in which riparian and ancient woodland has been largely cleared.

Urban edge influence

49.33 Infrastructure has a significant impact on the Kent Downs AONB, and on the wider context of the Len Valley. The restoration of this rural landscape is a priority.

49-3. Ashbank Fields

BIODIVERSITY

49.34 The site consists of improved grassland and arable farmland. There are some scrub areas and bands of broadleaved trees around the periphery of fields and along the M20 to the north. The River Len flows through the area with mature broadleaved trees growing along the banks. To the east of the river there is a leisure complex surrounded by amenity grassland. The rough grassland bordering the fields has the potential to support protected reptiles, such as the grass snake, slow-worm and viviparous lizard. The lines of mature trees provide potential habitat for nesting birds and commuting corridors for mammals such as bat as well as various reptile species. The riverside aquatic habitat has the potential to support protected species which may include otter and water vole. The field boundaries with associated tree and scrub vegetation may provide corridors for wildlife within the wider countryside but do not directly connect to the town centre or habitat areas designated as valuable.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

49.35 This is a coherent landscape, although heavy infrastructure provides many visual detractors. The water courses and small areas of woodland provide habitats for wildlife, but these are weak clusters and the remaining area is intensively farmed arable land.

Condition Assessment

Very Poor

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Many
Visual Unity:	Interrupted
Ecological integrity:	Weak
Cultural integrity:	Variable
Functional integrity:	Weak

Sensitivity

49.36 This is a sensitive location in that the landscape provides the setting to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. There are many recent features, although part of the woodland is ancient and Hollingbourne – Eythorne Street is designated as a Conservation Area.

Sensitivity Assessment

Moderate

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Apparent
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	Moderate

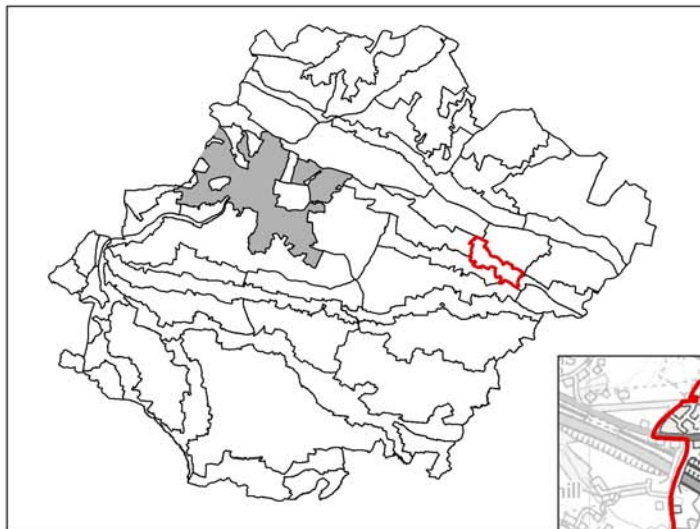
GUIDELINES - RESTORE AND IMPROVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

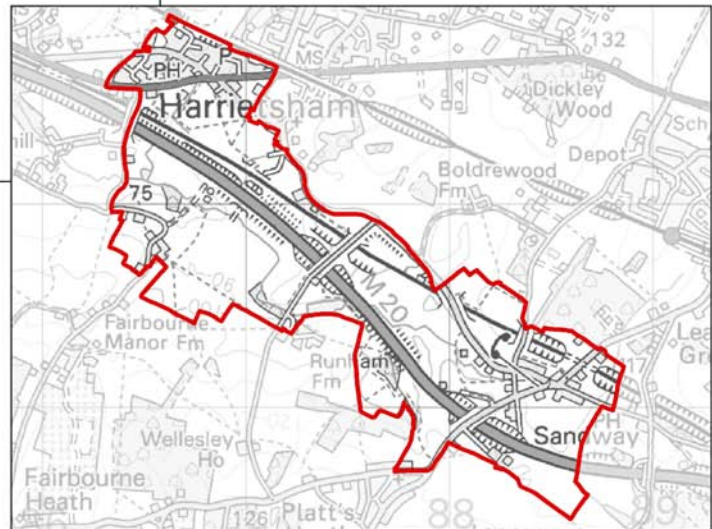
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Restore and improve the rural setting to the Kent Downs AONB north of the M20 by avoiding expansion of development
- Improve the integration of infrastructure through native planting where practicable
- Conserve traditional buildings and the rural setting of Hollingbourne – Eythorne Street Conservation Area

50. Harrietsham Vale



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Poor acidic soils
- Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland
- Sand extraction
- Severance caused by HS1 and the M20
- Artificial landform and ponds resulting from infrastructure mitigation
- Spring which forms the source of the River Len, running in a westward direction
- Loss of traditional hedgerow boundaries
- Equestrian grazing with temporary electric fencing

Location

50.1 Harrietsham Vale lies to the east of Maidstone across the Folkestone Beds. Harrietsham is situated to the west, the traditional core of Sandway lies to the east and Sandway Road marks part of the northern boundary. The landscape has suffered much severance as a result of HS1 and the M20 motorway, and it is the extent of disturbance and effects on surrounding land use and landscape character which broadly define the southern boundary. Whilst the landscape is very similar to the areas to the east, it is the headwaters of the River Len that cut into the landscape rather than those of the Great Stour. The landscape to the south is more intact in comparison with a more remote, tranquil character, and the southern boundary is further defined by the change from sandy to loamy soils.

50. Harrietsham Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

50.2 The landscape is heavily influenced by the infrastructure routes of HS1 and the M20, and the surrounding landform is evidently artificial with its small undulations, bunds and recent manmade water bodies. Field patterns have been severed, and traffic on the M20 is clearly audible from the surrounding landscape. Where roads pass across the M20, there are clear views of the traffic and all sense of remoteness, tranquillity and time depth are lost. Many traditional hedgerow boundaries have been removed and replaced with post and wire, and temporary electric fencing. A smaller and more enclosed field pattern has been retained around parts of Sandway, although much of the landscape has been opened up to accommodate modern intensive agricultural farming practices. The land is largely maintained as grassland alongside the infrastructure routes, with a significant amount of equestrian grazing.

50.3 There is a reasonable amount of tree cover, with some established broadleaf woodland blocks and newer native mitigation planting in association with HS1. To the south of the M20, well established woodland along the distinctively sunken and narrow Runham Lane creates a remote visual quality which is still unfortunately compromised by the audible presence of traffic along the M20. Similarly, south of the M20 the shallow upper Len Valley also has some visually remote qualities, with ribbons of vegetation defining the narrow ditch which contains the River Len and its adjoining drains. Willow trees are prominent along these ditches, and

surrounding areas where the water accumulates in ponds along the valley. A section of the River Len is designated as part of the wider Fairbourne Mill Meadows Local Wildlife Site for its unimproved, semi-improved and marshy grassland. A pocket of lowland dry acid grassland is situated north east of the M20.

50.4 The settlement of Harrietsham originated around a series of springs which emerge along these lower slopes of the chalk downland. Although there are several listed buildings along West Street, north of the A20, Harrietsham has experienced much recent development with densely populated houses situated within cul-de-sacs. The style of housing does not generally respect local vernacular, with a noticeable amount of plastic weatherboarding. Along the A20 Ashford Road, traditional oast houses have been converted to form part of a wider business park which lines this section of the road. This land use creates a suburban character, which contrasts with some of the visual qualities provided by other traditional buildings and use of local ragstone at Sandway to the east. The narrow lanes through Sandway, timber weatherboarding, the distinctive former post office building situated on a bend in the road and isolated farms to the south provide a remote, village like character, and Sandway is designated as a Conservation Area. However these qualities are again compromised by some recent development, audible traffic on the M20, the artificial landform where HS1 tunnels

50. Harrietsham Vale

through the landscape, the proximity of an industrial depot located along Lenham Heath Road and sand extraction to the west.

Geology, soils and topography

50.5 The solid geology largely comprises Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds, with a band of Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds to the south. Fringes of Lower Greensand Hythe Beds to the south, and Gault Clay to the north define the periphery of the area. Drifts of head and Fourth Terrace River Gravel are scattered across the area, and a strip of alluvium runs from north west to south east. Soils are generally loam over sandstone, with fringes of seasonally wet deep clay to the north and loam over limestone to the south. The topography is

gently undulating, with the shallow valley south of the infrastructure corridor containing the headwaters of the River Len.

Views

50.6 Infrastructure routes have generally been well integrated into the topography and there are few extensive views of the M20/HS1 from the immediately surrounding landscape. Although the undulating landform and intervening vegetation restrict views throughout the immediate landscape, there are some open views, particularly from higher points along Sandway Road, across the undulating landscape to the north which forms the foot of the North Downs.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

50.7 Overall the disruption and severance caused by the M20 and HS1, and the significant visual detracting caused by the pockets of commercial, industrial and mineral extraction works provide an incoherent landscape. The ecological integrity is moderate. Established woodland blocks, recent mitigation planting, drainage ditches and ponds within the Len Valley provide a reasonable network for wildlife. This is, however, compromised by heavily grazed equestrian areas, intensive arable production and the severance of infrastructure routes. The cultural integrity is variable. Whilst some established woodland blocks appear to be in reasonable condition, and new mitigation planting provides a good age structure, many traditional field boundaries have been lost. There is an extensive range of traditional listed buildings within the central core of Sandway and along West Street Harrietsham. However the setting of traditional buildings and settlements is sometimes compromised by adjacent recent development, and some buildings are in a poor state of repair.

Sensitivity

50.8 Parts of this landscape, like the established woodland blocks and central core of Sandway, are distinctive and historic. However the disruption to the landscape caused by the infrastructure routes of the M20 and HS1 compromise the local distinctiveness and the overall sense of place. Pockets of commercial, industrial and mineral extraction further fragment the continuity of the more traditional landscape elements. Recent development is extensive at Harrietsham and does not respect local vernacular or the setting of traditional buildings. Visibility is high owing to the intermittent tree cover and the undulating landscape, albeit artificial in places.



50. Harrietsham Vale

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Many	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Significantly Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

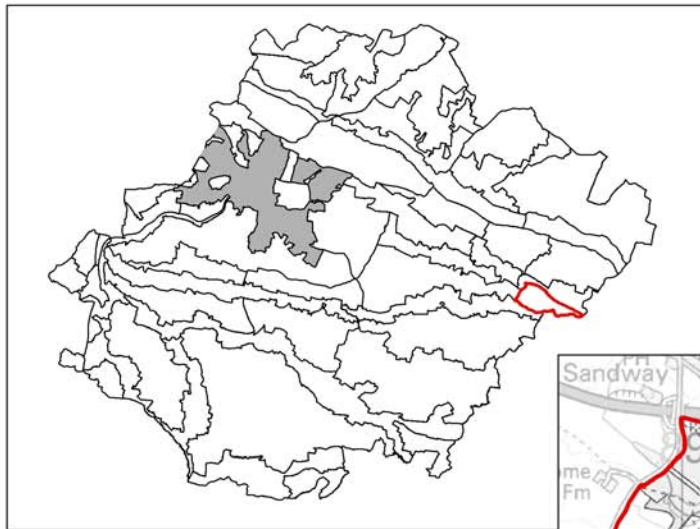
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



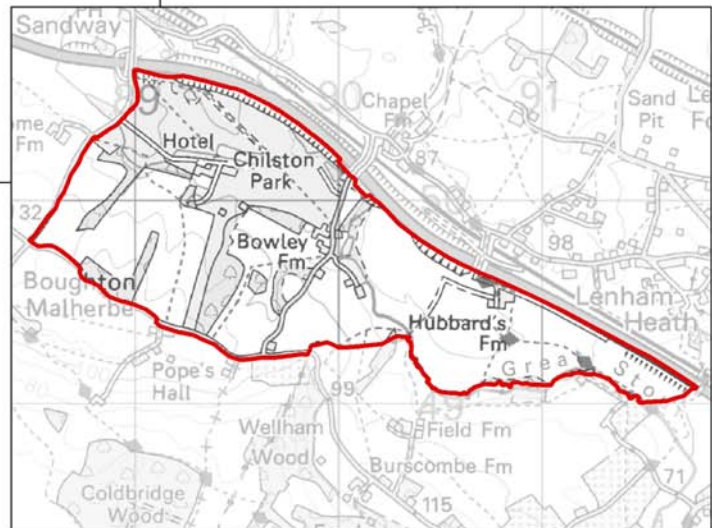
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Len Valley and its setting, and strengthen vegetation along the River Len and adjoining ditches to improve habitat connectivity
- Conserve the small scale field pattern around, and the traditional setting of, Sandway Conservation Area
- Conserve and appropriately manage the pocket of lowland dry acid grassland north east of the M20. Refer to Maidstone's local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath
- Encourage sympathetic redesign of former quarrying sites, with organically shaped water bodies and integrated vegetation
- Restore and improve traditional hedgerow boundaries where practicable
- Encourage sympathetic fencing in association with transport infrastructure
- Restore traditional buildings sympathetically
- Resist further infill development which detracts from the setting of traditional buildings and settlements
- Improve mitigation and visual softening of visual detractors where possible through further planting

51. Chilston Parklands



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Dip slope of the Greensand Ridge
- Valley side of the Great Stour
- Large arable fields
- Coppice and broadleaf woodland blocks
- Chilston Park manor house and rural parkland
- Extensive, panoramic views of the North Downs

Location

51.1 This area lies to the far east of Maidstone, comprising Chilston Park and the gently sloping valley side of the Great Stour River. The M20 forms the northern boundary, broadly following the change in soils from loam over limestone to loam over sandstone. The southern boundary is broadly defined by the ridgeline, and from where the land begins to fall sharply downwards across the scarp face of the Greensand Ridge. Soils become shallow and silty outside the area to the west, and there is a noticeably larger field pattern. Maidstone Borough boundary forms the edge of the character area to the east. This is the study area boundary, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the east may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



51. Chilston Parklands



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

51.2 This is generally an arable landscape of large undulating fields, enclosed by regular blocks of woodland, much of which is ancient, and some native hedgerow boundaries. However, agricultural intensification has led to some hedgerow removal, and long distance views of the North Downs give an exposed and large scale character to higher parts of this landscape. The Great Stour River flows through the valley as a minor stream, and within the sheltered pocket along the Great Stour Valley the land is grazed.

51.3 There is little development within the rural landscape, comprising scattered farms and the striking and secluded ragstone Bowley Mill. Bowley Farm mill pond, with a dam wall constructed from ragstone, dates back to the 11th century and is referenced in the Domesday Book. The mill pond supports areas of willow carr, reed bed and open water, and it is designated as part of the wider Lenham Heath and Chilston Park Local Wildlife Site. Within this section the Great Stour has a good water quality, and hosts a range of emergent and marginal species as well as adjoining wet woodland and semi natural grassland habitats. Overlooking the mill pond, Bowley Farm includes converted oast houses which add to the attractive and traditional character within the valley. Further east, the once isolated setting of Hubbard's Farm is compromised by the prominence of the M20 which runs to the north.

51.4 Straddling the headwaters of the Great Stour, Chilston Park comprises 25 acres of parkland with a late 15th century grade I listed red brick manor house. The grand property is now a hotel but over the years it has been the home of politicians, Lords and Viscounts, and it is recorded on the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Large oaks, limes, pines and horse chestnuts are scattered across the parkland, which is unfortunately dissected by the M20 and HS1. The landscape becomes heathy to the north where the soils become sandier, and pines, gorse and bracken reflect the acidic soils, although the parkland landscape character remains prevalent despite the change in underlying characteristics. The parkland is designated as a Local Wildlife Site for its grasslands and fallen trees, which provide habitats for beetles, invertebrate and bird fauna.



51. Chilston Parklands

Geology, soils and topography

51.5 The solid geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, with fringes of Sandgate Beds and Folkstone Beds to the north west around Chilston Park. Drifts of alluvium follow the course of the Great Stour, and deposits of head are scattered across the area. Soils are mostly well drained non-calcareous loam over limestone, becoming sandier to the north west. As part of the dip slope of the Greensand Ridge, as well as the valley side of the Great Stour, the landform slopes gently downwards to the north towards the river before rising gradually across the opposite valley side.

Views

51.6 Within the area, there are reasonably extensive views across the arable landscape and the open parkland of Chilston Park. Views are more enclosed within the Great Stour Valley to the east of Bowley Lane due to the landform and tree cover. There are extensive views of the North Downs from the ridge, and the white chalk cross on the scarp slope above Lenham draws the eye as a clear landmark feature.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

51.7 This is a unified landscape, where the undulating topography and the predominantly arable land use provide a coherent pattern of elements. There are very few visual detractors, although it is unfortunate that traffic on the M20 is prominent within the foreground of long distance views of the North Downs. The ecological integrity is strong. Although there is a high proportion of arable land, a large section of Chilston Park is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Sections of the Great Stour and the valley, and woodland at Bowley Mill and Park Wood are also designated as Local Wildlife Sites, demonstrating the extent and frequency of wildlife habitats. The cultural integrity is variable. Although there are some missing hedgerows and dying parkland trees, woodland, parkland and the built environment are generally in good condition. The range of vernacular style properties is very distinctive and provides a strong sense of place. However, aural pollution from the M20 adversely affects the tranquillity of Chilston Park.

Sensitivity

51.8 Chilston Park and its surrounding parkland setting are locally distinct, and the secluded character within the Great Stour Valley evokes a very strong sense of place. The local distinctiveness is further promoted by the valley side landform, and the resulting extensive views of the North Downs. Visibility is high, particularly to the south, owing to the elevated landform and subsequent views.



51. Chilston Parklands

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

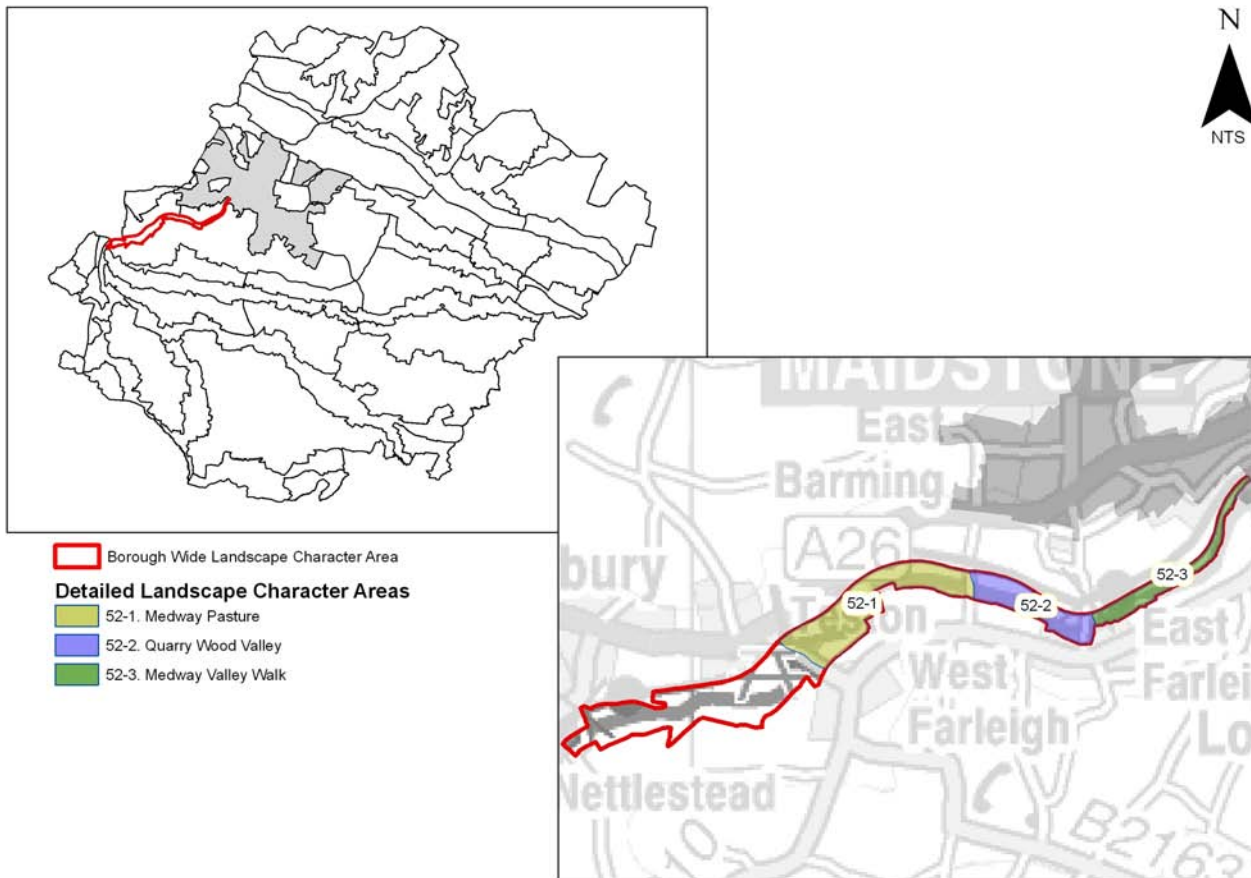
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve blocks of ancient woodland
- Conserve the remote qualities of the Stour Valley and its setting
- Conserve the good water quality within the Great Stour and the diverse range of species and habitats along the river corridor
- Conserve pockets of traditionally grazed landscape along the Great Stour Valley
- Conserve the rural and isolated setting of Bowley Farm and Bowley Mill
- Conserve characteristic isolated mature trees within parkland and plant new specimens to succeed ageing examples
- Conserve the parkland character, and avoid further severance, of Chilston Park



52. Medway Valley – Maidstone to Waterringbury



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Valley landscape containing the River Medway
- Frequent groups of willow trees and small native woodland blocks
- Grazed pasture
- Distinctive ragstone bridges
- Medway Valley Walk promoted Long Distance Path follows the river
- Recreational land use with picnic site at Teston, fishing and mooring facilities at East Farleigh and Waterringbury

Location

52.1 This section of the Medway Valley runs through the Greensand Ridge from the south western urban edge of Maidstone, at Tovil, to just south of Waterringbury. The northern and southern extents of the area are broadly defined by the extent of the Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay, which follows the river. The western extent of the area is defined by the approximate point at which the river begins to flow south of the Greensand Ridge, the valley sides become shallower and the surrounding landform less undulating. A railway line follows the line of the river to the north, and the Medway Valley Walk follows the river.



52. Medway Valley – Maidstone to Watlingbury



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

52.2 The River Medway meanders through a narrow and clearly defined valley, which predominantly supports grassland with sparsely scattered, small blocks of mixed woodland. Waregrave's Wood comprises a slightly larger block of broadleaf and sweet chestnut coppice and is ancient woodland. Frequent clusters and belts of willow are dotted along the valley sides, and native vegetation defines the route of the railway line to the north. The regular pattern of topography and vegetation provides strong continuity throughout the landscape, making a pine plantation to the west of East Farleigh and an unmanaged orchard west of Barming Bridge stand out as slightly unusual features.

52.3 The valley sides provide a strong sense of enclosure, and the frequent clumps of native woodland further contain the landscape. There are few physical boundaries between the land and the rivers edge, although some gardens at East Farleigh have low rise picket fencing. Fencing along the railway line is sporadic, with some stretches of chainlink fencing visible between sections of vegetation and other stretches evidently left open to the tracks. There is a varied field pattern, with long areas of grassland to the north of the river left open, segregation into small linear parcels within gardens at East Farleigh and fenced enclosures for equestrian grazing to the west of Barming Bridge and south of Bow Bridge at Watlingbury.

52.4 There is a parkland character along

stretches of the river, such as to the east of Teston Bridge where livestock graze pasture with darker green sedges between scattered isolated mature oak trees. West of Teston Bridge, Teston Country Park promotes recreational land use along the river with car parking facilities and a picnic site. This area is recognised for its wildlife value through its designation as a Local Wildlife Site, and is used by various birds including kingfisher, tern and snipe. Pipistrelle, Noctule and Daubenton bats feed off air borne insects above the river, and seasonally wet ditches and ponds support a range of aquatic plants and insects.

52.5 There is little development within the valley, although some peripheral development at East Farleigh extends down the valley sides. Large, detached, modern houses have long gardens which extend to the rivers edge. Many of these properties have private jetties and, although there is a variety of styles and materials, these are reasonably subtle. To the west of Station Road Bridge, caravan sites comprising static homes, climb the valley sides. Moored vessels line the river side here, and some boats are moored on dry land. Narrow ragstone bridges at East Farleigh and Teston form very distinctive crossing points and landmark features along the river. Both of these Medieval structures are designated as Scheduled Monuments. Crossing points at the pedestrian only Barming Bridge and Bow Bridge comprise more recent metal structures which are much less distinct.

52. Medway Valley – Maidstone to Waterringbury

Geology, soils and topography

52.6 The solid geology underlying the river to the west is Wealden Clay and to the east is Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. Atherfield Clay also occurs in the west, just south of the Wealden Clay. The drift geology comprises alluvium to the west with patches of brickearth. Two very small patches of alluvium lie only slightly east of the main alluvium deposits. Soils are seasonally wet loam to clay over shale in the west and loam over limestone to the east. The narrow valley topography gives way to a low lying landform, with steeply inclining valley sides.

Views

52.7 The Medway Valley Walk follows the line of the river, crossing from north to south at Teston Bridge. Views from the footpath are intimate and channelled along the valley, with the river naturally drawing the eye. Ragstone bridges at Teston and East Farleigh provide clear landmark features along the valley. To the east the crisp urban edge of Maidstone becomes visible, but it is only from reasonably close by that the proximity to the urban edge becomes clear. Views outside the area are limited because of the enclosing topography and intervening vegetation, although infrequent large buildings stand out along the skyline. The ragstone church and Court Lodge Farm Oast form key landmark features to the south at East Farleigh, and the large white bulk of Barham Court is raised prominently on the valley side at Teston.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

52.8 The consistency provided by the valley topography and the regular pattern of vegetation creates a unified pattern of elements. There are few visual detractors, comprising the varied materials and obtrusive structures at weirs and jetties, temporary fencing around over grazed equestrian pasture and poor detailing of some recent bridges and signage. The ecological integrity is strong, with the river and adjoining vegetation providing a major habitat corridor. The lack of intensively farmed arable land, clusters of new planting and the traditionally grazed valley floor further enhances habitat opportunities. The cultural integrity is good, and Medieval ragstone bridges provide distinct landmark features and a strong sense of place. Although localised, it is unfortunate that a recent caravan site, an obtrusive structure in association with the weir, and mooring and marina related features at East Farleigh do not respect local vernacular or the setting of the Medieval ragstone bridge in this location.

Sensitivity

52.9 The inclining valley sides, the river itself, the frequent pattern of willow trees along the river banks and the lack of development provide a strong sense of place and a tranquil, remote character. The limited palette of elements throughout the landscape, and the regularity of features, provides strong continuity and local distinctiveness. The ragstone bridges at Teston and East Farleigh provide clear and very distinctive focal points and a sense of arrival along the valley. Despite restricted views within the area, visibility is high because of the dominant valley landform and the subsequent prominence of the skyline.



52. Medway Valley – Maidstone to Waterringbury

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Very High
Pattern of elements:	Unified	Distinctiveness:	Very Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Strongly Unified	Sense of Place:	Very Strong
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

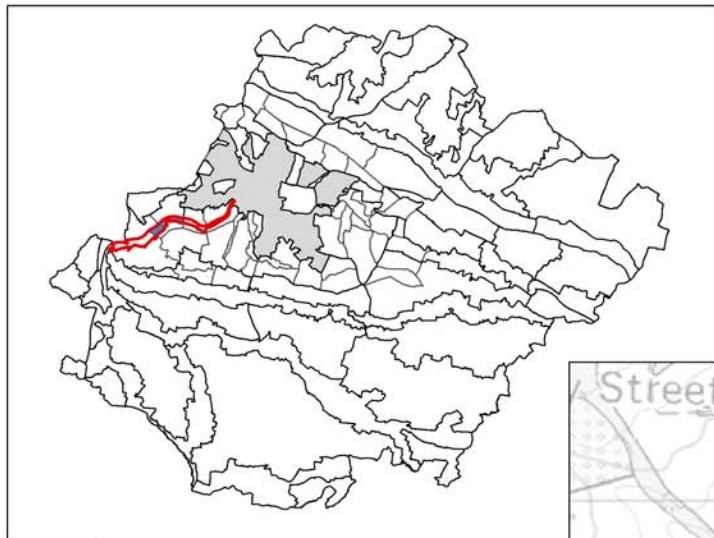
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

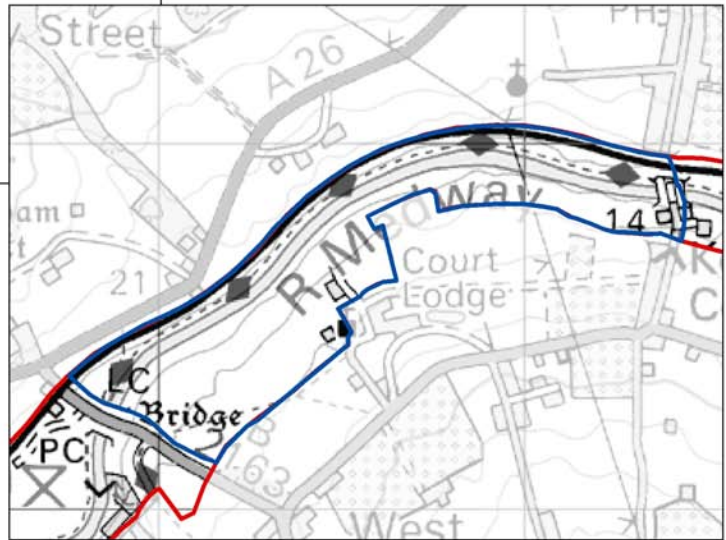
- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Conserve the grassland and pastoral land use with native vegetation and avoid arable land use
- Conserve the dominance of willow as a key species along the river
- Encourage the planting of isolated native trees to conserve the parkland character
- Respect the setting of traditional bridges
- Resist over complication and the use of too many varied materials at weirs and jetties
- Promote the use of local materials and avoid the cumbersome design of gates and visitor facilities
- Conserve the rural skyline in views from within the valley
- Conserve the open, unenclosed boundary between the land and river
- Soften chainlink fencing along the railway line where necessary with clusters of native planting



52-1. Medway Pasture



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- River Medway
- Valley sides
- Tree belts and hedgerows
- Pasture
- Some arable land
- Lack of development

Location

52.10 Medway Pasture lies to the south west of Maidstone, east of Teston, and comprises the River Medway and its valley sides. A railway line, running along the contours and parallel with the river, forms the northern boundary of the area. Teston Bridge provides the western boundary, and Barming Bridge forms the eastern boundary, where they cross the river. The southern boundary runs along field edges which contain the low lying land immediately adjacent to the river.



52-1. Medway Pasture



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

52.11 The River Medway flows in a south west to north east direction through the area and native vegetation, including willow, lines the river banks and the railway line to the north. Fields are linear in shape, following the contours, and are enclosed mostly by native hedgerows. Some land to the east is used for equestrian grazing, and subsequently hedgerows have been replaced by post and wire and temporary electric fencing. Vegetation surrounding Riverdale comprises a significant amount of evergreen trees. Land to the west is mostly grazed pasture, with some isolated mature native trees providing a parkland character. Some land to the west is intensively farmed but the linear field pattern and clumps of native vegetation and hedgerow boundaries have been retained. To the south of the River Medway, a traditional orchard has been more recently restored by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership with the land owner, using Countryside Stewardship funding. A public footpath runs along the northern bank of the river through pasture, although the route is visually informal with few signs. The area is almost undeveloped, with Riverdale forming the only property along St Helens Lane to the east. No highways permeate the area, although Teston Bridge lies along Teston Lane to the west. Teston Bridge forms a traditional, locally distinct landmark feature and is built of ragstone. Teston Lane is a busy route, linking West Farleigh with Teston and the A26. St Helens Lane to the east forms a quiet and narrow access road to properties. Barming Bridge is a footbridge only and, constructed out of steel, is neither historic nor distinct.

Geology, soils and topography

52.12 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. A patch of Lower Greensand Hythe Beds exists along the eastern edge and Wealden Clay surrounds the river in the southern half of the area. Alluvium surrounds the river in the southern half of the area. A second very small patch of alluvium surrounds the river in the northern section. Soils in the south are predominantly wet loam to clayey over shale. Soils in the north are predominantly loam over limestone. The River Medway flows along the valley and the rising land either side form the valley sides.

Views

52.13 Views within and out of the area are restricted by the landform and vegetation belts on the horizon. Within the area, the river promotes linear views along the water, with some views of pasture where vegetation allows. The traditional church at West Farleigh is visible from some locations to the west of the area. Tonbridge Road to the north of the area is visible from more open land to the west, but the general lack of visible development provides the perception of being in a definite rural area.

Urban edge influence

52.14 The urban edge of Maidstone is not widely visible from within the area, although there are intermittent glimpses of it from higher parts. The area is not influenced by the urban edge.

52-1. Medway Pasture

BIODIVERSITY

52.15 This area comprises mainly arable land which has been left fallow and as such rough semi-improved grassland and scrub dominate with scrub, ruderal vegetation and scattered trees bordering the river. The riverside habitat has the potential to support protected species which may include otter, water vole, bats and breeding birds including kingfisher. Riverside habitats are also classed as broad habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The scrub and semi-improved grassland have the potential to support reptiles, breeding birds, and commuting and foraging bats. There is good connectivity with similar stretches of habitat both up and downstream.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Good
52.16 Visual detractors to the east include pylons and some areas of poor pasture management. Wildlife corridors are provided by the river and vegetation belts along the water and railway line, as well as hedgerow boundaries around field edges to the south. There is a limited amount of intensively farmed arable land to the south of the river, but most of the land is used as pasture.	Pattern of elements:	Coherent
	Detracting features:	Some
	Visual Unity:	Coherent
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Variable
	Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	High
52.17 The River Medway and sloping valley sides, linear tree belts along the river and railway line, the hedgerow boundaries which contain fields to the south and the traditional Teston Bridge are all distinct and historic features which promote a definite sense of place and continuity through the area.	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Moderate
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Intermittent
	Visibility:	High

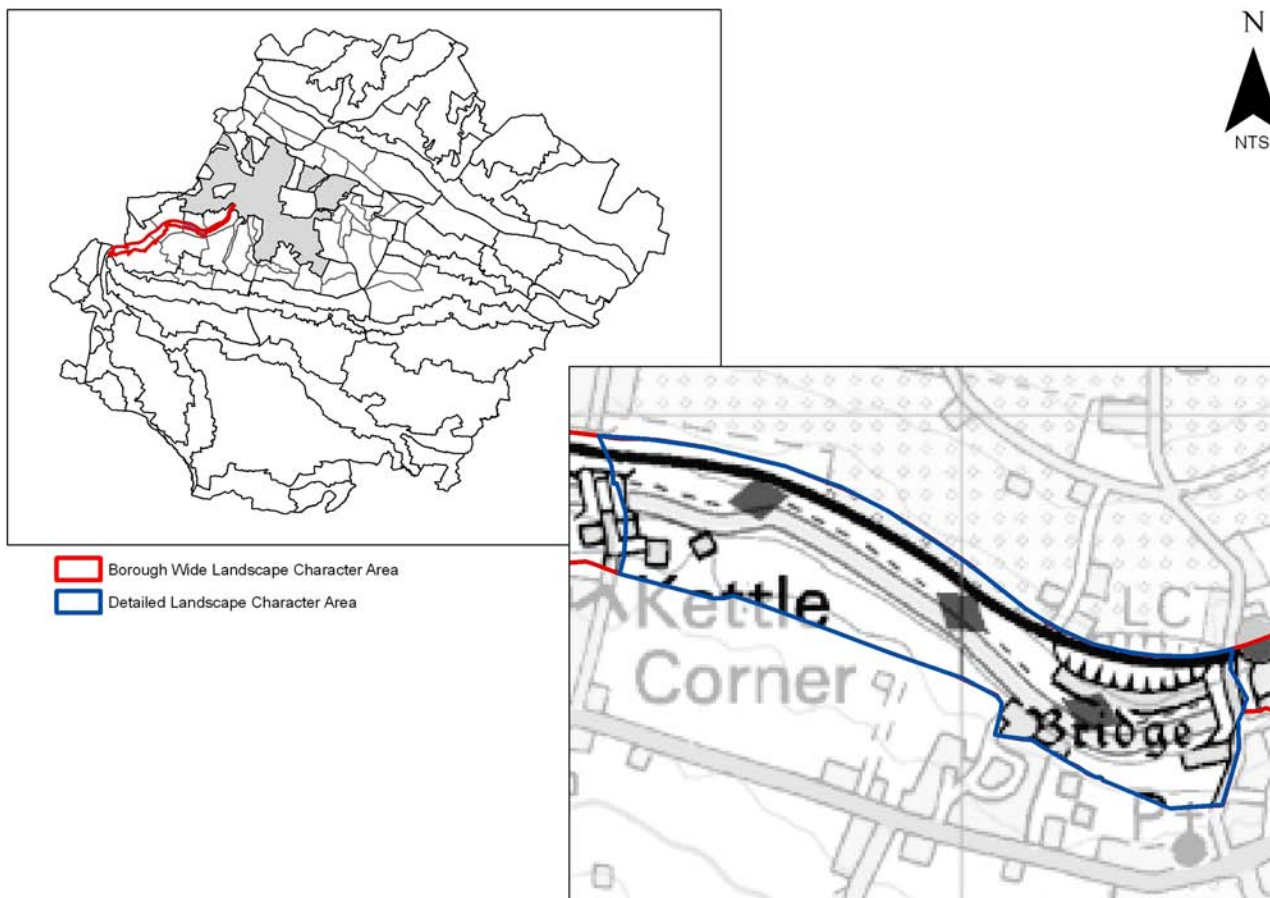
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Encourage the planting of isolated mature trees to conserve the parkland character
- Avoid the cumbersome design of gates and stiles, and promote the use of local materials in boundary treatments and access points
- Resist the introduction of contrasting visual elements in association with the railway

52-2. Quarry Wood Valley



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- River Medway and valley sides
- Railway line
- Lawns and views of the church at East Farleigh
- Willow trees along river
- East Farleigh Bridge landmark feature
- Caravan sites
- Native woodland and plantations and small paddocks

Location

52.18 Quarry Wood Valley lies to the south west of Maidstone, and comprises the valley sides of a section of the River Medway. The northern boundary is defined by the railway line, whilst the eastern boundary is formed by Vicarage Lane and East Farleigh Bridge over the River Medway. St Helens Lane and Barming Bridge form the western boundary. The southern boundary is defined by field boundaries, between the lower and upper valley sides.



52-2. Quarry Wood Valley



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

52.19 The River Medway is used for boating, with vessels moored near East Farleigh to the east. Caravan sites, as part of East Farleigh, are located on both sides of the river. Extending west, south of the river, the land is wooded with some small grazed paddocks. Willow trees form a distinct and noticeable characteristic feature along the river bank. To the west of the area native woodland, extending across a former quarry, and a plantation to the south of the river create an enclosed and rural perception. The landform and river provide a consistency in physical elements, whilst the tree cover and views out are varied. There is a sense of enclosure, provided by railway fencing to the north, the River Medway and some timber paddock fencing.

52.20 The low lying character of the land restricts development, although two permanent caravan sites are located either side of the river to the east. These comprise a dense arrangement of small lightly coloured dwellings, which are not traditional or characteristic of the area. East Farleigh Bridge to the east of the area provides a landmark feature, constructed of traditional local ragstone. Its importance has been reflected by its designation as a Scheduled Monument. Barming footbridge to the west is less distinct, constructed of steel. Some traditional properties are located along St Helens Lane to the west. There are no highways within the area, although East Farleigh Bridge forms a narrow vehicular route, joining Station Road

and Farleigh Lane. St Helens Lane, along the western boundary, comprises a narrow rural access to properties.

Geology, soils and topography

52.21 The geology of the area is predominantly Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. As the distance from the River Medway increases there is a transition to Lower Greensand Hythe Beds. There is a very small patch of alluvium in the north western corner of the area. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is a dominant feature, with the valley sides rising either side of the River Medway, with the northern slope being steeper than the south.

Views

52.22 Views within the area to the north are visually enclosed by the steep valley side and railway embankment, although a caravan site is visible to the east. Views out of the area to the south are varied, dependant on tree cover. To the east, development within East Farleigh is clearly visible from the public footpath along the northern side of the river. The church provides a visible landmark feature on higher ground to the south.

Urban edge influence

52.23 The area is not influenced by the urban edge of Maidstone, although visual detractors comprise railway fencing and caravan parks. The existing urban edge is not visible from the area because of the landform.

52-2. Quarry Wood Valley

BIODIVERSITY

52.24 This area comprises riverside habitat including scrub and semi-improved grassland adjacent to arable fields, and coniferous and broadleaved plantation woodland blocks and fruit farms to the south. A small housing estate with gardens exists along the eastern side of the area. The river banks consist of scrub and lines of mature trees, which may have the potential to support protected species which may include otter, water vole and breeding birds including kingfisher, as well as reptiles. Riverside habitats are also classed as broad habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. There is good connectivity with similar stretches of habitat both up and down stream. Farms provide habitats for breeding birds and reptiles and the boundary hedgerows may also provide commuting foraging corridors for bats and reptiles.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition

52.25 Although the railway fencing and caravan sites provide visual detracting, the extent of, and impact caused by these, is considered to be minor. The riverside vegetation and wooded character to the west provide strong ecological integrity. The historic East Farleigh Bridge provides good cultural integrity.

Condition Assessment

Very Good

Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Detracting features:	Few
Visual Unity:	Unified
Ecological integrity:	Strong
Cultural integrity:	Good
Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity

52.26 The River Medway and East Farleigh Bridge, designated as a Scheduled Monument, form distinct and historic features. Mature vegetation and willow trees along the riverbank also promote strength of character. The distinctiveness of these features outweighs the visual detracting caused by railway fencing and caravan parks.

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of Place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

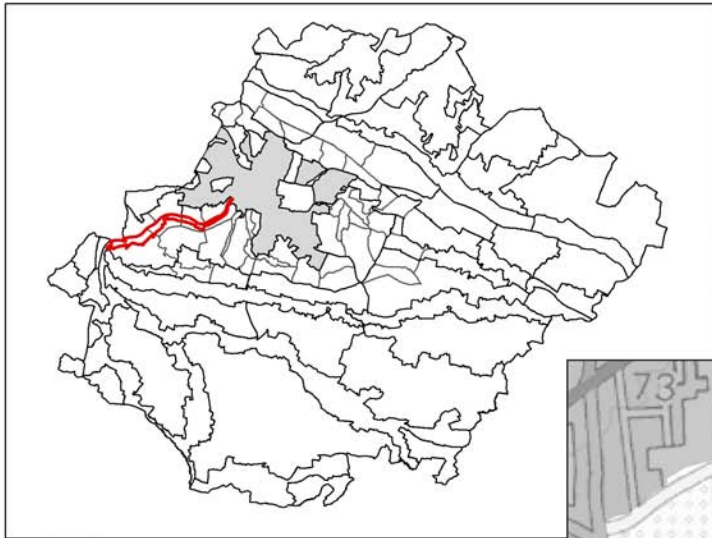
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

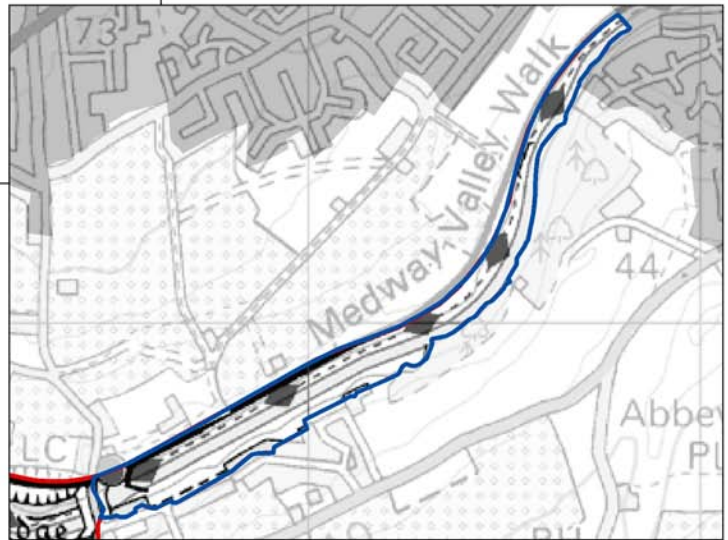
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the valley location and the River Medway
- Resist the introduction of further contrasting visual elements in association with the railway
- Encourage appropriate design, materials and style of mooring facilities and structures in association with boating

52-3. Medway Valley Walk



-  Borough Wide Landscape Character Area
-  Detailed Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- River Medway and valley sides
- Footpath running along river
- Native trees and shrubs
- Lawns extending to the river edge to the south
- Linear views along the river
- Influence from railway with gabion reinforcements and fencing

52.27 Location

Medway Valley Walk lies to the south of Maidstone and comprises a section of the River Medway and valley sides. The northern boundary is defined by the railway line, which follows the line of the river and, consequently, the contours. The western boundary is defined by East Farleigh Bridge, whilst the eastern boundary is defined by the urban edge of Maidstone. From East Farleigh, the southern boundary follows the line of a private road, which accesses properties overlooking the river, before following the southern river edge.



52-3. Medway Valley Walk



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

52.28 The area is strongly defined by the River Medway and subsequent valley topography. Enclosure is dominant, provided by the river edge, the railway and garden vegetation and fencing. Mature, native trees and shrubs line the northern river bank and, in places, overhang the river. Ground flora, including marsh marigold, wood anemone and periwinkle, provide seasonal variation and detail within the wider views. Narrow ditches feed into the river, crossing the narrow route of the Medway Valley Walk promoted Long Distance Path which runs alongside the river.

52.29 Although largely unsettled, a row of housing extending from East Farleigh is situated to the south. The dwellings are largely modern and indistinct, contributing little towards local style and materials. Private gardens run in a linear pattern down to the river edge. Some gardens have small private timber jetties and ornate iron fixtures at the river edge.

52.30 The railway is not clearly visible because it is situated on top of a steep embankment, although some fencing and gabion structures associated with the railway are visually detracting in places. To the west, East Farleigh Bridge forms a dominant and distinct historic landmark feature. Its historic significance is supported by its designation as a Scheduled Monument. Other modern structures associated with the river, including sluice gate and lock, slightly obscure clear views of the bridge and reduce its visual prominence.

Geology, soils and topography

52.31 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay. There is no drift. Soils are loam over limestone. The topography is a dominant feature of the area, with valley sides rising either side of the River Medway.

Views

52.32 The river gives way to distinctly linear views, extending along the water. From the Medway Valley Walk footpath which runs alongside the northern bank of the river, views are restricted to the north by the steep, wooded railway embankment. To the south, views extend to housing along the southern boundary of the area.

Urban edge influence

52.33 There are few urban edge influences within the area, and the restricted views resulting from the wooded character and landform provide a strong rural influence. Although the urban edge of Maidstone is visible from the north western end of the character area, it is not widely visible from the most part of the area. Recreation forms an important land use within this area.

52-3. Medway Valley Walk

BIODIVERSITY

52.34 This area comprises riverside aquatic habitat with mature broad-leaved trees along the river bank, and semi-improved grassland and scrub to the north east, along the railway corridor. At the western end it comprises residential gardens bordering the south bank of the river, forming part of the village of East Farleigh; there is also a weir across the river to the east of the East Farleigh Bridge. The area has the potential to support protected species which may include otter, water vole, bats and breeding birds including kingfisher. Riverside habitats are also classed as broad habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The semi-improved grassland and scrub has the potential to support reptiles and breeding birds. This section of riverside habitat connects well with more open sections to the west, and, together with the adjacent railway, provides a corridor for wildlife movement between the town centre and the rural areas to the south and west of Maidstone.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition	Condition Assessment	Very Good
52.35 Although there are a few visual detractors, such as railway features and modern housing, the pattern of elements within the landscape is unified. The river, with its aquatic plant species, and the abundance of native trees and shrubs provide strong ecological integrity. Cultural heritage is also strong, with historic woodland and the historic East Farleigh Bridge.	Pattern of elements:	Unified
	Detracting features:	Few
	Visual Unity:	Strongly unified
	Ecological integrity:	Strong
	Cultural integrity:	Good
	Functional integrity:	Very Strong

Sensitivity	Sensitivity Assessment	High
52.36 The landscape is very distinct, with a strong sense of place derived from the meandering River Medway and enclosing valley sides, mature woodland vegetation and narrow riverside Medway Valley Walk footpath. Visibility is moderate, resulting from the dominant landform and enclosure provided by tree cover.	Distinctiveness:	Very distinct
	Continuity:	Historic
	Sense of Place:	Strong
	Landform:	Dominant
	Tree cover:	Enclosed
	Visibility:	Moderate

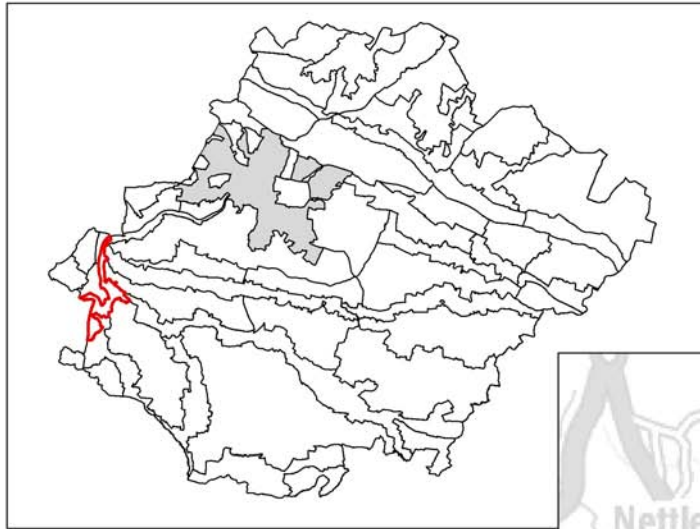
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the River Medway
- Resist the introduction of further contrasting visual elements in association with the railway
- Encourage topsoil and seeding within installed gabion baskets where coir matting has failed
- Encourage appropriate design, materials and style of mooring facilities and structures in association with boating

53. Medway Valley Yalding



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Broad valley landscape containing the River Medway
- Extensive grassland alongside the river
- Linear native woodland vegetation
- Numerous marina developments and a boat yard west of Twyford Bridge
- Frequent caravan parks
- Ragstone bridges

Location

53.1 Medway Valley Yalding comprises a section of the Medway Valley to the south west of Maidstone where the river flows south of the Greensand Ridge. It is the low lying valley topography and the underlying geology which define the area. The extent of the area broadly encapsulates this broader section of the Medway Valley and numerous marina developments. The northern extent is marked by Bow Bridge at Nettlestead, from where the valley runs eastwards to the north of the Greensand Ridge within a narrower valley. The study area boundary lies to the south west, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the south west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



53. Medway Valley Yalding



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

53.2 The River Medway flows through a broad valley which has a remote, secluded character, particularly within the woodland band south of Nettlestead and south west of Yalding across areas of former gravel extraction. Chainlink fencing along the railway, to the west, provides a definitive boundary line, although there are few agricultural fields and subsequently no field pattern or associated means of enclosure. Despite this the river is lined with blocks and ribbons of native woodland vegetation, some of which is ancient, along much of its length. There is an abundance of oak and willow, which provides an enclosed, intimate character. Frequent clearings comprise meadows of tall grasses and flowers. To the south west of Yalding the area extends to Gravelly Ways, where former mineral extraction has created a consistent continuation of regenerating scrub vegetation around pools of water. Much of the land in this area is covered by Local Wildlife Site designation for the diversity of wetland habitats provided by the ponds, dykes, pasture and rough grassland. Further east at The Lees, damp and dry meadows are also designated as a Local Wildlife Site for the extensive range of grass and herb species associated with unimproved grassland.

53.3 The land use is distinctly recreational and most of the valley is accessible via the Medway Valley Walk promoted Long Distance Path which runs along much of this stretch of the river. Numerous marinas are dotted along the river, creating pockets of development which contrast with the largely tranquil and remote character of the valley. South of Bow Bridge at Nettlestead and west of Yalding, jetties and

moored vessels line the water, and static caravan parks have developed along the riverside. Recent marina buildings, jetties, private garden plots and lighting columns accumulate to provide a slightly disjointed palette of materials. A canal adjoins Hampstead Lane between Hampstead Lock and a weir adjacent to Twyford Bridge, providing a manicured section of the river in contrast to other, more rural sections.

53.4 To the south near Yalding, the valley contains the confluence of the River Beult, the River Medway and the River Teise. The River Beult is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its diverse range of clay river flora and nationally scarce invertebrates. The bare clay banks are known to provide nesting sites for kingfisher, and the emergent fringes provide breeding sites for other birds such as reed warbler and reed bunting.

53.5 At Yalding, the character of built development is traditional and historic in contrast to some of the recent developments around marinas, and the settlement has a designated Conservation Area. Vernacular style housing, comprising white weather boarding and grey and red chequered brickwork, is scattered between more recent 20th century infill development along Lees Road. Although mostly within the Beult Valley landscape character area the narrow and very distinctive Medieval ragstone Yalding Bridge crosses the River Beult along the High Street, affording attractive views along the river corridor. Thought to have been

53. Medway Valley Yalding

constructed in the 1400's, the bridge is considered to be the longest surviving Medieval bridge in Kent and is designated as a Scheduled Monument. To the south west of Yalding, Twyford Bridge comprises another distinctive ragstone crossing which is also designated as a Scheduled Monument. Likely to have been originally constructed prior to the construction of Yalding Bridge, the crossing is thought to be at the site of an original Saxon village known as Twynford (twin ford) at the point where the Medway and Teise joined. It is considered likely that flooding moved the site of the village to the higher ground where Yalding is now situated.

Geology, soils and topography

53.6 Along the valley the solid geology is predominantly Wealden Clay, with drifts of alluvium, brickearth and First Terrace River Gravel along the course of the River Medway. Soils are predominantly seasonally wet deep clay around the course of the river with some

fringes of seasonally wet loam to clay over shale and deep loams. The landscape forms part of the River Medway Valley, and is flat and low lying.

Views

53.7 The Medway Valley Walk follows the line of the river, and from here views are channelled along the valley and the river naturally draws the eye. Historic ragstone bridges at Yalding provide clear landmark features along the valley. There is a significant amount of mature native vegetation which, along with the valley landform, restricts long views out. However, from some of the meadows along the river and from the periphery of the valley, along Hampstead Lane, there are longer views to the east of the opposite horticultural valley side. Plastic sheeting, polytunnels and vibrant fields of lavender stand out in these wider views.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

53.5 The valley topography and the river itself, the consistency in plant species and vegetation patterns provide a coherent pattern of elements. However, the mixture of materials found at the marina developments and caravan parks detract from the remote and secluded qualities found along much of the river. The ecological integrity is strong, with the river and adjoining vegetation providing a major habitat corridor. The lack of intensively farmed arable land, and restored areas of grassland further add to the habitat opportunities. The cultural integrity is variable. The vegetation includes a varied age structure and mature specimens appear to be in good condition. Historic buildings are generally in good condition, although some later brick renovations at Twyford Bridge and adjoining boatyard development slightly detract from the traditional character of the bridge. There is a strong contrast between the vernacular style buildings on the periphery of Yalding, and the collections of recent caravan parks which detract from the sense of place.

Sensitivity

53.6 The river, the regular pattern of vegetation along the river banks, and the lack of development along much of the valley provide a sense of place and a tranquil, remote character. The ragstone bridges at Yalding and Twyford Bridge provide clear and very distinctive focal points and a sense of arrival along the valley. However marina developments and caravan parks detract from the local distinctiveness, fragment the continuity provided by the more traditional pattern of elements and this recent development dominates the more traditional built heritage. Despite restricted views within the area, visibility is high because of the dominant valley landform and the subsequent prominence of the skyline.

53. Medway Valley Yalding

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Open
Functional integrity:	Strong	Visibility:	Very High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

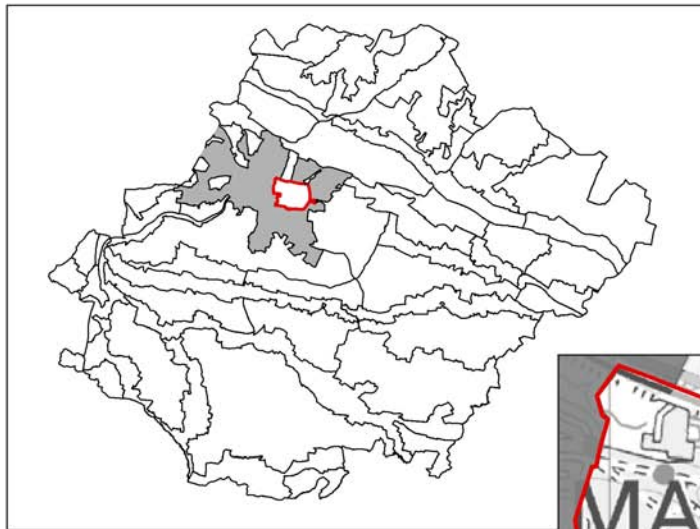
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



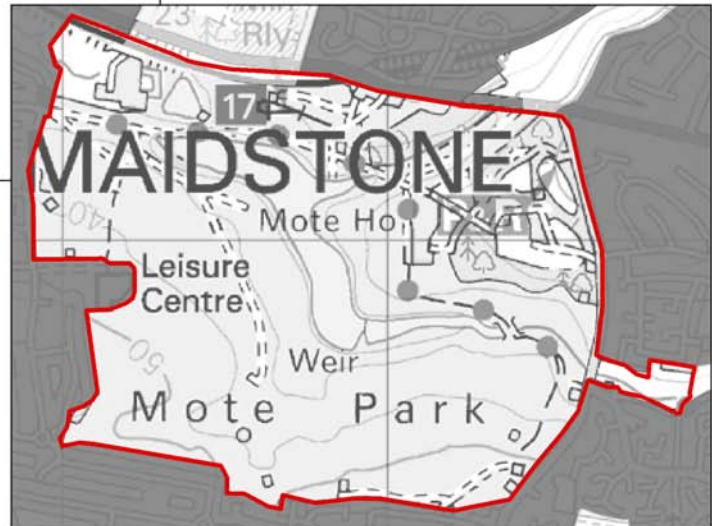
- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the special landscape quality provided by the rural valley location and the meandering River Medway
- Conserve and enhance the meadows and blocks of native vegetation and avoid arable land use
- Conserve the dominance of willow and oak as key species along the river, and plant new specimens to replace ageing examples
- Respect the setting of traditional bridges and maintain using like for like materials
- Resist over complication and the use of too many varied materials at weirs, jetties and locks
- Conserve the rural skyline in views from within the valley
- Conserve the open, unenclosed boundary between the land and river
- Soften chainlink fencing along the railway line where necessary
- Promote a limited palette of materials throughout marina developments and caravan parks



54. Mote Park



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating landform, declining to a large lake
- River Len with ragstone foot bridges, paths and tracks
- Tree avenues and woodland blocks
- Wide mown rides through swathes of rough grassland
- Flat sports pitches and car parking areas
- Traditional buildings, ragstone walls

Location

54.1 Mote Park forms a central open green space within Maidstone. The residential edges of Bearsted and Willington lie to the east, and the residential edges of Maidstone lie to the south and west. The northern boundary is enclosed by the railway line and the A20, Ashford Road.

54. Mote Park



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

54.2 Mote Park was purchased by the Borough by Lord Bearsted in 1929, and is the largest public park within any town in Kent. It originated as a deer park with castellated manor house in the 14th century and was remodelled in the 'landscape' style in the 18th century. The current mansion dates from 1793–1801. Much of the 500 acre park is enclosed by ragstone walling, with some recent mesh fencing segregating pockets of amenity land within. Although there are a lot of trees and wooded blocks, the park is generally open with an unenclosed character and vantage points across the park. Large mature deciduous trees, some isolated and some forming avenues, are scattered throughout the park. Some more recently planted evergreens are situated to the west, forming boundaries and shelterbelts between sports pitches. Clusters of trees and shrubs surround buildings within the park, and are situated within swathes of rough grassland. To the north east, the park is more wooded with significantly sized mixed woodland blocks and an increased sense of enclosure. Surrounded by reeds and aquatic planting, the River Len meanders through sections of the park beneath ragstone footbridges. Providing a major habitat and a key characteristic throughout the wider town of Maidstone, a section of the River Len to the west of Mote Park (outside this area) has been identified for designation as the River Len Local Nature Reserve due to its varied and abundant flora and fauna including water vole, Desmoulin's whorl snail and white legged damselfly. Formed by damming the River Len, the main lake is extensive and surrounded by

clumps of vegetation, attracting a variety of bird life. Access to the lake is possible via a series of informal paths, and a more formal hard surfaced area is located next to a ragstone boat house to the north. A series of paths run through the park, with some comprising wide rides, defined by the topography and mown grassland. Other paths form more formal hard surfaced routes, running adjacent to sections of the lake and in front of Mote House.

54.3 The park is used for amenity purposes, with sports pitches, cricket ground, paths and tracks, miniature golf course and children's play area. A significant car parking area is situated to the west and to the east a park and ride car park is enclosed by woodland, restricting views of parked vehicles from the surrounding park. Although the park is generally unsettled, Mote House (under renovation) is situated on higher ground overlooking the park. Several other timber framed properties are scattered around the edges of the park, including Mote Cottage, Keepers Cottages and Cobtree Hall. To the east, Mote Gardens comprise a walled area which is currently being developed to contain housing. Originally developed to contain a range of exotic plants, as well as providing as kitchen gardens for Mote House, the high ragstone wall is a remnant historic feature. A circular stone pavilion, supported by columns and enclosed by black railings, lies to the south, which provides a visual focal point. To the west, the Leisure Centre

54. Mote Park



Views

29.5 Views within the area reach across the park from higher points, with views down to the extensive lake. Views from the north east are limited because of woodland blocks. Views out of the area are to housing along the outer edges of the area to the south, east and west. From higher land to the south of Mote Park, open land to the north is visible, with scattered oast houses and woodland blocks scattered within the foreground of the North Downs, which forms a dominant skyline in the distance.



comprises a large modern building, which contrasts with historic buildings within the surrounding park. To the north, the grade II* listed Turkey Court was a gentleman's residence with landscaped lake and gardens around a commercial paper mill. Paper making ceased here in 1976, and the buildings have largely been converted to offices. Some newer buildings provide contrast in character. The railway line, with a brick viaduct containing a series of archways, forms a distinctive characteristic along the northern boundary.



Geology, soils and topography

54.4 The geology of the area is Lower Greensand Hythe Beds, with Wealden Clay underlying the lake and stream beds along with alluvium drifts. Soils are loam over limestone. The landform across the park is gently undulating, and slopes down to the lake and the River Len, with some flatter areas to the west used as sports pitches. West of the lake, artificial undulations form a miniature golf course.



54. Mote Park

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

26.6 Recent elements detract slightly from the historic quality of the landscape. Mote Park is registered at grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. Historic features within the park, such as the lake, buildings and pavilion, are generally in good condition.

Sensitivity

26.6 Mote Park forms a historic extensive open space within an urban setting, and many of its key characteristics are very distinct and historic. However encroachment of recent development within the park, such as the Leisure Centre, car parking areas, play equipment and the park and ride, detract slightly from the historic continuity.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Very Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Apparent
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

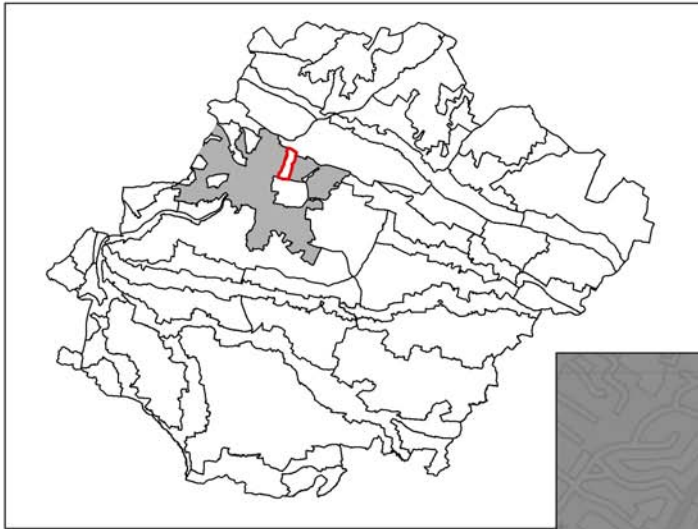
GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS



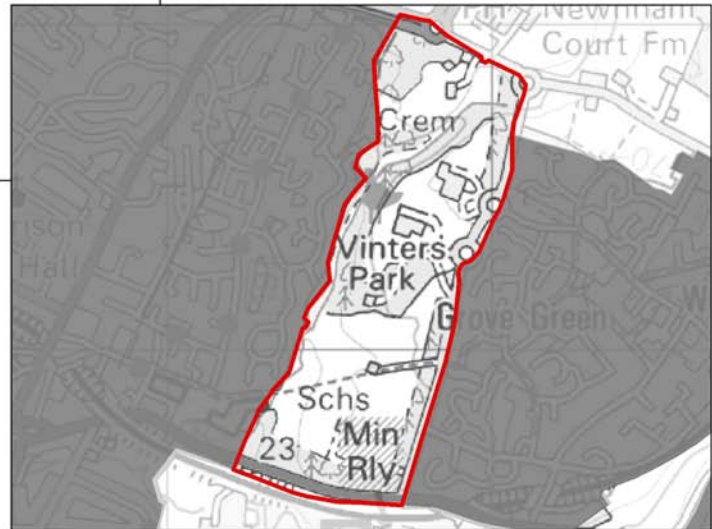
- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve historic features and buildings
- Conserve the rich biodiversity of the River Len and reinforce through appropriate management
- Conserve and reinforce the parkland landscape through promoting vegetation screening around incongruous recent buildings and features
- Conserve and reinforce the traditional parkland landscape and improve biodiversity through appropriate management and the creation of a palette of historically appropriate plant species, avoiding inappropriate species such as leyland cypress, variegated acers and flowering cherries - refer to relevant management plans for Mote Park
- Ensure renovations are sympathetic and use appropriate styles and materials
- Ensure play equipment is of sympathetic material, style and design
- Resist further building within the park boundary
- Improve the sense of place through promoting a palette of appropriate materials to provide some continuity
- Conserve open longer distance views out of Mote Park to the North Downs, whilst screening shorter distance views of adjacent roads and traffic

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

55. Vinters Park



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Site of former house and estate
- Narrow valley with small lake and stream
- Ragstone walls
- Rough pasture with parkland trees
- Woodland blocks
- Winding paths through woodland
- Playing fields to south
- Isolated traditional buildings
- Large commercial buildings

Location

55.1 Vinters Park forms a green parcel of land between high density housing to the east and west. The A20, Ashford Road, runs along the southern boundary and the A249, Bearsted Road, encloses the parcel of land to the north.



55. Vinters Park



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

55.2 The landscape is reasonably well wooded, with bands of native vegetation surrounding cleared playing fields to the south, Lower Fullingpits Wood to the north west and a significant amount of mature vegetation along the valley. Mature isolated trees are scattered around Grove Lodge, providing distinct landmark features. The extent of mature vegetation provides a sense of enclosure throughout the area. Although the playing fields to the south are open, vegetation belts segregate the two main fields and define the footpath which runs along the northern field boundary.

55.3 A network of paths runs through Vinters Valley Nature Reserve alongside a small lake, weir and stream. Most paths are enclosed by mature woodland vegetation, including some distinctive mature yew trees with gnarled trunks. Stone sets run along the edges of broad steps and line the open edge of the small lake. Clumps of reeds line the edge of the lake in places where overhanging woodland vegetation does not dominate. Ragstone retaining walls, draped in ferns and mosses, line the edges of the weir and the sides of some footpaths.

55.4 Vinters Park is the site of a former house and estate dating back to the 1350's. Remaining features include a Roman crematorium and the remnants of the old estate house, which was burnt down in the mid 20th century, a ha-ha, ice house, barrel bridge

and silt traps. There is little other development within the area. Grove Lodge and East Lodge are traditional ragstone properties, set within a parkland landscape with pasture and large isolated trees. A native hedgerow defines the outer boundary of land associated with Grove Lodge and smaller paddocks, grazed by horses and enclosed by fencing, immediately surround the property. In contrast, large modern buildings used as television studios and other commercial works set within amenity planting, appear out of scale and character with the surrounding landscape. A crematorium is situated to the north, set within mown lawns with clumps of native tree and shrub planting and denser wooded blocks, which again provides contrast in land use.

Geology, soils and topography

55.5 Vinters Park is underlain with Lower Greensand. This geology is further subdivided within the area into predominantly Hythe Beds, with a strip of Atherfield Clay occurring along the channel of the stream, and areas of Sandgate Beds and Folkestone Beds occurring in the north of the area. Only a small amount of drift geology occurs in the area as head brickearth in the north eastern corner. Soils are predominantly loam over limestone with two small areas of loam over sandstone located in the north and north east of the area. A narrow valley runs along the western side of the area, with localised surrounding undulations within the Nature Reserve, and

55. Vinters Park

the landform rises gradually in a north easterly direction.

Views

55.6 There are limited views within the area because of the wooded character, although views across the playing fields to the south are slightly more open. Glimpses through

woodland of the commercial buildings to the east and through a gap in the native hedgerow boundary up to Grove Lodge across pasture are possible. Views out of the area are again limited because of the enclosing woodland surrounding the area, although glimpses of housing through intervening vegetation to the west are available.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

55.7 The land use is varied providing a slightly fragmented character, although there are few visually detracting features. Lower Fullingpits Wood is ancient woodland. There are strong wildlife corridors, and the valley bottom is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The condition of heritage features is good.

Sensitivity

55.8 Although the continuity of the landscape is slightly fragmented, there are some very distinct and historic key characteristics. However, some urban influences and land uses detract slightly from the strength of character.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

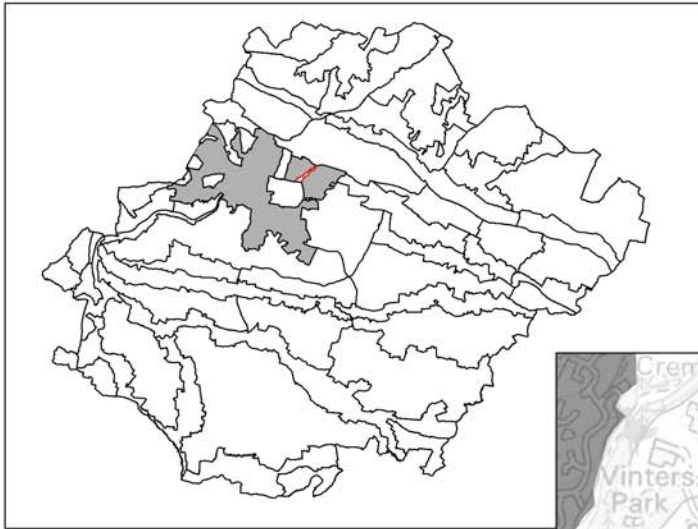
Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Good	Tree cover:	Enclosed
Functional integrity:	Very Strong	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES – CONSERVE AND REINFORCE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the important, historic, landscape quality and the undeveloped character of the park
- Conserve, enhance and appropriately manage the ecological framework
- Encourage planting of mature isolated parkland trees
- Conserve and reinforce open parkland character around Grove Lodge (resist field segregation)
- Conserve and reinforce areas of mature vegetation, woodland and enclosed character

56. Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow)



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Valley formation
- Narrow stream along valley bottom
- Pasture used for horse grazing
- Railway line to the west
- Mature native vegetation belts along railway line and valley ridge to the east
- Remnant ragstone walls

Location

56.1 Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow) forms a green corridor between the urban areas of Bearsted and Grove Green, containing the railway line to the west and a narrow stream which runs along the valley bottom.



56. Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow)



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

56.2 Mature belts of native vegetation line the railway line to the west, and the valley ridge to the east. Clumps of native vegetation and scrub are scattered throughout pasture, which is grazed by horses. Paddocks are separated with post and wire and electric fencing, and a combination of deteriorating timber stabling, shelters and sheds run along the valley sides. A dilapidated timber railed enclosure, used for sheep management, lies west of Fauchon's Lane, and remains of crumbling ragstone retaining walls add to the complexity of materials used within the valley. A narrow stream runs along the bottom of the valley, crossed by a footpath via a small concrete bridge.

56.3 Orchard Drive, to the south, comprises a densely populated cluster of modern houses and bungalows. Other than an access drive for these properties, no roads run throughout the area. Fauchon's Lane, to the east, comprises an unmade narrow track for accessing properties. The railway line to the west is crossed by a footpath which crosses the valley from east to west. The bridge is constructed of metal, with a cage like walkway which is joined at the top. Views along the vegetation lined railway line are possible from within the structure.

Geology, soils and topography

56.4 Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow) follows the solid geology of the Lower Greensand Atherfield Clay which runs through the length of the area in line with the stream, south of the railway line. In addition, the edges of the area overlap with sections of Lower Greensand Hythe Beds and Weald Clay in the south, and a drift of alluvium runs along the south eastern facing boundary of the area. The soils of the area are loam over limestone. The landform is defined by valley sides, with a stream running through the central, low lying valley floor.

Views

56.5 Views within the area stretch along the valley across pasture grazed by horses, with vegetation clumps restricting long views. Intermittent views, through intervening mature vegetation belts, out of the area towards housing to the east and west are possible from within the valley.



56. Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow)

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

56.6 The variety of fencing types and outbuildings surrounded by overgrown vegetation give way to an incoherent pattern of elements. The stream and vegetation belts, along the railway line and valley ridge to the east, provide strong corridors for wildlife. Deteriorating walls and loss of hedgerows illustrate the vulnerability to change.

Sensitivity

56.7 The key characteristics of the area, vegetation belts and grazed pasture, are indistinct. Although there is a lack of local distinctiveness, the overall sensitivity of the landscape is assessed as being moderate because of the high visibility caused by the valley landform.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Poor	Sensitivity Assessment	Moderate
Pattern of elements:	Incoherent	Distinctiveness:	Indistinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Recent
Visual Unity:	Interrupted	Sense of Place:	Very Weak
Ecological integrity:	Strong	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Poor	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES – RESTORE AND IMPROVE

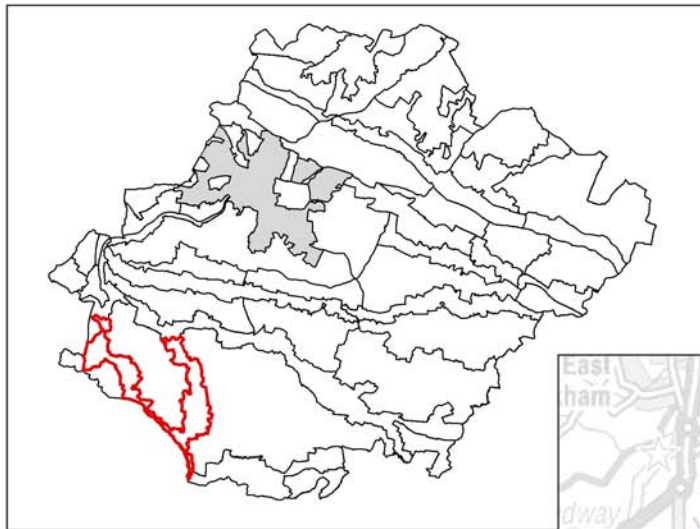
Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Improve visual aesthetics of railway structures
- Improve footpath features including ragstone edged steps and footbridge across stream
- Replace isolated trees where they have been removed
- Improve and enhance maintenance of pasture
- Improve mature vegetation alongside railway and Fauchon's Lane through appropriate management
- Maintain the undeveloped open space which acts as a buffer between developed areas



57. Teise Valley



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat, low lying landform
- Narrow rivers, ditches and ponds
- Rivers and ditches lined with native vegetation belts comprising much willow
- Large open arable fields and pasture
- Isolated oak trees within arable fields and pasture
- Scattered orchards
- Very little development and few roads

Location

57.1 The Teise Valleys are situated to the south west of Maidstone, comprising the River Teise and the Lesser Teise where they flow in a north west direction towards the Rivers Beult and Medway which they feed. The rivers are not set within valleys which are well defined by distinct valley sides, but it is the extent of alluvium drifts across the Wealden Clay that broadly define the extent of this landscape. The study area boundary lies to the south and west, which therefore forms an artificial boundary in terms of landscape character. The landscape outside the study area to the south and west may therefore form a continuation of this character area.



57. Teise Valley



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

57.2 There is very little woodland, comprising very small blocks of broadleaf woodland and some pine plantations. There are some sparsely scattered orchards and areas of soft fruit production, enclosed by poplar shelterbelts, although these do not form a significant feature within the landscape. Tall native tree belts, comprising much willow and a mixture of oak, blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, ash and elder, define the routes of ditches and enclose large fields of cereals, grassland and pasture. There is an irregular field pattern, and the landscape generally has an unenclosed, open character as a result of land drainage and agricultural intensification. Although orchards are enclosed within a smaller, more regular field pattern, these are very infrequent throughout the landscape.

57.3 Pasture is often grazed by herds of horses and, unlike in many areas, the grazing land remains open and is not segregated into small overgrazed paddocks. Large oak trees sometimes stand isolated across the arable land and within the pasture, providing landmark features within the open landscape.

57.4 The River Teise and the Lesser Teise are narrow and their routes are defined by native vegetation. The rivers are not widely visible, and the landform forms a subtle valley. The low lying nature of the landform is, however, evidenced by the numerous narrow ditches which dissect the landscape and are lined with colourful wild flowers as well as native woody vegetation.

57.5 There is very little development and few roads, which promotes a remote and tranquil character. A few isolated farmsteads are scattered across the landscape, and some farm buildings and houses are situated along peripheral lanes which skirt parts of the area. Most of the buildings comprise converted oasts and timber barns, creating a striking and simple built environment. A few minor lanes cover this landscape and cross the river, and crossing points are often lined by indistinct brick walls. A railway line crosses the landscape and both rivers, although its vegetated course is not widely visible from the surrounding landscape.

Views

57.6 There are long distance views of the elevated Greensand Ridge to the north, which is covered in orchards and polytunnels. Within the immediate landscape, views extend across large open fields of pasture and arable which are enclosed by tall tree belts. The white cowls of oast houses rise above the vegetation, drawing the eye in many views.

Geology, soils and topography

57.7 The solid geology comprises Wealden Clay, with strong drifts of alluvium along the river corridor. There are scatterings of First Terrace River Gravel, and there are some fringes of brickearth which becomes more dominant to the west of Laddingford. This is a broad and shallow valley, with a subtle transition to the wider landscape.

57. Teise Valley

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

57.8 There is a unified pattern of elements, with very few interruptions across this simplistic landscape. Key features include the flat, low lying topography, the rivers and ditches, the large open field pattern and the undeveloped character. There are few visual detractors comprising some fencing and weirs along the rivers, large pylons and a small number of polytunnels. The ecological integrity is moderate. Whilst the tree belts and ditches provide a coherent habitat network there are large swathes of intensively farmed arable land, and many ditches are filled with algae from fertiliser runoff. The cultural heritage is variable. There are some new orchards, and the sparsely scattered built elements respect local vernacular and evoke a distinct sense of place. However there is little evidence of traditional field pattern.

Sensitivity

57.9 The open character of the landscape and its low lying situation, which is evidenced through the series of tree belt lined ditches, is distinctive. The largely undeveloped character with few narrow lanes is also very distinctive and the style of development, which mostly comprises converted farm buildings, contribute to the sense of place. Visibility is high, because of the large, open field pattern which extends across the flat landscape.



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment

Good

Sensitivity Assessment

High

Pattern of elements:

Unified

Distinctiveness:

Distinct

Detracting features:

Few

Continuity:

Historic

Visual Unity:

Strongly Unified

Sense of Place:

Moderate

Ecological integrity:

Moderate

Landform:

Dominant

Cultural integrity:

Variable

Tree cover:

Intermittent

Functional integrity:

Coherent

Visibility:

High

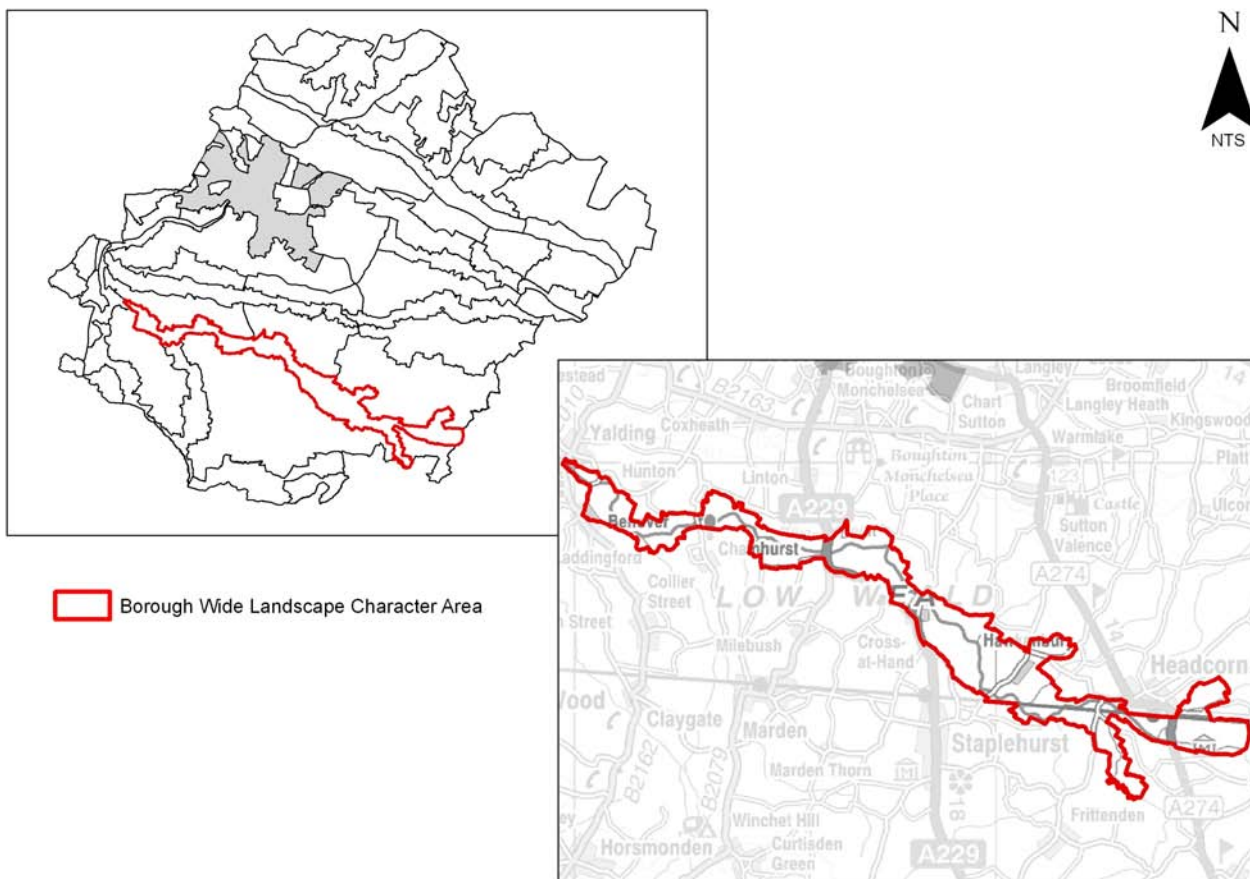
GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve and encourage grassland and pasture to improve water quality and biodiversity within ditches, and avoid further arabilisation
- Conserve native tree belts, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Encourage the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries in arable areas
- Conserve isolated oaks within arable land and pasture, and plant new specimens to replace ageing examples
- Create stronger features at crossing points along the rivers, utilising local ragstone for bridges
- Conserve remoteness by avoiding the development of new buildings and roads

58. Beult Valley



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying broad shallow valley of the meandering River Beult and Hammer Stream within the Low Weald
- Many ponds and watercourses with important ecological interest
- Species rich native hedgerow field boundaries with mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where boundaries have been removed
- Mixed agriculture with large fields supporting arable cultivation and small riverside fields with pasture
- Sparsely scattered small woodlands
- Historic north-south crossing points with ragstone bridges over the River Beult

Location

58.1 This is the broad shallow valley of the River Beult which enters the borough just east of Headcorn and slowly meanders north west across the borough to join the River Medway at Yalding. West of Headcorn, on the eastern edge of the character area, the valley of the Hammer Stream, a small tributary of the River Beult, forms a small offshoot of similar character.

58.2 The area contains a number of scattered farmsteads and small hamlets, close to the river crossing points such as at Hawkenbury, Cross at Hand and Stilebridge. The low lying topography is almost flat. Soils are generally seasonally wet deep clays alongside the river with flanks of deep loamy soils. Ponds, watercourses and ditches are common throughout the area.

58.3 The borough boundary cuts across the eastern and southern edges of the character area and it is likely that, in reality, this landscape character area continues beyond the borough boundary.

58. Beult Valley



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

58.4 This is an historic flat to very gently undulating valley landscape of small grazed hedged fields along the gently meandering and slow flowing rivers, creating a strong sense of place. Beyond the riverside, arable cultivation of mostly cereals is more common in the much larger fields, where historic hedgerow boundaries have been lost to allow intensive cultivation. Characteristically, the remaining field boundaries are wavy and species rich indicating that the hedge line was originally cut from cleared woodland, probably in Medieval times. Distinctive often ancient English oaks frequently occur in the hedgerows, typical of the Low Weald. Road access is generally limited to the north south crossing points so that the river itself appears tranquil and remote away from these bridging points. A network of ditches and watercourses drain the heavy Wealden Clay soils and ponds are very common, often surrounded by clusters of trees including distinctive silver leaved willows and lush reeds and other emergent vegetation. There are also very occasional patches of scattered wet woodland and rarely orchards on the higher slopes with freer draining soils.

58.5 Hamlets and farmsteads are dispersed throughout the area, and there are no substantial villages. The presence of occasional distinctive conical roofs of oast houses, such as the ones at Water Lane, Hunton, hint at the areas hop growing past. Other historic buildings include a group of barns, farmhouse and granary at Great Tilden with the earliest parts dating from around the 15th century. Many historic buildings are timber framed,

with either plaster or decorative brick infill between the timberwork. Also common is red and grey or blue brickwork in Flemish bond, usually just to the ground floor, with white or black weatherboarding or plain or decorative tile hanging to the upper stories. Projecting or 'jettied' upper floors are an indication of some of the earliest houses. Steeply sloping Kent peg tile roofs, often hipped, are also a distinctive feature.

58.6 The river crossing points are often historically important. Herstfield Bridges, on Chart Hill Road, are grade II* listed ragstone structures, about 100m in length with six low arches crossing over several braided streams of the River Beult. The bridge complex is probably as early as the 14th century, with later alterations. Hawkenbury bridge dates from the 15th century with blocks of roughly coursed stone and a later parapet in red and grey brick in Flemish bond. Stephens Bridge at Headcorn Road is constructed in ragstone in a Medieval style. It is said to be named after Archbishop Stephen Langton who built the original bridge at this point. Further east, New Bridge near Headcorn was built in 1815 reputedly by French prisoners of war. Unusually, the bridge is constructed from thin coursed slabs of Bethersden marble, a form of 'Paludina' Limestone which is very hard and rich in fossils.

58.7 In the middle of the area, at Monk Lakes and Riverfield Fish Farms there is an extensive system of man made rectangular ponds. As part of this development, there has

58. Beult Valley

been extensive land raising and earth modelling along the A229 and the artificial sloping landform appears rather incongruous on the valley side. There is extensive planting of weeping willow along the roadside which also adds to the artificiality of the landscape. South east of Headcorn the industrial development at New Bridge detracts from the historic river crossing.

58.8 This whole section of the River Beult is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because it is one of the few clay rivers in England which retains its characteristic flora and fauna and has not been canalised for land drainage purposes. River flows are dependent on surface run-off and weirs are placed in spring to maintain levels. In common with many lowland rivers, the Beult has suffered some enrichment with phosphate and nitrate from sewage effluent and agricultural run-off.

58.9 The River Beult has a characteristically diverse clay river flora, with many water edge plant species and a smaller number of submerged and floating plants. The total for the river and banks approaches 100 species, including 11 mosses and liverworts. The river channel is dominated by floating plants like yellow water-lily, arrowhead and duckweeds, which can form a continuous cover over the water surface. Other common plants include white water-lily, flowering rush, unbranched bur-reed and stands of bulrush. Submerged plants include five species of pondweed as well as rigid hornwort, and spiked water milfoil. Characteristic river-bank plants include water chickweed, amphibious bistort, celery-leaved buttercup, great yellow cress, water plantain and purple loosestrife.

58.10 The adjacent agricultural land use significantly affects these riverside plant communities, which in turn influence the insect and bird life. The most diverse plant communities occur where the river bank is relatively shallow and grades into a shallow berm grazed by cattle. The cattle-poached water edge supports fool's water cress, brook lime, blue water-speedwell, water figwort and water mint. Where the river bank is

inaccessible to grazing animals, bulrush and branched bur-reed, reed canary grass, or reed sweet-grass become dominant. The river bank next to arable fields has weedy vegetation of nettle and thistles, due to fertiliser run-off and pesticide spray drift.

58.11 Two nationally scarce invertebrates have been recorded from the River Beult; a rare water beetle occurs in slow-flowing stretches of the river and the hairy dragonfly is found in sluggish, well vegetated areas. Sixteen species of dragonfly and damselfly have been recorded. The thick emergent fringes of vegetation on the banks are important for several of the scarce species such as the white-legged damselfly and the ruddy darter dragonfly. Bare clay banks provide nesting sites for the kingfisher which occurs regularly along the river. Thick emergent fringes also provide cover and breeding sites for birds such as reed warbler and reed bunting.

58.12 In the west of the area south of Hunton, Stoneham and the Lees, Yalding Local Wildlife Site is an area of very damp, low-lying pasture between the River Beult and the millstream which supports unimproved grassland dominated by damp-loving species such as tufted hair-grass and yorkshire fog, with sedges, hard rush, soft rush and jointed rush, and a large population of cuckooflower. Slightly drier areas support a variety of herbs, including bird's-foot-trefoil, greater bird's-foot-trefoil and sneezewort. An adjacent area of alder and willow carr contains much yellow iris, pendulous sedge, marsh marigold and lesser celandine. A large population of snowdrop has colonised the slightly drier areas under the alder, ash and hazel. An area of damp, marshy, unimproved grassland on the banks of the River Beult is criss-crossed by ditches and is very rank. It is being colonised by willow, hawthorn, ash and intruding bramble patches. Most of the ditches are clogged with common reed and reed canary-grass with purple-loosestrife and marsh woundwort and have little open water. There is a large stand of slender tufted-sedge.

58. Beult Valley

This area is surrounded by tall, unmanaged hedgerows containing crack willow, ash, hawthorn and sallow, which are fringed with bramble and dog rose.

Geology, soils and topography

58.13 The River Beult and the Hammer Stream slowly meander through valleys which are generally wide and very shallow, with the adjoining land gently falling from around 20m down to around 12m. The area is characterised by drift deposits of alluvium and river gravels over the underlying Wealden Clay, resulting in generally fertile but seasonally wet soils. These range from deep, fine loamy soils and fine loamy over sandy

soils associated with the drift deposits to heavier soils which are poorly drained deep clay soils derived from Wealden Clay.

Views

58.14 Typically views close to the river are intimate and contained by the network of thick hedgerows, tree belts and majestic hedgerow oaks, especially where fields are grazed and small. However, the shallow topography can result in very exposed views where the hedgerow network is weak. From the larger scale arable fields views are more open and extensive, and in many areas the leafy backdrop of the Greensand Ridge to the north is seen on the horizon.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

58.15 There is a coherent pattern of elements, where the meandering river, historic bridges, ancient standard oaks, and thick native hedgerows over the relatively flat topography bind the landscape together. There are generally few visual detractors, although the artificial fishing lakes on the A229 are particularly incongruous. Away from the river banks, loss of hedgerows to allow more intensive arable cultivation has caused loss of pattern in the landscape. Consequently there has also been some loss of ecological connectivity as a result of this arable intensification, although the river itself is highly valued. The cultural integrity is variable, and has declined with changed agricultural practices towards intensive arable cultivation. The traditional small field pattern and hedgerow boundaries are reasonably intact in some areas, but elsewhere the land use has changed from predominantly pastoral land uses to larger arable fields and man made fishing lakes. Built development has a generally positive impact on the landscape because many scattered farmhouses, cottages and bridges are listed and provide a strong sense of place. However the development south east of Headcorn at New Bridge is poorly screened. Although the London mainline railway runs through part of the area it is generally unobtrusive and well contained by wooded belts.

Sensitivity

58.16 Overall, the typical characteristics of the landscape create a strong sense of place. Distinctive elements include the river itself, historic buildings and bridges, mature oak trees within species rich hedgerows, pasture, ditches and ponds. Large scale arable fields are much less distinctive however and the river is not always a distinctive feature within the flat arable landscape. Views are variable, being intimate and small scale along the river, but open and exposed within some arable areas. The backdrop of the Greensand Ridge is an important element in many views. Overall visibility is assessed as moderate.



58. Beult Valley

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Moderate	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Some	Continuity:	Ancient
Visual Unity:	Coherent	Sense of Place:	Strong
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Insignificant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Open
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	Moderate

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE AND RESTORE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

- Consider the generic guidelines for Valleys
- Conserve the river and its corridor by promoting improved water quality and reducing nitrogen-rich runoff from nearby arable fields and discharges
- Conserve oak as a dominant hedgerow tree species, and plant new oak standards within hedgerows to replace ageing species
- Conserve the species rich hedgerows, ensuring that they are correctly managed and gaps replanted
- Encourage the restoration of lost hedgerow boundaries in arable areas
- Conserve the pastoral land and occasional orchards and resist conversion to arable land
- Conserve and restore the fabric of historic bridges and traditional agricultural buildings
- Conserve and restore habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting and managing a framework of vegetation with links to the river
- Integrate the fishing ponds into the landscape by using more appropriate plant species. Resist further artificial earthworks



Section 5 Summary and recommendations

The landscape assessment has been undertaken based on the methodology promoted by Natural England through their Countryside Character Programme and Landscape Assessment Guidance 2002. In addition to the characterisation of the landscape, the condition and sensitivity has been analysed to generate guidance to assist Maidstone Borough Council in targeting resources and actions to those areas with greatest need.

This assessment has identified 58 landscape character areas at the borough scale. Each of these areas has physical and cultural characteristics that are distinct and identifiable from the others. Some of the changes between the character areas are not immediately apparent until they are broken down to their basic landscape components. The transition between the areas on the ground may be quite gradual in some places but the essential characteristics are quite distinct from each other. Some character areas appear to change quite dramatically within themselves. These changes may be due to either very local variations or more typically due to changes in condition or land management. A further 51 landscape character areas are nested within the borough wide areas at the detailed level.

Maidstone Borough is a diverse landscape, with its open chalk downland and unspoilt enclosed dry valleys, dramatic chalk escarpment, strongly patterned fruit producing landscape, and the Greensand Ridge which provides extensive views across the Low Weald landscape with its distinctive pattern of frequent oak trees and field ponds. Within these landscapes are many attractive villages with historic vernacular style buildings, and there is a particularly strong use of ragstone throughout the landscape which reflects the underlying geology.

Landscape character is not static. For example, many farming landscapes are under pressure due to intensification of arable cultivation. However, there are still numerous areas of landscape with a well-developed traditional patchwork of fruit fields, shelterbelts and woodlands that are worthy of conservation and opportunities to restore landscape structure through the actions of landowners or developers or through the actions of conservation organisations. It is hoped that this document and its guidance will assist that process.

The following table provides the condition, sensitivity and guidelines for each landscape character area. Although conclusions have been reached for each of the character areas, it is not the purpose of this study to rank one character area against another. Figure 14 illustrates the landscape guidelines for each borough wide landscape character area, and Figure 15 illustrates the landscape guidelines for the detailed landscape character areas. Generic landscape guidelines are provided for common issues across each landscape type, although these should be read in conjunction with the guidelines for each individual character area concerned. Guidelines specific to biodiversity issues are included in Appendix D (Biodiversity Opportunity Area maps and statements).



Section 5 Summary and recommendations

Table 2 Landscape analysis summary

Landscape Types	Landscape Character Area	Condition	Sensitivity	Guidelines
Dry Valleys & Downs	1. Bredhurst and Stockbury Downs	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	2. Westfield Sole Downs	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	3. Bredhurst Dry Valleys	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	4. Friningham Downs	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	5. Hucking Dry Valleys	Very Good	High	Conserve
	6. Bicknor and Hazel Street Orchards	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	7. Wormshill, Frinsted and Otterden Downs and Dry Valleys	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	8. Ringlestone Downs	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
Chalk Scarp Landscapes	9. Boxley Scarp	Very Good	High	Conserve
	10. Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Harrietsham Scarp	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
	11. Lenham Scarp	Good	Very High	Conserve
Gault Clay Vale	12. Sandling Vale	Poor	Low	Improve
	12-1. Cobtree Manor Park	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	12-2. Sandling Woodland and Heath	Poor	Low	Improve
	13. Boxley Vale	Very Good	High	Conserve
	13-1. Boxley Abbey Fields	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	13-2. Boxley Farmlands	Very Good	High	Conserve
	13-3. Boxley Wooded Parkland	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	14. Thurnham Vale	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	14-1. Weaving Fringes	Moderate	Low	Improve and Reinforce
	14-2. Thurnham Farmlands	Good	High	Conserve
	14-3. Bearsted Golf Course	Good	Low	Reinforce
	14-4. Water Lane Arable Land	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	14-5. Hollingbourne Wooded Arable Land	Poor	High	Restore
	15. Eyhorne Vale	Good	High	Conserve

Section 5 Summary and recommendations

Landscape Types	Landscape Character Area	Condition	Sensitivity	Guidelines
Gault Clay Vale	16. Harrietsham to Lenham Vale	Moderate	Very High	Conserve and Restore
	17. East Lenham Vale	Good	High	Conserve
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	18. Barming Greensand Fruit Belt	Poor	Very Low	Improve
	19. Barming Heath Arable Land	Poor	Very Low	Improve
	20. Oaken Wood	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	21. Teston Valley Side	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	21-1. Barming Slopes	Moderate	Low	Improve and Reinforce
	22. Nettlestead Wooded Farmlands	Good	High	Conserve
	23. Nettlestead Valley Side	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	24. East Barming Orchards (locally known as Medway Valley Orchards)	Good	High	Conserve
	24-1. Rectory Lane Orchards	Very Good	High	Conserve
	24-2. Fant Orchards	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	25. Oakwood Park	Moderate	Low	Improve and Reinforce
	26. Invicta Park	Poor	Low	Improve
	27. Farleigh Greensand Fruit Belt	Good	High	Conserve
	27-1. West Farleigh Medway Valley Side	Very Good	High	Conserve
	27-2. East Farleigh Slopes	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	27-3. Farleigh Green Greensand Dip Slope	Very Good	High	Conserve
	27-4. Bydews Slopes	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	27-5. Dean Farmlands	Very Good	High	Conserve
	27-6. East of Dean Valley	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	27-7. Loose Greensand Orchards and Pasture	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
27-8. Loose Valley	Very Good	Very High	Conserve	
27-9. Hayle Estate	Poor	Low	Improve	
27-10. Loose Greensand Orchards	Good	Low	Reinforce	
27-11. Boughton Farm	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve	
27-12. Boughton Quarries	Very Good	High	Conserve	

Section 5 Summary and recommendations

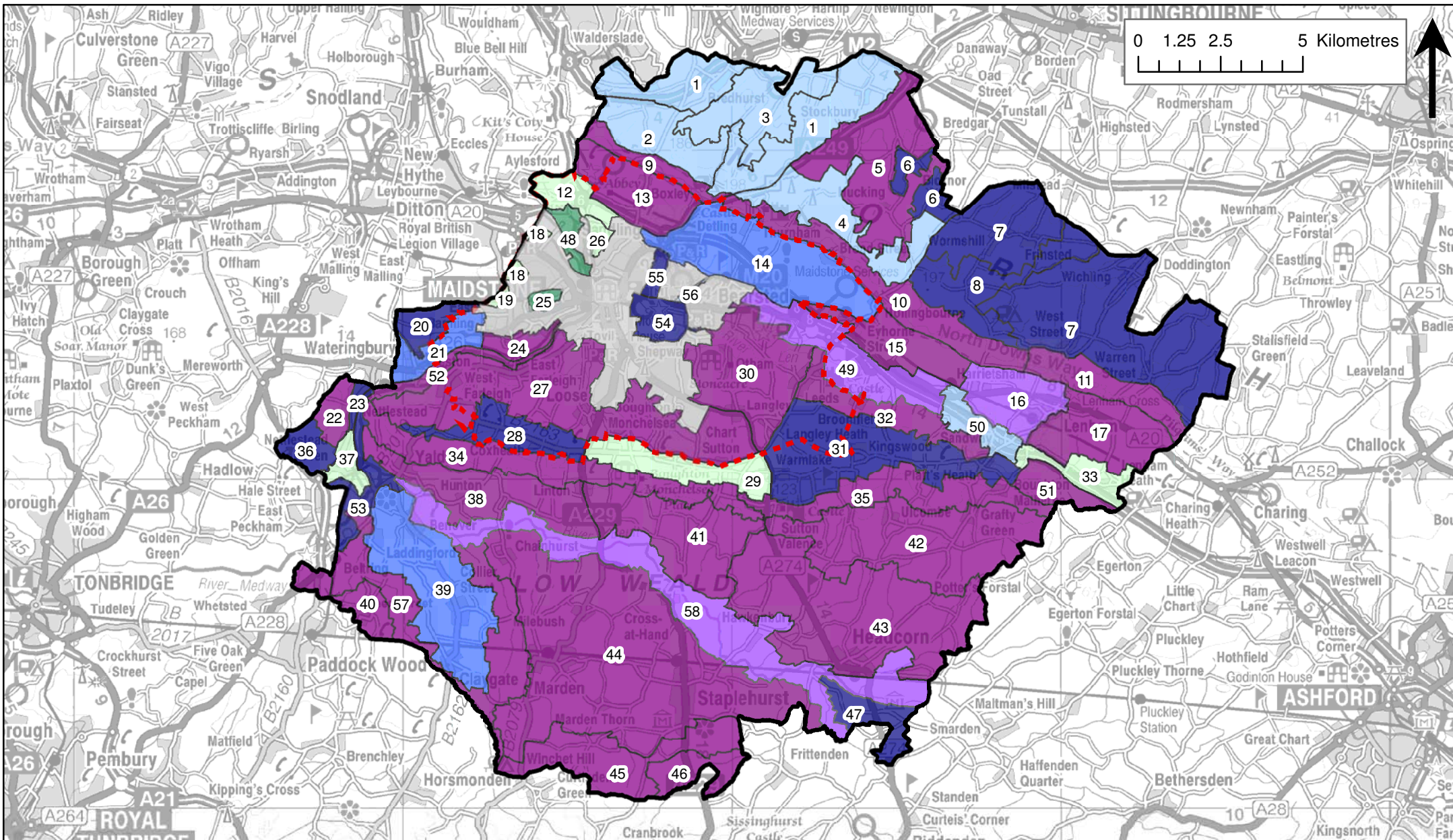
Landscape Types	Landscape Character Area	Condition	Sensitivity	Guidelines
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	27-13. Boughton Green Farmland	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	27-14. Park Wood Horticultural Land	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	27-15. Langley Park Farm	Moderate	Low	Improve and Reinforce
	27-16. Langley Loch Farmland	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	28. Coxheath Plateau	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	28-1. Gallants Flats	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	28-2. Quarry Woodlands	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	28-3. Coxheath Orchards	Moderate	Very Low	Improve and Reinforce
	29. Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton Plateau	Very Poor	Very Low	Improve
	30. Langley Heath Undulating Farmlands	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
	30-1. Len Valley	Very Good	High	Conserve
	30-2. Otham Open Land	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	30-3. Gore Court Farm	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	30-4. Stoneacre Spring	Very Good	High	Conserve
	30-5. Caring Fruit Slopes	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	30-6. Milgate Park	Poor	Low	Improve
	30-7. Upper Len	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	30-8. Langley Fruit Plateau	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	30-9. Leeds Farmlands	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	31. Kingswood Plateau	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	31-1. Leeds Fields	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	31-2. Kingswood Ridgeline Woodlands	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	32. Broomfield Undulating Farmlands	Very Good	High	Conserve
	32-1. Ashbank	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	32-2. Leeds Slopes	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve

Section 5 Summary and recommendations

Landscape Types	Landscape Character Area	Condition	Sensitivity	Guidelines
Greensand Orchards and Mixed Farmlands	33. Lenham Heath Farmlands	Very Poor	Low	Improve
Greensand Ridge	34. Linton Greensand Ridge	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
	35. Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
Low Weald	36. Nettlestead Woodlands	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	37. Nettlestead Green Farmlands	Poor	Low	Improve
	38. Yalding Farmlands	Very Good	High	Conserve
	39. Laddingford Low Weald	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
	40. Beltring Grasslands	Very Good	High	Conserve
	41. Linton Park and Farmlands	Very Good	High	Conserve
	42. Ulcombe Mixed Farmlands	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
	43. Headcorn Pasturelands	Good	High	Conserve
	44. Staplehurst Low Weald	Good	High	Conserve
	45. Sherenden Wooded Hills	Very Good	High	Conserve
	46. Knoxbridge Arable Lowlands	Good	High	Conserve
47. Waterman Quarter Low Weald	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce	
Valleys	48. Medway Valley Allington	Moderate	Low	Improve and Reinforce
	49. Leeds Castle Parklands	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore
	49-1. Caring Pastures	Poor	Low	Improve
	49-2. White Heath Farmlands	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	49-3. Ashbank Fields	Very Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	50. Harrietsham Vale	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	51. Chilston Parklands	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
	52. Medway Valley – Maidstone to Wateringbury	Very Good	Very High	Conserve
	52-1. Medway Pasture	Good	High	Conserve
	52-2. Quarry Wood Valley	Very Good	High	Conserve
	52-3. Medway Valley Walk	Very Good	High	Conserve
53. Medway Valley Yalding	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce	

Section 5 Summary and recommendations

Landscape Types	Landscape Character Area	Condition	Sensitivity	Guidelines
Valleys	54. Mote Park	Very Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	55. Vinters Park	Good	Moderate	Conserve and Reinforce
	56. Fauchon's Valley (locally known as Banky Meadow)	Poor	Moderate	Restore and Improve
	57. Teise Valley	Good	High	Conserve
	58. Beult Valley	Moderate	High	Conserve and Restore



Legend

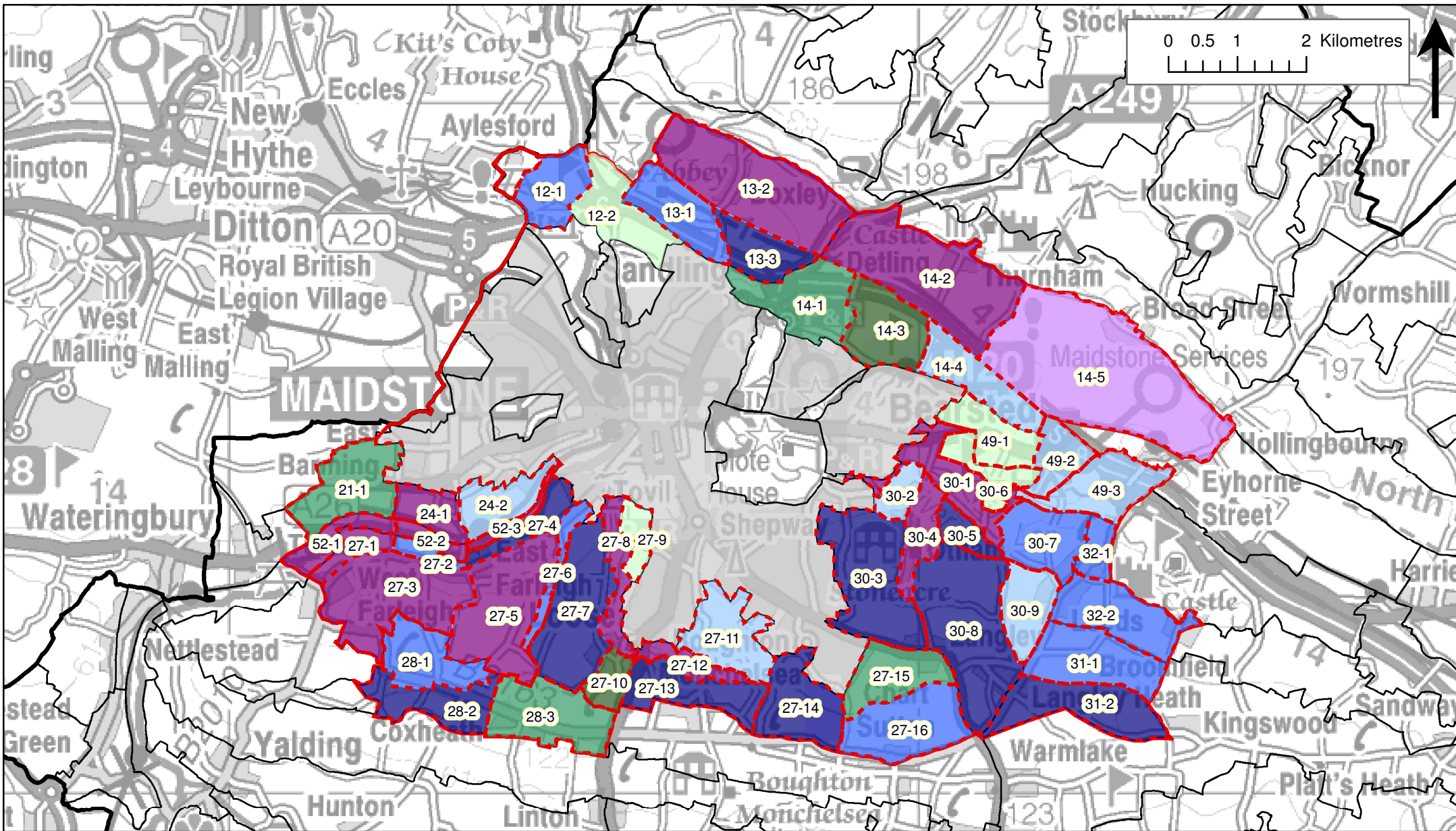
- Maidstone Borough Boundary
- Detailed Study Area
- Urban Area

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

NB: These Landscape Guidelines do not reflect upon landscape quality which is highlighted through national landscape policy

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Figure 14 Borough Wide Landscape Guidelines



- Legend**
- Maidstone Borough Boundary
 - Landscape Character Areas
 - Detailed Landscape Character Areas
 - Urban Area

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

NB: These Landscape Guidelines do not reflect upon landscape quality which is highlighted through national landscape policy

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Figure 15 Detailed Landscape Guidelines

Appendix A:

Other guidance documents to be taken into account within the Kent Downs AONB

- **Kent Downs Landscape Design Handbook**
Design guidance based on the 13 landscape character areas in the Kent Downs. Guidance on fencing, hedges, planting, gateways etc. to help in the conservation and enhancement of all corners of the AONB.
- **Kent Downs Renewable Energy Position Statement**
The purpose of this statement is to provide a clearly articulated position for the Kent Downs AONB partnership with regards to renewable energy technologies. It recognises that each Local Planning Authority must balance the impact of proposals for renewables on the AONB with all the other material planning considerations.
- **Kent Rural Advice Service Farm Diversification Toolkit**
Guidance on taking an integrated whole farm approach to farm developments leading to sound diversification projects that benefit the Kent Downs.
- **Kent Downs Land Manager's Pack**
Detailed guidance on practical land management from how to plant a hedge to creating ponds and enhancing chalk grassland.
- **Rural Streets and Lanes A Design Handbook**
Guidance on the management and design of rural lanes and streets that takes the unique character of the Kent Downs into account. This document discusses the principle of shared space and uses examples from around the UK and Europe. The Rural Streets and Lanes Design Handbook has been adopted as policy by Kent County Council.
- **Managing Land for Horses a guide to good practice in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
National guidance providing information on equine development covering grassland management, fencing, trees and hedges, waste management and basic planning information.
- **Kent Farmstead Guidance and Kent Downs Farmstead Guidance**
Guidance on the conservation, enhancement and development change of heritage farmsteads in the Kent Downs based on English Heritage's Kent and National Character Area Farmstead Statements. Includes an Assessment method and Design Guidance.

Appendix B: Detailed methodology

The assessment aims to provide logical, robust and defensible justifications for managing pressures for change in the borough, without diminishing the value of the landscape. The study also identifies areas that require conservation, restoration, reinforcement, or improvement to enable resources to be targeted to those areas in greatest need.

The objective of the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment is to ensure that decisions on the rural landscape are underpinned by a robust and widely accepted assessment of the landscape character. The challenge is to find ways of identifying the important characteristics of the landscape that assist the process of accommodating change, where this is both desirable and practicable, whilst maintaining the links with the past and the natural environment.

Many of the judgments regarding landscapes are subjective, which means that they are open to equally valid but different individual interpretations. The process of landscape assessment has to resolve this matter and has evolved so that current practice is now based on a logical and well thought out procedure. This procedure breaks down the analysis into the component parts, which collectively make up the landscape as we know it. It is a logical process, which enables decisions to be revisited over time as well as enabling different assessors to understand and contribute to the decisions reached.

The methodology used to undertake the landscape assessment is based on The Countryside Agency's Landscape Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002). There are essentially two elements to the appraisal. Firstly the characterisation of the landscape where the landscape character areas are defined and secondly the analysis of these areas where judgements are made about these character areas.

In the first instance the assessor interrogates the geological, soil and topographical information as well as accumulating as much information as is readily available regarding historic and cultural influences, nature conservation interests and land use. An aerial photographic study of the area assists with the identification of the landscape character areas as well as assisting with the appreciation of the conclusions subsequently reached.

Having initiated the desk based research, the fieldwork is undertaken. Two landscape assessors working together in the field debate and define the broad character distinctions using 'field assessment sheets' and taking photographic records as data.

The Field Assessment Sheets are designed to analyse the component factors of the landscape, to reach a series of decisions on the:

- Aesthetics;
- Key characteristics;
- Visual unity;
- Ecological integrity;
- Condition of heritage features; and,
- Impact of built development.

Landscape character areas are defined and mapped as a series of largely homogeneous units. However, for proposals at field level, close to character area boundaries, more detailed assessment should be undertaken as changes in landscape character are sometimes subtle.

Appendix B

Having identified the character areas the data collected is analysed in terms of each area's **Condition** and **Sensitivity**. Each of these words is strictly defined to avoid as far as possible any subjective interpretation, which cannot be justified. The objective is also to define a standard methodology that can be used by other assessors for other landscapes so that comparisons can be made and priorities set.

Condition is strongly influenced by the impact of external factors. The assessment of condition evaluates the pattern of the landscape and the presence of incongruous features on the unity of the landscape. It also evaluates how well the landscape functions as a habitat for flora and fauna and the condition of cultural or 'man-made' elements such as enclosure, built elements and roads. Condition is an indicator for future land management. It does not follow that if the condition of an area is poor that an area has more likelihood of being allocated for development. Landscapes surrounding urban areas are often under pressure that can frustrate other land uses. This often means that these areas are described as being in a poor condition whilst other more remote areas may still have the same basic features but be in a better condition. It is therefore practical to assume that condition may vary throughout a character area so that any conclusions should be regarded as a summary of the overall situation. **Condition** is defined by an analysis of *Visual Unity* and *Functional Integrity* and is classified as very poor, poor, moderate, good and very good.

Visual Unity is the result of an analysis of the *Pattern of Elements*, for example the pattern of vegetation, enclosure, settlement and the relationship of these to the landform etc., weighed against the number of *Detracting Features* in the landscape.

Functional Integrity is an assessment of how the landscape functions and considers both the influence of man (*Cultural Integrity*) and nature (*Ecological Integrity*).

Sensitivity is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the essential fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. The term change refers to both beneficial changes such as a new woodland as well as change that may be brought about by new land uses. This assessment considers inherent landscape sensitivity rather than sensitivity to a particular development type or proposal. **Sensitivity** is defined by an analysis of *Sense of Place* and *Visibility* and ranges from very low through low, moderate, high to very high.

Sense of Place balances *Distinctiveness* with *Continuity*. Distinctiveness is defined by how much the key characteristics contribute to a sense of place. For example in a landscape where hedgerows are a key characteristic if the network is intact the landscape can be described as distinct or 'characteristic'. Some landscapes have features that may be considered unique or rare and these will obviously contribute to a strong sense of place. Continuity ranges from recent, through historic to ancient and reflects how long that landscape has taken to establish. Ancient landscapes are uncommon in Kent but include those that have had very little intervention by man or contain ancient or prehistoric features. Historic landscapes are generally from the Medieval period onwards. This is when the pattern of most landscapes in Kent was established and is generally discernible today (although overlain with modern features). Recent landscapes are those where historic elements have been replaced with new elements or land management. They include reclaimed landscapes.

Appendix B

Visibility addresses the issues of *Landform* and the intercepting feature of *Tree cover*. For example an open hilltop landscape has a higher visibility than an enclosed lowland landscape.

The conclusions reached regarding each of the character areas are expressed using a matrix that encompasses Condition and Sensitivity. This analysis gives a broad indication of each area's ability to accommodate a change in management or use without loss of overall integrity. The matrix helps to assist in the direction of any policy that might be applied to the land in question.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		Low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

Although conclusions have been reached for each of the character areas, it is not the purpose of this study to rank one character area against another. Likewise this study is not intended to identify in detail areas suitable for development. It may however offer guidance to both the local planning authority and developers when deciding the type and scale of development that may be appropriate whilst respecting the character of the landscape.

Conserve - actions that encourage the conservation of distinctive features and features in good condition.

Conserve and reinforce - actions that conserve distinctive features and features in good condition and strengthen and reinforce those features that may be vulnerable.

Reinforce - actions that strengthen or reinforce distinctive features and patterns in the landscape.

Conserve and restore - actions that encourage the conservation of distinctive features and features in good condition, whilst restoring elements or areas in poorer condition and removing or mitigating detracting features.

Conserve and improve - actions that conserve distinctive features and features in good condition, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.

Improve and reinforce - actions that strengthen or reinforce distinctive features and patterns in the landscape, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.

Restore - actions that encourage the restoration of distinctive landscape features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features.

Restore and improve - actions that restore distinctive features and the removal or mitigation of detracting features, whilst creating new features or areas where they have been lost or are in poor condition.

Improve - actions that strengthen new features or areas where existing elements are lost or in poor condition.

It has to be recognised that whilst the process adopts a complex but logical critique of the landscape many of the individual decisions are still based on the trained but subjective judgements of the assessors. However by simplifying the conclusions into a series of generic actions it is possible to reach informed and well supported judgements on the landscape character.

Appendix B

Actions are offered that are locally appropriate to the character area and respond to the generic actions that have been identified. Many of these actions are not within the remit of the Local Authority to implement directly as they are not responsible for managing the land in most cases.

Such references are included with the view to influencing opinions, generating support and guiding policy. In many instances certain forms of land management have a strong influence on the landscape character. These are often dependent on market forces and land management practices for their retention e.g. fruit production.

Appendix C: Living Landscapes

Living Landscapes

Excerpts from The Wildlife Trusts reports '*Living Landscape*' (2006) and '*Living Landscapes Projects*' (2009):

The Living Landscape concept is one developed by The Wildlife Trusts organisation. The Wildlife Trusts are working with partners and local communities to create 'A Living Landscape' across the whole of the UK. We are restoring damaged and fragmented blocks of habitat, reconnecting these habitats and linking them to the green space in our cities, towns and villages to rebuild nature in our midst.

A healthy future for wildlife and people

A Living Landscape is The Wildlife Trusts' vision for the future of the UK. It is a new way of thinking about how we manage land to do more for wildlife, people and the economy. In Living Landscapes:

- Wildlife is **abundant** and **flourishing**, both in the countryside and our towns and cities
- Whole landscapes and ecosystems have been **restored**
- Wildlife is able to move freely through these landscapes and **adapt** to the effects of climate change;
- **Communities** are benefiting fully from the fundamental services that healthy ecosystems provide
- Everyone has access to wildlife-rich green spaces and can enjoy and **be inspired** by the natural world.

Thinking big – a landscape-scale approach to nature conservation

Wildlife needs room to move, especially in the face of climate change. The nature reserves we manage are unique and special havens, alive with plants, birds, mammals and insects.

But the wider landscape surrounding these sites is often inhospitable to wildlife. Intensive farmland, towns and cities, busy roads and railways, all make it difficult for wildlife to move between safe havens. As a conservation organisation, we have had to think differently about how to protect wildlife in this modern landscape.

Through Living Landscape Schemes, The Wildlife Trusts are joining the dots, making the whole landscape more wildlife-friendly. Linking isolated reserves allows wildlife to move freely, to trickle out through the landscape. Eventually, we hope this will mean we all experience the splendour of nature as part of our daily lives

Traditional nature conservation

Nature conservation in Britain has traditionally focussed on the preservation of special sites. This is both necessary and urgent, but it is less than the basic minimum required to conserve nature in the long term. This site-based approach provides the following:

Key benefits:

- It ensures that, within limits, we maintain the best of what we have;
- It encourages the valuing of key assets;
- It promotes the concept of sustainable management in sensitive areas, where people take responsibility for conservation and management.

Key disadvantages:

- It can place nature in a ghetto, with wildlife limited to special areas, to be enjoyed by the privileged;
- It can promote the view that nature is only where we allow it, and must be controlled and restricted;
- It may encourage a Disney-esque view of 'good' and 'bad' nature: we allow the 'right' and disallow the 'wrong';
- It encourages a prescriptive view of nature, where narrow objectives are set for it, and it is then controlled and manipulated to deliver;
- It can allow wildlife to be separated from a wider environmental sustainability agenda: Nature may be allowed in special places, but the 'real world' of wider sustainability issues holds sway over the vast majority of the landscape;
- It can separate nature from natural processes – making nature conservation a separate subject from climate, nutrient cycling, hydrology and so on.

Landscape scale: the future of nature conservation

Landscape-scale nature conservation is not simply about bigger special sites. It is a different philosophy that requires us to:

- Understand nature; appreciate it and work with it;
- Understand the processes that give rise to habitats, and provide conditions suitable for the species;
- Understand how these processes can be influenced or copied;
- See wildlife and nature as synonymous with natural processes, and the ecological functioning of the area, region or planet;
- Understand the interaction between cultural and natural landscape.

The core principle

Take an example: imagine a wet meadow, important for wildlife, in a river valley.

A traditional habitat management approach would aim to bring that habitat into favourable condition through appropriate management – maybe expanding it by including neighbouring areas as a contribution to Biodiversity Action Plan targets. This would benefit wildlife, and those who are interested in wildlife.

A landscape-scale or landscape ecology approach would address the processes that drive the ecological interest of the meadow – hydrology and grazing – and look at how these functioned in the whole valley. It is a step-change, from managing the meadow to influencing the processes that work on the whole valley.

Working in this way would improve a larger area for wildlife. But it would also improve the ecological functioning of the valley, with spin-off benefits such as better flood management and aquifer recharge. And this wouldn't just interest nature-lovers. It would interest everybody.

In short

To recreate genuine living landscapes, we need to embrace this approach:

- Move from dominators and controllers of nature to appreciators and influencers
- of nature;
- Move from nature as special interest to nature as providing our living conditions – locally, regionally and globally;
- Move from a situation of nature in boxes to nature in the neighbourhood and nature in the landscape.

Landscape-scale conservation to help species survive climate change: This is a crucial factor. Much of this paper focuses on the creation of corridors between patches of semi-natural habitat. However, linking patches of habitat with corridors can only be part of the answer. This is because only the most mobile species will be able to shift their latitude, altitude or aspect rapidly enough to keep pace with shifts in their climate-space.

Altitudinal corridors are likely to be more effective than latitudinal ones, because temperature drops more quickly with altitude than with latitude. But in much of the UK their creation is not possible.

A more pragmatic and effective response, in the medium term at least, is to strengthen and extend nature's best remaining refuges. Current scientific thinking on species response to global climate change is that the majority of species will try and remain at their current location for as long as possible, or will shift their habitats minimally.

The sustainability of species populations in a given landscape in the face of climate change will be influenced by the range of ecological niches offered across the area. A landscape that occupies a range of altitudes and offers a range of aspects, hydrologies, and vegetation structures will present more opportunities for species to shift their locations than one that is highly uniform in this respect.

Living Landscape Schemes in Maidstone

Medway Scarp

Scheme area: 5,000 hectares

Benefits include: support for local businesses and farmers, restored and reconnected wildlife habitat, conservation of natural and industrial heritage, community empowerment, regeneration in Thames Gateway

The chalk scarp between Medway and Maidstone supports some of the rarest and most valuable wildlife in the south-east of England. Wildlife-rich habitats in this area include chalk grassland, ancient semi-natural woodland and, in the Medway Valley at the project's western edge, diverse wetlands. This rich ecological seam contains not only a number of nature reserves but also many Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation.

Kent Wildlife Trust's Medway Scarp scheme is a long-term project to reduce habitat fragmentation by extending and connecting these core wildlife-rich areas, for example by enhancing landscape features such as hedgerows and copses, and through a system of roadside nature reserves. Kent Wildlife Trust is working closely with landowners and local authorities to achieve this. The Trust has recently bought an additional 230 hectares of ancient woodland into conservation management, and is currently creating an additional 93 hectares of chalk grassland through arable reversion.

The important species found in the scarp include the nightingale and great crested newt, as well as many types of orchid and butterfly. A key recent achievement of the project is the successful introduction of the rare and exquisite Adonis blue butterfly.

Appendix C

In addition to benefiting wildlife, the scheme provides wide-ranging advantages to the local economy and community by supporting small businesses and farmers, and through the enhancement of local knowledge and pride in the region's natural and industrial heritage. One small example is a current project to sell 'conservation grade' lamb and mutton from herds grazing on nature reserves.

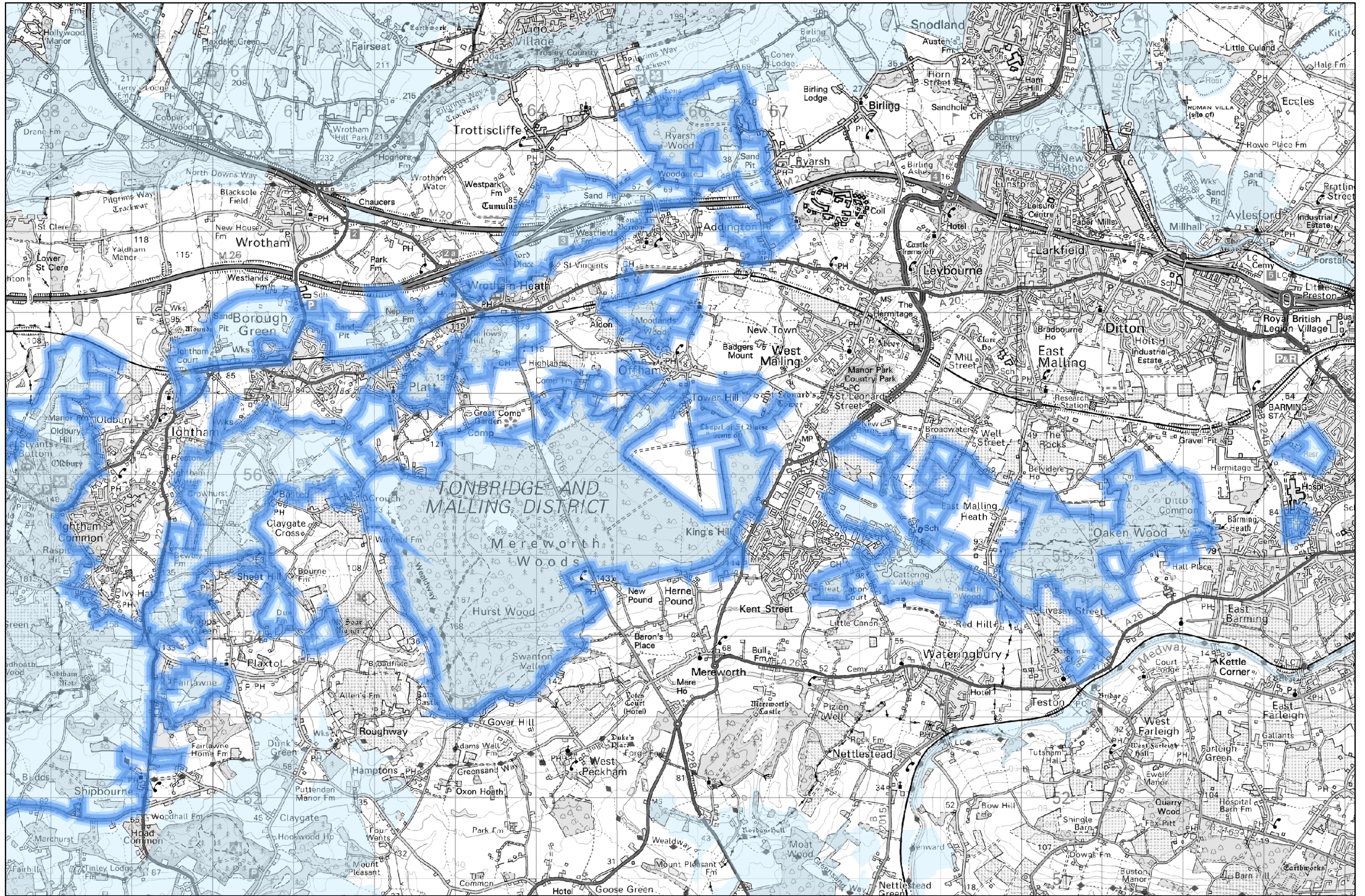
Funding has been provided by the Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment schemes, the Woodland Grant Scheme, Access to Nature, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Medway Council, the Highways Agency and the private sector (Lafarge and Trenport), as well as by grants from charitable Trusts, donations from Kent Wildlife Trust members, and developer contributions.

Appendix D: BOA maps and statements relevant to Maidstone (Kent Biodiversity Partnership 2009)

Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) maps can be seen as a spatial reflection of the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). They indicate where the delivery of Kent BAP targets should be focused in order to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits. The BOA maps also show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation, as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks or wildlife habitats. As such, they will be useful to local planning authorities in the development and delivery of positive nature conservation policy in line with the South East Plan. The BOA statement documents provide guidance on the conservation priorities which should be adopted in each area.

The following maps represent the BOA identified and developed by Kent Biodiversity Partnership, which fall within Maidstone Borough. These comprise:

- Greensand Heaths and Commons
- Medway Gap and North Kent Downs
- Medway and Low Weald Grassland and Wetland
- Mid Kent Downs Woods and Scarp
- Mid Kent Greensand and Gault



Kent Wildlife Trust 2009

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Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement



Name: Greensand Heaths and Commons

Description: A concentration of woodlands, some of significant extent, run along the Greensand Ridge from Maidstone to Westerham and the county boundary. A number have developed on old commons and wood pastures, and areas of heathy vegetation and acid grassland are a significant feature, particularly at Knole Park.

Joint Character Area(s): Wealden greensand

Landscape Types: The Greensand Ridge rises steeply from the clay vale of the Low Weald, and are characterised by thick woodland and heathy commons, within which are small pockets of farmland. This target area includes the ridge-top and the steep, south-facing scarp slope around Sevenoaks, as well as the enclosed, wooded landscape around Mereworth to the east. It includes the following Landscape Character Areas: Mereworth Woodlands; Ightham Greensand-Sevenoaks Ridge; and Westerham Greensand-Sevenoaks Ridge.

Geology: Lower greensand.

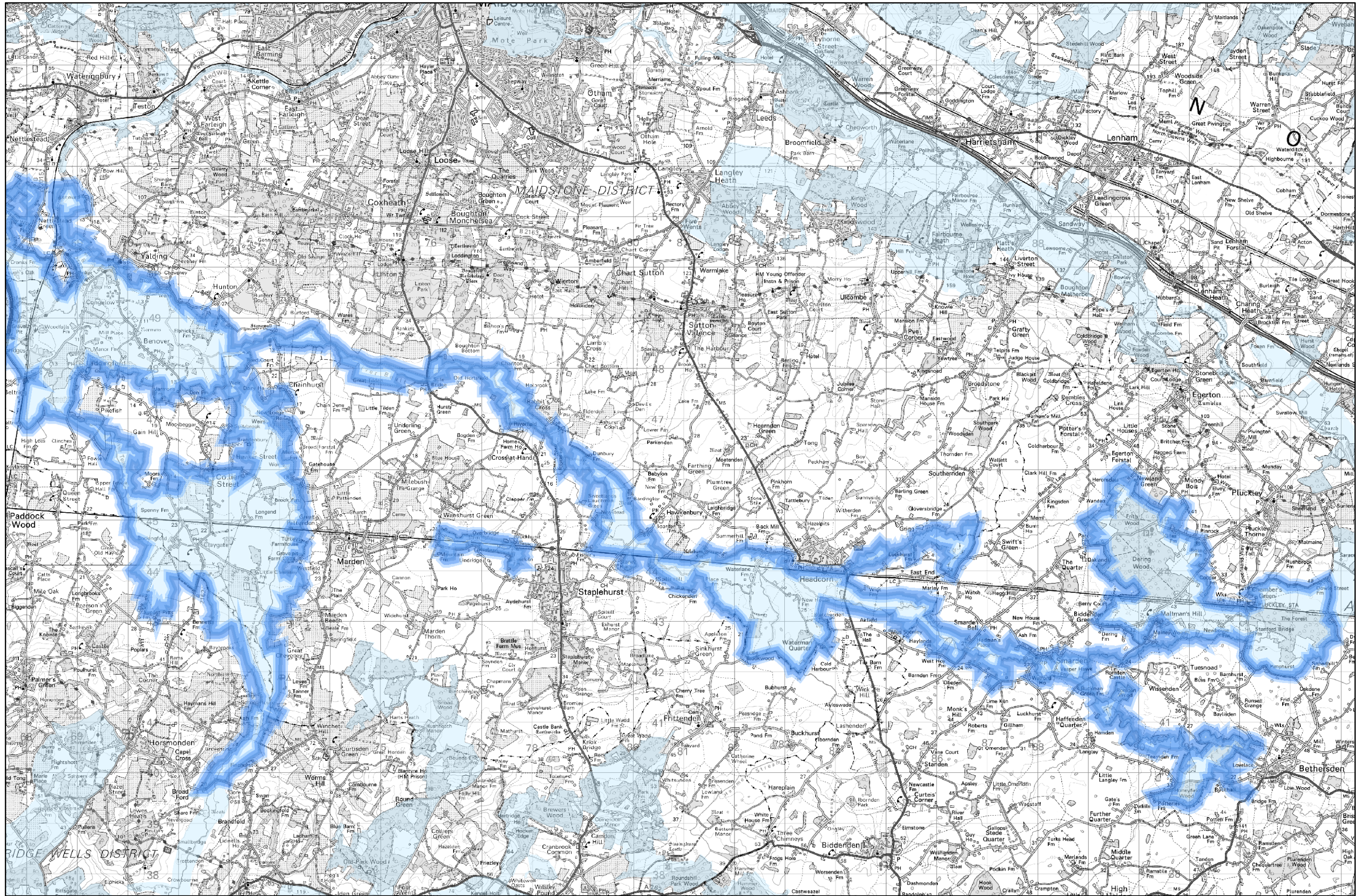
Biodiversity:

- 1 Large and important blocks of woodland and wood pasture on acid soils.
- 2 Important acid grassland sites.
- 3 Important for species of acid woodland and heathland which are otherwise scarce in Kent. Woodlands and woodpasture are noted for their veteran trees, fungus flora and invertebrate assemblages. The area is important for bats, adder and RDB bird species, and could be important in the future for woodlark.

Targets:

- 1 Pursue opportunities for creation of acid grassland and heathland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating, by 2015, up to 145ha in blocks of at least 1ha and no more than 500m from other existing or new semi-natural habitat.
- 2 Enhance or reinstate woodland management – including wood pasture management where appropriate – and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.
- 3 Pursue opportunities for quarries to be restored to maximize their biodiversity potential. Where appropriate, seek restoration to heathland and/or acid grassland as a condition of permissions for aggregates extraction
- 4 Engage communities within target areas by raising awareness of biodiversity and encouraging them to get involved in biodiversity action

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - Medway & Low Weald Grassland & Wetland - Map 1 of 2



Kent Wildlife Trust 2009

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Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement



Name: Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands

Description: The opportunity area includes long stretches of several of Kent's rivers and this is reflected in the presence of several designated sites such as the River Eden, River Medway and River Sherway LWSs. To the west is the Bough Beech reservoir, particularly important for wildfowl, and to the east is the LWS at Dering Wood, near Pluckley.

Joint Character Area(s): The Low Weald

Landscape Types: Dominated by the floodplains of the River Medway and its tributaries, this flat, undulating landscape of clay vales supports a mixed agricultural landscape of wet meadow and arable fields, small woodlands, historic hop gardens and orchards. The following Landscape Character Areas are present: Western Wooded Farmlands; Eden Valley; Western Low Weald: the Low Weald; Penshurst: Central High Weald; Kent Water: Upper Medway; Medway Valley; Greensand Ridge – Plaxtol; Low Weald Fruit Belt; Teise Valley; Beult Valley; Biddenden – High Halden Wooded Farmlands.

Geology: Weald clay with deposits of alluvium, head gravel, river brickearth and river gravel along the river valleys.

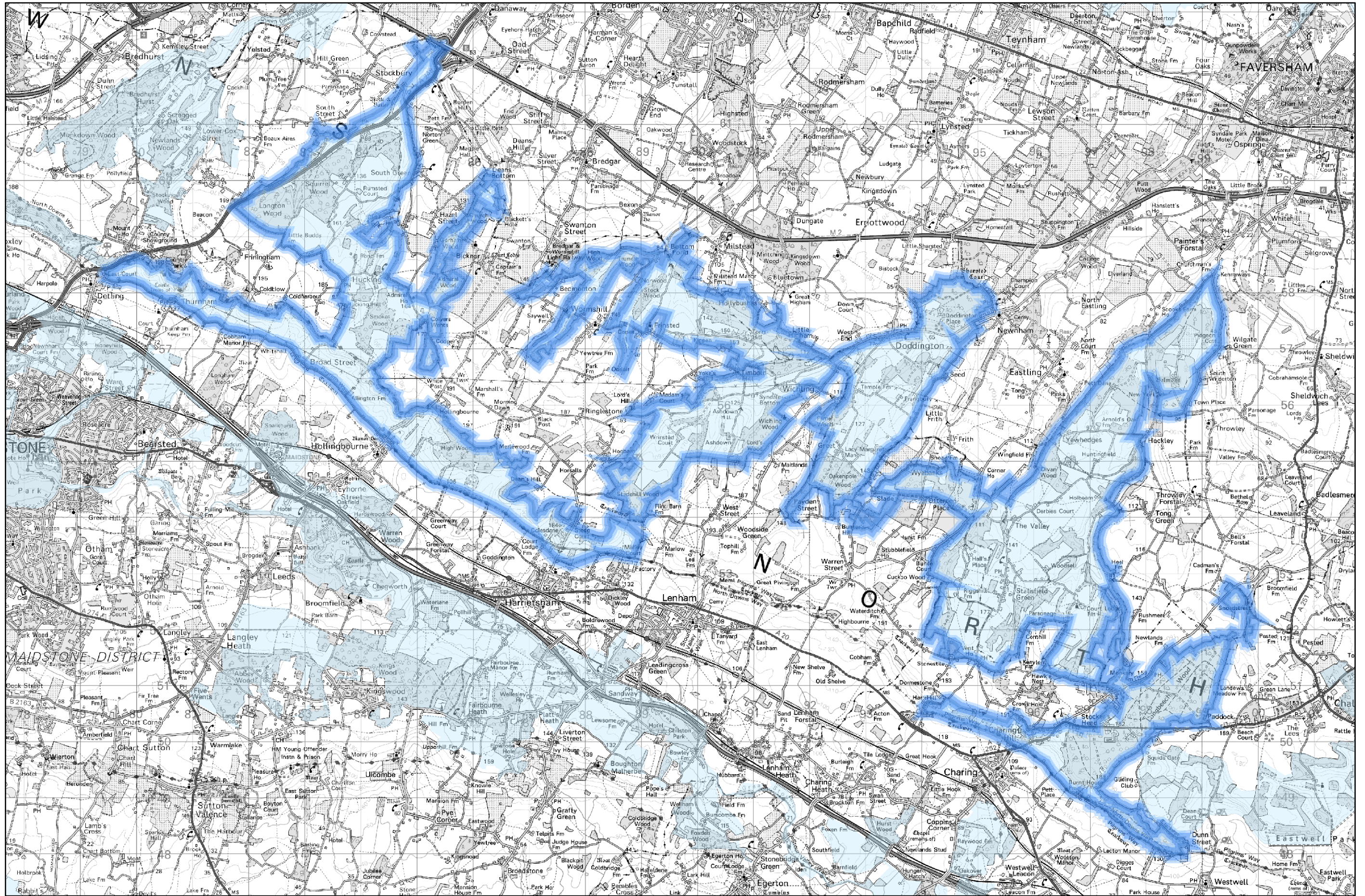
Biodiversity:

- 1 The most significant features are the courses, tributaries and floodplains of the Medway, Beult and Teise. The floodplains support species rich meadows or floodplain grassland and grazing is a significant landscape feature and management practice.
- 2 Associated habitats include ponds, small areas of woodland, including mature ancient woodland, and fen.
- 3 Key species include otter, depressed river mussel, white clawed crayfish and river lamprey.

Targets:

- 1 Pursue opportunities for creation of wider river floodplains with riparian corridors around natural drainage channels.
- 2 Pursue opportunities for the establishment, by 2020, of a new, landscape-scale, freshwater wetland complex, including fen, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland, in which successional processes are allowed to proceed. In this context, a 'landscape-scale' complex should be considered as extending over at least 1000 hectares.
- 3 Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows.
- 4 Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland, particularly close the Marden Meadows SSSI and south of Sevenoaks, where this will contribute to meeting the target of creating, by 2015, 100ha in the Low Weald and High Weald, in blocks of 2ha or more.
- 5 Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.
- 6 Continue to encourage the positive management, restoration and re-creation of hedgerows, particularly where this would reconnect other habitats or enhance the landscape, in particular where these have been removed due to agricultural intensification.
- 7 Improve the management of invasive species in and alongside water courses.
- 8 Maintain, restore, recreate and buffer ponds, particularly to establish networks of sites to support great crested newt.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - Mid Kent Downs Woods & Scarp



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Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement



Name: Mid Kent Downs, Woods and Scarp

Description: The Mid Kent Downs Woods and Scarp opportunity area stretches from Detling Hill through to Sheldwich and Charing. The area is within the Kent Downs AONB and contains over a high number of LWSs such as Gorham Woods and Wichling Wood and several SSSIs.

Joint Character Area(s): North Downs

Landscape Types: This landscape has a pattern of wide fields contained by dense belts of woodland, which run along the upper slopes of steep-sided dry valleys. The continual down-wash of soil from the scarp, combined with the sheltered aspect of the resulting fields, produces a belt of very productive agricultural land at the foot of the scarp. Most of the area is within the Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs Landscape Character Area, but a small amount falls within the Hollingbourne Vale LCA to the south and the Challock: Mid Kent Downs LCA to the east.

Geology: Chalk, capped with clay-with-flints and gravel head on the ridges.

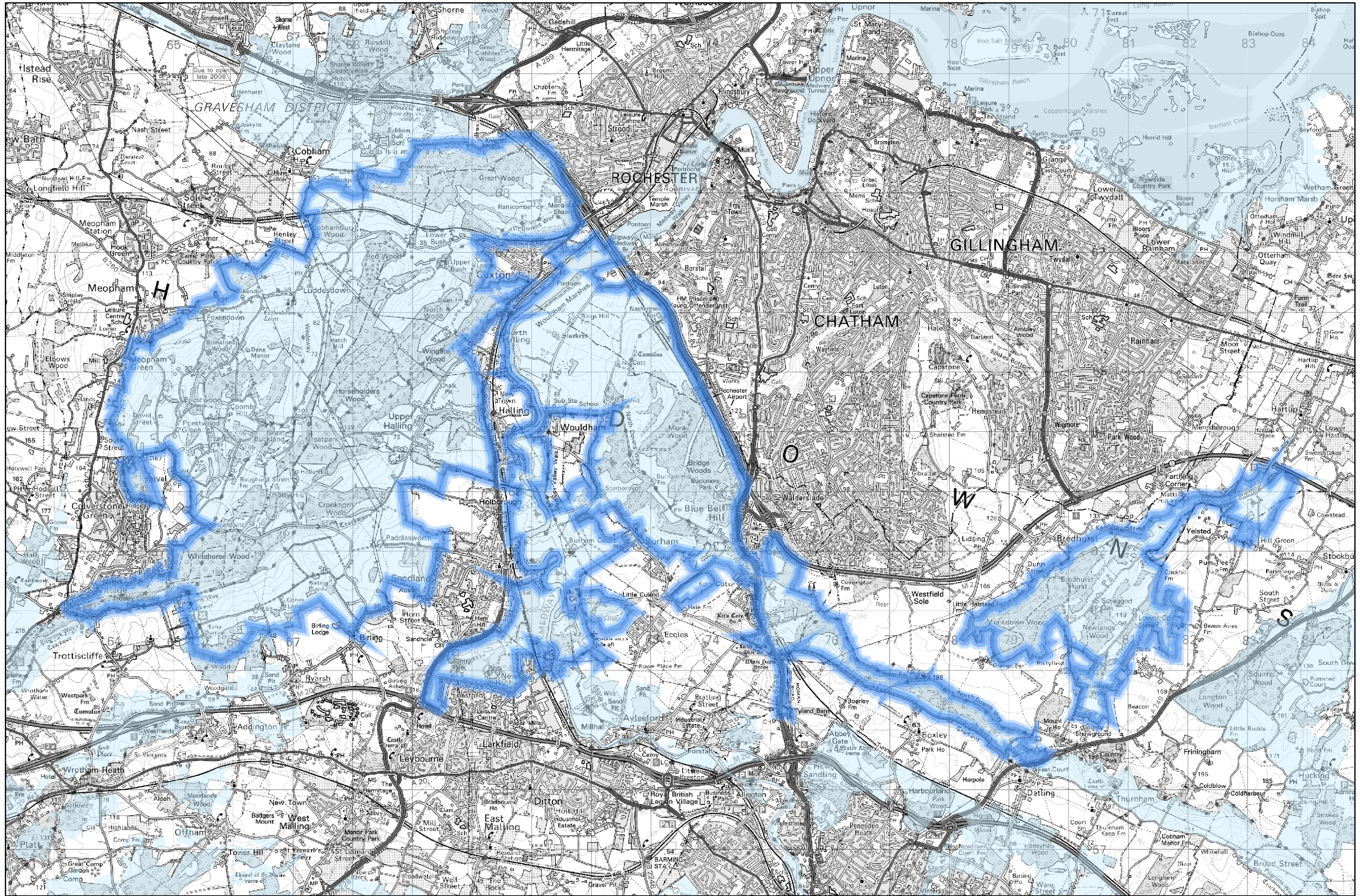
Biodiversity:

- 1 Important chalk grassland sites on the scarp and on the sides of dip slope valleys.
- 2 Important woodlands occur both on the chalk soils of the scarp and the deeper clay soils of the dip slope. There are some wood pasture sites, as at Belmont.
- 3 The dip slope woodlands support important bryophyte assemblages and remain important for woodland birds, including hawfinch. This is the only part of Kent known to support Bechstein's bat, a species closely associated with woodland. The area supports a large population of brown hares.

Targets:

- 1 Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats.
- 2 Restore and recreate chalk grassland to create large, continuous blocks on the scarp and on suitable soils in dip slope valleys. Pursue opportunities for:
 - Chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the county-wide target of 250ha by 2015; and
 - Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 150ha by 2015.
- 3 Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented, dip-slope woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement. Ensure woodland management takes account of the needs of woodland bats.
- 4 Complement dip-slope woodlands by buffering with semi-natural habitats (e.g. woodland edge, semi-natural grassland). Management which would maintain or expand the population of brown hares will also be supported.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - Medway Gap & North Kent Downs



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Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement



Name: Medway Gap and North Kent Downs

Description: This area stretches from the Ash Downs near Meopham, across the lower Medway Valley, to the downland between Medway and Maidstone as far as Queendown Warren. It includes extensive patches of woodland such as Whitehorse Wood, Great Wood (both SSSIs), Walderslade and Bredhurst Woods (LWSs), various historic parklands including Cobham, and chalk grassland sites such as Burham Down, Boxley Warren, Queendown Warren and Wouldham.

Joint Character Area(s): North Downs

Landscape Types: It encompasses a large-scale, open, intensively farmed landscape with sparse remnant hedges leading up the steep chalk scarps to wooded ridges. It includes large areas of mixed woodland and historic parkland and some small pastures and scrub. The river itself is tidal with well-developed meanders, riverside marshes and reedbeds. Chalk soils on the scarp, at the base and in the dry valleys, support areas of high-quality unimproved chalk grassland. The following Landscape Character Areas are present: Ash Downs, Luddesdown: West Kent Downs; Cobham: West Kent Downs; Medway Valley Lower; Nashenden Valley: Mid Kent Downs; Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs.

Geology: mainly Upper Chalk capped with clay-with-flints or deposits of Head gravel; some areas of Thanet Beds; alluvial deposits along the Medway.

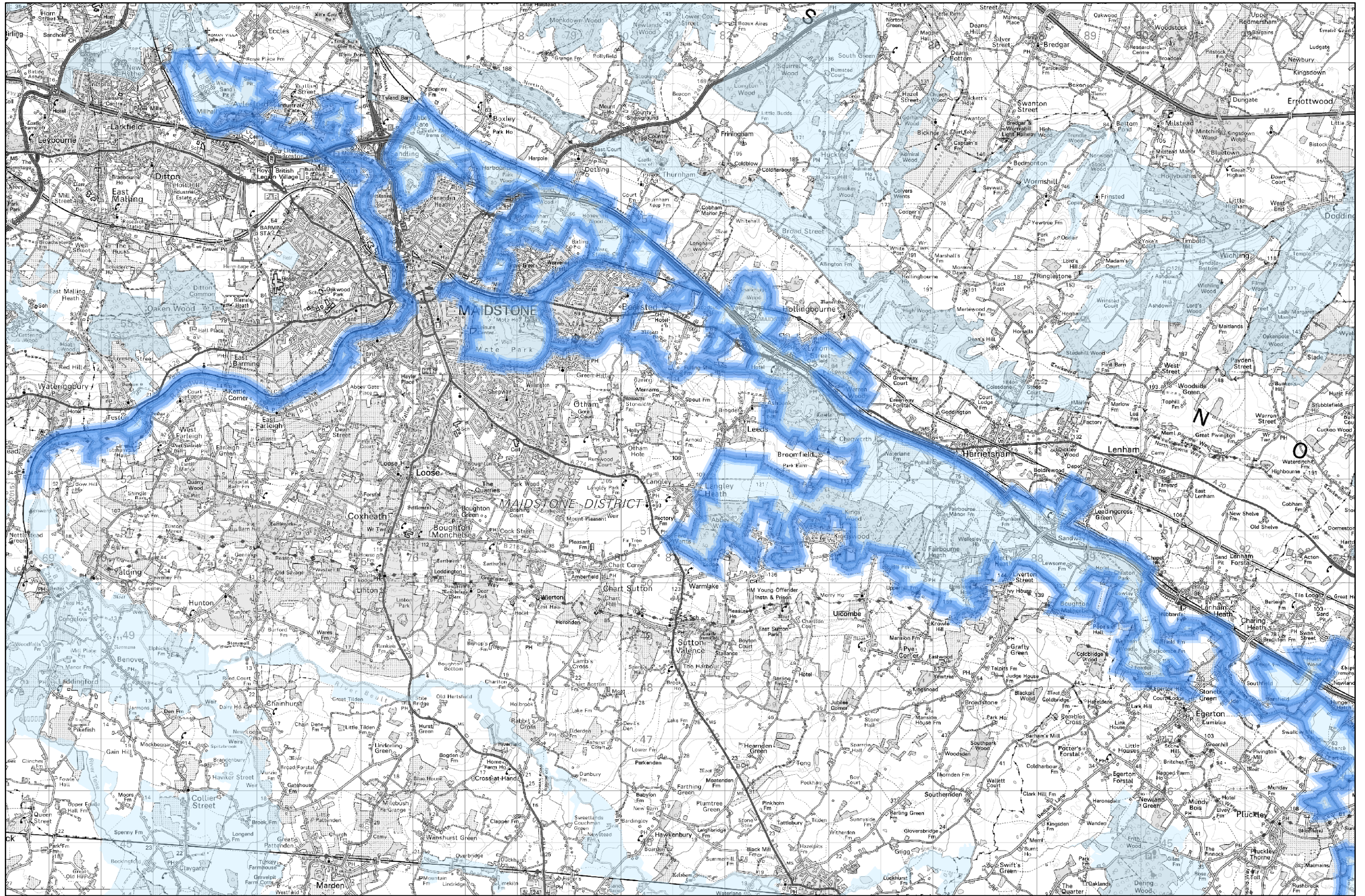
Biodiversity:

- 1 The area includes some very significant blocks of nationally and internationally important woodlands on a range of geologies from gravel to chalk, including areas of Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland.
- 2 The tidal Medway includes areas of intertidal mudflat, and there are associated areas of grazing marsh, reedbed and fen.
- 3 Chalk grassland exists as isolated fragments
- 4 There are a number of important brownfield sites, including disused quarries
- 5 This target area includes the county's most important site for arable weeds.
- 6 Key species include a number of important arable weed species, including corncockle, rough mallow and broad-leaved cudweed; chalk downland species including groundpine, man orchid, Kentish milkwort, meadow clary, and adonis blue butterfly.

Targets:

- 1 Maintain and enhance existing chalk grassland. Important opportunities exist to substantially extend areas of chalk grassland: within this target area, at least 10 hectares should be restored and 75ha created, by 2015. Pursue opportunities for:
 - Additional chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the county-wide target of 250ha by 2015; and
 - Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 150ha by 2015.
- 1 Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.
- 2 Pursue opportunities for the restoration of creation of grazing marsh, fen and reedbed habitats within the floodplain of the River Medway, including restoration of at least 50ha of grazing marsh in the Medway Valley between Rochester and New Hythe.
- 3 Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support priority species in the UK BAP.
- 4 Continue to conserve and enhance key populations of arable weeds, and maintain, enhance and extend the area of cereal field margins being positively managed for arable weeds.
- 5 Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 50ha on new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2015.
- 6 Where appropriate, encourage and enhance public access, particularly from the Medway Towns.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - Mid Kent Greensand & Gault - Map 1 of 2



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Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Statement



Name: Mid Kent Greensand and Gault

Description: The Mid Kent Greensand and Gault opportunity area contains a very high number of LWSs, including Honeyhills and Horish Woods. There are also several SSSIs including Burham Marsh, Lympne Escarpment and Hothfield Common, which is one of the last remaining heathland sites in Kent.

Joint Character Area(s): Predominantly Wealden Greensand with North Downs at the northern boundary.

Landscape Types: The landscape in this opportunity area is mainly mixed farmland, with small woodlands and hedged fields of both grassland and arable, although the quality of the land is not particularly good. The area is marked by development with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M20, A20 and railway lines. There are numerous Landscape Character Areas in the opportunity area.

Geology: Mainly Lower Greensand, Gault and Weald Clay, with some deposits of alluvium and head gravel around the Medway near Burham and head gravel around Langley and Fairbourne heaths.

Biodiversity:

- 1 Includes the River Len, the River Great Stour, The River East Stour and a number of their tributaries (including a series of small springs arising at the foot of the Downs). Associated habitats include lakes, areas of wet woodland, and some very small areas of fen.
- 2 There are nationally important acid grassland and heathland sites, as well as many smaller acid grassland fragments.
- 3 Blocks of wood pasture are scattered through this area, and there are small, isolated woodlands on the Gault clay and on the Greensand.
- 4 Key species include water vole, white-clawed crayfish and Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*, associated with river corridors, as well as wintering bittern along the Medway. The shrill carder bee *Bombus sylvarum* has been recorded at Leybourne Lakes Country Park, together with other important invertebrate species. Few nationally important species are associated with acid grassland and heath habitats, though many species of these habitats are scarce or unknown elsewhere in Kent, such as the keeled skimmer dragonfly at Hothfield or the assemblages of scarce invertebrates recorded from around Maidstone.

Targets:

- 1 Major opportunities exist to recreate and restore acid grassland and heath. This should include restoration, by 2015, of at least 3ha at Hothfield; and creation of at least 30ha of acid grassland and heath in the heathland corridor from Lenham to Brabourne Lees, plus at least 10ha of acid grassland around the northern edge of Maidstone. Habitat blocks should be no smaller than 1 ha if no more than 500m from other existing or new acid grassland, and no smaller than 6ha if more isolated. Additional opportunities should be pursued for creation of acid grassland and heathland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating up to 145ha by 2015.
- 2 Enhance or reinstate woodland management – including wood pasture management where appropriate – and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.
- 3 Pursue opportunities to restore or recreate wetland habitats along the Rivers Medway, Stour and Len and their tributaries, particularly where this may
 - Provide opportunities for flood risk management and for recreation;
 - Contribute to the conservation of priority species; or
 - Extend and buffer Local Wildlife Sites.
- 4 Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support priority species in the UK BAP.
- 5 Infrastructure and other development should avoid further fragmentation, particularly of wetland habitats and woodlands.

How should Biodiversity Opportunity Area maps and statements be used?

1. The BOA maps can be seen as a spatial reflection of the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). They indicate where the delivery of Kent BAP targets should be focused in order to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits. The BOA maps also show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation, as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks or wildlife habitats. As such, they will be useful to local planning authorities in the development and delivery of positive nature conservation policy in line with the South East Plan. The BOA statement documents will provide guidance on the conservation priorities which should be adopted in each area.
2. Information provided on the habitats and species associated with each BOA is not definitive. Rather, it identifies those priority habitats for which the areas is known to be most important, and provides a range of examples of priority species for which the area is known to be important. It is likely that each BOA will support additional habitats and species of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and reference should be made to the Kent Habitat Survey and the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre to support decision-making.
3. Biodiversity targets identified in the statement documents incorporate, where appropriate, targets in the Kent BAP. However, not all targets in the Kent BAP are easily spatially defined, and the BOA maps and statements should be read alongside relevant Habitat Action Plans in the Kent BAP.
4. The BOA maps should not be seen as planning constraint maps. It is not intended or proposed that nature conservation becomes the primary land-use within the target areas, so long as the targets and objectives for each area can be met, and development of any kind is not precluded. However, consideration might in some cases need to be given to ensuring that development within a BOA did not significantly increase the fragmentation of wildlife habitats within target areas or neutralize significant opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation.
5. BOA boundaries are not absolute. They have been drawn to follow mapped boundaries wherever possible in order to facilitate spatial planning and decision-making. However, a project immediately outside the mapped boundary should not be immediately dismissed if it would help to deliver the targets identified for the BOA concerned. It is also not the case that all land within a BOA offers the same opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation, and reference should be made to the Habitat Opportunity maps on the Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS) to support detailed decision-making.
6. The areas outside the identified BOAs still have substantial biodiversity interest, and include a number of nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands and other areas of habitats. Although the focus of any biodiversity action should be on the BOAs, it will still be necessary to maintain, enhance, buffer and extend areas of wildlife habitat outside the mapped areas in order to maintain the wildlife interest and richness of the wider countryside.
7. Some biodiversity interest is not well served by the BOA mapping process, and action for ponds, traditional orchards, wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of Kent and Medway and not just within identified Opportunity Areas.
8. While the primary purpose of the BOAs is to direct positive action for nature conservation, information on landscape has been included in the target documents. Reference should be made to AONB management plans or other landscape policy documents in drawing up proposals for habitat restoration or recreation in order to maximize the positive benefits for landscape and avoid conflict with features of landscape importance.

Kent Biodiversity Action Plan – www.kentbap.org.uk
Kent Landscape Information System – www.kent.gov.uk/klis
Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre – www.kmbrc.org.uk

Appendix E: References

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- Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (Jacobs and Ashford Borough Council, June 2009).
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- Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014 (Kent Downs AONB Unit).
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- Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Survey (Oxford Archaeology, 2001).
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- Kent Local Wildlife Site Schedules (Various - Kent Wildlife Trust).
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- Soils of England and Wales Sheet 6 South East England, Soil Survey of England and Wales (1980).
- Swale Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines (Swale Borough Council and Jacobs Babbie, 2005).
- The Greensand Belt Landscape Assessment and Guidelines (Kent County Council, 1998).
- The Kent Downs Landscape: An Assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Countryside Commission 1995).
- The Low Weald Landscape Assessment and Guidelines (Kent County Council, 1997).
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- <http://www.kentishcobnutsassociation.org.uk/>
- <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/>
- http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/listed_buildings_register.aspx
- http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/parks_and_open_spaces.aspx
- <http://www.valleyofvisions.org.uk/>

Appendix F: Glossary of terms

AOD

Above Ordnance Datum. Mean sea level is calculated from observation taken at Newlyn, Cornwall and used as the official basis for height calculation on British maps.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

Since 1992 the UK has developed a framework for the conservation of biodiversity known as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). This plan identifies priority species and habitats that are most under threat and develops measures for their conservation. Local authorities now have a clear duty to have regard to the conservation of these species and habitats under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (known as the 'Biodiversity Duty').

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA)

BOA represent a strategic network of BAP habitats across Kent.

BRANCH

In 2004-2007 Kent County Council, Natural England and other local and European partners undertook a major study to model how wildlife and ecological networks might respond to climate change known as BRANCH (Biodiversity Requires Adaptation in Northwest Europe under a Changing Climate).

Character

A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Characteristics

Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Characterisation

The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Condition

The assessment of condition evaluates the pattern of the landscape and the presence of incongruous features on the unity of the landscape. It also evaluates how well the landscape functions as a habitat for flora and fauna and the condition of cultural or 'man-made' elements such as enclosure, built elements and roads.

Conservation Area

Local authorities designate Conservation Areas in any area of 'special architectural or historic interest' whose character or appearance is worth protecting or enhancing.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

DEFRA is a Government Department in the UK. The primary objective for DEFRA is to secure a healthy environment in the UK.

Elements

Individual components that make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

Environment Agency

The environment Agency is an Executive Non-departmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and an Assembly Sponsored Public Body responsible to the National Assembly for Wales. The primary aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development.

Appendix F

European Sites

European site comprise a collective term for sites designated under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 such as **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** and **Special Protection Areas (SPA)**. Often wetland sites designated under the international **Ramsar** Convention are also included with these in practice. These international sites are almost always covered by the SSSI designation as well.

Features

Particularly prominent or eye catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

Functional Integrity

Functional Integrity is an assessment of how the landscape functions and considers both the influence of man (Cultural Integrity) and nature (Ecological Integrity).

Geographic Information System (GIS)

GIS is a system that captures, stores, analyses, manages, and presents data that is linked to location.

Guidelines

These actions should be applied to each character area to ensure that its unique character is maintained. Often more than one option may be the appropriate solution to achieving the ultimate objective. For example a degraded urban edge where the landscape objective is identified as create, the improvement could be through the creation of new woodland to screen the poor edge or to create a new urban edge through appropriate development. As most landscape character areas experience local variations in their condition and sensitivity, many of the policy objectives will involve a combination of the objectives.

Kent County Council (KCC)

In terms of planning, KCC manages development control, strategic planning and monitoring and enforcement with regards to county matters.

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally protected landscape afforded the same planning protection and landscape quality as the National Parks. AONB are part of a family of protected areas recognised and classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) throughout the world. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is, 'to conserve and enhance natural beauty'.

Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS)

KLIS is a geographic information system that allows the user to map various layers of landscape and habitat data for Kent in various combinations.

Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)

KWT is the leading conservation charity for Kent and Medway

Listed Buildings

Listed Buildings are buildings or other structures in the UK officially designated as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. Recommendations are made by English Heritage to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport who decides whether to place the building on the statutory list.

Living Landscapes

The Living Landscapes project is an initiative led by KWT to identify opportunities for county-wide strategic habitat networks in response to past degradation and future threats such as climate change and development. The project makes use of the KLIS habitat opportunity data and the location of existing habitat from the 2003 Habitat Survey.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

LNRs are designated by local authorities for both people and wildlife. They are semi-natural places that are of special interest locally and can be managed as such. They offer people opportunities for nature study or informal enjoyment. They may include sites that have one of the other designations.

Appendix F

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

LWSs are a non-statutory County designation, administered in Kent by the Kent Wildlife Trust and ratified by the Kent BAP Partnership. Central Government's 'New Performance Framework for Local Authorities' (2007) contains a number of National Indicators (NI) by which local authorities' performance is measured. NI 197 (Improved Local Biodiversity) is based on the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented. In addition to LWS the Kent Wildlife Trust has also identified **Roadside Nature Reserves** which recognise the important linkages provided by species-rich road verges.

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF)

MAFF is a former department of UK government, which has been overseen by DEFRA since 2001.

Native Species

Native species are those which are generally considered to have grown in England since before Roman times. Native planting is often recommended to encourage wildlife, but in certain circumstances such as agricultural shelterbelts, parkland landscapes and within villages and domestic gardens, selective non-native planting may be appropriate to reinforce existing landscape character. For instance, it may be appropriate to replant a village green planted with Horse Chestnut with the same species to conserve its distinctive character.

National Nature Reserves (NNR)

NNRs are almost always SSSI thus receiving statutory protection, but are also either owned or controlled specifically for wildlife conservation by Natural England or held by approved bodies such as Wildlife Trusts.

Natural England

Natural England is an independent public body whose purpose is to protect and improve England's natural environment and encourage people to enjoy and get involved in their surroundings

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

PPS 1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004)

PPS 7 sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.

Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

This record, known as the *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England*, was established, and is maintained by, English Heritage.

Scheduled Monuments

Scheduled Monuments are nationally important sites and monuments which are given legal protection. English Heritage identifies sites in England which should be placed on the schedule by the Secretary of State for Culture.

Sense of Place

Sense of place is the term used to describe the individuality and distinctiveness of a particular place or area. It is about the common identity and perception of a particular place to groups or individuals.

Sensitivity

This is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the essential fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. The term change refers to both beneficial changes such as a new woodland as well as change that may be brought about by new land uses. Landscape assessment considers sensitivity on an area's sense of place and its visibility.

Shelterbelts

A shelterbelt is a linear row of densely planted trees or shrubs which have been established to give shelter to livestock or vegetation within open fields. Throughout Maidstone Borough, poplar and alder shelterbelts have been planted to provide protection to fruit orchards.

Appendix F

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

SSSI are a statutory UK designation under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Designated by Natural England, these represent the very best wildlife sites in the country.

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC)

Maidstone Borough Council are the local planning authority for Maidstone.

Time depth

Time depth reflects how long that landscape has taken to establish. Ancient landscapes are uncommon in Kent but include those that have had very little intervention by man or contain ancient or prehistoric features. Historic landscapes are generally from the Medieval period onwards. This is when the pattern of most landscapes in Kent was established and is generally discernible today (although overlain with modern features).

Recent landscapes are those where historic elements have been replaced with new elements or land management. They include reclaimed landscapes.

Visibility

Visibility addresses the issues of Landform and the intercepting feature of Tree cover. For example an open hilltop landscape has a higher visibility than an enclosed lowland landscape.

Visual Unity

Visual Unity is the result of an analysis of the Pattern of Elements, for example the pattern of vegetation, enclosure, settlement and the relationship of these to the landform etc., weighed against the number of Detracting Features in the landscape.